

California Radio: Bruno Zuconi Remembers

An historical note by Bart Lee, Archivist, California Historical Radio Society,
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Bruno Zuconi, CHRS, will be 98 years old on August 23, 2020. Bruno and his wife Connie appear nearby.



Some of his recollections follow:

Harry Greene, II

Elmer Cunningham founded the Remler Radio Manufacturing Company about 1918 in San Francisco. Remler is Elmer backwards and an additional “r”. Cunningham bootlegged early vacuum tube triodes from an Oakland factory, much to the annoyance of Lee de Forest. Cunningham then joined RCA. RadioMuseum.org lists Remler products from 1921. Remler had its second factory at 2101 Bryant Street at 19th Street.

See:

<http://www.gejohn.org/Radios/MyRadios/Remler/Remler.html>

http://classicradiogallery.com/remler_history.html

Bruno's Scala Radio Company was across the street from the Remler factory. After a fire, Remler relocated to the four-story building on Bryant Street. Remler had evolved into Remler Company, Ltd. Bruno and Remler Chief Engineer Harry Greene, II frequently enjoyed lunch together at nearby restaurants on 18th and 20th streets, near reliable Sheet Metal Company.

Bruno knew Harry Greene very well. Greene was a quiet man, very straight-laced and nice. Bruno's business, Scala Radio, was very near to Remler in San Francisco. According to Bruno, David Packard and Bill Hewlett wanted their fellow Stanford grad Greene to join them in their new start-up. Greene was less entrepreneurial and opted for a "real" job with Remler. Greene had two partners at Remler, likely Thomas B. Gray and Ernest G. Danielson, because they were in the company name for a while before it reverted back to "Remler" in 1931.

Whence the Remler "Scotty" according to Bruno: In the 1930s, a nearby plastics company in San Francisco sought markets for its new Bakelite plastic. They could make a plastic case of some small dimension. They wondered if Remler, *i.e.*, Greene, could put a radio in such a small plastic case. He could. So he designed what became the Scotty to fit, and the rest is radio history, or at least local radio lore. Greene had very much wanted to make a midget radio. He did the schematics for the sets. He had brought drawings to Magnavox but they turned him down. He then went to the San Francisco company that formed Bakelite plastic. That company agreed to make the cabinets to expand their market into radios. These became the San Francisco Remler Scottie home radios: small, simple, two knobs, one band, AC/DC, and charming.



See:

<https://worldradiohistory.com/Archive-Broadcast-Weekly/1933/Broadcast-Weekly-1933-05-28.pdf> at page 16: “The Remler Scottie Makes Its Debut”.

President Roosevelt had a Scotty terrier and some say the name derived from that presidential pet.

The earliest Scottie listed by RadioMuseum.org is 1936, with another at 1940. After World War Two, many models came out.

See: https://www.radiomuseum.org/m/remler-co_usa_en_1.html

Remler very early on had had some experience with Bakelite, because it used it in some of the parts it sold. Remler manufactured the later Scotties. In *Remler Reminiscences* by Rick Ferranti, he notes:

“If you ever see the letter ‘g’ on a Remler radio schematic, it’s because the set was designed by Harry Greene II, Remler’s chief electronics engineer from the 30’s to the early 70’s.”

Ferranti adds that Greene's sons Clay and Dick worked for Remler during World War Two. John Kaar, then a young ham radio operator, also worked for Remler and later founded Kaar Engineering Company in Palo Alto.

See *CHRS Journal*, June 1993:

<http://antiqueradios.com/chrs/journal/reminiscences.html>

After the demise of its consumer products, Remler survived until the 1980s on military contracts, e.g., the air navigation receiver R-122 of the 1950s.



Bruno also recalls knowing Ed Nolan, who was the V.P for Engineering with another northern California electronics company, Farinon, now part of Harris. Nolan was known to be open-minded and personable. Bruno notes that both Harry Greene and Ed Nolan came from Weed, California, although several years apart. Bruno also notes that in those days, he and the men he knew in the radio

business were “really scrambling” to make their companies work in a competitive and technologically changing environment.

