

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Sources. Much helpful material was found in:

1. *U.S. Censuses* for 1910, 1920 and 1930.
2. *Newport News' 325 Years*, published 1946 by *The Newport News Golden Anniversary Corporation*.
3. *Newport News Street Directories*, various years. Volumes located at Newport News and Hampton Public Libraries.
4. *Social Security Death Index*.
5. *The Story of Hastings-Raydist*, by Carol Hastings Sanders. Hastings Instrument Co. is now Teledyne Hastings-Raydist in Hampton.

Biography Contributors are identified by their initials which appear at the beginning of the contributed segment.

ABLjr. – Andrew B. Lucas Jr., K4GAW.

JES - James E. Swafford W7FF, ex W7GQC, W4KPP, W9ZAW.

JFW - John F. Williams (son of Griff Williams, W3MT, W4MT).

JHW - Jeff Walker, W3JW, ex W4AAD.

JN - John Needre, Jr., KG4EQU, ex W4JQS, W3GGI

JRD - James R. Dale Jr., KD6VBS, ex W3HTV, W4JQL

FWF - Fred W. Field N6FY, ex W4LLI, W3UVU, K6IHY.

GEF - George E. Ficklen, KB4VIS.

JN - John Needre, KG4EQU, ex W3GGI, W4JQS

TCL - Thomas C. Lawfor, MD, W4WMX

Segments are in last name order.

Aaron, Bertram W3IED, W4JXH, WA2IED

• by *JRD* - Bert was younger than I, but I did know him at Newport News High School. He came to Virginia Tech after my time there and I think he graduated late in WW-II. I didn't see him for many years until the 1960s when I was at TRW in Redondo Beach, CA. He visited the company as a manufacturer's representative. *JRD*

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Anderson, Robert F., W4ISQ

• by *FWF* - I met Rob Anderson at Hastings Instrument Co. in Feb. 1948. He was a quiet black man and a very competent electronic technician. I remember him telling me that he came from Alabama, but I don't know when or where he was first licensed. He worked mostly 40 CW but I did talk to him several times on 10 M phone. In about 1956, not long after I made my move to California, I came back to Virginia on a business trip. My mother asked me to clear out the remaining radio equipment that was still in the attic. I called Bob and told him I needed to give away some "good stuff." He came over and I helped him load up what he wanted. I never saw Bob again. A photo in Section 6 shows Bob at his 1971 retirement party at Teledyne Hastings-Raydist.

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Austrian, Harry D., W3BU

• by *FWF* - Harry Austrian appears with his family in the 1920 Newport News census. They are living at 118 31st St. The father, John is 48 and his occupation is dyer. The mother, Esther is also 48. Both are immigrants from Austria. Harry is 23, born in VA and his sister, Lillian is 19. Old

timers in Newport News will remember Austrian's Cleaners at 3403 Washington Ave. According to an article about the family in *Newport News' 325 Years*, the business was founded by John Austrian in 1893 at 3105 Washington Ave. In 1915, after a successful 26 years of operation, the business was sold out of the family. The family later moved to Baltimore where they appear in the 1930 census. From Harry's age in 1920 we can see that he was only 17 when he was licensed in 1914.

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Aylor, Raymond P., W3DVO

• by *FWF* - Ray was a prominent engineer at WGH in the 1930s. A glimpse into his origins is seen in the 1930 census for Pulaski, VA. The family lived on Main St. The father was Raymond P. Aylor, Sr., age 40, born VA, a mill owner. His wife was Isabel, 34. There were two children, William K., 22 mo., and Ray Jr., 4 yrs. 3 mo. Ray would have been only about 19 when he came to NN in the mid 1930s. He must have been quite bright to acquire an FCC First Class Radiotelephone license at such a young age.

Ray appears in NN for the last time in the Spring 1947 call book. In the Winter. 47/48 issue he has relocated to Fairway Hills, MD. This location allowed him to keep his W3 call. In the 1957 call book he is still W3DVO and living in Garrett Park, MD. *FWF*

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• by *JN* - Ray Aylor told me that when he applied for the job at WGH they said that they had an apartment for the chief engineer to live in at the downtown studio. Well, this consisted of a 6 by 9 ft. room with a cot to sleep on and a desk with a typewriter to copy the news that came in by Morse code on a short wave receiver. This was the room where I helped him install an emergency ham rig during the hurricane of 1936. This rig was composed of various home made components borrowed from different hams.

In the mid 30s WGH had its studios on the second floor of a building between 28th and 29th Streets on the west side of Washington Ave.

Plans were being made to construct a new transmitter site at the Boat Harbor. There would be a new transmitter and a modern free standing vertical antenna tower. The new transmitter was purchased some time before the new site was ready so it was installed temporarily in the Warwick Hotel. Their old flat top antenna atop the hotel was still in place and was put to use again.. I visited that location many times to talk radio with Ray Aylor.

I can remember going to the new site when the station was being set up. Ray Aylor was *making* a co-axial cable to feed RF from the transmitter building to the tower. This homemade cable was fabricated in 1 inch diameter copper tubing with a heavy gauge wire centered with spacers. The spacers were made of wood obtained (apparently) by sawing up a broomstick into wafers. These were then drilled for center holes and then boiled in wax. I don't know how they got it all to go together. On a later visit I noticed that this feedline was pressurized with nitrogen.

