



Front of  
1934 Zenith # 6 Vol-25 © 2020  
1000z



# NEW MEXICO RADIO COLLECTORS CLUB

## Next meeting June 14th

Virtual online Zoom meeting Sunday, June 14th at 1 PM

The theme will be the April meeting theme for the show and tell.

## A REFLECTION ON A 13-YEAR RADIO JOURNEY by David Wilson

I've had some extra time recently to catch up on projects in my shop. One of the things on my list was to install the original bronze bezel that I recently acquired to replace the casted in plastic bezel we made for my Zenith 1000 Z Stratosphere radio I acquired in 2007. Since I had the Stratosphere tuner out of the radio to install the original bezel, I decided to check all the tubes, do a tune-up so to speak on the radio. Zenith did not think through their cabinet design as well as E.H. Scott and McMurdo Silver did where they made the lid on their cabinets lift-up so the tubes could be easily serviced without taking the tuner chassis out of the cabinet. This process to me took me a couple half days totaling about 8 hours. Over the years I have acquired thousands of tubes and when I moved into my new workshop back at the beginning of the year I started to process of sorting and organizing all my tubes. As most here know, it's not a real fun project. So, I took the opportunity to do a lot of extra testing on multiples of tubes I had that

went into my Stratosphere and other radios. This time spent testing also included labeling each tube's new tested value.

As I serviced the Stratosphere, I did some reflective thinking about the journey this unique radio had taken me on for just over a decade now. It was May of 2007, when I was asking a seller about their item on eBay, it turned out the seller that was in Albuquerque. I had some questions about the seller's item and in the exchange this person became aware that I lived in Las Cruces. The seller told me that there was a NMRCC picnic being held at a member's home that May, which turned out to be Richard Majestic's home. I decided to attend that picnic and that's how I became a member of NMRCC for a second time, the first time was in 1996. I reconnected at the picnic with some old members and met some new ones like Richard.

Little did I know that a few months later I would once again be on

*(Continued on page Six)*



Rear view of David's Zenith Strat

NMRCC Meeting MINUTES to be continued soon watch this space

#### NMRCC 2020 MEETINGS

**January 12th** 'FM tuners

**February 9th.** Tube boxes, old radio books and text books, documents (manufacturer newsletters), and advertising items related to radios and broadcasting

**March 8th** 1930s art deco radios, chrome chassis and intricate wood design radios

**April 19th** . Old computers, calculators, slide rules, and associated items

**May 10th** Spring Picnic&sale – (J.Anthes's)

**June 14th** Unusual Devices/Stump the Experts - Unusual tubes, light bulbs, transistors, and radio parts. Also, who can identify that strange gizmo you found, or explain how an unusual object works?

**July 12th** Radio Repair Workshop with Les Davidson AA%<sup>s</sup> at J. Anthes' home

**August 9th** Wild Card Sunday

**September 13th** Radios with odd construction

**October 11th** Fall Ribeye Steak Picnic (Wilson's)

**November 08th** Radio Repair Workshop with Richard Majestic AA12s

**December 13th** Holiday Party & sale at Mark topo's home

#### NMRCC Officers for 2017

- *David Wilson: President*
- *Mark Toppo: Vice President*
- *Richard Majestic: Treasurer*
- *[open] Secretary C. Burch acting*
- *Membership Randy Gray*
- *Ron Monty Director*
- *Les Davidson Director*
- *John Anthes Director*
- *John Hannahs*
- *Richard Majestic: Newsletter Editor*



**The NMRCC AUCTION TREE at Kaseman Hospital parking lot**

## Flashback from The Past

I recently had some blood tests done at Kaseman Hospital where NMRCC previously held their club meetings for probably around 15 years. Prior to the meetings, we gathered up in the parking lot to socialize and then had an auction. Afterwards, we would haul our stuff for the monthly theme to a room inside the hospital where we would conduct our meeting. I do mean haul as it was quite a distance from the parking lot to our meeting room. Since the furniture in the hospital was nice, we needed to be careful not to bring in stuff that was very junky and might damage the furniture.

In leaving Kaseman after my lab work, I stopped by the "old auction tree" and took a picture. Many a radio, tubes, parts, etc were sold under this tree prior to our monthly meeting. The auctions occurred pretty much every month independent of the weather. Occasionally in the winter, we might decide to bypass having an auction and quickly head inside

where it was warmer.

