

Season 1, Episode 11 - September 2025

Radio - Television -
Broadcast News -
Audio - Video Capture

The Technology that
Brought the World to
Your Home



— TEXAS —
BROADCAST
MUSEUM

MONTHLY

MINI-MAGAZINE



THE 4TH TV NETWORK

THE RISE AND FALL OF DUMONT

RESTORING THE BUS

MUSEUM FOUNDER RESCUES DUMONT
TELECRUISER AND RESTORES TO GLORY



IN THIS EDITION



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The rise and fall of the DuMont Television Network.



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1949 DuMont Telecruiser Production Bus Brought Back to Life .



TEXAS BROADCAST MUSEUM CELEBRATES ITS 9TH ANNIVERSARY Page 12

Look at how we changed...and so much more to come!



WHEN TAKING PHOTOS WITH YOUR TV SET WAS NORMAL - Part 1/ Page 13

It was a status symbol, and we all wanted to be in a photo with our sets!



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The Asheville Radio Museum in Asheville, North Carolina.

T HE FOURTH TV NETWORK OF THE 1940S



Most people today are familiar with the FOUR major television networks – ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox (no offense CW Network!). But if you were born after about 1950, Dumont is often described as “the fourth tv network”. In reality, it was actually the *third* network as it went on the air around the same time as the TV divisions of NBC and CBS (1939).

A WAY TO SELL TELEVISION SETS

Early sales of television receivers were hampered by the lack of regularly scheduled programming. However, the Dumont network didn't evolve out of an existing radio network but went in the other direction. Founded by scientist/inventor Allen B. DuMont, the company manufactured TV sets. Much like some of the early movie studios, DuMont's TV network arose out of a corporate decision to create and distribute original programming in order to create demand for the machines they made.

A few months after selling his first television set in 1938, engineer and inventor DuMont opened his own New York-area television station (W2XVT) in Passaic, New Jersey. In 1940, the station moved to Manhattan as W2XWV on channel 4 and commenced broadcasting on April 13, 1940. Unlike CBS and NBC, which reduced their television broadcasting during World War II, DuMont continued experimental and commercial broadcasts throughout the war. In 1944, W2XWV received its commercial license, the third in New York, under the call letters WABD. In 1945, it moved to channel 5. On May 19, 1945, DuMont opened experimental W3XWT in Washington, DC., which became commercial station WTTG.



Allen B. DuMont



Dumont televisions sold poorly due to their high cost and the company's inability to compete with financially powerful rivals like RCA. Although DuMont was a pioneer in early television technology, its innovative products were never widely popular with the general public. Early DuMont sets were luxury items, priced out of reach for most families. Their 1938 model, the DuMont 180, sold for \$395, which would be nearly \$9,000 in today's money.

TELEVISION CONTENT

Without a library of bench of radio stars to rely on like CBS and NBC, DuMont couldn't just adapt existing radio hits for TV, and bring their huge rosters of talent along. They had to program the entire schedule from scratch.

They had quite a few affiliate stations throughout the United States, and they had desirable content too. Their notable shows included *Cavalcade of*

Stars (with Jack Carter, then Jerry Lester, then Jackie Gleason), *The Morey Amsterdam Show*, *Captain Video and His Video Rangers* (favorite TV

program of Ed Norton on *The Honeymooners*), *The Hazel Scott Show* (the first U.S. TV show hosted by a black female), *The Gallery of Madame Liu-Tsong* starring Anna May Wong (first U.S. show hosted by an Asian American), and *Life is Worth Living*, a religious program featuring Bishop Fulton Sheen.



Competition among the networks grew fierce. The number of channels were limited by the FCC. Coming in late to claim station frequencies, Dumont sometimes had to resort to the UHF band, which few sets were equipped to pick up. It lost the ratings wars. In 1948 ABC also entered the

fray, to become the actual fourth network, although they didn't really become a threat until 1953 when they got the backing of Paramount Theaters.

RATINGS

DuMont performed well in the Hooper (pre-A.C. Nielsen)

audience measurement ratings. In fact, DuMont's talent program, *The Original Amateur Hour*, was the most popular series of the 1947-48 season. Two seasons later, *Variety* ranked DuMont's popular variety series *Cavalcade of Stars* as the 10th most popular series. However, by February 1950, DuMont did not fare well in the A.C. Nielsen ratings, as none of its shows appeared on Nielsen's annual top 20 lists.



