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ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. -- Lt. Gen. James D. O'Connell (USA-Ret.), who had a major part in providing the highly dependable combat radios that helped win World War II, was honored for his leadership in communications here Wednesday night (April 20).

Gen. O'Connell, who later served as the Army's Chief Signal Officer, from 1955 until his retirement in 1959, is now Special Assistant to President Johnson for Telecommunications.

The new honors were conferred on him at the banquet of the 20th annual Frequency Control Symposium held at the Shelburne Hotel. The three-day meeting, attended by some 700 representatives from government, industry, and universities, was sponsored by the Electronic Components Laboratory of the Army Electronics Command, with headquarters at Fort Monmouth, N.J. The conference closed yesterday (Thursday).

Gen. O'Connell was introduced by Brig. Gen. William B. Latta, commanding general of the Electronics Command, who reviewed some of the highlights of the former Chief Signal Officer's accomplishments and presented him with a scroll.

As Gen. Latta recalled, combat communications methods and equipment were in many instances considered inadequate at the approach of World War II for the massive job they would be required to do. The need for better radio transmitters was especially critical.

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"One of the major problems ... had to do with one small component -- the quartz crystal," Gen. Latta said.

And it was the addition of quartz crystals to vast numbers of radios which gave them push-button tuning on the battlefield and kept them precisely on the frequency on which they were set.

After the groundwork of Gen. O'Connell and his associates, the Army set up a Quartz Crystal Coordinating Section under his direction; he was then a lieutenant colonel.

One of the men who joined the wartime task force was W.L. Doney, of West Long Branch, a physicist who is now director of research and development at Fort Monmouth for the Electronics Command.

The accomplishments of Gen. O'Connell and his group "were fantastic," in the words of Gen. Latta.

Up to the time of World War II, the number of crystal units that had been made for all radios numbered less than 100,000, radio engineers say. By the end of the war, 70 million had been turned out through the rapid expansion of industrial production.

Most of the radio-grade quartz that was used to meet the greatly increased needs came from Brazil, with enemy attacks on U.S. shipping sometimes causing acute supply problems.

As an outgrowth of this, the Army in cooperation with industry launched a program to grow -- that is, synthesize -- radio-grade crystals from more plentiful quartz fragments, otherwise unsuitable for such precision purposes.

The result today is that the country could supply all of its essential radio crystal needs by the synthesis process if it should become necessary.

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Besides Gen. Latta and Mr. Dussey, others taking part in the honor ceremonies for Gen. O'Connell included Fred Lack, former vice president of Western Electric Co.; Vincent J. Rublin, of West Long Branch, symposium chairman, and Dr. Edward A. Gerber, also of West Long Branch, ex-officio chairman. Dr. Gerber is a director of the E-Command's Electronic Components Laboratory, and Mr. Rublin chief of the laboratory's Frequency Control and Solid State Division.

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