

“Voices of Victory”

by

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Recently I came across an interesting item on eBay—not directly radio related, but the kind of thing DX types might find interesting. It is a “Voices of Victory” record. The records, which are 6-1/2" in diameter—slightly smaller than a 45 rpm—were recorded by World War II servicemen for sending to the folks back home.

The record is cardboard, with a shellac-type finish on both front and back. It is recorded on one side only; the other side contains some promotional pictures (see next page). It is made at 78 rpm, the common recording speed in those days. The records were produced by the American Safety Razor Corp. of Brooklyn, doing business as GEM Razors and Blades.





I have a pretty decent Audio-Technica turntable, and I was hoping the record would play on it, but no such luck. The stylus wouldn't even track. So I sent the record to ["LP2CD,"](#) an audio restoration house in Windermere, Florida that I have [used before](#). They managed to dig out the audio and put it on a CD, but it was still more like listening to Botswana than the BBC—man talking, woman talking, etc. You can hear the audio [here](#).

After playing around with playback speed and the equalizer I was able to decipher some of the audio. There was an intro and an outro by a woman, and I managed to make out the following:

[:07] I look like . . .

[:13] I've been havin a good time, uhh . . . How ya doin this day, honey?

[:33] . . . you go ahead and have a lot of fun. Anyway don't . . . somethin wrong by doing such. Just go ahead and do as you . . .

[:45] In a few days we'll be leavin, and so I want, uhh, I want to tell ya that every time I write ya a letter, I'll be thinkin of ya. And now . . . good bye.

The duration of the recording was 1 minute, 8 seconds.

I did some Googling and found many references to “Voices of Victory” records, and audio from three of them. On [one](#), the sound was noisy, but it was mostly understandable [the audio starts at :08]. The man giving the intro said it was being made at the U.S. Naval Training Station in Great Lakes, Illinois.

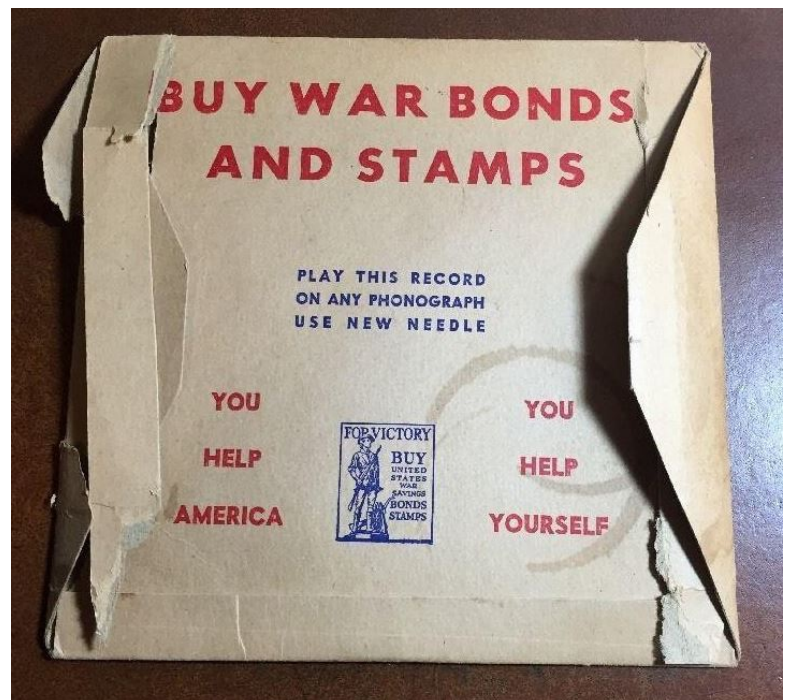
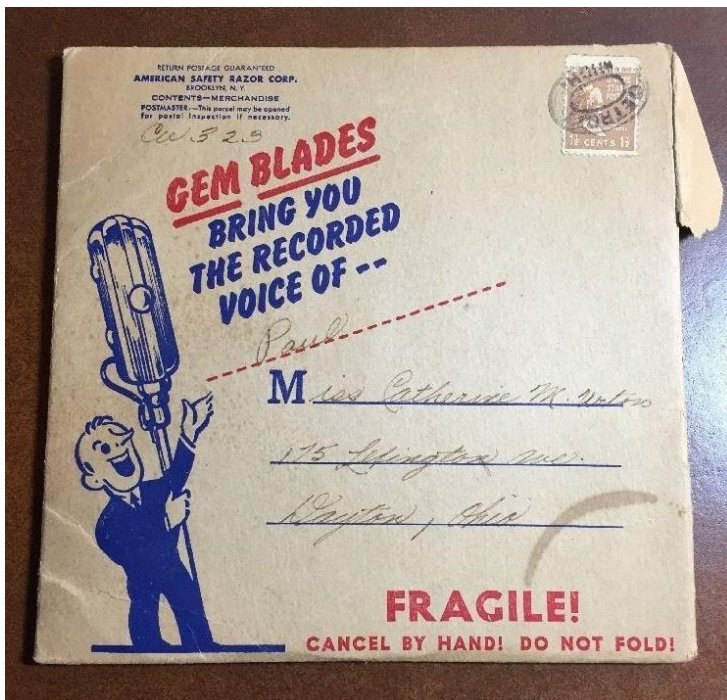
A [second](#) record has a different label and looks more like a traditional record, but it was probably still cardboard. It presents the audio in both the original and cleaned up versions, and I would rate the latter as fair to good. That record was made at Camp Elliot, San Diego, California.

A little more digging found a [short writeup](#) about these records (scroll down to “Whatever Happened to Dick Slocum?”) which includes a [third](#) recording, mailed from San Francisco. This one has the best audio, plus some info on the recording equipment and a picture of a GEM trailer that apparently traveled around to various bases.

Something I noticed when listening to my record and the first two mentioned above is that they sound scripted. The first one sounds entirely scripted. What is the likelihood that a speaker would otherwise decide to recite “The Value of a Beer”? Although my record is harder to understand, its cadence also suggests a script. I am less sure of the second clip above, which may be a mix of scripted and non-scripted. The third recording is definitely not scripted. That GEM would have scripts available for the tongue-tied would certainly not be a surprise.

Below, and on the next page, are pictures from the internet—a photo of the envelope used to send the records, and an instruction sheet. These “home made” records had a short playing life, hence the advice to make a copy if you wanted to preserve the audio.

All in all, an interesting trip to a very different time.



**THIS IS AN ORIGINAL
MASTER RECORDING**

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Important

There are no duplicates of this record. If played on a modern phonograph it should last for many playings . . . However, with continued use, the quality of the voice is impaired and surface noises will appear.

If you desire to preserve the voice of your loved one on this record, we suggest you take the original to a reliable recording studio and have a copy made with this master record before voice quality is impaired. Use steel needles for best results.

We sincerely hope you enjoy this personal "Voices of Victory" record and it will bring joy into your home.

GEM SAFETY RAZOR CORPORATION
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