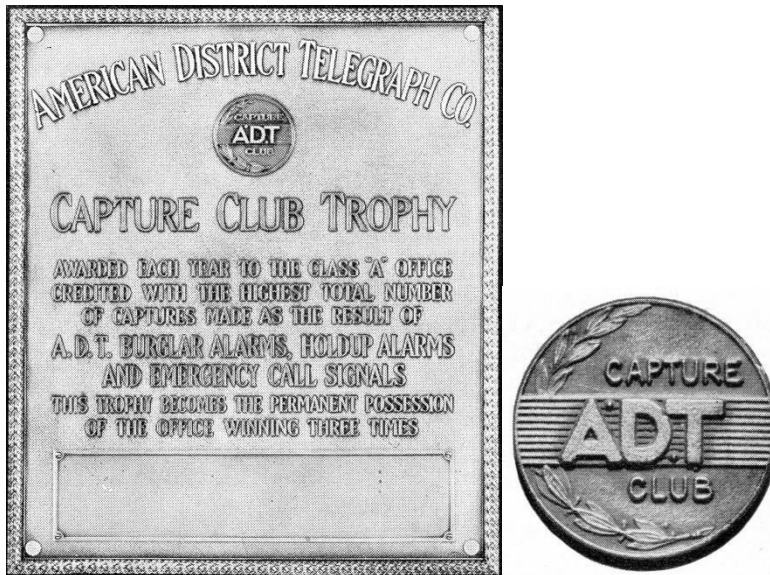


THE ADT CAPTURE CLUB and THE CAPTURE CLUB AWARD PROGRAM

I guess I'm a bit of a historian at heart. When I read about an interesting subject that I know little or nothing about, I often find myself wanting to learn more. Such was the case recently surrounding a photo of an ADT Capture Club Award plaque.



(Capture Club Award plaque and guard's lapel pin.)

Introduction

The summary which follows is the result of a recent thread in the **ADT Memories** Facebook group that discussed ASIs carrying guns and earning capture rewards. Jerry B., a contributor of content to that thread posted a photo of a Capture Club Award plaque.

Having spent the first fifteen years of my ADT/Tyco career in the Central Station, I was familiar with the Capture Club, but had never heard of the Capture Club Award plaque. And having visited many Central Stations in the next thirty-five years of my career, again I never saw an Award plaque. So, with my curiosity aroused, I decided to dig a bit deeper into the history of both the Capture Club and the Capture Club Award plaque. These notes summarize the results of my research.

In the Beginning . . .

To learn more about the Capture Club and the Capture Club Award plaque, I undertook a review of all early issues of **The A.D.T. Transmitter**, a company newsletter published monthly

from 1929 through to the early 1970's. My collection of newsletters includes about 180 different issues. Of these, about 80 are from the years 1929 to 1940.

One of the first things I realized was that the Capture Club had a long history. Its creation was first announced in the February, 1930 issue of *The A.D.T. Transmitter* under the headline "*The Capture Club Starts Its Career.*"

Almost every newsletter in my collection issued between 1930 and 1936 included a detailed Capture Club report indicating the subscriber name and city where a capture occurred in the previous month. Also indicated was the name of the ADT Guard involved in the incident and the number of bad guys captured. Interestingly, detailed Capture Club reports ceased beginning with the January, 1937 issue. I will talk more about that later.

Announcement of an Award Program

The first reference to a Capture Club Award program is found in an article in the March, 1936 issue of *The A.D.T. Transmitter*. In that issue, B. F. Sofge, General Superintendent of the Operating Department announced, ". . . an innovation to the Capture Club program, a regular (newsletter) feature each month which reports the captures made as a result of A.D.T. alarms."

Per Mr. Sofge's announcement,

*"The awards, which will be known as **The Capture Club Awards**, are inspired by a desire to present to Capture Club Leaders each year some tangible and lasting evidence of their outstanding performance, in addition to the honorariums at present received by guards participating in captures. The awards will consist of engraved plaques for the leading offices and silver medals for guards who individually participate in the greatest number of captures."*

It was acknowledged in the article that larger offices would have a distinct advantage over smaller offices in capturing bad guys. To balance the playing field, the article stated that Central Station offices would be divided into three groups based on the number of subscribers served. Group "A" would consist of the 9 largest offices; group "B" would consist of 16 mid-size offices; and group "C" would consist of the remaining offices.

The newsletter announcement provided a list of offices assigned to Groups "A" and "B." Offices not listed were assigned to Group "C." Mr. Sofge further indicated that recognition would be given to the top two offices and top two guards in each group.

Also noted was that beginning with the April, 1936 newsletter, format of the Capture Club report would be enhanced to include current award program standings for each of the three Central Station groups.

Additional program rules were also summarized in the article.

The Program is Finalized

Now let's fast forward to the October, 1936 newsletter when updates were provided concerning the award program.

The plaque design was finalized and a photo is shown in the newsletter. Also shown is a photo of a lapel button that will be provided to winning guards. Images of both plaque and lapel button are shown at the beginning of this report. The previously announced award medal for the guards was changed to a lapel button that could be worn on the uniform.

