

CQ de WA2LQO

Seventy Years: 1944 -2014

The official voice of the Grumman Amateur Radio Club

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A Hobby of Friendship Across the Globe

By Ed Whitman, K2MFY

Funny, when DXers get together amongst themselves, they talk about rare countries, DXpeditions, and of course, sunspots. Some old-timers recall past sunspot cycles with such reverence it almost sounds like war veterans recalling their fiercest battle campaigns. Let me tell you about my memorable early “campaign.”

Back in the fall of 1955 I was fortunate to have started in ham radio at the onset of one of the highest sunspot cycles in recent times – which meant that you could easily make long distance contacts (“work DX”) with very little effort. My friend Mike and I had our new novice FCC licenses and were making contacts on the lower frequency bands. We had an ongoing competition to see who could work the furthest station from our location in Brooklyn, NY. We were on a somewhat even playing field. We used whatever crystals we had for the 80 and 40 Meter novice bands. (Novice stations had to be crystal-controlled CW). Mike was running a Heathkit AT1 transmitter with 40 Watts of power to a 100-foot end-fed antenna on top of his two-story home. I was running about the same power from my Johnson Viking Adventurer with my antenna up on the roof of my six-story apartment house; a “sort of” straight wire dipole antenna. I say “sort of” because the wire zigzagged around the numerous TV antennas on the roof. I believe my antenna favored east-west direction. (I used the tower lights of nearby Ebbets Field as my alignment beacon.)

Mike and I had not yet contacted any stations west of the Mississippi and would track our contacts on a wall map of the United States using colored stick pins. Then one day Mike called me and said he had just worked St. Louis, Missouri. I was devastated – I couldn’t get west of Chicago! One afternoon, after school, I was experimenting with my equipment and noticed that I could load my antenna on the relatively new 15 Meter novice band, using the third overtone of my 40 Meter crystal. I transmitted “CQ” in slow Morse code and listened for a response, and heard nothing but noise. Over the next few afternoons I actually worked a few local stations. The following weekend I again called “CQ” on 15 Meters and listened patiently. Out of the noise, I heard a slow methodical response of dots and dashes:-

Dah-dah-dah Dit Dit-dah-dah-dah-dah Dit-dit-dah-dit Dah spelling out “OE1FT”.

The station repeated his call to me about a dozen times. I was panicky. I was trembling. My hand was shaking. I had never before copied a station whose call did not start with K or W. I composed myself, acknowledged the call, exchanged information, and then he faded away into the noise. Looking down at my log book, I saw that I had copied the station OE1FT, his name Franz, and his location was Vienna – in **AUSTRIA!**

I ran to Mike’s house, and when I told him that I had worked Vienna, he replied, “Sure Vienna, Virginia.” When I insisted he asked, “So, where is the QSL card?” The next day I ran to the library and looked up OE1FT in the Amateur Radio Worldwide Callbook and mailed him my QSL card...and waited. Over the next few weeks that magic 15 Meter band produced a contact with Algeria, and many others in Europe. Mike’s wails of disbelief were gradually eroding. Then the *coup d’état* – OE1FT’s QSL card arrived in my mail. The pin was way off my map. As more foreign QSLs arrived, our DX competition was over ... and I won!

This story is not over yet. Almost seven years ago (50 years after I had worked him) like a ghost whisper from the past, I heard OE1FT’s call sign jump out of a heavy pileup. My call to him was drowned out in the cacophony of whistles and codes from other stations. I looked up his call sign in the call book and dropped him a note about our 1955 contact – even including a copy of his old QSL card. Several weeks I received a reply. Although getting on in years, Franz was still an active ham. He mentioned his early training

with the Austrian defense forces toward the end of WWII. He recalled that he too felt the same way about his very first DX contact in 1950 when he worked New Zealand. A few years later I read that Franz had become a silent key. I was informed that his estate - radio equipment and his QSL cards were picked up by an Austrian radio club. Perhaps my card was among the lot.

It is technically true that a radio signal never completely fades away entirely. It only gets attenuated by its travels through space. I'd sort of like to believe that there is an echo of the dots and dashes of the old contact with Franz due to arrive at some far off galaxy.

[My story is almost the same: Peru, 1964. No 50-year-later follow-up yet though – Ed WB2EAV]

HOW I BECAME A HAM (continued from January 2014)

By Bob Wexelbaum, W2ILP

Synopsis: Having discussed the many Elmers who influenced my early interest in Ham Radio during my grade school years, I will continue to discuss inputs from friends and teachers during my high school years.

