

THE INFO AGE MARCONIGRAPH

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WWII Memories of Belmar and Camp Evans

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On the weekend of the 23rd of May this year an elderly gentleman visited the RTM museum and showed an interest in some of our early battery powered radios. In talking to him, he indicated that he had worked at Camp Evans many years ago so I questioned him on what he did here. In any event, he said his 97 year old brother in California was a collector of old radios so he promised to come back with a camera to take some pictures for his brother. Sure enough, he came back the following Wednesday the 27th with his camera. He also dropped off a short story of his experiences in the Belmar area and his time spent at Camp Evans. I did not get to read his story until after he left and I found it extremely interesting so I contacted him at his home in Cherry Hill to ask for permission to print it in the newsletter. This he granted and we had long conversation about how InfoAge grew out of Camp Evans. He is only a couple of years older than me and his remembrances about 1941 and WWII closely paralleled some of my own childhood experiences. So, here is Manuel Robbins story in his own words.

A week or so ago I visited your very interesting Museum. Thanks for that opportunity.

During my visit, I mentioned that I had worked at Camp Evans. That seemed to provoke some interest. For that reason, I am providing this note dealing with a few memories relating to Camp Evans.

I was born in Belmar and lived a few blocks from the beach. On December 7, 1941, a chilly Sunday, I and a friend were hiking around the fields and woods south of what is now route 138. I came home around three o'clock and found my parents hovering around a radio, a Silvertone console with "electric eye" tuning. Japanese forces had attacked Pearl Harbor. Where was Pearl Harbor? I thought it might be near the Panama Canal but wasn't sure.

The War was on. Shortly after, at night, I could hear the distant rumbling of heavy vehicles on the move, I discovered that a new road was being hurriedly put in, later to be designated route 138. The purpose seemed to be to provide further access to the Marconi facilities, and to park trucks for what would be Camp Evans.

I mentioned that I had hiked through the area south of that route, and did so even after the Army had it. In those wanderings I found little strips of tin foil here and there. In those days, cigarette packs were wrapped in foil and to open the pack, one pulled a little cellophane ribbon around the top. That also freed a little strip of foil. I thought that accounted for the little strips of foil in the woods and field, but why so much? It was everywhere. Sometimes in bunches.

Only years later did I realize that these strips of foil was "chaff". No doubt, at that point, the Army was developing chaff or chaff dispensers. Or, the Army was experimenting with the effects of chaff on radar.

As a boy, I made small contributions to the war effort. I put in a Victory Garden- tomatoes-which grew well in the sandy soil. The scrap metal drive. At that time, in Belmar during the winter months, no one lived within two blocks of the beach. We boys had a wagon and one day prowled those streets and alleys. Picking up any piece of metal that wasn't nailed down-pails shovels, old screen doors, a discarded water boiler. The mindlessness of boys. We turned in a huge pile.

At Allaire, Arthur Brisbane had a towering building (now gone), and it had been taken over by the Army. There was access to the roof which was used for aircraft spotting. Direction of flight, number of planes, identification of planes, were phoned into a center. Volunteers manned this but the problem was, these adults didn't know much about planes. Among us boys, there was knowledge. We built model airplanes. And so we boys were called into the operation just as boys are called in today to fix a computer problem.

The war went on. It was not so evident at home, in the town, except for rationing, and sadly from the losses. The older brothers of two of my close friends were lost, one a sailor, the other a Marine pilot. There were a number of pendants hanging in windows. Near the beach, windows were blacked out. On the beaches, there was "tar". Not everyone recognized that this was oil from ships sunk a few short miles off the coast.

After the war, as I finished college, in the early 1950's, I worked at Camp Evans during two summers. My job was that of a junior scientist, though I don't recall the actual job title or pay grade. I worked in the Cathode Ray Tube Section of the Thermionics Branch. My boss in the CRT section was Munsie Crost.

