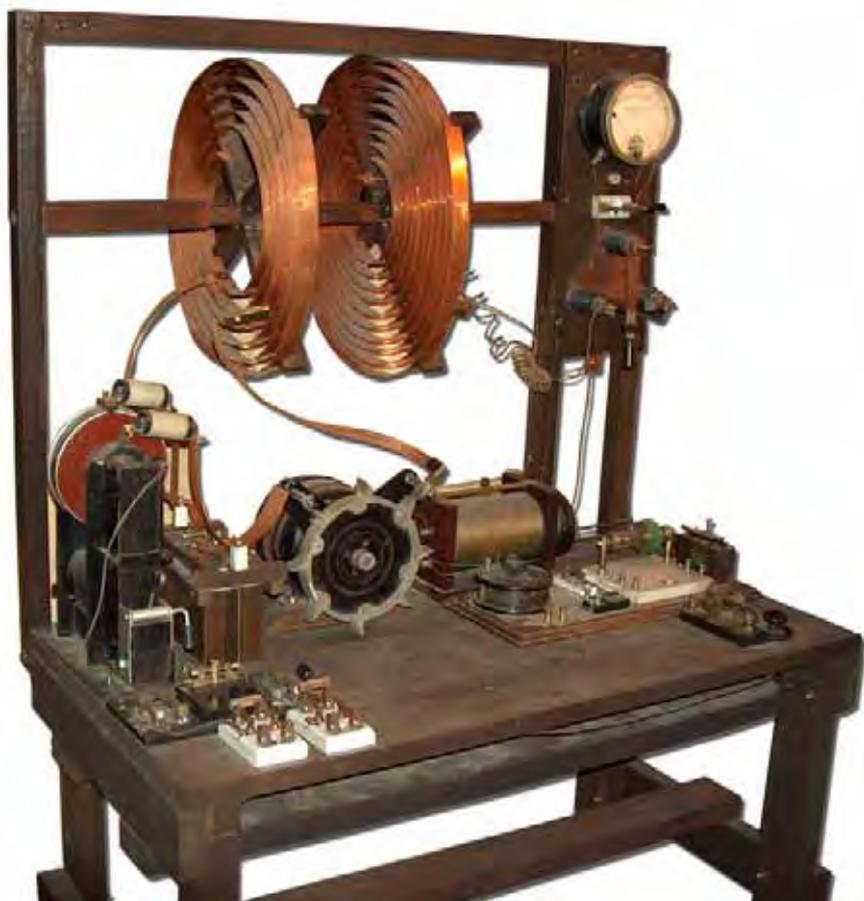


*The*  
**Call  
Letter**

November, 2005  
Vol. 31 — No. 11



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Over **30** years in print!

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# The Northwest Vintage Radio Society

Post Office Box 82379  
Portland, Oregon 97282-0379

The Northwest Vintage Radio Society is a non-profit historical society incorporated in the State of Oregon. Since 1974 the Society has been dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of "Vintage radio" and wireless equipment.

Membership in the Society is open to all who are actively interested in historic preservation. The dues are \$25.00 for domestic membership, due on January 1st of each year (prorated quarterly).

The *Call Letter* has been a monthly publication since 1974. It was originated with the founder, Bob Bilbie, and our first president, Harley Perkins. Through several editors and with the assistance of numerous society members, the *Call Letter* has continued to be a publication that informs members of the society's business and that supports the hobby of collecting, preserving, and restoring vintage radios.

Society meetings are held the second Saturday of each month (except July and August) at the Abernethy Grange Hall at 15745 S. Harley Ave. in Oregon City, Oregon. They convene at or about 10 AM for the purpose of displaying radios, conducting Society business, and exchanging information. Guests are welcome at all Society meetings and functions (except board meetings).

Other Society functions include guest speakers, auctions, radio show, and radio sales which are advertised in the *Call Letter* and are held in and around Portland.

