



Chuck Azar, 82, of New Hope, Pennsylvania, works on a Stewart-Warner television set manufactured in 1949 on May 6 at the Early Television Museum in Hilliard. A DVD signal passing through a converter displayed "The Wizard of Oz" on the picture tube. Such converters typically are necessary for early TVs to receive any signal.

KEVIN CORVO/THISWEEK

Antique-TV enthusiasts savor screen time

By KEVIN CORVO
THISWEEKNEWS.COM

A simple World War II history lesson made a larger-than-life impression on Thai Prasertsak four years ago when he was in high school in western Ohio.

Prasertsak, now 18 and a freshman at Clark State Community College in Springfield, and his friend, Justin Williams, 22, of suburban Buffalo, New York, stood with dozens of men — almost any of whom could pass for their grandfathers — learning how to repair antique televisions May 6 in the Early Television Museum in Old Hilliard.

The workshop was offered for collectors like Prasertsak and Williams.

"I've been getting a lot more requests from young adults who wanted to learn how to repair old TVs," said Steve McVoy, 74, who

Video online

Go to ThisWeekNEWS.com to watch Chuck Azar demonstrate repair tips on a television made in 1949 and Thai Prasertsak and Justin Williams explain the significance of an early 1950s Hoffman TV.

in 2001 opened the Early Television Museum at 5396 Franklin St. in Old Hilliard.

More than 100 early TV enthusiasts — from New York and Pennsylvania to California and Washington, and all points in between — converged May 5 to 7 at the museum for its annual convention that first was held in 2004.

Although Prasertsak wasn't required to show an ID to get in, no one disputed he was the youngest in attendance.

Aside from a clean-shaven face that stood out from among several bearded visages, Prasertsak's crisp attire included an original early 1950s brimmed hat.

"It all started when I was 14," Prasertsak's said his love for repairing and watching black-and-white television sets and the entirety of 1940s and 1950s pop culture, all set in motion by a history lesson about World War II.

"The first thing I did was buy a 1950 GE radio for \$5 at the Heart of Ohio Antique (Center)," he said.

Ironically, Prasertsak used decidedly modern technology — a YouTube video — to begin a crash-course in radio repair.

"I learned from my mistakes, a lot of them," said Prasertsak, whose collection grew to include radios, record players and televisions.



Vacuum tubes were among the thousands of parts and pieces enthusiasts could pick through during the annual convention May 5 to 7 at the Early Television Museum in Hilliard.

MUSEUM

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His record collection includes those of the 78 rpm variety cut by Bing Crosby and Tommy Dorsey's orchestra, whose vocalist at the time was a young Frank Sinatra. The Glenn Miller Orchestra is another favorite.

His favorite TV shows are "I Love Lucy," "The Andy Griffith Show" and "I Dream of Jeannie."

"Not so much 'Bewitched,'" he said. "I've got a crush on Jeannie."

Prasertak met Williams through a Facebook page for early television enthusiasts and the two decided to attend the convention at Hilliard's museum. It was the first visit for both.

"I got started into this because I remember watching my grandfather's old tube radio warm up and begin to work," Williams said. "Then I bought (a radio) that didn't work, but I blew it up when I put in a resistor instead of a capacitor. It's a common mistake for newbies."

Both graduated to televisions and, after the workshop on repairing televisions, the two friends labored to carry a 1953 Hoffman-manufactured television set into the museum to make a quick fix.

Chuck Azar, 82, of New Hope, Pennsylvania, led the

workshop, during which he purposely installed bad caps into a television's circuit board to adversely affect its signal reception, vertical hold or horizontal hold, and then showed trouble-shooting tips to fix it.

Like many at the convention, Azar has lifelong experience with television.

He moved from suburban Chicago to Miami when he was 15, and with a partner opened a television sales and service business.

Today, he keeps busy restoring pre-1950 televisions in the basement of his residence.

For others, like Bob Galanter, 70, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, television repair always has been a hobby.

"About 15 years ago, I was on a Bay and saw a TV like the one I sat in front of to watch 'Howdy Doody,'" he said.

It sparked a "fever" and he now has about 100 early televisions, he said.

That fever is shared by many who participated in a silent auction at the museum and viewed the hundreds of TVs in McVoy's collection.

As a teenager, McVoy worked in a television-repair shop in Gainesville, Florida, in the 1950s, and was mesmerized by the earliest-manufactured televisions that sometimes came into the shop.



Justin Williams, left, and Thai Prasertak search for a knob that resembles one needed to replace a broken knob on a Hoffman-manufactured television from the early 1950s on May 6 at the Early Television Museum in Hilliard.

PHOTOS BY KEVIN CONROY/THE WEEK

Some of those models are at his museum, including mechanical televisions from the early 1930s, early electronic televisions from the late 1930s, a variety of postwar black-and-white televisions from the late 1940s and the earliest color TVs from the early 1950s.

Picture tubes were so large in early models that the tube faced toward the ceiling. A mirrored lid allowed viewers, seated across the room, to see the image in the mirror, McVoy said.

The mirror allowed the TV cabinet, with its upright tube, to hug closer to the wall, he said.

The Early Television Museum is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays, noon to 5 p.m. Sundays or by appointment.

For more information, visit earlytelevision.org.

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An image of Donald Duck advertises an RCA color TV inside the Early Television Museum in Hilliard where hundreds of televisions, picture tubes, advertising and other early television artifacts are displayed.