

Microwave Surfing

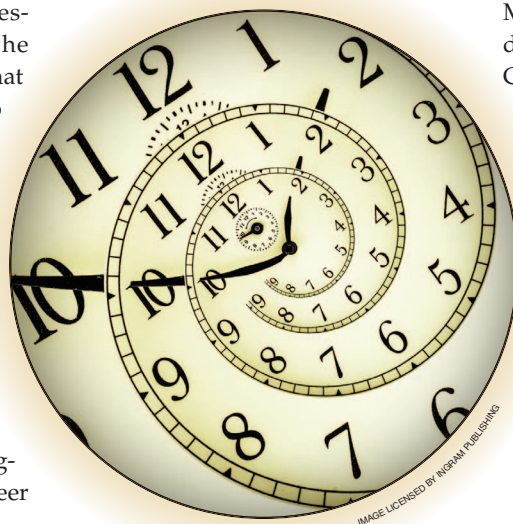
Looking Back

■ Rajeev Bansal

Let me start with a simple question. Take a good look at the photograph in Figure 1. What is it? Here is a hint: I took the photo at the historical exhibit [1] during the last International Microwave Symposium (IMS2018) in Philadelphia [2].

Give up? It is a Radio Corporation of America (RCA) Model 103 loudspeaker (1928) from the Sarnoff collection [3]. The speaker cone is disguised by a tapestry in the front to suit the interior home décor of the time. (David Sarnoff, long-time chairman of RCA, was a pioneer in radio and television.)

The historical exhibit (an annual feature of the conference) was also chock-full of vintage radar equipment from the IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society (MTT-S) historical collection—very cool stuff with lots of blown glass tubes and knobs to turn. Unfortunately, no touching was allowed! By



the way, the MTT-S historical collection is housed permanently at the National Electronics Museum [4] in Linthicum, Maryland, near the Baltimore/Washington International Airport.

The visit to the historical exhibit reminded me of a trip to the Chatham

Marconi Maritime Center [5] I made during a family vacation on Cape Cod over the Memorial Day weekend in 2018. (Disclaimer: I did not drag my family from the beach to the wireless history museum; one of my daughters found the place and thought it would be fun to visit on a rainy day.) This small museum was established in 2002 in historic buildings that once housed Marconi's 1914



Figure 1. An item on display at the historical exhibit during IMS2018 in Philadelphia. (Photo courtesy of Rajeev Bansal.)

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Rajeev Bansal (rajeev.bansal@uconn.edu) is with the University of Connecticut, Storrs, United States.

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receiving station, RCA's 20th-century ship-to-shore radio station WCC, and a secret World War II U.S. Navy post that listened in on U-boats. An unusual aspect of the museum is the Antenna Field Walking Trail. Established in 2012, the footpath behind the museum buildings follows the track to the first of the original Marconi antennas. To learn more about the historical antennas used there, check out the online resource "Antennas at Chatham" [6].

I hope that you will have a chance to drop by one of these museums during

your travels. As Isaac Newton wrote to Robert Hooke in 1676 [7], "If I have seen a little further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

References

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[7] The Phrase Finder, "The Phrase finder." Accessed on: 27 June 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/268025.html>



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