

The missing radio

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My father worked for the railways and as far as I know his first appointment was at a small station, called Nuy in the Worcester farming district in South Africa. This was about 1922 I worked out. He boarded with the station master in a railway house next to the station like many such stations around the country.

The station master owned what was probably the first radio in the vicinity and the farmers used to come and visit to listen to this modern marvel. Outside was a long pole to which the antenna was attached.

One morning the station master stormed into my fathers room to shout: “The radios is gone!” So they looked all over the house until someone happened to glance up, and there was the radio, just below the ceiling in a corner of the room. The antenna pole had fallen over, and the radio was dragged up against the ceiling by the antenna.

Fortunately it suffered no damage. This is not the station master's radio but it is more or less what they looked like:



Radio always played an important role in our house because my father was interested in what was going on in the world.

When he was transferred to Bitterfontein in the Northern Cape around 1942, World War 2 was in full swing and there was no electricity at Bitterfontein so he purchased a Sparton radio that had a vibrator in the power system and could be powered from a 6V car battery as well as from mains. It had several short wave bands. The battery was charged by a wind charger mounted on a short tower outside. I remember there was a voltage regulator that used to click regularly as the relays pulled in. On the wall behind the radio was a map of Europe on which my father drew lines to show the progress of the Allied forces fighting against German forces. The Sparton still exists today although it does not work as well as it used to. The photo I



found on the Internet is not exactly the same model but it looks more or less like it.

Later, when we moved to Worcester, Lorenzo Marques Radio was very popular and was often heard in our house.

Years later I visited Marion Island and the first thing I heard when I stepped inside the base there, was LM Radio coming from a Hallicrafters SX25 I think it was.

Sadly, nowadays many people do not even know what short wave radio is.