



Central Texas Amateur Radio Club

# THE Wavelength

NEWSLETTER

September

2014

**The Central Texas Amateur Radio Club  
meets the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM at the  
Bell County Communications Center, 798 West Avenue O, in Belton**

## The President's Rant...

Gerald Richmond, N5ZXJ

September is here and starting off at the top of the month, is Labor Day – a last opportunity for a warm weather outing. At the same time, let's all be careful in our outings during the holiday weekend. Also coming up this month is the ARRL VHF QSO Party on the 13th through the 15th. On the 22nd of the month will be the first day of Fall, with the promise of cooler weather. Then a week later is the Texas QSO Party on the 27th and 28th. A great opportunity if you're trying to work all of the Texas counties. More on all of these are further on in the newsletter.

A proposal is being kicked around between the Bosque County ARC, the Texas State Guard ARC and the Lake Whitney ARS to have all of the area amateur radio clubs get together and have a swap meet. This proposal has already gained favorable responses from these groups. The idea behind the proposal is to help the clubs get more money into their treasuries. Each club that is interested will be requested to send two members to a coordination meeting that will be announced in the future. Each club would be able to rent as many or few tables as its member's desire, and an admission fee would be charged. After all expenses are deducted, the money remaining would be shared equally among the clubs.

We'll discuss this more at our next monthly meeting on the 2nd of September. Perhaps we can also get the Cove Repeater Association in on the act as well. This is a good idea for all involved as well as an opportunity to get to know some of the other area hams.

Our next dinner get-together will be on Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00 PM, at the "Taqueria El Mexicano Grill" located at 812 East Central Avenue in Belton. Hope you all can attend.

Lastly, the Sun is rising later now and the schools are back in session with the kids out and about. Be sure to exercise additional caution in the school zones, as well as your cell phone use while driving in the school zone areas. Matter of fact, do the right thing and hang up the mic while driving in the proximity of our schools.

- 73 de Gerald, N5ZXJ





*"The Tom Mix Ralston Straight Shooters are on the air..."*



*The Tom Mix Ralston Straight Shooters* radio show debuted September 25, 1933 though Mix himself never appeared on these broadcasts, and was instead played by radio actors.

Tom Mix was King of the Cowboys when Ronald Reagan and John Wayne were youngsters. He was an American film actor and the star of many early Western movies between 1909 and 1935, appearing in 291 films - all but nine of which were silent movies. He was Hollywood's first Western megastar and is noted as having helped define the genre for all cowboy actors who followed.

The crush of television eventually doomed the radio series which, last aired on June 23rd, 1950. Yet as veteran announcer, Don Gordon, concluded on that final broadcast, "In the heart and imagination of the world, Tom Mix rides on, and lives on, forever."

You can listen-in again to the 24 episodes in the series that have survived by visiting: [https://archive.org/details/Tom\\_Mix](https://archive.org/details/Tom_Mix)



The Central Texas Amateur Radio Net meets every Thursday at 8:00 PM on the N5ZXJ repeater, on 145.310(–) PL 123.0  
Join Us!

September NCS & Back-Up NCS Schedule:

September 4 <sup>th</sup> :	September 11 <sup>th</sup> :
Net Control: KE5ISN	W5VEX
Back-Up: W5VEX	W5GNK

September 18 <sup>th</sup> :	September 25 <sup>th</sup> :
Net Control: W5GNK	KF5OHR
Back-Up: KF5OHR	K6WXA



### ARRL September VHF QSO Party

Contest period is from 1800Z, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> to 0300Z, Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> on all authorized amateur frequencies of 50 MHz and up. For complete information on this event please visit:

<http://www.arrl.org/september-vhf>



### Texas QSO Party

The Texas QSO party is sponsored each year by the Northwest Amateur Radio Society - W5NC - to encourage contacts between Texas amateur radio operators and amateur radio operators throughout the world. This event is also an excellent opportunity for county hunters to add to their list of Texas counties worked.

