

Greetings,

I was hired by a local science store to start an astronomy department in 1983. At the time I had about 23 years under my belt in astronomy and a member of the Detroit Astronomical Society and Astronomy Club of Livonia. I would say that I had direct contact with Unitron, as a dealer, from about 1983 or 1984 to around 1992 or so. I resigned my managership in 92 or 93. In those last years I dealt directly with Jim Mullaney. Orders were hard to fill, though complete scopes were still coming. I remember prices going thru the roof in the last days. My 160 had nearly trebled in price and was going for \$6000+ in 1992! This was a dark and confusing time in terms of what dealers were told about Unitron's viability - very little.

Unitron had no assembly or manufacturing facilities in the States, only a warehouse and offices. Unitron was just an importer. I was at the Unitron warehouse and general offices in Plainview, NY in 1980 when I went to take delivery on my 160. Telescopes and accessories arrived from Japan already factory packaged. I still remember the pillows of straw excelsior the Japanese used for packaging compared to our American styrofoam peanuts. Unitron would then fill orders and ship them as a US distributor just as Fine did in the United Trading days in 1951.

There is some question as to just how much "manufacturing" was done by Nihon Seiko themselves going back to the United Trading days. They built institutional instruments and small commercial scopes before the war. But Japan was in shambles after the war. In the 1950 and up, they farmed out services like objectives, eyepieces to Nikon, Pentax, Carton, Towa, Jaegers, &etc. They likely rolled their own tubes, enameled and baked, cast and finished parts, milled gears and assembled other parts (objectives, oculars, and small parts) from their jobbers as per their specifications to create their brand. They may have had a shop for rudimentary repairs, some special assembly and special work like their weight driven clock drives, and chroming brass. Specific info on Nihon Seiko proper is extremely vague.

As a dealer, I did commission Nihon Seiko to provide us with eyepieces with our brand name. We got a few samples, but that is as far as it went. This would have been in the mid to late 80s. While stickered with NS, I don't know who they likely outsourced to at the time.

- Steve

Per email dated August 20, 2014

Regards,
Steve Franks