

# YL Amateur Radio Operators

“Their Struggles and Achievements!”

**NSARC Presentation by**

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# First Sea-Going Woman Radio Operator

## Miss Graynella Packer

Jacksonville, Florida  
November 1910 to April 1911

Served aboard the Clyde liner, "*Mohawk*", a US Atlantic, coastal passenger steamer in full charge of the wireless radio room. Prior to this, she worked as a telegrapher on shore for two years. Little is known about Miss Packer, after she left the "*Mohawk*". They say her ambition was to handle atmospheric electricity aboard a big ocean liner.

Later in 1922, she was elected as a member of Oklahoma State Bar Association, in Oklahoma City.

**Source of Photographs:** U.S. Library of Congress

To read more about this interesting YL, read:  
**"The Autobiography of a Girl Amateur",**  
Radio Amateur News, March 1920.

Website: <http://earlyradiohistory.us/1920auto.htm>



## **RMS Titanic Sunk Early Morning of April 15, 1912**

- This sinking disaster prompted new international radio laws regarding frequency allocations and operating procedures. Ships were now required to carry two radio operators.
- Soon after, a Boston lady (name unknown) applied for a ship's wireless operator position, without success.
- The ship had one male wireless operator and wireless men had to bunk together, due to confined space allotted them.
- Despite company policy, this lady radio operator married the ship's wireless operator and spent their honeymoon at sea.

# USA Radio Act of May 18, 1912

## New Regulations

- With the adoption of licensing, amateurs were restricted to transmitting on wavelengths 200 meters and below plus prohibited them from transmitting on commercial and military wavelengths. If violated, there would be fines.
- Ships must maintain 24 hour radio watch and stay in contact with nearby ships.
- Call signs were assigned to radio transmitters, not to the operators.
- These new restrictions in the United States caused the number of radio amateurs to drop by 88%.
- This also had a profound effect on women radio operators, causing their numbers to decrease.



# The Book of Wireless

(1915)

## Archie Frederick Collins

**Born:** Jan. 8, 1869 in South Bend, Indiana

**Died:** Jan. 3, 1952 in Nyack, New York

Image Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
Collins at a radio telephone set in 1904.

**"Fancy a boy sitting in his room at home with his finger on a telegraph key and a telephone receiver to his ear .... thousands of boys are doing this wonderful thing every day and night of the year, and you, my young friend, can do it as easily as they, for any boy can own a real wireless station, if he really wants to." [End of Quote From: "The Book of Wireless"]**

Frederick Collins, an experimenter in wireless telephony, owned the large Collins Wireless Telephone Company. He wrote many books. One such book was "The Boy Scientist" which had a positive influence on young boys and a negative one on young women.

During this early period, gender inequality was prevalent not only in the women homes but also in books, magazines, and the work force, etc. Young women had few educational, career and recreational choices. They were not welcomed in the amateur radio community, nor in commercial radio. It took a very confident, brave women to challenge companies who had an all male policy work force. In amateur radio, by sending Morse, women were able to pass themselves off as OMs to get on-air and enjoy conversations, with other operators. Otherwise, women would be ignored, by most male operators.

# Electrical Experimenter

(October 1916)

*Magazine published the following article titled:*

## **“The Feminine Wireless Operator”**

**Quote:**

“Just because a man, Marconi, invented commercial wireless telegraphy does not mean for a moment that the fair sex cannot master its mysteries.”

Author Unknown

# Events Affecting Women

## Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- Gender inequality existed in the family, educational institutions and workforce. This impacted on women's feelings and their choice of activities.
- Before WWI, a large number of women entered the workforce: primarily in traditional "female" occupations: teaching, nursing, secretarial work, telephone and telegraph work.
- **WWI began summer of 1914 and ended November 1918. In Canada, an Order in Council was issued to suspend operation of amateur radio stations and all non-essential amateur radio activity.** On Aug. 15, 1919, this order was cancelled and amateurs stations could apply for licenses. **The U.S.A did not declare war against Germany, until April 16, 1917. A similar Executive Order was issued.** All loyal amateurs were encouraged to join the armed forces, where their skills were needed. It is reported that of the 6000 U.S. amateurs, 4000 served during the war years, 1917-1918. Out of necessity, women, in both countries, had to assume full responsibility for their families, plus work in jobs previously denied them, before the war.
- **Canada's first wave of feminism 1900-1930 had two goals:** Woman had the "right to vote" and are "**persons under the law**". In 1918, Canada Elections Act enfranchised all female citizens over age of 21 to vote federally. It was not until 1940, that Canadian women achieved full suffrage, in all provinces. In 1929, Canadian women were declared to be persons under the law, thanks to five Alberta womens' appeal to the British Privy Council.

