Frank S. Milburn: Burlington’s Cornfield Edison

If you stop in Burlington, the dispenser of octanes and information will likely tell you what you want to know almost before you open your mouth: “Frank’s place is over there behind town in a corn field.” To the Burlington native, you’re just another seeker-after-truth in the endless parade of inventors looking for Milburn’s shop. Frank Milburn, a combination corn-field Edison and softhearted engineer, has a strange hobby: he likes to give struggling inventors free help. - George Laycock, Mechanix Illustrated, 1953

Introduction

There is an old factory building tucked away in a lot in the far northeast corner of Burlington, Kentucky, just beyond the Burlington Elementary School campus. When the staff of the Boone County Planning Commission noted it in the summer of 2002, county records did not indicate the white concrete block structure’s purpose or who built it. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Frank Milburn’s Old Machine Shop (2004)

Long-time neighbors commented that the place belonged to a man named Frank Milburn, who they variously described as an eccentric, inventor, and/or recluse. It was also said that (1) he had a watchmaker’s shop in the building, (2) he did some sort of top secret production during World War II or (3) that he could make a model of any invention if you brought him a design. After several years of research, we now know that there is some truth to each of these claims and that there is much, much, more to the story.

Who Was Frank Milburn?

Frank Sinton Milburn (1910 – 1984) was an inventor for inventors. He was a mechanical genius, expert machinist and die-maker as well as photographer, watchmaker, HAM radio operator and writer. Above all, Frank was dedicated to helping “the little guy” develop ideas into reality. Milburn’s dream was to form an inventors institute in conjunction with his machine shop in Burlington, Kentucky, where inventors and their families could come and stay. While the family vacationed, enjoying the relaxing rural pace of Burlington, Frank and the inventor would concentrate on developing a working prototype from the inventor’s ideas. Although Frank never fully implemented his plan, he coached thousands of would-be inventors from the late 1940s into the 1960s. Along the way, Milburn’s syndicated
news columns and television program brought an avalanche of mail and visitors to sleepy Burlington.

During World War II, Milburn served as a technical consultant to the United States military, helping to solve complex engineering and industrial problems. He also quietly manufactured components for one of America’s most closely guarded military secrets: the legendary Norden Bombsight. Anyone living in Burlington in the 1950s knew who Milburn was and where his shop was located, yet today only a handful of long-time residents recall Frank S. Milburn. Few people today know or appreciate the man’s unique legacy.

Milburn Family Tree

Some of the Burlington residents who remember Frank Milburn believe that he was from a well-to-do family. However, Frank’s second wife Dr. Carol Swarts Milburn states emphatically that Frank was “independent, but not independently wealthy….his income came from consulting.” Frank Sinton Milburn was born in Louisville on May 23, 1910, to John Walter Milburn (1883 – 1929) and Grace Barrington Sinton (1884 - 1964). Together with Frank’s brother John Thomas Milburn, the family moved to Ft. Mitchell in the 1910s and built a house at Park Road and Fortside Drive in 1922. (Figure 3)

Frank’s father John was President of the Sinesimer Clothing Company in Cincinnati and is remembered as a dapper gentleman who changed into a second suit after his morning train ride into work. Frank’s mother Grace was related to the Sintons who owned the Sinton Hotel on 4th Street in downtown Cincinnati. John Milburn was elected as a Ft. Mitchell Trustee in 1928 but died the following March from complications after gall bladder surgery; he was 49. Frank’s mother Grace remarried a man named Hall Hagemeyer; a marriage which at one time landed Frank a surveying job on the Tennessee & Oneida Railroad. Both of Frank’s grandfathers were from the Louisville area and fought on the Union side in the Civil War. In 1940, Frank, a handsome man with “ex-collegiate football player” looks, married Dorothea McQuiston, a “pretty red-haired nurse” from Oxford, Ohio (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Dorothea McQuiston, Frank’s first wife

Sadly, Dorothea and Frank’s time together was brief: she died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1945. In 1963, Frank met Dr. Carol Swarts, an oncologist who provided care for Grace (Milburn) Hagemeyer during an extended illness (Figure 5). The couple married the following year. Carol is an internationally recognized oncologist, presently living in Lakeside Park. Frank’s brother John Thomas Milburn married Corky Andrews of Newport Steel, a union which may explain one of the “Milburn family money” myths.
Figure 5: Dr. Carol Swarts Milburn, Frank’s Second wife (1970). She is pictured here in their garden using one of Frank’s Inventions designed to ease the tasks of planting and harvesting.

The Formative Years of Frank Milburn

From an early age, Frank was fascinated with all things mechanical. His first workshop was located in the basement of the family’s Ft. Mitchell home: here he repaired record players and made models of inventions (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Frank’s first workshop

He also kept his mother awake at night tapping out Morse code on the rail of his bed. According to Carol S. Milburn, Frank attended University High School in Cincinnati for a time but was eventually sent to a military academy in Bell Buckle, Tennessee, an institution designed to “offer a structured learning environment for free thinkers.” In 1930 and 1931, Frank attended the Ohio Mechanics Institute (OMI) in Cincinnati. His coursework doubtless included mathematics, mechanical engineering and hands-on machining. The presence in his personal papers of manuscripts with titles such as COLD FACTS on Direct By Mail Advertising (dated November 12, 1930) and Advantages and Disadvantages: a Complete Study of the Advantages and the Disadvantages of the Various Kinds of Advertising suggests that Frank was interested in marketing as well as manufacturing. Although he graduated from OMI in 1931, Frank took evening classes in various topics well into the 1960s and was eventually awarded an honorary PhD in Bacteriology from Florida State University.

Following graduation from OMI, Frank went to work for the W. S. Hallawell Company in Osgood, Indiana, which specialized in making parts for electric vacuum cleaners; here Frank gained valuable experience in machining and die-casting. By early 1932, Frank had started drafting plans for various inventions. He made a concerted effort to protect this intellectual property by sending a sketch and description of each design to himself or someone he trusted via certified mail. Included among these early designs were:

- Fertilizing Devise - “Claiming a conical shaped bottom” (January 1932) (Figure 7)
- Dripless Bottle Holder (March 23, 1932) (Figure 8,9)
- Dripless Glass Coaster (June 1, 1932) (Figures 9, 10)
- Hydraulic Clutch – “works by pumping oil in and out of cylinders at will” (June 4, 1932)
- Bakelite Door Switch (September 5, 1932)
- Automatic Door Switch – “automatically turns on the light” (September 5, 1932) (Figure 11)

By the mid-1930s, Frank’s design process had become more formalized and included several pages of description and photographs of models under a printed manuscript cover with “FRANK S MILBURN EXPERIMENTAL STATION” near the bottom. At
least two of Frank’s earlier designs were refined and submitted to the United States Patent Office, including the Apparatus for Fertilizing (Patent 2,057,785; Registered October 20, 1936) and the Bottle Holder (Patent 2,075,217; Registered March 30, 1937).
Also by this time, Frank was running his own die-casting plant in Osgood, Indiana, under the name “Milburn Products Company.” The company apparently maintained an office somewhere in Covington as well as in the 2nd National Bank Building in Downtown Cincinnati. Examples of the die cast items the company manufactured are depicted in a catalog titled *Die Castings: Moulds All Material*. Frank S. Milburn, Covington, KY, which has over 30 photographs of metal parts with descriptions. Included in the catalog are clock wheels and pinions, drawer knobs and pulls, an electric sign, a bakelite perfume bottle base, the coin slide for a vending machine, in-pavement reflective road markers, and a rather complex looking devise described as follows:

...mother of yesterday guessed at her coffee – mother of today demands accurate measure for her coffee. We met that demand with this intricate little coffee dispenser. All holes were cored to size and the internal thread which fits a mason jar was cast in the die all in one operation.

Also depicted in the catalog are two of the components for the Milburn Grass Grower, which was the production version of the “Apparatus for Fertilizing” patented by Frank in 1936. The Milburn Grass Grower is approximately 14 inches in height and consists of three die-cast components that screw together: a pointed base with female garden hose coupling, a canister and a screw-on lid with male hose coupling. To use the device, one pushed the pointed base into the ground, filled the canister with fertilizer and connected water hoses to both couplings, with a sprinkler or hand sprayer connected to the top...
Milburn’s factory was the first of its kind constructed in the Burlington area. At the time, there was only one other factory in Boone County – the Walton Canning Factory. The Boone County Recorder hoped that Milburn’s new factory would attract other manufacturers to the area. The reasons why Frank chose to locate his workshop in Burlington are unknown, although some years later, he remarked that:

Being an old country boy, somewhat allergic to cities, we located our lab here in the little town of Burlington, Kentucky, where comfort is the order of the day and only on special occasions do we don our city clothes. Our entire operation and layout here is devoted to the design and development of new products, machines and solving industrial problems. 

There is little documentation pertaining to the pre-World War II operations of the Milburn Products Company in Burlington, although it is likely that grass growers and other items were produced there. One long-time Burlington resident recalls some of the non-war related production that took place at the plant during the 1940s. Bob “Bobby” Greene (then a 7th Grader at the Burlington School) did odd jobs for Frank at the machine shop. Greene’s first job was to paint the metal frames that Frank and a blacksmith named Bill Waters were assembling in the back of the building. In exchange for instruction on forging and blacksmithing, Frank taught Mr. Waters how to arc weld. Frank paid Bobby 10 cents to paint a bed frame, 15 cents to paint a single gate and a quarter to paint a double gate. In the summer, Frank hired Bobby to paint the exterior of the building. Bobby was paid 25 cents/hour to give the entire building a good coat of white paint. Saturday was payday and Frank always offered to flip Bobby “double or nothing.”

coupling. Today, Miracle-Gro and other companies make plastic canisters that screw onto the end of a garden hose but which work in a similar manner. The grass grower retailed for $2.50 and came in a long cardboard box marked “Milburn Grass Grower manufactured by Milburn Products Co., Cincinnati, O.”