The high school that I attended had many after school clubs. Unlike Stagecraft, sports or musical clubs, students could join most of the clubs without approval from Grade Advisers or the teachers who ran the clubs. I joined the Philately Club (where we traded stamps), The Chess Club (where we played chess), and the Surveyors Club (where we made maps). There was no Radio Club but I volunteered for service in the Physics Lab, which supported a Radio Course I hoped to eventually attend. However, I had to give up my lunch period and eat my bag lunch in the room where the lab equipment was stored. The Lab Manager was Mr. Pedro, who was not actually a teacher, although he was certified to teach. When I first met him he was building a short wave superhet radio receiver from a kit. I told him that he had used the wrong capacitors in the audio output stage because they were the ones that were rated for only 200 working volts and were meant to be used in the RF stage. This led him to realize that I was a radio repairman. There was another student radio repairman named Albert Miller who did service in the lab during another time period. He was studying for a ham license at that time, but he was taking the Commercial Course and had no plans to go to college. The only chance I got to talk to him at school was during Physical Training when we both were inactive in sports activities. We were joined by my friend Byron R and talked about nothing but Ham Radio. I visited Al at his apartment in The Bronx, and we made several trips to the Cortlandt Street “radio row” store area together.

All of the teachers who ran the after school clubs earned very little extra pay for their time. During my second year in high school, there was talk of a teachers strike, but since they were not permitted to do so by law, they were told by their union to instead protest by stopping the extracurricular clubs. The school had planned to present the G&S operetta “Ruddigore” after normal hours, but it was cancelled because of the union protest. That did not stop Mr. Englander and the music department from building the stage sets and proceeding as if the full scale after school production was to happen anyway. The operetta required the use of “magic” mirrors and chemical smoke which were created professionally by “Mystery”. The operetta was presented, but only to an audience of the school’s own teachers and students. In addition to “Ruddigore” and “The Yeoman of the Guard,” the school produced a music concert and a play called “In the Zone”. The latter took place inside a submarine, simulated by wood and canvas, and illuminated in red with overtones of gray to make the wood appear metallic. In spite of my love of the art of Stagecraft, after 2 years I quit. I was very busy attending other extra-curricular clubs, repairing radios, and installing TV antennas (with my partner Marvin) after school. There was also an element of peer pressure from some of my academic honor school classmates who referred to Stagecraft as “Stooge-Craft.” I never did get the chance to operate the spot lights or the back-stage lighting control board, because those jobs were given to senior members. One of the Stagecraft crew eventually became a professional TV cameraman after he graduated and was later credited as the chief cameraman for the epic film “Exodus.” His name was Morris Feingold and I consider him an “Elmer”, even though he didn’t teach me about Ham Radio. Instead, he volunteered to teach me how to drive my first stick-shift car, which had higher priority once I got my first full time job in Jersey City.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE by ED GELLENDER, WB2EAV

Don't forget your club dues of \$20 (\$25 family, \$10 out-of-town-retiree.)

On January 26th, ARRL Hudson Division Director, Mike Lisenco N2YBB held a meeting of officers of the radio clubs in the New York City/Long Island (NLI) section. I was there with about thirty others and Mike brought us up to date.

At a recent ARRL board meeting, Mike was invited to join the ARRL steering committee, as well as the Education and Centennial celebration sub-committees. He feels it is quite an honor for someone as new as he is, but he feels the ARRL now realizes it needs some fresh thinking. The consensus of opinion is that the clubs are the heart and soul of the ARRL and they have not been getting the service they deserve. It is as silly as when you go to arrl.org to search for nearby clubs, the result is ordered from furthest to nearest. There also is a crying need for training materials to be made available to clubs.

Hiram Percy Maxim and Clarence Tuska founded the ARRL in 1914, and this year's annual convention will celebrate the Centennial in July in Hartford, CT. Unfortunately, Hiram and Clarence cannot attend. We will make up for that by providing more information as we get it.

In keeping with Mike's plans to keep all 3 Hudson Division sections engaged, he is rotating meetings between them. Recently the annual Division awards luncheon was held in Newburgh, NY, as Mike felt that ENY has been consistently left out. He noted that his predecessors felt that no one would come to the awards meeting unless it was held in the NNJ section; specifically Paramus. Mike was pleased to report that the turnout was 50% more than in the previous year, with profuse thanks for the change from many attendees. I believe the next one is to be NLI's turn, then back to NNJ.

Ed, WB2EAV

GRUMMAN AMATEUR RADIO CLUB MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING 1/15/2014 By Karen, W2ABK

The meeting was opened by Gordon at 5:30 PM

TREASURER'S REPORT – Ed, WB2EAV: Finances continue to be in good shape.