With each issue of the *Call Letter*, we remember Jim Mason, a charter member of the society who remained active until his death in 1999. A generous bequest from Jim's estate ensures the vitality of the Northwest Vintage Radio Society, and continued publication of the *Call Letter*



## Society Officers for 2005:

President	George Kirkwood	(503) 648-4809 <a href="mailto:radiogeo@hevanet.com">radiogeo@hevanet.com</a>
Vice-President	Dave Brown	(503)585-4667 <a href="mailto:ironradio@qwest.net">ironradio@qwest.net</a>
Treasurer	Ed Charman	(503) 654-7387 <a href="mailto:enamrahc@peoplepc.com">enamrahc@peoplepc.com</a>
Secretary	Liles Garcia	(503) 649-9288 <a href="mailto:landn2@verizon.net">landn2@verizon.net</a>
Board member at large	Cliff Tuttle	(503) 666-7005 <a href="mailto:kiptuttle@aol.com">kiptuttle@aol.com</a>
<i>Call Letter</i> Editor	Rick Walton	(503) 656-4104 <a href="mailto:rwalton@easystreet.com">rwalton@easystreet.com</a>
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# November 2005

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**On the cover:** This spark-gap transmitter lives in Don Iverson’s attic. It’s an impressive looking collection of antique parts that becomes even more impressive when powered up and keyed!

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**The next meeting is on November 12, 2005.**

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**November Feature: Your most ambitious Summer radio project**

Visit our web site at <http://nwvrs.org>.

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**May Call Letter Deadline: August 3, 2005.**

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The *Call Letter* is the official publication of the Northwest Vintage Radio Society. Circulation is limited to the membership and guests of the Society. The Society is not responsible for the material contributed for publication, nor the quality, timeliness, or accuracy of the items offered for sale in the SWAP SHOP. By common agreement of the board of directors, the buyer assumes all responsibility for the satisfaction of any transaction.

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## From the Editor

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by Call Letter Editor, Rick Walton

Holy Cow! It's November already and the calendar that once stretched across three pages is now reduced to just two entries. They are important entries, though, because at this month's meeting we nominate our officers for the next year, and in December we elect them at the annual Holiday Party. As I have done for the last few years, I've printed the officers' responsibilities on the inside cover at the back.

Although last month's swap meet was fun, there didn't seem to be as much interest in the auction at the end. Most of the buyers had left, and the auction took place in the midst of sellers folding up and hauling out. That is unfortunate because the auction can be one of the most entertaining and enjoyable parts of the swap meet, at least for me. It is also a time when, with an adequate number of bidders, the proceeds can give the club's treasury a boost. There were a couple of radios that should have sparked some lively bidding leading to a respectable sale price, but instead wound up being sold for just a tiny fraction of their worth. It was a lucky situation for the bidder, but too bad for the club.

Related to that is the idea that we need to find a new location for our swap meet to spark interest among both buyers and sellers. The Rose Center facility is very nice, but there has been a diminishing of interest on the part of sellers over time because we aren't bringing in the foot traffic that leads to sales. Perhaps as important, we aren't bringing in the curious individuals who become new members. It seems that we used to always bring in several at each swap meet, but of late the numbers have fallen way off. The idea of changing venues is not my idea, nor is it a new idea. But perhaps it is one whose time has come.

OK! Off the soapbox and on to this month's issue. The photo on the front cover is one I took while visiting Don Iverson's amazing collection. At the Swap Meet Don had approached me with a sketch of a sign that has a tie-in with the article by Dick Karman last month about KISN radio. That led to my report on the afternoon at Don's. Then there are loads of photos from the October Swap Meet. Play It Again, Sam! is of special interest this month since it comes from our Hawaiian contingent, Jeff Martin. Jeff tells of his efforts with the radio, and in the process points out the great benefit of being part of our club. Aloha, Jeff, and Mahalo Nui for a great story. Mike Parker is back in a reprint of another "In the Shack" article, this time from January, 1996.

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## NWVRS 2005 Calendar of Events

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**November 12** NWVRS monthly meeting 10 am; tailgate swap 8:30.  
Nomination of officers for 2006.