Milburn Comes to Burlington

In 1938, Frank bought an 8.5-acre lot on the north side of Burlington and constructed a concrete block machine shop measuring 32 by 100 feet (Figure 12). Milburn had not decided exactly what he would manufacture in Burlington, but noted that he was already manufacturing “lathes, dies and other metal articles” in his Milburn Products Company plant in Osgood, Indiana. Construction on the Burlington facility went quickly as Frank hired local men to construct the building, paying each $2/day to work every day but Saturday: given the state of the economy, they were “glad to have the work.”

Figure 12: Milburn Machine Shop under Construction, 1938

The officers of the company were Frank S. Milburn (Secretary and Treasurer), Walter Hallawell (President) and Grace Hagemeyer (Vice-President). Frank referred to the Burlington plant as “an experiment,” noting that the Osgood plant (and its 35 to 40 workers) may move to Burlington “if conditions warrant it.”

The Osgood plant had been operating the last four years.
Frank S. Milburn:

World War II: “Your Baby is Sick”
The Gruen Connection

In a 1955 auto-biographical letter, Frank commented that he was a “technical consultant” for about 70 companies in 9 states in many different manufacturing and industrial fields although he preferred to be called a “cornfield engineer.” Frank neglected to mention that during World War II, he primarily consulted with the United States military, so much so that the U.S. would not let Frank enlist in the armed forces – he was too valuable as a consultant. Carol Milburn said that Frank was frequently awakened in the middle of the night by phone calls where the caller would say something cryptic like “Your Baby is Sick.” That was Frank’s signal to pack a bag and be ready for someone to pick him up for a flight out of town. On one rainy night, Frank was flown to Cleveland to help solve a computer glitch. After the United States became involved in the North Africa campaign in late 1942, Frank was called in to help the U.S. Army solve the problem of sand impeding armored vehicles.

During the war, Frank frequently traveled to consult with the U.S. military and its contractors. At the same time, the local women employed by Frank in the Burlington Machine Shop were secretly manufacturing a component of the Norden Bombsight. During World War II, only the Manhattan Project was a more closely guarded military secret than the Norden Bombsight. Frank’s bombsight work was performed under subcontract to the Gruen Watch Company, headquartered on Mt. Auburn (aka Time Hill) in Cincinnati. Even before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, industries across the United States had begun retooling for wartime production. American watch companies like Gruen, Elgin, Hamilton, Waltham, and Bulova were no exception. Gruen created a War Instruments Division in Cincinnati to make gauges and indicators for the U.S. Military, including many gauges used on electronic equipment supplied to the U.S. Army Signal Corps. Gruen manufactured the Signal Corps gauges in conjunction with the Triplett Electrical Instrument Company of Bluffton, Ohio. In fact, Triplett showed Gruen engineers how to make the meters in exchange for instruction from the Bulova Watch Company in techniques for setting and polishing jewel bearings and pivots.

While Gruen publicly advertised that they were doing their patriotic duty by making gauges and indicators for the war effort, they were also manufacturing gyroscopes for the top-secret Norden Bombsight. Milburn was subcontracted by Gruen to make a component of the gyroscope using a “Special Core Machine” loaned to Frank expressly for that purpose. According to Carol Milburn, this was a precision engraving machine so accurate that it could be used to engrave plates for printing currency and, as such, was registered with the Federal Government. A couple of times per month, Frank personally delivered a box of completed gyroscope components to Time Hill. Frank made the trip alone at night and always carried a sidearm with him in the car. Near the end of the war, Frank received a letter from Gruen notifying him that the Special Core Machine “held at his plant” had been sold (along with all of the equipment in the Instrument Division) to Triplett and that Frank should make arrangements for transferring the machine with Triplett Purchasing Agent George Linden. Mr. Fisher also personally thanked Frank for his cooperation and assistance, noting that he doubted “very much if it would have been possible for us to have been awarded our Army-Navy “E” for an outstanding job – well done.”

Other than the 1945 Gruen letter and the claims of several people who knew Frank personally, there does not appear to be any surviving documentation about Frank’s wartime production for Gruen. Neither Gruen nor Frank Milburn appears in the Partial List of Norden Bombsight Contractors in Albert L. Pardini’s The Legendary Norden Bombsight. However, Pardini notes that his list is far from comprehensive because of the highly secretive nature of bombsight production. Indeed, Frank Milburn’s
Burlington machine shop was probably one of a number of small factories producing that gyroscope component and Gruen was probably not the only contractor assembling gyroscopes. Facilities at levels of bombsight production were scattered across the country. This was done to avoid a total breakdown in production if factories were compromised by sabotage or enemy attack. Because of the top secret nature of the Norden Bombsight and its production, there will probably never be a definitive list of bombsight contractors.

Henry W. Jenisch is an interesting character worthy of much more discussion than is presented here. Before WWII, Jenisch served as Executive Director of the Covington-Kenton County Industrial Association and for 5 years was the Industrial Director for the City of Covington. During the war, Jenisch was Cincinnati District Manager for the Smaller War Plants Corporation. In later years, he became president of the Frank Insurance Agency, Covington.

Frank Milburn and Henry Jenisch probably met during the latter’s tenure as Cincinnati District Manager for the Smaller War Plants Corporation. During the war, concern for small business intensified as “large industries beefed up production to accommodate wartime defense contracts and smaller businesses were left unable to compete.” In 1942, Congress created the Smaller War Plants Corporation (SWPC) to help give small businesses financial viability by urging their participation in wartime production. The SWPC provided direct loans, encouraged banks to extend credit to small businesses and “advocated small business interests to federal procurement agencies and big businesses.” While the SWPC was dissolved after the war, many of its functions continue today under the auspices of the United States Small Business Association. As district manager of the SWPC, Jenisch would have
been keenly interested in connecting small scale machine shops like those operated by Frank with larger companies such as Gruen and General Motors.

Frank’s association with Henry W. Jenisch marks the beginning of a profoundly productive period in Frank’s life. In addition to co-founding the Jayemm Company, it was Jenisch who urged Milburn to begin his groundbreaking *Genius at Work* and *Invenoscope* newspaper columns (see below). Jenisch’s influence and experience with the SWPC is evident in Frank’s later “Community Production Plan project,” the elements of which were presented in both the newspaper and television formats of *The Invenoscope* (see below).

### Frank Milburn the Photographer

Frank Milburn’s photography may be his most permanent and visible legacy: some of the images he produced are simply breathtaking (Figure 15). The more than 2,000 negatives, slides, and prints contained in the Frank S. Milburn Collection were taken over a period spanning from the mid-1930s to the early 1970s. The scope of the photographic collection almost defies written description and truly must be seen to be appreciated. There are many prints, including 8 by 10-inch and smaller prints as well as mounted and matted prints measuring up to 16 by 19 inches, in both black and white (B/W) and color. All prints were apparently developed by Frank in a darkroom located in the basement of his Ft. Mitchell home. According to Frank’s notes on the surviving negative sleeves, photos were taken using different cameras and in different formats. Frank’s cameras included an unknown number of 35mm models, medium format Rolleiflex (2.25 x 2.25-inch) and Busch Pressman (2.25 x 3.25-inch) cameras and a large format Meridian (4 x 5-inch).

Because of the nature of his business, many of Frank’s photographs are documentary in nature. Some of the earliest photographs from the mid-1930s are those Frank included with the patent applications for the Apparatus for Fertilizing and Bottle Holder (see above); others depict examples of products Frank could produce through die casting. Some of the later series of images depict inventors Frank worked or products he developed, such as the Milburn Water Filter.

Naturally, a significant number of the images in the collection are “snapshots” of family and friends or shots taken during vacations. Frank loved to assemble slide shows of his many trips out west and to the North Shore of Lake Superior in Minnesota. There are complete color slide series of driving tours to favored destinations like Capital City and Red Rocks, Colorado, and Split Rock Lighthouse, Minnesota. There are many additional B/W negatives of these same trips, few of which have ever been printed.

Figure 15: Bart E. Aylor, plowing, 1946

The Ohio River, the boats that traveled it and the communities along it appear frequently in Frank’s photographs (Figure 16). One of the earliest sets of images is a series of color slides taken in Covington and from the hillsides around the river basin during the catastrophic 1937 Flood (Figure 17). Frank returned to the hilltops periodically in the late 1940s
and early 1950s, photographing the riverfronts of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky from many locations, including Mt. Echo Park, Mt. Adams, Price Hill and Devou Park (Figures 18, 19).

Most of these photographs were shot with the medium and large format cameras and Frank’s goal was probably artistic in nature. As documentation, they offer clear images of locations that, in most cases, have changed dramatically over the past 50 years. Like the landscapes, many of the human subjects Frank captured on film appear larger than life. Photographs of farmers in Boone County and Wisconsin from the late 1940s both document a way of life and celebrate those who lived it.

Frank also experimented with macro (i.e., close up), die transfer color and infrared photography. Among the images that would have required a great deal of preparation and ingenuity, are macro images of insects and animals taken in the late 1940s. The extreme close ups of jumping spiders, flies, bumblebees, praying mantises and snakes would have
required long lens attachments which Frank is believed to designed and constructed himself (Figures 20, 21). As a cat lover, Frank also took plenty of shots of his pet cats over the years: Winnie, Omar, and Timmy among them (Figure 22).