My NN High School Yearbook of June 1937 was dedicated to the newly completed WGH transmitter site at the boat harbor.

Shortly after the new Boat Harbor station was in

operation, a storm blew the antenna tower down. Curtis Bryant and I went to see it and walked its full length down to the beach where the top had smashed into the rip-rap rocks of the sea wall. It was a total loss. Later a more durable tower was erected at the same spot.

Baskin, Barnett H., W3IAG, W4IZT -

Baumeister, Ernest L., W3CDW -

- by *JRD* - I knew Ernie mostly through Atwell Clayton Jones, W3NE. He was also quite friendly with my Dad.

Bodine, Don, W4HRP

- by *FWF* -

Bright III, William J., W3HNU

- by *JRD* - Bill was a Newport News High School chum. His father was president and (I think) owner of the Franklin Printing Co. which was on 25th St., directly across from the Daily Press building.

- by *FWF* -

Brown Jr., Rex L., W4LBL

- by *FWF* -

Brown, Raymond M., W4LOL

- by *FWF* -

Bryant, A. Curtis, W3GGP, W4JIA

- by *JRD* - Curtis taught me the code when he lived on Huntington Ave. at 29th St. He was very active on 160, 40 and 10 meters. One time when I went to see Curtis he was very intent on copying the station he was in contact with. It turned out that he was communicating with someone in Lakehurst, NJ who had just seen the Hindenburg Zeppelin explode. His last address was at 325 33rd St., just a few houses up from the St. Vincent School playground. His shack was in the garage at the rear of the yard.

- by *FWF* -

Butler, George, W3AAG

- by *JRD* - I knew him but didn't know he was a ham! In 1932, he and my father went into a radio repair business. The shop was located on 25th St. down the street from and across from where the Daily Press building was then. The business was *Jimmy Dale's Service*. George came to NN from New York, but I don't know how my Dad knew him. I heard he had been involved in rum-running between Cuba and New York and at the time, prohibition was about to be repealed. He only stayed the Fall and Winter of 1932-34. My Dad bought him out with a borrowed \$300. George didn't do any technical work. His style was to obtain and

bring in repair jobs. He would then take the radio chassis out of the cabinets for my dad to fix.

Cayouette, Robert L., W4ONL

- by *FWF* - I met Bob in the summer of 1949. He had been recently hired as a technician at Hastings Instrument Co. I had just returned to the company for a summer job after my first year at Virginia Tech. I went to his home one time. The building was very unusual, being all steel. Even the walls were sheet steel and pictures were hung by magnets. His father had received special permission from the State authorities to erect it as an experiment. I believe the purpose was to demonstrate reasons that the building codes needed to be modernized.

Dale Jr., James R. KD6VBS, ex W3HTV, W4JQL

- by *JRD* - I was enraptured by ham radio from 1936 to 1955. My view was that everything had to be designed (ARRL Handbook!!) and built by hand. My first 40 meter transmitter was 100 W. with a 211 triode in the final. This tube was the same as the more common 203A, except that it had a metal plate instead of carbon. I also had a 160 meter phone net going with about a half dozen other young hams (not including several bootleggers). We all had little low power rigs running only a few watts. Mine used a 57 crystal oscillator driving a 2A3 triode final (the popular 2A3 was a receiver audio output tube of the day). Audio came from the carbon mike in an old stand-up telephone followed by a 57 preamp and a 2A3 modulator. These little rigs ordinarily gave just local coverage around the Peninsula. However when we moved up to Shirley Rd., I strung a long wire between two pine trees. and one night worked North Carolina and Rhode Island with my 5 watts. After moving to CA I became too occupied with family and job and the ham activity was not continued. However in 1990 after retirement, I became enthused again and was re-licensed with KD6VBS.

Darracott, Charles, Jr. W3IOX

- by *JRD* - He was the first person I worked with when I went into the Shipyard in Nov. 1941. He was "the mechanic," I was a "handyman." Later, during the war, he was promoted to quartermaster. He, like many others (including myself) felt the draft creeping up. He volunteered for the Air Corps, and shortly I volunteered for the Navy. I don't recall any postwar contact.

Donahue, Dara H., W3GXS

- by *FWF* -

Drummond, Charles, W3MU

- by *FWF* - He must have obtained his license at the same time as Griff Williams, W3MT since their calls are one letter apart. We have not been able to contact anyone who remembers Charles Drummond. He appears in the 1920 NN census, age 14, born in Ireland. He is living at 3711 Virginia Ave. with his widowed father and two younger brothers. In the 1930 census, Charles is married and has three sons.

His occupation is draftsman at shipyard. I recall a pilot named Charles Drummond when I used to hang around the tiny NN Municipal Airport on Aberdeen Rd. back in the late 1930s. He was the pilot for my first airplane ride in 1940.

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Field, Fred W., N6FY, ex K6IHY, W3UVU, W4LLI

• by FWF - During grade school I developed an interest in electricity and radio. I was encouraged to read and experiment by my 6th grade science teacher, Miss Susie Floyd. Although I built several crystal sets, my involvement in radio did not get really serious until I entered Newport News High School in September 1941. The school had a good library with some books on radio. I had been aware of amateur radio, but did not know of anyone licensed except Frederick E. Royall, W3HGK. He lived near me on the Boulevard, but died suddenly before I could arrange to meet him.