**December 10** NWVRS monthly meeting and annual Holiday Party 10  
am. Election of officers for 2006.

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## A Word of Thanks

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This is to acknowledge the generosity of NWVRS member Blake Dietze who, at the last meeting, volunteered to donate a laptop computer to the club for its use in recording meeting minutes and keeping up with other club business. Blake has also donated several boxes of mailing labels to the club, a great benefit when mailing out the Call Letter.

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## Another Portland Radio Co.?

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*Editor's note: Those of you who participate in the club's Yahoo! Group have already seen this message from Sonny Clutter. I thought it too good to not share with everyone. Perhaps one of you can shed some light?*

Hey guy's, anyone ever hear of this company? I was cleaning up my shop and came across a lid only from what appears to be from an early battery radio cabinet with the "Superior" logo. See attached image.

Sonny, the RadiolaGuy



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# Photo Display

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Photos by Rick Walton

Here are photos from the Fall Swap Meet.







*Editor's note: This "In The Shack" article is from the January, 1996 Call Letter.*

While at a radio sale last summer, I happened to find the odd looking item shown here, a Western Electric 25-B amplifier, circa 1925.



Actually, I was with NVRS member, Sonny Clutter, and we both discovered it together. He asked me if I knew what it was, and I replied, "Yes, I do." I got the impression that he and I were the only ones there that knew what it was. It does not look like a radio-related item.

He then asked me if I wanted it and I was immediately faced with a snap decision. The price was quite reasonable. I was compelled to ask him, "and what if I don't?" He replied with a statement indicating that he would buy it for resale only, not really wanting two of them in his collection.

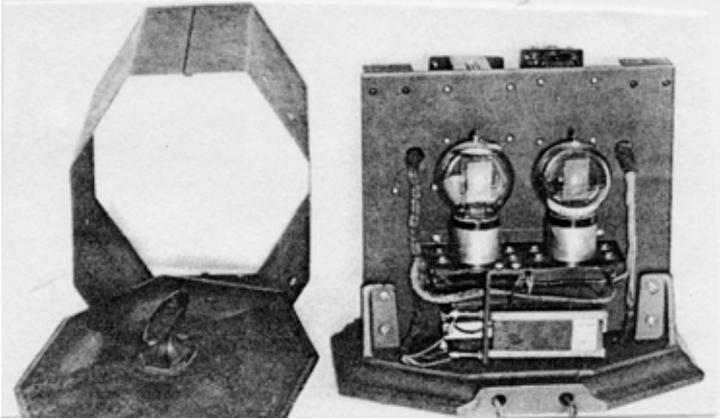
So I made the snap decision and said, "yes, I would like to have in my collection." "Very well. Go for it." Sonny replied.

The feeling I got from that experience was certainly a refreshing change from what I was used to! Here was a person who actually put generosity ahead of greed. As far as I am concerned behavior like that earns a higher level of respect, especially at a swap meet.



When I brought the 25-B amplifier home and carried it into the house my wife said, "What's that... an old electric heater?" I said, "No, it's an old-fashioned cooking pot!" The way it looks, it could pass for either one.

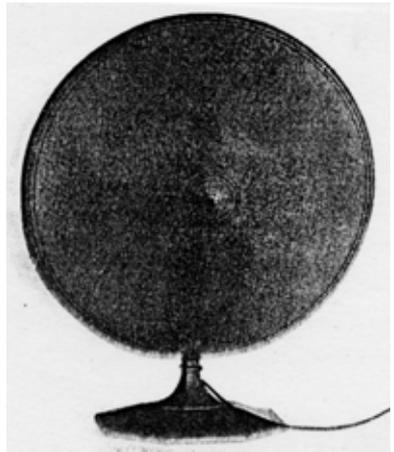
The base and the top are made of heavy cast metal. The transformers and tubes are mounted on a fiber board mounted vertically on a frame inside the unit. The top piece is removable and has a knob in the casting to easily hand-carry the amplifier. The cover is an octagon shaped piece of sheet metal that fits snugly between the base and the top. It is perforated with a few diamond shaped holes to ventilate the tubes. The disassembled amplifier is shown here.