DuMont Model 180 - First DuMont TV set - 1939

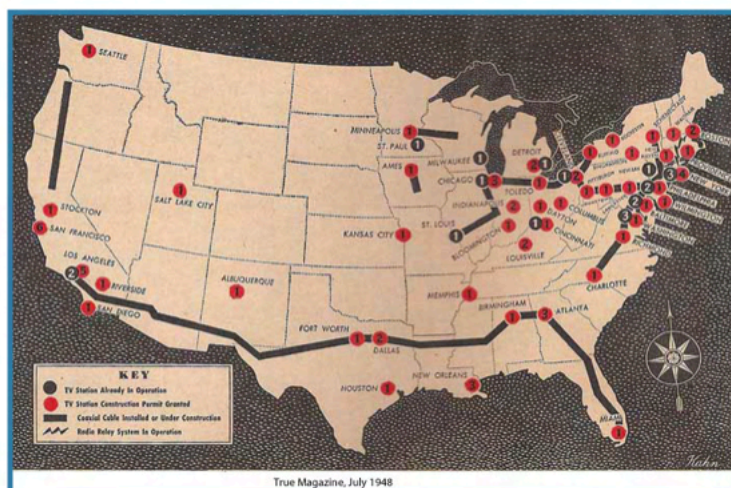
NIELSEN

DISTRIBUTION AND COVERAGE LIMITATIONS

DuMont struggled to get its programs aired in many parts of the country, in part due to technical limitations of network lines maintained by telephone company AT&T Corporation. During the 1940s and 1950s, television signals were sent between stations via coaxial cable and microwave links owned by AT&T. The service provider did not have enough circuits to provide signal relay service from the four networks to all of their affiliates at the same time, so AT&T allocated times when each network could offer live programs to its affiliates.



1949 DuMont Map of Affiliates



1948 AT&T Co-Axial Cable Network for TV

In 1950, AT&T allotted NBC and CBS each over 100 hours of live prime time network service, but gave ABC 53 hours, and DuMont 37. AT&T also required each television network to lease both radio and television lines. DuMont was the only television network without a radio network, so it was the only network forced to pay for a service it did not use. DuMont protested AT&T's actions with the Federal Communications Commission and eventually reached a compromise.

SOME KIND OF PARTNER

DuMont's biggest corporate hurdle may have been with the company's own partner, Paramount. Relations between the two companies were strained as early as 1939 when Paramount opened experimental television stations in Los Angeles and Chicago without DuMont's involvement. Dr. DuMont claimed that the original 1937 acquisition proposal required Paramount to expand its television interests "through DuMont".

DuMont aspired to grow beyond its three stations, applying for new television station licenses in Cincinnati and Cleveland in 1947. This would have given the network five owned-and-operated stations (O&Os), the maximum allowed by the FCC at the time. However, DuMont was hampered by Paramount's two stations -- KTLA (channel 5) in Los Angeles and WBKB (channel 4, now WBBM-TV on channel 2) in Chicago - the descendants of the two experimental stations that rankled DuMont in 1940.

Although these stations generally did not carry DuMont programming (KTLA did for just one year, 1947 to 1948), and, in fact, competed

against DuMont's affiliates in those cities the FCC ruled that Paramount essentially controlled DuMont, which effectively placed the network at the five-station cap. Paramount's exertion of influence over the network's



management and the power of its voting stock led the FCC to its conclusion. Thus, DuMont was unable to open additional stations as long as Paramount owned stations or owned a portion of DuMont. Paramount refused to sell.

In 1949, Paramount Pictures launched the Paramount Television Network, a service that provided local television stations with filmed television programs. Paramount's network "undercut the company that it had invested in." Paramount did not share its stars, big budgets, or filmed programs with DuMont; the company had stopped financially supporting DuMont in 1941. Although Paramount executives indicated they would produce programs for DuMont, the studio never supplied the network with programs or technical assistance.

During the early years of television, there was some measure of cooperation among the four major U.S. networks. However, as television grew into a profitable business, an intense rivalry developed among the networks, just as it had in radio. NBC and CBS competed fiercely for viewers and advertising dollars, a contest neither underfunded DuMont nor ABC could hope to win.