Unfortunately, World War II began only a few months into my freshman year of high school. As of early December, all amateur radio operation was closed down. I continued my interest and managed to build working circuits up to a two-tube regenerative receiver for the broadcast band. During my junior year I taught myself morse code. This was done the hard way - by sheer memorization. Then I found that I could pad the variable capacitor on my broadcast regen. and hear maritime and military cw traffic on 425 to 500 kHz. I couldn't copy everything I heard, but I did make progress. By my senior year I was buying copies of QST and devouring every word.

I turned 17 on June 7, 1945 - the day I graduated from high school (we only went to school 11 years then). The war was still on and I went to work in the Shipyard as an Electrician's Helper. In September the war abruptly ended. Soon after, I ran into an old friend who told me that the FCC had opened up two ham bands and that he knew an operator who was already on the air. That friend was Jimmy Gregory, who today is W3OPD in Maryland. I scrambled to get an introduction to this real live ham. He turned out to be Curtis Bryant (now SK) then W3GGP and later W4JIA. Curt lived at 120 29th St. in Newport News. When 10 meters was restored, Curt was quickly on the air with about 60 watts phone and a 3-element beam.

Curtis was about the nearest I came to having an "Elmer." He taught me how to use the key and critiqued my sending. And he patiently went over an old license manual, making sure that I not only knew the answers, but thoroughly understood all the theory.

Suddenly an opportunity came along which allowed me to enlist in the Navy with a guaranteed entry into electronics school. That put ham radio on the shelf for a while, but as soon as I was through basic training I began to think again about getting licensed. Upon starting the electronics school at Great Lakes, IL, I met a fellow student, Frazier Phillips, who was already licensed as W8WOC. He offered to give me the Class C license exam, which in those days was the usual entry path for those in the military. His

code test was probably harder than anything the FCC would have given me, but I passed ok. Unfortunately the Base Commander hated amateur radio and would not sign the form for a station license, so I got an operator-only ticket and no call sign..

Shortly after getting licensed, I met another ham, John Brett, W2QPJ. I offered to buy parts to put together a station and together we built up a 3-tube regen. receiver, and a one-tube (6L6) transmitter. We rented a garage outside the Naval Base and went on 80 meter CW with our one crystal.

After finishing up the Navy primary school, I was transferred to Washington DC for advanced courses. During a short leave in Dec. 1946 I went to the FCC office in Norfolk and passed the class B license exam. W4LLI was issued to me on Jan. 31, 1947. On the first weekend visit home, I got out my 80 meter rig and went on the air. The first contact was arranged with Curtis Bryant, and took place on Feb. 8, 1947. For the next six months all of my operation was from my parents' home at 38 Apple Ave. The tiny lot did not have much antenna room, so each weekend I tossed a temporary wire over the house and trailed it off down the alley on top of a fence.

By the summer of 1947 I had begun building a 10 meter phone rig. This had an 807 final and was modulated by a pair of 6V6s. Progress was slow because I had been put aboard a destroyer and got home only when my ship was in Norfolk. In Dec. 1947 I received my discharge from the Navy and within two days had the phone rig finished and on 10 meters. I am proud that my first ever phone contact was with W4MT.

My first PARC meeting was in January, 1948. The speaker was Bert Aaron, now WA2IEL, then W4JXH, and pre-war W3IED. Bert spoke on converting a surplus SCR-522 VHF transmitter to 10 meters. All of us younger hams salivated as he showed off his 10 meter mobile which was neatly installed in his new convertible. Bert was my co-speaker at our PARC presentation in October, 2000. My log shows a 10 meter phone contact with Bert on Jan. 11, 1948.

A very fortuitous event took place at that first PARC meeting. My friend Jimmy Gregory introduced me to Stan Howell (then W4KDV, later W6MTY and recent SK). Stan was Chief Engineer at the fledgling Hastings Instrument Co. I explained to Stan that I was just out of the Navy and was looking for a job in radio. Stan arranged an interview with Charles Hastings and a few days later I was the company's 12th full time employee. That wonderful connection lasted throughout my college days and I always had a much-needed summer job waiting for me.

After graduating from Virginia Tech in 1952 I left the Peninsula area for a job in Baltimore where I became W3UVU. In 1954 I accepted a job in Southern California and became K6IHY (and later N6FY). I have been here ever since.

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Gibbs, John B., W4MQM

- by *FWF* -

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Giroux, Al, W4NCK

- by *FWF* -

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Grubbs, Vernard W3HYW

- by *JRD* - Vernie grew up in my neighborhood but I didn't have much contact with him after he was licensed.

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Herndon, William W3CIA

- by *JRD* - Bill was Broadcast Engineer at WGH when the station transmitter was located on Washington Ave. The site was between 28th and 29th Streets on the west side, above a row of stores which probably included Grants and/or Metropolitan. Ray Aylor was the other station engineer and I think at that time they roomed together. I spent many evenings at Curtis Bryant's home learning the code. When finished we would walk over to Washington Ave. and visit these guys at the WGH site. The station was glass enclosed and we had to visit through a "dutch door" arrangement.

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Howell, Fred Stanley (Stan) W6MTY, ex W9QAF, W4KDV

- by *FWF* - Stan Howell appeared on the Peninsula scene just before the end of WW-II. He was transferred from active duty in the Pacific to reserve status so that he could fill a vital slot at NACA (now NASA) Langley.

