

KUTZTOWN 101

by Mike Koste

Having personally been there from the very beginning, it was clear that, in time, the Kutztown Radio Meets at Renninger's would become a major Big Deal in the hobby. Like Rochester, Lansing and Elgin, nowadays when you say Kutztown to another collector, no matter where they're from, they know what you're talking about. Every May and September has become "must attend" events.

The original plan for this piece was to call it "*Swapmeet for Dummies*". However, in this age of Political Correctness, a guide to the ins and outs of Kutztown in the form of FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions) seemed more fitting. Some valuable information here for newbies, and perhaps a few facts our long-time DVHRC members never knew.

- **WHY KUTZTOWN?** As anyone in the real estate industry can attest, location, location, location! The Renninger's facility is convenient to all the major metropolitan areas on the East Coast, provides the event unlimited growth potential, nearby and on-site attractions to keep non-hobbyists occupied, free parking, camping and a built-in crowd.
- **SO, WHO'S IN CHARGE?** The Kutztown Radio Meet is a Renninger's event: The DVHRC has no financial interest or control of facility, including the renting and assignment of vendor spaces. The club merely acts as hosts. You will find their staff to be very friendly and approachable, and are always open to suggestions for improvements at future meets.
- **THE PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS I'VE SEEN ARE SOMEWHAT CONFUSING. WHAT TIME DOES THE MEET ACTUALLY START?** One aspect of Kutztown that sets it apart from other radio functions is the fact that there is no starting gun: Wheeling and dealing begins with the arrival of the first vendors. Typically, sellers begin arriving by 8:00 Friday morning, taper off at noon, and pick-up just before dark. Saturday morning, new sellers and an army of buyers show up just before dawn.
- **WHAT IS THE TYPICAL ATTENDANCE?** Since there is no registration or admission fee for buyers, an actual headcount is impossible. But a close examination of the parking area can give you a good idea of how far folks come to take part. In recent years, it's common to find license plates from over twenty different states and a couple of Canadian provinces. Unlike other similar radio events which are losing steam, Kutztown continues to grow by ten percent with every subsequent meet.
- **ANY WORDS OF WISDOM FOR A FIRST-TIME SELLER?** Here, I'd say preparation is the key. A week before the meet, pull your wares together, dust them off and price them. (Hang tags, please! No stickers or masking tape!). Depending upon the caliber of your goods, sometimes it's a good idea to bring something extra nice along for the ride: It'll dress up your table to make your less desirables more attractive. Get an early start. If you can't make it until late Friday afternoon, realize you'll be mobbed with buyers before you have a chance to unload. Examine other vendor's tables and ask them for guidance.
- **MUCH OF WHAT I'M BRINGING TO SELL IS PRETTY COMMON AND IN 'AS FOUND' CONDITION. HOW SHALL I PRICE IT TO ASSURE I DON'T HAVE TO TAKE IT HOME AGAIN?** Price it cheaply, be flexible with a potential buyer, and if it doesn't sell, consign it or donate it to the auction.
- **WHAT ABOUT NON-HOBBY RELATED ITEMS?** This is an antique radio swapmeet. Please leave your Tupperware, baseball cards and small appliances at home.
- **BESIDES THE STUFF I'M SELLING, IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD REMEMBER TO BRING?** Something to sit on, tarps for covering up your tables overnight, a small tool kit, and an assortment of smaller bills for making change. Wear comfortable shoes, too.
- **WHAT IF I RUN LOW ON DISPOSABLE INCOME?** There are ATM's inside the farmers market. Sometimes you may be able to convince a vendor to take a check, but generally speaking, radio swapmeets follow the Jean Shephard credo: "In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash".
- **ANY CLUES TO BAGGING A BARGAIN?** Get there early, stay late and haggle all the way. Many sellers are anxious to earn some quick spending money right off the bat. Conversely, late Saturdays are a good time to deal since in many cases, sellers don't want to have to take a lot home with them. Excellent buys can also be found at the auction on Saturday afternoon.
- **I FAILED TO RESERVE A TABLE IN ADVANCE. CAN I STILL GET ONE?** Possibly, but more than likely, you'll end up in the second pavilion. To avoid this happening again, the Renninger's staff will be making the rounds late Saturday morning taking reservations for the next one. If you want to be on the main dance floor, you'd be wise to make arrangements then.

- **CAN I SHARE A TABLE WITH ANOTHER SELLER?** Certainly. It's not uncommon for two sellers to split the cost by cohabitating, or one using the space on Friday, the other on Saturday.
- **WHAT IF I HAVE TO LEAVE MY TABLE TO EAT, VISIT, OR SHOP?** If you're flying solo and not sharing a space with a buddy, get to know your neighboring vendors: Let them know where you're going and if they'd mind keeping an eye on your stuff. Or, invest in one of those plastic clocks with the movable hands that say "Closed. Will return at...."
- **HOW SHOULD I SECURE MY GOODS OVERNIGHT? ANY PILFERAGE PROBLEMS?** Vintage radio enthusiasts, for the most part, are a very honest and trustworthy bunch. Possibly more so than other hobbies. However, there's always at least one bad apple in every barrel. Invest in a few inexpensive tarps and some of those big spring loaded clips to cover your tables. If you have any high-end items you're still concerned about, lock them in your vehicle until morning.
- **WHAT'S AT THE DVHRC TABLE?** Raffle radio and ticket sales, auction registration, tube, capacitor, pilot lamp and t-shirt sales. Also, the PA system and the studios, office and transmitter of Radio Free Kutztown. Late Saturday morning, the area transforms into Auction Central. Centrally located, it's the perfect "meet me at" spot.
- **I'M COMING IN FRIDAY AND STAYING OVER BOTH DAYS, BUT TOO CHEAP TO SPRING FOR A HOTEL ROOM.** Camping and overnight stays are welcomed and encouraged. If you're not a camper, you can bunk out in your car.
- **BEVERAGE CONSUMPTION?** Yes. In fact, many regulars have graduated from conventional canned and bottled goods. The whir of Waring blenders is not unusual, particularly after dark.
- **WHAT HAPPENS IF IT RAINS?** You and everyone else stand the chance of possibly getting wet. But, seriously folks, the K-Town meet has survived a couple of showers and a full-fledged hurricane, and it hasn't dampened the enthusiasm we all have for this weekend.. If you're a seller around the outer perimeter of the pavilion, bring some tarps and a staple gun along, just in case we experience some of that unusual Berks County horizontal rainfall.
- **I CAN'T SWING A TABLE, BUT I STILL HAVE SOME THINGS I'D LIKE TO CONSIGN TO THE AUCTION.** Listen for PA announcements on Saturday morning. Once you're registered, you can consign your items, with or without reserve. Bid cards, required for both buyers and sellers, are \$1 and the DVHRC charges 10% commission or a flat \$5 for any item selling over \$50. Collections from bidders are taken in cash, and payments to consignors are paid by check, usually within a week of the auction. Complete auction rules are printed on the bid cards.
- **ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?** Stop by the DVHRC table. If we can't provide the answer, we'll point you in the direction of someone who can.