REPEATER REPORT – Gordon, KB2UB: Repeaters are working.

NET REPORT – Karen, W2ABK

Thursday night net at 8:15 PM on 146.745 MHz had 3 check-ins.

Thursday night net at 8:30 PM on 145.330 MHz had 2 check-ins.

Sunday morning net at 7:30 AM on 7.289 MHz had 0 check-ins.

VE REPORT – Ed, WB2EAV: No applicants applied this month.

OLD BUSINESS: We need programs for our meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

The August 2014 Picnic will be at Bethpage State Park.

Jack, WA2PYK has the permit for Haypath State Park for Field Day 2014.

PROGRAM: Karen, W2ABK brought in a DVD about the story of the Queen Mary and W6RO.

GARC NETS: 40 Meters: 7.289 MHz at 7:30 AM EST Sundays

Net Controller: Eugene, W4JMX

2 Meters (repeaters) Thursdays: 146.745 MHz (-600 kHz) at 8:15 PM

145.330 MHz (-600 kHz) at 8:30 PM. Tone for both repeaters: 136.5 Hz.

GARC Net Controller Karen, W2ABkK **ARES/RACES NETS: Mondays.**

MEETINGS

General Meetings of the GARC are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month, starting at 5:30 PM, at the Ellsworth Allen Park in Farmingdale. Driving directions and map can be obtained from <http://www.mapquest.com>. It is suggested that the GARC web site be checked to be certain of meeting location, which may change after this newsletter is distributed. Board meetings are held a week before the General Meeting at the Bethpage Skating Rink. *Meetings may be cancelled or relocated. Check the website.*

WEBSITE

The GARC web site can be found at <http://www.qsl.net/wa2lqo>. Webmaster is Pat Masterson, KE2LJ. Pictures of GARC activities, archives of newsletters, roster of members, and other information about the GARC may be found there.

INTERNET LINK OF THE MONTH FOR INTERNERDS

My friend Charles Pleckaitis sent me this month's internet link. Here it is:-

<http://www.youtube.com/embed/XRCIzZHpFtY?rcl=0>

Charlie is a Grumman retiree but not a ham or member of GARC. He has always been an active IEEE member and now does volunteer work for a local group of IEEE Life members who help others find employment and/or remain socially active. You can find him on LinkedIn. He went to many computer shows with me and has been a great help in advising me about buying software and hardware when we both were learning to use PCs.

Accompanying the link above was the following short e-mail message from Charlie:- *How the Rover got to Mars. Very Cool.* When we were both working on the JSTARS program in Melbourne, Florida we had unforgettable opportunities to witness the launching of Space-Shuttles from Cape Kennedy. We also saw the deployment and return of the first JSTARS E-8 aircraft from Desert Storm.

Charlie and another IEEE friend, Bill Wilkes, now want to become Hams. They are going to a meeting of the Larkfield Radio Club in Huntington, the nearest club to them and invited me to attend with them. Bill will be driving me to and from the meeting because I am unable to drive at night. There will be an interesting presentation at the club and I may report more about it next month. It involves using obsolete computer routers, which happen to be capable of transmitting in the ham 2.4 GHz band, to form what are called HSMM-Mesh networks. W2PB and KB2SCS will be the speakers.

This month I'll give you another link that should be of interest to Ham Internerds. It is <http://www.kb6nu.com/>. KB6NU's handle is Dan, and he has been the editor of a California radio club newsletter, and writer of many inspirational as well as technical ham radio articles. Dan is a dedicated ham. He doesn't wait for the ARRL to publish better study material or develop better ham courses. – He does it himself! Dan and I have shared information for quite some time now, but the reason I am writing about him now is to tell you about the Ham Technician “one day cram course” that Dan teaches and the license study guides that he makes available at no cost. As you know, for years I was Contact VE for the GARC, but now that responsibility has been taken over by Ed, WB2EAV. I still get asked about ham radio license tests. Charlie Pleckaitis and Bill Wilkes, mentioned above, want to prepare for Technician Ham tests and were considering buying ARRL study guides. I looked up KB6NU's website and found that it is possible to download excellent study guides for ham exams. They can be downloaded in pdf format or can be read on a Kindle or Nook tablet. People who have used them to get licensed have given them 5 star reviews. There are some who think that the Tech test is too easy, but that isn't Dan's fault. The FCC Tech Q&A is the same in both the ARRL and W5YI Group (Gordon West) study guides. The study guides are excellent at preparing people to pass the tests; just not to make them engineers.

