

Interview with Robert “Hi Hi Bob” Pienkowski, March, 2016:

VRCM: Tell me a little about your background and how you got interested in the Vintage Radio and Communications Museum.

BP: I am a radiological tech -- x-ray technician -- and I have had an interest in stereo equipment since the early 1970's. It was in 1999 when I met my friend Mike Urban, who has his own repair / restoration business that I began to restore and repair the stuff myself. I am 85% self taught, with help from Mike and various other people over the years. Now I buy, sell, and restore all kinds of equipment and have a nice collection of vintage vacuum tube pieces which I enjoy, along with early solid-state, turntables, CD players, speakers; you name it.

Also In 1999 I had heard of the Radio Museum – it was in E. Hartford then -- and decided to join. At first I was working on old radios for practice, such as Zenith tube Transoceanics. I loved the people and all the resources at the Museum, as I moved on to bigger and better projects with vintage hi-fi equipment.

VRCM: I've heard people refer to you as “Hi Fi Bob.” How did you get that nickname?

BP: Well, I needed an e-mail name, and Dan Crowley of the Radio Museum started calling me that years ago, so it just stuck. Because of my interest in vintage hi-fi, in buying, collecting, restoring, repairing, and selling, I suppose the name just fits.

VRCM: Any other comments you care to make?

BP: I love my time at the VRCM, and its sister museum, the Vintage Hi-Fi in W. Hartford. Mike and I created the HI-Fi Museum to educate the visiting public on vintage early hi-fi, and music, and to make available some fine pieces of software (LP's) and hardware so they can enjoy their LP's, CD's, and tapes once again.

It is a never ending field of design and development out there with more and more analogue (LP's and Turntables) coming out every year, plus rising LP production and sales for everyone to enjoy. For anyone with a 'thing' for any of the various aspects of either museum, be it battery sets of the teens and 20's, telephone equipment, television, telegraph, hi-fi gear, you name it... the museums are an invaluable resource.

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