

VPEA Reporter

The Virginia Professional Electronics Association Newsletter

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April May 2005

Assistant Editor Wallace Harrison

Top Tech Training; Interaction With Mfrs.; and Homage to History Highlight 2005 Conference

VPEA Convention in Va. Beach, June 10-12 Celebrates 50 Years of Meeting the Challenges of Service Industry Professionalism

The 2005 Mid-Atlantic Conference will be held June 10-12, 2005 at the scenic and award-winning Virginia Beach Resort and Conference Center (VBRH). It is situated on the sandy shore of Chesapeake Bay in Virginia Beach, just minutes from the Norfolk International Airport.

The primary thrust of the annual Mid-Atlantic Conference has always been about providing training to technicians in the eastern part of the United States. That's remains true, but this year it offers so much more.

In addition to more tech sessions, there are great profit-enhancing opportunities, plus a proud remembrance of how VPEA began 50 years ago.

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National Service Alliance: Friend or Foe to Independent Service?

National Service Alliance (NSA): A consortium that brings pleasure to some, and raging fury to others. What is it? How does it – or might it – affect you in the service business?

By Wallace Harrison

We hope to answer those questions for the many people who have been seeking more information on this topic. But, before we can talk about what NSA is, we will first have to explain how – and why – it came about.

A LEGACY SET IN STONE

Immediately after an enterprising cave dweller invented the wheel, three new industries were born: (1) wheel manufacturers; (2) wheel resellers; and (3) wheel servicers. Not long after that, each industry segment more than likely tried to increase its level of profitability at the expense of the others. And within each segment, the entrepreneurs

looked for ways to gain a competitive advantage to either help ensure its survival, or increase its level of prosperity. The wheel had to be built progressively more round, wider, stronger, with more features. The price had to come down to allow Og to outsell Groof, and get more people

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VPEA: Meeting the Challenge of Community Service

Peter Florance CET/CSM

Many of the organizations I belong to either raise money for charity or donate time to worthy causes. Yet back to my joining VPEA (then VEA) in the early 90's, I can't recall any such endeavor.

Fast-forward to the present. My fiancé's father has had Macular Degeneration for a few years and can no longer read books easily. He found a wonderful program at our local library provided by the Library of Congress's National Library Services (NLS) for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Patrons such as her father are loaned Cassette Book Machines (CBM) and books recorded on tapes. The CBM's are special 4-track dual speed, monaural cassette players and will fit six hours of audio on one cassette tape. This provides vision-impaired patrons unabridged versions

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From the President's Pen

NSA: Not a Satisfactory Alternative

By Al Moses, President,
Virginia Professional Electronics As-
sociation.



For many in our industry, there is a long, rough road ahead. In addition to the usual ruts and expected detours, we now face unexpected roadblocks from nationally oriented service organizations. One such group, the "National Service Alliance" (NSA), wants us to believe that they are the saviors of our service industry.

In previous years, several manufacturers tried to establish their own

service centers in metropolitan areas. They felt they could save money, even if it meant putting many of us out of business. Well, it didn't work then, and it's unlikely to work now. They all lost money. So, it's doubtful that these service groups can do better.

My feeling about that is: "beware."

INDEPENDENT SHORTCOMINGS

NSA is only one of several national service groups that are currently trying to take advantage of our collective shortcomings.

We are in this vulnerable position because too many of us servicers failed to heed the warning signs that were posted several years ago.

Too many service dealers gained a false sense of security from their customers who kept coming back – until they ultimately discovered better service elsewhere. Too few dealers courted their customers, or modernized their places of business.

Many succumbed to the allure of the quick warranty buck without considering the consequences.

These rates did not adequately reimburse for the escalating costs of transportation. They did not allow owners to invest in high tech test equipment to service the high-tech sets. Those who accepted the paltry rates were unable to acquire or keep the quality technicians needed to service the increasingly complex products.

One of the results of this was unhappy employees; technicians who were under constant pressure to produce more with less. Our techs were overworked with too little time to spend with their families. We had the best technical minds feeling more secure being unchallenged on an assembly line than chasing electrons through consumer product circuitry.

Additionally, the failure of independent servicers to support our vocational schools prompted them to drop their consumer-product service courses; courses that could have

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The VPEA Reporter is published periodically by the Virginia Professional Electronics Association Inc. for the enlightenment, education and entertainment of the members of VPEA and other ethical and responsible professionals in or connected with the electronics service industry in and surrounding the state of Virginia. The statements and opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Virginia Professional Electronics Association. Permission is hereby granted to reproduce any material contained herein providing credit is given to the Virginia Professional Electronics Association.

The More Things Change...

Advice From Former Leaders of VPEA

With discussions in this issue about potential threats from national entities, and coping with a changing industry, and the value of association, we thought the following items taken from the pages of past V(P)EA convention guides are interesting.

IMPROVE TO SUCCEED

Our society is in the throes of

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grown future technicians. The schools lacked not only needed funds, but also direction from service industry advisory groups.

THE NATIONAL SERVICE FUTURE

The failures by independents compounded to give the opportunity to some large independent servicers to get together and "save the service industry" by going national.

Under NSA, the independent servicers are no longer independent. The participants now work for a third party, and have to put up with more stress than ever before. The record-keeping requirements are enormous. At some point, you have to write that rebate or fee check to those who claim to have set you up in this utopia. But then, when you may not have enough left over to pay the rent or utilities, where do you go?

Yes, theoretically, you can resign and go back to being an independent. But, by then, you will have lost your loyal customers, manufacturer affiliations, your technicians, and of course, most of your money.

Beware, friends. In my opinion, it cannot and will not work!

THE BETTER ALTERNATIVE

The only way to win is by keeping your technicians and yourself happy

change which exceeds anything we have experienced before. At the same time, our electronics service industry is facing and trying to cope with even more rapid and drastic changes.

The independent servicer cannot stand alone in a private world and hope to succeed as he has in the past. I firmly believe in the need for every technician and service manager to continue to improve their knowledge, and to conform to newer concepts of service and business practices.

Clifford A. Shaw (1969), Past President

and up-to-date on the latest technology. One way to do this is to take advantage of the state-of-the-art technical training offered each year at the Mid-Atlantic Conferences. You would also be wise to partake of the business education and management training offered by NESDA and its National Professional Service Convention. Most importantly, you must remain loyal to your present customers and manufacturers; the people who have allowed you to make a decent profit and have put you where you are today.

My experience of 43 years in this industry has taught me that, if you keep up with the technology, treat your customers (including the manufacturers) right, and remain loyal to those clients who allow you to make a profit, you will succeed.

Remember, the manufacturers need you just as much as you need them. Do not put too many of your eggs in one basket. If that basket falls, most of the eggs will break. (And in this case, the basket will fall.)

The roads may be a little rough right now but if we all do what we should, you will provide the asphalt for a smooth ride to the horizon and beyond..

VEA, President NATESA, Richmond VA

FORMIDABLE COMPETITION

At the time of the 5th VEA Convention I stated that change was the order of the day and that our industry was definitely not immune to it.

Change is being compounded in home electronics, not only technologically, but in basic business concepts. The birth of a new captive service company run by "the" giant of our industry, lines up against independents the most formidable array of electronic service business administration. It, coupled with growing use of solid state, and particularly integrated circuits and long-term, in-boarded service contracts, demands that we, the independents, must adopt equally sophisticated techniques.

Business-as-usual is the first victim of change. Independents need not be the second.

Frank J. Moch, (1970), Executive Director, NATESA, Chicago IL

A SERIOUS THREAT

"Superior Independent Service" is the motto of this year's (1971) convention. This motto was selected because of the rapidly growing and ever-expanding national (factory) service organizations that threaten our very existence. The motto, "Independent Service is Best," is directed to the same goals; that of halting the advance of national all-brand service. The independent television service industry must combat this threat with logical solutions.

Our businesses can never be threatened if we supply the service the customer demands in an orderly and business-like manner, and at a price the customer can afford. We must be prepared to service the technical environment of today, and stay abreast of technology. At the same time, we must prepare to meet

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Solder Fodder

Peter Florance CET/CSM

I've got a few more random thoughts to share with other techs.

Quick notes on JBC AD-2200.