The room in which we worked and in which I had my desk, was crowded with very bulky commercially made Cathode Ray Tube equipment, big stuff. More came in every so often. I asked Munsie why he didn't stop ordering equipment. We would soon be out in the hall. As he explained it to me, with exceeding patience, if he didn't continue to buy equipment he would lose his equipment budget and that would be bad.

Muncie was exceedingly smart, and a good boss. He had me designing a gear box and transmission for a spectroscope, and had me oversee its construction in the machine shop. Once I accidentally broke a very fine wire in a spectroscope thermocouple. After Munsie finished cursing, he showed me how to make a mini soldering iron out of a match stick and fine wire. When powered through a transformer, it worked, and Munsie let me do the fine soldering repair of the thermocouple under his direction.

Next door in another Section "Gerry" (I can't remember his last name), was purifying germanium with the view of duplicating the recent transistor work at Bell Labs. I can't tell you more about work at Camp Evans. Wandering about in the corridors of the lab was not encouraged and, in any case, my stay there was short.

After I finished school I did a tour in the Army and was stationed near Washington, DC. While I no longer lived in Belmar, I was aware that Senator McCarthy had been raging around Fort Monmouth and Camp Evans. Now the "Army-McCarthy" hearings were taking place in D.C. Several of us obtained three day passes and went down to D.C. for the afternoon to view the hearings. We listened to Senator McCarthy, Army attorney J. Walsh, Senator Ev Dirksen and many other familiar figures. It was really great theater. Too bad so many got hurt. When I visited home, Belmar, I heard that a neighbor who worked at Evans was in "Siberia". He could not report to work, for months, because he was accused. Only months later it was clear that he was the victim of a mix up. Wrong person, wrong name.

There was no right name, so far as I know, McCarthy and his people never found a Communist at Camp Evans.

I had been trying to recall the name of the chief of the Thermionic Branch when I worked here. Today, here at the former lab it came to me. The Chief's name was Jack Slattery.

Thanks, Manuel Robbins

Another Radar Scope For InfoAge

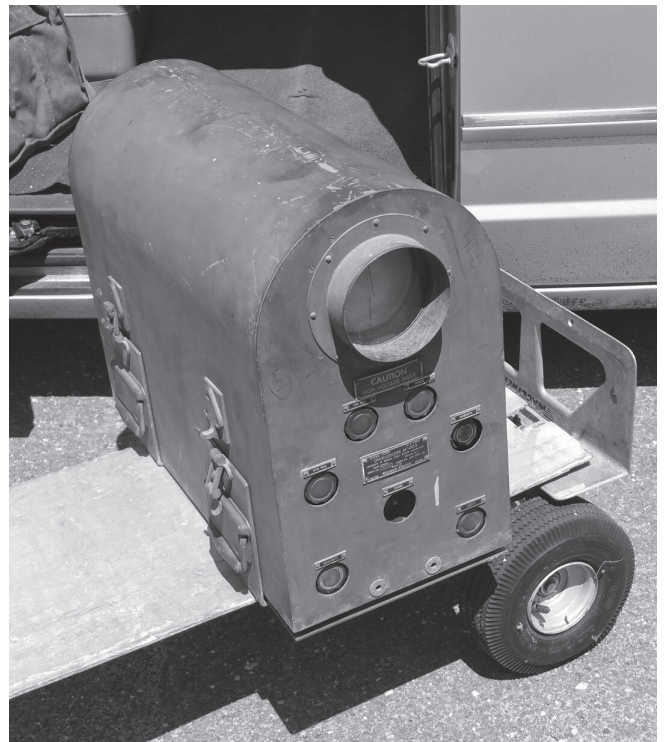
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This is the third newsletter article that I have prepared regarding the acquisition of a SCR-268 radar indicator scope. The first one told of recovering one from a perilous perch in a Northern New Jersey garage attic, the second told of traveling to the Kingston NY area to pick one up we bought on E-Bay and this tale is about a trip to Virginia to rescue another on. This exemplifies the effort we will go to in order to obtain these historic artifacts. Why three of them? The SCR-268, the Army's first radar, used three of these Indicators, one each for Range, Elevation and Azimuth. Actually we now have four of them but two are missing the outer shroud (or doghouse as some call it) so we are still looking to complete that final piece. The two incomplete units will serve as parts donors to help get these scopes operational.