According to author Dennis Mazzocco, "NBC tried to make an arrangement with ABC and CBS to destroy the DuMont network." The plan was for NBC and CBS to exclusively offer ABC their most popular series after they had aired on the bigger networks. ABC would become a network of re-runs, but DuMont would be shut out. ABC president Leonard Goldenson rejected NBC executive David Sarnoff's proposal, but did not report it to the Justice Department.

HOLDING ON - SURVIVAL MODE

DuMont survived the early 1950s only because of WDTV in Pittsburgh, the lone commercial VHF station in what then was the sixth-largest market in the country after New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Washington.

Despite its severe financial straits, by 1953 DuMont appeared to be on its way to establishing itself as the third national network, despite a smaller footprint than ABC. While DuMont programs aired live on 16 stations, the network could count on only seven primary stations - its three owned-and-operated stations plus WGN-TV in Chicago, KTTV (channel 11) in Los Angeles, KFEL-TV (channel 2) in Denver, and WTVN-TV (channel 6) in Columbus, Ohio.

In contrast, by 1953 ABC owned & operated five stations, augmented by nine primary affiliates. ABC also had a radio network descended from NBC's Blue Network from which to draw talent, affiliate loyalty, and generate income to subsidize television operations. However, ABC had only 14 primary stations, while CBS and NBC had over 40 each.

By this time, DuMont had begun to differentiate itself from NBC and CBS. It allowed its advertisers to choose the locations where their advertising ran, potentially saving them millions of dollars. By contrast, ABC followed NBC's and CBS's practice of forcing advertisers to purchase a large "must-buy" list of stations, even though it was only a fourth the size of NBC and CBS.

ABC's fortunes were dramatically altered in February 1953, when the FCC cleared the way for UPT to buy the network. The merger provided ABC with a badly needed cash infusion, giving it the resources to mount "top shelf" programming and to provide a national television service on a scale approaching that of CBS and NBC. Realizing that ABC had more resources than they could even begin to match, DuMont officials were receptive to a merger offer from ABC. Goldenson quickly brokered a deal with Ted Bergmann, DuMont's managing director, under which the merged network would have been called "ABC-DuMont" until at least 1958 and would have honored all of DuMont's network commitments. In return, DuMont would get \$5 million in cash, guaranteed advertising time for DuMont sets, and a secure future for its staff.

A merged ABC-DuMont would have been an entity rivaling CBS and NBC, however, Paramount vetoed the plan almost out of hand due to antitrust concerns. With no other way to readily obtain cash, DuMont sold WDTV to Westinghouse for \$9.75 million in late 1954. While this gave DuMont a short-term cash infusion, it eliminated the leverage the network had to get program clearances in other markets. Without its de facto monopoly in Pittsburgh, the company's advertising revenue shrank to less than half that of 1953.



THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1953



American Broadcasting Company
and United Paramount Theatres

Merge

The BIG Radio-TV news story... and what it means to you

The most important news in the television and radio industry in years has been announced. The long-planned union of ABC and United Paramount Theatres has been approved by the Federal Communications Commission, and the two organizations are now one company.

The event is of far more significance than any statistics of the corporate merger. The new company will be impressively stronger and more flexible, and possess a greater potential for growth.

The combination is a "natural" if ever there was one. United Paramount's great history of showmanship and superb experience discovering and developing new talent will now be available to the American Broadcasting Company.

But the really great thing about the union is the tremendous promise the merger holds for YOU, the radio and television audience.

New programs will be developed. New stars will be attracted. New techniques will be introduced. New facilities will be developed. Not tomorrow, of course. Not next week, or next month. But ABC intends to be a leader in radio and television, and it intends to grow like an oak, not a mushroom.

The future began yesterday. So keep your eyes and ears on the new ABC.