Those who read my Dec 2003 issue might recall my mention of this Spanish-made solder station. I was discussing my Weller WTCP stations and how, except for it and the JBC product, many stations left me disappointed.

I asked my fiancé to proof-read the article.

Christmas morning I opened a gift from her to find a JBC station inside. Holy smokes! That was very sneaky of her, I had to say. Neither one of us is easy to buy for.

I've used the station for about 14 months now. The solder tips hold up very well. I was given the AD2200SMD (now AD2700, I think) kit which included 4 tips, tweezers, tip cleaner and Chip Quik. One tip is for soldering QFP's and SOIC's and another odder-looking tip is for PLCC's, which I need to install occasionally.

If you still have to solder, you might want to treat yourself to this station. It really does solder better than anything else I've used. Joints look better, and large ground planes are no match for the AD2200. The JBC line is available at Howard Electronics, a NESDA and VPEA supporter.

Cardas Solder

I was hired to build a high-end audio preamp for a customer. He specified that I use Cardas solder; which I had read about but never used. The solder is a quad-eutectic solder, containing tin, lead, silver and copper. Audio equipment soldered with Cardas Solder is supposed to sound better, and is prized by many audiophiles.

Does it sound better? I'm not sure. I can tell you it flows out very nicely with no plastic state. The flux residue is light and doesn't seem to burn as much as other brands. To me, it's as much an improvement over 63/37 alloy as 63/37 is over 60/40 solder. A 100 gram roll costs about \$20 or so which isn't cheap. But it may provide an extra profit center if you still serve particular audiophiles, or where your work will be seen by critics.

Current Tech Tips: Repair Hints to save you time

Type: PTV

Brand: Hitachi

Model: 50UX58B

Symptom: Dead

Fix: Replaced protectors E991 & E994, regulator IC I901 and HOT Q777. Cause of failure was Q777 arced to the shield when the power supply was restored, opening E994 again. Removing the HOT failed to show any cracks in the transistor housing. (0-2261)

Submitted by: Joe Searles - Joe Searles TV

Type: PTV

Brand: Hitachi

Model: 50UX22BA

Symptom: Immediate shutdown

Fix: Replaced shorted diodes D927 and D977 (NTE519). When turning on set the -27V, +27V and 7V LED's tried to light but went down immediately. The 11V LED lit brightly, then the set went off with the red LED flashing. I removed F906 and unsoldered the anode of SCR Q903. The set came on and I checked all power supplies and found them normal. I then installed F906 after finding no problem in the high voltage circuit. The set came on and all functions are normal with a beautiful picture. I was then able to troubleshoot the shutdown circuit. I found the collector of Q914 at ~5.6V with D933 re-

moved and it should have been zero. The voltage at the emittor was 6.95V and base at 6.5V. I found D927 and D977 shorted. Replacing both diodes fixed the set, however the voltages at Q914 were the same on the emmitter and base, but now the voltage was only .226V

Submitted by: Joe Searles - Joe Searles TV

Type: PTV

Brand: Hitachi

Model: 50UX22BA

Symptom: Regulator IC shorting.

Fix: R914 open in feedback circuit. 47ohm 1/2W resistor. Replaced IC901 STR-M6511, F903 (5A pico fuse) and R914.

Submitted by: Joe Searles - Joe Searles TV

Type: CTV

Brand: Apex

Model: GT2011S

Symptom: Dead

Fix: Replaced R502, ntc thermistor, using Phillips part number 483511637005

Submitted by: Joe Searles - Joe Searles TV

Send tech tips to Peter Florance: peter@audio-services.com or fax to 757.498.9554



Application for Membership Virginia Professional Electronics Association, Inc.

BUSINESS NAME: _____

OWNER / INSTITUTION NAME (S): _____

INSTRUCTOR/TEACHER NAME: _____

TECHNICIAN'S NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: () HOME PHONE: () _____

FAX: () Email: @ _____

Type Membership Desired (check one) :

Full (\$48 per year *) Associate (\$36 per year *)

Associate Teacher (\$36 per year*) Associate-Student (\$36 per year *)

Associate Distributor/Vendor (\$100 per year *) Assoc. Vendor/Dist. Employee (\$50 per year *)

*Does not include any local dues that may apply.

Employer / Business Classification : Corporation Partnership Proprietorship

School

(Check one)

Select Appropriate Categories (Check all that apply.) :

Audio-Visual(Pa's/Intercoms/Projectors) (Radio/TV/Stereo/VCR)Consumer Electronics

Communications* Computers/Computer equipment

Distributor Hospital Bio-Med Equipment

Industrial Maintenance Student

Instructor** Audio-Visual Maintenance

Appliance

*(Police, Fire, Rescue, Taxi, CB, Amateur, Business Band)

** (High School/Technical School / College:)

If you are an electronics educational instructor at High School, Technical School, or College, what type of electronics course do you teach?

Would you be willing to help with technical training? Yes No.

Recommend by (Current member) :

(Continued from page 1)

to buy more wheels. And once the wheels were sold, someone had to grind the rough edges, patch the holes and cracks, and help consumers attach them to their various carts or barrows. The segments had to find ways to work together while fiercely competing, both inter-industry, and intra-industry.

Some of that Neanderthal mindset is alive and well today.

The electronics industry of today is far removed from the birth of the wheel. It is also far removed from the electronics industry of fifty, twenty – or even ten – years ago. With the evolution of the industry, the battle for business survival and profitability – among and between manufacturers, retailers, and servicers – becomes more intense each year.

THE BATTLE OF THE TITANS

Manufacturers battle each other over brand image, market share, product price points, service cost containment, and other issues affecting their profitability. Retailers battle each other over roughly the same issues. However, where once upon a time, manufacturers could dictate terms and prices to retailers, that is no longer the case. The growth of mega-retailers and their clout with consumers, and their intense competition with each other, means their demands for the lowest possible price point will be heeded, if not by that manufacturer, then by the next. This competition among manufacturers also fuels their extensive efforts to minimize the costs of in-warranty service.

Caught in the middle (or out on the exploding fringe) of this phenomenon, is the independent service community. Also enter into this equation the realization of the long-sought-after national service company, and it becomes obvious that the pressures on independent service are tremendous.

WHITHER NATIONAL SERVICE?

Better than half a century ago, the first lasting national trade association was formed to enhance the lot of radio and television servicers. But the fierce independence of those in the industry, and even of those who saw value in association, kept it from realizing its promising potential. The associations could never attract anywhere near even 10% of the eligible professionals. Many of those who did join were subject to perpetual infighting. Factions broke off to form new “national” associations, which further diminished the industry’s effectiveness.

The National Electronics Service Dealers’ Association (NESDA) is the oldest and arguably the most successful of these organizations. It and the others provide numerous avenues for members to work together and gain professional self-improvement. But it, too, is limited in what it can do for individual member-businesses.

These limitations provided an incentive for some of the largest and most successful of the independent service companies to band together in different kinds of groups. Most often, their purpose was to obtain knowledge and gain concessions they couldn’t get from within the existing trade associations. They sought group purchasing advantages or exclusive product lines, petitioned for favorable warranty business, bargained for discounts, and pushed for better warranty reimbursement rates and amenities that might not have been available to the average independent.

One of these groups of servicers was called “The Dirty Dozen” (TDD). Over time, TDD matured and expanded to accommodate changing business conditions (and eliminated the parameters of being merely a dozen). In the mid-1980s,

it became the Service Advisory Group (SAG), and included several members of the existing national associations, including NESDA. It was a prestigious, self-help group that allegedly did not seek and would not accept special favors from manufacturers or distributors. This group found advantage in discussing industry issues and trends, as well as sharing their own “confidential” management and financial information.

In the meantime, numerous companies (including some manufacturers, and eventually, some servicers) tried to create a lasting all-brand national service company. Some of these were: RCA, Philips, Tronics 2000, Montgomery Ward, Sears, etc. In 1998, some NESDA members, including NESDA’s then-president Randy Whitehead CSM, set up a far-reaching group, Service Express International. None of them succeeded to any great degree. In 1999, Gerry McCann CET/CSM/EHF, a NESDA member from Metairie LA, tried to institute an alliance of independent servicers, the NESDA World Service Network, through NESDA. This failed too, partly because NESDA had no ability to sign national service support contracts or establish collective bargaining.