**All of these events impacted greatly on women.** Over time, with increased responsibilities, confidence and self-esteem, women began to realize that they have value, intelligence, and the "right" to attend Universities and Institutes of Technology to pursue careers, in any field of study they choose. ***Women have joined the amateur radio fraternity, over the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in increasing numbers, despite the fact that they are and will likely remain greatly outnumbered by men.***

# First YL

(Licensed Amateur Radio Female)

## 1914, First Canadian YL Wireless Radio Operator

Miss M. S. Colville, XDD, of Bowmanville, ON

- Only 10% of active amateurs were licensed
- Only 79 licensed Canadian amateurs

## 1915, First U.S. YL

Emma Chandler, 8NH/W8NH of St. Mary's, Ohio, USA

- Featured in QST issue Oct. 1916



## “The Electrical Experimenter”

### “The Feminine Wireless Amateur”

(October 1916 Article)



15 year old **KATHLEEN PARKIN**, of San Rafael, CA, “expert radio operator and mechanic”, received a first grade commercial radio operator's license, from U. S. Gov’t ..... station’s call was **6SO**.

She practiced her code daily, on a buzzer, for many years, prior to receiving her license. (Slide #10 – Buzzer Image)

Kathleen made all of her own apparatus, like the ¼ kilowatt set, shown in this image.

**View Article & 1916 Image in:**

Thomas H. White <http://earlyradiohistory.us/1915fem.htm>

**Electrical Experimenter** magazine, published 1913 to 1920.

# BUZZER

- The round object on left side of the wood base is the buzzer.
- Three binding posts: the middle post connection was used when two hams wanted to send and receive Morse with each other.



# San Francisco "Chronicle" (1916)



Today, when the nation is aroused as never before by the propaganda of preparedness, the eyes of the military leaders are on the wireless amateur—the type shown above. He is recognized as constituting a resource for national defense which has been almost entirely overlooked. Most of the best operators are mere schoolboys, but are active, alert, and efficient.

**Credit Source:** Thank you to the **San Francisco "Chronicle"** newspaper for giving YLRADIO permission to use this **1916** image.

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# **“Popular Science Monthly” 1917**

## **Girl’s Wireless School at Hunter College, NY**

*With U.S.A. declaring war against Germany April 1917,  
“Preparedness” Included Women Radio Operators.*

Source of Image: **Popular Science Monthly 1917 Issue Reviewed This Event.**

Thomas H. White made mention of this, in his link at

<http://earlyradiohistory.us/sec012.htm>



The code room of the Girls' Wireless School at Hunter College, New York. The students are instructed and drilled in every branch of wireless work

