

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).

*Take it
anywhere*

There's even a strap for comfortable carrying over your shoulder. The Air Rover keeps you in touch with everything even though you are far from city activities.



BOATING

Music sounds particularly lovely when heard on the water.



PICNICKING

A dance tune makes the picnic all the merrier.



ROOM TO ROOM

Enjoy a program in any room in the house.



MOTORING

Be entertained as you drive. No unsightly aerial nuisance.

Features

- SELF-CONTAINED BATTERIES
- SELF-CONTAINED LOOP AERIAL
- MODERN SUPERHETERODYNE CIRCUIT
- RAPID ACTION TUNING DIAL
- AUTOMATIC VOLUME CONTROL
- SEPARATE ON-OFF SWITCH WITH WARNING INDICATOR
- SIX TUBE PERFORMANCE
- LITZ WIRE COILS
- DOUBLE WOUND I. F. TRANSFORMERS FOR MAXIMUM SELECTIVITY
- PERMANENT MAGNET SPEAKER
- FREQUENCY COVERAGE 1720—535 KC.



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?

How to Obtain Your Merchandise

The card consists of girls' names—under each seal is a number which shows the amount the person selecting that name is to pay.

Your customers pay only 1c to 39c, according to the number shown under the disc punched. (Numbers are not consecutive). **NOTHING HIGHER THAN 39c** — Any number over 39 pays only 39c.

Upon receipt of your order (see other side) we immediately ship you the articles indicated on order.

Isn't this an easy way to get these wonderful gifts? Nothing hard about this—nothing complicated—you merely show the illustration to your friends. They will all want one.

Prospects are to be found amongst fellow workers in the office, store, or shop; fellow lodge or club members; uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces, neighbors, and the druggist, grocer, beauty operator, barber, baker where you trade.

Don't forget the Extra Gift — Be sure to send your order in promptly.

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.
6227 Broadway, Chicago, Ill. ROC-81

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.....
CITY..... STATE.....

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 *Mrs. Emmett J. Anna*
Address.....
City *Delphos* 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...



Majestic model 130

ca: 1939

RadiolaGuy.com

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)