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SUBSTITUTION METHODS IN CAPACITANCE MEASUREMENT

Low capacitances, especially from 100 uufd. down, are particularly important in high-frequency circuits. These capacitances are selected by design but they can be of considerable concern also when they appear by accident as stray circuit parameters. The problem of checking small capacitance values accurately becomes apparent to the student of electrical measurements as soon as the limitations of conventional methods are noted. Familiar members of the smallcapacitance domain are low-value fixed and trimmer capacitors, terminal-toterminal capacitance, terminal-to-ground capacitance, lead capacitance, tube interelectrode capacitance, and socket terminal capacitance.

The direct measurement of small capacitances usually is complicated by stray capacitance in the measuring instrument itself. This stray characteristic is especially disturbing on the low ranges which normally would be used. For that reason, it is desirable to employ an indirect method of measurement, in order that the effects of all strays might be compensated automatically. Substitution methods fall into this category. There are several ways of using substitution methods with conventional test instruments to obtain greater accuracy of small-capacitance measurement. These methods are described in this article.

Principle of Substitution Method

Figure 1 shows a basic setup for substitution measurements of capacitance. This arrangement, which will serve to illustrate the method, often is employed in laboratories. Instruments required are a capacitance bridge and a variable capacitor with dial calibrated for direct reading in micromicrofarads.

The first step in using this arrangement is to set the variable capacitor to some capacitance (C_1) near its maximum and to connect it to the bridge. Short, rigid leads are used. Next, the bridge is adjusted for null. Thereafter, the bridge setting must not be disturbed. Note that this setting of the bridge includes all of the capacitance in the circuit — the total of strays and the capacitor. Finally, connect the unknown small capacitance to termi-

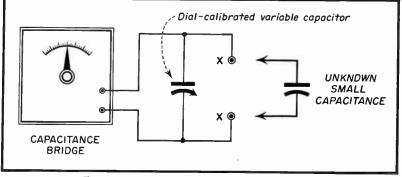


Fig. 1. Basic setup for substitution measurements.

nals X-X in parallel with the variable capacitor and bridge, using the shortest possible leads. Since the capacitance connected to the bridge now has been increased by the amount of the unknown, the bridge unbalances.

Null is restored by reducing the setting of the variable capacitor to a new capacitance, (C_1) . This removal of capacitance from the original setting of the variable capacitor thus compensates for the presence of the unknown unit. The unknown capacitance then is equal to C_1-C_2 , the difference between the two settings of the variable capacitor required for null. In other words, the unknown capacitance is equal to the amount of capacitance which must be subtracted by means of the variable capacitor in order to restore the circuit capacitance to its initial value.

Illustrative Example: The variable capacitor is set to 1000 uufd. and the bridge balanced to a sharp null. C_a thus is 1000. The unknown capacitance (C_x) is connected into the circuit, and the variable capacitor setting reduced to restore null. At the new null point, the variable capacitor dial reads 988 uufd. which is the value of C_a . In this case, $C_x = C_a - C_a = 1000 - 988 = 12$ uufd.

This method of measurement affords higher accuracy than the direct method because (a) the initial null balance automatically compensates for stray shunting capacitances within the instrument and the setup and removes the necessity for correcting for the "zero" capacitance of the measuring instrument; and (b) the initial setting (C₁) of the variable capacitor is at or near the maximum capacitance of this unit, where settings are relatively free from disturbances due to small physical movements and to strays. Furthermore, smaller capacitance changes may be read on the dial of the variable capacitor than are possible with the bridge alone. Note that the bridge serves merely as a null indicator in this setup, the actual readings being taken from the dial of the variable capacitor.

The maximum capacitance which may be accommodated directly by this particular method of measurement is restricted by the difference between maximum and minimum capacitance settings possible with the variable capacitor used. Thus, if the capacitor dial is graduated for continuous reading between 100 and 1000 uufd., the maximum capacitance that can be measured is 1000—100, or 900 uufd.

Thus far, nothing has been said about power factor or Q balances of the bridge (if a bridge is used as the null indicator) and the effect of these balances upon the adjustments of the variable capacitor. Actually, there is no deleterious effect. The variable capacitor, being air-tuned, has a high Q value approaching infinity (low power factor), and the power factor balance may be assumed to apply only to the unknown capacitor under test.

