

## Radio Swan and Radio Americas: A DX Saga

by

Jerry Berg  
Lexington, MA  
[jsberg@rcn.com](mailto:jsberg@rcn.com)

*In Ontario, while there on biz,  
I met a nice guy full of whizz;  
Glanced around with a leer,  
Sed "Buy me a beer  
And I'll tell ya where Swan really izz."*

Laconia Limerix  
NASWA, March 1967

Putting out a good signal on both mediumwave and shortwave from a largely unknown island in the Caribbean, Radio Swan was bound to be a popular DX target when it came along in 1960. But it got more than its fair share of attention in the hobby press, thanks mainly to a manufactured controversy over whether the station was really located on Swan Island.

In this article I have tried to resist the temptation to tell the Radio Swan story in every detail, in favor of reviewing the considerable DX literature surrounding the station, and providing a road map, with links, for anyone who wants to delve into it more deeply. I hope I have succeeded. Much of the writing on Radio Swan is available online, and I have posted some additional items that aren't.

### RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS: THE STORY THROUGH 1961

The history of Radio Swan is actually quite straightforward. The U.S. government put the station on the air in the middle of 1960 as part of its propaganda war against Cuba's Fidel Castro, who had come to power in January 1959. Although the Bay of Pigs invasion was still in the future (April 1961), as was the Cuban missile crisis (October-November 1962), anti-Castro fever was running high. The mediumwave channel came first; 1160 kHz., 50 kw., opening on May 17, 1960. Shortwave followed in August; 6000 kHz., 7.5 kw. Programs were in both Spanish and English. Radio Swan was supposedly a private, commercial station, and it did carry some advertising, but its main fare was anti-Castroism. It said it was owned by the Gibraltar Steamship Corporation of New York City, which turned out to be a CIA front company.

One of the first mentions, perhaps *the* first, of Radio Swan in the DX press was one line, squeezed into the very bottom of page 13 of the June 18, 1960 issue of *DX News*, the bulletin of the National Radio Club: "A new station is reported testing with 50 kw. from Swan Island in Spanish, freq. unkn." Loggings started arriving in the next issue. The first reference to shortwave may have been an item in the September issue of the NNRC Bulletin.

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

A selection of Radio Swan/Radio Americas entries from the NNRC Bulletin can be found on pgs. 20-22 below.

The station's signal was widely heard in the Americas and beyond. I was 16 years old when I heard it from my home in Connecticut, and I gave it a SINPO 4 3 5 3-4 3 on mediumwave, 4 4 4 5 4-5 on shortwave. And while they weren't forthcoming with any detailed information, the station was generally a good verifier, replying to reports from a variety of New York City post office box addresses. The CIA's cover, which was never much more than a fig leaf anyway, was blown during the failed Bay of Pigs invasion when it became apparent that Radio Swan was part of the action.



In November 1961, Radio Swan took a new name, Radio Americas, and a new "owner," Vanguard Service Corporation. But it was still CIA, and the programming was still mostly anti-Castro. Radio Americas was on shortwave until May 1968. For a time, late in 1962, the 1160 kHz. channel changed to 1165, 6000 went to 6005 and back, and 11800 came into temporary use. And the Radio Swan name was reborn with the opening of an apparently-legitimate but still anti-Castro shortwave broadcaster of the same name in San Pedro Sula, Honduras in July 1975. The frequency was 6185 kHz., then 6000 (the old Radio Swan frequency), then 6015. The new Radio Swan was on the air until at least mid-1977.

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

The first article in the shortwave press about Radio Swan appears to have been by Tom Kneitel, who would be a student of the station for many years. In his March 1961 [Popular Electronics](#) article (p. 52) entitled “Radio Swan—The Thorn in Castro’s Side,” he cites Castro’s irritation with the broadcaster, as expressed by Fidel at the U.N.: “[The U.S.] has set up a very powerful broadcasting station which it has placed at the disposal of war criminals and the subversive groups that are still being sheltered by [the U.S.]” At this point Kneitel was buying the line the station was putting out, namely, that, as TK put it, Swan was run by “a sedate group of American businessmen whose primary interest is making the station a commercial success.” He describes the geography of the Swan Islands—the station was on Big Swan, usually called “Swan Island” (a second island was Little Swan); he relates the islands’ ambiguous status (they were claimed by both the United States and Honduras);<sup>1</sup> and he briefly reports on a July 1960 “invasion” attempt by a small group of armed Hondurans, an event that was defused by CIA personnel but that could have been serious had it gotten out of hand, there being no more than a few handguns on the island. The population on the island consisted of 20 Cayman Islanders, six FAA employees, and 20 Radio Swan personnel.


By June Kneitel had done his homework, and in an article in one of the *DXing Horizons* successor publications, *CB Horizons* (where he was Managing Editor), he laid out the Swan situation in great detail. In [“Radio Swan, a ‘Method’ or a ‘Madness,’”](#) he reported that the station was a U.S. government project. The broadcast band signal, at 50 kw., was interfering with KSL in Salt Lake City and WJJD in Chicago, but the FCC claimed no knowledge of the station, even though it had long exercised jurisdiction over the island, for which it had issued ham call signs from time to time. According to Kneitel, there was a 15-person contingent of Philco personnel assigned to Swan for six months by way of the U.S. Navy—a kind of “flying squad” of technicians that Philco contracted out in those days. He described life on the island, and detailed how the station got its programs—either taped and flown in by air, or, in the case of the news, radioed in from Radio Press International, a news subsidiary of WMCA in New York, via RCA’s Radio Central point-to-point facility on Long Island, even giving the frequencies.

He also described in some detail how the facility was supplied, and included photos of some of the station’s equipment, including the broadcast band antenna, and a plane being welcomed by Swan personnel. He analyzed the station’s commercial rates and found them extremely low, and observed that while there were some big names among the advertisers, many companies were reluctant to get involved due to the station’s propagandistic nature. He quoted *Newsweek* to the effect that the station was run by the CIA, but was cagey about the veracity of that claim.

In a brief followup note in the [July 1961 CB Horizons](#), Kneitel observed that an unnamed “American organization” was making inquiry regarding the delivery of a 50 kw. broadcast band transmitter, a 20 kw. shortwaver, and antennas to Navassa Island, another piece of U.S.-claimed Caribbean territory. Navassa was off Cuba’s east coast, and the combination of Swan plus Navassa would have made for a good one-two, anti-Castro punch. But TK avoided saying more.

In [“Method or Madness,”](#) while addressing the murky issue of the station’s ownership, Kneitel suggested a possible Radio Swan connection with the United Fruit Com-

RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS



**GIBRALTAR STEAMSHIP CORPORATION**  
 18 East 50th Street · New York 22, N. Y. · PLaza 5-7697

November 22, 1960

Mr. Robert Kipp  
 9951 Winthrop  
 Detroit 27, Michigan

Dear Mr. Kipp:

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the reception of Radio Swan programs. We are pleased to verify your report, which is in conformity with our program schedule and is informative and helpful.

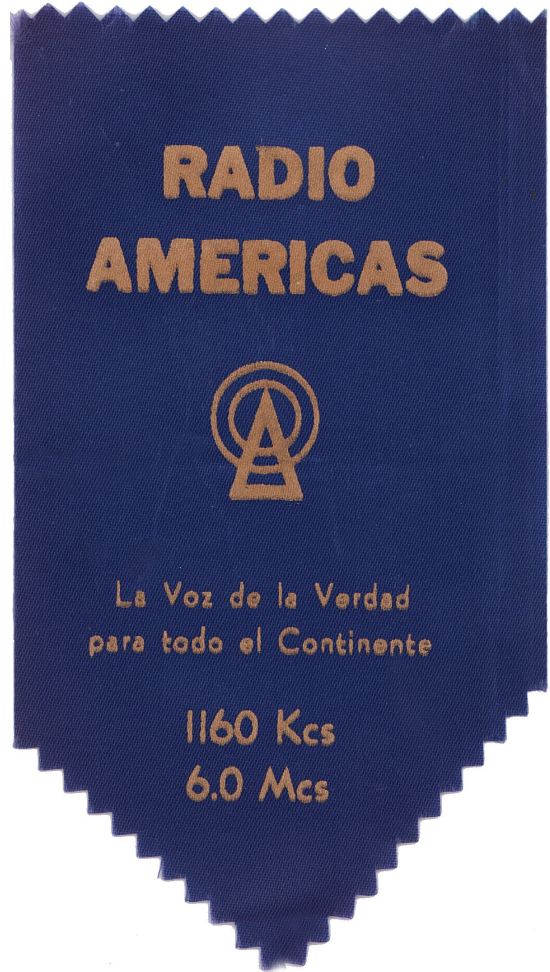
Radio Swan, the International Voice of the Caribbean, is a powerful new commercial station, owned by the Gibraltar Steamship Corporation. It is located in the Swan Islands, West Indies, approximately 100 miles northeast of Honduras.