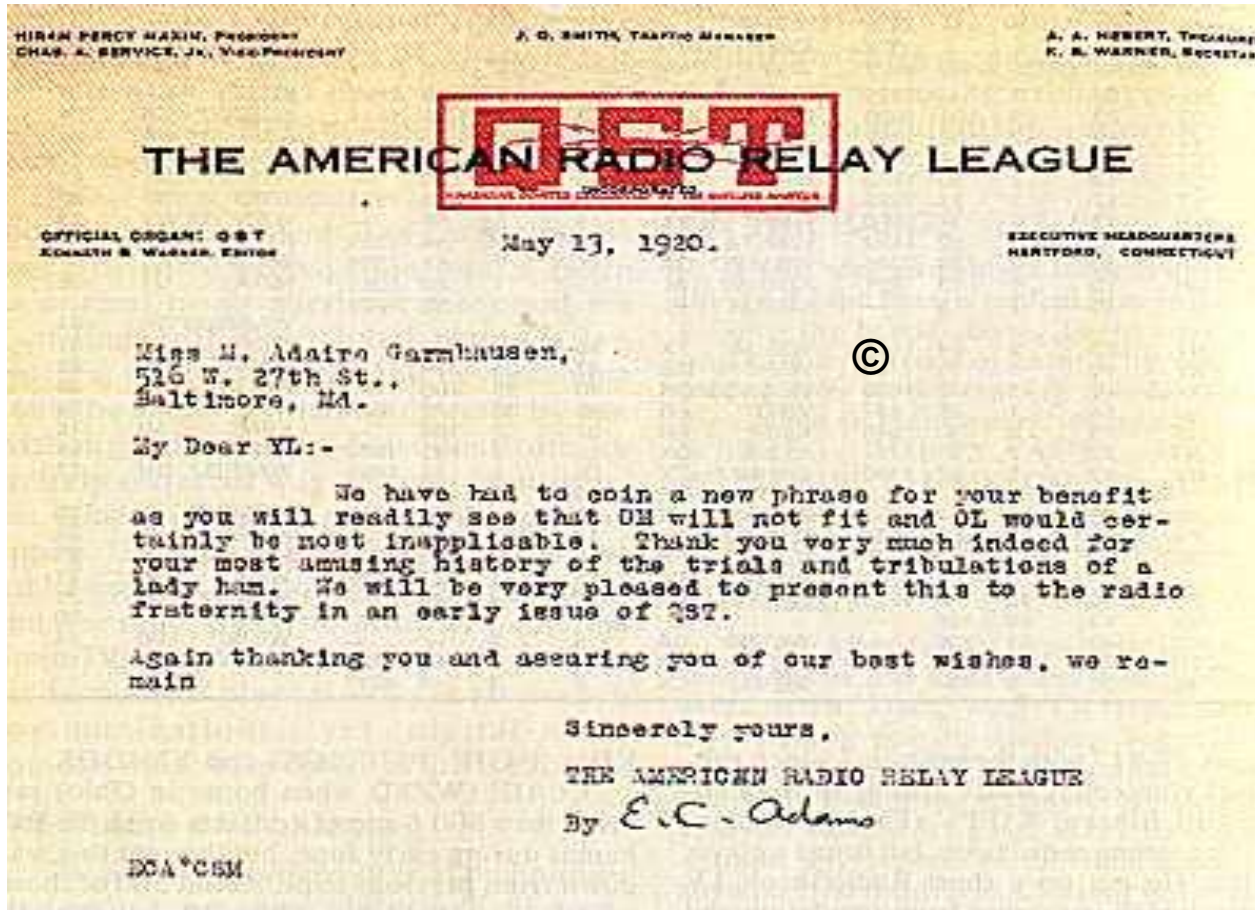
Photos © Underwood and Underwood

Miss Margaret M. A. Donahue, of Boston, Mass., the very first woman in the United States to receive a first-class license for commercial radio operation



# American Radio Relay League (ARRL) Story of Acronym "YL"

Miss M. Adaire Garmhausen 3BCK, the first "Young Lady"



Thank you to ARRL for giving YLRADIO permission to use these two images.

# Eunice Randall

1898 - 1982

1CDP and W1MPP

Around 19 years of age, Eunice Randall built her own amateur radio station (ER). In 1919, Eunice became the first announcer, on-air, at AMRAD (1XE/WGI), broadcasting station, in Boston, Massachusetts.

**American Radio & Research Company**, male colleagues, strongly opposed hiring Eunice. With a team of engineer/radio experts, she demonstrated, built and tested equipment. To keep company's radio station on-air, this six-foot lady, climbed the tower, when necessary, earning their respect.



In 1925, AMRAD went bankrupt and shut down. Eunice still continued working as an engineer and an active YL in amateur radio activities. She married to Ken Thompson (W1PS), in 1948, an employee of AMRAD. Their retirement years were spent in Maine, where Eunice Randall Thompson died in 1982.

**Image Source**: Eunice's niece, Eunice Stolecki gave this **1921** image to Donna Halper, Assistant Professor of Communication, Lesley University, Cambridge, Mass. Thank you to Donna Halper for giving me permission to use it on YLRADIO Website.

**Read**: Donna Halper's informative essay on **Eunice Randall** at <http://www.olderadio.com/archives/people/randall.htm>

# Ethel Pick VE2HI

## QSL Card - 1937



QSL cards confirm that two amateur radio stations have made contact with each other. Station, signal and call sign details are recorded on card. Cards will be exchanged with one another through regular post and/or QSL Bureaus. [SWL stations often send cards to stations they hear.]

## Origin of “33”, “73” and “88”

- “33” Adopted by YLRL in 1939. It means, **“Love sealed with friendship between one YL and another YL.”**
- “73” The National Telegraphic Review and Operators’ Guide, first published “73” in April 1857. It meant “My love to you”!  
Its meaning now is **“Best regards”**.
- “88” Abbreviation used by wire telegraphers similar to Q signals today.  
It means, **“Love and kisses”**.