The type of substitution method just described requires an accurately-calibrated, ruggedly-constructed variable capacitor. Standard units of this type are available in laboratory grade. When economy is a factor, however, as usually is the case with experimenters, service technicians, and small laboratories, a satisfactory substitute can be made using a soundly-built 100-, 500-, or 1000-uufd. tuning capacitor, preferably with plates cut for a straight-line capacitance curve. A micromicrofarad calibration of the dial may be provided by standardization against another capacitance standard.

Substitution Method for Large Capacitances

Large capacitances outside of the range of a bridge or other available capacitance-measuring instrument also may be checked by means of a substitution method of measurement. Although a number of service technicians give attention to this method from time to time, quite a few have become confused in the calculation.

Figure 2 illustrates the method. Here, a capacitor (C₂) of accuratelyknown value is connected in series with terminals X-X which are short-

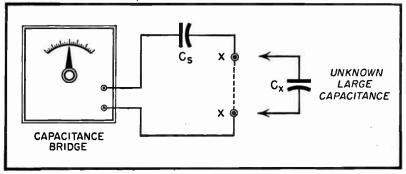


Fig. 2. Substitution measurement of large capacitance.

circuited temporarily by means of a short jumper. The capacitance reading for C₀ then is read from the instrument and recorded as C₁. Next, the jumper is removed and the unknown capacitance connected to terminals X-X. The unknown thus is connected in series with C₀. The new capacitance, read from the instrument, is recorded as C₀. The unknown capacitance (C_x) is equal to:

$$\mathbf{C}_{\mathbf{x}} = \frac{\mathbf{C}_{i}^{2}}{\mathbf{C}_{i} - \mathbf{C}_{i}} - \mathbf{C}_{i}$$

Illustrative Example: A 1000-uufd. capacitor is selected as C_n . The initial reading C_1 then is 1000. When the un-

known capacitance is connected into the circuit, a reading (C_a) of 910 uufd. is obtained. The unknown capacitance (C_x) then equals:

 $\frac{1000^2}{1000-910} -1000 = \frac{1,000,000}{90} -1000 = 10,111 \text{ unfd.} = 0.0101 \text{ ufd.}$

Substitution Method in Capacitance-Tuned Bridges

Figure 3 shows the skeleton circuit of a capacitance bridge having a direct-reading variable capacitor, C_v , as its adjustable arm. Bridges of this type are used at both audio and radio frequencies.

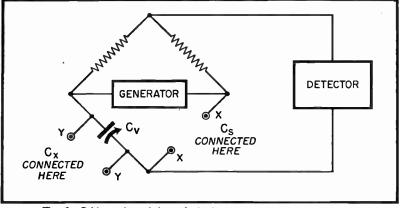


Fig. 3. Bridge adapted for substitution capacitance measurements.

The unknown capacitance normally is connected, for direct measurement, to terminals X-X, the bridge balanced by adjustment of Cv, and the unknown capacitance value read directly from the calibrated dial of Cv. The substitution method may be employed with this bridge, using the internal variable capacitor, Cv. Terminals Y-Y are provided for this purpose. Such terminals are available on some laboratory-type bridges of the capacitance-tuned type.

The bridge is set initially by connecting to terminals X-X a capacitor having a value near the full-scale setting of C_v. The accuracy of this capacitor is unimportant. The setting of C_v then is recorded as C_a. The unknown capacitance is then connected to terminals Y-Y, and capacitor C_v detuned to reduce its setting to restore null. At the new null point, the setting of C_v is recorded as C_a. The unknown capacitance then is determined from the relationship C_x = C₁--C_a.

It is to be noted that this variation, or any of the other methods of substitution measurement of capacitance, will not compensate automatically for stray capacitance in the unknown unit. Such strays are introduced by the leads to the unknown capacitor. The effect of lead capacitance may be nullified to some extent by connecting the leads alone first to terminals Y-Y and setting C_v for initial balance. The unknown capacitor then is connected to the leads carefully without disturbing their position. When the unknown capacitor has pigtail leads, it may be connected to terminals Y-Y for the initial setting, but with one pigtail disconnected and its tip separated from the corresponding Y terminal by a short distance, say is to 1/8 inch. After the initial setting, the lead is inserted into the Y terminal.