Your interest in Radio Swan is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,  
*Horton H. Heath*  
 Horton H. Heath  
 Commercial Manager

RADIO SWAN HOURS OF BROADCASTING  
 (Eastern Standard Time)

MEDIUM WAVE (1160 KC - 50 KW)	SHORT WAVE (6 MC - 7½ KW)
5:00 - 7:00 A.M. (in Spanish)	8:00 - 10:00 A.M.
6:30 - 7:00 P.M. (in English)	6:30 - 7:00 P.M.
7:00 - 11:00 P.M. (in Spanish)	7:00 - 11:00 P.M.



*You have one of very few R. Swan QSL's we have taken over their facilities - No connections to old mgmt.*

*on Sky in world Radio Hand book* This will verify your reception of Radio Americas  
 on 1160  kcs, at 1373 EST, on 25 July 1963  
 on 6000  kcs, at 11.800

Our 1160 kc transmitter is a 50 kw RCA using two 250-foot vertical radiators. The 6000 kc transmitter is a 7.5 kw RCA feeding a full-wave dipole.

Thank you for your interest.

*B. S. Houston*  
 Radio Americas

Thanks to Robert Kipp for these QSLs from Radio Swan and Radio Americas.

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

pany. It was not a fanciful idea. The influence of United Fruit in Central America and the Caribbean was pervasive. It owned millions of acres of land, and it was a major employer (and not necessarily a benevolent one). It operated schools and hospitals, railroads, the “Great White Fleet” of refrigerated ships, and numerous other enterprises. (The ships also carried passengers, contributing to the early development of the cruise industry.) The company bribed officials when necessary, and paid little in taxes. In Cuba it had been the main force in the sugar business until its holdings were nationalized by Castro, so there was a grudge to settle there. Two of the assault ships in the Bay of Pigs were owned by United Fruit. And the president of Gibraltar Steamship was Thomas Dudley Cabot, a former president of UF.

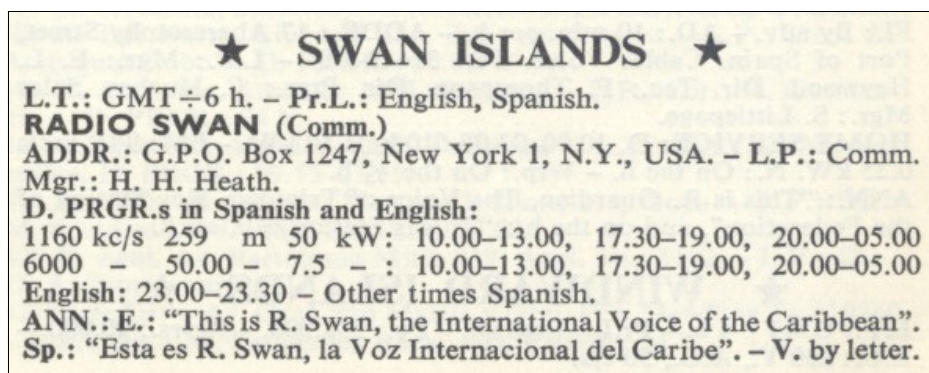
United Fruit also had a very real historical radio connection with Swan Island. It began installing spark equipment within the company in 1904, eventually setting up a longwave radio network to serve the United Fruit facilities in the United States, Central America and the Caribbean. An important part of the system was a big relay station on Swan Island. The network carried public as well as private traffic, and soon morphed into the Tropical Radio Telegraph Company, which became a major player in U.S.-Central American communications (and home to early mediumwave and shortwave broadcaster HRB, the Voice of the Tropics, in Tegucigalpa, Honduras). However, it does not appear that United Fruit’s *radio* activities on Swan island had any direct bearing on the island’s later use by the U.S. government in clandestine radio operations against either Guatemala in 1954 (see below) or Cuba in 1960. The Swan Island relay station operated only until the late twenties, and on leased land.

United Fruit was also a known quantity in the higher echelons of the U.S. government. The Dulles brothers—Secretary of State John Foster and CIA Director Allen—had represented United Fruit in important legal matters, and Allen was a board member. The brother of the Assistant Secretary of State had once been the company’s president. Henry Cabot Lodge, Nixon’s vice-presidential candidate in 1960, was a United Fruit stockholder.<sup>2</sup> And there were other connections at lower levels.

One motivation for putting a propaganda station on the air to help with the hoped-for political ouster of Castro was that it had been done successfully, and right in the neighborhood, not very long before—in 1954. (Lodge was U.N. ambassador at the time.) The target then was Guatemalan President Juan Jacobo Arbenz and the station was La Voz de la Liberación, operating during the day circa 6370 kHz, at night on 3420 kHz. It was on the air from May 1, 1954 until its close on July 2, by which time Arbenz was gone. The location of the station, which was known within the CIA as SHERWOOD, has long been a matter of controversy (see pgs. 17-19). Some have said it was on Swan Island, and that the 1954 activity there was the reason the CIA returned with Radio Swan in 1960; others have said that Liberación was located elsewhere (more likely). Whatever its true home base, La Voz de la Liberación was credited with having been a significant factor in the successful toppling of Arbenz, with whom the United States had become disenchanted (in part at the urging of United Fruit, whom Arbenz had crossed in various ways). Don Moore tells the story in his April 1989 article in *Monitoring Times*, “Revolution! Radio’s Role in the Overthrow of Guatemala.”<sup>3</sup> A [YouTube video](#) about La Voz de la Liberación contains some audio from the station; and the CIA has produced an [exhaustive analysis](#) of the station’s programming.

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

There was one Guatemala-Swan connection that was unmistakable, however. To run Radio Swan the CIA brought in the same team that had run La Voz de la Liberación. The key man was David Atlee Phillips, who had been in charge of the Guatemala station. Now he would head up the general anti-Castro propaganda effort, and in particular the development of programming for Radio Swan, which was the main element of the project (which also included leaflet drops). Phillips had spent time in Cuba, but had been out of full-time CIA service for about a year and a half when the idea for Radio Swan came up. His nominal boss in Guatemala had been E. Howard Hunt, whose job now would be to organize the Cuban exiles into a government in waiting to take over after Castro was deposed. Managing the conflicts among the groups would prove to be not his strong suit, however, and eventually he would be reassigned to assist Phillips with program production.



*World Radio TV Hand-  
book entry for the 1962  
edition (prepared in  
1961).*

Following three months of active consideration, the final policy decision to “displace” Castro was taken by President Eisenhower on March 17, 1960. To maximize plausible deniability, the CIA would be the lead agency, and a strong propaganda effort would be part of the effort. At first it was thought that propaganda broadcasts might be made through WRUL, whose owner, Walter Lemmon, “worked closely with the CIA,” and was ready to go at a moment’s notice. In fact WRUL did carry some anti-Castro programming—including its own “Havana Rose,” Señorita Pepita Riera—and also provided some programming for Radio Swan. This was not unlike 1954, when WRUL received a letter of commendation from José “Pepe” Toron Barrios, one of the principal Guatemalans involved in La Voz de la Liberación, thanking the Boston shortwave broadcaster, on behalf of the country’s new government, for its services in toppling Arbenz.

Another idea was to use ships, or a plane. But eventually the Radio Swan idea took hold. Navy Seabees, under CIA direction, built a small airstrip, constructed the facilities, and installed the transmitters.

The target date to begin broadcasting was May 17, 1960, exactly two months from Eisenhower’s March 17 decision to move against Castro, and that is when broadcasts did indeed commence. The general theme of the programming was “a revolution betrayed.” Some of the programs were prepared by the Frente Revolucionario Democrático, or FRD, the main CIA-supported exile organization, but over time many groups provided content. By the end of the summer Swan was on both the broadcast band and shortwave for ten hours a day.

In the apparently CIA-authored [“Brief History of Radio Swan,”](#)<sup>4</sup> which was appended

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

to the report of the Cuba Study Group (or “Taylor Committee”), a kind of Bay of Pigs “after-action” report made to President Kennedy in June 1961, explaining the failure of the invasion, the observation is made that by the end of 1960 Radio Swan had lost whatever credibility it had with Cubans because the programming had devolved into a muddle of distorted, easily debunked, self-serving content provided by competing exile groups. Since this situation could not be allowed to continue during the Bay of Pigs operation (which began on April 17, 1961), all such programs were ended on March 27 and the station took over production of most of its own content, which became mainly news. The tempo of things picked up.

From Radio Swan programming during the invasion it was clear that the station was no mere bystander. It adopted a 24 hour schedule. Much of the erroneously positive and reassuring information about rebel landings and support for the rebels within Cuba—to which members of the invasion force were themselves listening—was quickly proven false. The Cuban military was urged to revolt, and civilians to engage in sabotage. Instructions were specific: “Make prisoners of or shoot those who refuse to obey your orders! . . . See that no Fidelist planes take off. Destroy its radio; destroy its tail . . . ! [E]lectrical plants must not supply power today to the few industries that the regime is trying to keep in operation. . . . [A]ll lights in your house should be turned on; all electrical appliances should be connected. Increase the load on the generators of the electric company!”<sup>5</sup> A desperate attempt by Phillips to confuse Castro forces through the broadcast of phony “coded” instructions to the invaders was to no avail. Castro’s victory was consolidated in a matter of days.

