

The Zenith Transoceanic Portable

A Note by Bart Lee, K6VK, Archivist

Summer Fun — The Zenith Transoceanic portable radio defined the genre for a couple of decades. The Model 600 (1954) appears in the nearby image: a red-haired beauty summering on a sailboat with a black beauty Model 600 at her feet.



Zenith consumer advertising often featured young women in bathing suits, implying that men usually bought the radios. “Summer Fun” and all that. This is probably one of those advertising images, circa 1955, but hard to find. This version (above) comes from the English collectors’ journal *Radiophile* (cover, No. 116; Summer 2009). Another ad:



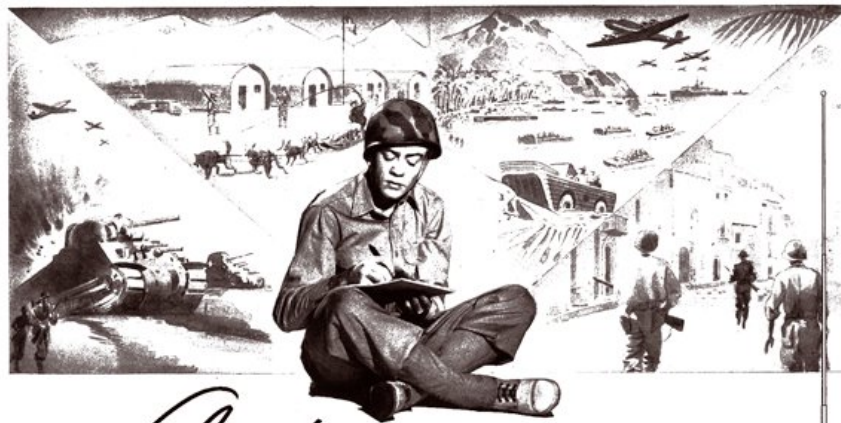
Bathing suits were not, however, required:



Some people (and the Zenith PR department) referred to the Transoceanic as “The Royalty of Radios.”

See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-Oceanic> and <https://www.radioworld.com/tech-and-gear/zenith-trans-oceanic-radio-in-war-and-peace> . For lots of Transoceanics in one place, see <https://www.pinterest.com/garyprincipato/zenith-trans-oceanic/> .

In World War Two they entertained many a U.S officer around the world. (Enlisted ranks had to be satisfied with, say, the Hallicrafters S-39 as a morale receiver).



A thousand letters

WHICH BREAK OUR HEARTS

LETTERS!

—THE PILE IS GROWING—

—letters from Privates, Corporals, Colonels, Generals, Seamen and Admirals—from Wacs, Waves, Spars . . . from everybody . . . everywhere.

Their urgent pleas strike a universal note . . . they say in effect:

I know of only one portable radio that will do the work out here—they say, writing from Africa and Alaska . . . from Australia and the South Seas . . . from all over the globe—Only one . . . and that is your Zenith Transoceanic Short Wave Portable Clipper. My folks tell me they have tried everywhere to obtain one with no success. Can you help me?

. . . so these letters come to us.
To each request must go the answer “No”—an unwilling “No”—and our regrets that this must be so. We were over 100,000 sets over-

sold on this one model when we ceased civilian production for 100% war work.

Nothing would please us better than to have a great plenty of these justly famous portables to ship to all who need them—especially at this Christmas season—when our thoughts turn to loved ones everywhere. For our Transoceanic Portable Clipper is a real friend to the men and women in the service. Those who managed to get them early feel themselves fortunate; they are the envy of their friends!

BUT THESE PORTABLES MUST WAIT. The entire Zenith organization is now engaged in giving all its efforts to the making of tremendous quantities of urgently needed radionics* materiel for the armed forces. These things must come first—even ahead of the tender link with home which a personal radio provides for the fighting man far from friends and family. Thus we help to speed the day of “absolute Victory”—help to bring closer the next real American Christmas . . . with “Peace on Earth—Good Will to Men” . . . when families shall be reunited—and when home life can once again resume the even tenor of its ways.

ZENITH
“LONG DISTANCE” RADIO

BETTER THAN CASH
U.S. WAR SAVINGS BONDS AND STAMPS

ZENITH RADIO CORPORATION
CHICAGO 39, ILLINOIS

RADIONICS PRODUCTS EXCLUSIVELY—
WORLD'S LEADING MANUFACTURER

***RADIONICS —with its subdivisions of Electronics, Radio, etc.**

The Army contracted, in 1955 or so, for a militarized WW II Transoceanic R-520/URR, probably for the Generals.

See <http://www.richardmcwhorter.com/R520AURR/> .



The Model 600 introduced the Slide-Rule horizontal dial. It remained in production until about 1962. The transistor obsoleted its vacuum tubes, but Zenith went on to world-class transistor Transoceanics, up to the Model R-7000 (1969 - 73 +/-). Zenith radios such as this targeted the market of rich people.

Both RCA and Hallicrafters tried to horn in with copycat (but well-engineered) big portables with slide-rule dials. The little Japanese transistor radios killed them all.

The Wiki says:

“The earlier tube or valve versions of the T/O are prized by radio collectors. Many working models and replacement parts are available on various online auction sites. The build quality and longevity of these receivers is well known and highly regarded.”

The definitive book is THE ZENITH TRANSOCEANIC by John H. Bryant and Harold Cones, (Schiffer, 1995).

(v2, de K6VK) ##