Stan had been a long time active ham in his home town of Jerseyville, IL where he earned his license in 1933 at the age of 13. He entered the U. of IL and upon graduation was commissioned an officer in the Army Air Corps.

In about 1947 he began part time work with Physicist Charles E. Hastings who was putting together the future Hastings Instrument Co. in the garage behind his home at 117 Hampton Roads Ave. Soon Stan left NACA to become a full time employee with the title of Chief Engineer.

I met Stan at the Peninsula Amateur Radio Club in January 1948. I was 18, fresh out of the Navy and looking for a job in electronics (such were mighty sparse at that time). Stan was now W4KDV, had become very active in the club, and was a major force along with Griff Williams W4MT, and Walt Walker W4AKN in revitalizing PARC after the 4-year WW-II hiatus. Stan was also our Section Emergency Coordinator.

Stan arranged for me to have an interview with Mr. Hastings. I was hired in Feb. 1948 to work as a full time technician at the "new" facility in the old Robinson Brickyard on Chesapeake Ave. This was a big turning point in my life and I have been grateful ever since for the opportunities that Stan initiated. Later he was my main inspiration to attend college. I entered Virginia Tech in Sept. 1948 and graduated in 1952 with a degree in Electrical Engineering. My connection with Hastings benefited me through my time at Tech. The plant manager saw to it that I had a job during each summer vacation and even put me on

the payroll during the Christmas breaks. I believe Stan had a hand in that.

Stan married Iris Haywood in the Summer of 1948. She was a Hampton native, lived on Newport News Ave., and was the younger sister of Hastings engineer Vernon Haywood. The wedding was a huge event at St. Johns Church with most of the Company attending. I felt greatly honored to be an usher. The best man was Stan's roommate, Jim Swafford, W4KPP. That role was to be reversed a few months later at Jim's wedding when Stan served as best man.

By the end of 1949 Stan had been following news of the emerging space program. Finally he was presented with an opportunity he couldn't refuse. He moved to California in the early 1950s and settled at the research and test facility at Edwards Air Force Base. Soon the FCC assigned Stan a new call, W6MTY.

By the time I graduated in 1952, Hastings Instrument Company was having terrible court battles with a larger company that had infringed the patents. The expensive trials nearly bankrupted Hastings and most employees had to find paying jobs elsewhere. Many went to California. I took a job in Baltimore with the intention of coming back to Hastings if things turned better. However after two Baltimore winters and summers I succumbed to a California offer and went west.

Hastings eventually won the lawsuit and once again began to flourish. In 1968 the company was absorbed into Teledyne and became known as Teledyne Hastings-Raydist.

Stan died in his adopted town of Yucaipa, CA in May 2003. A celebration of his life was held at a Yucaipa Church in August, 2003. At the front was a table lined with mementos of Stan's interests and achievements.. Prominent was his beloved and well-worn semi-automatic telegraph key. He had used that right up until he was physically no longer able to operate his station.

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Jones, Atwell Clayton W3NE

- by *JRD* - I knew him quite well. He was referred to as "Jonesy" and sometimes as "Attie." He lived with his parents at 48 Claremont Ave. He did repair work in my Dad's shop from about 1934 until the war was about to start. At that time he knew the draft was not far off so he went to sea as a radio operator aboard a tanker which operated between New Jersey and Caribbean ports. Prior to the WW-II ham shutdown he operated a ham station from aboard ship. Curtis Bryant and I used to work him. During the war his tanker operated in battle zones, hauling fuel between East Coast ports and the South Pacific. He described an incident in which the tanker sailing in front of his ship, and the one behind, were both attacked by Japanese naval forces.

Jonesy was probably the strongest influence on my becoming a ham. He really was a *ham's ham*. His transmitter was a classic tuned-grid-tuned-plate oscillator using a pair of 203As. He operated on 40 and 20 meters.

On 40 he stayed right on 7003 kHz with only a homemade wavemeter to set frequency by. And he never got out of the band! The plate power supply was a motor-generator set located in the basement. His receiver was also home made – a 3-tube regenerative. With this station he worked all continents and 37 countries. He was the fastest CW operator I ever knew. He could send 40 plus wpm with his Vibroplex and could read upwards of 60 wpm. He could copy close to 50 wpm with pencil and paper. He and an op in New Jersey had a running chess game nightly for several years.

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Lucas Sr., Andrew B., W3BDQ, W4BDQ

- by *ABL, jr.* - My father taught me ham radio when I was a kid, about 9 years old. In his long amateur radio career he only worked CW, never phone. I am sending some of his QSL cards to let the world know that he was here (see QSLs in Section 6).

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- by *FWF* - Andrew Lucas Sr. was born Feb. 16, 1900 in PA and died Dec. 1, 1990 in Newport News. He was active in amateur radio throughout most of his long life. The 1921 callbook lists him as 3BDQ. His first station was at 1336 30th St and licensed to use 490 watts (which suggests a pretty big size spark rig!). He was one of the lucky few who were able to keep the same call letters when the district was changed from W3 to W4 in 1946-47. Andrew's early license and long active span places him in a tied position with Walt Walker who was also licensed in 1921 and who also was continuously active past mid-century. It was gratifying to learn that Andrew Jr. (Luke, K4GAW) has followed in his father's footsteps and is an accomplished CW man

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Maclay, John W3HOC

- by *JRD* - I knew him at Newport News High School and in PARC. Did not have much personal contact.