After the Bay of Pigs, Radio Swan remained an anti-Castro voice, if somewhat less strident and with a more varied program lineup. It became Radio Americas in November 1961, with a new CIA front organization, Vanguard Service Corp., replacing Gibraltar. But the CIA was still running things. Programming was again strongly anti-Castro, and, after some months of intermittent operation in its later days, Americas closed down in mid-May 1968, when the CIA finally decided that its resources could be better applied elsewhere.

1962-1970

In March 1962, after Radio Swan had become Radio Americas, Hank Bennett, [Popular Electronics](#) “Short-Wave Report” editor, noted (p. 77) that some unnamed persons felt that the location of Radio Swan and its successor was actually Navassa Island; or perhaps stateside; or aboard a ship. He left the issue open, but on Navassa he cited a Sweden Calling DXers report from months earlier that an American anti-Castro organization was planning a Navassa station that would operate with 20 and 50 kw. transmitters. The story may well have originated in the [July 1961 CB Horizons](#) article mentioned earlier. The *Official History of the Bay of Pigs* (see p. 12 below) says nothing about Navassa, save that some thought had been given to building an airstrip there, an idea that never went anywhere.

Also in 1962, an interesting article, [“Return to Swan Island,”](#) appeared in the July 6 *Falmouth [Massachusetts] Enterprise*, wherein Ethel M. Crowell, whose father had been the company chemist for the Falmouth-based Pacific Guano Company, related her visit to

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

Swan Island as a member of a party that was tracing the company's history. Guano—phosphate-rich bat and seabird droppings used as fertilizer—was once big business, and the island's claim to fame. She took note of the operation of the station, by then called Radio Americas, and the cooperation of "Vanguard" in helping with the visit, but paid little mind to the origins of either. This article would have put to rest the argument that Radio Swan/Radio Americas was not on Swan Island. However, it was not discovered within the shortwave community until 1965, by Don Jensen, who probably picked it up from a passage in *The Invisible Government*, a book published the year before.

The year 1963 saw the introduction of a new player in the Radio Swan story: C. M. Stanbury II, editor of an [Electronics Illustrated](#) DX column called "The Listener." Stanbury loved mysteries, especially those he created himself. In "Short Wave Fraud Finder," a short article separate from his regular column in the May issue of *EI* (p. 70), he outlined a technique whereby the combination of a horizontal and a vertical antenna would produce comparative signal readings that could, under certain circumstances, reveal whether or not two particular signals emanate from transmitters near each other. From his tests he concluded that Radio Americas was "much nearer Cuba than it is to Swan." He doubled down on this conclusion in his [regular column](#) for May (p. 100). With no particular evidence, he speculated on various possibilities: Cay Sal Island, a Bahamian island between Florida and Cuba; Navassa; perhaps a shipboard operation; "and so on." (In his [January 1964](#) column, p. 42, he breezily concluded that, based on the "Fraud Finder," another clandestine station, Radio Libertad, was most likely in Venezuela. But, he noted, "who can say for sure?")

In his [May 1964](#) column (p. 62), Stanbury seemed to confirm his view that Radio Swan had not been on Swan Island by advising readers that if they wanted to hear and QSL Swan Island they should try for either the longwave beacon there, or an aircraft in contact with a control station on the island. Radio Americas was never mentioned as a possibility. And in his [July](#) column (p. 103), he advised that, for awards purposes, he would put Radio Americas in the "International Waters" category. "Though dumping R. Americas in the middle of nowhere certainly isn't ideal," he said, "it's the best we can do so long as that strange secrecy continues to surround the station."

In mid-1965, Don Jensen took a crack at the subject. Don was a DX authority, an active DXer and a leading figure in the North American Shortwave Association (then less than four years old), and he would go on to be a columnist and author for many radio magazines. A journalist by profession, he was a careful researcher. In a privately-circulated 45-page paper, "[Radio Swan and Radio Americas](#)," and an addendum (pgs. 46-53) that appears to have been written not long after, he retraced the stations' tracks. He discussed the history and ownership of the islands and what was known of the stations. Jensen also described the Swan programming during the invasion in some detail (fake military orders were still being broadcast even after the invasion had ended).

Jensen discussed the station's "rebirth" as Radio Americas and the relocation of its offices to Miami, and then to nearby Coral Gables. In mid-1964, ownership changed again, this time to Radio Americas, Inc., but Jensen believed the CIA was still running things. The schedule at that time made no pretense to being a bona fide commercial operation; three-quarters of the broadcast day was devoted to programs of one political (or religious)



stridency or another.

Jensen's conclusion: "[I]t is hereby flatly stated that Radio Americas, and Radio Swan before it, is and has been operating from the location it has claimed all along . . . Swan Island." He was bolstered by the discovery of the *Falmouth Enterprise* article, by several references to the stations' location in sources outside the radio world, and by a direction-finding project that had been undertaken by several DXers, including Gordon Nelson of Watertown, Massachusetts, whose scientific techniques—described at length in Jensen's paper—were highly regarded within the mediumwave DX community.

It 1966, C. M. Stanbury got back in the game. In his May [Electronics Illustrated](#) column ("The 212 Mystery," p. 76), the precise direction of the beam of a WRUL news program that Radio Americas picked up and relayed brought him to the "inescapable" conclusion that Americas was located on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, or on a ship nearby. By this point it might have been thought that Stanbury was speaking tongue in cheek about the whole Swan/Americas affair, but apparently not, for in the [January 1967 EI](#) (p. 52) he said he had a signed statement from someone who had visited Swan Island in the latter half of February 1960 and found no sign of any station preparations. (My guess is that this was someone on the three-man KS4AZ DXpedition to Swan that month, which found a total of six government personnel there—two Weather Bureau and six FAA.<sup>6</sup>) Stanbury believed that Radio Swan's May startup must have required construction to be in progress by February—he thought the decision to start broadcasting was made very late in 1959—and that the absence of any sign of the station in February proved that it was located elsewhere—perhaps on a boat nearer Cozumel, Mexico, he suggested. He also reported that the American Short Wave Listener's Club had asked Radio Americas to allow it to send an observer to Swan and to ride on the supply flight from Cozumel to Swan to check things out, but had received no reply.

The years 1967-68 kept Swan in the DX press, thanks mainly to Tom Kneitel, now writing for *Electronics Illustrated*. In a [May 1967](#) article, "Confessions of a Radio Swan Hoaxer" (p. 98), he rehashed the Swan/Americas story and owned up that it may have been his early articles that led to some of the questions about the station. He was clear that Radio Swan/Radio Americas was in fact on Swan Island. (The Navassa theory he called preposterous.)

In [September 1967](#), Kneitel followed up with another Swan/Americas article in *Electronics Illustrated*. This one, "Radio Americas and the CIA" (p. 27), contained much new information, which Kneitel said was based in part on reports from Cuban nationals who had had some connection to the station and now lived in Miami's growing Cuban community. He relates the names of many of the behind-the-scenes individuals at the station, as well as some of its day-to-day personnel, and describes how programs were produced and delivered to the station. He also suggested a couple of likely scenarios for the future—the station's closedown, or its partnership with another anti-Castro broadcaster of the time, Radio Libertad.

Another Swan/Americas article appeared just before Kneitel's September offering. It was "The Real Truth About Radio Americas!" by Ken Simon in the August-September 1967 issue of [Radio-TV Experimenter](#) (p. 41). There were a few new points. Radio

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

Americas was temporarily off shortwave at the time, and the station manager told Simon that it was because the shortwave transmitter “had hit the point of no return.” Repairs were too expensive, and shortwave listeners were not the station’s main audience. There was discussion of jamming, the FAA station, ham activity on the island, the island’s history, the FCC’s hands-off attitude about the station, and direction finding. Simon quotes the Radio Americas Miami representative, Roosevelt Houser, as saying, “We have no connection with the U.S. government. I have heard, though, that our predecessor, Vanguard Services, Inc., was mixed up with the CIA.”

Say what you will about Tom Kneitel’s fixation over Radio Swan and Radio Americas, he knew how to dig. For his next article, “EI Visits Radio Americas” ([\*Electronics Illustrated\*](#), July 1968, p. 45), he, *EI* editor Robert G. Beason, and Cayman weather station head Frank Roulstone, Jr. took a February trip to the island. There was no problem getting the required FAA approval for the visit, nor a KS4 ham license from the FCC.