In 2002, NESDA launched another well-intentioned program to serve the industry: NESDA/FieldPower. Three manufacturers invested substantial sums of money to develop software to provide independents with an on-line service-call scheduling and dispatching system. This was developed from a program already used by MCI to enhance its customer service capabilities. Among other benefits, this program would: (1) directly schedule repairs by manufacturers and warranty centers; (2) provide real-time comprehensive reporting of work status and accounting activity; and (3) import and export data

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automatically without any special software. (Servicers with their own software would have had the expense of writing import/export routines for their in-house software.) This was an innovative program that some say could have been the basis for a comprehensive nationwide service information system. However, it failed to succeed because it was not sufficiently embraced by the servicers, nor supported adequately by enough manufacturers.

WHY NSA?

Even though some manufacturers' service personnel remained solidly behind independent service, many weren't getting what they thought they needed in the way of quality service, or timely service information. While most service companies were both competent and honest, far too many were incompetent, dishonest, and provided lousy customer service. Many others were simply mired in "business as usual," being unable or unwilling to modernize, or serve modern consumer needs.

Many of the manufacturers felt they needed an alternative. And they were being courted by the latest incarnation of national service; conglomerate companies that were promising much of the alternative methods the manufacturers and retailers desired. These were nationally oriented companies like A&E, Decision One, IBM, Rent-A-Center, Rent Way, and UPS. (Allegedly, at least one of these companies was disparaging the overall independent industry as being dishonest and incompetent.)

According to Lane Norman CSM (Atlanta GA), one of the attractions of these national companies is the ability to aggregate all data throughout the service experience; from service request to repaired-product delivery. Critical information is at the finger tips (or

mouse click) of the manufacturer or retailer during the repair process. They no longer have to wait for the after-service report. Manufacturers want to know that a consumer's service request is promptly attended to, if a particular part shows a pattern of premature failure, or if consumers are having connectivity problems with a particular model, etc. That information serves them better if they can get it the day of the repair process, rather than days or weeks after the repair is complete.

Gradually, according to Randy Whitehead, president and CEO of NSA, the independent servicers have already lost a sizeable chunk of warranty business. Many manufacturers have already stopped, or are in the process of ceasing the production of CRT-equipped TV sets. This includes Sony, Hitachi, Mitsubishi, and Toshiba. Within a few years, many of the major brands will even stop making plasma-screen sets in favor of LCD. The carry-in market (small TVs, VCRs, DVDs, component music systems, boom boxes, etc.) has dried up to the extent that many independents are already out of the picture. These units, when out-of-warranty, are being replaced rather than repaired. Even Circuit City, which at one time had 37 service centers, now has difficulty keeping technicians busy at five depots. Some manufacturers have started the process of phasing independents out of board level repair, with this business going to large computer repair companies.

For example, Sony uses Decision One for its laptop and computer repair. Sony is currently doing a pilot service program with both Decision One and Qualxserve on their Grand Wega and Plasma sets. Samsung has done a trial with Decision One. InFocus, a major projector manufacturer, uses UPS for their repair. IBM has assumed

the functions of Philips' service division, including the repair of all Philips products. Major retailers, including Circuit City, were also looking in the direction of a single national entity for repair service.

MEETING A CHALLENGE

One member of SAG relates that, at one of their meetings on March 29, 2004, in San Diego, some key manufacturers' representatives implored them to create an alternative to the big national service companies. Otherwise, they said, they would also be forced to throw their lot with those groups which were hotly pursuing them.

In May, 2004, not willing to accept the alternative, the bulk of the members of SAG formed the National Service Alliance (NSA). It is incorporated in the state of Delaware, with its headquarters in Salt Lake City UT.

WHAT IS NSA?

In an advertisement to recruit technicians that appeared on the Internet in January 2005, the company claimed to be: "a consortium of the premier independent repair facilities across the U.S." It claims to need technicians "in every major city in the U.S." – from Boston to Los Angeles, and from Portland OR to Miami FL. It also informs that it "has a national contract with one of the largest electronic retailers to repair television products from more than 600 (out of approximately 620) of its stores nationwide." (That retailer is Circuit City.)

Our information indicated that there are now 18 shareholders who have put up substantial sums of money to get the program off the ground. Most of these are present or former movers and shakers within NESDA (including several past presidents).

The Board of Directors of NSA consists of the following officers:

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President and CEO, Randy Whitehead, Service West, Salt Lake City UT; **Vice President**, Charles Chappell, United Radio, Syracuse NY; **Secretary**, Gerry McCann, McCann Electronics, Metairie LA; and **Treasurer**, Chuck Masa, Electra-Sound Inc., Parma OH. Additional members of the board are: Brian Weisner, AVRC, Kernersville NC; Jeff Manning, Sharper Video, Portland OR, Lane Norman, Norman's Electronics Inc., Chamblee GA, and John Spiridakis, Advisory TV, New York City.

According to Lane Norman (one of those past presidents), a portion of the seed money went to develop software and interfaces for the most commonly used business management systems. They have successfully linked popular software packages, such as SoftServ, CDA, and Servicing Systems, that are used by other servicers. One of the eventual results is that customers, including manufacturers, and retailers, can go to a website and immediately determine the status of their product. These clients also have the ability to access the NSA website to retrieve information in the format they desire.

Gerry McCann outlines the purpose of NSA as "to study, offer, negotiate, standardize, establish common MIS technology, and organize the service of member servicing companies and their associated contractors." He also says the plan is to "develop and establish programs with manufacturers, retailers, third-party administrators, and others." He adds that, "Further development is intended to expand toward a network of servicers with equal commitment to satisfying the needs of the consumer electronics marketplace."

According to some key NSA participants, the funding by investors into the creation of NSA is many times the manufacturers' investment in NESDA's FieldPower.

They also claim that the engine for scheduling, product tracking, and reporting is ten times stronger than that used in FieldPower.

Nevertheless, the NSA founders have tried to make this venture valuable to NESDA as well. They encourage their shareholders and participating service centers ("associates") to be members of NESDA. They also must be – or be prepared to become – a Certified Service Center (which requires both management and technician certification).

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

The contract that "Authorized Service Providers" (ASP) must sign include the following provisions: (1) use only industry standard parts; (2) provide the highest quality customer service; (3) maintain clean, orderly, and sanitary premises and vehicles; (4) achieve Certified Service Center status within one year (with encouragement to be or become a NESDA member); (5) comply with all pertinent laws; (6) guarantee the repair (and labor on the entire unit) for an agreed-upon duration; (7) accept referred resolution of unserviceable units; (8) assume total responsibility for possessed products; (9) honor extended warranties at a predetermined rate; (10) submit to random quality control inspections; (11) transmit to NSA a monthly management and performance report for each client relationship; (12) pay NSA 3% of applicable billed labor; (13) carry a million dollar-plus general liability insurance policy, and add "additional insured" as required; (14) submit daily status reports on all NSA-related repairs to NSA FTP etc. Agreements are for one year unless terminated "as per agreement."

Another requirement is that those without one of the requisite service management software, must obtain it (at up to \$4,000) in order

to collect and transmit the requisite data.

Each investor will cover their respective (exclusive) service area using a combination of resources. This will include sub-contracting with other independent servicers to cover areas outside the NSA member's normal service territory.

Of course, some sub-contractors (such as small servicers who fill coverage gaps in rural or outlying areas) could not, and will not be expected to meet all of these requirements. However, the ASP is ultimately responsible for all aspects of service it performs or sub-contracts. Therefore, the ASP will be careful who it selects, and what type of criteria it establishes for sub-contractors.

HOW DOES NSA WORK?

NSA negotiates a contract with a client. In theory, this would be either a manufacturer, service contract company, or mass retailer. (In practice, at this time, NSA's only national client is the retailer, Circuit City.) The service center then gets together with that client to personalize the transaction, and determine the client's service needs, and logistics.

Units are picked up on an agreed-upon schedule. When they arrive at the service depot, the units are logged into the ASP computer system. This data, and subsequent repair information, is automatically forwarded (through an interface) to the NSA server. There, it is consolidated with data from all ASPs. In-warranty units are billed to the applicable manufacturer, while non-warranty merchandise is repaired up to an agreed-upon cost limit.