**First Graduating Class H.D.S.  
Wireless Operators 1942**  
Radio College of Canada  
Toronto, Ontario



Thank you to the Royal Canadian College (RCC)  
for giving YLRADIO permission to use this image.

# Prominent Canadian Radio Schools

- **Radio College of Canada** - Toronto, Ontario
- **Eastern Radio School** – Halifax, Nova Scotia
- **Sprott Shaw School of Radio** – Vancouver & Victoria
- **King Edward High School** - “Famous Room 19”  
A “nameless” male instructor did not allow women in his class, “period”.



## THE UNKNOWN FEW .... 1939 to 1945

Most Canadians do not know that women radio operators worked on Norwegian ships, during the **“Battle of the Atlantic”**, due to a seamen shortage.

The crews aboard Allied Merchant Shipping vessels, between 1939 and 1945, witnessed ongoing, continuous warfare, from German subs and feared mines and bombing from aircraft.

**Twenty-two wartime female Canadian Sparks** sailed through the U-boat infested Atlantic Ocean and six (perhaps even seven) sailed during post-war years.

Read about these brave women on YLRADIO “YL Stories” website: <http://www.ylradio.ca>



## Post WWII BC YL Wireless Ship Operators

Elizabeth (King) Anderson VE7YL  
Olive (Carroll) Roeckner VE7ERA

1947 – Elizabeth aboard the  
Norwegian cargo ship “MS Vito”

- Sprott Shaw Radio School – Vancouver
- Posted to VAI , Point Grey wireless station, and put under contract with the Canadian Department of Transport as interceptor operators.
- Job required competency in the Kata Kana, Japanese radio code.
- 1947, Olive, signed aboard Norwegian, “*M/S Siranger*”, until Dec. 1950.
- Her book, [Deep Sea 'Sparks', a Canadian girl in the Norwegian Merchant Navy](#) was published in 1994.
- 1947, Elizabeth Anderson signed aboard Norwegian, “*M/S Vito*”, for two years, then two more years on the Norwegian, “*M/S Skauvann*”



1947 – Olive aboard Norwegian  
passenger freighter, “m/v Siranger”

# Number of Amateur Radio Licenses

## IARU & AH0 Amateur Radio Education Statistics

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>
• Japan	1,296,05	1999	489,256	2009
• USA	679,864	2000	696,041	2009
• South Korea	141,000	2000		
• United Kingdom	58,700	2000	67,485	2009
• Canada	44,024	2000		
• India	10,679	2000		
• China	800	2000	70,000 +	2009
• Australia			15,432	2009
• Germany			81,150	2008
• Spain			33,298	2008

In most countries, the population of operators is overwhelmingly male.

In the USA, in the year 2000, approx. 15% of the operators were women.

It would be interesting to know what the percentage of women operators is now in YEAR 2011.

**Reference Websites :** <http://www.dxzone.com> "AH0 Amateur Radio Licensing Statistics" web page.

**IARU Region 3 Conference Oct. 2009**, "The Status Report of Amateur Radio in China" reported by:  
<http://iaru-r3.org/14r3c/docs/019.doc>

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## YL INTERNATIONAL AMATEUR RADIO ORGANIZATIONS

- **USA Young Ladies' Radio League** (YLRL) 1939
- **Japan Ladies Radio Society** (JLRS) 1953
- **New Zealand Women's Amateur Radio Organization** (NZ WARO) 1961
- **Canadian Ladies Amateur Radio Association** (CLARA) 1967
- **Australian Ladies Amateur Radio Association** (ALARA) 1979
- **British Young Ladies Amateur Radio Association** (BYLARA) 1979
- **Korean Ladies Amateur Radio Club** (KLARC) 1984
- **Scandinavian Young Ladies Radio Amateurs** (SYLRA) 2003
- **Italiano Radio Club & Germany's YLS DL-YL**

As more women (YLS) became licensed amateur radio operators, in countries worldwide, they established YL National Amateur Radio Organizations. United States was the first country to do this by forming the "Young Ladies' Radio League (YLRL)", in 1939. Other countries, followed years later. YLS united for many reasons.