The heavy cast base has terminal lugs underneath simply marked IN and OUT. The input could be connected to perhaps a one tube receiver, crystal set or phonograph output. I have tried all of these with good results. The output connects to a horn or a cone speaker.

The western Electric 25-A and B amplifier uses a design that is unprecedented in Western Electric history. I suspect that it was made to more easily blend with household decor as well as function as a one piece carry about unit. Everything that Western Electric made before it looks as if it were lifted from Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory, with exposed tubes and knobs, that were easily damaged in transport.

In reality, when looking at the Western Electric 540-AW cone speaker, which was developed at about the same time as this amplifier, it is evident that these items were designed to be compatible. The somewhat octagonal shape of the 540- AW speaker is the real clue, as is the gold tinted brown color of each.



By far the most unusual feature of the 25-A and B amplifier, was the fact that it was a 110 volt A.C. “light socket power.” It may be argued that it was the first real successful plug in radio amplifier.

The amplifier uses two Western Electric 205-D “tennis ball” triode tubes. One is for rectification. One is for amplification. These tubes are very scarce and, in my case, I’m very glad they both work.

The A.C. switch is installed on the power cord and uses a push pin, similar to a push-through modern day lamp socket. When I acquired this amp the push through pin was frozen in one position. Here is a hint concerning old A.C. switches:

I shot this one with a few drops of Liquid Wrench squeezed in the cracks by the push through pin. I then gently worked it back and forth. This will rejuvenate the mechanism and generally restore to original working order any stuck switch.

Here is what Charles Fisher, a collector from Massachusetts said about this amplifier (from the May 1989 issue of *Antique Radio Classified*, article on Western Electric): “The No. 25-A, a strange item, shown, weighs many pounds but contains only two tubes, type 205D's, one of which is used as a half-wave rectifier, the other as an amplifier. The weight is largely devoted to the components needed to provide smooth DC for the considerable output power. (I have no data on the 25-B except that its schematic is identical to that of the No. 25-A.)”

Well, that’s all I have on this unusual, but excellent item. Should you find one that is all rusty, with barnacles on it, it was probably used as a boat anchor. They are certainly heavy enough!

See you next time. In The Shack —

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## An Afternoon with Don Iverson

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by Rick Walton

At the Fall Swap Meet, Don approached me with a sketch of the sign pictured here. He explained that he had the sign in his basement, and dug it out after reading Dick Karman’s article about KISN radio in the October Call Letter. Don acquired the sign at an auction several years ago, and didn’t know much about it except that it was used at Blue Lake Park at some point in the 60’s or 70’s. He didn’t listen to KISN, and didn’t remember the promotion this sign would have been part of.



I asked Don if I could come by to take a picture. He said “OK,” so I went and took the picture after spending a most pleasant and thoroughly

fascinating three hours or so with Don viewing his various collections (he doesn't limit himself to radios). I saw some of his rare and strange mouse traps, tubes that I'd only read about, crystal sets and parts for them, telegraph keys that Don has designed and built, and a host of other gadgets and gizmos. The most impressive thing I saw, though, was the demonstration of the spark-gap transmitter (see the cover). I just wish I could have gotten a picture of the blue sparks!

Don also showed me several of the radio restoration projects he has in progress. These are jobs that Don has taken on for other people primarily. It is easy to discern that Don really puts his heart into the work though, and receives greater reward in accomplishing the task of restoration than he receives in payment.

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## Play It Again, Sam!

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by Jeff Martin

### **Life after the "Free Table"**

During my first few months at Northwest Vintage Radio Society, I discovered the value of coming to the meeting early and frequently looking at the treasures brought in to the free table. It was during one of these early mornings when I came across a very small, plain looking wooden radio case. It was not only plain, it was even a little homely. It must have been created as a very inexpensive set. It had some very plain looking veneer, that was so plain, it required some toning lacquer on each end just to make it look a little better.