Kneitel detailed the trip to Swan, which was reached by way of a chartered DC-3 flight from Grand Cayman. On the approach to the island, antennas could be seen everywhere. There were two “compounds,” one for the station, the other for the FAA and the Weather Bureau. Kneitel talked about the receiving shack, the simple studio (most programs were on tape, flown in from Miami), the transmitter trailers (shortwave was said to be 5 kw.), towers and generators, plus a small store and two “bars.” There was a complete Collins ham station installed in an old panel truck, but station communications with Miami were generally by way of the FAA’s teletype. The local people on the island lived in a small community of wooden buildings called Gliddentown, named after the island’s on-site caretaker.

If Ethel Crowell’s report on her 1962 visit to the island was somehow not enough, Kneitel’s 1968 sojourn there put an end to the question of the “true” location of Radio Swan/Radio Americas.

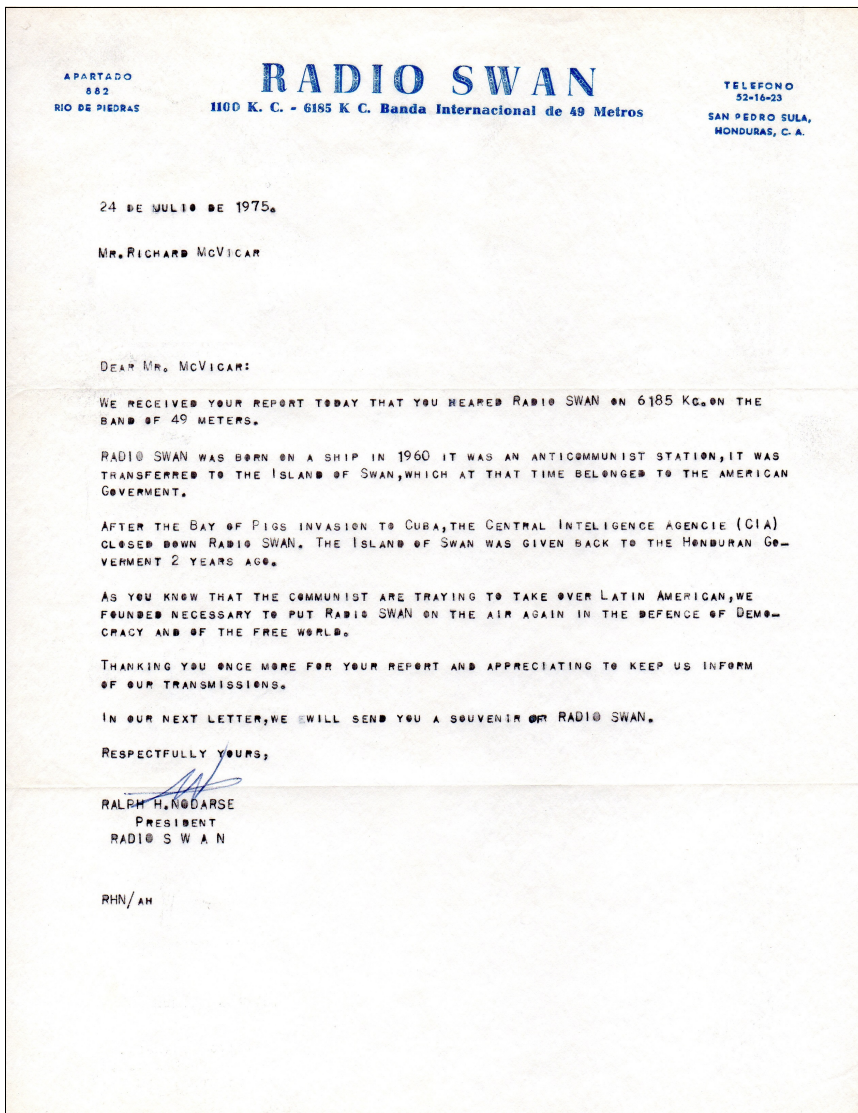
In 1970, Bob Beason, who had accompanied Kneitel on the trip, penned an update, “A Letter from Georgetown [Cayman Islands],” which appeared in the November issue of [\*Electronics Illustrated\*](#) (p. 14). He reported that the U.S. had agreed to turn over the Swan Islands to Honduras (which it did on September 1, 1972). The FAA beacon would remain, as would the Weather Bureau. Beason visited the vessel *Daydream*, which he and Kneitel had seen while they were on Swan and which was now in port in Georgetown. It visited Swan every few weeks, but getting people and material to and from the island was still a problem. Grand Cayman was being developed, and an increase in tourism was expected. And there was a new rumor—that a radio station was being set up on Little Corn Island, Nicaraguan territory, leased to the U.S. for 99 years in 1912, and located about 100 miles off Bluefields.

## AFTER 1970

While Radio Swan continued to receive attention, it was mostly by way of summaries of existing knowledge, with little new ground covered. An example was Don Jensen’s article, “Unraveling the Mystery of Radio Swan,” which appeared in the May-June 1976

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

issue of [Elementary Electronics](#) (p. 67), and did a nice job of presenting the Swan story. Ditto Tom Kneitel's two-part, 1985 series in [Popular Communications](#), of which he was editor. "Inside the CIA's Secret Radio Paradise: Part I," in the November issue (p. 16), covered the history of Radio Swan/Radio Americas. Part II (December, p. 18) recounted TK's 1968 visit to Swan Island. He summarized the Swan/Americas story again in [PopComm's](#) August 1991 issue ("Swan Song," p. 16), by which time he was writing a radio history column for the magazine under the pseudonym Alice Brannigan.



"Alice" addressed Radio Swan again in a [June 1999 PopComm](#) article, "Radio Swan: At Last, (Most of) the Story!" (p. 8), wherein some additional details were provided from what she called a "Secret, Eyes-Only" report on Swan, probably the "Brief History of Radio Swan" (see p. 6, above), which had become public. The article also attributed the information that the Radio Swan transmitter, originally built in the early 1950s, had seen duty with Radio Free Europe in West Germany before being moth balled and eventually redirected to Radio Swan. But Germany had long ago been identified as the source of the Radio Swan mediumwave transmitter.

Thanks to Rich McVicar for this QSL from the Radio Swan that came on the air from San Pedro Sula, Honduras in 1975.

In April 2001, [Popular Communications](#) carried an interesting article by Jon Elliston titled "Bay of Pigs Radio War Revealed" (p. 6). It covered some of the Radio Swan information contained in the "Brief History of Radio Swan," and also addressed broader radio efforts against Castro, including broadcasts by VOA and WRUL; CIA programming put out over various U.S. broadcast band stations, certain foreign radio stations, and two ship-based stations; and post-invasion broadcasting. These themes had been developed

more fully in Elliston's 1999 book, *Psywar on Cuba*.

In his *PopComm* article, Elliston says that during the invasion the CIA used a separate transmitter on Swan Island to broadcast the Voice of the Escambray, a clandestine station claiming to operate from a rebel camp in the mountains. The point of this ruse was to demonstrate that the Bay of Pigs operation had been successful in establishing a new rebel presence, and that it was just the first phase of the anti-Castro military effort. According to a page of unredacted text from the "Brief History of Radio Swan" that appears in the Elliston article, "Voz del Escambray still [circa June 1961] broadcasts at irregular intervals to keep up hope among the forces in opposition to Castro." There were a few references to an Escambray station in the DX press of those years. In the June 1961 NNRC bulletin, a member in Decatur, Illinois reported an "Escambray Libre" heard infrequently on 6185 kHz., in English, with "invasion talks and so forth." In November 1961, C. M. Stanbury related a brief story about an Escambray rebel station, "Radio Cambre," heard once on 7000 kHz. by a well-known Omaha DXer.<sup>7</sup> And Tom Kneitel mentioned an "Escambray Libre" in a 1964 article about clandestine broadcasters, but with no details.<sup>8</sup> The true scope of any Swan-related "Escambray" station is unknown.

A long time passed before the next entry in the Radio Swan saga. In 2010, Bartholomew (Bart) Lee, a respected author on many radio subjects, applied his talents in "[Swan Island, Its Radio History Including the CIA and the Revenge of United Fruit](#)," which appeared in the *AWA Review* (Antique Wireless Association) for that year (p. 115) (see also the later [Appendix](#) and follow-up [letter](#) to the AWA with regard to La Voz de la Liberación; also see pgs. 17-19 below). A slide presentation based on the article can be found [here](#). The Bart Lee article takes a good look at the radio doings on Swan Island. It covers La Voz de la Liberación and Radio Swan, as well as the early days of United Fruit's Swan Island station (with photos), the weather station, and the FAA station.

A major account of Radio Swan, most of which became available in 2011, is the multi-volume *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation*, which was prepared by the CIA between the years 1979 and 1984. It can be found on the [CIA's website](#), and also on a legacy site of [The National Security Archive](#), a non-governmental project (the National Security Archive site also contains a useful Bay of Pigs [chronology](#).) It is in Volume III, "Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961," that we find Radio Swan. The account makes it clear that the station was not just sponsored or supported by the CIA. It was a CIA-run project from start to finish.