ABC AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANY
A DIVISION OF AMERICAN BROADCASTING - PARAMOUNT THEATRES, INC.
IN NEW YORK: ON TELEVISION - CHANNEL 7, ON RADIO - WJZ 770

Merger Announcement for ABC and UPT (Parent of DuMont)

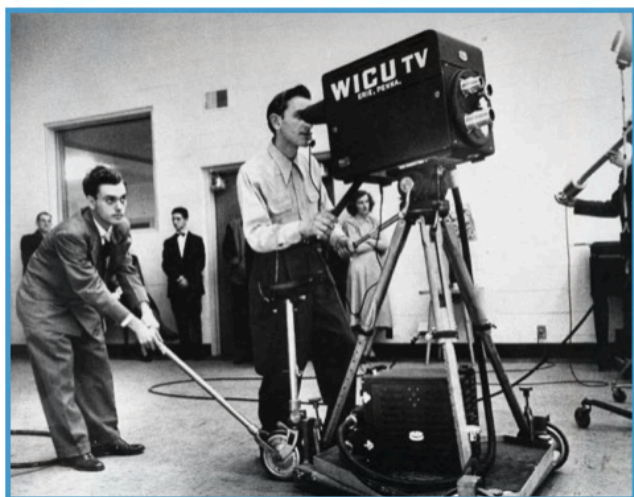
By February 1955, DuMont realized it could not continue as a television network. The decision was made to shut down network operations and operate WABD and WTTG as independent stations.

On April 1, 1955, most of DuMont's entertainment programs were dropped. In August 1955, Paramount, with the help of other stockholders, seized full control of DuMont Laboratories. After that, DuMont's network feed was used only for occasional sporting events. The last broadcast on what was left of the DuMont Television Network, a boxing match, aired on August 6, 1956.

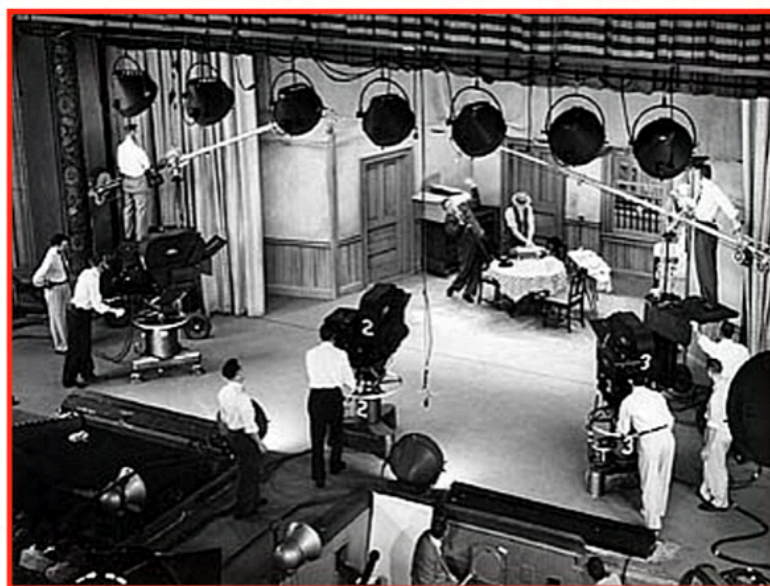
All three DuMont-owned stations still are operating and are owned-and-operated stations (O&O's) of their respective networks, just as when they were part of DuMont. Of the three, only Washington's WTTG still has its original call letters.

Although DuMont's programming pre-dated videotape, many DuMont offerings were recorded on the kinescope device developed by Eastman Kodak. These kinescopes were said to be stored in a warehouse until the 1970s. However, so little value was given to these films that the stored kinescopes were loaded into three trucks and dumped into Upper New York Bay. Nevertheless, a number of DuMont programs survive at The Paley Center for Media in New York, as well as other archives.

Today, DuMont is an unknown brand to most under the age of 75, yet some of the cameras they used and the television sets they built can be seen in the **Texas Broadcast Museum!**



DuMont Network camera in 1951.



The set of the DuMont smash hit "The Honeymooners"

RESTORING A 1949 DUMONT TELECRUISER



In 1949, there wasn't a "Dumont Station" in Dallas-Fort Worth in the same sense as a radio or television station; however, the DuMont Television Network established an affiliated station in the market - KBTW (channel 8 - later becoming WFAA), which was the first full-service TV station in Dallas and began broadcasting in 1949.

Shortly after television broadcasting began from Channel 8, the need for quick news reporting led to mobile news studios. In 1949, DuMont Labs (Parent company of the DuMont Network) put a "Telecruiser" into services to cover remote live events. It was featured in DuMont's 1949 Broadcast Equipment catalog.

The unit was used until 1972, appearing at countless local events including the post John F. Kennedy assassination coverage in Dallas (original WFAA television cameras that covered parts of the Kennedy visit and Lee Harvey Oswald arrest in 1963).

