National Capital Radio & Television Museum

Artifact of the Week:

Hoffman "Trans-Solar" Model RP-706



Transistor radios were a rather new thing, and so were solar cells, when Hoffman first offered its "Trans-Solar" radios, employing solar cells built into the radios' tops. Los Angeles-based Hoffman manufactured solar cells for satellites, and decided to try using them for transistor radios Their first Trans-Solar, the Model KP-706, was introduced in 1957, only three years after the Regency TR-1 (the first consumer transistor radio). This similar model was sold in 1959.

When Southern California's Mission Bell Radio company went bankrupt, Les Hoffman purchased it. In addition to radios, Hoffman's company produced high quality television sets. Around 1950 it was the largest west coast producer of TVs. The company continued to make consumer electronic products until the 1970s.

The museum has not tried to restore this radio to operating condition. Solar cells of that era did not perform as well as modern ones, so it probably took a bright sunny day to work well.

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!