The story of this acquisition is as follows. A young man in Warrenton, Virginia sometimes helped his father who ran a demolition business. In razing an old barn that had been rented out for storage, the son came across this unit which fortunately had a nomenclature label on it identifying it as a BC-412-A. Using Google, he was able to ascertain what it was and he then proceeded to use the internet to contact several radio clubs and other groups to see if he could sell it. Two NJARC listed board members were contacted who then referred the matter to me. I responded to the seller and he tried to play it up as a significant historical piece and that several other parties had shown interest in it. My approach was to highlight the significance of InfoAge and that it really belonged here but we were all volunteers and did not have a significant budget for acquisitions. I offered to pay him as much as the last one we bought on E-Bay several years ago and to also pick it up at his place in VA. I suspect that he had no other offers and since it weighted about 120 pounds, the free pick up offer sold him and it was ours.

I set a date for pick up a couple of weeks later and as Warrenton is only about 60 miles from my daughter's home in Maryland, my wife and I were able to combine it with a visit with my daughter and granddaughters. Since I knew the exact weight and dimensions of the piece I was able to rig the back seat of my small car to accommodate it although hefting the unit in and out of my vehicle required the assistance of several younger men than me. On inspection of the item, a prior owner had made some modifications to it which is not unusual since these were sold after WWII on the surplus market to hams and others for use as test scopes. Most buyers at that time tossed away the heavy shroud and base and kept only the inner chassis which is why we cherish finding one that is still complete. The 600 mile trip was uneventful and the piece is now stored away in the 9010A radar room awaiting further restoration.



The radar scope arrives safely at InfoAge.

Some New Displays in the Radio Technology Museum

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We try to add new displays to the radio museum whenever we can to keep it fresh. Here are three that we added recently.

A few months ago we received a call from a gentleman in Westfield, NJ who was downsizing and moving and who had two radios to donate. Both turned out to be “chairside radios” designed to be placed beside ones easy chair for convenience. While we already had a unique chairside radio in the museum, one of these donated radios had special character. It is a top of the line Zenith model sold in 1946. This radio has AM/FM and Short Wave reception as well as a built in hidden record player. The FM portion is in two bands, the original FM band of 42-50 Mhz. and a proposed new band of 88-108 Mhz. 1946 was a transition period for FM radio as the Television interests (RCA & David Sarnoff) wanted the 42-50 Mhz. frequency for TV channel one and so petitioned the FCC to push FM radio up to the higher frequencies. This would have the effect of making tens of thousands of existing FM radios obsolete. Hence at this time, radio manufacturers were hedging their bets and built some radios with capabilities for either frequency. But the real novelty of this radio was it had “push button” control of the hidden record player. Push a button and a mechanism automatically slides out the record player from one side of the cabinet. Put your favorite records on the player, push the button and the player retreats back into the cabinet and you are set for a couple of hours of relaxed listening. Our recorded music guru, Phil Vourtsis immediately took this radio under his wing; restored the AM radio and record

