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**Jardine: Son tuned in to father's radio habit**

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By **JEFF JARDINE**  
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last updated: September 02, 2008 07:40:38 AM

From the e-mails and voice mails:

**MAKING WAVES** -- At age 40, Atwater's Harry Bohl is considered a kid among antique radio buffs.

His father began collecting old radios years ago but had no place to store them when he moved off the family farm. Then, Alzheimer's disease set in, and the elder Bohl could no longer dabble in the hobby. So Harry took over and now owns a collection of roughly 200 antique radios and parts, some of which have been on display at the Merced County Courthouse Museum since July 3 and will remain there through September.

It's becoming a passion for Bohl, an ironworker by trade. But while many collectors buy and sell radios, he isn't looking to add any more to his trove. So instead of displaying his collection, he'll simply work the information desk at the swap meet sponsored by the Central Valley Chapter of the California Historical Radio Society on Oct. 4 at the Modesto Radio Museum, helping others get started in collecting and interested in the club.

"I won't be selling anything, so I won't be bringing anything," Bohl said.

He'll be signing up visitors for the club's mailing list and trying to enhance its reputation.

He's still learning about the antique radio world, after taking over his dad's collection a couple of years ago.

His oldest piece is a 1909 Chicago Radio Laboratories model. The company eventually began making radios under another name: Zenith. His 1909 model probably would still work if he decided to try it.

"I'm sure it would," he said.

The problem is that it uses a De Forest Audion vacuum tube, and he doesn't want the risk of having it go out.

"Even a blown-out one, I'm sure, is worth quite a bit of money," he said.

He could manipulate it to use other kinds of tubes, he said, but the value is keeping them in mint condition.

"I've had it apart to make sure it's in good working order," he said.

Even so, he said he doesn't really have a favorite piece among the collection.

"My expertise is in the 1920s crystal and battery sets," he said. "The elders are teaching me at the radio club, and I really like those older battery sets. You can tell they have some history to them."

The October show will be at the Modesto Radio Museum, 1192 Norwegian Ave., in Modesto.

**DID YOU KNOW HER?** -- During World War II, young Ruth Mix volunteered as a nurse at the Gila River Japanese internment camp in Arizona. Breaking camp rules that prohibited fraternizing with the internees, Mix befriended many of them and smuggled in items ranging from soaps and lotions to camera film, the latter of which was considered contraband.

She was only 15 at the time and the only white person working in the hospital. She saw a great injustice being done to these American citizens of Japanese ancestry, and tried to make their lives a bit better.

Her daughter, Claire Mix of Sacramento, and niece Sandy Mix of San Francisco, recently received a grant to develop a documentary about her time and role in the camp. Many of the Japanese-Americans, Claire Mix said, came from the Central Valley and the Modesto area in particular. She is looking for former internees who might have known her mother. Some might not recall Mix by name but might remember her for her shocking red hair. Mix hopes to find people to interview for the documentary, which she would like to finish by July. She can be reached at thesolo@sbcglobal.net or 916-451-4045.

**READ ALL ABOUT IT** -- In May, I wrote about Modesto resident Walter Woodley, a retired city employee who didn't learn to read until he reached his mid-50s. The Stanislaus Literacy Center will honor him with its "Shining Star" during its Wine, Jazz and a Movie event Sept. 25 at the State Theatre.

During his 33 years as a maintenance worker for the city, Woodley, 59, rose through the ranks to become the chief groundskeeper at John Thurman Field. He oversaw the rebuilding of the playing surface during the stadium renovation in 1997. He spent a few weeks each spring at the major league training camps in Arizona, learning trade secrets from other groundskeepers.

His own secret, though he told his bosses from the beginning, was that he couldn't read. After his retirement, he enrolled in the Literacy Center's program in 2005 and has been tutored by Marilyn Halferty. He now reads at an 11th-grade level.

**BACK TO WORK** -- In July, I wrote about 70-year-old Modestan Vito Fontana who, at 45, began to ruin his life with drugs. He was 62 when he was first arrested and started to confront his demons after basically losing everything -- his family, his home, his business and his expensive toys. After going through the Stanislaus County Superior Court's drug program, he cleaned up and has been sober since 2000. He's also become a Red Cross volunteer who has been to Louisiana, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Southern California and other disaster spots.

Friday, he left for Louisiana again to prepare for Hurricane Gustav. He works in warehousing, getting goods and supplies to those affected by the storms.

Jeff Jardine's column appears Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays in Local News. He can be reached at jjardine@modbee.com or 578-2383.

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**The High Five**  
Most Emailed Stories  
Most Commented Stories

1. **Man tries to cut off arm inside Modesto restaurant**
2. **Position Breakdown**
3. **Modesto police arrest twins in pair of pursuits**
4. **14 months into job search, 'I'm looking for anything'**
5. **Portuguese tradition set to come alive in Gustine**

*The High Five are the five most-read stories, updated hourly.*

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