Other Instruments for Substitution Measurements

R. F. Oscillator. Any convenient, highstability radio-frequency oscillator may be used for substitution capacitance measurements provided its tank tuning capacitor is provided with a directreading capacitance dial. The tuning capacitor first is set to its maximum capacitance (C_1) and the frequency of the oscillator measured with a convenient frequency meter. The unknown capacitor (C_x) then is connected in parallel with the tuning capacitor, using the shortest possible leads, and the tuning capacitor detuned to a second lower setting (C_1) to give the same oscillator frequency. The value of the unknown capacitance C_x is equal to $C_1 - C_2$.

Q-Meter. The standard Q-Meter checks capacitance values at radio frequencies by means of the substitution process. The measuring circuit of the Q-Meter is shown in Figure 4. C₁ is a rather large variable capacitor, having a maximum capacitance near 500 uufd. C₂ is a small variable trimmer with a range of only a few micromicrofarads. With C₁ and C₂ both set to their maximum positions; the L-C circuit is resonated, as indicated by peak deflection of the v.t. voltmeter, by varying the frequency of the input radio-frequency voltage from an oscillator. The unknown capacitance then is connected to terminals X-X and C₁ or C₂ reduced to restore peak deflection of the meter. The unknown capacitance then is equal to the difference between the two tuning capacitor settings for meter deflection. For very small unknown capacitances, trimmer C₂ alone is varied, C₁ being left at its maximum capacitance setting.

Grid-Dip Oscillator. The grid-dip oscillator, familiar to most amateurs and service technicians, is employed in a manner similar to the Q-Meter. In this case, however, an external L-C circuit must be provided. The latter may consist of a rigid coil of a few turns of wire connected in parallel with a direct-reading variable capacitor. The variable capacitor is set to its maximum capacitance (C_1) , the grid-dip oscillator coupled loosely to the coil and tuned for resonance as indicated by complete dip, and the reading C₁ noted. The unknown capacitance then is connected in parallel with the vari- .. able capacitor and the latter detuned

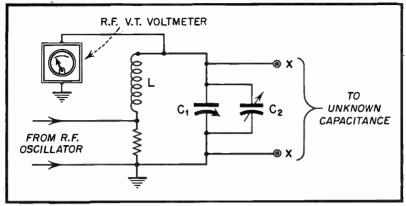


Fig. 4. Q-meter capacitance-checking circuit.

to re-establish resonance. The new variable capacitor setting is recorded as C_a , and the unknown capacitance determined from $C_x = C_1 - C_2$.

Twin-T Network. Another null instrument employing a variable capacitor in one of its arms is the Twin-T Impedance-Measuring Network, shown in rudimentary form in Figure 5. Like the other circuits, this network is set initially to null with the tuning capacitor, C_1 , at its maximum capacitance. The unknown capacitance then is connected to terminals X-X in parallel with the tuning capacitor which then is detuned to restore null. As before, the difference between the two settings of the variable capacitor indicates the value of the unknown capacitance.

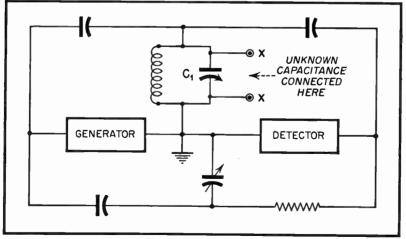


Fig. 5. Twin-T network.

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AUGUST, 1952

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- FOR SALE—Back issues of Radio Television News and Radio-Electronics, 40c per copy. J. J. Cannon, 143 High St., Mauch Chunk, Pa.
- WANTED-Hickok 209A VTVM or equiv. Will pay cash or swap. Leonard Cammarata, 2225 W. 5 St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