Operating times are from 1400Z, September 27<sup>th</sup> to 0200Z, September 28<sup>th</sup> with then a break and again from 1400Z to 2000Z on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

For more information, please visit:  
<http://www.txqp.net>

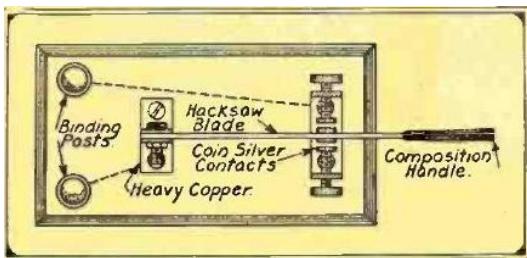
## A Double Speed Key

Willis Oldfield

Radio News – September, 1920

An item for any radio amateur to be proud of is a double speed key. This instrument can be easily made by anyone possessing a few tools and a little ingenuity.

The base may be made of marble, wood or any suitable substance the experimenter has on hand. The lever is made from a hacksaw blade with the teeth filed off. The pivot holding the lever is formed of two pieces of copper strip bent at an angle of ninety degrees. These two are screwed to the base and the lever is bolted in between the strips.



The contacts are two thumb screws mounted in a U-shaped strip of copper. The contacts proper are two pieces of coin silver soldered onto the screws. Two similar pieces are mounted on the lever in the proper position.

The knob is made of a composition material, and may be designed to suit the tastes of the operator.

The advantage of a key of this sort is obvious. This type of key is designed for speed and especially adapted to calling. This "bug" is easy to manipulate after one gets the hang of it, because the movement is sideways, rather than up and down.

*Editor's Notes... I made one of these very similar to this when I was a teenager and it really worked great!*



Jan Gregg, W5GNK

## German Chocolate Oatmeal Cake

I think this is one of the favorite desserts that I have brought to our club meetings; it must have been good because there were no left-over's.

1 Cup Rolled Oats  
1-1/4 Cup Boiling Water  
1 Cup Butter  
1 Cup Brown Sugar  
1 Cup White Sugar  
2 Eggs  
1-1/3 Cup Flour  
1/2 Teaspoon Salt  
1 Teaspoon Vanilla  
1 Teaspoon Baking Soda  
1 Teaspoon Cinnamon

Pour boiling water over oats and let stand for 20 minutes. Combine butter, both sugars and add eggs. Mix together and add flour, salt, vanilla, baking soda and cinnamon. Mix until all blended. Pour into a prepared 9x13 pan and bake at 350° for 30 minutes.

Icing... I doubled the icing because a single recipe was not enough.

1-1/2 Cup Butter  
1/2 Cup Milk  
2 Cups Coconut  
1-1/2 Cup Brown Sugar  
1 Teaspoon Vanilla  
1 Cup Chopped Pecans

Boil butter, milk, coconut, brown sugar and vanilla for 3 minutes. Add nuts and pour over hot cake and put under a broiler for about 3 to 5 minutes. Watch very carefully as not to burn, just toast.



Early settlers in Texas found the soil rich for growing various crops. Our own Gerald Richmond-N5ZXJ, had an all together different idea on raising crops. He was gonna raise aluminum!

Now then, Gerald says you start by digging this big ol' hole in the ground. He says ya really gotta get involved in your work. Kinda like being neck-deep in that 'back-to-nature' thing.



Then he says, what you do is, ya get a big container of *Cheer* laundry detergent down at the local H-E-B, and then cut the top of it off and just dump the entire bottle down the hole. Somethin' about the 'electrolytes' in the detergent mixin' with the soil and what not.



Then according to Gerald, you wait for a really good thunder storm. Somethin' about a near-by lightning strike which supposedly charges all those particles in the soil and intertwines with the stuff in the laundry detergent. Then ya wait...

- And voila: -



I don't know about y'all, but I'm gonna go out and dig me some holes!

**MODERN  
MECHANIX**  
YESTERDAY'S Tomorrow TODAY

**Portable Radios for U.S. Cavalry**  
*September, 1931*

The latest in portable radio receivers and transmitters has been developed by Signal Corps engineers for use by the U. S. Cavalry. The antenna is strung on a short mast, while the instruments are carried on the saddle, as illustrated below.



A U.S. Cavalryman equipped with the portable radio developed recently by the U.S. Signal Corps.



N7QT will be active from Christmas Island 18 September - 2 October as **VK9X/N7QT**. QSL via his home call.

VE3LYC, VK5CE, PA3EXX, and KD1CT will be active from Sandy Islet 14-21 September as **VK6ISL**. QSL via VE3LYC.

VE3LYC and KD1CT will be active from Matthew Island from September 1st – 9th as **TX4A**. QSL via VE3LYC.

ZS1S will be active from Tristan da Cunha Island September / October as **ZD9ZS**. QSL via his home call.

