



# EMC Society History

*Dan Hoolihan, History Committee Chair*

## Stories from 50-25-10 Years Ago in the EMC Society Newsletter

**50-Years Ago (August 1958 – Institute of Radio Engineers (IRE) Professional Group on Radio Frequency Interference Newsletter – Issue Number 3 – Editor: Rex Daniels)** The main article of this Newsletter was the announcement of the Fourth Conference on Radio Interference Reduction and Electronic Compatibility would be held by the Armour Research Foundation of the Illinois Institute of Technology under agreement with the U.S. Army Signal Research and Development Laboratories, Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.

The conference was scheduled for October 1 and 2 (1958) at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, Illinois. The IRE Professional Group on Radio Frequency Interference would cooperate on the program. Approximately 450 people were expected to attend the Fourth Conference on Radio Interference Reduction.

**25 Years Ago (Summer 1983 – IEEE EMC Society Newsletter – Issue No. 118 – Editor: Robert Goldblum)** Front-page articles on the EMC Society Newsletter were *ECAC to be Recipient of the 1984 dB Award and BOD Election for Three-Year Term (Jan. 1, 1984 – Dec. 31, 1986)*. The first article announced that the dB Society would present the 1984 dB Award to the Electromagnetic Compatibility Analysis Center for its “Outstanding International Contributions to the Field of Electromagnetic Compatibility.” The second article was by Gene Knowles, Nominations Chairman, announcing the can-

didates for the Board of Directors election; the candidates included Edwin Bronaugh, Robert D. Goldblum, George Hagn, L. Gilda Haskins, H. R. (Bob) Hofmann, Don Heirman, George Kunkel, Walter Mc Kerchar, Henry W. Ott, and Richard B. Schulz. The Newsletter also contained an article on the 5th Symposium and Technical Exhibition on EMC held in Zurich on March 8-10, 1983. The report on the Zurich symposium stated, “Increasing interest in EMC Technology is confirmed by steadily growing participation in West European EMC Symposia (1975 and 1977 Montreux, 1979 Rotterdam, 1981 and 1983 Zurich). Of these, the recent event in Zurich achieved, with 650 participants, the largest growth rate of 20%.”

**10 Years Ago (Summer 1998 – IEEE EMC Society Newsletter – Issue No. 178 – Editor: Janet O’Neil)**

This Newsletter highlighted two technical articles: one by W. Scott Bennett and a second by Daryl Gerke and William Kimmel. Both articles were published in the “Practical Papers, Articles and Application Notes” section of the Newsletter under the guidance of Bob Rothenburg, Associate Editor. Bennett’s article was titled “Normalized Site Attenuation and Test Site Validation” and the article by Gerke and Kimmel was titled “The Mysteries of Grounding...” Penny Caran was profiled in the Personality Profile section of the Newsletter under Dr. William G. Duff’s Associate Editorship.

## An Archaeological Expedition to Washington DC Unearths Engineering Gold

*By Mike Violette, Washington Labs*

The hunt for treasured artifacts—not the stuff of gems and jewels, but the stuff of hearts and memories—was on our minds as we descended the steps of a 1940s era brick home in Northeast Washington, DC on a recent warm May day. Leonard Thomas, the fifth Secretary of the EMC Society, passed away over a year ago and his archives and collections beckoned EMC Historian Dan Hoolihan. With members of the Washington/Northern Virginia EMC Chapter in-tow, Dan’s mission was to ferret out the lost records of the Soci-



*Dan Can’t Wait*

ety during Mr. Thomas’ sixteen-year tenure from 1965 to 1981.

We got more than several boxes of records and remembrances; we got an eyeful, as Mr. Thomas was, obviously, a quintessential engineer and an inveterate tinkerer. Surrounded by radios that had not tuned a carrier in at least twenty years were the notes from meetings, the history of the development of EMC standards and, somewhere, hopefully was the EMC equivalent to the signature page of the Declaration of Independence: the document with the xxxx names of the first signatories to the EMC Society petition.



Why here? Well, chances were good and for a few reasons: first, Mr. Thomas was the fifth person to serve as Secretary of the “EMC Group”, as the first agglomeration of the afflicted were then called. Perhaps to give it more ‘cachet’, the EMC Group was renamed the “IEEE EMC Society.” Makes you think of white gloves and tuxedos. The second reason we held out hope to find the documents was that Mr. Thomas was, ah, a collector, and one can have quite a collection if one succeeds to make it to a 97th birthday.