If an estimate approval is needed, the service center puts the service order in an estimated status in his own computer system and indicates the dollar amount of the estimate. Their computer transfers this estimate data to the NSA server where it is then presented to the client on the website.

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The client reviews each estimate on the website and clicks the appropriate box to indicate if the estimate is approved, declined, or if more information is needed. The website then immediately sends an email to the respective service center to inform them of the decision. (A text file can also be sent to the service center if their computer is capable of importing the authorization number and estimate-approval information.) The estimate submittal and approval notification process is totally automated.

On the day prior to delivery, the NSA server automatically notifies the client. The ASP prepares a manifest, and returns the repaired units to the client.

At any point, 24/7, the client can inspect this data, and extrapolate whatever information the company needs: stock availability, repair part needs, failure trends, repaired-product availability, etc. In the case of a nationwide chain (such as, say, Circuit City), national headquarters can get information on all of its stores serviced by NSA associates that day (or any day). Each individual store can view only the information applicable to them.

After the units are returned, the ASP bills the manufacturer or client directly. All billing to an NSA client, like Circuit City, is automatically exported through the website and validated before it is submitted. Circuit City uses the NSA website to approve all claims for payment according to their own pre-programmed business rules. Rejections are automatically sent by email to the servicer for notification. The servicer goes to the website to correct any incorrect data and resubmits the claim for payment. Most potential clients have indicated a preference for the automated claims processing and payment option. However, according to Mr. Whitehead, they may request a consoli-

dated file that contains their claims from all NSA members. The ASP is then responsible for forwarding the applicable transaction/administration fees (3% of labor) to NSA. (Some of these procedures may change in the future.)

NESDA President Brian Gibson CET of Wellesley MA, reported that Gerry McCann outlined the purpose of NSA's business model to the NESDA Board of Directors in August 2004. He said that NSA intends to negotiate national contracts, including a national or regional rate structure, along with performance metrics with the manufacturers. NSA also plans to develop programs such as call scheduling, enhanced service billing, and reporting with manufacturers, retailers, and extended warranty providers, utilizing advanced computerization.

In the works are such additional features as allowing participating servicers to share generic information, permitting consumers to schedule their own service calls with the ASP, and more.

NESDA'S POSITION

By NESDA President, Brian Gibson CET, owner Elite Media Solutions, Wellesley MA

(This is condensed from an article that appeared in NESDA's *ProService Magazine*.)

At the 2004 NESDA convention in Nashville, industry figures made two separate significant presentations to the NESDA Board of Directors.

The first was by representatives of Philips Consumer Electronics Co., Wayne Nichols and Ken Goins. They related that IBM was assuming the customer relations, parts distribution, and service administration functions of Philips' entire service division. It is anticipated that board-level repair of their products will replace current component-level repairs for in-

warranty service within the next few years.

The second presentation was by Gerry McCann of the National Service Alliance. He explained what NSA is, the reason for its creation, and its potential impact on the NESDA membership.

NESDA's position on national service has not wavered. We still believe that the independent service network is the best way to provide warranty and extended warranty service to the entire country.

If Philips' conversion to IBM includes the use of independent service networks, then we could mutually benefit. However, if IBM intends to use independents only in the short term merely for their component-level skills, then completely take over in-home service once board-level repairs becomes the norm, then everyone will lose. Consumers, especially, will lose when they are deprived of service options when the warranty expires.

NSA's efforts to secure a national contract seems more encouraging for independents than those of other national entities. Presumably, some of us will be included, albeit as sub-contractors.

As always, the devil will be in the details. We find it troubling that the criteria mandates that membership in a clique is more important than competency. Some superior service centers may be harmfully left out due to their geographic relationship to an NSA investor. Also, the task of covering the entire country seems daunting and implausible.

Many manufacturers have expressed staunch support of NESDA and independent service. However, it seems that some manufacturers have been disingenuous. Several years ago, we were told that better times were coming. When the new, expensive products arrived, they said, the service of these high-tech products, like HDTV, would bring

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increased profitability. We were advised to increase the proficiency of our technicians, and to invest in new, modern (and expensive) test equipment.

Now that these new products are here, we hear a different tune. Some are suggesting that we no longer need technically knowledgeable technicians because no great technical expertise is required to swap boards. Coincidentally, they say, since high-salaried technicians are no longer needed, we have to reduce our rates.

NESDA realizes that the actual repair of new products may be less costly. However, the complex technologies, and the likelihood the sets will be interconnected with other devices, requires additional technical skills, such as networking and computer repairs. It also requires extensive customer-relations skills. So, it's NESDA's position that we still need highly skilled technicians to meet the complex challenges of the future.

NSA, and the Philips/IBM partnership – and the unrealistic expectations of some manufacturers – top the list of our challenges. We feel we can meet those challenges. as we always have.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Obviously, this isn't a plan that everyone can fit into. Many servicers can't qualify for this, just as they couldn't qualify for a Certified Service Company or NESDA World Service Network designation. Some who could qualify, won't want to submit to the kind of rules and scrutiny that NSA requires. Some won't like being "naked," with real-time information readily available on-line. Now, procrastinating servicers will lose the ability to gain time by falsely blaming others (such as claiming that "the part is on order" when it isn't). Some of the smaller companies will not wish –

while some cannot afford – to invest up to several thousands of dollars in a compatible management software program.

A portion of the servicers feel that NSA is another unfair structure that the smaller independents have to compete with, or is an abandonment of the all-for-one philosophy that NESDA and the other trade associations embody. Some feel that the requirements drain whatever profits there might be, rendering any increase in business worthless, while leaving them scant time to care for their current customer base. There's also the fear by some that NSA will take some of their existing service business (such as with Circuit City), and award it to an NSA investor. And others are assured that such a national consortium is doomed to failure like all the predecessors.

COMMENTS, PRO & CON:

Following are comments from some of the people in each camp: those who are for it, or believe it's the way to go; and those who are against it, or feel it can't succeed.

PRO: The Way of the Future

KEEPING OPPORTUNITY ALIVE

By Randy Whitehead CSM, President/CEO, National Service Alliance, Salt Lake City UT:

One thing that helps put this issue into perspective is projecting what it will mean to independents and the industry two to four years into the future. We all know in-shop repairs are going away. That means independents will be doing only in-home repairs.

There are two types of in-home repairs: component-level repairs, and board-level repairs. The major

manufacturers have said that most in-home component-level repairs will disappear within three years as traditional analog-CRT televisions are phased out. HDTV has accelerated this change because High Definition sets are based on digital technology which incorporates circuitry that is small and difficult to repair to the component level. Some time ago, manufacturers recognized the service challenge posed by HDTV. They have moved to a board-level repair model that makes it easier to repair a set in a timely manner for the customer. This trend is not new, and soon all sets will be board-level repair.

Knowing that the future of service will be in-home board-level repair, this major threat to independent service becomes obvious. More and more manufacturers are choosing to outsource board-level repairs to the large national computer repair companies. This would leave nothing for most independents to do. Some could remain in business for a couple of years living off the diminishing scraps of component-level repairs. However, that avenue will eventually evaporate completely.

If independent service doesn't provide a viable and competitive alternative to the large national computer repair companies, then independent electronics repair becomes a "buggy whip" industry. It will be doomed to dry up and disappear.

NSA was formed in response to that threat. Its mission is to become the absolute best solution in the industry. It is a strong and competitive offering that can turn the tide. It can allow independents to retain their position as the premier providers of electronics repair in the industry.

It is important to remember that the NSA service model is to create a nationwide network for on-site service. All NSA service providers will

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be connected by May 2005. Then, a manufacturer, retailer or extended service company can schedule service calls on-line any where in the country. On-line service call scheduling, dispatching and complete tracking of repair status is what sets NSA apart. It is what national accounts are begging for. It is what will enable independents to compete against the national computer service companies that don't have the technical expertise that we do.