**YO2MSB** will be active **stroke 3A** from Monte Carlo, Monaco between September 5th and the 12th. QSL via his home callsign.

**DF1YP** will be active from Windward Islands, French Polynesia 12 September-8 October as **FO/DF1YP**. QSL via his home call.

A group of Japanese amateurs will be active from the Chatham Islands 11-16 September as **ZL7X**. QSL via JH1TXG.

ZS6AYU will be active from Botswana as **A25GF** from September 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup>. QSL via his home call.

K5LBU will be active from Mozambique through September 2nd as **C81CF**. QSL via his home call.

DL2SBY will be active **stroke HBØ** from Liechtenstein between September 13th and the 20th. QSL via his home call.

The National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Radio Club **W4LHS** will be activating the ‘*City of Savannah*’ B-17 on September 20th from 9:30 am until 3:30 pm in celebration of the Birthday of the U.S. Air Force. QSL via K4SDJ with an sase.

**LZ3FN** will be operating **stroke SV9** from Crete through September 7th. QSL via LZ1PM.

Special event station **PA44AH** will be active between September 1st and the 28th to commemorate the World War 2 Battle of Arnhem. QSL via PAØAW.

Special event station **GB2WWT** will be active through September 7th to commemorate the start of World War 2. QSL via eQSL.

EA5IDQ will be on the air signing **9H3JA** from Malta between September 18th to the 25th. QSL via his home callsign.

JH3LSS, will be operational as **A52LSS** from Bhutan between September 4th through the 10th. QSL via his home callsign.

ZL2MF will be active from Niue Island 2 - 9 September as **E6MF**. QSL via his home call.

Special event station **PD538RNI** will be operational through September 19th on 10, 20, and 40 meters to commemorate Radio Veronica, which last broadcast on 538 meters, and Radio Northsea International – both pirate radio ship broadcasters from rock’s early days. QSL via PDØARI.

Special event station **PA7ØOMG**, will be operational from September 12th to the 21st to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WW2’s Operation Market Garden. QSL via PBØAEZ.

The Romanian Radio Club Association will activate Fericirii Island as **YPØF** through September 30th. QSL via YO9FNP.

EA7FTR will be active between September 5th and October 10<sup>th</sup> as **D44KS** from the Cape Verde islands. QSL via EB7DX.

JHØJHQ and JH1QJU will each be on the air from Palau, September 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> as **T88PB** and **T88ZD**. QSL each via their respective home callsigns.

IK7YTT will be active from Macao as **XX9TYT**, 4 - 8 September. QSL via IZ8CCW.



## Fall Forecast Outlook

The Autumnal Equinox, also known as “*Mabon*” for many Pagan and Wiccan traditions, is a time of giving thanks for the things we have, whether it is abundant crops or other blessings. For those of us here in Central Texas, the Autumnal Equinox marking the first day of Fall, will arrive on Monday, September 22nd, at 9:29 PM CDT.

The Autumnal Equinox is a time of balance because its day and night are nearly equal. On this mystical day of balance, according to myth, you may be able to balance eggs on their ends. From here on out, the temperatures begin to drop and the days start to get shorter than the nights and if autumn leaves are slow to fall, prepare for a cold winter.

The dynamic models output for the upcoming fall favors above normal precipitation for the drought-stricken Lone Star State. Although this is also consistent with an emerging El Nino, El Nino conditions have been slow to develop in the equatorial Pacific. Nonetheless, the consensus of dynamical and statistical projections is for El Nino conditions to be in place by the end of 2014.

In the accompanying image, the green areas denote parts of the country that have an increased chance of being in the wettest tercile (the wettest third of historical data) during the 3-month period from September to November. Much of Texas is beyond the 40 line, indicating that there is a greater than 40% chance of being in the wettest tercile. As such, above normal rainfall during the fall can be expected to significantly ease our drought conditions. However, the drought has been 4 years in the making and is unlikely to be reversed in just one season.



As to the Atlantic Hurricane Season, tropical cyclone activity peaks in late summer, when the difference between temperatures aloft and sea surface temperatures is the greatest. September is the most active month in the Northern Atlantic Ocean, with the season's climatologically peak of activity occurring around September 10<sup>th</sup>.