A small item in Vol. III (pgs. 219-220) will tickle SWLs:

To verify its audience the Swan Island radio offered simple gifts (ball point pens were a favorite) to any listener who would write to the station. Considering the police controls inside Cuba, listeners' letters were an act of defiance to the regime. There was a flood of letters including, during freak radio propagation periods, requests for ball point pens from New Zealand.

Does anyone have such a pen? Or how about a Radio Swan bubble gum card? Also from

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

the CIA report (p. 220):

It appears that perhaps baseball cards also were going to be offered as an inducement to get listeners to indicate that they had picked up Swan's broadcast. A propaganda note from WH/4 [Western Hemisphere Division, Branch Four, the task force running the anti-Castro effort, which was itself known as Project JMATE] for 9 August 1960, for example, reported: "[Michael J. Maney] [a Phillips associate] spoke to [name deleted], Special Acquisitions. He has contacted a company making baseball cards who claim 'this most unusual order ever received.' Will get cards, but curious about what was wrong with bubble gum."

Finally, Radio Netherlands Media Network did a short feature on Radio Swan in the program of June 13, 2000. You can find it [here](#). You can hear a recording of Radio Americas on Swan Island, made in 1968 on 1165 kHz. (Spanish and English), on YouTube [here](#); and a recording of the Honduran Radio Swan, made in 1977 on 6015 kHz., [here](#). As Jonathan Marks noted in the Media Network program, he had no luck finding a recording of Radio Swan, and neither have I. If you have one, please let me know so that we can include it here.

Said *The New York Times* in October 1977: "[W]hat is left of the radio station is crumbling and gathering rust on the east end of the airstrip, the opposite end from the weather station. Iguanas scurry around the rubble."<sup>9</sup>

## QSLs

Both Radio Swan and Radio Americas were good QSLers most of the time. At one time or another Radio Swan showed at least three different addresses on the letterheads that it used for QSLing. In addition to the address shown on the QSL letter on p. 4 above (437 Fifth Avenue, New York 16, NY), it also used General Post Office Box No. 1247, New York 1, NY, and 18 East 50th Street, New York 22, NY. Don Jensen reported the latter address to be the offices of Radio Press International. He also reported a fourth address for the station—29 Broadway, New York 6, NY, which was the address of the station's law firm.

When Radio Swan headquarters moved from New York to Miami in September 1961, it located in the Langford Building, 121 SE First Street. When it became Radio Americas two months later, the on-air address was given at first as Box 1833, Miami, and later Box 352, Miami 1, FL. There was no address printed on the Radio Americas QSLs, but some of the envelopes bore the Box 352 return address. When Radio Americas, Inc. replaced Vanguard Service Corp. as the Radio Americas parent, a new address was used: 101 Madeira Avenue, Coral Gables, FL (ZIP code 33134 was added later).

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

### INTERPEX

One of the most interesting pieces of DX ephemera from Radio Swan is the postal cover shown below. It was issued in March 1961, almost exactly one month before the Bay of Pigs invasion. As can be seen, it is a professionally-printed envelope showing a map of Central America and the Caribbean, with a microphone and the name and location of Radio Swan. The pre-printed address is the INTERPEX Stamp Show in New York City, and the envelope contains the printed message: “SPECIAL INTERPEX FLIGHT—From Swan Island, West Indies to Miami, Florida and then flown by Special Northeast Airlines Jet TO THE INTERNATIONAL STAMP EXHIBITION INTERPEX, NEW YORK.” The envelope bears a Radio Swan “cinderella” (a stamp-like, non-postage label), which is “cancelled” with a rubber bullseye imprint showing two towers and the legend, “Swan Island, West Indies, March 16, 1961.” The envelope is posted with a regular 7¢ U.S. airmail stamp, cancelled in Miami on the following day, March 17.



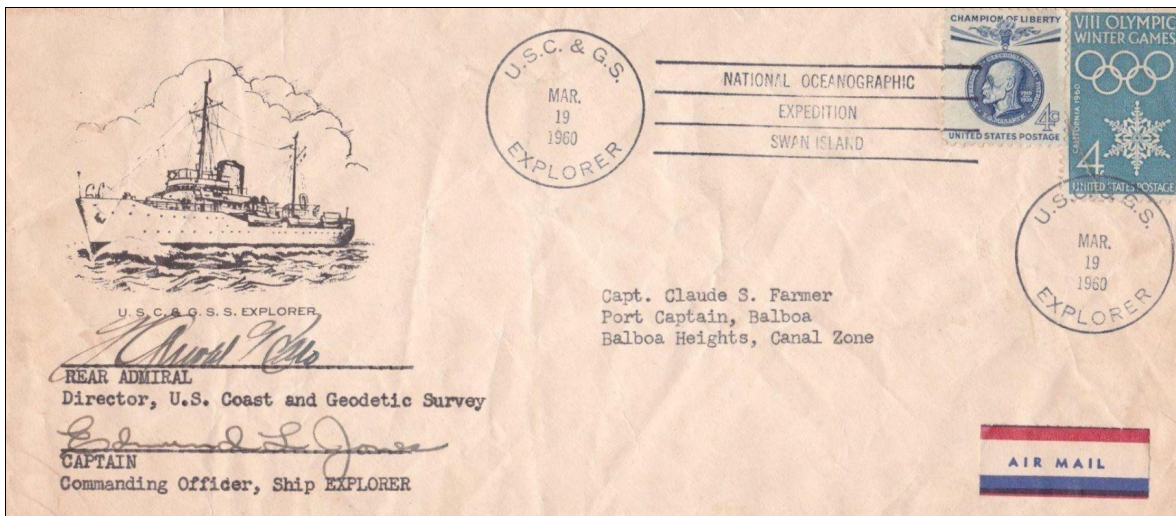
In an impressive article, “Mail of Swan Island, a Former United States Caribbean Possession,” in *Linn’s Stamp News* for October 15, 2018, author Ken Lawrence sheds some light on this piece of postal memorabilia. (The article is posted [here](#), with the permission of Linn’s Stamp News.) He says that Herbert Rosen, the organizer of the INTERPEX stamp show (and head of Industrial Exhibitions, Inc.), arranged for the covers to be flown from Swan Island to New York via Miami, and that the project served to camouflage a CIA-sponsored air transport flight in support of the upcoming invasion (which began on April 17, 1961). Rosen was a natural for the Radio Swan cover project. In 1924, at age 16, he created the first radio series about stamp collecting, and he is the author of the 1956 volume, *Radio Philatelia*, which I believe is still the only book on the subject.

As far as I know, the Swan INTERPEX cover never was intended to be a postal “first”

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

of any kind. But according to a May 1961 article, "[Mail Flown From Swan Island, U.S.A.](#)," in *The Airpost Journal* (p. 246), this was "the first—and only time—that mail was sent from this U.S.A. territory." It seems an odd statement because mail had originated from Swan Island for many years, usually picked up by boat and mailed upon reaching shore. There had been an airstrip on Swan for at least a year at the time of the INTERPEX event, and during that time surely letters had been put on planes on Swan and mailed in the ordinary course when the plane reached its destination. The INTERPEX cover, while specially designed, was really just another such item; it was (presumably) transported by plane from Swan to Miami, where the postage stamp was cancelled and the cover sent on by "Special Northeast Airlines Jet," whatever exactly that meant, to New York. The Radio Swan March 16, 1961 bullseye hand stamp was an element of the cover's overall design, but it was not an official postal cancellation; the cover was not "officially cancelled" on Swan.

On p. 73 of the *Linn's* issue containing his article, Lawrence describes another interesting radio-related, Swan philatelic event, this one a year earlier, in March 1960, and connected with the visit to Swan Island (by way of the Panama Canal) of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey ship *Explorer*.<sup>10</sup> For that trip, stamp aficionados were invited to submit covers for shipboard cancellation when the party reached Swan, the ship's captain having been formally sworn in as an assistant postmaster for one day. Some 5,100 cancellations were made; see the example below. According to Lawrence, for public consumption the ship was on a combined scientific-census mission, but its real objective was to deliver personnel and equipment for the construction of Radio Swan.



