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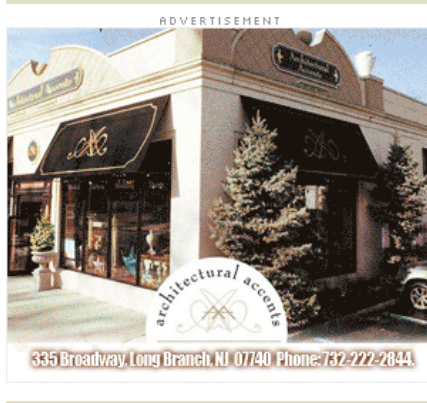
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MAKING CRYSTAL MAGIC

BY MAUREEN NEVIN DUFFY • CORRESPONDENT • JUNE 8, 2008

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It may sound a little like the Age of Aquarius — all the mystic crystal revelations — but don't worry, this is still 2008 and the big Crystal-Radio Seminar is being staged by a different age. InfoAge is a nonprofit science and history learning center located in Guglielmo Marconi's original labs, on Marconi Road in Wall Township.

Please note the time and date, because this workshop promises to be an experience the whole family can enjoy together and remember for years to come.

On Saturday, the Telephone Exchange Building, behind the Marconi Hotel at 2201 Marconi Road will open its doors for the 9:30 a.m. start and you'll have until 4 p.m. to — get this — actually

build your own radio. Called a crystal set, the radio will work without batteries or a wall outlet. That should amaze your techno geeks in training!

"We can teach people to wield magic!" says Al Klase, N3FRQ, also known as a "guru" with the New Jersey Antique Radio Club and InfoAge.

You'll want to call Klase right away at (908) 892-5465 to reserve the parts necessary to construct the kit — or as the Radio Club calls it, the "Pretty Good Xtal Set," designed by Klase. (No wonder they call him the guru.) There is a charge of \$15 per kit (about what you'd spend on a Saturday matinee movie), but the guidance and general admission are free; and there will be plenty of antique and contemporary crystal sets to see in action.

Also, visitors are welcome to bring sets they may have at home for repair and evaluation, in a kind of antique road show for radio. Children 10 and older are welcome to build a radio if accompanied by an adult who can assist them. Attendees are advised to bring a bag lunch, unless they want to chip in for pizza.

"These radio sets work by using a solid-state device to rectify the radio frequency energy (turn AC current into DC) captured by the antenna," says Klase. Think of a primitive version of the integrated circuits in your home computer.

Enter the crystal, otherwise known as the "detector": "The heart of any radio receiver is the detector, or as our British cousins say, the "frequency changer," " says Klase. "The detector converts high-frequency electrical signals, that we can't hear, into audio-frequency signals that we can. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, if you didn't have the money to buy an expensive radio, you built a crystal-set. In the 1940s, soldiers in lonely places — even prison camps — built crystal sets," says Klase. "The famous foxhole radio used just a razor blade and pencil to serve as a detector."

To demystify just a bit, Klase tells us this works because the carbon in pencil lead and selenium in the bluing



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on Gillette Blue Blades are semiconductor materials, much like silicon.

When you've completed your crystal-set (a pro might finish by 2 p.m.), you'll be able to pick up — with about 40 feet of antenna wire up a tree — four or five AM stations, all the way from New York City, plus a local station or two. Klase is looking forward to tuning in a Spanish station with a particularly strong signal. The same set up at night will pick up stations a couple of hundred miles away!

"Building crystal radios remains a great way for young people, of all ages, to experience the magic of electronics in a most personal way." He's got our vote! Visit www.infoage.org on the Web.

Note: Thanks for the compliments on our quiz last month. More to come. . . .

Maureen Nevin Duffy created and hosted "Asbury Radio - The Radio Voice of Asbury Park," a weekly public affairs talk show at the City's WYGG, 88.1 FM station, for more than six years. Please send your comments and suggestions regarding Radio Somewhere to AsburyRadsixio@aol.com or 3 Deal Lake Court, Asbury Park, NJ, 07712.

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