Earlier in the year, forecasters predicted that 2014 would be a below-average season for hurricane development in the Atlantic. As we go to press, there have thus far been only three

named Atlantic storm systems plus one un-named tropical depression (TD-2). Currently, Hurricane Cristobal is churning away in the north Atlantic, with no threat of landfall. Despite this, let us not put our guard down for the remainder of the season, which won't end until November 30<sup>th</sup>.

## ‘When the Dancing Stopped’ – The Final Voyage of the S.S. Morro Castle –

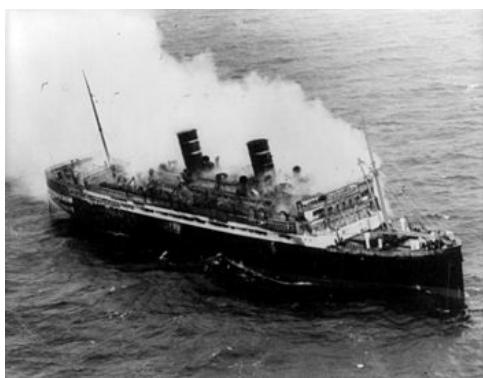
The tragic events surrounding the final voyage of the *S.S. Morro Castle* could not have occurred with such drama than had they been scripted for a soap opera. A ship at sea... the sudden death of her Captain... Fire... a hero villainized... suspected arson... murder... and at the heart of several of the *Morro Castle*'s unsolved mysteries – the ship's radio operator.

Eighty years ago this month, during the dark days of the Great Depression, weary souls who did have money – escaped their bleak lives for a week of paradise aboard the Ward Line's glamorous cruise ship, the *Morro Castle*. It was the most famous passenger liner of its day, lightning fast, elegantly appointed... and it was also a ticking time bomb.

The final voyage of the *Morro Castle* began in Havana on September 5, 1934. On the afternoon of the 6th, as the ship paralleled the southeastern coast of the United States, it began to encounter increasing clouds and wind. By the morning of the 7th, the clouds had thickened and the winds had shifted to easterly, the first indication of a developing nor'easter. That evening, Captain Robert Willmott had his dinner delivered to his quarters. Shortly thereafter, he complained of stomach trouble and, not long after that, died of an apparent heart attack. Instantly, the duties and responsibilities of the ship's officers shifted up one position – positions they were not trained for or familiar with.



*Post card of the S.S. Morro Castle in its glory days*



*The Morro Castle afire, September 8th, 1934*

Then at around 2:50 a.m. on September 8th, while the ship was sailing around eight nautical miles off Long Beach Island, New Jersey, a fire was detected in a storage locker within the First Class Writing Room. Assistant radio officer George Alanga smelled the smoke and awakened George Rogers, the chief radio officer who then took command of the radio room and sent Alanga to the bridge to find out if the captain wanted to transmit an SOS. Alanga returned to report that the bridge was in chaos and that, in

addition to the fire, the crew was now fighting a horrible storm which fanned the flames. Rogers sent his assistant back through the smoke and flames to the bridge to try again as they couldn't transmit the SOS without the captain's approval.

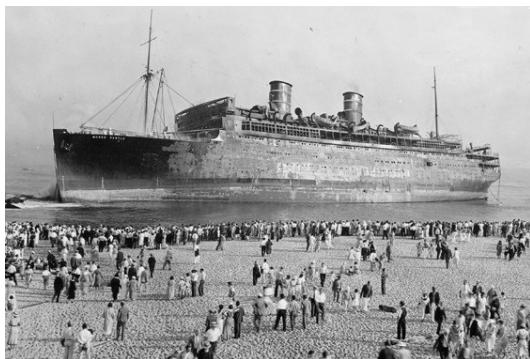
Through the smoke and unbearable heat filling the radio room, Rogers heard other ships along the New Jersey coastline radioing the Coast Guard to ask if a ship was on fire because they could see the glow. Batteries which powered the receiver then exploded, spilling sulfuric acid onto the floor. The transmitter was still functional, however, and Rogers held his ground until Alanga returned with Warms' okay.

When Alanga finally returned with the acting captain's approval, Rogers began to transmit the SOS, and then a wire became disconnected from the generator which powered the transmitter. Rogers calmly felt his way across the room through the smoke and, ignoring his blistering hands, reattached it and continued transmitting; a model of calmness and devotion to duty.