PUZZLE

This month's question is:-

What is the Fibonacci series? What is its relation to the design of 18th century rifles, modern building architecture, and cell phone antennas?

Last month's question was:

What invention was developed by both Marconi in Italy and Popov in Russia when both were rumored to have been collaborating in the improvement of ship to shore radio communication equipment?

Please see my answer on page 6.

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1 Yr. Board Member: Jack Hayne, WB2BED

1 Yr. Board Member: George Sullivan, WB2IKT

Newsletter

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GARC Webmaster

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GARC VE Exams

We normally proctor exams for all classes of ham licenses on the second Tuesday of each month, starting at 5:30 PM. The exams may be given at various locations. Ham Exams are: Element 2 – Technician, Element 3 - General, Element 4 – Amateur Extra Class. All applicants must pre-register to determine the location of a VE session by contacting Ed Gellender WB2EAV. Time and location of exams are subject to change. If there are no applicants VE sessions will be canceled. The fee for 2013 is \$14 for all exams taken at one sitting. New first time applicants should be aware that their Social Security Number will be required on the application form unless they register with the FCC for an FRN. Applicants for an upgrade should bring their present license and a photocopy of it. All applicants should bring picture ID such as a driver's license. Study material may be bought from the ARRL-VEC or W5YI-VEC <http://www.arrl.org> or <http://www.w5yi.org>. All VECs use the same Q & A pools.

Editorial

I put Ed Whitman's article on page one. In the future I will try to do the same for any GARC member who sends me an original (not copied) article relating to ham radio. I am never at a loss for words, and without input from others I will just continue my own autobiography as long as it takes.

The ARRL National Centennial Convention is scheduled for July 17-19 in Hartford, CT. See February QST, page 12. Is anyone planning to go? It is difficult for me to make a commitment now, but I would like to go; Maybe several of us could rent a car and share expenses?

If you have not yet mailed in your dues, please do so now. Remember to send them to the return address on Page 6; not to the old box number.

I expected to have a hernia operation in January but the surgeon said it wasn't urgent and postponed it indefinitely. This makes four specialists who admit that I need to be operated on for four different problems, but prefer not to proceed. I think each is concerned that my three other conditions - that in their mind should already have been taken care of by the others - will complicate their efforts and slow my recovery.

There have been several snow storms lately, which have forced me to cancel doctor's appointments. My two sons have been living with me during the storms and clearing the driveway. My wife and I are unable to shovel snow or walk on ice, so I am glad that my sons are here with us.

TXN 73 DE W2ILP (Ice Loaded Plows?)

Grumman Amateur Radio Club
215 Birchwood Park Drive
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FIRST CLASS MAIL

Do Not Delay

MARCONI and POPOV's COLLABORATION?

By Bob Wexelbaum. W2ILP

Hertz was a German physicist who sent electromagnetic radio waves across a room, but he did not foresee the use of radio for practical communication. Alexander Stepanovich Popov (1859-1906) was a Russian physicist who also generated radio waves using spark coils. It is now impossible to determine who did so first, or who first realized the applicability of their experiments to communication. Popov is known to have sent the name of Heinrich Hertz in the Russian language, in 1896, so he was well aware by then that radio could be used to send messages. The Russians celebrate May 7, 1895 as Radio Day, claiming that date as the first Popov radio communication, but it is not clear as to whether a message was actually sent at that time or just a carrier was detected. What we do know is that Popov was originally building radio receivers for the purpose of detecting lightning strikes at a distance that might enable weather forecasting. This meant that he was developing sensitive galvanometers (if not headphones) and using monopole vertical antennas that were much like lightning arrestors. Popov was also trying to improve the coherers (invented by Oliver Lodge) that were used as detectors back then, before crystal detectors and vacuum tubes. Coherers were only useful for receiving radio telegraphy and they were limited in the speed of the coded signals that they could handle because each dit or dah left metal filing clumps that immediately had to be mechanically broken up. Guglielmo Marconi was heavily involved in producing radio equipment for British and Italian ships, while Popov doing precisely the same at the Russian Navy Torpedo School. It was understood that radio could be useful for rescues at sea, but that meant all ships would need the best radio equipment available. It happened that both Popov and Marconi came up with the exact same method of automatically tapping coherers at the same time! It was rumored that both had to have collaborated on the design, although both denied it; Marconi even claimed that he never talked to Popov. Then, one of Marconi's daughters received a very expensive wedding present in a box with Popov's return address. People assumed Marconi and Popov had to have been friends for such a gift to be sent. Marconi's daughter said it was from a different Alexander Stepanovich Popov; One who was not a physicist. It is up to you to believe whichever story you wish! --w2ilp--