Figure 20: Housefly, 1947

Among the most unusual of Frank’s photographs are a series of crime scene images he took in the early 1950s at the request of Boone County Sheriff Wendell H. Easton. The first series, taken December 4, 1950, documented a scene at the Rainbow Tourist Camp on Dixie Highway, where George Wabnitz and Viola Jackson had been discovered dead in one of the cabins.

While Frank’s notes suggest that it was initially thought to be a homicide, the cause of death was later attributed to carbon monoxide poisoning.37 A few weeks later, Frank photographed the crime scene and autopsy of the victim of a fatal shooting in Walton.38 The other crime scene pictures in the collection include images of a fatal automobile accident involving State Trooper Robert Miller in February, 1951, and photographs of the crime scene and victim of a robbery and shooting in a general store in New Haven, Kentucky in July, 1951.39 Other unusual photographs in the collection include pictures of a surgical operation and a series of about 10 images of nude women dancing on a stage in front of a crowd of cheering men. According to Dr. Carol Milburn, Frank mentioned that he photographed the surgery at the request of the doctor who performed the operation. The nude dancers may the results of one of Frank’s “undercover” trips to the Lookout House, apparently made at the request of local law enforcement officers attempting to gather evidence against the night club.

Frank enjoyed photography but he also approached it in a very professional manner. Indeed, he had his own publicity glossies taken at the Oxford, Ohio studio of well-known professional photographer George R. Hoxie.40 Hoxie’s high quality portraits captured Frank at the height of his public career. Frank was also a member (and probably co-founder) of the Dixie Camera Club of Florence. He exhibited his own photography at club meetings and instructed others in photography and development techniques.41 Frank’s activities with the Dixie Camera Club were instrumental in winning a 4-year fight against the telephone company.

Figure 21: Snake Macro, 1947
Frank Takes on the Boone County Consolidated Telephone Company (1948-1951)

On March 2, 1948, the telephone in Frank Milburn’s Burlington machine shop went out again, which was a widespread problem in the county at that time. The next day, Frank visited the Consolidated Telephone Company’s office in Florence and spoke with company Vice-President E. G. Stephenson, promising to publicize the problem if it was not addressed. Stephenson agreed to a public meeting and two trucks came out the next day and installed a new phone in Frank’s shop. Afterwards, things returned to “business as usual,” as far as Consolidated was concerned. Finding no satisfaction in the company’s long term response, Milburn began organizing other dissatisfied telephone subscribers.

A public meeting was held on June 10, 1948, at the Boone County Courthouse. It was attended by about 100 irate citizens demanding better phone service. The Citizens Telephone Committee formed that night and Milburn was appointed chairman, along with A. B. Renaker (a Burlington banker), Boone County Judge-Executive Carroll L. Cropper, Wilfred Scott (Manager of Dr. George Sperti’s Burlington Farm), J.C. Acra (Soil Conservation Service), and Powers Conrad (Walton Hardware). Garland Foscue, Consolidated’s President in Wilmett, IL, agreed to meet with the committee on a monthly basis for 3 months to avoid damage to his company’s credit caused by adverse publicity.

Shortly after the June 10 meeting, the Citizens Telephone Committee presented a 9 Point Improvement Program to Consolidated, which included requests to replace broken wires, poles, repair/replace antiquated switchboards, and install direct circuits between Walton, Florence, and Burlington. Subscribers across the county were encouraged to send letters to the Committee documenting problems with phone service. It appears that the Telephone Committee agreed to give Consolidated some time to address their complaints. In fact, there is no record of communication between the phone company and the committee for nearly two years, and Frank’s personal notes say that “meetings [with Consolidated] stopped because promises not kept.”

An uproar ensued in the summer of 1950 after Consolidated announced a plan to raise rates on a temporary basis for “immediate emergency relief.” The Citizens Telephone Committee, still chaired by Frank, immediately responded by threatening to call a mass meeting of subscribers, stating that “the service out here is absolutely awful and it’s up to the people to fight this attempt of the company to raise its rates.” At the same time, the Dixie Camera Club of Florence (one of Frank’s projects) launched a bold experiment to photograph the poor condition of the existing phone lines (Figure 23). Photos were given to the Boone County Recorder and Walton Advertiser with captions such as “Fix These Conditions so We Can’t Photograph Them” and “They Float Through the Air With the Greatest of Ease” (referring to sagging phone lines). In ramping up support for the mass meeting, Milburn is quoted in the local papers as saying that the poor phone service is “perhaps the principal drawback to the development of the county.” Another subscriber noted that “Twenty-six years of promises is enough…It’s either fight now or else go back to carrier pigeons and smoke signals.”
By the time the “mass meeting” was held at the Boone County Courthouse on Friday evening, August 18, 1950, State Representative Morris Weintraub from Newport was publicly backing the Boone County effort; the Boone County Farm Bureau had also pledged to join the fight against Consolidated. That night, a “wildly enthusiastic crowd of 200 Boone County telephone subscribers” gathered at the courthouse to hear Consolidated’s rate increase plan. When urged by the crowd to speak, “Weintraub obliged with a fiery diatribe against the public utilities of the State, which, he said, had enjoyed too lenient treatment from the Public Service Commission.” Those in attendance agreed that the existing committee chaired by Frank Millburn should be given permanent status and that the committee should make an argument before the Public Services Commission of Kentucky (KPSC). The first order of business was to prevent Consolidated from initiating the rate increase, which was scheduled to begin September 1, 1950. Fundraising to hire legal counsel and pay for advertising began that night, with a total of $339.00 collected at the door. Plans were made to insert pledge coupons in the Boone County Recorder and Walton Advertiser, in an effort to reach every one of Consolidated’s 2,000 Boone County subscribers.

Despite the efforts of the committee to secure a hearing before the KPSC, Consolidated’s rate increase went into effect on September 1, as planned. The Committee reacted by filing suit before the KPSC, which sought to rescind the rate increase as well as secure a 10 percent “across the board” rate decrease until service improved. The petition, filed by Vest & Vest of Walton, was signed by 501 individual and corporate subscribers, together with Boone County and the cities of Florence and Walton. In addition to the rate decrease, the petition requested that the KPSC hold a hearing in Burlington. The KPSC’s response was to postpone any hearing until sometime after January 1, 1951.

On April 5, 1951, the telephone subscribers of Boone County finally had their say before the KPSC, which scheduled a public hearing in the Boone County Courthouse. Nearly 200 people “swelled” the courtroom with the 3-man Public Service Committee hearing testimony from a total of 42 witnesses, including key testimony from Judge Carroll Cropper, Frank S. Milburn and C. Liston Hemphling.

By the end of April, 1951, the KPSC made an “unusual ruling” that was called a victory for the residents of Boone County. The ruling granted a $4,000 overall rate increase in Boone County, which was less than ¼ of the $16,400 increase requested by Consolidated. The KPSC also ordered Consolidated to make significant improvements to the service, including replacing the switchboards in Walton and Burlington and rebuilding the pole line from Burlington to Florence “in accordance with good construction practices.” After three years, countless letters, public meetings, legal documents and hearings, Frank Milburn finally resolved the problem that interrupted his phone conversation on the night of March 2, 1948.
By mid-1949, Frank and Henry Jenisch’s model-making business in Burlington was starting to garner regional attention. Their 2-line classified ads in Popular Mechanics Magazine were evidently bringing in quite a bit of business. A feature article on Frank and the Burlington shop appeared in the August 7, 1949, Cincinnati Enquirer.\(^5\) Elements of that article were picked up and recycled in similar articles in papers all over the Midwest, including the Pittsburgh Courier, Grand Forks (ND) Herald, the North Omaha Booster, and Parkersburg News.

That November, Frank began to submit short articles to the Cincinnati Enquirer which initially appeared in a column titled Genius at Work and later as either Along the Business Front or The Business Scene (Figure 24).

Frank began the series at the urging of Jenisch, who may have envisioned it as a means to drum up business for the Jayemm Company. The columns were ghost written by Frank using several different pseudonyms, including Richard C. (or Dick) Havlin, Ralph Weiskittel, Frank F. Kappel, Jr., and Frank Koppel. Each of the Genius at Work articles showcased an inventor from the Greater Cincinnati area and their invention and discussed various aspects of the process of inventing and patenting. Indeed, the editor’s introduction to each column noted that “The ideas have been screened carefully. Inquiries can be directed to the Business Editor of The Enquirer.”

Figure 24: Along the Business Front, 1950

Figure 25: Grapefruit Seeder, Genius at Work 1949
inventors. Inquiries can be directed to the Business Editor of the Enquirer.\textsuperscript{57} It is clear from reading the articles that Frank and Henry probably developed or perfected a prototype for nearly every invention featured in Genius at Work.

Most Genius at Work inventions were household or light industrial labor saving devices. Typical inventions included a grapefruit seeder, the “Waterfinger” broom with garden hose attachment, the “Hi-Pocket” Toy Holder for high chairs, the “Any Angle” snow shovel, the “Any Length” Tree Saw, the “Dale Wiggle Fin Fishing Lure,” the “Dent-L-Aid” toothbrush and powder dispenser, the “Bus Umbrella Holder,” and the “Job-Joy 50 Tools in One” electric power tool (Figure 25, 26).