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Morewitz, Harry W3IAN

- by *JRD* - Harry was younger than I and I only knew him at PARC meetings and transmitter hunts.

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Needre, John KG4EQU, ex W3GGI W4JQS

- by *JRD* - I met John at John W. Daniel elementary school. We were both in the 7th grade and I had just been transferred from Stonewall Jackson school. We went through Newport News High School together and both graduated in 1937. John and Curtis Bryant were close friends and had gotten licensed at the same time about 1936. John was quite talented as a cartoonist (and Curtis was also) and eventually attended a prestigious art school in Philadelphia. John is now recognized as an outstanding artist.

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Penney, William H. W3GSV, W4JQU

- by *JRD* - Bill Penney was married but I believe had no children. He was an active private pilot and owned a fancy two-seater airplane, an Ercoupe. I knew him mostly as a

quartermaster in the Shipyard during WW-II. He was involved in electrical and electronics equipment installation.

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Ross-Clunis, Hayden W3EWX

- by *JRD* - I only knew him in the PARC. He always attended the very popular transmitter hunts which were held 2 to 3 times a year, usually in the summers.

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Sledge, Charles W3ENO

- by *JRD* - He was from Petersburg and he was in my Class of 1941 at Virginia Tech. I don't think he finished there because I used to contact him in Petersburg from the Tech ham club station. I also worked him later from my home station in Newport News. I think Curtis Bryant used to also work him on occasion. Charles had albino physical characteristics – no facial hair, no eyebrows, etc. and head was shiny bald.

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Stoner, Lauran W3ICZ, W4JRX

- by *GEF* - Lauran Stoner was my uncle. He married my mother's older sister, Dorothy Maney, I guess about 1938. Lauran was born in Hagerstown Md. A mean stepfather situation caused him to leave home and join the Army Air Corps. There he became an enlisted aviator. He left the Air Corps with the grade of technical sergeant, then went to work for Pan American Airways. I don't know exactly when Lauran arrived in Newport News. He first worked for Benjamin Fisch appliances, later opened his own radio service shop at 3508 Washington Avenue in Newport News.

I remember that before WW II he had a ham station which was small, no more than 50 watts. When he resumed amateur radio after the war he had a 500 watt rig using 2 813s and a National HRO receiver. The antenna was a Lazy H. He only worked the 10 meter band, mostly DX. The advent of TV and T^{VI} caused him to leave radio.

After the war, Lauran moved to a house on Moore House Circle in Yorktown. He purchased it from a Col. Mackin. Dorothy Stoner died in 1977 and Lauran in 1979. He is buried at the Episcopal church in Yorktown.

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- by *JRD* - Lauran was a business associate of my Dad (both were in radio repair). His shop was at 3508 Washington Ave. which was positioned to catch a lot of the Shipyard worker trade. He was a big brawny man and could be a tough guy to do business with. He was one of a group of radio service men who closed up shop on Wednesday afternoons to go fishing. They hired Patty Dunn's trawler out of the small boat harbor. Stoner was the life of the party. When he caught a fish, even though it might be only an 8-inch croaker, one would think he had snagged a whale the way he reacted!

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Strailman, Gilbert W3FW, W3UM, W4UM

- by *JRD* - Gil was a good friend of my Dad. I was only aware of him.

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Vernon, Robert W3IFJ, W4JNT

• by *JRD* - I never knew Bob was a ham, although he worked briefly for me doing service work in my radio repair business on Wickham Ave. in Stuart Gardens (soon after WW-II). He later went to N.C. State where I understand he excelled. The last I heard of him he was president of a large electronics co. in Melbourne, FL (can't recall the name). Bob had a brother named Clowers Vernon who came to work as a technician at TRW when I was there. Don't know if he was ever a ham.

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Walker, Walter G. W3AFJ, W3AHW, W3AKN, W4AKN

• by *JRD* - Curtis Bryant and I visited Walt frequently at his 51st St. home. He was then President of PARC and very active on field days and transmitter hunts.

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Wikstrom, Karl W3IIF, W4JFU

• by *JRD* - I only knew Karl in the Shipyard. He was a Navy inspector for radio and electrical spares. He was also an old friend of my Dad's.

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Williams, Thomas G. (Griff) W3MT, W4MT

• by *JFW* - My Dad, Thomas "Griff" Williams was born in Newbury, SC on August 1, 1905. The family moved to Newport News in the 1920s while my Dad was in his teens. He graduated from Newport News High School. He later graduated from the NNS Apprentice School and attended W&M. He worked for NNS for 42 years and rose from Apprentice Designer to Chief Designer in the Hull Division. This was his position when he died January 7, 1967 after a short illness. I was still at VPI at the time of his death. My Mom lived on until her death on May 18, 1998. My brother, Tommy, had died just 12 days before at the age of 60. I am the only child still living.

My Dad had 3 younger sisters. All have passed except the youngest who stills lives in Newport News with her husband. My Dad had several hobbies, but none were as dear to him as radio, and helping all that had the "bug". His other love was sailboat racing and he was one of the early members of the Hampton Yacht Club. I still have some photos and trophies that he won. Our home on Nelson Drive was built in the early 30's and we lived there until 1956 when we moved to 1 Downing Place next to the James River Country Club. We became members of the Club and my Dad took up golf but was never a serious player. His lifetime love was radio and he was on the air until his death. I can't remember when he first got his license, but it seems he was just out of high school. I would say early to mid 20's. I do remember him saying he met Walt Walker about this time who was also a ham. A long friendship followed.