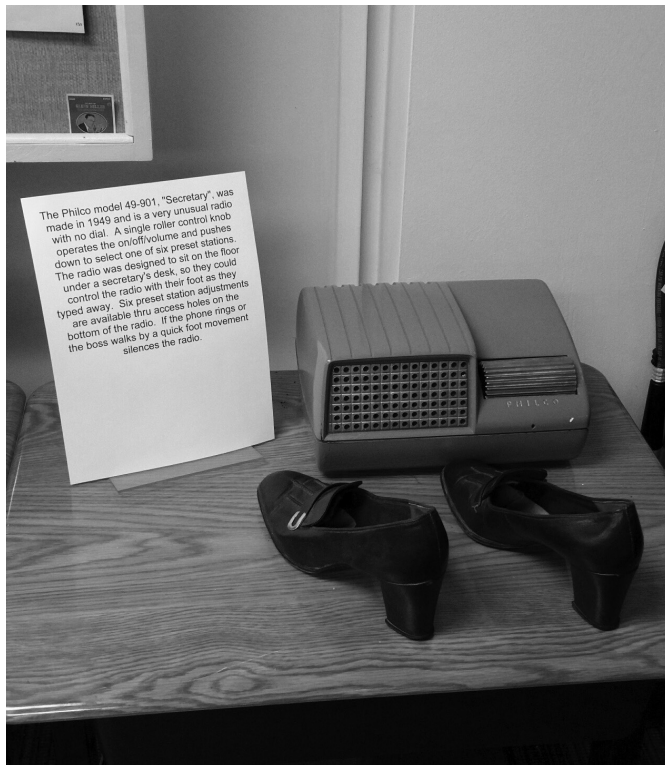
player to working condition and it now has a favored place in the museum. These early FM sets are a bit tricky so restoration of the FM portion of the radio has been put off for a bit. But, the operation of the automatic deployment and retraction of the hidden record player is now a novel attraction for visitors. Soon we will add a video of the record player operation so that we can visually show how it works while not wearing out the 70 year old mechanism of the radio itself.



Chairside Radio With Hidden Record Player Extended

The next item is an unusual Philco “Secretary’s” radio sold in 1949. This radio has no tuning dial and only one large roller type control. The idea

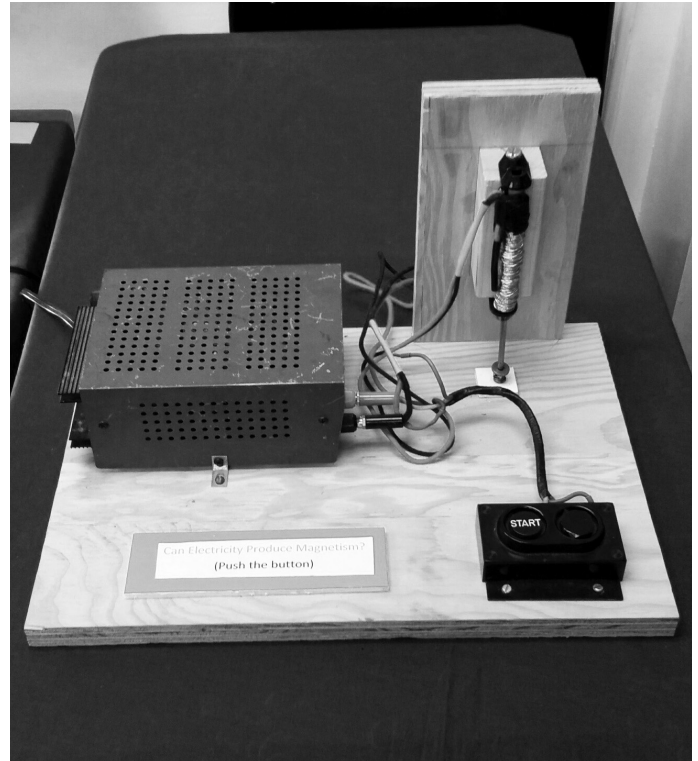
being that a secretary could place this radio on the floor in the well under her desk and operate it solely with her foot. Turning the roller controls the on/off and adjusts the volume. Pushing down on the roller selects up to six preset radio stations and the indicator light changes color with each station. If the telephone rings or the boss walks by a deft touch with her foot silences the set. The concept probably did not sell very well as no other models of this type seem to be around. I may be guilty of sexism in using only the feminine gender in this description although I'm sure that there were male office workers who would benefit from this appliance. The display depicts a novel use for a radio in the workplace that now would be replaced by an Ipod and earbuds.