PART OF THE SOLUTION

By William Sims CSM, Owner Bayard Electronics, Dallas TX; NESDA Region 4 Director; Past President, Texas Electronics Association

I have consistently tried to alert my fellow members of NESDA and the independent service industry to the growing threat from the non-independent, national service companies. These are aggressive entities, and if they are successful, will leave you, me, and all of NESDA out in the cold. They have put intense pressure on the manufacturers to move the service of their products to them, and away from the independents who have served the manufacturers and consumers so well for so many years. NESDA was warned that such changes, if not properly responded to, would put an end to our profession as we know it. Like the warnings of icebergs sent to the Titanic, my warnings were not well-received.

In the spring of 2004, the threat became more urgent and more ominous.

A group of us in another association decided to create a nationally oriented service organization of our own. This was partly because NESDA had not, and actually could not, create such an organization. Our rationale was that by doing this, we might retain most of this service work for us and many other independents.

As we held discussions with man-

ufacturers, we perceived that many of them preferred to continue dealing with progressive independent servicers like you and me. But we knew that things were going to change fast, and we had to move quickly to succeed.

The formation of NSA is now history, and I am proud to be a part of the forward-looking stockholders and other participants. I am still a "little guy," trying to stay in business and represent your interests as a member of the NESDA board of directors. And believe it or not, the founders of NSA are still concerned about, and are working for the benefit of the independent electronics industry.

CON: A Misguided Plan

TOO MANY QUESTIONS

By Al Moses CET; Owner, Al's TV Service Center, Dover DE; President VPEA/Chairman Mid-Atlantic Conference

There are three main thoughts that persist about this NSA venture:

(1) If Circuit City could not survive financially doing their own service, why does NSA think they can? RCA, Philips, and Sony are among many who have tried to compete against independents with all-brand national service, and they all failed.

(2) The only people I can envision this program working for are those who are just starting a service business. In that case, you can afford to give your devoted attention to the record keeping and financial demands of the NSA group. If you are already established in business, and are taking care of the manufacturers and customers who have helped put you where you are today, it's a different matter. You can't afford to give your current clientele any less attention or you are sure to fail.

(3): Even if you were to join

this NSA group, there is a major concern. There are no guarantees that Circuit City and/or the NSA group is going to be around in two or three years. How will you then satisfy your investments, and who will pay your invoices for the work already accomplished. I would personally rather take my chances in the stock market.

With or without NSA as a contender, I expect to be servicing my contented customers many more years.

MANUFACTURERS WILL KEEP CONTROL

By John Eubanks CET/EHF, Owner, Quality TV, Jacksonville FL; Editor FESA Watts Current; NESDA Immediate Past President; ISCET Treasurer

NSA has a pact between them and Circuit City to repair their stock merchandise nationally. To me, this is the very worst form of service. That's because every store tries to claim that all their defective stock sets are in-warranty. They do this even when consumers have registered those products with the manufacturer before they are returned to the store. That always causes extra work and/or delay for payment.

I am neither pro or con towards this venture. I view it as a good-sounding idea that isn't going any further than such schemes have in the past. And there's very good reason for that. Manufacturers never have and never will allow external forces the kind of control this will create. Others would then have too much influence over their options. They are not going to paint themselves into any service corner.

This arrangement might appeal to "bean counters," but the novelty will soon wear off and prove to be an overall unwise choice. Then they will all march in their own directions, and to their own bands.

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INDEPENDENTS OUT OF BUSINESS

By Al Leatherman, *Al's TV, Mine Hill NJ*

If NSA succeeds, the manufacturers will feel that their problems are solved. However, everybody else will have to fold their businesses and either retire or go to work for the big guys. But those companies will cut the less productive employees, while they operate without competition. That is, until the manufacturers put NSA (or other national company) out of business. Remember, once you shut your doors for a length of time, you most likely could not get your business going again.

The only real concern I have about NSA is the possibility of them upsetting or siphoning off support from the manufacturers. That could be detrimental to NESDA, as we depend on the manufacturers for service support, technical training, and financial aid for the annual convention. Without that support, NESDA would have to hold NPSC in a tent at the Fair Grounds.

COSTLY LONG-DISTANCE SERVICE

By R. Daniel Champion *CSM/CET, Electronics Specialists CSC, Lansing MI*

National all-brand service? We have witnessed many failures at this concept in the past.

What I'd like to know is how they approach servicing the small towns, rural areas, and places that require travel in excess of 20 miles. Our company is getting increasing requests to take care of consumers with in-warranty products in such areas. But, I am saying "no" to servicing any in-warranty product that involves travel of 60 miles for an intermittent shut-off problem. The business costs are huge for long-distance service, and most manufacturers don't want to assume this cost themselves. (Out-of-warranty, we can collect the reason-

able extra costs from the customer.)

So, does NSA plan to service only the large metro areas and leave the boondocks up for grabs?

VAINLY RAIDING TECHNICIANS

By Anthony and Linda Falvo, *Anthony's TV & VCR Repair, Utica NY*

One of the NSA elite in our area, has been contacting the smaller service centers. They ask the owner/tech to shut down his business and go to work for them. They are also actively soliciting technicians from our businesses. They should realize there are no good techs left to steal. Their dream of 100% coverage will never happen.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

When I started this article, it was because there seemed to be a great deal of apprehension and unanswered questions on the part of many servicers. There was also a great lack of specific information. While the subject was bandied about extensively on the NESDA e-mail chat forum, NESDAnet, even there the pertinent facts were confusingly mixed with non-facts and even some paranoid conjecture.

We attacked the topic without any preconceived notions. We sought truth – and some worthy opinions – without any desire to either witch-hunt or whitewash. We contacted some people, on both sides of the equation, who either would not talk openly, or who seemed less than candid in their responses. Others, including those whose opinions are printed on these pages, displayed both unique frankness, and a passionate concern for their industry. (Some of those came not from direct interviews, but from opinions published on NESDAnet. In those cases, we requested permission to publish their edited comments.)

The primary source of this information, however, were some of the people who are heavily involved with NSA. I was pleasantly surprised at

the degree of openness and candor I encountered. Gerry McCann, Lane Norman, and NSA President Randy Whitehead did not take offense at any questions, even the hard ones (well, maybe one), and freely cooperated in helping me arrive at a factual presentation.

I have no idea whether this venture will ultimately be judged fair or foul to the industry, or whether it will even succeed. But, unlike some previous ventures, this one is not currently cloaked in a lot of secrecy. An open book, and the light of truth, are good things.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Wallace Harrison is a former president of local and state chapters of the Virginia Professional Electronics Association (VPEA), a former editor of the VPEA Reporter, and a former officer in NATESA, NEA, and NESDA. He also served NESDA as the Publications Editor and Director of Communications for 23 years. Now retired, he lives in Virginia Beach VA.

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the advances of tomorrow.

Service requirements are changing just as marketing requirements have changed. The large retailer is gobbling up the sales market. Similarly, the large service organizations are likely to gobble up the majority of the smaller independents. That is, unless the independents can meet the competition with new and improved methods of supplying the required services. Competition is fierce.

If we hold to the independent "general store" approach, we will be squeezed out of business. If we choose to survive, then we must work together. Yes, I said together. We independents must join together and work for our common goal.

*Frank Blount, (1971), President V. E. A.
Newport News VA*

IN MEMORIAM

**DICK AMBROSE: May 9,
1924-March 17, 2005**



Richard E. "Dick" Ambrose, the first state president of VPEA (nee VEA), passed away peacefully on March 17, 2005 at his home in Newport News VA.

Mr. Ambrose was born in Newport News, but spent his early childhood in eastern North Carolina. He was a pilot in the U.S. Army, flying P-47 fighter aircraft during World War II. His interest in electronics led to his graduation from DeVry Institute of Electronics in Chicago, IL. In 1951, he co-founded A&T Television in Portsmouth VA. Within a year, he was a sole owner and maintained his business until forced into retirement by bad health in 1992. He and his wife, Lucy, then relocated to Newport News in 2000. In addition to his widow, Mr. Ambrose is survived by a son and daughter, a daughter-in-law, one grandson, and a brother.

Mr. Ambrose had an intense belief in the value of trade associations. He was one of the earliest active members of the fledgling National Alliance of TV and Electronics Service Associations (NATESA). He was one of those who campaigned for a local association at the area parts distributorships in the early 1950s. He helped organize and attended the first organizational meeting of VEA-Tidewater in 1955. He



served as local president in 1958/59. A quarter-century later, in 1983/84, he again served as president of VEA-Tidewater, and was named Man of the Year.

