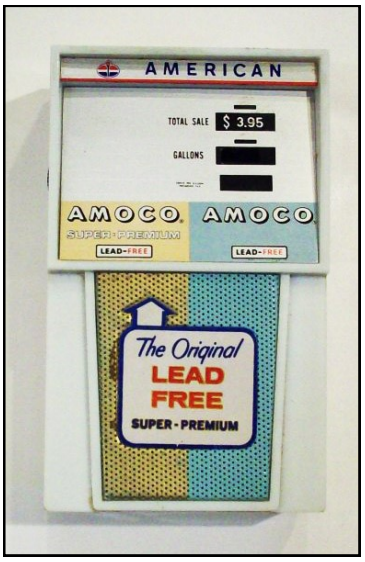
National Capital Radio & Television Museum

Artifact of the Week:

Amoco Gas Pump Radio



This week's featured artifact is a example of how companies use radios to advertise consumer products.

By the late 1960s mass produced Asian-made transistor novelty radios were cheap enough that companies used them as promotional items. Plastic molding technology made it possible to create almost any desired shape.

Amoco probably purchased these radios by the thousands. Other oil companies also offered transistor radios made to resemble their gas pumps. (We have one from Sinclair in our collection.)

We have not been able to date when this radio was first offered or the exact nature of Amoco's promotion. An Amoco service station might have offered a free gas pump radio to any customer who had an oil change and lube, bought a new set of tires, or possibly even for good customers who filled up with at least 15 gallons of gasoline. In other cases, service stations might have sold these radios at an unusually low price just to advertise their brand.

The museum collection includes a number of consumer product transistor novelty radios, such as a Coors Beer can, the Jolly Green Giant, and even some from local radio stations (e.g., WRC.) There are radio collectors who specialize in transistor novelty radios. (Most can be had at low cost, and they do not take up as much space as pre-WW-II consoles.) Our library includes a number of price guides for transistor novelty radios, although they are somewhat out of date.

Amoco was part of the Standard Oil empire but in recent years merged with BP.

We appreciate your support of the museum so that historical artifacts like this one, and the stories that go with them, can be preserved for future generations. THANKS!