The shade of the tree was very welcomed during the hot summer months. I suspect many of the old timers in the club might still have a few of the radios they bought under this tree. When you look at the picture of the tree, imagine the times when all of the ground area under the tree was filled with radios, test equipment, boxes of tubes, boxes of parts and whatever else people brought to auction off. ~by Chuck Burch

The tree may have been owned by Kaseman but Chuck owned it at Auction time on the second Sunday of the month. [ED]

NMRCC Letter from the president May Newsletter.

NMRCC Members:

Unfortunately, it looks like June is going to be a repeat of April and May for us when it comes to meeting as a group. We are going to have to cancel the Spring picnic scheduled at John and Janis Anthes home. The stay-at-home directive issued by Governor Lujan Grisham has been extended again into June with now end date, which is not helpful when making a decision on our June event. The consensus of the board I talked to is since we have an older membership it puts many of us in the higher risk category if we contract the virus. Let hope things open up soon and we get past this ordeal.

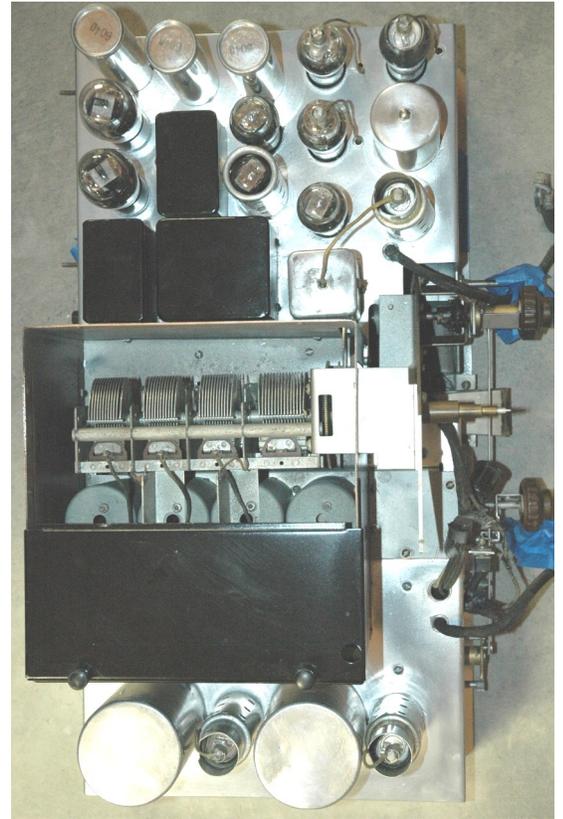
I've decided to try to hold meeting a regular meeting using Zoom conferencing online. It's called a virtual meeting. I use the Zoom system for my business all the time and it works well for meetings. Members who want to participate will have to have a computer with a camera feature and they will have to download the Zoom application on to their computer. You can go to the following link to download the application: <https://zoom.us/support/download>. Unfortunately, we will not have the feature where you can call in from a cell phone. I will email all the membership a Zoom invitation before the meeting with a link that they can click on and it will take them to our online meeting. You must have the Zoom application downloaded on your computer first.

Our NMRCC Zoom online meeting date will be **Sunday, June 14 at 1 PM** and it will go to 3 PM. The show and tell theme will be the April theme we ended up not doing which was old computers, calculators and slide rules and associated items.

Our newsletter will continue to be emailed only due to the difficulty in mailing things during this COVID-19 period.

Be safe and I hope to see you all on our virtual Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup> Zoom meeting!