- FOR SALE—Port. 7" TV, built-in antenna, carrying case, like new \$40; Press camera 21/4 x 31/4, comp. outfit; sync. shutter, case, holders, adapters, flash guns, etc. Seldom used, \$140. Jacob Dvorkin, 1903 Davidson Ave., New York 53, N. Y.
- FOR SALE—SX42 and R42 spkr in perf. cond; Hammarlund 411 xmtr and 420 modulator, like new; NRI xmtr, multitester, and comp. Comm. Course. Frank T. Giudice, 1413 E. Evergreen St., Wheaton, Ill.
- FOR SALE—Hallicrafter SX-28 with spkr; exc. cond., \$125. Norman Bennett, 301 Holly Rd., Holbrook, Mass.
- FOR SALE—25W instant heating 10 meter VFO transmitter, power requirements 6V, 250 to 450 plate voltage, comp. less power supply; price \$25 FOB, D. F. Guptill, 17 Park St. Ct., Medford, Mass.
- FOR SALE—Rider's vol. 12 \$10 plus postage. William Grazier, 43261/2 30th St., San Diego 4, Calif.
- SALE OR TRADE—5 table model radios, need slight repairs; National Schools multitester; 22X telescope and 2 sets of double headphones. Karl Nester, Van Meter, Pa.
- SELL OR SWAP—"New Products" automatic changer, plays 10-12" or 12-10" records, 78 RPM only, with base. Good shape, \$10 cash or \$10 worth of tubes of my choice. C. Elgasser, Jr., 1920 Fern St., San Diego 2, Calif.
- FOR SALE—Field strength meter; Bogen 32W mobile amp.; 4 University reflex horns; 4 University MP units; 1 mike; 1 stand; A-1 cond. Write for our low price. Carrs Television Center, 15-17 Kelley Square, Worcester 4, Mass.
- FOR SALE—Hallicrafter S40-A, like new, \$60. Chas. Cerami, 146 Congress St., Newark, N. J.
- WANTED—Stancor 202A transmitter. State cond. and price. Hartley Grisham, 911 E. Main St., Marion, Ill.
- TRADE—16mm movie projector (Kodascope); comm. rec., Hallicrafter; sig. gen.; 2 TV boosters; Yaugi 4 bar TV aerial; 18W Masco amp, with mike, spkr; wood clarinet. Want 14" TV set, sig. tracer and cond. tester. John Arnold, P.O. Box 84, Bluffs, Ill.
- WANTED—Rider Chanalyst, must be A-l; state mod. and price. Henry P. Zych, 5624 W. Byron St., Chicago 34, Ill.

THE C-D CAPACITOR

- FOR SALE—Rider TV Man. 1-7 \$85; 1-5 \$60; Rider Radio Man. 1-18 \$80; Sams Photo Facts, 8 vol. \$80; all in fair cond., intact. Donald E. Schafer, 340 S. Virginia Ave., Burbank, Calif.
- SELL OR TRADE—HRO rec., very good shape; 375W xmitter with BC696 v.f.o.; micamold xtr-1, very nice. Eqpt. at my home in Brooklyn. Want mobile eqpt. Peter Schlein, Kappa Nu House, Lenox Rd., Schenectady 8, N. Y.
- FOR SALE—Motorola TS-4D 7" TV set, blond cabinet, good cond. \$18; RCA Victor mod. 56x10 AM SW table radio \$12. Cash with order only. Jones Radio Co., RD I, Douglassville, Pa.
- FOR SALE—Air King wire recorder, with mike and 3 spools wire, like new \$45; Howard FM tuner, perf., \$25; Weston mod. 689 I-F ohmeter, guar., \$6. Send M.O. Bert's Radio & TV, 5115 Elyria Ave., Lorain, Ohio.
- WANTED—Abbot T-R & B, must be in good cond. Stanford Radio Shop, 2209 N. 16th St., Philadelphia 32, Pa.
- WANTED—Instructograph and good commrec. E. Tischler, 56 Carey Ave., Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
- FOR SALE—Jackson mod. 641 sig. gen; Jackson mod. 645 VTVM, all leads and instructions incl. Best offer takes one or both. Jim Sylvester, 3370 "C" St., Niagara Falls, N. Y.
- TRADE—Heathkit 05 oscilloscope and TS-2 marker and sweep gen.; Triplett 1200-A VOM and 1232 sig. gen.; Webster Chicago 78-1 wire recorder. Want tape recorder, Hallicrafter SX-71 or equiv., Speed Graphic, or what have you. Ed's Radio and TV, R 1, Allenton, Mich.
- TRADE—Mallory 8301 Inductuner, in orig. carton. Edward Christner's Radio Shop, 313 Crawford St., Middletown, Ohio.
- FOR SALE—High and low voltage transx. Type used in no. 7 Telekit TV set., both in good cond; 7 x 50 binoculars with case; German make, E. Leitz. Make cash offer. Stephen Barniak, 2426 Perot St., Philadelphia 30, Pa.
- **EMPLOYMENT WANTED**—T.V. supervisor in large company wants employment in or around Richmond, Va. 17 years experience in electronics, graduate T.V. engineer. References and all information sent on request. John Ferri, Rt. 2, Box 600, Louisville, Ky.