He was the first editor of the "state" association newsletter, the "V.E.A. Reporter" (even before there was a state organization). Beginning with a manual typewriter and a mimeograph machine, he and Lucy cranked out the pages, collated and folded them, then stamped and mailed the newsletter every month during the organization's first ten years. Though its appearance pales in comparison with modern publishing products, the "Reporter" effectively spread the word about the importance of association to members and prospective members alike.

Dick Ambrose was one of the band of pioneers who traversed the state many times to help build local chapters for the state association they dreamed about. He also served as chairman of the state organization committee. When the first organized meeting of the Virginia Electronics Association was held in Richmond VA in 1955, Dick was elected the first state president. Almost 20 years later, he was elected president again for the 1974/75 year.

In addition to his dedication to associations, Dick loved music, and was also a week-end pilot, and a model airplane enthusiast. He was awarded an honorary lifetime membership in VEA (now VPEA), and in 1995 was nominated, elected, and installed into NESDA's Electronics Hall of Fame.

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of thousands of books in a reasonable amount of tapes.

The only problem we had was getting a working CBM. When his CBM would fail, he had to wait to get driven to the library in order to exchange it.

My finance suggested I volunteer to repair the machines. I thought that this could be a good project for the VPEA. After all we don't do any community service and who better than us to maintain them.

I ran this past our local VPEA chapter and was surprised at the level of interest. Everyone wanted to help in some way.

I called the library and asked about helping out. I was told: "Let me get my supervisor; Please don't hang up!!". Aleene Wicher, who runs the program in Virginia Beach connected me with the NLS's Kevin Watson. Kevin sent the necessary training tapes and replacement parts. The training videos are excellent and the parts kit is quite complete as well

The machines are not repaired as much as rebuilt, which is nice in this day where many customers want the cheap way out.

We've had a couple of meetings and trained a number of members to repair and quality-check the machines.

We feel this is a great way to give back to our community. We want to publicize our experience in the hopes that other organizations could also help out. It will also help combat the negative public image that the service industry has unfairly gained in some areas. Stay tuned for more on this.

If you're interested, contact me (phone and email on page 2) or contact Kevin Watson with the Library of Congress NLS (202) 424-8567

NESDA NEWS

News from the National Electronic Service Dealers Association



Region 2 Director: “NESDA is Working for You”

Doug Freeman, NESDA Region 2 Director, will attend the Mid-Atlantic Conference in Virginia Beach.

Mr Freeman commented: “NESDA is working on several programs that I think will be very beneficial to the membership.” He reported that he will be in Orlando in the next couple of weeks for Nesda’s Spring Board Meeting. One of NESDA’s discussion topic Mr Freeman said, will be the NSA issue.

He also said: “I had planned on some type of get-together with NESDA members who are attending the Mid-Atlantic Conference while I’m there”

Benefits and Programs for NESDA Members

NESDA SERVICER LOCATOR (NEW)

Customers, TPA’s, and manufactures can now find NESDA members by going online and entering a zip code. All member-service centers located within the radius selected are displayed, showing products serviced, warranty affiliations, extended warranty affiliations, and business and technical certifications. The customer may use the system to send an email request for service. Soon, Google will be used to drive consumers to the site.

For more info, check out the website at:

http://www.nesda.com/locator/state_search.php

NESDANET, THE E-MAIL SELF-HELP PROGRAM

Current NESDA members can join NESDAnet, the e-mail forum for the exchange of industry-related information and technical/parts assistance. Members are able to discuss service and management concerns, seek out parts and technical assistance, and converse on topics of interest. If you are not yet a NESDA member, you can go to <http://www.nesda.com/services/trial.html> for a free, 30-day no obligation trial.

TECHMATE, TIPS PROGRAM

Current members of NESDA and NESDAnet receive ongoing access to a growing web-based program that contains thousands of useful repair hints, includes tips from several major electronics manufacturers.

ACCESS TO INFORMATIVE NESDA.COM WEB PAGE

The NESDA website contains helpful information for NESDA members that the general public and non-members are not able to see.

INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

ProService Magazine is a bi-monthly publication of NESDA and ISCET. With two mailed issues and four on-line issues per year, ProService updates members on major association activities and important industry happenings and trends.

ANNUAL DIRECTORY AND YEARBOOK

Each January, NESDA mails each member a resource directory and sourcebook containing listings of manufacturers, distributors, educational sources, trade associations, trade publications, software and systems providers, service contract

providers, and more. Included in the volume is a listing of all current NESDA members at the time the book was printed, along with photos and contact information for the leadership of both NESDA and ISCET.

INSURANCE PROGRAM

NESDA members may participate in an optional competitively priced, preferred-rate insurance program that offers: Group Life, Health, and Disability Insurance; Dental and Vision Coverage; 401(k); Liability Insurance (Professional, General, Directors & Officers); Building and Property Coverage; and Workers Compensation.

CREDIT CARD PROGRAM

NESDA provides a low-rate credit/debit card processing program for Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, Diner’s Club, and private label cards.

ANNUAL NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONVENTION

The annual gathering of NESDA members offers opportunities for several days of meetings, training, and social events. Included are management seminars and technical training sessions that offer attendees a chance to learn and then practice those techniques through hands-on training. First-time NESDA members receive one complementary convention registration. To learn more about NPSC, go to: <http://www.nesda.com/npsc/index.html>

LEGISLATIVE WATCHDOG

NESDA and its associate organizations keep a watchful eye on political and legislative activities at both the state and national levels. Contact is maintained with government officials to ensure early warning of proposals or rules that affect business and the industry.

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INDUSTRY AND MANUFACTURER RELATIONS

An open dialogue is maintained between NESDA Industry Relations Committee and electronic product manufacturers to convey dealers' special needs. NESDA seeks the intelligent interchange of information to benefit the entire electronics service industry and to improve the relationship between the technician and service dealer, manufacturers and distributors, and the consumers they serve.

MEMBER DISCOUNTS

PARTS: Members receive discounts from several parts distributors as a benefit of membership.

INDUSTRY: Members are also entitled to substantial discounts off the regular prices of NESDA's industry-serving programs. Savings are available for many books, video training tapes, computer software, computerized service tips, and specially selected products.

OFFICE SUPPLIES: Set up a web portal with Staples (through The Buying Group) for your regularly used office products and get savings of from 10-20%.

SHIPPING: Sign up for DHL through The Buying Group for the best in fast and efficient letter, parcel, or package shipping. Get FREE weekly fee for regularly scheduled pickups (savings of up to \$520 annually), plus save 10% on regular freight charges.

For more information about NESDA, contact:

The National Electronics Service Dealers Association, 3608 Pershing Avenue, Fort Worth, TX 76107-4527 • 817/921-9061 • FAX 817/921-3741 • info@nesda.com

Apply for a FREE 1-Year Membership in NESDA: Includes full membership, plus FREE subscription to NESDAnet, and FREE TechMate (Tech Tips). Go to: <http://www.nesda.com/servicers/angelmemb.html>

VEA/VPEA: The 50-Year History of Electronics Trade Association in Virginia

By the VPEA Pioneers and Builders

Once upon a time, there was no trade association for radio and television servicers in Virginia. But such an organization was a dream of a group of servicers in the Tidewater area more than 50 years ago. These men had similar problems and similar ambitions, and they believed that the most effective solutions to their problems lay in combined efforts. And they dreamed not just of local cooperation, but also of finding solutions throughout the state.

It all started in the early 1950s, with informal discussions over coffee at various local parts distributors on Saturday mornings. Two of the distributor personnel who encouraged the group were Hymie Bennett of Radio Supply Co. and Ennis Cain of Cain Electronics, both in Norfolk.

The most persistent of the organizers was a service dealer named Robert Kidd. Kidd was a member of the fledgling national association, NATESA, which was formed in 1950. After several ill-fated attempts, the first effective and lasting organization of electronics service dealers in the state of Virginia was held in Norfolk on July 14, 1955.