My wife, Joan and I have been living in Pinehurst for about a year and intend to start construction on a house soon. I do have pictures of my Dad and his 1 KW rig that he used in that radio shack he built behind 113 Nelson Dr.

in Newport News. Unfortunately, these pictures are packed away in boxes until we get this house built. As we unpack, I will try to find the pictures and any other information that would be fitting for the PARC Heritage project. I will pass this along when I can.

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• by *JN* - Although I knew Griff Williams as a ham since the mid-1930s, I had more early contact with him socially than through ham radio.

Unlike most of today's beginners, my entry into the world of amateur radio was not through inspiration and guidance by an older counselor (called an Elmer these days). I started out on my own and in fact never met another ham until after I had my license.

My interest in radio began from reading articles in the popular technical magazines that fascinated teen aged boys in the 1930s. My favorites then were *Radio Craft* and *Short Wave Craft*, published by Hugo Gernsback. I still have three copies of 1944 and 1945 *Radio Craft*, which were issues I wrote articles for. In 1955 I heard Mr. Gernsback speak at the 10th "Round Up Banquet" of the Delaware Valley Radio Assn. in Trenton, NJ.

I managed to construct and get working a simple broadcast receiver. Later I heard about radio amateurs and where in the spectrum they could be heard. I made another radio and adjusted the tuning to cover the ham bands.

During this process of my "catching the bug," a friend and neighbor, Curtis Bryant also got infected with the same enthusiasm. We obtained information about amateur radio and studied theory and code together. Finally in 1935 the day came when we felt prepared. We rode the ferryboat over to Norfolk, went to the FCC office and took the exam.

Later we were overjoyed to learn that we had both passed. I was assigned W3GGI and Curtis got W3GGP. At this time we had still not met a real live ham, but we had learned about Walter G. Walker, W3AKN and that he lived at 217 51st. Street, right behind the Riverside Hospital. One evening, Curtis and I went up to Walt's home. After a nervous pause, we knocked on the door. Walt came and we explained that we had just gotten our ham licenses. He was very gracious and invited us in to see his station.

A short time later I met Griff Williams. My main contact with Griff was from my involvement with a sailing club in which he was a prime motivator. In about 1932 the Shipyard took over the abandoned Warwick Machine Co. pier, located on the James River at the foot of 32nd. St. The shipyard did not utilize the pier in the first several years of ownership, and it soon became popular among youngsters for swimming and fishing. Many cases of drownings and other injuries caused the shipyard to close access to the public. Somehow a group in the Design Dept. of the Shipyard was able to get permission to develop the pier into a recreation facility.

Griff was a member of the group from the Design Dept. They proceeded to repair the pier and turn the large machine shop into a clubhouse complete with dance floor and bar. The group designed a 14-ft. lap strake sailing

dingy and the Yard's Woodworking Dept. built 6 or so of the hulls out of mahogany. These were delivered to the pier for the members to paint, finish and rig. Photo 2.2a shows two of the boats by the hoist on the pier, ready for launching. The long building in the background with many windows is the old Original Club.

I got a job helping out in the sailing club's bar. Griff was very active in the Sunday afternoon sailboat races. One Sunday, he asked me to go along as his only crew member. A squall blew up and Griff ordered me to reef the sail. I tied the reef points with square knots, but forgot to set loops so we could pull out the knots quickly. When the squall was over, we couldn't get the sail unreefed while the other boats set their sails and finished the race.

After the sailing fiasco, I went back to setting glasses at the bar. Griff did win the most races that season, for which he was awarded a large trophy cup. I remember that he filled it to the brim with liquid refreshment and passed it around to the members.

The weekend sailing races continued until about when WWII began. I volunteered for the Army Air Corps in October, 1941. When I saw the place again in 1946 the Shipyard had covered the area with heavy industry.

After getting licensed, Curtis and I began to take part in PARC activities such as Field Day and Transmitter Hunts. Photo 2.2b was taken following a transmitter hunt in September 1938. The hidden transmitter was located somewhere above the North End of Big Bethel Rd. The picture was taken at a nearby picnic site after the hunt. Griff is facing the camera in the center of the picture, and setting out the food and plates. As usual, he is wearing a cardigan sweater. The young boy with his back to the camera is Bobby Heywood, a neighbor of mine (unfortunately never licensed). Most of the men in the background were from the Norfolk radio club. Some of my other pictures of this event were shown by Fred Field, N6FY during his talk at PARC in October 2000.

During the pre-WWII days my ham activity was mostly on 40 meter CW and 160 meter phone. Although I knew Griff from the sailing club and on PARC activities, I had never worked him on the air. With the war over, I was back home living with my parents at 211 30th St. Very soon I started to dust off my old ham gear. We didn't get 160 meters back for several years after the war, so I began to look at other bands for some phone activity. Griff had been quick to get on 10 meter phone after the war. He no longer had any interest in CW. His often stated philosophy was that men were not meant to communicate by whistling at each other!

About this time, the FCC decided to put Virginia into the W4 call zone. If the W4 counterpart of our calls were available, that version would be assigned. Most of us had to accept new calls and I got W4JQS. Curtis got W4JIA. But Walt Walker's W3AKN became W4AKN, and Griff kept his suffix letters with W4MT.