For Genius at Work, Frank’s writing style was light, engaging, and often tongue-in-cheek. In one column, Frank described Jack Frost’s “Sick-Well Doll” invention as follows:

The doll looks just like the typical “blue-eyed dollie” that any little Miss would cherish. Push a button, its eyes sparkle, its pink tongue protrudes, proving dollie’s healthfulness. Push a second button and dollie becomes ill. Its eyes lose their luster, roll out of focus, are bloodshot. Its tongue is no longer a healthy pink but becomes a dull gray.\textsuperscript{58}

The column goes on to say that Frost took his initial “Sick-Well Doll” idea to a “Greater Cincinnati company that specializes in lending a helping hand to inventors in whipping their ideas into practical and salable shape.” Frank developed Mr. Frost’s idea in the form of a simple mechanism made of sheet metal that could be fit into any number of dolls. Another time, Frank wrote the “Hi-Pocket” Toy Holder for high chairs column from the point of view of a toddler, saying “When it comes time to put on the feed bag, mommies have a habit of popping you into a high chair and then expect you to sit there like a "dream boy," while they fuss around the kitchen wrestling up some grub.”\textsuperscript{59}

Frank’s run of twice-weekly Genius at Work and related columns in the Cincinnati Enquirer lasted into May, 1950, totaling at least 36 articles.

Figure 26: Umbrella Container, Genius at Work 1949
The column was very well received by Enquirer readers, who were quite appreciative of Frank’s willingness to both assist local inventors and to then publicize those inventions through Genius at Work. Of the Milburn/Enquirer venture, one avid reader wrote that the “encouragement and directing your combination is giving embryonic inventors cannot be measured in dollars and cents…May the Lord take a liking to you and may your circulation increase.”

Bring on Your Inventions!
*Popular Mechanics Magazine* (June, 1950)

Even before Frank began to garner local success with the Genius at Work series, a reporter from *Popular Mechanics Magazine* had visited Burlington with the intention of writing a feature article. The article, titled “Bring on Your Inventions!” appeared in the June, 1950, issue of *Popular Mechanics Magazine* (Figure 27). The 3-page article included photographs of Frank, the Burlington Machine Shop, and several of the inventors and inventions covered in the Genius at Work series. Frank chose the inventions himself and supplied the photographs for the article to Mr. Wayne Whittaker, *Popular Mechanics* Managing Editor. The inventions featured in the piece included a combination flashlight and fuse holder, the “Dent-L-Aid” toothbrush and powder dispenser, a metal nailing strap or joint fastener for use in frame construction and one of Frank’s favorites – the “Waterfinger” broom with garden hose attachment.

The *Popular Mechanics Magazine* feature gave Frank, Mr. Jenisch, and the Burlington Machine Shop a level of exposure that dwarfed anything they had experienced to date. By September 1, 1950, they had received 8,476 letters, 512 in-person visits and 372 long distance phone calls from budding inventors. Frank wrote to Mr. Whittaker to say that “for a few weeks they almost covered us up with mail” but that all letters were being answered personally. Frank later observed that “Bring On Your Inventions” generated approximately 30,000 letters and 500 visitors from as far away as California. In 1955, Frank was assured that the 1950 *Popular Mechanics* article “still holds the all time record for correspondence received.”

![Figure 27: Milburn meets with a prospective inventor, as shown in *Popular Mechanics*, June, 1950](image)

“The Invenoscope”
*The Cincinnati Post* (1950-1956)

It is not clear why Frank’s Genius at Work series in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* ended in early May of 1950. However, at some point Frank approached Robert Linn, then managing editor of the *Cincinnati Post* about doing a twice weekly article about new inventions. Linn agreed to test the feature for six weeks, which debuted as The Invenoscope in the *Cincinnati Post* on May 31, 1950 (Figure 28). The forthcoming series was announced in a short article in the Post on May 29, which made several mentions of the *Popular Mechanics* feature. The Invenoscope ran twice weekly (Wednesday and Friday) through at least July 18, 1956. Frank probably penned upwards of 450 Invenoscope columns over a six-year period, during which he only appears to have taken two hiatuses. The first invention featured in the Invenoscope was classic gadgetry: Mr. S.E. Shepherd’s “Shepherd Soap Saver,” a soap “corral” designed to hang on the inside edge of a bucket, thus keeping the bar of soap out of the water.
The response to Frank’s new Invenoscope column was quick and positive. In a letter to Post Editor Carl Groat, Frank noted that the May 29 announcement of the Invenoscope generated 21 phone calls and that he is now routinely taking 5 to 10 calls every night. Frank also observed that three out of four inventors featured so far in the Invenoscope had been contacted by parties interested in manufacturing and/or marketing their inventions. In the first year alone, Frank published 114 Invenoscope stories which generated 3,764 letters, 823 phone calls and 292 visitors to Burlington.

Riding the initial wave of positive response to The Invenoscope, Frank wrote to George Collins, Promotion Manager, Popular Mechanics Press apparently in an effort to persuade the national publication to do another feature article. The letter also offers some insight into Frank’s reasoning for writing The Invenoscope:

“I personally am not seeking publicity, however I sincerely hope that someone will see fit to publicize the Invenoscope and the tremendous service that The Post is doing to span the gap that exists between an individual’s conception of an idea and the culmination of that idea into successful production… I write the column gratis and even though it requires quite some time and expense, I am happy to do so if it helps these people. Inventions are not my business, they are my hobby and have been for twenty years. It’s a story that Popular Mechanics should tell.”
Much of The Invenoscope content was an extension of Genius at Work; most columns were witty and featured a gadget or method invented by someone living in the Greater Cincinnati area. There were many rat/mouse traps, can crushers and fishing aids such as Lloyd Kelly’s “Kelfli” fishing lure and Cliff McGee’s “Fisherman’s Hat” (Figures 29, 30). Cigarette lighters, ashtrays, and other smoking paraphernalia were also commonly featured, including the patented “Skeeter the Fire Eater” ashtray. Other unique inventions included the “Thief Snatcher” automatic leg cuff, an early curb feeler, Captain Chandler’s Flashlight Gunsight, Mrs. J. F. Owen’s Suitcase Bassinet, and George Glazier’s Atomic Escape Suit (Figures 31, 32, 33). Of course, these are just the inventions that were successfully "screened" for inclusion in The Invenoscope: Frank probably rejected thousands of others. One of the more endearing proposals came from a young reader named John Bruning, who wrote "I am only 10 years old and read your ad in the Post the thing I have thought of inventing is a wooding [sic] rifle like this." One of the notes on the 1950 design says: “Have the magazine like a real one, make it work like a real gun” (Figure 34).

One of the earliest inventions featured in The Invenoscope was the Sifta-Scoopa-Sanda-Mold, a multipurpose sand box tool designed by a four-year-old College Hill girl named Marianne Miketta. The invention itself consisted of a large kitchen spoon with funnel, sifter and molding attachments. Marianne developed the tool in conjunction with her Grandfather, Dr. Franz Miketta, who she called “Hey Doc!” The family even hired a patent attorney and Marianne was able to sign her own patent application, which Frank noted was “already on file in the U.S. Patent Office.” Marianne’s exposure in The Invenoscope landed her a spot as a guest on
Figure 12: Flashlight Gunsight

Invenoscope
Flashlight Gunsight
Invented by Policeman

BY FRANK S. MILBURN

All too few of us realize what a true friend we have in “the policeman on the corner”. He works many hours in the heat of summer and the cold of winter to direct the flow of traffic. He risks his life to remove those from the highway who abuse the privilege of the road, and he is on hand to see that school children cross busy streets safely.

After working hours, policemen are like any other folks, and they pursue a variety of hobbies.

Aside from hunting and fishing, Capt. Dan G. Chandler, of the Columbus, Miss., police force has another hobby, and that is inventing. He has recently been granted a patent on a flashlight attachment for rapid and accurate aiming of a gun at night.

Although this device may be used on almost any gun, it is especially recommended for use on a Thompson submachine gun. It is quickly and easily attached to the Thompson gun and it has an extra forward handle.

Conveniently placed in this extra handle is a small button, operated by the index finger of the left hand. Merely by pressing this button a powerful beam of light is turned on the target.

Capt. Chandler tells us that this flashlight attachment has proved effective. He hasn’t quite decided whether he will manufacture these lights himself or offer the product to a manufacturer. He is open to any offers.

He is particularly interested in having comments and suggestions from police officers and sportsmen. When you write him, be sure to tell him you saw it in The Post.

Mr. Milburn is an engineer who aids inventors. If you have an idea you think is worth developing, write to him, care of The Post.

Figure 13: Atomic Escape Suit

Atomic Escape Suit
Has Shoes to Pump Air to the Wearer

BY FRANK S. MILBURN

George Glazier, of 3570 Blue Rock road, has developed an atomic escape suit. The suit, made completely of plastic, is designed to be worn as a protection against atomic fall-out and radiation.

It would not, of course, give protection to a person who happened to be too close to the force of the blast itself, although the wearer’s chances of survival near the blast center would be greater with the suit than without it.

One of the unique features of this suit is that the soles of the plastic shoes have been so designed as to act as air pumps. Movement of the wearer pumps air through the soles, and through special filters, to the person inside.

The inventor believes that if his suit would be adopted officially as a Civil Defense aid the all-important evacuation line for large areas of population could be greatly extended.

Page 20
WLWT’s “Gadgets ‘N Gimmicks” TV program. Subsequently, the Sifta-Scoopa-Sanda-Mold and Marianne were one of the three inventions featured on the first televised episode of Frank’s The Invenoscope TV program (see below). Frank maintained a relationship with the Miketta family (including father Robert and mother Josephine) for many years: Marianne called him “Uncle Frank.”