With John C. Wood, Jr. presiding as chairman-pro-tem, the first officers were elected and an association name was chosen. Since these far-sighted men envisioned a statewide organization, they chose the name of "Virginia Electronics Association."

Nominated and elected at the initial meeting were: President, A. A. Bradshaw; Vice-President,

Robert Kidd; Secretary, Paul Hirtz; and Treasurer, C. T. Bridgers. The first directors were: Robert Glasgow, Thurman Gardner, J. N. Dennis, Charlie Thompson, and Ray Wiseman. Two others in attendance at that first meeting were Dick Ambrose and Paul Whesdos Jr., who along with Wood and Wiseman would become builders as well as pioneers.

By August they had established dues, discussed, wrote, and voted on a code of ethics and bylaws; and agreed to affiliate with NATESA.

In addition to managing the local organization, the pioneers and builders kept their dream and goal: a true statewide organization.

Early on, Dick Ambrose assumed editorship of the association newsletter, the VEA Reporter. Dick used a manual typewriter and a mimeograph machine to tell of the advantages of association. Then he and his wife, Lucy, would collate the pages, fold, staple, address and stamp them, and send them to members and prospective members, as well as potential leaders in other parts of the state.

There were growing pains which included minor squabbles and major disagreements. President Bradshaw resigned a couple of months into his term, and VP Bob Kidd served the rest of the term as president. The original healthy interest of some diminished, and the organization appeared to be foundering.

Nevertheless; there were always those hardy individuals especially Dick Ambrose, Paul Whesdos, and John Wood who refused to give up. Besides holding their local association together, they found the time (and a sizeable portion of their own expenses) to visit other parts of the state.

They traveled to Richmond, Roanoke, Lynchburg, Suffolk, Petersburg, Northern Virginia, the Peninsula, etc to spread their ideals. They pushed and pleaded, and though they were often rebuffed, they didn't falter.

Finally, part of their dream was

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TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

Each year, the best trainers from the top manufacturers come to the Conference to teach attending technicians how to understand and service the current crop of high-tech products.

At press time, the following manufacturers were committed to participate in MAC '05: Hitachi, JVC, Mitsubishi, Panasonic, Philips, Pioneer, Samsung, Sharp, Sony, Thomson, Toshiba, and Zenith. (Others have tentatively committed.) Howard Electronic Instruments will also conduct a seminar on effective soldering and de-soldering.

HELP FOR MANAGERS

While the technicians are attending their choice of seminars, there are also excellent sessions for management personnel.

On Friday afternoon, exhibitors will display some of the stuff that can make servicing easier, more efficient, and more profitable. Usually, there are a score of companies showing their wares at the MAC trade show. Exhibitors already committed at press time were: Howard Electronics Inc., NESDA, Panasonic, PTS, TriState Modules, and Tritronics. Lots more will come, including parts distributors, software companies, service contract vendors, etc.

On Saturday, service dealers Peter Florance (VA) and Roberta Chesney (NY) will moderate an all-day, Manufacturers' Round Table question-and-answer session. Attending servicers may submit industry-specific questions to representatives of participating manufactures, distributors, and

service contract companies.

TIME FOR FOOD, FUN, AND RELAXATION

The manufacturers, distributors, and service contract companies who contribute to the MAC are generous in their support. That's why the amount charged attendees doesn't nearly equal the amount spent on even their individual meals.

The meal sponsors for MAC '05 are: Mitsubishi, Panasonic, PTS, Thomson/RCA, Toshiba, and Tritronics.

At press time, other sponsors or contributors were: AON, Cumberland Electronics, NEW, Philips, Pioneer, Sony, Tri-state Modules, and Warrantech.

And the meals at the VBRH are noted for their gourmet quality. Early arrivals will find the food, service, ambience, and spectacular view of the bay at the TradeWinds Restaurant exceptional. The less formal Cafe by the Bay, and the TradeWinds bar are folksy, and a great place for intermingling with fellow servicers or freshly made industry contacts.



One of the sumptuous buffets at MAC '04

VPEA 2nd VP, Mike Gorbett (who is also in charge of entertain-

ment for the convention committee,) has secured a really fun Casino Night for Friday evening. You can play craps, roulette, blackjack, etc., and win or lose a lot of chips. But you won't lose a dime, and it's all very kid-friendly.

As a matter of fact, the entire convention is constructed with the idea of appealing as well to parents with children in tow. Additionally, there's the lure of the sandy beach and soft surf along the hotel's wide, private beach.

The hotel also has a spacious indoor/outdoor pool, and a well-equipped spa. Hotel guests can hike or bike (with free loaner bicycles)



through the cypress trees at nearby First Landing/ Seashore State Park. Or experience the lighthouses at nearby Cape Henry and the boardwalk along the Atlantic Ocean at Virginia Beach. Families can also take a side trip to Colonial Williamsburg, Busch Gardens, the Virginia Marine Science Museum, or the Nauticus Marine Museum and U.S.S. Wisconsin near Norfolk's downtown Waterside complex.

The award-winning Virginia Beach Tennis Club is nearby (hotel guests get 1-hr. of court time for each registered night), and the area has many golf courses.

(Continued on page 17)



Roberta Chesney (left-center) emcees the Manufacturers Roundtable at the 2004 Mid-Atlantic Conference

(Continued from page 16)

Speaking of golf, the friendly Tritronics crew is again sponsoring a fun golf outing for attendees on the Thursday preceding the convention.

For those who like to schmooze, or just relax following the day's cranium-cramming, there's the always popular hospitality room. Sponsored by Hitachi, and hosted by genial Loni and Lawrence Kanak, it opens each evening following the convention's activities.

CELEBRATING A RICH HERITAGE

Fifty years ago, in 1955, forward-looking local service dealers saw a need for cooperation among competitors. They convinced enough of their colleagues to form a trade association for the Tidewater area. They dreamed of eventually creating a statewide organization, so they called it the Virginia Electronics Association (VEA).

For ten years, they tirelessly traversed the state to urge servicers in other areas to form local groups. In 1965 forty years ago they banded these groups together into a true statewide association. They elected officers, and gave them the state name. The local group then proudly renamed themselves the Virginia Electronics Association of Tidewater.

In 1991, the first of what would be the annual Mid-Atlantic Conferences was held in McClean VA, in conjunction with the VEA convention. In 1996, the name of the association was changed to the Virginia Professional Electronics Association (VPEA).

While VPEA is always poised to look to the future, we are proud of our history, and of the people who made it. During the upcoming convention, we will honor those people we call "pioneers"; reluctant leaders who gave of themselves and their

businesses to make their industry better. Our surviving "founding fathers" and their spouses will be guests of honor at our 50/40 anniversary convention.

And we are especially honored that our keynote speaker on Friday night will be Mr. Walt Herrin, the National Service Director for Hitachi America's Home Electronics Division. Mr. Herrin will dispense his usual sage advice about the industry while calling attention to VPEA's 50 Years of meeting the challenge.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

This is the industry conference that has it all. Technical and management information, food, fun, and fellowship in a historical context.

A complete, though tentative schedule (except for seminar times and titles) follows. A conference registration form is on page 15. For updated conference information and the latest training schedules, please check out the *new* VPEA website at <http://www.vpea.org>.

If you want to golf on Thursday morning, June 9, you can contact Randy or Kim at Tritronics directly, at 800-638-3328.

We have negotiated very special room rates at the hotel: \$97 per night, double occupancy, with a gorgeous panoramic water view. (With the 12% room tax, the total is appx. \$110.) However, this price is guaranteed only until May 19. So get your registrations in early. Contact the hotel directly: Virginia Beach Resort Hotel, 2800 Shore Drive Virginia Beach VA 23451; 757-481-9000; 800-468-2722;

vbresort@aol.com.

Come share our Golden Anniversary convention and educational opportunities. You can also bring your family and your zest for fun.