- FOR SALE—NRI tube tester, like new \$25. Also tube sockets and condensers reas. Alfred A. Johnson, 5604 N. Western Ave., Chicago 45, Ill.
- FOR SALE—Teletone AM-FM table radio, 8 tube \$30; Samson toaster \$12; G.I. 33, 78 rpm phono motors \$4; Revere T-100 tape recorder with dynamic mike \$115; all excellent. Mrs. Arthur Hein, 418 Gregory St., Rockford, Ill.
- SELL OR SWAP—"Practical Radio Comm." and latest "Q & A Book" for FCC exams. Sell for \$10 or trade for newest "Keith & Henney Engineering" in excellent cond. Books in orig. cartons. Robert L. Ingram, 140 N. Harrison St., Easton, Md.
- WANTED—Precision mod. 864 or 866 multimaster. Will trade RCA Jun. voltohmyst. State cond. and price. Precision Service Co., 2 N. Quincy St., Brockton 58, Mass.
- SWAP-5 band Browning preselector for R9'er with 20 meter coil. 813, like new, for Eimac 100TH. John Serafin, 332 Madison Ave., Clifton, N. J.
- WANTED—DB22A preselector and VHF-152-A. Joseph A. Stauhs, 159 N. 15th St., Bloomfield, N. J.
- WANTED-Tape recorder, semi pro, hi-fi, such as Conertone. Richard Westhoff, 1451 Clayton St., San Francisco, Calif.
- SALE OR SWAP—15W Regal port. P.A. system; 2 12" spkrs and mike, all in plastic cov. carrying case, \$40 or swap for 630 10" RCA TV table model. J. Heitner, 1183 Grant Ave., Bx 56, N. Y.
- FOR SALE—Two Setchell Carlson 32V, 25W 7 tube table sets; one white, one walnut plastic case, at \$41.95 and \$39.95 less 25% disc.; one Zenith inverter input 32V DC output 110V.A.C., cap. 100W, at \$39.50 less 25% disc. FOB. Furch Electric Co., Comfrey, Minn., Box 253.
- FOR SALE—H&R Sportsman .22 revolver with holster, perf., FOB \$30; National ACSW-3 rec., 10, 20, 160 meter bandspread coils and comp. instr., good, also ext. power supply, poor. All FOB \$15. Hal Magargie, 162-20 N. Hempstead Tpke, Flushing 65, N. Y.
- FOR SALE-Eico VTVM mod. 221 with HV probe \$30; Sylvania polymeter, type 134, make offer; Photofact TV Course; Modern Oscilloscopes; Modern Radio Servicing. H. L. Dean, 671 S. Saybrook Ave., Los Angeles 22, Calif.