Another change announced was that the individual guard awards would go to the top 3 guards in each Central Station group. That's an increase from the 2 guards per Central Station group announced previously.

It was also reported that the 1936 award winners would be announced in the February, 1937 newsletter.

So Who Were the Winners in 1936?

Quite frankly, we don't know.

An editorial policy decision was announced in the January, 1937 newsletter advising changes to the format of *The A.D.T. Transmitter*. Per the announcement,

“. . . Besides the obvious change in physical appearance, there are also changes in editorial policy. In the future, purely organizational news, such as personal notes, detailed listing of captures, etc., will be omitted. . .”

Beginning with that issue (January, 1937), Capture Club reports no longer appeared in the newsletter.

Another casualty of the editorial policy change was the Capture Club Award program. The announcement of winners that was expected in the February, 1937 newsletter was not provided. Nor did a winner list appear in any of the later 1937 issues.

The last reference I can find to the Capture Club Award program appeared in the December, 1936 newsletter. That issue provided program statistics thru November month-end. Leaders with one month to go were:

Group “A” Central Stations

Cleveland: 42 captures

Detroit: 42 captures

Chicago-West: 21 captures

Group “A” Guards

O. Belonge, Detroit: 15 captures

H. L. King, Cleveland: 14 captures

Group "B" Central Stations

Baltimore: 15 captures
Chicago-North: 8 captures

Group "B" Guards

A. Stopinski, Baltimore: 5 captures
H. Wellmer, Baltimore: 5 captures
E. A. Supik, Baltimore: 5 captures

Group "C" Central Stations

E. St. Louis: 4 captures
Portland, OR: 4 captures
St. Paul: 4 captures

Group "C" Guards

8 tied at 3 captures each

So which offices won in 1936? I don't know. Comments in the January, 1937 newsletter announced that future Capture Club updates would be provided in an internal company bulletin rather than in *The A.D.T. Transmitter* newsletter.

I've not been able to find any documentation announcing the winners; so identifying them will require viewing the actual plaques, if any still exist.

The plaque photographed by Jerry B. appears to have lettering at the bottom left of the plaque that may be a list of winning offices. Unfortunately, the lettering is not legible in the photo. Without viewing the plaque it is probably impossible to know who the winners were.

The Awards Program in Subsequent Years

It is unknown just how long the awards program continued to exist past 1936. A search of all newsletter issues in my collection from 1937 to 1950 (80+ issues) found no further mention of the awards program. I still have another 60+ issues post-1950 to review, but I don't expect to find any further information in them about the program.

The Capture Club itself did, however, continue on. There are small one sentence notes in many newsletters from 1937 and later indicating the number of company-wide captures in the previous month and the running total for the year. No details are provided – just totals.

After Thoughts

I worked in the Philadelphia Central Station for fifteen years, until the end of December, 1979. In our office, the descriptive term "Capture Club" continued to exist in some form or another well into the 1970s.

Our office was required to send reports to district headquarters detailing all attack alarms and indicating if there were any captures. And our guards continued to receive a \$15 capture reward (bounty is what I called it) well into the 1970s for each bad guy caught due to an ADT alarm. I personally received a few "bounties" while serving as a guard and responding to

burglar and holdup alarms. I haven't a clue as to when the Capture Club bounty program may have ended.

Unanswered Questions

My study ended with a few unanswered questions:

1. For how many years did the Capture Club Award plaque competition run?
2. Supposedly, there were 6 winning offices each year. What offices won in 1936?
3. And what offices won in later years?
4. Separate from the Award competition, the Capture Club, which paid a stipend to the guards involved in captures resulting from ADT alarms, continued well into the 1970s. When did it end?

The Final Word

I'll close by saying that while the Capture Club continued after 1936, I am unable to find any further mention of the Capture Club Award program from 1937 forward, although I have a hunch it continued for a number of years. Unknown is how many years the program actually ran and which offices and guards were winners. Is it possible the Capture Club Awards program was just a 1-year program? Perhaps, but I doubt it.

If any ADT associate or retiree has further information about the Capture Club Award program, please share it. You can send comments directly to me by email: rbrownpsl@gmail.com.

References

Newsletters mentioned in this article reside in .PDF format on the treasurecoasthams.com web site. They can be viewed or downloaded by visiting the web site and selecting *ADT Memories*, or by clicking on the links below.

The A.D.T. Transmitter – February, 1930 (story on page 4): [Xmit 2-2.pdf](#)

The A.D.T. Transmitter – March, 1936 (story on page 8): [Xmit 8-3.pdf](#)

The A.D.T. Transmitter – October, 1936 (story on page 3): [Xmit 8-10.pdf](#)

The A.D.T. Transmitter – January, 1937 (see pages 2 and 5): [Xmit 9-1.pdf](#)

The A.D.T. Transmitter – February, 1937 (see page 5): [Xmit 9-2.pdf](#)

Bob Brown
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