Unfortunately, a half-hour was wasted waiting for the order to transmit, which proved deadly. But the delayed SOS was not the only contribution to the *Morro Castle*'s fate. Then at about 3:10, the fire burned through the ship's main electrical cables, plunging the ship into darkness. As all power was lost, the radio stopped working as well, so that the crew were cut off from radio contact after issuing the single SOS transmission. At about the same time, the wheelhouse lost the ability to steer the ship, as those hydraulic lines were severed by the fire as well.

When it was obvious the *Morro Castle* was beyond saving, crew members were the first to

leave passengers to fend for themselves, escaping in under-filled lifeboats. It was a disaster, and by the time ships in the area arrived to help, it was too late for many of the passengers. In the end, eighty-six passengers and forty-nine crew members died.



The *Morro Castle* itself then drifted northward along the Jersey shore before running aground later on September 8th, just hundreds of feet from Convention Hall in Asbury.

Through it all, one man seemed to have acted honorably, and became known as the hero of the *Morro Castle* — George Rogers, the chief radio officer. "Radio Man Fought Death Waiting Orders," one headline declared. It was

Rogers who "stuck to his key long after all hope was gone," the news reported.

Rogers left the Ward Line after the *Morro Castle* disaster and opened a radio repair shop in 1935 in Bayonne but had a difficult time making it a success. One day it caught fire under suspicious circumstances. The Bayonne Police Department investigated the fire as arson but could not prove it.

In 1936, Rogers joined the Bayonne Police Department to work in the radio room as an assistant to Vincent Doyle. Doyle became suspicious of the former hero and began to question him about his experiences on the *Morro Castle*. He became convinced that Rogers was responsible for the fire. Perhaps Rogers thought he was getting too close to the truth, because in March 1938, he delivered a package to Doyle that contained a heater for a fish tank and a request for Doyle to repair it. This was not unusual since friends often dropped off electrical items to repair. When Doyle plugged the heater in and turned



Chief Radio Officer George W. Rogers

on the switch, the explosion was instantaneous. He survived but sustained numerous injuries; Rogers was arrested a few weeks after and later convicted of the attempted murder of his colleague.



George W. Rogers in 1953.

Though sentenced to twelve to twenty years in Trenton State Prison, Rogers never served his full sentence. In 1942 he was released from prison on parole. After a mysterious trip to Australia he returned to Bayonne in 1945 and opened another radio repair shop, but he was struggling financially again by 1952.

A friend named William Hummel loaned him \$7,500 and in June 1953, began to pressure Rogers to repay the loan. A month later the police found Hummel's body and that of his unmarried daughter savagely bludgeoned to death in their Bayonne home.

Suspicion immediately fell on Rogers, and in 1954 he was found guilty of two counts of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. Four years later on January 10th, 1958, he would die of a brain hemorrhage while in prison. He was 61.

Did George White Rogers murder Captain Robert Wilmott and set fire to the *Morro Castle* to hide the crime? Or was he just guilty of arson, with the death of the captain an unfortunate coincidence? Although circumstantial evidence strongly suggests his guilt, and Rogers even hinted to some that he did it, he never confessed to either crime and it's doubtful that it can ever be proven.

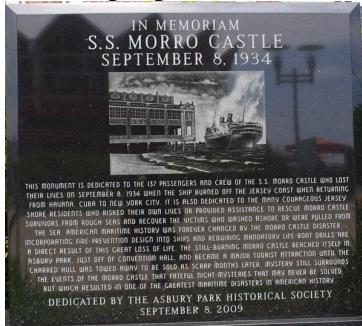
As to the *Morro Castle* itself, the cause of the fire was never determined and she was later towed away and sold as scrap. And to this day, the ship's



Captain Robert Wilmott

call letters – **KGOV** – are still registered to the *Morro Castle*, unavailable for reissue, with the U.S. Coast Guard, the trustee of the license.

In the years since the disaster, investigations into Rogers' life — a long history of crimes and psychotic behavior — suggested that the radioman had been anything but a hero. Many now believe that Rogers poisoned the captain and started the fire, and that the 134 people who died were really victims of a mass murderer.



On September 8th, 2009, a monument engraved with the story of the *S.S. Morro Castle*, was installed in memoriam for the 75th anniversary of the disaster and can be found just south of the Asbury Park Convention Hall.

May the spirits of those who perished in this disaster find fair winds and following seas, and may they rest in peace.