If that is true, it would be the first of two known deliveries by sea in support of the creation of Radio Swan. According to the *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation*, Vol. III, p. 213, Swan construction activity required the shipment of 180,000 pounds of equipment, which was sent aboard two LST's. A visitor to [STAMPBOARDS.com](#) in 2012 related the witnessing of both events:

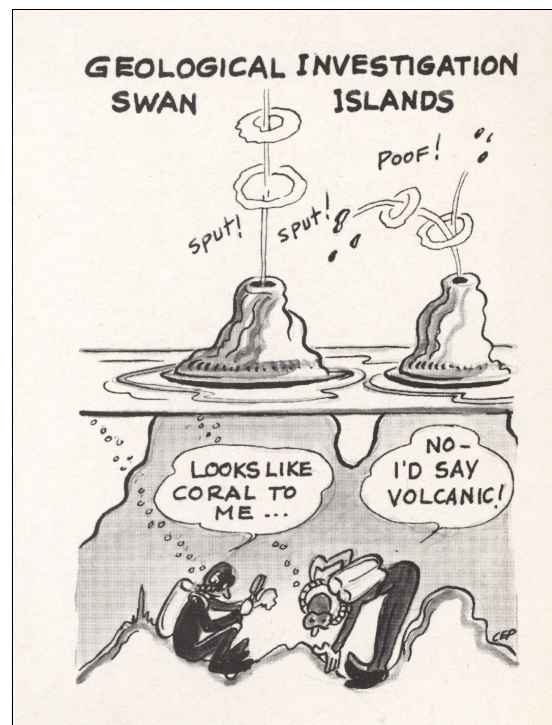
I was on Swan Island when the Coast and Geodetic Survey Ship "Explorer" came to survey the island around March of 1960. They also took a census of who was on the island which caused quite a furor in Tegucigalpa. I was there, around April of 1960,

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

when U.S. Navy ships appeared offshore . . . then an LST came up to the beach, started offloading all kinds of equipment and Seabees. They built a dirt runway, buildings and a radio transmitting station. The radio station first called "Radio Swan" then later "Radio Americas" broadcasted anti-Castro propaganda and was very likely a CIA operation. Anyway . . . the guy who was in charge of that operation was quite surprised when he found out that I could speak Spanish and realized that I could understand what was being broadcast.

The visit of the *Explorer* to Swan took place March 12-19, ending just two days after Eisenhower had approved the Swan project, reflecting, Lawrence suggests, that CIA activity was underway before the project ever received a formal go-ahead (the ship had begun its trip in Seattle on February 2). The challenge to Honduran sovereignty implied by the *Explorer's* visit was said to be one of the reasons underlying the mini-invasion by Hondurans in July 1960<sup>11</sup> (see p. 3 above).

There is more to be learned about the Radio Swan-INTERPEX postal cover. What sort of CIA transport mission was it necessary to hide when flights in and out of Swan had likely become pretty standard by then? Did the covers really start their journey on Swan Island; or in Miami, where they were postmarked? The May 1961 *Airpost Journal* referenced on p. 15 contained a photo of a plane's arrival on Swan, which the unnamed author said showed the loading of "bags and cartons containing special cacheted envelopes for the INTERPEX Exhibition in New York City." Tom Kneitel used the same photo in his "Method or a Madness" article in the following month's *CB Horizons* (p. 5). On a different page (p. 7) he also showed the INTERPEX cover, but made no connection between it and the photo. (The cover shown in his article was hand addressed, and not to INTERPEX but to the Gibraltar Steamship Corp. in New York.)



Clarence E. Pete Pedersen cartoon, [NOAA Central Library Historical Coast and Geodetic Survey Collection](#).

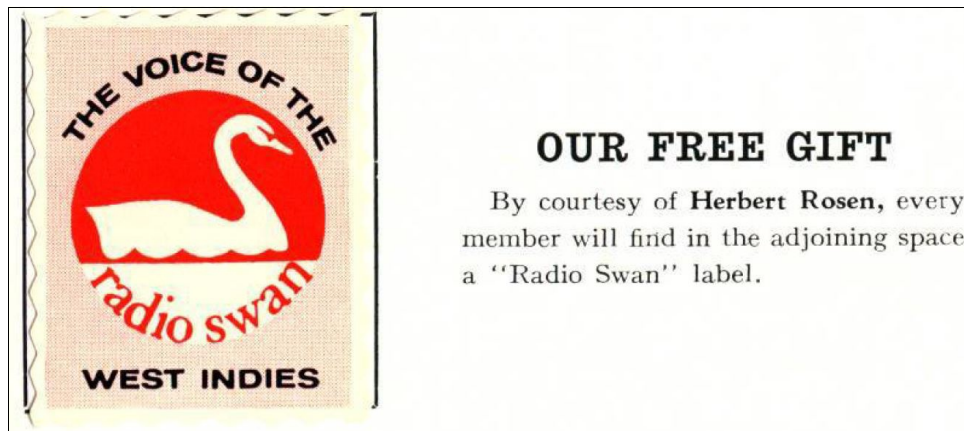
Was the cover a CIA initiative, or an accommodation to a request from within the philatelic community; was it available only to INTERPEX attendees, or could it be purchased by others; and how many covers were produced? A review of *Stamps* magazine for the months before and after INTERPEX, including detailed pre- and post-exhibition articles<sup>12</sup>, found no mention of the Radio Swan cover.

In April 1964, three years after INTERPEX, *The Cinderella Philatelist*, a publication of Britain's Cinderella Stamp Club, which had been founded five years before, called the Swan-INTERPEX event a "surprise" arranged by Mr. Rosen, but offered no details.<sup>13</sup> It



## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

missed the CIA connection, calling Radio Swan a "highly profitable business venture" that had been "very successful" in lining up commercial sponsors. But it added a surprise of its own, for attached to copies of *The Cinderella Philatelist* was one of the Radio Swan-INTERPEX cinderellas, courtesy of Mr. Rosen.



