

McMURDO SILVER AND HIS COIL PATENT

Alan Douglas

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McMurdo Silver, for all his inventiveness, received only one patent, for a plug-in coil drawer. Its primary feature was the double row of sliding contacts, allowing two drawer positions: all the way in for general coverage, and pulled part way out for bandspread. Silver used it only in his model 3A communications receiver, first advertised in *QST* in March 1933 (the coil alone in February). Sales

must have been limited, as it was not advertised beyond October, when it was superseded by the more elaborate 5A. Postal Radio in New York City offered two models from July 1933 to 1935, using this plug-in drawer.

Silver apparently had delusions of grandeur when his patent issued on December 1, 1936, claiming that it covered all plug-in coil drawers. He went right after National, writing to his old acquaintance Jim Millen, "cordially" inviting him to take out a patent license. As you can see from the exchange of letters, Jim equally cordially invited Mac to take a hike.

Silver should have known better, since the plug-in coil drawer was several years old before he applied for his patent. Westinghouse had used four coils side-by-side on a common panel in its RO-2 submarine receiver (June 1930) and Aircraft Radio Corp. was using a similar arrangement also (described in

McMurdo SILVER CORP.

DIVISION OF G. P. H., Inc.

2900 South Michigan Ave., Chicago, U. S. A.

Telephone Calumet 6309

December 22nd, 1936

Mr. James Millen

c/o The National Company

Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Jim:

You have probably heard rumors that I have had a patent application in covering fundamentally the coil change system that you have used in the HRO and NC100 receivers. The patent in question has just been issued and I am enclosing a copy for your perusal. I suppose I should not write you this letter but should have our attorneys do it. For old times' sake and friendship, however, I am writing you direct to suggest that it may be simpler and less expensive if you want to consider this patent yourself and let me know why you think you are not infringing. I think you are, and upon such assumption am suggesting that a license on quite reasonable terms would be available to the National Company.

The next move I am now leaving up to you with, however, the thought that we are both familiar with the good old custom of tabling letters suggesting patent infringement until action is taken. I think it would be a fine idea if you didn't do that in this case but wrote back promptly your thoughts on this subject. I suggest this as I am certain that between us we can handle the whole matter pleasantly and amicably. If I am mistaken and you prefer to follow the usual policy of inaction, I shall be the first of the year contact our attorneys and in all probability move with much more alacrity than you are accustomed to experiencing in patent matters.

Larry Chambers in conversation with me has mentioned that you yourself have several patents from which you have not apparently derived any revenue, and it occurs to me as Managing Director of Glen's Patents and Holdings, Inc., that there might be some basis of getting together whereby G. P. H. could exploit and enforce your patents - and as enforcers G. P. H. is really grade A-1. Have you any thoughts along this line?

With very best wishes for the holidays and the anticipation of a prompt reply, I am Cordially yours

McMURDO SILVER CORPORATION

McMurdo Silver

MS:L

December 28, 1936

Mr. McMurdo Silver

McMurdo Silver Corp.

2900 South Michigan Ave.,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mac,

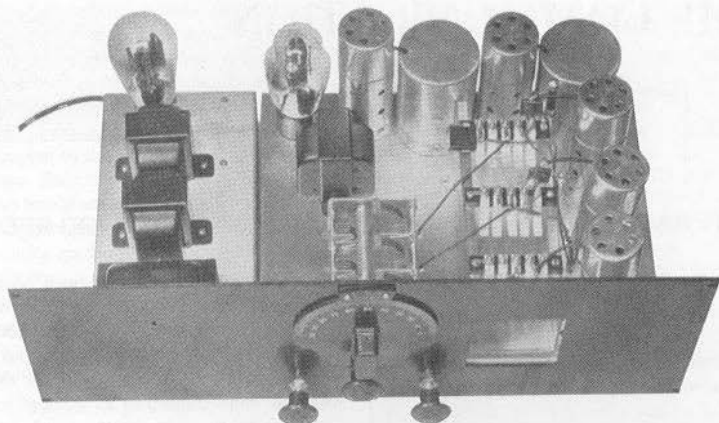
This will acknowledge yours of the 22nd. I have studied your patent very carefully. It is one that I should think would find some worth-while applications in our industry some time.

None of our present production receivers, however, in any way infringe the claims of your patent. We definitely do not, and never have, shifted position in inductors in order to change from general coverage to band spread. I am sure that if you will re-read the claims of your patent, and re-study any of our literature, or re-examine any of our receivers, you will see that this is a very clean-cut matter with no possibility of doubt. The set-up that we use is also very thoroughly and definitely covered with patents issued prior to your application.

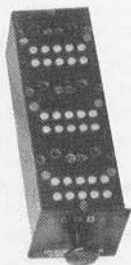
I realize how difficult it is for anyone with a new patent to secure licensees in our industry, unless he has some prominent manufacturer to whom he can point as a licensee. For old time's sake, I would be willing to take a free license under your new patent if it would help you any in your negotiations with others. We might well get around the free part by making a fixed royalty of a dollar a year or something of the sort. At this time, however, I definitely have no intentions of changing the design of any of our receivers to incorporate the teachings of your patent, or for that matter, I am not even contemplating bringing out a new receiver that might do so.

With best wishes for the New Year,
Cordially yours,

JM:KS



The McMurdo Silver "Ham Super" advertised in *QST* - covering 1.5-15 MHz in four bands, with bandspread on 160, 80, 40, and 20 m.



Dec. 1, 1936.

McMURDO SILVER

2,062,379

RADIO RECEIVER

Filed Nov. 30, 1934

2 Sheets-Sheet 1

Fig. 1.

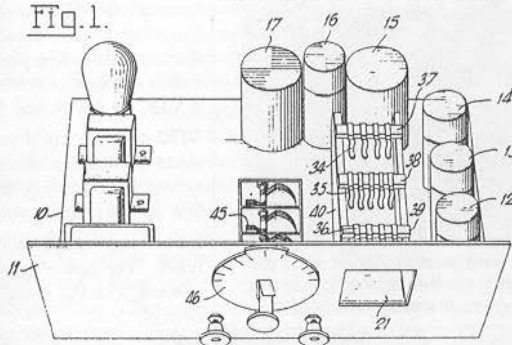


Fig. 2.

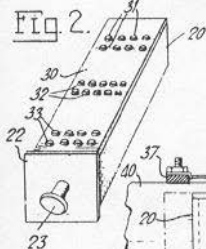
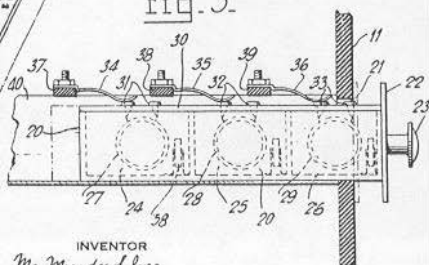


Fig. 3.



INVENTOR

McMurdo Silver

BY

Watson, Bristol, Johnson, Leavenworth

ATTORNEYS

QST, Oct. 1930). Furthermore, every claim in his patent specifically mentioned shifting the tuning range by positioning the drawer, which National did not do.

One puzzle here, is how McMurdo Silver got his patent at all. His application is dated November 30, 1934, well over a year after his *QST* ads, while patent law allowed only one year after publication or sale. Presumably, if the law was not violated, the publication had not been detailed enough, and there were no sales. But what about Postal, who advertised (and presumably sold) the same coils in July 1933, also well over a year before Silver's application?

In any event, whatever the legality, Silver's patent was commercially valueless by the time it issued.