The Invenoscope was more than just a stage for household gadgets: Frank also used it to give advice for would-be inventors. Just two months after the series kicked off, Frank devoted a lengthy column to the patent process. He pointed out the importance of hiring a patent attorney to conduct a patent search and guide the inventor all the way through the negotiation stage with a potential manufacturer. Frank urged inventors to ask for no more than 5 percent of the manufacturer’s gross, or they would be politely told there was no need for their invention. Frank also encouraged readers to form a Greater Cincinnati Inventors Club and to send their inventions to the National Inventor’s Council. From time to time, Frank would publish follow-up articles on inventions/inventors featured in earlier columns so readers could see how they were doing.

During his six year Invenoscope run, Frank received and reviewed many books that claimed to be self-help guides for amateur inventors: all but one turned out to be long on inspiration and short on practical advice. The sole “how to” guide reviewed in The Invenoscope was Money from Ideas: a Primer on Inventions and Patents by Myron Penn Laughlin and published by Popular Mechanics Press in 1950. Frank apparently received a copy of the book from George Collins, Promotion Manager at Popular Mechanics. Milburn was very impressed with the book, noting in a letter to Mr. Collins that he “just finished reading it for the third time… I believe it is one of the finest works to ever come before me.” In calling it the “nearest thing to Inventor’s Handbook – all should buy” Frank gave the book a glowing review in The Invenoscope on January 12, 1951.

In addition to self-help for inventors, Frank used The Invenoscope to help the U.S. military as armed conflict in Korea escalated in late 1950. On December 21, 1950, Frank wrote letters to the Cincinnati Ordinance District and the Inspector of Naval Material in Cincinnati, expressing his interest in helping their offices to compile lists of small machine shops in the Greater Cincinnati area. He described The Invenoscope and suggested that the column could serve two purposes: (1) to assemble data on small and “very small” machine shops capable of subcontracting military contract work for larger contractors, and (2) to publicize “needed” inventions to help in the conflict. In January, 1951, Frank met with H.T. Sellers, Assistant for the Acting District Chief, Cincinnati Ordinance District, with whom he had “quite a talk.” Mr. Sellers told Frank that the Ordinance Department would welcome any data on small machine shops that he could assemble through The Invenoscope and that he also liked the idea of
publishing “needed small parts.” In fact, Frank had taken the initiative to publish a list of “needed military inventions” in The Invenoscope even before he contacted Mr. Sellers. Frank’s list included a telephone wire splicer, a method for welding titanium, a personal heating system and a new method for improving ship unloading.84

In early 1951, Frank began using the Invenoscope to ask local shops to submit their names and capabilities for possible defense purposes, a project called the Community Production Plan. These columns typically featured a small shop already capable of helping the war effort, such as the gasket making operation John A. Koegel had in the basement of his Colerain Avenue home or R.W. Wood’s Indian Hill engraving shop.85 For these columns, Frank’s byline was edited to read “If you have not already listed your shop with The Invenoscope, send a self-addressed stamped envelope for complete instructions.” In February, Frank wrote to Bob Linn, saying that “The stories about ‘Home Workshops’ have brought in about fifty shops, over half of which have some excellent equipment for tool and die work. Of this half, many contain several thousand dollars worth of critical machines and most of them seem to have plenty of floor space and a good supply of labor.”86 In a tongue-in-check Invenoscope column titled “Top Secrets Revealed, Russian Spies Happy,” Frank noted that the Community Production Plan had located thousands of small shops “all busy thinking up ways to destroy enemies of the United States.”87 Frank explained the purpose behind the Community Production Plan more thoroughly later that year, writing that:

Americans must continue to invent – or else resign themselves to becoming a second or third rate nation...For the moment, we have technical superiority, both in research and

production, to pit against the Communist manpower. But if this superiority is ever lost...look out Brother! You may find yourself in a full-scale war, with atom bombs as numerous as tax collectors...”88

Figure 15: Frank Millburn Congratulating Andrew White, inventor of the combination Bird Bath-Christmas Tree Stand

BIRDS AND T R E E S — A combination bird bath and Christmas tree holder invented by Andrew G. White, right, 6322 Chandler street, brought scores of inquiries after he appeared with his brain-child on the TV show Invenoscope, Sunday. Frank Milburn, left, whose column, The Invenoscope, appears in The Post, is featured in the TV show. The program which is designed to help aspiring inventors, can be seen over WCPO-TV each Sunday at 1:15 p.m.
It is worth noting that Frank’s policy for choosing inventions and inventors for The Invenoscope was non-discriminatory. At a time when white men were seemingly given the key to the city at every turn, Frank routinely featured women inventors as well as African-Americans and even children. Frank often touted the merits of female inventors, noting how often “Mr. Smith’s invention was actually inspired by Mrs. Smith.” In one feature column devoted to women inventors, Frank said that “next time you have a problem with inventing, may we suggest that you sit down and talk it over with the woman in your life.” In a 1949 Genius at Work column, Frank featured a telephone attachment designed by Marshall E. Butler, an African-American man from Raleigh, N.C.; Mr. Butler was also featured in the Popular Mechanics Magazine article. Andrew G. White, an African-American letter carrier, and his combination Bird Bath-Christmas Tree Stand were featured in both The Invenoscope newspaper column and an episode of The Invenoscope TV program.

The Invenoscope Hits the Airwaves (1952)

On the heels of the rapid success of The Invenoscope newspaper column in the Cincinnati Post, Frank and some of his associates began working on a plan to produce a TV version of the column (Figure 36). Frank may have been inspired to produce the show by George Collins, Promotion Editor, Popular Mechanics Press, who noted that he had read about a television show where “inventors demonstrate new products to the TV audience.” The existence of another local show on WLWT-TV called either Gadget Gabfest or Gadgets ‘N Gimmicks may also have inspired development of the show. Frank was assisted on the project by a man named Gary Lee and another man named Bill. In February, 1951, Frank wrote to Bob Linn, saying that “We have finally completed the presentation film on The Invenoscope and hope during the next week to add the sound to it.” This original 16mm Presentation Film and script were donated to the Review Board by Carol Milburn in 2004. The Presentation Film, along with the first production episode of The Invenoscope and an earlier 8mm film were transferred to DVD in 2005.

The Presentation Film and accompanying script are fascinating: the film includes brief clips filmed “on location” in Burlington, downtown Cincinnati, Fort Mitchell and other Northern Kentucky neighborhoods. The script tells the story of “semi-retired engineer” Frank Milburn and his “Factory in a Corn Field…a factory without workers.” It touts Frank’s credentials as a wartime industrial consultant, talks about the Community Production Plan and mentions the success of The Invenoscope and Popular Mechanics articles. The Presentation Film was clearly designed to try and land sponsors for a more fully developed television program.

Like The Invenoscope newspaper column, the script delivered a serious message with a tongue-in-cheek twist. Speaking about a seemingly simple invention, the light switch:

Frank: Took a lot more time, and men to create that gadget and the force behind it…lot of ideas…lot of inventions.

Gary: You never think of them though…you kinda take them for granted…Ideas and inventions – do you know what they are? What they add up to?

Gary: I know, they’re high sounding – overworked phrases, but brother, without them we’d still be living in caves.

And when discussing the actual look of the set of the TV show, which was designed as a homey living room with guests and interviewer sitting around a coffee table:

Gary: To build a television program – consider first the “little woman,” for the hand that rocks the cradle…also sets the dial. So plan with her in mind.

Bill: To stage a television show, add a touch of home, and you’ve caught the woman’s eye. She’ll see a living room where Dad will see his den.

Although the Presentation Film was completed in early 1951, Milburn later observed that “the television end is progressing slowly. We have just completed one complete show in full color with sound on film.” In June, 1951, Cincinnati Post Promotion Editor Stanley Dahlman wrote a letter of support to WCPO-TV’s Harold Perry on Milburn’s behalf, noting that the Post averaged 50-100 letters per week in response to The Invenoscope.

The television version of The Invenoscope finally debuted on August 1, 1952, on Cincinnati’s WCPO (Channel 7).” The half-hour program aired on Sundays at 1:15pm and was followed at 1:45 p.m. by the “Flying Saucers Interview Show.” According to Carol Milburn, the show was filmed and produced in Cincinnati, Chicago, and New York. Less than a week after the first show aired, Frank wrote to Wayne Whitaker, Assistant Managing Editor at Popular Mechanics Magazine, saying that the “show is being carried in the Cincinnati area with quite a little success…we literally had them crawling out from under rocks in about five states… it is possible that in the very near future we may get a network feed.”

The first episode of The Invenoscope was introduced by Bill and hosted by Gary Lee, who spoke about the concept and introduced Frank and his guests. Frank sat at a coffee table and talked with each guest about their invention. The first show featured local inventors previously covered by Invenoscope columns in the Post, including Marianne Miettta and her Sifta-Scoopa-Sanda-Mold, Nancy Gale Bowman’s patented cheese spread, and Guy Kenney’s electric lunchbox (Figure 37). Those first three guests were probably chosen in part to demonstrate that anyone could become an inventor, regardless of gender or sex…or even race. Indeed, one of the later episodes featured the combination birdbath-Christmas tree stand developed by African-American Andrew G. White.

Despite its success, the television version of The Invenoscope only ran for 12 weeks on WCPO-TV. In his 1955 self-autobiographical letter, Frank
observed that the show had been very successful but that he grew tired of writing, producing, and directing it.\textsuperscript{101} In that letter, Frank also said that the WCPO show led to a subsequent offer of a network show. However, Frank refused the offer, feeling that a good newspaper story was more productive than three television appearances.