Preliminary Schedule for 2005 Mid-Atlantic Conference and VPEA Convention

Wednesday, June 8th, 2005

6: PM -8 PM Registration for Golfers

Thursday, June 9th, 2005

11 A.M - 5 PM VPEA Golf Outing;

Sponsor: Tritronics

6 PM Midnight: Hospitality Room Open;

Hostess: Lonie Kanak; Sponsor: Hitachi

6 PM - 8 PM Registration Desk Open

Friday, June 10th, 2004

7 AM Registration Desk Open

8 AM - Noon: Technical Training

10 AM Coffee and Danish; Sponsor: Philips

Noon - 1 PM Lunch; Sponsor: Mitsubishi

Noon - 4 PM Trade Show

1 -5 PM Technical Training Resumes

3 PM Coffee Break; Sponsor: NEW

5:30 - 6:30PM Cocktail Hour

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM Dinner; Sponsor: PTS Electronics

8:30 - 10:30 PM Casino Night

10 PM - Midnight: Hospitality Room Open;

Hostess: Lonie Kanak; Sponsor: Hitachi

Saturday, June 11, 2005

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM Breakfast Sponsor: Tritronics

8:30 AM - 12:30 PM Technical Training

8:30 AM - 12:30 PM Manufacturers

Round Table

10:30 AM Coffee Break; Sponsor: Pioneer

12:30 PM - 1:30 PM Lunch; Sponsor: Panasonic

1:30 PM - 4:30 pm Manufacturers Round-table Continues

1:30 PM - 5:30 PM Technical Training Continues

3:30 PM Coffee Break; Sponsor: Philips

5:30 - 6 PM VPEA General Membership

Meeting; Election of Officers

6:00 - 7:00PM Cocktail Hour

7-9 PM Awards Banquet; Sponsor: Thomson / RCA

9 PM- Midnight: Hospitality Room Open;

Hostess: Lonie Kanak; Sponsor: Hitachi

Sunday June 12th., 2005

9 - 10:30 A.M Brunch and Give-Away;

Sponsor: Toshiba

11:00 AM VPEA Board Meeting

(Continued from page 15)

fulfilled when VEA of Lynchburg was formed in 1960. Lynchburg joined Tidewater as the then-state VEA. Then, with the help of Lynchburg leaders, such as Earl Talley, Tom and Jane Hudson, etc., VEA of Roanoke was formed in 1962. The following year, 1963, VEA-Danville and VEA-Richmond were added to the list. In 1964, Covington/Clifton Forge, Tri-Cities (Petersburg/Hopewell/Colonial Heights), New River Valley, and Martinsville/Henry County, started VEA affiliates.

By 1965, there was a group of associations around the State, all using "Virginia Electronics Association" as part of their name. But, there was still no actual state association. Still, the pioneers and builders would not be denied. On May 2 and 3, 1964, the first state organizational meetings were held in Richmond.

The meetings were attended by leaders from the locals of: Danville, Lynchburg, Petersburg (Tri-Cities), Richmond, Roanoke and Tidewater. The group was called to order by LeRoy Cox (Tidewater). A temporary chairman and secretary were appointed: Dick Ambrose (Tidewater) as Chairman, and Clifford Shaw (Richmond) as Secretary.

A second meeting was held in Richmond on November 14, 1964. A proposed Constitution and By-Laws were hashed out and temporary officers were elected for the purpose of incorporation. The total slate consisted of: Dick Ambrose (Tidewater), President; Lloyd Pillow (Lynchburg), 1st Vice President; John Gibson (Roanoke), 2nd Vice President; Lewis Adams (Danville), 3rd Vice President; Clifford Shaw (Richmond), Secretary; and Alan Jones (Tri-Cities), Treasurer.

On August 7 and 8, 1965, in Richmond, the proposed bylaws, a constitution, and a charter were agreed upon, and the state Virginia Electronics Association (VEA) was finally a reality.

Other local associations added

were: VEA-Peninsula (1966); VEA-Northern Virginia (1967), and VEA-Tri-Counties (1970).

The Virginia Electronics Association has worked closely, since its inception, with national associations. In the early years, nearly all VEA members were also members of NATESA.

John Gibson (Roanoke) and Cliff Shaw (Richmond) were both early presidents of NATESA. Several other VEA/VPEA members have served as officers, on committees, and other leadership positions in NATESA, NEA, and NESDA. And many of our members have regularly attended the national conventions and participated in the decision-making process. (In some chapters, this was required.)

Later, after years of bitter turmoil at the national level, VEA left NATESA to become 100% affiliated with NESDA. After determining that VEA members could not legally be required to join another organization, VEA dropped that requirement. However, the association continues to support NESDA, and still urges its members to join the national.

Of course, many other changes have occurred in the organization in its half century of existence. There have been two executive directors, Cliff Shaw and John McPherson (Peninsula). In 1991, VEA leaders established the Mid-Atlantic Conference as a part of the annual VEA Convention. The regional conference was a conduit for technical trainers to impart knowledge about new technology products to technicians in the eastern United States. It provided a well-regarded tradeshow of service-oriented products and aids. And it featured the Manufacturers' Roundtable, a forum for candid interaction between service dealers and representatives of manufacturers and other providers to the service industry.

In 1996, desiring to publicly distinguish their trained, competent,

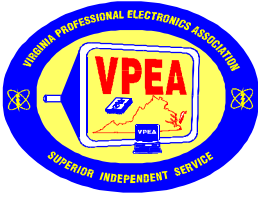
and ethical members from some of the less-professional practitioners of the trade, VEA changed its name to the Virginia Professional Electronics Association (VPEA).

It is now 50 years since that first beginning, and 40 years since the state association was born. Some of those original members are no longer with us due to death, retirement, changing profession, or relocation. But those departing pioneers were replaced by more builders, and most of these join the remaining founders in still believing in the original goals.

During all these years, VEA has worked hard to promote the interest of its members, while also serving the well-being of their customers and the community. They have occasionally joined forces with such entities as the Virginia Consumer Affairs Division, and have helped resolve many consumer complaints. They have worked closely with the Virginia Retail Merchants Association, as well as local Retail Merchants groups, Better Business Bureaus, and consumer affairs agencies. They have fought against attempts at unfair encroachments by cable TV companies, utilities, and rural electrification co-ops. They fought diligently for a licensing law to protect consumers against fraud and inefficiency by incompetent service companies.

They have won some of their battles and lost some. But association leaders and members remain determined to fight any battle on behalf of its members and the consumers they serve. Though diminished in size, the new generation of leaders will assure that the spirit of the association will live on for at least another 50 years.

The Above article was compiled from information from various sources, including Messrs. Philip Jones, Cliff Shaw, Earl Talley, John Wood, Wallace Harrison, and even from authors unknown



REGISTRATION FORM
2005 MID-ATLANTIC ELECTRONICS CONFERENCE
June 10th. -12th. 2005

Hosted by the
Virginia Professional Electronics Association
50 years: meeting the challenge

Name: _____
 Company Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
 Phone (____) _____ Fax(____) _____ email: _____

FULL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION INCLUDES:

All programmed meal functions, banquets, door prize drawing, trade show admission, dealer/manufacturers meetings, admissions to all unrestricted meetings and workshops, and includes all sponsored functions.

Full paid registration RECEIVED BY!	1st registered fully paid adult	Each Additional adult (Same family or bus.)	Children (Age 5 – 16)
April 30, 2005	_____ @ \$125	_____ @ \$120	_____ @ \$90
Full Convention	_____ @ \$135	_____ @ \$130	_____ @ \$90
Subtotal :	_____	_____	_____

Make checks payable to: Virginia Professional Electronics Association.

Total Amount Inclosed: _____ **Check or Money Order Number:** _____.

Room reservations will be handled solely by Virginia Beach Resort and Conference Center, 2800 Shore Drive, Virginia Beach, Virginia.
www.virginiabeachresort.com

To guarantee a room @ the \$97.00 rate, reservations must be made no later than May 19, 2005. Call 757 481 9000 or 800 468-2722.
AFTER THIS DATE ROOMS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE , AND THE ROOM RATE WILL INCREASE.

**PLEASE PRINT THE NAMES OF ALL ATTENDEES AS THEY ARE TO APPEAR ON THE
 NAME BADGES.**

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____

Please Mail Registration Form to: Mid-Atlantic Electronics Conference
 C/O. Al Moses, CET
 PO Box 188
 Cheswold, DE 19936
 Need more info? Check <http://vpea.exis.net>

Join VPEA Today!

Contact one of the following people for more information about VPEA

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