



The Oscillator



"All the Electrons that are Fit to Flow . . . "

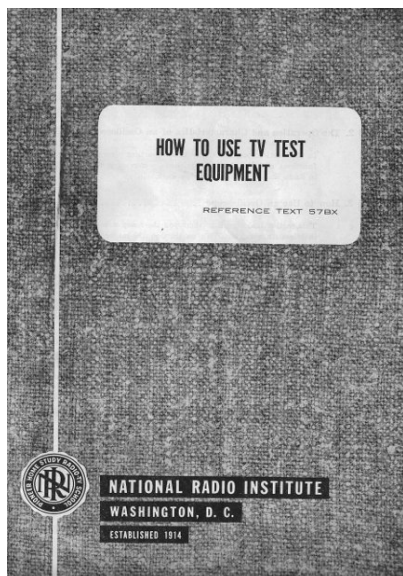
The Official Newsletter of the DVHRC

March 2010

National Radio Institute

When Frank Krider brought in his father's National Radio Institute diploma awhile back, that made me dig out my small collection of NRI booklets.

You are probably familiar with, or have at least seen, these small booklets on radio, television and electronics repair published by the National Radio Institute of Washington, DC.



The NRI was founded in 1914 by high school teacher James E.

Smith, in Washington, D.C.

Smith controlled the reins of the company for nearly 60 years until his death in 1973.

Publishing giant McGraw-Hill purchased NRI in 1968. The school was renamed NRI Schools, McGraw-Hill Continuing Education Center. Smith remained as NRI chairman until his death in 1973. James' son, J Morrison Smith, succeeded as president, retiring in 1976. McGraw-Hill announced in 1999 that it would phase out NRI Schools, citing "changes in the marketplace". They ceased operation on March 31, 2002.

The setup for NRI education was simple. The student was mailed a booklet based on a particular subject such as "*How Operating Voltages are Obtained from an A.C. Power Line*", "*Peak and Band-Pass RF Tuning Circuits*" and "*How Practical Requirements Changed Receiver Circuits*".

Lessons started with the basics, and gradually progressed into more

technical subjects.

Each booklet had a lesson number, of which I've been unable to see a pattern. Examples of lesson numbers are 24FR-1, 10FR-4 46RH-1 and 64-RS.

The lessons were fairly demanding, but care was taken to present the information in small doses and build on the material already learned. Each booklet was just 20-30 pages.

After the student studied the material, he would complete the lesson questions and mail them back to NRI for grading. After completing enough lessons, the student could proudly call himself a "Radiotrician" and later, when television became common a "Teletrician".

The courses were quite popular with veterans returning from WWII, and costs were often covered as part of the GI Bill of Rights.

The elder Smith comes across as quite the character. Like Oscar



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The Oscillator is the monthly newsletter of the Delaware Valley Historic Radio Club.

We welcome information relating to radio and television history and collecting. Submissions should be sent by the 25th of the prior month to saegers@ptd.net. Personal views, opinions and technical advice do not necessarily reflect those of members, officers or Board of Directors of the DVHRC, nor is the DVHRC responsible for any buying or selling transactions.

Dues are \$20 per year and can be paid at a meeting or mailed to the above address.

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Wilde's title character in *A Picture of Dorian Gray*, Smith never aged, as the same sober portrait of Smith graced the back page of each booklet.



Accompanying the photo was folksy advice to the student encouraging the student and espousing the virtue of hard work.

Some examples are "Thoroughness in study habits leads to thoroughness in work habits", "The man who knows HOW will always have a job – the man who knows WHY will be his boss", and "In baseball, the hero of the game is the man who scores. There are plenty of others who 'almost' hit a home run – who 'almost' scored – but these are forgotten men, as 'almost' does not count."

NRI was not without competition in the radio correspondence school market. National Schools, National Technical Schools, Hollywood Radio and Television Institute and Hemphill Schools offered similar courses. One wonders if the the first

two competitors were trying to capitalize on the success of NRI when they chose their name.

NRI also offered kit radios and test equipment for the student to build. One often sees them at radio swap meets, the radios usually housed in homemade wood cabinets.

I have in my collection approximately 75 of these booklets along with some pens and pencils pictured below.



Thanks . .

. . to Ludwell Sibley, for his contribution of more tubes for the club's tube stock.

About this issue

Due to the cancellation of the February meeting, and therefore no meeting minutes, this issue of the *Oscillator* is an abbreviated edition.