Whatever mysteries of Radio Swan remain seem to have more to do with philately than broadcasting.

~~~~~

AND BY THE WAY: WHERE EXACTLY **WAS** THE CIA'S 1954 GUATEMALAN CLANDESTINE, LA VOZ DE LA LIBERACIÓN, LOCATED?

It is a question that has eluded a clear answer.

Soley and Nichols, in their 1987 treatise on clandestine broadcasting, say the main transmitter was on a United Fruit plantation in Honduras, "with another transmitter held in reserve on Swan Island, United Fruit's telecommunications base off the coast of the Honduras mainland," and other transmitters in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, plus at least one in Guatemala, including one in the U.S. embassy in Guatemala.<sup>14</sup> If there was a transmitter on Swan, reserve or otherwise, it wasn't connected with any United Fruit radio facility. That installation closed in 1928.

Save for the principal conclusion—that the main transmitter was in Honduras—the information in Soley and Nichols sounds of Schlesinger and Kinzer's 1982 *Bitter Fruit*, a book about the American effort to bring Arbenz down. There the authors say that Col. Albert Haney, head of the CIA's anti-Arbenz effort,

established a radio camp near the Nicaraguan capital, Managua, to acquaint a few of the men with broadcasting techniques. He began to place hidden communications stations around the perimeters of Guatemala: one in Managua; one in the Dominican Republic; one in Honduras . . . ; and two in Guatemala itself, one actually inside the U.S. Embassy. Some of the stations were equipped with jamming devices and others

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

were programmed to broadcast on the same wavelengths as Guatemala's regular radio stations. Haney also kept one transmitter in reserve on Swan Island off Honduras' Atlantic coast in case the others were discovered.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, a "radio camp" is not necessarily the equivalent of a transmitter site. Also in 1982, Richard H. Immerman, now of Temple University, said the broadcasts were from the jungles of Honduras and Nicaragua.<sup>16</sup>

Soley, writing individually in 1989, said Liberación transmitted from Nicaragua and from Swan.<sup>17</sup>

In 1989, Latin American DXpert Don Moore said the main transmitter was on a remote farm in Nicaragua; that other sites (Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala) were used perhaps partly for Liberación but for other purposes as well, such as phony military transmissions and the jamming of Guatemalan broadcast stations; and that a Liberación reserve transmitter on Swan was never actually used.<sup>18</sup>

E. Howard Hunt has said in two of his books, one in 1974<sup>19</sup> and the other in 2007,<sup>20</sup> that Liberación was located in Honduras. In Bart Lee's 2010 Antique Wireless Association [article](#) on the radio history of Swan Island, he noted those statements by Hunt but wondered if they might have been CIA disinformation. He made the case for Swan Island as Liberación's location, noting, however, that the Swan transmitter, which he put at 10 kw., was part of a network, and that the overthrow of Arbenz was "largely executed by propaganda radio stations in nearby countries closer to Guatemala City." Lee placed some reliance on a 1998 letter from Hunt which he believed supported Swan as the station's venue. In 2012 he [reconsidered](#) the letter and cast doubt on some of its content, but not on his view of Swan and Liberación. Hunt died in 2007.

In 1995, another writer, Piero Gleijeses, now of Johns Hopkins, also had Swan as the station's location. He wrote that "the island had served the CIA well in 1954, when Radio Swan had been installed to broadcast against Arbenz as part of PBSUCCESS [the name of the anti-Arbenz effort]. It had ceased operating after the fall of Arbenz, but some equipment had been left behind." For that last point he cited a 1992 telephone interview with the key man in the design of the Bay of Pigs invasion, Richard M. Bissell, the CIA's Deputy Director for Plans (read covert operations).<sup>21</sup> The writer mistakenly refers to the anti-Arbenz operation as "Radio Swan," but he puts a station on the island in 1954, and he seems to imply that the Radio Swan of 1960 was in some respects returning to its roots. (Note: In 1991 the author said the station was in Nicaragua.<sup>22</sup>)

The CIA's account of the anti-Arbenz operation offers these clues:

Couriers carried the tapes [recorded in Miami] via Pan American Airways to [redacted] where they were beamed into Guatemala from a mobile transmitter. When the traffic in tapes aroused the suspicions of Panamanian officials, the announcers moved to [redacted] and began broadcasting live from a dairy farm [long redaction] a site known as SHER-

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

WOOD. At about the same time, the SHERWOOD operation improved its reception in Guatemala by boosting its signal strength. By mid-May the rebel broadcasts were heard loud and clear in Guatemala City, and SHERWOOD announcers were responding quickly to developments in the enemy capital.<sup>23</sup>

And on p. 1 of its [analysis](#) of Liberación's broadcasts, the CIA notes:

The SHERWOOD transmitter was located in a country neighboring Guatemala, and the studio in which the programming was recorded was located in southern Florida. Tapes were couriered from the studio to the broadcast site, but by the time armed hostilities broke out, this system had become too cumbersome and the actual program production was shifted to the broadcast site. ¶The SHERWOOD tapes were clearly recorded at the transmitter site, rather than from a receiver. They are devoid of the interference and distortion that would have been present had they indeed been recorded off the air.

The above two passages would favor a mainland site; ditto David Lee Phillips, the CIA operative in charge of La Voz de la Liberación, who, in *The Night Watch*, referred to a "jungle transmitter . . . being set up in an old cow barn," with living quarters "in a dilapidated shack" (p. 38). But he never revealed the station's actual location. Phillips died in 1988.

November 7, 2021

## SELECTED NNRC BULLETIN ENTRIES

NNRC, July 1960

**NEW ECB STATION:** There is a new ECB station that should be of interest to all DXers. It is Radio Swan on Swan Island, 100 miles off the coast of Honduras in the Carribean Sea. It is a commercial station operated by the Gibraltar Steamship Co. on 1160 kcs. with a power of 50 Kw. There were two weeks of tests during May and regular broadcasts began on June 1st at 0830 - 2230. According to Broadcasting Magazine KSL, the clear channel station on 1160 kcs. has complained of interference. Radio Swan is broadcasting in English and Spanish.

Swan Island is claimed by Honduras and up to now was inhabited by a handfull of U.S. Weathermen to man the weather station there. Thus it looks like this would be a very interesting QSL. I hope that they will verify reports.

NNRC, August 1960

\*\*\*\*LAST MINUTE FLASH:

•**SWAN ISLAND**--"Radio Swan", operating on 1160 kc with a power of 50 kw has been reported since regular broadcasts started in June, 1960. Actually the State Dept, and USIA do not control it, according to reports. It is commercially owned. The broadcasts include 'soap operas', music, and news in English and Spanish. It reaches 15 Latin American countries. Advertising is planned for the venture. A wire report lists the owner as Gibraltar Steamship Corp. and a Baltimorean as one of the stock-holders. It's been logged easily in New Jersey and Connecticut. (Tweedie, Zahner, and Berg)

Thomas Mount, 31 Rumson Place, Red Bank, N. J., has submitted a clipping to the effect that an American-owned radio station is broadcasting news to Cuba from a tiny island of disputed sovereignty in the Caribbean. According to the clipping, the project is disowned by the State Department and U. S. Information Agency, although the Information Agency was planning almost the same project to get straight news to Cuba. The Agency abandoned the idea because of 'interference and licensing' problems. The station in operation is located on two-mile-long Swan Island, 97 miles from the coast of Honduras and 300 miles southwest of Cuba, and is operated by the Gibraltar Steamship Corp. of New York which owns no ships. The station broadcasts from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and has 50 k.w. power. Broadcasts include music, soap operas and news, in both English and Spanish, and reaches 15 countries in the Caribbean, Central America, and on the northern fringes of South America. The frequency was not indicated in the clipping.

Vol. 26 No. 11 Page SWBC-1 August 1, 1960

Hank Bennett, W2PNA  
Editor

Newark News Radio Club P. O. Box 254  
Haddonfield, New Jersey

### Shortwave Section

All times EST -  
24 hour system.

All Closing Dates - the 8th of each month.

With the hope that we are not intruding on another department, namely the ECB section, we would like to make mention of a new station on 1160 kilocycles operating from Swan Island. This powerful, American-owned station is broadcasting news to Cuba. The station, known as Radio Swan, is operated by the Gibraltar Steamship Corp. of New York, which, by the way, owns no ships. The station, which has been disowned by the State Department and the U. S. Information Agency, is apparently making Mr. Castro a bit unhappy. The U.S. reportedly was interested in setting up shop on Swan Island but ran into difficulty with interference and licensing problems, according to a United Press International dispatch. Swan Island is located 97 miles from Honduras and 300 miles S. W. of Cuba. Has anyone heard Radio Swan as yet? (Now I know darn well that someone has; where did that note go?)

NNRC, September 1960

**RADIO SWAN**, Swan Island (Mailing Address: Radio Swan, GPO Box 1247, New York 1, N.Y.) now is carrying English on 1160 kcs. at 1900-2000, and this same transmission is repeated on 6000 kcs. at 2200-2300 EST. News in English heard at the end of each transmission seems to be broadcast to Swan Island from the U.S.A., possible on 19990 kcs. The Spanish programs have been extended and are heard on 6000 kcs. at 2300-0045.

NNRC, September 1960

**SWAN ISLAND** - Mr. Richard S. Greenlee, an Officer of the Gibraltar Steamship Co., 29 Broadway, New York-6, N.Y., is desirous of receiving reports (especially reports in various publications) concerning the reception of Radio Swan. No doubt he would be receptive to receiving detailed reception reports from our readers.

NNRC, October 1960

Ralph M. Johanns, 11 East Chippewa St., Buffalo-3, N.Y. ... I hope that all enjoyed the NNRC convention on the 17th. A local nx item mentions in part: U.S. radio on Caribbean Isle counters Cuban propaganda; this 50 kw-1160kc on Greater Swan Is., & Radio Swan after 9/12 will be daily on air with 2 hours A.M. and 3 hrs P.M. (no time given) in both Spanish and English with wrl. wide Bg. S'll tape & rebroadcast some prgms (that are beamed to LA). The U.S. weather bureau has a post there, but Radio Swan is a separate operation. The isle is one of 2 that have been in ownership dispute for many yrs by both U.S. and Honduras..

• **SWAN ISLAND**--"Esta es radio Swan La Voz Internacional del Caribe-- 1160 en su dial" is the Spanish announcement and identification of Swanradio. News in English at 2230 followed by Spanish at 2240. (Feinstein)