“When an Inventor Needs a Friend”  
*Mechanix Illustrated* (October, 1953)

Following the experiment of The Invenoscope television program, Frank returned to writing the twice-weekly Invenoscope newspaper column. He also began working toward expanding his exposure in print media. This effort led to a 5-page feature article in the October, 1953, issue of *Mechanix Illustrated*.\textsuperscript{102} The article, titled “When an Inventor Needs a Friend” took a more in depth look at Frank, his desire to help amateur inventors, and his philosophy about that aspect of his business:

“What I’m trying to do out here,” Frank says, “is different than anything else in the country. It’s different because we don’t…judge the value of an invention…It’s the public that determines whether there is a need for a new invention. I try to get the public’s reaction to these things. I think that’s the reason so many inventors contact me.”

Like the *Popular Mechanics* piece, When an Inventor Needs a Friend featured a handful of inventions that had already appeared in The Invenoscope. Every invention in the article had achieved some level of success, measured by a contract with a manufacturer and/or distributor. One example was Marl McMath’s batteryless photographic flash, which was being tested by the military at Wright Field in Dayton. Another was Bob Lacker’s “Skeeter the Fire Eater” smokeless ashtray, which was being manufactured by the Molding Arts Plastic Company of Covington, KY.

Also like the 1950 *Popular Mechanics* article, the *Mechanix Illustrated* feature generated phenomenal exposure. In a letter written perhaps six weeks after its publication, Frank quipped that “the article in *Mechanix Illustrated* almost snowed us under with mail, about 6,500 to date”\textsuperscript{103} Eventually, “When an Inventor Needs a Friend” generated a grand total of 17,000 letters and 300 “hopefuls” who came to Burlington with ideas for an invention.

Milburn’s Push for National Syndication (1950-1955)

In late 1950, Frank made an initial effort at securing a nationally syndicated version of The Invenoscope. He sent packets of promotional materials and a cover letter to newspaper syndicates around the country, including American Features Syndicate, Fortune Features, the Chicago-Sun Times Syndicate, King Features Syndicate, NEA Service, Inc., AP Newsfeatures, Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate, and the Bell Syndicate, Inc. and George Matthew Adams Service in New York. A flood of rejection letters followed Frank’s initial. Most of the syndicates were either already overloaded with other material or simply were not interested in stories on inventors. Undaunted, Frank sought help from Charles E. Scripps, then chairman of the board at Edward W. Scripps Trust (publisher of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*). Scripps wrote a letter of introduction on Frank’s behalf to Boyd Lewis, Vice-President of NEA Service, Inc., in New York City.\textsuperscript{104} Mr. Lewis apparently ignored the first inquiry and, for whatever reason, Frank did not follow up again until January of 1953. In a rather stinging reply, Mr. Lewis stated that “My opinion is exactly what it was in 1951. You have a good feature of limited appeal. We only use good features of universal appeal.”\textsuperscript{105}

Frank ultimately inked a deal with a national syndicate, but only thanks to a lucky break which started with an old family friend: Charles T. Stuart, Editor of *Editor & Publisher Newspaper* in New York City. In December, 1952, Mr. Stuart wrote to Frank, saying that “I have not seen you since you were a little boy but I have heard lots about you” and that he had heard about Frank’s Invenoscope newspaper
Stuart reasoned that since Scripps-Howard “own or control two of the best syndicates in the field,” that it should be “a cinch for you” to get in with one of them. Stuart told Frank to write to Laurence Rutman at United Feature Syndicate and to mention his name.

At Mr. Stuart’s suggestion, Frank began corresponding and meeting with Laurence Rutman in New York City, a relationship that ultimately led Frank to sign a contract with United Features Syndicate, Inc. In January, 1954, Frank agreed to write an article titled “Inventors I have Known” for the United Feature’s nationally syndicated Spotlight series; the feature was released to client newspapers in March. “Inventors I have Known” apparently contained stories on five inventors, including a mechanical doll invented by Clement Guadagna of Oakland, California. In June Frank wrote to Harry Saylor at United Feature to ask about the response to the first article and to see whether they were interested in publishing an article on inventors three times per week. In the letter, Frank noted that “Inventors I have Known” generated over 44,000 letters, 570 phone calls and 600 visitors. Saylor replied that he would like to have a cross-section of some of those letters, to help him “get the ‘feel’ of the type of readership that is interested in inventions and inventors.”

Based on the overwhelming response to “Inventors I have Known,” United Feature Syndicate agreed to publish another article titled “Invention: Mother of Prosperity” or “Put That Idea to Work.” This second feature article included stories of “case histories of grass-roots inventors who have turned strange gimmicks into cash.” “Put That Idea to Work” appeared as a two-page spread in the New York World Telegram, Sunday Feature Magazine on November 13, 1954. Inventors featured in the article included Harvey Myrick and his “Sport Seat” folding cardboard chair, the grass clipping catcher invented by William Griffith of Ft. Mitchell, KY, and the Paul Perrine and his aluminum spoon rest. The New York World Telegram feature was richly illustrated with photographs and a cartoon handyman and also included Frank’s Burlington address. The following February, Frank wrote to Harry Saylor to report that “Put That Idea to Work” brought in 43,274 letters, 1,172, phone calls and 312 visitors.

With two successful national features to his credit, United Feature Syndicate agreed to give Frank’s proposal of a three-times-per week version of The Invenoscope a trial run. Frank sent 15 completed Invenoscope articles to Laurence Rutman in April, 1955. United Feature ultimately released some or all of them to “about 50 newspaper” editors in October, but “the response was negligible, and almost all of the editors from whom we heard said that they would not buy the feature.” The last letter Frank received from United Feature closed “With all good wishes, and may I wish you success in whatever undertakings you have in mind.” In a March, 1956, letter to Charles T. Stuart, Frank observed that “Mr. Rutman fluffed me…but good” but that “I’m not discouraged very easily. We’ll keep pitching and sooner or later we’ll make it.”

Frank’s March, 1956, letter to Charles T. Stuart is the last reference in the Milburn Collection to the subject of national syndication. That year was also the final year The Invenoscope appeared in The Cincinnati Post. After more than 6 years and an estimated 150,000 letters received, Frank Milburn’s Invenoscope phase wrapped up in the summer of 1956 with little fanfare. The final Invenoscope column, published on July 18, was titled “Science Journals Can Keep You Up to Date.” In it Frank mentioned his “recommended reading list of 75 weekly or monthly science journals,” and featured David and Edward Winkle, who had invented a small lathe. Frank closed the article saying “for more information I suggest that you write directly to the inventor. Just to keep the Boss in good humor, be sure you mention The Post.”
Not one to remain idle for long, Frank appears to have segued from *The Invenoscope* into heavy involvement with amateur short wave “HAM” radio. At the time, amateur radio was in the midst of a Golden Age of sorts, having taken off after government imposed limitations were lifted following the end of World War II. It is not known when Milburn developed his passion for amateur HAM radio, but in 1952 he was asked to prepare a piece on the subject for the *Cincinnati Post*. In a letter to Post editor Robert Linn, Frank noted that “it took sixteen evenings and visits to collect the materials for the story and it was worked down from over a hundred pages of data collected...almost every one of these fellows is a story in himself.” The story featured several of the estimated 700 Hams in the Cincinnati area. From the story comes Frank’s description of a Ham: “the modern amateur radio operator is a highly-skilled amateur scientist...examined and licensed by the FCC to operate his own radio transmitter.” The article goes on to say how much Hams enjoy talking with other Hams, especially in foreign countries and that, “in times of emergency, [the Ham] is sometimes the only means of communication with the outside world.” Frank was quite taken with the people he encountered while preparing the story, as well as with HAM radio in general.

By 1956, Frank was probably up to his eyeballs in Ham radio. Covering the topic in *The Invenoscope*, he observed that “one of the most interesting and rewarding hobbies, which occupies the minds of several hundred greater Cincinnati is amateur radio.” Within the Frank S. Milburn Collection is a series of negatives from 1957 depicting the installation of a large “Quad” antenna above the Burlington Machine shop. The images show that several antennae were already in place at the site.

According to Dr. Carol Milburn, Frank was strictly interested in coded HAM radio and could read code as fast as anyone could send it. Frank’s call letters were K4OCN, which stood for “Old Cat Nip;” fitting for a cat lover. Saturday night was HAM radio night at the Burlington shop. Although by law amateur transmitters were restricted to 1,000 watts, Frank once commented that “they could push the transmitter at the Burlington shop to 50KW.” It was nights like these that locals (such as Burlington Hardware and Dry Goods owner Pete Stephens) would call and complain about interference with television reception.

Frank was involved in at least two publications for HAM radio enthusiasts in the late 1950s and early 1960s. One was the 4-page newsletter of the Ohio Valley Amateur Radio Association (OVARA) called “Ether Waves,” which Frank wrote, printed and mailed from Burlington for an unknown length of time in 1958 (Figure 38).
The other ham publication was *DX Magazine*, a much more substantial periodical of up to 24 pages, including classifieds, advertising, editorials and stories on various amateur radio topics (Figure 39).\(^{122}\) *DX Magazine* was begun in 1957 by a friend of Frank’s named Don Chesser, who lived in Idlewild.\(^{123}\) Although Chesser was the editor, Frank was heavily involved in *DX Magazine* and referred to himself as “the Janitor.”\(^{124}\) *DX Magazine* was printed bi-monthly through at least 1963 and its circulation was apparently quite extensive. One long-time ham enthusiast noted that by 1958, “Chesser was receiving requests to be put on the mailing list from far-away places, like Dayton, and then farther still. The list grew and grew … Chesser’s rag was the only game in town, and, besides, it was good.”\(^{125}\) Hams today continue to collect old copies of *DX Magazine*.

Figure 19: Frank Milburn was heavily involved in *DX Magazine*, a 24-page periodical on HAM radio. HAMs still collect old copies today.

