

Norm Berge Collection Featured on American Pickers

By Jonathan Winchell
(Life Member of the California Historical Radio Society)

Norman Berge, along with three others, founded the California Historical Radio Society (CHRS) in 1974 and he was the first President of CHRS serving from 1974 to 1980. He passed away recently, and Berge's estate, including an extensive radio collection, was featured in the "American Pickers" episode *Desert Gold Rush*, which aired on August 3, 2020. This episode can still be viewed on the History Channel website at:

<https://www.history.com/shows/american-pickers/season-21/episode-21>

He collected radios and related materials well before joining with others to form CHRS and in the 1980s continued to enlarge his collection. For example, he owned this KROW poster.



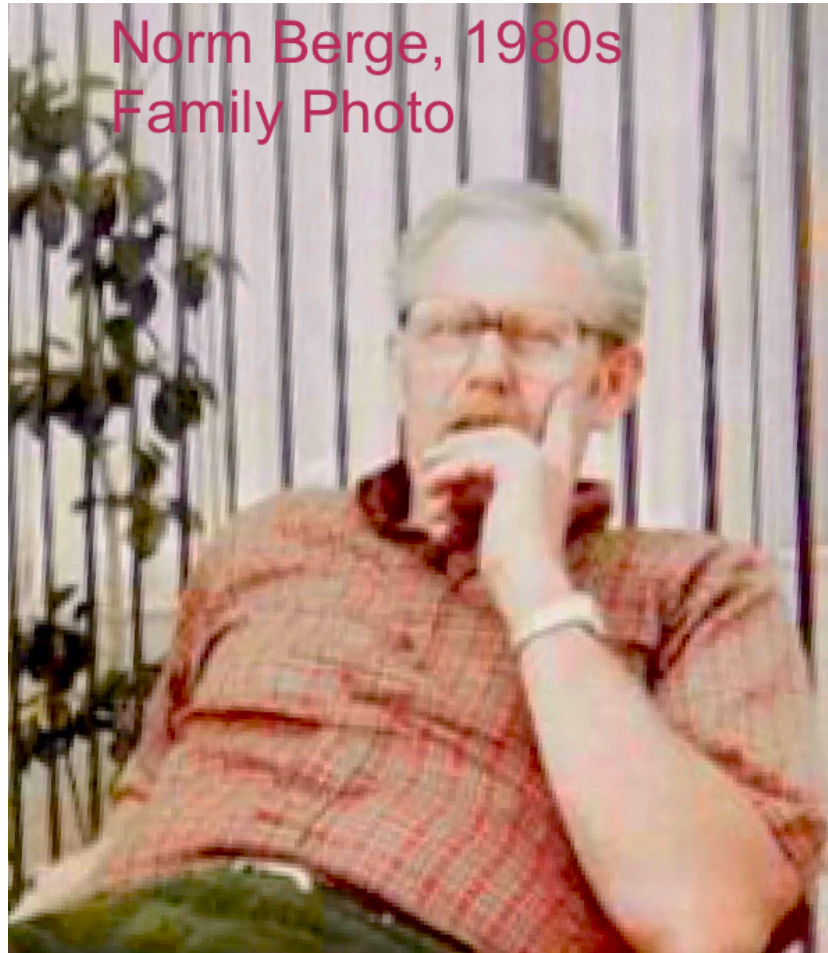
Norm recently lived in Bullhead City in Northern Arizona with his family where the episode was filmed.



In the episode, American Pickers' Mike and Robbie Wolf view and evaluate Norm's collection. The episode shows many images of the items they saw of his collection. These include many radios. Norman also collected microphones, one of his specialties. The episode featured a McIntosh Supertronic pre-amplifier of 1970 that was then state of the art. A 1920 Western Electric Microphone featured in his collection. He also collected records mostly orchestra but also Dixieland, Jazz and Big Band.

In his music room he displayed the CBS microphones he was most proud of. He had preserved two Spring Carbon Microphones, a CBS Pill microphone and CBS Flag microphone. His collection also featured WCBS Nickel microphone. Norman also collected a battery operated "World's Smallest Record Player."

Norman was a carpenter by trade. He enjoyed refurbishing radio cabinets since he knew about wood, stain colors and veneers — it was his happy place.



From the *CHRS Journal*, Vol.1 No. 1 (Sept. 1975):

“Our president, Norm Berge, has been interested in radio since age thirteen. Although he has been collecting for only four years, he has amassed an impressive collection of books, magazines, tubes, speakers, microphones, and over 150 vintage radios. When he started working on radios in the 1940’s he was given his first load of scrap radio parts from “Uncle Al.” Norm is a member of A.W.A., A.R.C., and the Indiana Historical Radio Society. He is employed by the engineering department of the Stanford Medical Center.” [Uncle Al's Radio Shop was in Oakland since 1925]. ##