I picked it up, but I think a lot of others passed it by. There was no chassis, but I had determined to live up to the ideals of the organization. "Dedicated to the Preservation and Enjoyment of Vintage Radio and Wireless Equipment." I thought especially in those early days, that every tube radio needed to be restored. The worse shape a radio was in the more I wanted it, so I could make it beautiful again. It's a sickness... I know! Surely someday, I'll find a chassis that will fit this poor unfortunate excuse for a radio case, I thought.

Then, the day finally came, when Rudy brought in a load of stuff, and was saying something about a pre-war radio chassis. It even had a piece of tape on it that said "pre-war". It was kinda small, and I remembered that a year or so earlier, I had picked up an ugly little case, that just might be a fit. Unfortunately, when I got it home, and found my case, I discovered that the two shafts didn't line up with the holes. So, I put the case back in a box, and did the same for the chassis.

When I began packing my radios for my move to Honolulu, I decided to bring those two items along, and recently started working to make them into a real radio. I decided, that since I am in Hawaii, I needed a koa radio, Koa is my favorite wood right now, and it only grows on the Big Island of Hawaii.

I found a nice curly piece of koa veneer, then started working to make the case ready, I filled the two holes with wooden dowel, then sanded it down flat, and re-drilled the holes to the right distance apart. I wish it were that easy. Actually I ended up filling the holes a few times until I figured out how to get them just right. My plan was to cover the face and top with a single sheet of veneer then drill out the holes and cut out the openings with an Exacto knife. My plan worked pretty well, and the glue I chose worked like a charm. I used a powdered epoxy that mixes with water. I put it on a little too thick in some places, and it bled through the veneer, but fortunately, when sanded, it disappeared.

After cutting all the openings, and trimming all the edges back, I began sanding and preparing the wood for the lacquer. For the beveled ends, I decided to do something outrageous. To be a Hawaiian radio it needed a Tapa design so I found some pictures of Tapa cloth on the web, and printed them out, then glued them onto the beveled section as well as around the inside edges of the speaker grill, and the dial. For grill cloth I found a piece of real tapa cloth. For the dial lens I had to experiment a little. I cut some cardboard pieces that would fit inside the dial opening, then I pressed the plastic material that had once been part of a package, over the cardboard using the case opening to press, while using a heat gun to soften the plastic. After two tries I came up with one very respectable dial lens.

The paper printout with the tapa design looks very good with the lacquer. I suppose it is the same as doing a paper photo veneer. On the wood I didn't use a grain filler, so I have had to put a lot of coats of lacquer on, each followed by some wet sanding to make the surface nice and flat. Nothing ever seems to go as planned, and wouldn't you know it, when the top was almost perfect, I had just put on another coat, and some little bug landed on it. He must have squirmed around until he dug down deep, and after a long time of sanding I ended up with a little blemish, which I had to work on even more to get it out. I tell, you there are more bugs around here than you can imagine.

I was convinced that this radio was going to be a real problem, when I started working on the Chassis. It was in pretty good shape, but although

it was an AA5 it was an older type, using the following tubes: 50L6, 35Z5, 12K7, 12Q7, and 12A8. I didn't even know what kind of radio it was. I put out a message on the NWVRS news group, and Sonny thought it was a FADA. Sure enough, I finally found a picture of it, and it looked like a model 55. With that information, at least I could get a schematic, which I found on Nostalgia Air. I decided to recap the entire radio, and when all done, I hooked up the cord, and fired it up on my variac. To my delight, I got some noise, then when I hooked up the antenna, I got radio stations... several of them, loud and clear. The next time I turned it on, it suddenly died. I put a little note on the news group again, and Sonny suggested it may be a tube. It turned out to be the 50L6. When I replaced it, my radio came back to life! For now, I have some wooden knobs that I made a while back, but I plan to change them soon. I still don't know what kind of case this originally was, but I did see a Zenith on eBay that looked very much like it.