The Secretary's Radio

Finally, an addition to our "Hands-On" room display made by Harry Klancer illustrates the concept of electro magnetism using a DC supply, a coil and a nail set up as a miniature "drop forge". Magnetism is one of those invisible forces in nature that is all around us and does a myriad of jobs for mankind yet many of us do not understand it or realize how

important it is. Our young people need to be aware of and to understand all these natural forces that benefit mankind so much.



Electromagnetism Display for Kids

These are not the only displays that we have added or changed in the museum in the past year, only the more recent ones. I hope to report on more changes in the future.

Camp Evans: The Untold Story

InfoAge is proud to sponsor the book, “Camp Evans: The Untold Story,” in recognition of the significant contributions made by men and women, both military, civilian, and contractors who served at Camp Evans, Wall Township, New Jersey and who left a legacy of innovation that had enabled and continues to enable our Armed Forces.

The InfoAge Science History Learning Center and Museum at Camp Evans is a focal point for the preservation and interpretation of New Jersey’s rich communications, computer, and electronics history, providing a specialized learning center for all visitors. The area is especially significant in history, serving as the site of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America. During World War I the Navy operated the station under the authority of the Radio Act of 1912. The message announcing that World War I had ended and the Armistice had been signed was received at the Marconi Station and retransmitted to Washington.

Camp Evans’ U.S. Army Signal Corps provided America’s first World War II radar systems. In 1946, Camp Evans under Project Diana opened the “space age” by reflecting radar signals off the moon. During the 1950s, innovative and far reaching technologies were developed at Camp Evans.

It is appropriate that InfoAge, as a science and technology learning center, has its start at such an historic location. The intent of InfoAge is to provide visitors a dynamic and evolving interactive atmosphere, rich in specialized history, technologies, and basic science, and similarly, to invoke an appreciation for the vital contributions of the many engineers and scientists who developed the technology.

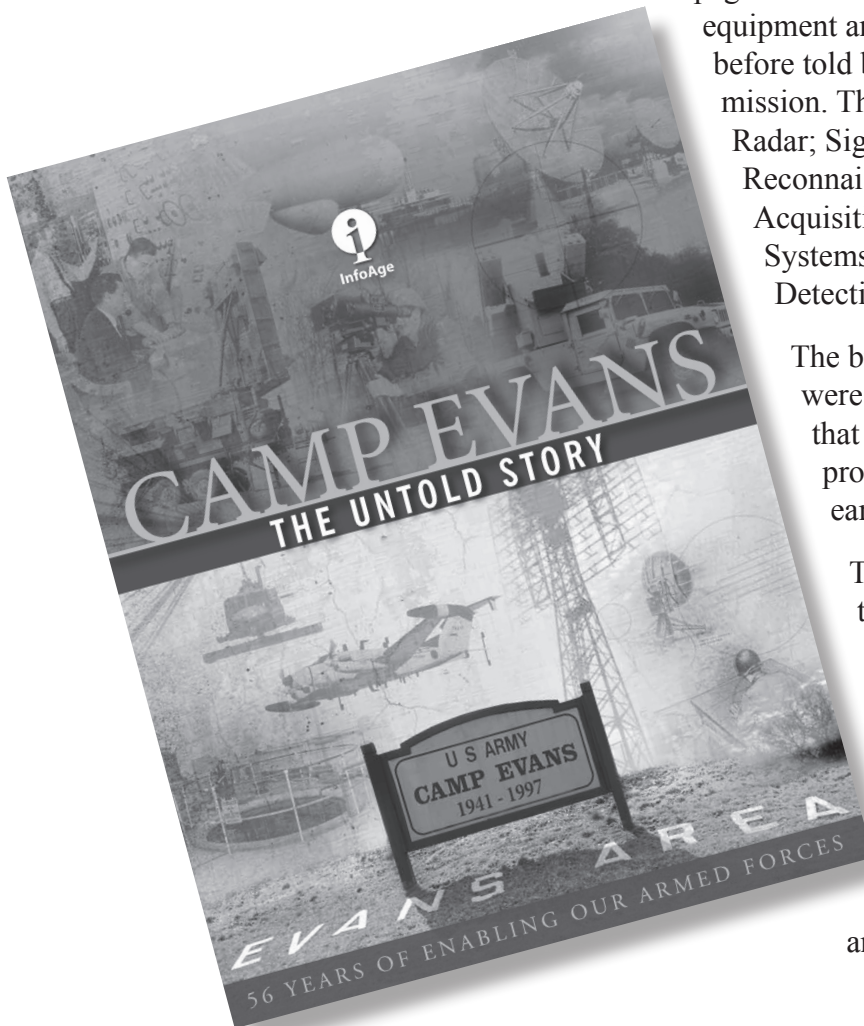
We ask that you consider purchasing this important book which captures the tremendous heritage of technological innovation at this historic site.

