

To: Joe Schwarz & Brian Berggren – [\[VIP Club Newsletter Editors\]](#)

From: Norm Palzer – 4/28/2009

Regarding: VIP Club Newsletter, April 2009 Electronic Copy

Subject Article: How the ERA DRUM Got to the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS)

I worked in the Property Administration/Disposal Department spanning UNIVAC to UNISYS (1967 to 1993). I departed the company in 1994 after a brief stint in 'Accounts Payable.'

The ERA Prototype Magnetic Drum was in our possession from about 1970 until 1991. It was always housed in our crib. That crib was located at Plant-2, 1092 West Minnehaha Ave., Room-1267. As you know ERA's original plant was Plant-2.

Our department heads (Don Miller, Dick Crawford, and others) were under instructions from the "Legal Department" to not dispose of it. I am pretty sure it was used as an exhibit in at least one patent lawsuit. Every now and then it would leave our possession to be displayed at trade shows.

As the years went on, most of the people who knew anything about the DRUM departed the scene. But, it was never unaccounted for. In 1986 when UNISYS celebrated the 40th anniversary of ERA's founding, the DRUM had some distinguished visitors. Among the 'ERA' veterans touring Plant-2 that day were Arnold Cohen and Jack Hill. Both Arnie and Jack along with Frank Mullaney developed the DRUM.

In December, 1990 after 44 years, UNISYS vacated Plant-2. In January of 1991, the DRUM and our crib moved. I was relocated to the U.E.C. Building and our crib was moved to the "MMC Building. We shared space in the "MMC Building with Jack Laver's and Maynard Paul's "Asset Reduction Group."

Finally, in February 1991, the DRUM got its final marching orders. Realizing its historical significance in the development of the general purpose computer, it was requested as a donation by the Minnesota Historical Society. The donation was approved by Linda Miller (Public Affairs) and signed off by Carole Bidon (Administration) on February 11, 1991.

I generated Disposal File #208 declaring it for disposal. On February 13, 1991 I wrote up Order-to-Ship No. 90185. Our truck delivered it to the Historical Society Storage Facility at 1500 Mississippi Street, Saint Paul on February 10, 1991.

I am glad to hear that after all these years the DRUM has been refurbished and beginning May 23, 2009 it will be featured as part of the MHS Greatest Generation Exhibit.

It certainly merits a spot there. The new History Center Building is located in Saint Paul at 345 Kellogg Boulevard.

Yours truly, *Norm Palzer*