In 1949, the station was called KBTW and had studios and a transmitter located at 3000 Harry Hines Blvd. in Dallas. The story goes that the Telecruiser was originally purchased by Kilgore oilman, Tom Potter, who put Dallas' original Channel 8 on the air in 1949. Potter spent over \$1.5M (\$20.3M in 2025 dollars) getting the station on the air. A year later, he sold it to the Dallas Morning News (A. H. Belo) for a mere \$100,000. It is assumed that he thought this 'radio with pictures' stuff would never amount to anything.



bus, and they gutted it with the intention of making it a motorhome. After years of waiting to be converted to a motorhome and never making any progress, Texas Broadcast Museum founder Chuck Conrad purchased it and began the long process of restoring the unit.

In 1972, the Telecruiser was sold to a Mr. and Mrs. Terry of Oak Cliff (Dallas). They paid \$750 for the



Before



Chuck Conrad Inspects the engine.



The process was satisfying for Conrad, but was not quick. "It was a very long, 10+ year adventure getting it the way it is today. We believe the DuMont Telecruiser is quite possibly the oldest restored TV mobile unit anywhere. It's serial number 101, the first one DuMont ever sold", says Conrad.

It replicates the 1960s' update done by WFAA. The Texas Broadcast Museum has quite a lot of early DuMont equipment on display in the Museum, but 15-20 years ago when the project was underway, there was little or no DuMont equipment to be found. The Telecruiser now contains "like" equipment from the era, as well as some DuMont equipment.

With restoration completed in 2011, the Telecruiser is decked-out in its original color scheme and lettering as it was delivered by DuMont Labs to Channel 8. Best of all, it is fully operational. "It makes pictures and also runs.

"Driving the Telecruiser takes a lot of muscle power. There is no power anything! Steering is the brute force "Armstrong Method," with a huge steering wheel that Ralph Kramden would have been familiar with. The four speed manual transmission has no synchronizers, so double clutching is a necessity. In fact, just figuring out what gear you are in is somewhat of a leap of faith. With more than 25 feet of linkage, between your hand and the transmission, you tend to revert to "The Biblical Method" of shifting.

Seek, and ye shall grind!. If you don't find it, you get to listen to gears gnashing against each other.

The bus has air brakes, which does make it stop fairly well. The down side of that plan is early air brakes stopped working if you lost air pressure. Break the belt that runs the air compressor, and you have no brakes. That isn't very convenient at highway speeds.... Not that this bus can really keep up on the highway-50-55 mph is about it", laughed Conrad.

As for the interior, "the audio engineer sat on the left. The remote supervisor (engineer) sat in front of the equipment racks. The director sat on the right. since this picture was taken, a video switcher has been installed in the director's desk", explained Conrad.

Those in the media who have reviewed the Texas Broadcast Museum say that "the 'crown jewel' of the museum is this gleaming and immaculately restored 1949 DuMont Telecruiser.

Make sure to see it when your Visit the Museum in Kilgore, Texas.

AFTER





NINE LIVES FOR OUR MUSEUM



From one man's love of collecting broadcasting equipment to preserve history, to the largest museum in the Southwest holding our broadcasting past. From TVs to radios, to camera equipment, to production trucks, radio station sets, early recording devices and so much more. The Texas Broadcast Museum celebrates NINE years serving the public in September. Take a look back at how we looked in the beginning and visit to see how we've grown and changed!

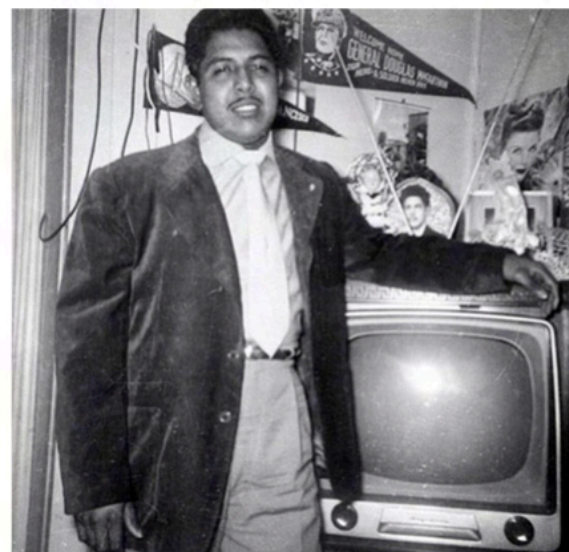




PORTRAITS WITH YOUR TV - IT WAS A BIG THING!