“Camp Evans: The Untold Story” has over 200 pages and 100s of photographs showing the actual equipment and technology developed in a story never before told because of the classified nature of the mission. The breadth of the work described covers Radar; Signals Intelligence; Electronic Warfare; Reconnaissance and Surveillance Sensors; Target Acquisition Systems; Identification Friend or Foe Systems; Unattended Sensor Systems; Radiation Detection Systems; and Meteorology Systems.

The broad spectrum of accomplishments were achieved with an assembled workforce that was considered the best in the country, providing products that were the “eyes and ears” on the battlefield.

The legacy of Camp Evans will live on in the hearts and minds of those who helped make that history. Their contributions will hopefully be better appreciated by having been recounted in this book.

To order your copy of “Camp Evans: The Untold Story,” contact InfoAge at 732-280-3000, or contact us via e-mail at rfginc@optonline.net and an order form will be forwarded.



JAMBOREE ON THE AIR: OMARC & BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA



OMARC was founded in 1977 and has been a responsive and responsible organization with dedicated members which share a common interest in Amateur Radio and the community in which we live.



Jamboree On The Air (JOTA) 2015

JOTA is an annual event in which Boy and Girl Scouts and Guides from all over the world speak to each other by means of Amateur (Ham) Radio. Scouting experiences are exchanged and ideas are shared via radio waves. Come visit OMARC for a free and fun day of Amateur Radio at the famous OMARC location at Camp Evans in Wall, NJ.

Where:

(Right Next To The Big "Dish")

OMARC
2300 MARCONI ROAD
WALL, NJ 07719

WWW.N2MO.ORG



Groups - Please e-mail George (below) to let us know you are coming! Walk-Ins Welcome!

Dates and Times

17 October 2015	18 October 2015
Saturday	Sunday
10 AM to 5 PM	10 AM to 2 PM

Scout Groups - Camp Overnight!
E-Mail George for Details!



Program Highlights

- Get On The Air! Partner with an experienced "Ham" and chat with others across the world!
- Merit Badge Training
- Have fun! Learn! Enjoy!
- See and learn about our History!

InfoAge Museum

- Science History Learning Center and Museum at Camp Evans
- Right down the road
- Open Sat/Sun from 1 PM to 5 PM
- Enjoy Free Admission to InfoAge
- Radios, Electronics, and History!



FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.scouting.org/jota or www.arrl.org/jamboree-on-the-air-jota
Contact: George G. McBride gmcbride@digdata.com



InfoAge

Science/History Center
at Camp Evans, Wall, NJ

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The Newsletter of InfoAge Inside this issue...

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Save The Dates

NJARC/IALC Auction

Saturday, September 12, 8AM–4PM

OMARC Jamboree

Saturday, October 17–18, 2015

NJARC Repair Clinic

Saturday, October 24, 9AM–4PM

For information see web site www.njarc.org or call 914-589-3751

CEBOT–Camp Evans Base Of Terror

Every Friday and Saturday in October (weather permitting), 7–11PM

Holiday Spectacular & Christmas Train Display

December 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, 20, 12PM–5PM

*For more information about these events, such as admission costs and times,
call 732-280-3000 or visit us online at www.infoage.org.*