AUGUST, 1952

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- WANTED—Sam's folders 1-90 with or without binders. J. E. Smith Radio Shop, Montezuma, Ga.
- FOR SALE—Vocatron wireless intercom and baby watcher, 2 units like new; list \$79.95, best offer over \$50. New York met. area only. H. D. Roistacher, 35-08 95th St., Jackson Heights 72, N. Y.
- WANTED—TV field strength meter for fringe area service. Bill's Radio & TV, 2016-B 45th St., Los Alamos, N. M.
- FOR SALE—RCA electronic control capacity operated relay no. 41903 using following tubes: 6SQ7, 6F8G, VR-105, 6X5, COD \$10; coin-operated station box, used to operate remote radio, comp. with 24 AC motor, spkr and timer clock, \$3 each. Victor Kozma, 1665 Stadium Åve., N. Y. 61, N. Y.
- FOR SALE—Precision mod. E-200-C sig. gen. \$50; Precision mod. 1020-P comb. tube and set tester \$85; Supreme mod. 574 VTVM \$45; Bud deluxe cabinet rack 37" high with 3 panels \$15. Milan Rafajko, 460 N. Lime, Lexington, Ky.
- SELL OR TRADE—Motorola car radio; power supplies, dynamotors, transformers, chokes, condensers, meters, crystals; transmitting, receiving, CR tubes, relays, misc. parts; beam rotor motor. Zambakian, 1259 Gaylord, Denver 6, Colo.
- SELL OR TRADE-Signal Corps DC VTVM, operates wholly on A and B batteries which last for years. Want 110V oper. VTVM or? Arnold Martin, 114-04 204 St., St. Albans, N. Y. 11, N. Y.
- WANTED—Communications receivers, any cond., for Civil Defense. Must be priced low. Frank Sikonski, 19 Oakwood, Saylesville, R. I.
- SELL OR TRADE—10 tube transmitter, comp. with modulator, antenna and shock mounts., like new; freq. 500 Mc., but may be mod. for Citizens Radio Band. C. Karlson, 3150 S. Atlanta Rd., Camden 4, N. J.
- SELL OR SWAP—Rider Vol. XX, like new, for VTVM, sweep s.g., or will sell. Make offer. Adolf Striberny, Jr., 6605 Martins Mill Rd., Philadelphia 11, Pa.
- FOR SALE—BC625 transmitter, unconverted, like new, make offer: Wiremaster Prof. wire recorder, built in AM tuner, phono and extras \$195; National HRO, comp., bandspread; make offer. Paul Wunsch, Jr., 421 Clifton Ave., Clifton, N. J.

- FOR SALE—SX-71, used 5 hrs. Make offer. Center Television Co., 867 Broad St., Central Falls, R. I.
- SELL OR TRADE—Rider record changer book, good 4D32, misc. radio magazines, coax. connectors, National 5886 power sup. for HFS, National HRO-M receiver. Need 829-B, mod. transformers, National HRO-7, late mod. Heathkits. D. C. Harrington, 2137-D 43rd St., Los Alamos, N. M.
- WANTED—Scope, Heathkit or Eico, must be in good oper. cond. and reasonably priced. Prefer local seller. Leon Medler, 2109 Daly Ave., Bronx 60, N. Y.
- SWAP—.45 cal. Army Colt auto. pistol in exc. cond., 2 clips and ammo included. Want S-40 Hallicrafter rec. in exc. cond. Postler Radio, Rt 2, Box 231 Å, Enumclaw, Wash.
- TRADE—Federal disc recorder, 16mm 70DA movie camera, fishing rods, shoe skates size 8½, Remington Foursome electric shaver. Want 35mm candid camera, mod. items, or what have you. Stanley T. Jazowski, 335 17th Ave., Irvington 11, N. J.
- FOR SALE—Motorola 605 auto radio, like new, universal mounting head fits all cars. At cost \$52.50; list \$69.95. Al's Service Center, 430 Smith St., Schenectady 5, N. Y.
- FOR SALE—Gonset 10-11 converter and noise limiter, \$35 FOB; B&W 75W turret \$5; 522 transmitter only comp. with tubes \$20. Leo Liebl, PSR, Medford, Wis.
- FOR SALE—Rek-O-Kut LP-35 transcription turntable \$30; Scott Dynaural noise suppressor \$20; Sperti port. ultraviolet lamp \$15; Garrard RC-60 changer with GE pickup \$20. All FOB, exc. cond. Marilyn Phillips, 311 Penlield PI., Rockford, Ill.
- WANTED—Tape recorder. Send particulars on anything you have to offer. Eugene Kon, 1575 Broadway, Buffalo 12, N. Y.
- SALE OR SWAP—Webcor 180 recorder, Scott SLR-H marine rcvr, Wilcox Gay recordette, Motorola 508, Super-pro 210LX, Traveler port, Admiral microgroove rdophono, Precision 954. Need BC 221, Hickok 209, GE ST-2A, tape recorder. John Pellock, 614 W. North, Decatur, Ill.
- FOR SALE—S-29-S-38, separate spkr; Kenyon T-301 PA output transf; LQ-DIM phono cartridge; AC, DC, FP condensers; HROW, 13 coils, spkr and spare parts. Write for list. M. Schmitz, 2135 W. Berteau Ave., Chicago, III.

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