My pre-war 40 meter rig was reworked to cover 10 meters. I used grid modulation to avoid building a large

audio section. Later I built a new 10 meter rig using 6F6's. This put out 2 watts and was fed into my 40 meter antenna. On Jan. 31, 1949 I worked W4MT on 10 meter phone, the QSO lasting from 10:00 to 10:30 PM. This is the only QSO I ever had with Griff over the air waves. Later, I added a 15 watt RF amplifier, but the only other QSOs with Griff were by sound waves.

Griff was very good with DX. I remember the time when he intercepted an urgent CQ from a station in Japan. The problem involved a US military man who was being transferred to stateside immediately. At the same time his relatives were scheduled to depart for Japan to visit him. In order to avoid their trips crossing enroute, Griff picked up the telephone and relayed the news to the relatives. Someone asked Griff why they didn't use commercial communications services, to which Griff replied, "They wanted the news to get there on time."

I visited Griff's radio shack just one time. This was in the 1950s. It appeared that he had built a special room onto the back of his large garage. The interior walls were finished, but the ceiling had wood paneling. This made it possible to drill holes for antenna leads to go straight up from the rigs.

Griff's energy, imagination and enthusiasm helped many diverse things happen. It is a great tribute to his memory that W4MT lives on as the PARC's call letters.

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- by JHW - I well remember Thomas "Griff" Williams, W4MT. He was my "Elmer" when I became interested in amateur radio. I was a member of Boy Scout troop 41 in Hilton Village and he taught a novice class for several of us in the troop. I believe six of us all went together to take the exam in Norfolk. The other five got calls ending in the late Zs. But I ended up with WN4AAD, which was presumably the first of the re-issues of previously-held W4 callsigns. My license was dated July 6, 1953.

I remember going to the PARC meetings with Griff and Walt Walker (no relationship), W4AKN (SK). They would take several of us "protegees" including me, Tommy Lawford (W4WMX), Charlie Meissner (W4ZZS), and Bob Puckett. When Griff drove we would go in his 1949 Hudson Hornet.

I spent many an afternoon over at his shack at 113 Nelson Drive. This was an addition to the back of his garage. I remember drooling over his National HRO-50T1 receiver and Viking 1 transmitter. He had a three element 10 meter beam on a telephone pole. The rotating mechanism was home brew and manual. A vertical pipe mounted in bushings ran down the pole with a right angle gear coupled to a horizontal drive shaft at about eye level. The drive shaft entered the shack through a hole in the wall and an automobile steering wheel was attached to the end for turning the beam. I don't recall what he used to lock it in place.

Griff had an earlier homebrew full KW transmitter. The final was a pair of 250TH's and I think he modulated them with a pair of 810's (not absolutely sure on that). He kept it

on 10 meters. Sometime in the late 50's, TVI was giving him a fit and I ended up getting part of the rig -- the final amplifier deck and the relay rack.

Griff's final was a link-coupled, push-pull design with one of those big B&W butterfly capacitors. It had plug-in coils to change bands. I rebuilt it and went to a pair of 450TH's. I didn't get the original high voltage power supply or the modulator so had to build new ones. My modulator used a pair of 304TH's.

My final rig was a two-relay rack affair with the final, its power supplies and control circuitry in the original rack. My added new rack housed the modulator and its PS. When I moved away from the Peninsula in 1962 I sold my rig to W4MBE in the Richmond area. I tried to contact him a couple of years ago but his wife said he had had a stroke and all his amateur radio equipment had been disposed of. Goodness only knows where it ended up.

Griff died of a heart attack when he was only 61. In his too-brief life he contributed so much to those interested in amateur radio. He was a unique individual and definitely "the character" of the PARC in the fifties.

Every time I drive along Warwick Blvd and pass Nelson Drive, I have fond flashbacks to that era of my life.

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- by *TCL* - I too have very fond memories of Griff Williams, W4MT. He was my mentor and was the major factor in my getting my license when I was only 12.

I can remember eagerly pedaling my bike over to Nelson Drive every weekend. I would be bringing the latest semi-finished item of whatever I was building. I remember taking my 50 watt rig with a 6BQ6, and by what I know now, it was terrible. Griff just shook his head and sat down with me and led me through what I needed to do and what not to do in building my first rig. For example, I learned you really shouldn't wrap every single wire under the chassis in aluminum foil. Next, use socket punches! Don't spend 9 hours filing out a hole for an octal socket. As Griff made that point he dropped a socket punch in my pocket.

We would go out to his hamshack which was a custom room added onto the back of his garage. To me it was just like a kid's magic fort - only from here you could crank that 10 meter beam around and talk to "Souse Amereeca." Wow, I was just totally amazed!

I was also dazzled by Griff's equipment. His Meissner Signal Shifter VFO fascinated me, because it had the counter backlash gears and that green seeing-eye tube in its forehead, with violet glowing voltage regulator tubes in the back seen through its grill.

Griff had tons of patience with me, and gave me and other kids rides to the PARC meetings on a constant basis. He would tell hilarious jokes on the way, with gales of laughter all around. Griff also enjoyed others poking fun at him. One time he turned to me and said, "You're not repeating all of these jokes to your parents are you?" I told him, "Griff, I carefully write them all down and hand them over to my parents after every meeting." Once the hoo-ha

from that settled down, I reassured him that no, I wasn't, please keep 'em coming.