Jack Moseley:

Bruno also knew broadcasting pioneer Jack Moseley; they were close friends. Moseley enjoyed amateur radio for decades as W6ERD. His obit says, in part:

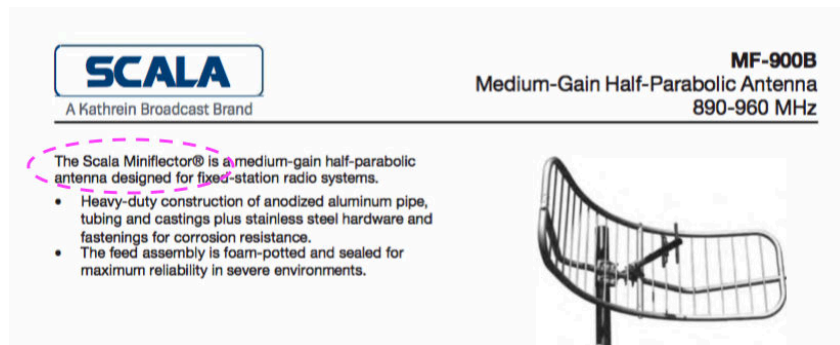
“Jack [Moseley] worked 1951-1953 at Raytheon Manufacturing Company in Point Mugu, California, from 1953 to 1955 at Lear Inc., Santa Monica, California, before returning to Santa Barbara in 1955 ... He was a pioneer in radio and television broadcasting. In 1959 he founded a company in his garage, Moseley Associates, Inc., which was dedicated to the research and development of remote control equipment for the radio and TV industry. He was the first to develop a wireless audio link between radio stations and mountaintop transmitters, one of the first being used by Santa Barbara station KTMS-FM. As the business expanded, it rapidly outgrew Jack’s garage, first relocating to a commercial/ manufacturing office ... in Santa Barbara.... Moseley Associates, Inc., expanded into remote control systems, FM exciters, stereo generators, subsidiary communication generators, digital control systems and satellite earth station control systems. By the time of his retirement in 1977, Moseley Associates had grown to over 130 employees.... Moseley Associates is still in existence today and headquartered in Goleta, California.”

See:

<http://lakecitysilverworld.com/SWN16/2018/08/31/jack-moseley-91-year-old-california-entrepreneurs-love-for-lake-city-improved-quality-of-life-in-myriad-of-ways/>

Moseley wanted to buy a directional gain antenna from Bruno’s Scala Radio for a broadcasting relay. Bruno recalls that Moseley then had about 30 people working for him. According to

Bruno, Moseley intended to capture signals from atop a high ridge or mountain, and then beam them down to televisions in the valley or lowlands. Bruno had already built a parabolic reflector dish. Moseley then said he didn't need that much gain. He said just make a "Miniflector" — so Bruno made it a smaller half parabolic shape, cutting off the top and bottom. Moseley told Bruno he could use the term "Miniflector" as his own.



So Bruno then trademarked "Miniflector" for Scala Electronic Corporation:

Serial Number
73275590
Registration Number
1200895
Word Mark
MINIFLECTOR

Filing Date
1980-08-25

Bruno says that he sold the Miniflector ® only to Moseley. Moseley used them for studio and transmitter links.

Moseley brought television to Yosemite Valley. A receiver at great height captured the signals. Then an early "translator" (a technology pioneered by Dr. Byron St. Clair) rebroadcast them down into the Valley. Bruno's antennas handled the signals on both ends of the circuit. He got flowers with "Thank you for bringing TV to Yosemite!" Bruno also helped put in translator

systems in Hawaii — once using filters in tin cans. They were hand-made but worked well, to the surprise of some. Bruno frequently took inspiration from the ARRL Handbook.

Scala's successors still use the trademark for its half-parabolic antenna. Bruno says that as far as he knows, there are still 3,000 in service, around the world. (Bruno later sold his company, Scala, ultimately to Kathrein Broadcast GMBH of Germany. Kathrein has now sold the Scala antenna division to the Swedish telecom Ericsson — *Telefonaktiebolaget LM Ericsson*. So his old company has also seen the world.)

Bruno was closest to Jack Moseley and Ed Nolan. The Bruno Zucconi and Jack Moseley families once enjoyed a family vacation together at Christmastime at Yosemite. One of Bruno and Connie's daughters once stayed for a while with the Moseley family in Santa Barbara.

Coda

Bruno Zucconi's enjoyed a long involvement with radio, even before the Second World War. His business ventures after the war put him in the middle of California's new electronics industry as it evolved. He met and worked with many of the important California entrepreneurs of the 20th Century. Harry Greene and Jack Moseley are two he remembers especially fondly.

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