Alan J. Knapp, 4202 Craven's Creek Rd., SW, Roanoke, Virginia, writes: "Veri received from Radio Swan, Swan Islands. Their letter says: 'Thank you for your recent letter concerning reception of Radio Swan programs. We are pleased to verify your report, which is in conformity with our program schedule, and is informative and helpful'. No mention was made of time, date, or frequency. Their QTH is Gibraltar Steamship Corp., G.P.O. 1247, New York 1, N. Y."

Richard W. England, address above, obtained the operating schedule of Radio Swan from Mr. Horton Heath, Commercial Manager of the station: "1160 k.c., 50 k.w.-- 0500-0700 EST (Spanish); 1900-2000 EST (English), and 2000-2130 EST (Spanish). ... 6000 k.c., 7 1/2 k.w.--0800-1000 EST (Spanish); 2200-2300 EST (English), and 2300-0030 EST (Spanish)". Dick specifies the necessity of including the postal zone number, as his first letter was returned due to omission (see Alan Knapp's letter above).

**SWAN ISLAND** - Veries in indicate this to be their schedule: 0800-1000 and 2300-0030 in Spanish; 2200-2300 English, on 6000 kc. On 1160 kc. (mediumwave) at 0500-0700 and 2000-2130 Spanish; 1900-2000 English. However, Your Editor still has an unconfirmed report that the English period, at least on 6000 kc., has been ended. We haven't had a chance as yet to check that out for sure. (2AXS, 5AG, 9YD; also 1QY, Richard Lawrenson, Fall River, Massachusetts). PS - Reports go to Radio Swan, General P.O. Box 1247, New York-1, N. Y. 2315-0015

NNRC, January 1961

6000 Swan Island; 1828 with tone signal; s/on 1830 with Eng. & Sp. and into music with Eng. News 1845-1900 daily; 1900-2000 (Sun.) has religious pgms, news & ads. Dual 1160, also hrd well. Also hrd 2000-2300 s/off. (3AK, 4BC, 9AHS, 9AZL, VS)

NNRC, February 1961

6000 SWAN, Swan Island; 1930 religious pgm & Eng. news. (1EM) (This on 5998 but later returned to 6000); good evenings but catching heck via QRM from 4VEC & others. Can usually hear part of Eng. s/off amnt. at 2300. Veri sez 0500-0700 and 1900-2300 Spanish; 1830-1900 English. (6AET)

NNRC, April 1961

**SWAN ISLAND** - Associated Press on Dec. 10 ran an item stating that the Foreign Minister of Honduras said that the US soon will turn over to Honduras control of the tiny Swan Islands. No further word as yet as to what effect this will have on R.Swan

6000 Swan Island; 1800-1830 Eng. news & music; 1830-1945 Span. news & march music at s/on & s/off; talk on Castro. Sun. has religion & news 1900-1945. (2EHN, 2EMO)

NNRC, June 1961

Both recent "Newsweek" and "New York Times" dispatches state that Radio Swan is operated by the Central Intelligence Agency. (8FV)

NNRC, January 1962

6000 R.America (ex-Radio Swan) hrd as early as 1315 with chimes IS and Spanish ID; then pop music; hrd at 0715 with music and to close at 0800 when said would be back at 1230. The BCB sked for 1160 reads 0500-2330; does this straight thru sked also apply to 6000 kc.? (3NF, 4BC, WB, Editor)

NNRC, July 1962

6000 R. America, Swan (??) Island; AM sked 0500-0800; 1230-????; also 1800-2330. Mostly Spanish to Cuba. Gives QTH as Miami. (2GES, 4BC)

NNRC, November 1962

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                  |                |                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Vol. 29                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | No. 2                            | Page SWBC-1    | November, 1962                      |
| Hank Bennett, WPE2FT<br>Editor                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Newark News Radio Club</b>    |                | P. O. Box 254<br>Haddonfield, N. J. |
| <b>Shortwave Section</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                  |                |                                     |
| All times E.S.T.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Closing Dates: 8th of Each Month | 24-Hour System |                                     |
| <p>Well, whattya know - Radio Americas has started in the QSL'ing business! Quite a few of our reporters have reminded me of this fact and I realized it myself, a couple of weeks ago. I received a most cordial letter from one of the people at the station. Perhaps some of you may remember back a few years when Yours Truly made a personal appearance on a BCB station (BCB yet!!) known as WKDN for a NNRC Special. The d.j. at that time is none other than this fellow that is on Swan Island. Probably the most significant item pointed out is the fact that they are now QSL'ing after having obtained a boatload of cards and even now they are almost obsolete for Radio Americas is to begin experimenting on 1165 kc. I wonder how many DXers realized that the proper name of the station is Americas and not in the singular form?</p> |                                  |                |                                     |

NNRC, November  
1962

6000 R. Americas, Swan Island; news to 2100 & editorials, all Sp., 2220-2300 to Cuba; some items from Castro's speeches; 2255 Sp. news. Also noted s/off in Eng. & Sp. at 2359; would return at 0455. P.O. Box 352, Miami-1, Fla. (2AJ, 2GES, 2GXU, 4BC)

LATEST RETURN ADDRESS for Radio Swan, is a note from Dave Skinner, Belleville, N.J.; lists: Vanguard Service Corporation, 911 Langford Building, 121 Southeast First St., Miami-32, Florida. Between that and Box 352, we should be getting QSLs. Many have already let us know that they are now in circulation.

NNRC, December  
1962

6005 R. Americas, Swan Island, up here with VOA relay of Sp. pgm at 2000. Excellent. Dual to m.w. 1165. Lately has returned to 6000. (3NF)(1165 is 60 over 9 hr. Ed.)

11800 R. Americas, Swan Island; 1230 s/on in Eng. & Sp., s/off 1400. Reports to Box 352, Miami-1, Florida. (5AG, 8AD)

NOTES

1. For a review of the history of the dispute, see Tom Henderson Wells, "The Swan Islands Dispute," *Journal of Inter-American Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, January 1964, p. 57.
2. Bartholomew Lee, "[Swan Island, Its Radio History Including the CIA and the Revenge of United Fruit](#)," 2010 AWA [Antique Wireless Association] *Review*, p. 115.
3. It is a slightly edited version of an article that appears on Don's website, "[The Clandestine Granddaddy of Central America](#)."
4. The report is also available at *Clandestine Radio: An Anti-Castro Historiography*, a website that appears to be no longer active but can be found in the Wayback Machine at [https://web.archive.org/web/20080723103347/http://www.cubapolidata.com/ach/ach\\_taylor\\_report.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20080723103347/http://www.cubapolidata.com/ach/ach_taylor_report.html); and in Jon Elliston's *Psywar on Cuba*, p. 59 (see "Additional Resources" below).
5. David Wise & Thomas B. Ross, *The Invisible Government* (New York, NY: Random House, 1964), pgs. 64-65.
6. Victor C. Clark, "Journey to Swan Island," *CQ*, May 1960, p. 52.
7. C. M. Stanbury II, "The Listener," [Electronics Illustrated](#), November 1961, p. 54.
8. Tom Kneitel, "Counterfeit Broadcasters," [Radio-TV Experimenter](#), April-May 1964, p. 63.
9. "2 Caribbean Isles Just Can't Find Place in the Sun," *The New York Times*, October 15, 1977, p. 4.
10. The ship appears to have had a full agenda. Harris B. Stewart, Jr., [Oceanographic Cruise Report, USC & GS Ship EXPLORER-1960](#) (Seattle, Washington to Norfolk, Virginia, 2 February-27 April 1960), p. 143; H. Arnold Karo, "[Oceanographic Expedition of the Ship Explorer](#)," *International Hydrographic Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (January 1, 1961), p. 155.
11. Wise & Ross, n. 5 above, p. 331.
12. March 11, 1961, p. 370; April 1, 1961, p. 5.
13. "Mail from Swan Island, U.S.A.," *The Cinderella Philatelist*, April 1964, p. 27.
14. Lawrence C. Soley & John S. Nichols, *Clandestine Radio Broadcasting—A Study of Revolutionary and Counterrevolutionary Electronic Communication* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1987), p. 222.

## RADIO SWAN AND RADIO AMERICAS

15. Stephen Schlesinger & Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), p. 114.
16. Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala—The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin, TX: Univ. of Texas Press, 1982), p. 164.
17. Lawrence C. Soley, *Radio Warfare—OSS and CIA Subversive Propaganda* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1989), p. 223.
18. Don Moore, “Revolution! Radio’s Role in the Overthrow of Guatemala,” [\*Monitoring Times\*](#), April 1989, p. 6. This is a slightly edited version of an article that appears on Don’s website, [“The Clandestine Granddaddy of Central America.”](#)
19. E. Howard Hunt, *Undercover* (New York, NY: Berkley, 1974), p. 100.
20. E. Howard Hunt, *American Spy: My Secret History in the CIA, Watergate, and Beyond* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2007), p. 75.
21. Piero Gleijeses, “Ships in the Night: The CIA, the White House and the Bay of Pigs,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (February 1995), p. 6.
22. Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope—The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1991), p. 294.
23. Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA’s Classified Account of its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999), pgs. 75-76. Cullather was hired by the CIA to write this internal history of the Guatemalan operation, which was subsequently declassified, and released in 1997.



**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Gerry L. Dexter, "Radio Swan," in *Clandestine Confidential* (Columbus, OH: Universal Electronics, Inc., 1984).

Christina S. Drale, "The United Fruit Company and Early Radio Development," *J. of Radio & Audio Media*, v. 17, n. 2, November 2010.

Jon Elliston, *Psywar on Cuba* (Hoboken, NJ: Ocean Press, 1999).

John M. Hotchner, "U.S. Stamp Notes—Mail from the Radio Station on Great Swan Island in the Caribbean," *Linn's Stamp News*, February 27, 2017, p. 6.

"Mail from Swan Island, U.S.A.," *The Cinderella Philatelist*, April 1964, p. 27.

Roy Mason, "The History of the Development of the United Fruit Company's Radio Telegraph System," *Radio Broadcast*, September 1922, p. 377.

Everett L. Parker, "Secrets of Swan: The Island Apparently Figured in '60s CIA Activities," *Stamp Collector*, November 22, 1986, p. 16.

David Lee Phillips, *The Night Watch* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1977). (Phillips mistakenly refers to the Gibraltar Steamship Corporation as the Gulf Steamship Company.)

Lawrence C. Soley & John S. Nichols, *Clandestine Radio Broadcasting—A Study of Revolutionary and Counterrevolutionary Electronic Communication* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1987).

Daniel C. Walsh, *An Air War With Cuba* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012).

Charles Morrow Wilson, *Empire in Green and Gold—The Story of the American Banana Trade* (New York, NY: Greenwood, 1968).

David Wise & Thomas B. Ross, *The Invisible Government* (New York, NY: Random House, 1964).

Richard Yudin, "Swan Island—The Forgotten U.S. Possession," *The Oxcart*, September 2001, p. 81.

Special thanks to the [American Philatelic Research Library](#) and the [Spellman Museum of Stamps & Postal History](#) for their help with Swan Island philately.