David Wilson  
NMRCC President





eBay, this time contemplating bidding on a Zenith 1000 Z Stratosphere or what was left one. You see, the radio was missing major parts of the radio, the unique 50-watt amplifier, the two A-12 Jensen speakers and the rare 5" Jensen "Q" horn tweeter. It was also missing the original bronze dial bezel, the shadowgraph tuning escutcheon, all 7-knobs, which were bronzed wood, 2 metal switch levers and the radio's back-copper screen door. I basically was bidding on a large decorative cabinet made up of complicated inlay wood designs and exotic woods. The cabinet was in really nice condition wood wise, but the shellac/lacquer finish was another story. Most of the finish was flaking off one side and the top of the radio's cabinet. The only other thing that came with the cabinet was the massive tuner, which was all there but it was rusted in places. It's July 7, 2007, the day the auction was to close, I'm on the phone with my long-time friend Brand Merchant, who is one of the top jukebox restorer/fabricators in the world. People from around the world sends their projects to Brand for restoration. The auction was just minutes away from being over and I'm trying to convince myself that if I buy the remnants of this radio, I can come up with an affordable way to restore it to its former glory. Keep in mind, in 2005 these radios peak in price with one complete all original Stratosphere, the complete opposite of what I was considering bidding on, sold for a record \$75,000. Consider all this on a greater scale, this auction was like buying a complete a Carol Shelby 1965 Shelby Cobra, worth \$750,000, and I would be buying only the body and the engine for \$110,000, everything else is missing. This radio purchase of a lifetime was a bit of gamble considering only 350 were produce in 1934/35 and less than 60 had been found to date. So, I'm on the phone with the Carol Shelby of jukebox restoration trying to get some kind of assurance that he will help me restore and fabricate some of the missing parts needed for this radio. I knew it would almost impossible to find all the original parts that went to this scarce, three quarters of a century old Zenith radio. I kept thing to m self, this was a chance to own one of the Holy Grails of the radio collecting in the world. I guess I also really hadn't not gotten over the fact that I had to pass on buying one of these 25-tube Stratosphere radios, discovered in an El Paso warehouse in 1988 by another jukebox collecting friend. I was a 31-year-old kid who had spent what little extra money he had at the time on a couple jukeboxes picked out of Mexico. I was flat financially all tapped out to pay my friends \$3,500 asking price for his newly discovered Stratosphere. What a mistake that was!!! For the next 19 years the framed 1935 Fortune Magazine ad of the Zenith Stratosphere hanging near my 1937 Zenith 12-U-158 console in my office would have to do. People at my office would ask me every once in a while, what the significance of the radio in the framed ad was and I would tell them a story about finding this grand radio that went along the lines of the big fish that getting away. Not quite sure why I had that Stratosphere picture in my office really because the thing kind of depressed me.

So, the eBay auction clock counts down on a hot July afternoon in Las Cruces, I'm on the phone with my friend Brad. I enter a bid knowing this very well could become the second time in almost 20 years I miss a chance to own a Zenith Stratosphere. I pull the trigger

with seconds to go and the screen flips over and to my surprise I was the proud owner of cabinet and a tuner and I just spent more money than I had spent in my entire radio collection in 20 years in one snip bid. My heart is racing as I tell my friend on phone, I got the radio. Now the real work would begin.

Here I am, 13 years later, sitting in my living room, ordered to stay a home by my Governor due to a world pandemic, working on the 55" high luxury Stratosphere radio, thinking about what this radio has meant to me over the years, remembering the many people who I met along the way who helped me make this radio come back to life. People like Richard Majestic, who would restore the Stratosphere tuner and build the amplifier on a chassis I had fabricate at a local machine shop, based on my final drawings. Richard also help me make 5-sets of the back, copper screen door to the Stratosphere. John and Jean Goller of Fort Wayne, Indiana who casted my dial bezel and escutcheon off their 1000 Z original parts. George Kazaku, an Abbott Laboratories computer programmer and a Stratosphere owner who hand traced the patterns off his 1000 Z amplifier and crossover tweeter stand box he had taken apart, sending me all the dimensions needed to fabricate my own parts. Larry Bordonaro of Antique Restoration who reproduce the 7 unique knobs for the Stratosphere. The radio's quiet and selectivity control levers were missing, and my long-time aircraft mechanic friend Ron Karp assisted me in recreating these complicated metal levers.

I would eventually spend over 70 hours scraping off by hand, using razor blades, the old lacquer/shellac finish in order to preserve the original stain colors in the radios 7 different woods. The final finish on the radio was made-up of a combination of lacquer and shellac, 6-coats in total that were shot by good friend Brad Merchant the Carol Shelby of jukeboxes. I have met some great new friend along the way in this major collaborative effort to bring this radio rarity back to its full life. Collectively we reproduced over 9 different parts for the Zenith 1000 Z stratosphere of which some have been sold to other Stratosphere restorers. The extra sets of the back door went to the 1000 Z owners for their help.

