

Helena Rubinstein R-390A manufacturing in 1960 – Larry Haney

I received an email from Greg Mengell stating that he saw a Helena Rubinstein R-390A at the McCLELLAN AFB in Sacramento in the 70`s. The following is Greg's recollection from 47 years ago. Although it seems to be very clear and honest, there is no tangible evidence that it did exist.

-From: Greg Mengell

-Date: Feb 20, 2022, 11:30 am

-I can tell you I saw one at McCLELLAN AFB in Sacramento in the 70`s. It was on the -faceplate of an r390a that had been crushed with only the front panel and tag recognized.

He also said in subsequent emails:

-NO, I DO NOT (have any pictures). BUT I CAN STILL SEE IT CLEARLY IN MY MIND. I -HAVE NEVER SEEN A CRUSHED R390 BEFORE, ONLY THE FACEPLATE AND TAG -WERE RELATIVELY UNTOUCHED.

-NO, I AM SORRY (there were no special markings on it), I WISH I COULD REMEMBER -MORE (can't remember the serial number).

-IT WAS A SUNNY DAY. IT WAS OUTSIDE THE DMRO LYING ON THE PAVEMENT. IT -WAS INTENTIONALLY CRUSHED. ALL THE CHASSIS HAD BEEN FLATTENED WITH -THE FRONT PANEL WITH NOMENCLATURE TAG INTACT. IT LOOKED AS IF IT HAD -BEEN RUN OVER BY A TRACKED VEHICLE.

-THE KNOBS AND METERS WERE STILL ON IT. IT WAS 1975-76. IT LOOKED LIKE AN -L SIDEWAYS HORIZONTAL WITH VERTICAL BEING THE FACE. ALL BEHIND IT -CRUSHED.

Les Locklear sent me a letter he had on this subject on 11/12/2021. Tom Marcotte (N5OFF) received a letter from N1PG, Harry A. Brooks on 1/7/1995 about these units and passed it on to Les. I believe the reference to HR is Helena Rubinstein.

Tom sent me an email on 2-20-2022 stating that he does not believe that HR was ever in this business because no tangible evidence has ever surfaced and other rare items have (such as Fowler and Dittmore-Freimuth). He also noticed that Google Books has comprehensive lists of government contractors. All of the usual names appear, but HR does not.

Here's the 2 page letter:

Subj: **Original HR Note**
Date: 4/25/2004 12:33:49 PM Central Daylight Time
From: courir26@yahoo.com
To: llgpt@aol.com

Les,

This is the original note sent to me about the HR radio.
You may post it if you like.

73 Tom

Message #61
Date: 07 Jan 95 15:52:00 UTC
From: n1pg@n4yrz.va.usa.na
To: n5off@k5arh.la.usa
Subject: R-390A RCVRS

Path: N5UXT!W5KSI!K4CJX!W4NPX!N4YRZ

From: N1PG@N4YRZ.VA.USA.NA
To : N5OFF@K5ARH.LA.USA

Hi, Tom:

Read your bulletin ref R-390A's with interest. I am retired from the Navy, 24 years service in electronics. In 1956, I conducted the first field test on the Collins R-390 (not 390A), so have had a long-time interest in that series. Used and maintained and repaired R-390/R-390A until I retired in 1975.

The most unusual R-390A that I ever saw bore a builders label indicating that the Manufacturer was Helena Rubinstein (the cosmetic maker). Regret that due to passage of time, and lost correspondence/notes, I am not able to identify better than the manufacturer.

In 1960, I was stationed at the Naval Security Group Activity, Bremerhaven, Germany, in the Research and Development Department. We received 3 R390A's Bearing the Helena Rubinstein label. I do remember that it was a Navy Contract, as opposed to Army, AF, etc.

The label was so unusual that I wrote several letters to track down the story. Here's what I got from a friend at Collins Radio, the original developer. Rubinstein decided to diversify into electronics, and since military contracts was where the money was, they bid on a contract for 80 R-390A rcvrs. At that time, they did not have on their staff a single electronics

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engineer, so they bid a ridiculously low price. Low Bidder won! Then they hired an engineer to set up an assembly line. He told them how much the whole thing would cost and they almost fainted. Rather than spend the money, they bought 80 R-390A's off the shelf from Collins for some exorbitant price, put their own labels on them, delivered them to the Navy and promptly forgot about going into electronics.

I'm sorry I cannot provide any further info about this batch of R-390A's but thought you might like this info as a sidelight on the History of the receiver.

73
Harry
N1PG

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