

ON THE
SHORT WAVES
1923 — 1945

by Jerome S. Berg
(MacFarland & Company, ISBN 0-7864-0506-6)

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Radio on short wavelengths opened up the world. Commercial interests exploited the discoveries of the amateurs in the early 1920s, that wavelengths under 200 meters could girdle the globe. The broadcasting craze of the 1920s featured a desire to hear distant stations — “DX.” The short waves on which stations began to broadcast in the late 1920s and early 1930s made world-wide DX a nightly event. Like local broadcasting before it, the short wave broadcasting of the 1930s generated an enormous enthusiasm. Jerry Berg has now chronicled the history of that phenomenon. We all owe him a debt of gratitude. He has written a very good book indeed. Everyone who has ever tuned a dial above 1600 kcs ought to buy it. You’ll like it.

ON THE SHORT WAVES tells the story not only of broadcasting, but of short wave listening as well. Jerry quotes Hugo Gernsback in 1926: "I cannot imagine any greater thrill, than that which comes when I listen, as I often do, to a station thousands of miles away. It is the greatest triumph yet achieved by mind over matter." Jerry sets forth who the broadcasters were, and in the increasingly tense 1930s, what they were trying to do. He provides great detail on the listeners as well, not only the hobbyists and the casual, but also the World War Two volunteers who monitored tirelessly for news of prisoners of war, to notify their families.

The book distills station histories, equipment, publications, ephemera (e.g., QSL cards and EKKO stamps), personalities, clubs and the events of the world, into 272 pages of well written and *superbly* illustrated text, with scholarly notes and a thorough index. Outstanding as it is as a source of historical material, its is even better for enjoyable reading by anyone with an interest in radio, its powers and its

development Not until the coming of the world wide web on the internet has a technology had so much impact on the world of nations.

Short wave radio, as Jerry tells its story, made us all internationalists, because it brought the voices of the world directly into our homes, not only our “radio-rooms” (however modest) but into our living rooms as well. Unedited, unmediated and un-spun, we could hear the world and make up our own minds. DX took on meaning, and the book lays it out. To this day, a short wave radio provides an unmatched ear to the world, and we should be thankful to Jerry for telling its history so well.

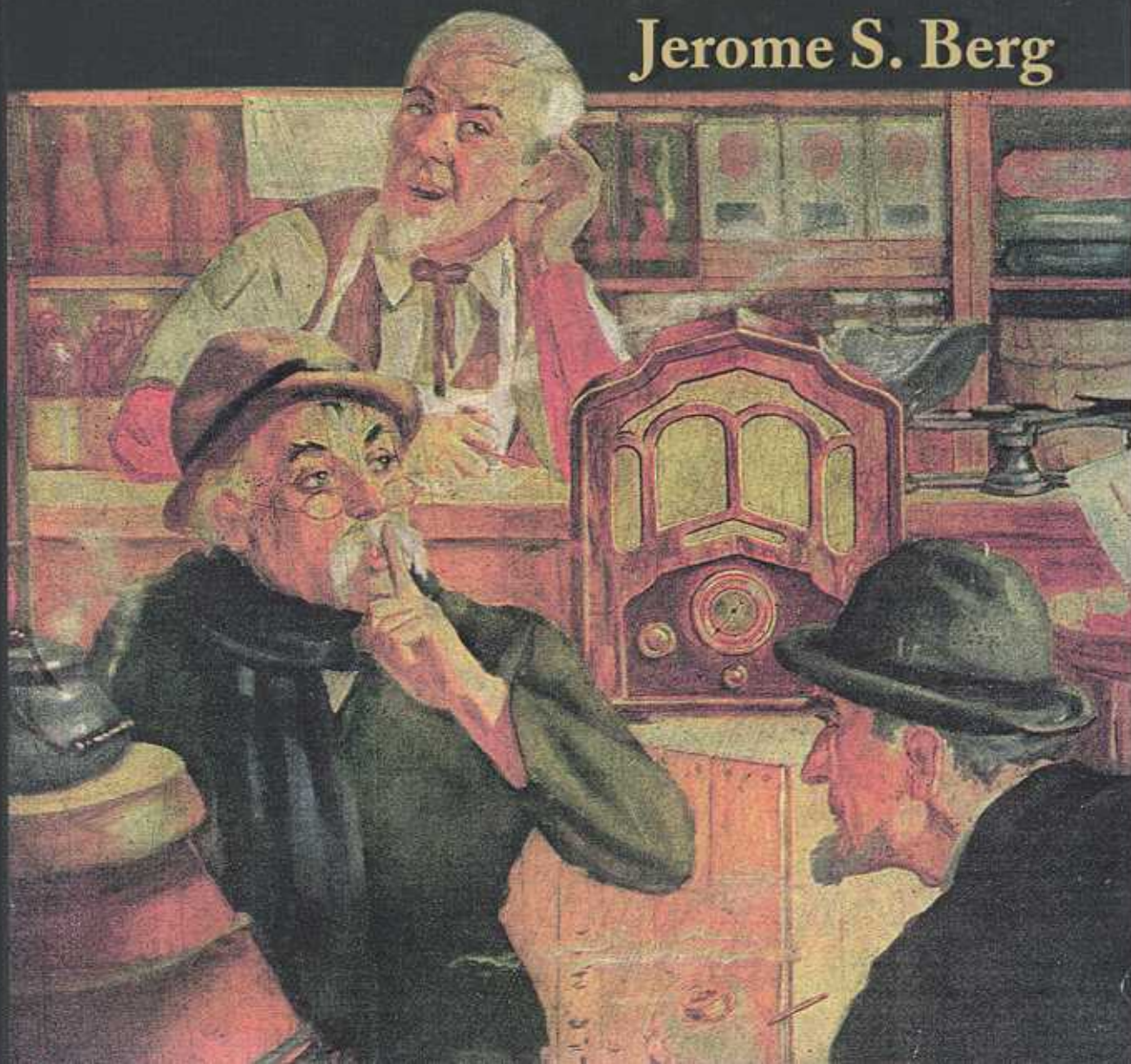
But what of an encore? A Compact Disk with this story, and with accompanying audio, and the illustrations in color? A “coffee-table” size book with color illustrations updated to the 1990s? A second volume 1945 — 1995, the cold war in the ether? If Jerry Berg does any

of these, you may be assured they will be of equally high quality with this book. Go buy it. — 73 — *

* Note of full disclosure: I am personally indebted to Jerry for his generous help in providing materials from the Committee to Preserve Radio Verifications (ANARC), and a pre-publication draft of his FINE TUNING article on which the book is based, for my presentations on short wave radio history at recent conventions of the Antique Wireless Association.

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Jerome S. Berg



Cover: From *Official Short Wave Listener* (February-March 1935 edition).

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication data are available

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Berg, Jerome S., 1943-

On the short waves, 1923-1945 : broadcast listening in the
pioneer days of radio / by Jerome S. Berg.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7864-0506-6 (case binding : 50# alkaline paper) ∞

1. Shortwave radio—History. 2. International broadcasting—
History. I. Title.

TK6547.B425 1999

384.54—dc21

98-44921

CIP

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Manufactured in the United States of America

McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers

Box 611, Jefferson, North Carolina 28640