

# HOW IT HAPPENED— CHRS, THAT IS

Eugene Rippen, esq., Auburn, CA, a founding member  
of the California Historical Radio Society

In 1974, having talked it almost to death for years, Jim Cirner and Norm Berge were sitting in Jim's living room one evening once again discussing the prospect of an antique radio club for the West Coast. They believed they already knew enough collectors in Northern California, alone, to make a success of it. They decided to quit talking it and just go ahead and do it.

The first thing that Norm and Jim did was to get a nucleus of collectors who would help them start it up. A few phone calls later, the original seven charter members were lined up to go to work.

Norm Berge was the first president. At the time he was working in the engineering department of Stanford Medical Center. Although he had only been collecting for four years, he had great enthusiasm and had already amassed over 150 radios in his collection. Norm had been repairing sets since the 1940's.

Jim Cirner, treasurer, was working for N.A.S.A. at the Ames Research Center in Mt. View. Jim already had over 250 radios, along with quite a collection of other radio items. He started repairing in 1948 and collecting in 1950.

The other five that Jim and Norm had hustled up were: Vice President Dave Brodie, a ham operator since 1955 and already a repairer and collector of old radios; but most important to the club at the time, he was a CPA. Second vice president Peter Brickey, a Hewlett-Packard employee, got interested in old radios in the early '60s and began collecting them in 1971. He had a broad interest from early wireless to '40s consoles.

Robert Middleton was one of the first seven. He had been into radios for a long time as the author of many technical articles that were published in many different magazines and other publications.

Our first editor of the Journal of the California Historical Radio Society was Ken Miller who was then working for Varian as an Electronic Engineer. He, too, had only been collecting for a couple of years but had that great newcomer enthusiasm. He had been a ham and already had about 30 sets in his collection.

To those six other original members you can add myself. Conveniently I was an attorney and did all that legal stuff to get it all official. At that time, I was also a newcomer to collecting, although I had amateur and commercial licenses and started repairing radios in 1937.

Although he was not actually one of the seven charter members, Larry LaDuc, Jr. was the club's first historian and had been collecting about two years at that time, collecting a mixture of everything: battery, crystal and AC sets.

As it turned out, Jim and Norm were more than right. By the time that the first issue of CHRS's Journal was printed in September of 1975, only four months after CHRS was formed, the club had 25 members, and seven of them were from the Los Angeles area.

Interestingly, the logo of the club, namely the Crosley Pup, had already been selected and began being on the covers of the Journal with the very first issue.

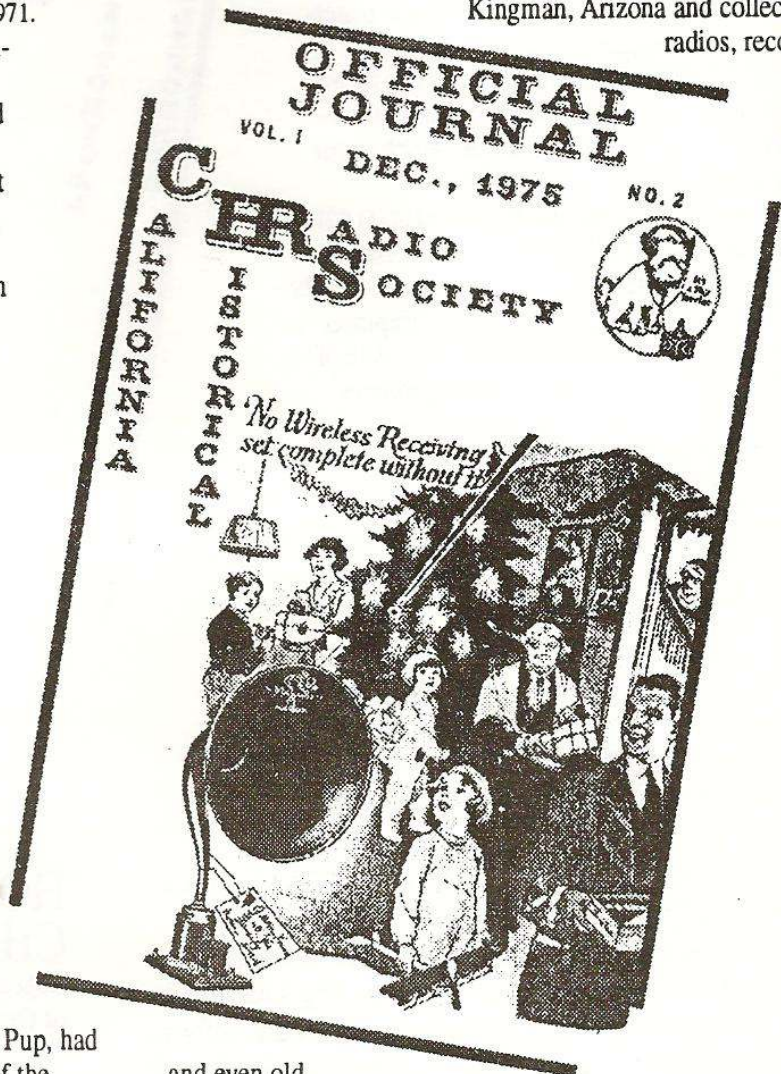
Being in the San Jose area seemed even more appropriate since it was the site of KQW, the world's first commercial broadcasting station. In fact, within a year, Jim and Norm had located the old KQW transmitter in San Francisco where it had been moved when KQW became KCBS and they got the station to donate it to the club, which in turn got donated to the Foothill Electronic Museum.

Under the regime of the initial officers, the swap meets were begun, some of which were in collaboration with AWA, complete with programs and guest speakers. In fact, at the second meet, Ray Newby was the speaker. In 1909, when Newby was just 16 years old, he provided Doc Herrold with the spark gap for first KQW transmitter. He also taught radio at Doc Herrold's technical school. Norm Berge tells me that he still has the tape recording of Newby's talk at that meet.

The original officers remained the same until September of 1978, with the exception of Allan Bryant, taking over as editor

in the summer of 1977.

Robert Middleton and Dave Brodie are deceased but the rest of us are still around. Jim is retired from NASA living in San Jose, still repairing and collecting and is now in the antique business in San Jose. Norm is retired and living in Kingman, Arizona and collecting radios, records



and even old big band posters, Kenneth Miller is still active and living in Fremont. Peter Brickey still collects and is living somewhere in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Larry LaDuc is in Campbell, California and is still collecting.

I have become a member again after having dropped out while in the Title Insurance business. I'm now in Auburn, California practicing law and I've got a couple of antique stores; about as retired as I'll probably get and looking forward to CHRS' next 20 years. —73—