According to Carol Milburn and Bob Matheny, Frank and Don Chesser were motorcycle and ham radio enthusiasts.\(^{126}\) On at least one occasion, Frank raced Don down winding Kentucky 20 from Idlewild to Petersburg, Frank on his motorcycle and Don driving a VW Bug. They also devoted many hours to making radio contacts over long distances (abbreviated DX) with operators in foreign countries. Then as now, “DX-ing” is one of the most engrossing aspects of ham radio operation. Old ham publications like *Ether Waves* and *DX Magazine* and their modern online internet equivalents devote many pages to DX. Frank and Don regularly participated in DX contests, where the goal was to reach as many foreign operators as possible in a set number of hours or days. Operators still send small postcards known as “QSL cards” by mail to verify the details of each contact. Frank’s interest in ham radio continued well into the 1970s. Photographs of the Burlington shop taken around 1970 show that it was festooned with antennae: remnants of some of these are still evident in the trees that have since grown up around the building.

Figure 20: Frank Milburn on his BMW motorcycle

**Conclusion**

Friends and relatives say that Frank S. Milburn’s name fit his motto: “I can improve it with a Few Slight Modifications.” He was good at everything he tried and an expert in many areas, including at least machining, die-casting, watch repair, photography, and amateur radio.\(^{127}\) Frank genuinely wanted to help the
“little guy” bridge the gap between idea and reality, although he was never able to fully realize the dream of founding an inventors institute in Burlington. Frank’s syndicated news columns brought a landslide of mail and attention from the outside world to quiet Burlington, yet he never earned a dime from The Invenoscope. While the inventions Frank so diligently documented in print seem quaint today, his photographs, especially the picturesque images of the Ohio River, are timeless.

In 1996, in loving memory of her remarkable husband, Dr. Carol Milburn provided an endowment for Northern Kentucky University’s Outstanding Professor Award program, begun in 1970. The Frank Sinton Milburn Outstanding Professor Award is given annually at NKU. Fittingly, the epitaph on Frank’s marker at the Milburn family plot in Ft. Mitchell’s Highland Cemetery reads “Few Slight Modifications…”

About the Author

Matt Becher is a planner with the Boone County Planning Commission and staffs the Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board. He wrote this biography of Frank S. Milburn simply because the story needed to be told. Mr. Becher is deeply indebted to Dr. Carol Swarts Milburn for sharing much more than memories of her late husband. Bob and Ruth Matheny and Joe and Ann Milburn are also gratefully acknowledged for their assistance. Also deserving of praise for their involvement are Bridget Striker and the Boone County Public Library; Pat Russ, who copied every page of the original Milburn scrapbooks; and Maria Scheitz, who formatted the document for web publication. Thanks to Don Clare, Robert Jonas, and Karl Lietzenmayer for reviewing drafts of the manuscript. Finally, Mr. Becher would like to acknowledge Frank Milburn’s poltergeist in the hope that he or she will continue to let me work in peace.

ENDNOTES


2 In the summer of 2002, the Planning Services Division of the Boone County Planning Commission developed the Burlington Town Strategic Plan, a document intended to guide development in the Boone County seat. The planning process included an inventory of current conditions, including everything from traffic counts to trees, buildings and sidewalks.

3 The Milburn Machine Shop property was donated to the University of Nebraska Foundation in late 2007. In January, 2009, the Foundation had all of the buildings on the site demolished. No notification was made to the historic preservation office or other local officials.

4 Dr. Carol Swarts Milburn, a series of interviews and email communications with the author from May 28, 2004, and October, 2005.

5 Record of Baptism from St. Mark’s Church, Louisville, dated February 3, 1942. Frank was baptized at St. Mark’s on November 6, 1910. Grace B. Sinton and John W. Milburn were married on 6/12/1906 in Louisville, Kentucky.

6 Joe and Sue Milburn, interview with the author, October 5, 2004.

7 Margaret Warminski, Fort Mitchell Heights Historic District, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Certified by the National Park Service September 9, 1989. The John Milburn House is a stately Colonial Revival residence designed by Guy Burroughs and John Henry Deekin; it is part of the Ft. Mitchell Heights Historic District, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1989.
8 Carol S. Milburn, op cit.

9 Thomas R. Sinton received an appointment as Commissary of Subsistence of Volunteers with the rank of Captain from Abraham Lincoln on September 23, 1861. John Thomas Milburn served as Captain of Company B of the 10th Kentucky Volunteers.

10 Laycock, op cit.

11 Founded in 1828, the private Ohio Mechanics Institute (OMI) was located in the OMI Building at Central Parkway and Walnut Street from 1911 until the school merged with the University of Cincinnati. The original mission of the institute continues at UC’s OMI College of Applied Sciences.

12 Carol S. Milburn, op cit.


14 Both patent applications were filed on June 13, 1935.


16 The Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board is fortunate to have a Milburn Grass Grower, which was donated by Burlington resident Bob Matheny, a long-time friend of Frank and Carol Milburn.


19 Osceola Edwards (nee Williams), long-time Burlington resident, comment to the author, May 19, 2005.


23 Milburn to Stuart, op cit.

24 Carol S. Milburn, op cit.

25 This was probably sometime in early 1943, following the U.S. Army’s analysis of the disastrous U. S. defeat at the hands of German General Irwin Rommel at the Battle of Kasserine Pass, Tunisia, in February, 1943.

26 Over 150,000 American women served in the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) during World War II. However, it is not known whether the local women Frank hired to work in the Burlington shop were WAC’s. Everyone acquainted with Frank stated that most (if not all of) the machinists working for him during the war were women from the Burlington area. Among the women known to have worked for Frank were professional baseball hall-of-famer Pat Scott and her mother, Irene. At that time the Scotts owned a farm on the other side of the road from Frank’ shop. Pat was too young to operate the machinery at the time, so she gauged the materials while her mother did the cutting and machining. Additional evidence to support the claim of informal WAC’s comes from Frank’s early 1940s 8mm film titled “Mechanical.” The short film shows live action machining and casting.
taking place at the Burlington Machine Shop. The person using a bandsaw to precisely cut pieces of metal tubing is a woman.


28 “History of the Triplett Corporation,” (2004); available from [http://www.triplett.com/lvl1_hpg_his.htm](http://www.triplett.com/lvl1_hpg_his.htm); Internet; accessed January 2006.


30 The author wrote letters to two known Norden Bombsight archives, including the United States Air Force Museum/MUA Research Division at Wright Patterson AFB (Dayton, OH) and the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell AFB (Alabama). Neither archive has any information pertaining to Gruen or Frank Milburn. If they exist at all, surviving records of the relationship between Milburn, Gruen and/or Triplett are probably housed at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.


32 By 1950, the company’s letterhead was either Milburn Products Corporation, Burlington Division or Milburn Manufacturing Company, which included the following text: **Custom Production:** Plastic Moulds, Die-Cast Moulds, Punch Press Dies, Jigs & Fixtures and **Die-Castings:** Small Power Tools, Electric Welded Fabrications, Complete Service for the Inventor and Precision Three Dimensional Die Service.

33 At a minimum, the Milburn Water Filter was advertised in *Professional Photographer, Popular Mechanics Magazine, and Photographic Trade News*.


37 *Boone County Recorder*, “Monoxide Fumes Blamed in Death of Two Monday: Cincinnati Pair had been Dead 12 Hours, is Belief of Sheriff Easton,” December 7, 1950.


40 George Richmond Hoxie (1903-1984) was editor of *Minicam* magazine and a popular Salon judge and participant in the 1940s - 50s. A Fellow of the Photographic Society of America, he had a studio in Oxford, Ohio, and taught photography at the Winona School of Photography, Miami University, and the University of Cincinnati. Some of Hoxie’s images are collected at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; others are available for purchase on the internet.
See Cincinnati Times-Star, “Dixie Lens Club Seeking Members,” February 1, 1950. The article states that “the Dixie Camera Club will meet Wednesday at 8 p.m. in the Florence Town Hall. The club currently has about 50 members but wants to expand to at least 75. At the last meeting, “local inventor and photographer” Frank Milburn exhibited his works and presented a color film with sound about the use of lighting. Club members also practiced their skills by photographing a live model.”

Typed timeline of events inserted in Frank’s “Telephone” file, part of the Milburn Collection maintained by the Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board.


Boone County Recorder, “Boone County Subscribers Complain of Phone Service,” June 19, 1948.

The Kentucky Post, August 9, 1950.

The Kentucky Post, August 9, 1950.


The Kentucky Post, August 15, 1950.

“Born in Newport about 1910, Morris Weintraub became a lawyer and, over the years, represented a variety of people in court including community leaders and gambling figures. Like his father Hyman, Morris Weintraub got involved in politics, becoming an influential member of the Democratic Party both locally and statewide. He was elected to several terms in the state legislature, serving as speaker of the House in the mid-1950s under Gov. A.B. "Happy" Chandler. In 1952 Weintraub showed his vision in proposing a merger of seven cities in Campbell County. The idea failed, but he continued to advocate for merging services to increase efficiency. He also lobbied on behalf of a Jewish homeland in the Middle East and he was a founder of the Yavneh Day School in Cincinnati. Morris Weintraub later moved to Florida. After his wife died in 1994, he moved to Cincinnati, where he died in January 1996 at the age of 86. He was buried in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.” Jim Reis, “Pieces of the Past: Synagogue Once Stood on 5th Street in Newport,” The Kentucky Post, December 10, 2001.


The Kentucky Post, November 6, 1950.


The Kentucky Post, April 9, 1951.

The Kentucky Post, May 1, 1951.

See Cronin, op cit.


