

New England Antique Radio Club

Radio News

The Newsletter of the NEARC



In This Issue

The Prez Says: Make your nominations!.....	3
NEARC Meets Ralph Baer.....	4
Hallicrafter in Hawaii.....	6
Member Spotlight on Dick Kromer.....	8
The 2nd Annual NEARC Photo Contest.....	10
The Phillips "Family".....	12
2013 Financial Statement.....	14
Radio XLV in Pictures.....	15

NEARC Meets Ralph Baer Adam Vaughn

In October, a few of us from the club took a trip to meet with Ralph Baer. A very fascinating man, Ralph Baer is considered the father of home video games as well as many other toys and devices including the popular *Simon* game.



In addition, he has many connections to the world of radio as well as early television.

Born in Germany in 1922, Ralph and his family immigrated to the US in 1938, at the age of 16, to escape the Nazi regime. Graduating from the National Radio Institute a couple of years later, he ran three radio stores in New York City for a few years before joining the Army where he was assigned to Military

Intelligence overseas. After WWII, he completed his engineering degree, earning the very first Television Engineering degree ever conferred.

In the early 1950s, he had several articles published in Electronics Magazine, including the very first hands-free intercom system. Soon, he went to work in the electronics industry, designing products for Wappler, Loral, and Transitron, moving to New

England during his tenure with the latter. Many of these companies built devices for the defense industry, and in 1956 he went to work for Sanders Associates, which built all manner of

electronic devices for the US military. Ralph soon ended up as chief engineer and Division Manager in their electronic design division. As early as 1951, while still working at Loral tasked with designing “the best television set in the world,” Ralph did research into creating what would later be termed a “video game.” His boss dismissed the idea because they were behind schedule but, while working for Sanders in 1966, Ralph returned to the idea and began designing a device that could be used for playing simple games on a television set. Early prototypes had a HeathKit TV signal generator at their heart, and generated two player-controlled dots. One of his other associates proposed adding a third dot which could be controlled by logic circuitry, resulting in another prototype which could play the game for which it would be best known, “TV-Tennis.”

After several more revisions (and a switch from vacuum tubes to then-new transistor technology), Ralph patented his invention, and



began displaying his “Brown Box” to companies in hopes of licensing it to one of the major television set manufacturers. After being turned

Ralph didn't necessarily share in proportionally).

In the mid-'70s, while still at Sanders, he started his own consulting business and designed innovative electronic toys and games, including the “SIMON” memory game (sold by Milton-Bradley), among many others. He retired from Sanders in 1987, and went into consulting full-time, which continues to this day. He has received numerous

Recently, Mr. Baer emailed Bruce Phillips, President of the New England Antique Radio Club, and asked him to pay him a visit. Bruce, Membership Secretary Tom Scarpelli and I took a field trip to his modest New England home, and got to visit with him for a couple of hours. The walls are lined with various awards and accolades he's received over the years, and his basement contains several examples of the devices he's invented over the years, along with the workbench where he continues to design innovative toys. He even has replicas of the original “Brown Box”, which he built for several museums to use as working exhibits on the history of video games. I got to play a quick game of TV Tennis against him, and was handily schooled by the master!

Ralph talked to us for a long



down by several, including RCA (which came close to a deal, but fell through), someone at Magnavox saw the potential of his device, and the Odyssey was born. Released in 1972, the Odyssey initially saw limited success due to various marketing gaffes by Magnavox, including ads insinuating that it would only work with Magnavox television sets. Soon, however, the product caught on like wildfire thanks to an intensive advertising campaign involving celebrities such as Frank Sinatra. Atari, whose founder, Nolan Bushnell, had played an Odyssey ping-pong game at a California Magnavox dealer's showroom in May of 1972. Busnell tasked Alan Alcorn to build an arcade version of ping-pong which they named Pong. Atari licensed Ralph's patents, as did several other companies, making a large amount of money for Sanders Associates (something

accolades over the years, including several from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), including “Fellow” status, and the National Medal of Technology, which he received from President George W. Bush in 2006. In addition, he donated the prototypes and papers pertaining to his “Brown Box” consoles to the Smithsonian Institute, where they were featured in an exhibition about the history of video games. He has been written about in several books, and has written his own, called “Video Games: In The Beginning” (published by Rolenta Press).



time, showing us pictures of articles and devices he'd worked on over the years, and detailed his early days in the radio repair

Continued on Page 13

Front Cover Photo

Ralph Baer at his workbench

NEARC Radio News – April/May/June 2014

NEARC meets Ralph Baer cont'd
business, as well as the military. He talked about how he would often travel the NYC busses carrying a radio chassis or two under his arms, on his way from one of his shops to another, so he could carry on his customer repair work there! He also talked about the early history of television, and how his shop had an example of one of RCA's earliest pre-war TV sets in the front window, which attracted countless numbers of curious onlookers. In addition, he discussed having to do conversion work on transformer-type radios so that they could be used in areas of New York City that were still supplied with DC rather than AC. He could detect these customers even before they talked to him, by the smell of the burnt-

out power transformer in the radio they were bringing in!

All in all, we found it a very educational and intriguing visit. Mr. Baer gave the club a Weston Model 774-5 analyzer tube tester, which he said he found on the side of the road at a signal depot near Paris during his stint in the military. Apparently, it had fallen off the back of a truck! In addition, he was kind enough to sign my Magnavox Odyssey 300 video game system, which was a distant offshoot of the original Odyssey system. I feel privileged to have had a chance to speak with such a fascinating individual.

More info on Ralph Baer and his numerous inventions and accolades can be found at his website, www.ralphbaer.com.

About the author: Adam Vaughn has been collecting vintage electronic devices for nearly two decades, including numerous examples of classic video game systems. His website can be seen at

<http://www.electronixandmore.com/adam/index.html>.



The Prez Says cont'd

APPOINTED POSITIONS

The NEARC President shall appoint Club members or immediate family members of Club members to the following appointed positions:

Membership Secretary — Keep records of Club members including membership members, status of dues payments, current USPS address, internet address, and telephone numbers.

Swap Meet Chairperson & Assistant Swap Meet Chairman — Responsible for scheduling and reserving Swap Meet locations, defining and implementing table layouts, collecting fees for Swap Meet admissions and table rentals and forwarding them to the Club treasurer. The Swap Meet Chairperson should have the support and supervision of several volunteers: 1— Prepare printed table numbers, admission badges, etc., 2— Table reservations, 3— Dealer check-in, 4— Hall setup & cleanup coordination.

Newsletter Editor/Publisher — Responsible for collecting items needed for publication, laying out newsletter's pages, arranging for newsletter's composition, printing, addressing and mailing.

Meet Contest Chairperson — Responsible for organizing and conducting the "People's Choice" contests at swap meets, selecting contest categories, labeling contest entries, providing blank ballots, tabulating contest results, and reporting results to newsletter editor.

Club Photographer — Recording Club activities photographically for use in the newsletter and for publicity. Note: All Club members are encouraged to submit pictures to the newsletter editor.

Publicity Chairperson — Responsible for Swap Meet publicity, ie, making non-members aware of the Swap Meets

Web Master — Responsible for creating and maintaining the Club's internet web site www.NEARC.net, posting/removing information as requested by Club officers and monitoring web site's status.