## Radio in 1947

1947 was the last year when radio would lack any meaningful competition: television was on the air in a few cities and was due to arrive in others very soon. But radio was still king. In fact, more than 400 new stations were going on the air, many in small towns where a local station was of great importance. According to *Broadcasting* magazine, by the end of the year, there were 1,962 stations; most of them were AM, but there were 142 FM stations operating in 33 states – eight of which, were in Texas.

A few new radio shows made their debut in 1947, the crime drama *The Big Story* first aired over NBC on April 2nd. *My Friend Irma*, starring Marie Wilson, began over CBS on April 11th; *Lassie* first went on the air on June 8th over ABC; *Adventures of Philip Marlowe* began as a summer replacement on June 17th, 1947 on NBC. *The Ford Theater* attempted to broadcast famous plays, using radio performers instead of stage actors and actresses. It debuted on October 5th over NBC, promising a wide range of theatrical works from comedies to musicals to serious dramas. Critics

liked it, but the public never warmed up to the show. But most notable among them was Groucho Marx with *You Bet Your Life*, which also debuted over NBC on October 13th.



Marie Wilson – “My Friend Irma”



Red Barber

In sports, you were probably listening to the games on radio, enjoying such great announcers as Red Barber, who called the games for the Brooklyn Dodgers or Mel Allen who called them for the Yankees. But for the first time, you could watch the World Series on television; those who owned a TV saw the Yankees defeat the Dodgers 4 games to 3.

Since the end of World War II, something was changing at the majority of stations – radio was moving away from live music and studio orchestras and towards recorded music and disc jockeys.

One survey in *Broadcasting* magazine found that by the fall of 1947, 9 out of 10 stations had some disc jockey programs on their station. In 1947, Jimmy Savile claims to have become the first DJ to use twin turntables for continuous play, and in 1958 became a radio DJ at Radio Luxembourg.

And another thing was about to change in radio, although the full impact would not be apparent for several more years. It was in December 1947 when three physicists at Bell Labs - John Bardeen, William Brattain, and William Shockley invented a replacement for the vacuum tube - the transistor. This new technology wouldn't become affordable till the early 50s, paving the way for the production of smaller portable radios.



On the amateur scene, in the fall of 1947, the propagation on 6 meters was wide open from the east coast of the USA to Europe and over the Pacific. VK5KL made a two way contact on August 26, 1947 with W7ACS/KH6 in Hawaii – a distance of 5,400 miles. Then, Amateur operator Larry Fish-CE1AH, in Chile, broke the record in working J9AAO, in Okinawa, with a distance of over 10,500 miles! On 2 meters the DX record was over 650 miles, on 235 MHz it was 210 miles, and on 432 MHz it was 186 miles.



Oswald G. "Mike" Villard – W6QYT

Then in September of 1947, Oswald G. "Mike" Villard-W6QYT, and a group of student hams at Stanford University, started new experiments which led to the invention of SSB. Their pioneer experiments were published from January 1948 in *QST* in a three-part article dealing with the "Single Sideband, Suppressing Carrier". "Mike" became a *Silent Key* on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004. He was 87.

And in 1947, at the Atlantic City Plenipotentiary Conference, the International Frequency Registration Board was created.

It would later become known as the International Telecommunications Union – or ITU.

We lost several famous or –infamous– people in 1947: on January 26th, Grace Moore - known as the "Tennessee Nightingale," a popular star of opera, movies and radio - was killed in a plane crash in Denmark along with 21 others. On the same day, former gangster Al Capone died at age 48. Industrialist and automobile manufacturer Henry Ford, died at age 83 on April 7th; and popular three-time mayor of New York Fiorello LaGuardia, passed away at the age of 64 on September 20th.

In 1947, you could buy a copy of Time magazine for 20 cents. You could rent a two-bedroom home for \$65 or buy one for \$6990, with no down payment for veterans. And if you had \$1900, you could get a new Nash sedan to drive; and if you wanted a nice black and white TV, that cost about \$274 - and an increasing number of people were buying them, even though nationally, there were fewer than 20 stations on the air.

And that new top-of-the-line Hallicrafters S-40A communications receiver, touted as the "finest performing receiver in the popular price field" would run you \$99.50.



Grace Moore

Amid the uncertainties of the Cold War era, people relied on radio to keep their mind off of world events. As Americans contemplated a world where Communists might take over and UFOs were watching everyone, they undoubtedly were grateful for their favorite radio stars. It was 1947, and the era of sitting in front of the TV was about to begin.