In a new chapter in this radio's 13-year history I did tune-up on the radio for the first time. I spent a couple days going through the and testing the 25 tubes in the tuner and amplifier. This amp uses eight 45-G power tubes and I ended up replacing all but two of the power tubes. I test over 42, 45 tubes to get 8 tubes that met spec or better. In the tuner, this radio uses six 6D6-G tubes, 5 of the six in the audio section of the radio. I had to replace 3 of these tubes the rest of the of the radio's tubes were still within spec. I had to fix one of the lights in the radio's 5-bands that stopped working. One of the growing problems on this radio was the static noise in the volume control when turning it up and down. It turns out this is no ordinary volume control pot; it is about 2" by 1.5" and it has a sealed backlite case. It's a mystery pot, I thought to myself, how am I to service this thing. I got my best LED flashlight out and really took a close look at the thing and discovered two, tiny 1/6" holes on the side of the volume control. I took my jewelers size standard screwdriver and dug the grease and dirt out of the holes. What I found were two set screws, when removed, created access to the side of

the volume control where I could spray white lithium grease in, a trick Richard showed me years ago. It worked; after a few turns of the pot the static was gone and the radio's volume work perfectly. I cleaned up both tuner and amp chassis and this chapter was closed in the radio's history for now.

The restoration of this Zenith Stratosphere has been one of the most rewarding restoration projects I have ever been involved in. I've met some incredible, new radio friends along the way as we all worked together to bring this radio rarity back to its full life in just one year. A radio found by a picker in Eureka, CA at a yard sale of a longtime electrician who worked at the nearby Pacific Lumber Co. lumber mill for 30 years, who brought this radio home from the mill's employee break room in the 1950s. The picker then listed the radio on eBay and the rest is this radio collecting history.

Shortly after finishing the 2008 restoration Stratosphere I posted a progress report and on the radio's restoration along with some of what I shared here in this column on [antiqueradios.com](http://antiqueradios.com). Martin Blankenship who, the co-author of the series of three quintal Zenith books: "Zenith Radio: The early years 1019-1935", "Zenith: The Glory Years 1936-1945 History & Products" and "Zenith The Glory Years, Illustrated Catalog & Database," posted this comment: "David, congratulations on a fine, labor-intensive restoration. Commander McDonald and Gilbert Gustafson must be smiling down on you now!" Martin was referring here to the President and the Chief engineer and plant manager of Zenith during the construction of the Stratosphere radio.

It has been an honor to be the custodian of this great radio! My long-term plan for this great piece of history is to donate the radio to the Anderson – Abruzzo International Balloon Museum along with all my historical Stratosphere Balloon collection for the public to experience and be aware of the radio connection to the early U.S. stratosphere balloon missions in the mid-1930s. The high atmospheric balloon flights in 1933 and 1935 most likely inspired Zenith to use the Stratosphere name on its premier radios of that time.

My family had a friendship with the Abruzzo family when I was growing up in Albuquerque. I also worked at the Sandia Peak Tramway, which is partly owned by the Abruzzo family, where I worked with both sons of our founding NMRCC member Jim Stuber, in the 1970s and 80s. During this time, I had a chance to help test the radio antenna system on the Double Eagle II balloon that was the first successful attempt to cross the Atlantic accomplished by Ben Abruzzo, Maxie Anderson and Larry Newman in 1978. My uncle and step aunt were also part of the pioneering hot air ballooning community in New Mexico. So, with all my family ties to ballooning and the Abruzzo family I feel the balloon museum would make a great home for my Stratosphere radio.

The restoration of this Zenith Stratosphere would not have been possible without everyone's help mentioned in this story. I would like to close here by saying this story marks the 13-year anniversary of my friendship

with my great friend Richard Majestic and the renewing of my membership with NMRCC, a truly great experience with all the many friends I have made here.