Much can be written about such a life and much already has; suffice it to say that his career made for a fascinating tale and included participating in state-of-the-art interference studies in the Stoddart Mobile Test Vehicle. Took leaded gas. Played Jefferson Airplane.



*Stoddart Mobile Testing Van*

He was a meticulous record-keeper, for which we are grateful, and each drawer peeled back another layer of the standards-onion. CISPR, ANSI C63, MIL-STD—all the great fairy tales—were there. Early in the exercise, with such a bounty, we focused our mission on EMC Society matters, particularly those that dealt with personalities and correspondences.



*Dan Hoolihan and Barry Wallen Begin the Archiving*

There were files back to the forties.



*What DNA Standard is NOT Represented?*

While Tom Boughner and Tom Revesz catalogued, crated and hauled, I poked around at a man’s life of treasured possession, curiosities, hobbies and passions.



*Tom Boughner (left) and Tom Revesz Catalog and Crate*

I noticed a not-so-distinctive piece of RF gear with a Dymo®-label that said “IDIOT BOX – TURN ON WHEN IDIOT TALKS”. Must be a story there somewhere (and *someone’s* not telling).



*Field Radio Next to “Idiot Box”*

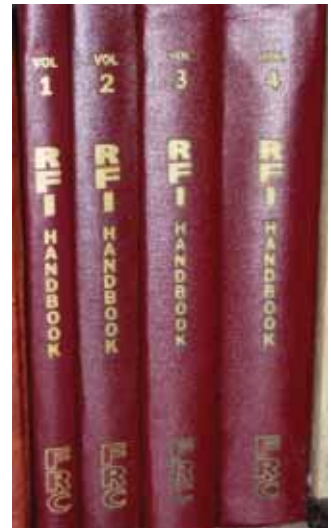
Other shelves held ancient archival IRE Proceedings; so regarded with nostalgia (well, maybe not so much nostalgia for this writer).

And finally, lots of fundamentals, predictions, studies, reports and handbooks.

The stacking and sorting will be left for another day. We dropped off the bounty at a storage locker for later



*Institute of Radio Engineers – Precursor to the IEEE*



*RFI Handbook*

research, sorting and cataloguing; Dan says: “I’ll go through it when I return to Washington.” Right. I wonder why I have this sneaking suspicion that I just inherited all this history? Dan, you listening?



*Dan and Barry in the Inner Sanctum*

From his obituary, we learn that Mr. Thomas was born in Birmingham, Ala., as the eldest son of British immigrants from Cornwall. He was the 1920s equivalent of “a nerd,” said his daughter Sarah Ellen Sandel. He built radio sets as a youngster and discovered electrical engineering in high school.

As every good engineer keeps things running as long as possible, the radios that



*WJSV, Later WTOP*



*Tom and Tom Dig In*

were in his possession certainly were things of beauty. I'm at a loss as to what all the particular buttons on this thing were.

After taking a degree from Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn), his career took him from radio stations (the old WJSV) in Washington, DC to the Navy to ECAC to retirement and service with the IEEE.

Again, from his obituary: His suggestions were instrumental in the construction of an interference-free radar system for the military, and he helped write

national standards for future communications devices. Mr. Thomas also resolved interference problems in the White House radio room when he discovered that fluorescent lighting from the kitchen was the culprit. After the war, he became the first U.S. representative to the International Special Committee on Radio Interference (CISPR).

In the meantime, Tom and Tom kept at it. We barely scratched the surface.

Mr. Thomas wrote numerous technical papers. He was elected an IEEE Fel-

low and received the Institute's Standards Medallion and the Laurence G. Cumming Award. Mr. Thomas passed away on January 31, 2007.

For all his collecting and documenting and archiving, we are forever grateful. Now, Dan when are you coming back?

*The author is indebted to Dan Hoolihan of Hoolihan EMC Consulting, Barry Wallen of ANDRO Computational Solutions, Tom Boughner of EMC Technologists and Tom Revesz of HV Technologies for providing a very memorable day.*

**EMC**