

Danish radio amateur has no trouble finding friends here

By JOHN ENIGL

"I've talked to a lot of people on amateur radio," says George Gabert, W9JM, "But this is the first time I've had DX come and knock at my door!" (DX refers to a long-distance contact made by amateur radio.)

George was referring to a visit paid by a radio amateur from Denmark, Jorgen Beiskjaer, whose call letters are OZ1CHD. (The "o" in his first name has a slash through it, and the "a" and "e" in his second name are together, as is the custom in the Danish language, but most computers and typewriters made in America have no way of printing those letters.)

Jorgen's visit to Gabert's house illustrates the strength of the worldwide fraternity of amateur radio, which even extends into communist Russia. Asked how he knew that George was a radio amateur, Beiskjaer said that there are three other radio amateurs at his work and they told him about George and his long involvement in the hobby.

How does OZ1CHD happen to be in Sturgeon Bay?

"I am an electrical engineer with Semco, a Danish company which produces marine instruments being installed in ships at Bay Ship," he says. He says he had no difficulty finding the home of W9JM, since Gabert has re-installed his massive antenna which was damaged in the June 8, 1985 tornado.

Beiskjaer cannot operate amateur radio equipment in this country because special permission is required for citizens of one country to operate in another country. Plans are now being made, however, to at least allow reciprocal operating privileges among several European countries. People over there frequently travel from one country to another for business or pleasure; this has also led to students learning several languages in school, and radio amateurs there converse sometimes in their own language, sometimes in the language of the person they contact in another country.

As for Jorgen Beiskjaer, he speaks English like a native and this aids him greatly in his work at Bay Ship since he is able to communicate with his American co-workers directly, without an interpreter. (Sometimes something is lost in third-party translation.)

Jorgen Beiskjaer got to meet about 30 of the members of the Door County Amateur Radio Club and their spouses at a club breakfast at the Fisherman's Table. He brought along an interesting Danish amateur radio publication, which listed the qualifications for, and limits of, the Danish ham licenses.

"Once you pass the licensing examinations," he said, "your license is good for life." (Unlike the United States, where licenses must now be renewed every 10 years.) "There are five classes of licenses; A, B, C, D, and E in Denmark. Each class demands being able to pass an ever more complex technical exam, and requires a high speed in sending the International Code."



Jorgen Beiskjaer (OZ1CHD) of Denmark, left, talks amateur radio with Clayton Cardy (W9OVO) of Sturgeon Bay.

—John Enigl

One of the articles in the magazine Beiskjaer brought along told about the first amateur radio operator in the world, a Dane named Einar Dessau, whose call letters are OZ9DES, who went on the air in 1909 and is still alive. The transmitter he first used still worked well in 1936 but probably would be illegal today because of the possibility of television interference.

By the time World War II began, there were thousands of Danish amateur radio operators but they all had to turn in their radio equipment when Hitler invaded Denmark, Beiskjaer says. However, the English built 2000 transceivers (units that could both send and receive) for amateurs to use in cooperation with the Danish underground. (Denmark, incidentally, cooperated as little as possible with the Nazis. The Danish refused to turn in their Jews, spiriting them out into the farms, providing them with Danish-sounding names and Lutheran baptismal and confirmation certificates. Catholic priests in Italy used the same system to save many Jewish lives.)

The clandestine radios were used to keep the Allies informed of the Nazi goings-on. Some of the radios, which were compact and highly advanced above the state-of-art of electronics at the time, never reached Denmark, Jorgen says. Eight hundred were lost when a ship destined to drop them

off was sunk, perhaps at some remote point on the Danish coast.

While at the radio club breakfast, Jorgen was informed that an exchange student from Denmark is staying at the Karl May home. Telephone numbers were exchanged so he can give his English a rest and communicate with the student in his native tongue.

Jorgen's wife spent some time here recently and has returned to Denmark. Meanwhile, he's made a whole new circle of friends here in Door County to help him pass his time away, thanks to the worldwide fraternity of amateur radio.