Now, my office desk sports a beautiful koa, Hawaiian style radio, that will probably never have any value to a collector, but to me it is a treasure, brought back to life from the free table, and it creates for me a link to all my friends at the Northwest Vintage Radio Society.

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## Swap Shop

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**FOR SALE:** Thousands of tubes, hundreds of radio parts, panels, meters, surplus, etc. R5-D3 electronic surplus, Bob Lee, 9770 S.E. Stanley Ave., Milwaukie, OR 97222, (503)513-0410

**FOR SALE at the NOV MEETING:** I will be bringing the following “radio restoration” items: power transformers, cloth line cords, original bakelite and hard rubber AC plugs with some reproduction ones, and other restoration items. Jerry Talbott

**FOR SALE:** \*\*Two remote control Philco console radios with matching Mystery Dial remotes. \$200 for both. Included is a third console without remote and a Philco cathedral. Contact Pat Kagi (360)694-6149.

**FOR SALE:** \*\*Hallicrafters TW-1000 for sale, \$60.00. Color is black. The TW-1000 is the Hallicrafters version of the Zenith Transoceanic. Liles Garcia

**FOR SALE:** \*\*Icom R 8500 100kh to 1.999gh all mode. Played about 30 hours. E/W shipping box, manuals, software for computer control and TV R 7000 TV picture adapter. \$1200, Robert Campbell 503 648 7331 or hmlcc@aol.com.

**FOR SALE:** Triplett Tube Tester, Model 1210A. \$75 OBO. Damon Vandehey 503-481-9344 (work) or 503-259-9129 (message).

**WANTED:** \*I am looking for a Zenith model 808 chassis and speaker (5605 or 5607) to fit into my cabinet. According to my sources, Zenith used these two chassis in the 808, 809, 861, 966, 1114 and 1160 radios. Phil LeVelle

## Radio Service

These members have indicated they are willing to perform radio repairs:

Roger Brown - (503) 693-6089

Blake Dietze - (360) 944-7172, [wb6jhj@ix.netcom.com](mailto:wb6jhj@ix.netcom.com)

Tony Ranft - (360) 944-8489 or [ranft@saw.net](mailto:ranft@saw.net) - General repairs.

Dave Wise - (503) 293-7835, [davidwise@phoenix.com](mailto:davidwise@phoenix.com)

If you are willing to repair radios, give your name, phone and/or e-mail, and any comments to the *Call Letter* editor.

The Northwest Vintage Radio Society is not responsible in any disputes arising from services provided by members listed here. By common agreement of the board of directors, the buyer assumes all responsibility for the satisfaction of any transaction.

## Leads and Needs

Questions about restoration of vintage radio? Visit radiolaguy's web site often for this information plus lots of other interesting displays, photo's, virtual museum plus lots of other information on vintage radio and television. Oh, yes, there are items for sale as well and NVRS members get a substantial discount on most of these items. Thank You, Sonny the Radiola Guy  
Visit my vintage radio web site: <http://www.radiolaguy.com>

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# Officer's Roles

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## **The President**

The President shall preside at all regular and special meetings of the membership and the Board of Directors. The President shall set the time and the place of Board of Directors' Meetings. The President has the power to appoint members of committees as appropriate to enhance the activities of the society.

## **The Vice President**

The Vice President shall be responsible for planning and arranging technical and entertaining activities associated with the society's meetings. He serves as chairman of the program committee if such a committee is appointed. He acts as presiding officer at meetings if the President is unavailable.

## **The Secretary**

The Secretary shall be responsible for recording the minutes of every business meeting and for receiving and preparing all of the society's correspondence.

## **The Treasurer**

The Treasurer shall be accountable for all funds received and disbursed by the society and shall report all monetary transactions and treasury balance at each regular meeting of the society. The Treasurer shall prepare a list of members in good standing for distribution at the next regular meeting following the annual meeting of the society.

## **The Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors shall consist of the current elected officers of the society plus the immediate past president of the society. The Board of Directors shall direct the care and expenditure of the funds of the society. The Board shall determine a suitable time and place for regular society business meetings.