Richard, thank you for your mentoring, friendship and all that you do for NMRCC to make it such a great organization and for making radio collecting in our club a true learning experience!  
~David Wilson





**NEW MEXICO RADIO  
COLLECTORS CLUB**

**New Mexico Radio Collectors Club**

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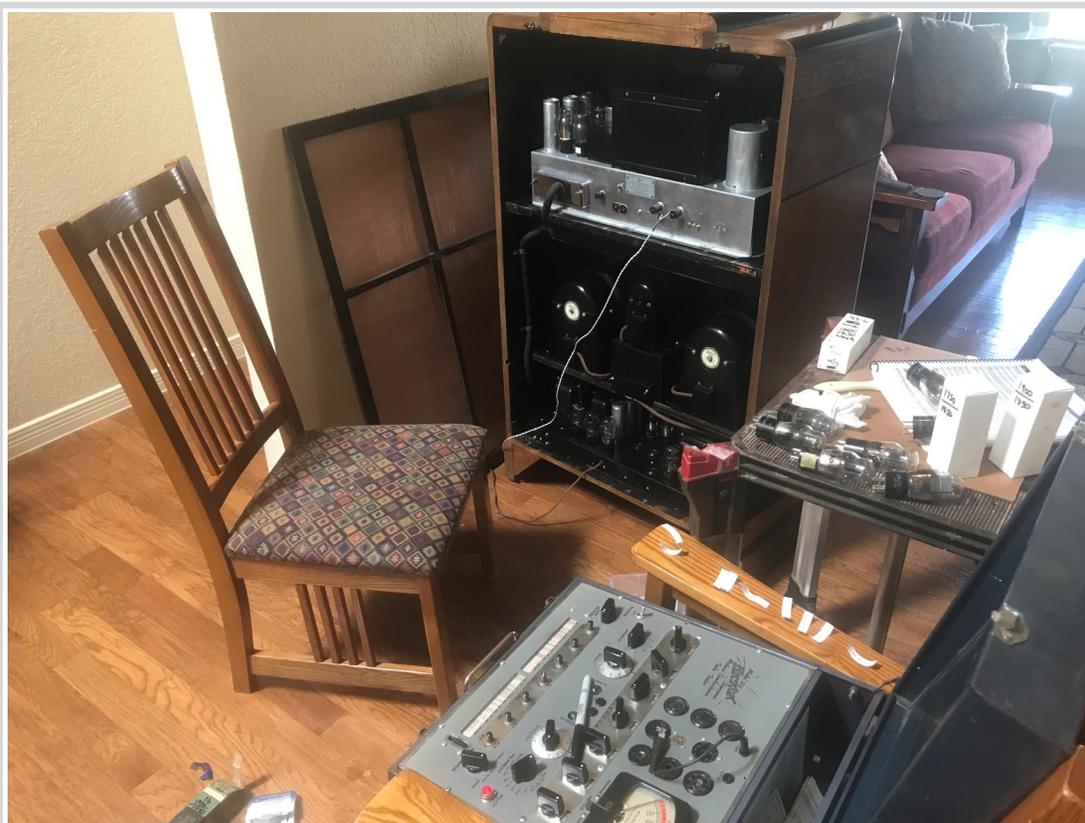
*The New Mexico Radio Collectors Club is a non-profit organization founded in 1994 in order to enhance the enjoyment of collecting and preservation of radios for all its members.*

*NMRCC meets the second Sunday of the month at The Quelab at 680 Haines Ave NW , Albuquerque NM Tailgate sale at 1:00PM meetings start at 2:00 pm. Visitors Always Welcomed.*

**NMRCC NEWSLETTER**

THIS PUBLICATION IS THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW MEXICO RADIO COLLECTORS CLUB. INPUT FROM ALL MEMBERS ARE SOLICITED AND WELCOME ON 20<sup>TH</sup> OF THE PRECEDING MONTH. RICHARD MAJESTIC PRO-TEMP NEWSLETTER EDITOR, SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS IN WORD FORMAT, PICTURES IN \*.JPG FORMAT TO: [RMAJESTIC@MSN.COM](mailto:RMAJESTIC@MSN.COM)

USPS Stamp



What it looks like to refresh a Zenith stratosphere with NOS and used Vacuum Tubes. A good stock of 45s, 67s, 42s, 6D6s, and a 6A7. all of these tubes are getting expensive and hard to get, a working Hickcock tube tester



Part of my stockpile, David didn't need any 80s since I designed the power supply in David's Stratosphere to get the proper voltages I used 6x1N4007 silicon diodes and two filter chokes. RM