The Cincinnati Enquirer, “Readers Views: Genius at Work” letter to the Editor from
S.E. Shepperd, Cincinnati, January 30, 1950.

61 In a November 23, 1949, letter to Frank, Wayne Whittaker, Assistant Managing Editor, Popular Mechanics Magazine apologizes for “not writing to you sooner and thanking you for your fine hospitality and many courtesies during our visit to Cincinnati...Let me know how things are with you and give my best regards to Mr. Jenisch.”


64 Laycock, op cit.

65 Frank filed for a trademark for The Invenoscope on June 13, 1950 and received a 20-year certificate (#547,195) for the name on August 8, 1951.


67 Based on correspondence with Bob Linn and missing dates from The Invenoscope scrapbooks, it appears that Frank took off 3 months in late 1951 to “tour the country looking for inventors.” Similar breaks were apparently taken in subsequent years.


70 These inventions included Cap Sefferino’s Flexible Truck Roller Skate, Joseph G. Linneman’s Dry Cleaning Tagging Machine and Maryann MacBrair’s “Picture Package” gift wrapping method. Sadly, Mr. Shepherd had not entertained any offers for the Shepherd Soap Saver.

71 Frank S. Milburn to Robert Linn, Managing Editor, The Cincinnati Post, June 18, 1951.

72 Another result of Frank’s initial success with The Invenoscope appears to have been a separate newspaper column called Melody Mites. “Melody Mites: Mel-o-dies that might be-come hits!” was a short-lived column that ran in the Saturday edition of the Cincinnati Post from mid-November, 1950, through January 20, 1951. The weekly piece was a spin-off of The Invenoscope but featured a song written by a local amateur rather than an invention. It is doubtful whether more than 10 Melody Mite columns were published and the experiment was quickly abandoned. Ironically, Frank applied for a trademark for “Melody Mites” on December 19, 1950 but did not receive the 20-year certificate for the phrase until July 15, 1952 (#561,511), well over a year after the column ended.

73 Frank S. Milburn to George Collins, Promotion Manager, Popular Mechanics Press, December 27, 1950.


75 The Cincinnati Times-Star, July 26, 1950. Also in the Milburn scrapbooks was a separate undated newspaper clipping noting that Ms. Miketta would “make her debut on WLWT’s Gadget Gabfest at noon today.” The author was unable to find any other references to the Gadgets ‘N Gimmicks or Gadget Gabfest television program and suspects that the names were references to a single program. Several local television
historians and long-time employees of Cincinnati-based TV stations (including Mike Martini, John Kiesewetter, Bill Myers, Mike Bowdon and Len Goorian) were consulted and none of them could recall either Gadget Gabfest or Milburn’s later Invenoscope TV show. However, Mr. Goorian noted that “shows came and went fast in those days,” mostly because Mort Watters, who launched WCPO in 1949, was willing to give airtime to just about anyone in hopes of developing a successful program.

76 Carol S. Milburn, op cit.


80 Frank S. Milburn to George Collins, Promotion Manager, Popular Mechanics Press, December 27, 1950.

81 Frank S. Milburn, handwritten notes pertaining to Money from Ideas by M. Pen Laughlin.

82 Frank S. Milburn to Cincinnati Ordnance District and Inspector of Naval Material, Cincinnati, December 21, 1950.

83 Frank S. Milburn to Robert Linn, Managing Editor, The Cincinnati Post, January 8, 1951.


86 Frank S. Milburn to Robert Linn, Managing Editor, Cincinnati Post, February 12, 1951.


89 The Cincinnati Post, “The Invenoscope: To the Ladies – They Have a Way with Gadgets” by Frank S. Milburn, July 4, 1951.


91 The Cincinnati Post, “What-Not is Bird Bath, Christmas Tree Holder” by Frank S. Milburn, September 15, 1950.

92 George Collins, Promotion Manager, Popular Mechanics Press to Frank Milburn, January 4, 1951.

93 Both men had speaking parts in the script for The Invenoscope Presentation Film and both also appear in the first episode of
The Invenoscope. Carol Milburn recalls Frank mentioning Gary Lee by name but knew nothing about Bill.

94 Frank S. Milburn to Robert Linn, Managing Editor, Cincinnati Post, February 12, 1951.

95 The Milburn DVD production was made possible by a Local History Grant from the Kentucky Historical. It was a joint project of the Boone County Public Library, Boone County Planning Commission and Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board. In the Invenoscope Presentation Film Pilot, Frank Milburn’s part was read by David Geohegan, the part of “Bill” was read by Robert Jonas and the part of Gary Lee was read by Matt Becher. Recording and final production of the DVD took place in Mr. Jonas’ home studio. Copies of the DVD are available for loan within the Boone County Public Library system.

96 Frank S. Milburn to Robert Linn, Managing Editor, Cincinnati Post, November 12, 1951.

97 Stanley L. Dahlman, Promotion Editor, The Cincinnati Post to Harold Perry, WCPO-TV, June 19, 1952.

98 The Invenoscope: New Local Inventors Can Be Seen on TV by Frank S. Milburn, Cincinnati Post, July 30, 1952.


101 Milburn to Stuart, op cit.

102 According to the Wikipedia online encyclopedia, Mechanix Illustrated debuted in 1928 to compete with Popular Mechanics and Popular Science. It went through number of name changes over nearly six decades in existence, finally going out of production in 1996 as Home Mechanix.

103 Frank S. Milburn to Robert Linn, Managing Editor, Cincinnati Post (November 27, 1953).

104 Charles E. Scripps, Chairman Board of Trustees, Edward W. Scripps Trust to Boyd Lewis, Vice-Chairman, NEA Service, Inc., March 8, 1951.

105 Boyd Lewis, Vice-President, NEA Service, Inc. to Frank Milburn, January 12, 1953.

106 Charles T. Stuart, Editor, Editor & Publisher Newspaper to Frank Milburn, December 8, 1952.

107 Publishing Agreement between United Feature Syndicate, Inc., (signed by Laurence Rutman) and Frank S. Milburn for the sum of $300.00 for authoring “Inventors I Have Known,” January 19, 1954; Harry T. Saylor, United Feature Syndicate to Frank S. Milburn, March 1, 1954. The author has not yet located a copy of the “Inventors I have Known” article.

108 Frank S. Milburn to Harry T. Saylor, May 4, 1954. In a September 18, 1954, letter to Mr. Saylor, Frank revised those figures to 47,000 letters, 612 long distance calls and over 1,000 visitors, respectively.

109 Harry T. Saylor to Frank S. Milburn, June 29, 1954.

110 Publishing Agreement between United Feature Syndicate, Inc., (signed by Laurence Rutman) and Frank S. Milburn for the sum of $300.00 for authoring “Invention: Mother of Prosperity,” September 27.

Frank S. Milburn to Harry T. Saylor, February 17, 1955. In addition to the *World Telegram*, Frank indicates that the “full page spread in the *Detroit Free Press* produced 2747 letters” and that “the *Columbus Citizen* [also] produced quite a bit of mail.

Frank S. Milburn to Laurence Rutman, April 1, 1955.

Hannah Bond Wilson (Mr. Rutman’s Secretary) to Frank S. Milburn, November 16, 1955, and January 24, 1954.

Wilson to Milburn, January 24, 1954.

Frank S. Milburn to Charles T. Stuart, March 9, 1956.


*The Cincinnati Post*, “The Invenoscope: Operating Ham Station is a Rewarding Hobby” by Frank S. Milburn, June 13, 1956.

A Quad is “a directional antenna consisting of two one-wavelength "squares" of wire placed a quarter-wavelength apart,” *Amateur Radio Glossary Jargon, Abbreviations and Terminology*; available online from [http://www.ac6v.com/jargon.htm](http://www.ac6v.com/jargon.htm), Internet; accessed February 2006.

Bob Matheny comment to the author, 2005.


Don Chesser was born on 7 January 1917 in Byesville, Ohio. He was first licensed in 1933 as W8KVX. Sometime around 1936 he enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard, was accepted as a radioman, and was sent to school in New London, Connecticut. After graduation he was assigned to the USCG cutter Tahoma, based at Cleveland. Chesser completed his enlistment and moved to Cincinnati before the war. During the war he worked as a civilian radio operator for American Airlines and was married at the time. At some point he landed a job in the Cincinnati Police Radio Section; the chief was Jake Schott, W8FGX. Later he worked as an engineer for WKRC in Cincinnati, then left to start his own television and radio repair shop. He died 16 June 1985 while on a motorcycle trip in Ohio...Chesser...was a well-known top DXer and associated with the Ohio Valley Amateur Radio Association...Chesser was a talented writer..."
During the course of the author’s research, Dr. Carol Milburn provided many more bits of information about her late husband. The author has no reason to doubt the validity of these statements, but could not realistically research every detail of this complicated man’s life. This additional information includes: Frank knew Burl Ives and Arthur Godfrey; he was an audiophile and set up sound systems in the homes of Jerry Lewis and Les Paul; he apprenticed as a watchmaker in Ludlow, Kentucky; he was once asked to counterfeit the Canadian $20 bill; he built and eventually sold a copy of a Stratovarius violin; as a teenager, Frank performed as a “Daredevil” motorcycle rider on the “Wall of Death” at the Ludlow carnival; Frank was better known internationally than nationally; the developer of the Milburn Electric Car was a distant relative of Frank’s; Frank felt that he would die in a year of Halley’s Comet; Frank was known to pay for dental work for people with bad teeth who could not afford to pay for dental work; Frank’s many interests included: fabric painting, knife throwing, horses and horse shoeing, lost wax casting, leather tooling, making clothes, blacksmithing and woodworking. Frank also believed in poltergeists.