It was not that long ago (1950s and 1960s) that owning a television was such a status symbol to own one, that people purposely posed in front of them. More importantly, those people who viewed the photos rarely saw the person in the photo, just the television they dreamed of owning.

We wore our Sunday Best for Photos with our entertainment friend.



When we felt attractive, we added our TV sets to be even more "WOW"!



Even our Grandparents and Kids felt like Movie Stars when Posing with their Television Set!



DID NOT KNOW THAT



TV REPAIRMEN

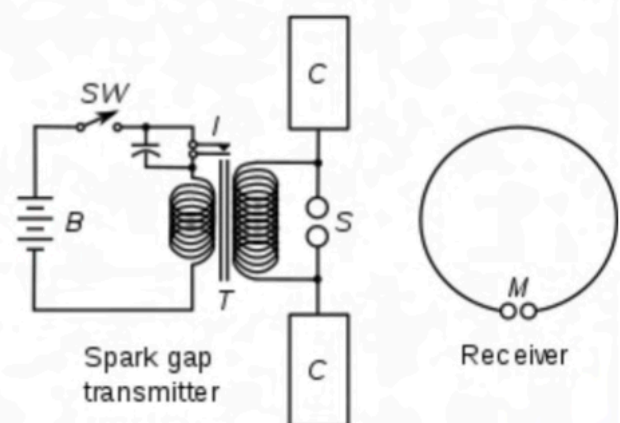
In the 1950s, a TV repairman's salary would have varied, but a general estimate for full-time, year-round workers in 1957 was around \$4,713 per year for men and \$3,008 for women. Minimum wage at the time was \$1.00 per hour, as of March 1, 1956 according to the U.S. Department of Labor.



WHERE THE TERM "HERTZ" CAME FROM

Heinrich Rudolf Hertz experimentally proved the existence of radio waves, also known as "Hertzian waves", between 1886 and 1888.

Hertz's Experiment



DID NOT KNOW THAT

**ORIGIN OF
ICONOSCOPE (FOR
TV CAMERASA)
NAME**

It got its name from the Greek words "eikon" (meaning "image") and "skopein" (meaning "to look" or "to see"). This invention was a big step forward for television.

FIRST RADIO DISC JOCKEY

The first disc jockey was Ray Newby in 1909, playing records on the airwaves during a radio experiment at Charles Herrold's station in San Jose, California, though the term "disc jockey" was not coined until 1935 by Walter Winchell to describe Martin Block's popular show. Newby's pioneering work predated the formalization of the role by over two decades. Yes - That is Ray Newby in the photo on the right!



MUSEUM OF THE MONTH



The Asheville Radio Museum Opened to the public in 2001 by a small group of amateur radio operators, and has evolved from being a collection into a teaching museum, where people of all ages can learn about the history of radio technology and wonder at the equipment and how it evolved.

Their mission is to foster an understanding of the technology and history of amateur and commercial radio development and an appreciation of the impact this has had by collecting and preserving radio equipment, advertising and other memorabilia, in an education-oriented museum, with hands-on displays and a working ham station. And, through outreach, offering education programs and tours for interested students. In doing so, stimulate student interest in science, technology and engineering (STEM).



**Visit the Asheville Radio Museum in Room 306 Elm
Building (near 283 Victoria Road)
Asheville - Buncombe Tech Comm. College
Asheville, North Carolina 28804**

H

ELP US PRESERVE BROADCAST HISTORY



If you have that pile of old stuff that's just been sitting in the barn or basement, it might be something we've been looking to add to our collection for others to enjoy. Old TV cameras, tape systems, audio equipment or early radios and TV sets? Old hardware manuals? Give us a call **(903) 985-8115**, or shoot us an email at **info@txmbc.org**

For us, older is better - radio, camera equipment or something else. Best of all, we have a new 8,500 square foot storage and staging facility to house new donations.

Of course, there is always money. The Museum owns its building and real estate, but insurance, utilities and maintenance are huge expenses. Besides the modest admission fee and seasonal facility rental for special events, the Museum relies on donations from our supporters. Can you help?

To donate financially, please use the QR code below.

