## Radio Sales Gimmickry, circa 1939

## By Bart Lee, K6VK, CHRS Fellow in History

The Air Rover portable radio offered radio fun before Word War Two. (Funny, though, it looked just like a Majestic model 130 portable radio.)



The CHRS archives provide a glimpse into radio retailing just before the War. One could get in on the sales of the Air Rover radio sold by Standard Distributing Company of Chicago. Likely, one responded to a print advertisement. So Standard sent you a nice flyer (most of which is reproduced here).



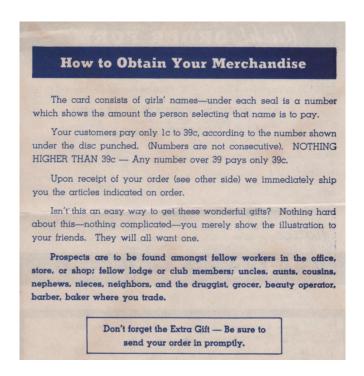




But Standard also sent you a card of punch-able names. The deal was: Go get your friends, etc. to pay a little for participating in the game (no more than 39¢). When all of your eighty (80!) friends ponied-up, the big seal could come off the card and one of your friends got a "free" prize Air Rover radio. The other 79 people got bupkis.



Those feeling lucky could "buy" more than one name; did you get to keep the money? Or at least some of it? Is that how YOU got to buy a radio?



You provided order forms to the unlucky 79 or so punters. They could get two Air Rover radios and a camera for \$29.95.

Rush! ORDER FORM
STANDARD DISTRIBUTING CO.  8227 Broadway. Chicago. Ill. For the enclosed remittance  \$29.95 as payment in full.  \$3.00 as deposit—balance C.O.D.
Please Rush Me 2 AIR ROVER PORTABLE RADIOS (COMPLETE WITH BATTERIES) AND 1 CANDID CAMERA
NAME
ADDRESS
CITYSTATE
EXPRESS OFFICE IF DIFFERENT.  Notice If you enclose cashier's check or money order in full, YOU SAVE paying return C. O. D. fees and we prepay all shipping charges.
(SEE REVERSE SIDE OF ORDER BLANK)
FREE ADDITIONAL Valuable Surprise Gift if Order is received within 15 days.
Presented by: (Send Genuine Wahl Eversharp Pen and Pencil Set to) Name Mus, Emmett J. Sma
City Delphoe State Kansas

\$29.95 for two, and you got a spiff if one of your punters bought in.

Why would anyone want two? The sales emphasis is on having one supplemental radio. But it does sound like a deal, until one remembers that this is 1939. In today's money that's something over \$500 (and 39¢ is over \$6 today). It is probably not surprising that few if any Air Rover portable radios show up on E-Bay or other antique sites. The identical Majestic 130 does. Perhaps Air Rover was a Majestic-produced private brand of Standard to facilitate this sales gimmick. Maybe "Air Rover" bought Majestic seconds or surplus. Maybe Standard would just order as needed...



But taking a close look at the radio on the flier, it doesn't actually have a name on it. Maybe it is just a Majestic. (de K6VK)