Griff really shaped the future course of my life in more ways than he could have possibly have known. He gave me his edition of "The ARRL Radio Amateur's Handbook" each time he bought a new version. I would take it to grade school at Hilton Village Elementary. I would open it on my knees under the desk and read from it when the teacher was boring me. It was from this beginning that Griff nurtured and encouraged me, to where by the time I got to 9th grade, if someone asked me, "what do you want to do when you finish high school?" I would look them straight in the eye and, without missing a heartbeat, say "Be an electrical engineer from MIT." Folks usually don't expect that much from a 9th grader, but Griff got me there. And so it was to be.

Griff worked for the Shipyard, and had the major job of designing signage throughout the new passenger liner, United States. This was a daunting job, and when the ship was launched, Griff got an 18" long sign looking quite official that said "GRZZLMPHFF." He had that on the wall in his hamshack for a number of years.

When the time came, Jeff Walker and a bunch of us kids all caught the Norfolk Ferry and went to the FCC in downtown Norfolk to take the code test. Most of us passed, got our Novice licenses and advanced upward. Much of the credit has to go to Griff. He was patient and guiding. He got us properly launched and knew how to inspire each of us.

Unfortunately, Griff was a chain smoker and I fear that is what took him away far, far too early (at age 61). The air in his hamshack was always dense bluish, but it was worth it to me to go there and learn all I could, and enjoy his tales and delivery. He was a real character in the PARC, and I think that he was the sparkplug that helped the PARC expand and prosper. He did even more than that for me in my personal growth.

Griff, thank you. Tom Lawford, MD - still W4WMX

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- by *GEF* - I grew up with Griff's son Tommy and came to know Griff in that way.

I found Griff to be a patient teacher of electronics. He also was the committee chairman for our Boy Scout Troop 41, in then Warwick County, now absorbed into Newport News. At one time I and another youngster were to be examined for the First Aid Merit Badge. We had attended the same Red Cross Course the County Firefighters attended. We appeared for examination by a committee member and he wanted to see textbook splints and bandages. Griff intervened in our behalf, ruling that we had demonstrated emergency methods properly with what we could find - no need for store bought!

Griff always had time for a young fellow who wanted to learn. Many of the "kids" Griff worked with went on to very good careers in electronics.

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- by *JES* - I first met Griff Williams while I was working for NACA at Langley in 1946. He had a bunch of electronic war surplus stuff he had bought from the shipyard. I remember buying a high voltage Navy plate transformer from him. I used it in a home-brew rig I was building in the garage of Carl Probst, W4AJA, on Wine Street in Hampton.

Stan Howell, W4KDV, and I visited Griff's home several times to align his ham receiver and other pre-war equipment. At the time he was operating mostly on 10 meter AM phone, and I'll always remember that his phonetic for his call was "W Four Mighty Tight."

Griff was a "hail fellow, well met" and seemed to enjoy life. I am not sure when he became an SK, but know he died rather young.

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- by *FWF* - Unlike most kids who grew up in Newport News and became involved in amateur radio, I did not meet Griff Williams until after I was licensed.

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My first-ever phone contact was with Griff Williams, W4MT on Dec. 7, 1947. In our initial conversation I was surprised to learn that Griff knew both my parents. He also lived near my uncle and worked with him in the Hull Design Dept. of the Shipyard. It was not long before I visited Griff and met him in person. His shack at that time was on the second floor of his huge garage. Somewhere outside was a 3-element yagi which could be manually turned from within the shack. Griff's QSL describes his then rig as ECO (Meissner Signal Shifter), 814, pair of 810s. Receiver was a Hammarlund Super Pro with an "R9er" preamp.

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I got very active in the PARC during spring and summer of 1948. In June it was time to elect new officers. To my surprise, Griff nominated me for the position of Secretary (I have since found out that the tradition was to dump the job on one of the kids). I pointed out that I had applied for admission to Virginia Tech and expected to leave by September. Walter Walker, Sr., W4AKN, said very sarcastically, "In the unlikely event that you are accepted by any college, I'm sure we will have no trouble finding a replacement." I served as Secretary for the next three meetings, but by August, Walt had to make good on his promise.

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By my second month, I was on the air and working Griff on 75 meters. My new call was W3UVU. At that time I didn't have a phone rig for 75, so I used CW. In spite of all his prior negative statements about morse code, Griff had no problem copying my 15 WPM. An indignant ham broke in and asked why a CW station was in the phone band. Griff very curtly told him "If you could copy code you would know why." My last radio contact with Griff was from Baltimore on 75 phone, probably in early 1954. Shortly thereafter I moved to California to start a new job with Hughes Aircraft Co.

In California, I became K6IHY and continued to work 10 meter phone, but only from my mobile rig. I always hoped to contact Griff. I even found when he was likely to be on the air and I would drive up on the top of the Palos Verdes Hills to try to reach him. But this was never to happen. I did usually manage a visit with Griff during my business trips to the East Coast. He was always overjoyed to see me.

One sad day in January 1967 my mother phoned from Hampton to tell me that Griff had died of a sudden heart attack. It was hard for me to believe. Even today I can close my eyes and hear Griff making some very clever and witty statement. It would be so great to hear his voice just once more on W4MT. Stay ***Mighty Tight*** Griff!