Two reasons were their need for technical support and to feel welcomed by a male dominated amateur radio community. They were ignored on-air and/or excluded from local amateur radio clubs. This continued from early 20<sup>th</sup> century days to small pockets of male resistance today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In recent years, ARCs which were exclusively all men are now welcoming women to join. **Very rarely today would a YL hear on-air, words like, "go back to the kitchen". Instead, you will hear words like, "can we help you", "will you accept an executive position" and occasionally, to a DX YL "will you be an operator on our dxpedition team"!**

# International YL Meets

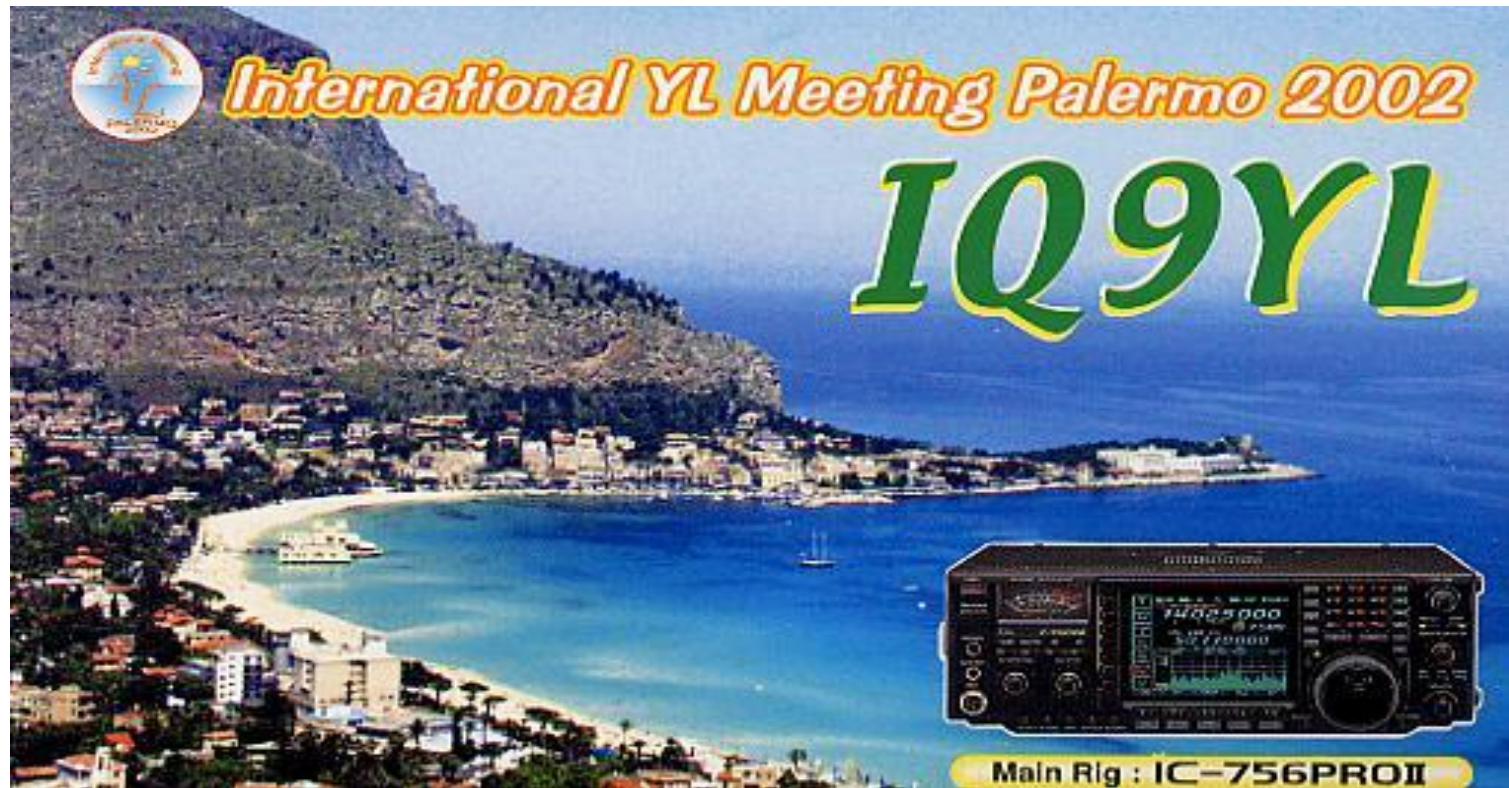
Stockholm, Sweden	1991 (first of many to follow)
Japan	1993
Berlin, Germany	1996
Svalbard, Norway	1998
Hamilton, New Zealand	2000
Palermo, Sicily	2002
Seoul, Korea	2004
Mumbai, India	2006
South Africa	2008
Munich, Germany	2010
Adelaide, Australia (next)	2012

Once, many *National YL Amateur Radio Organizations* existed worldwide, YLs began to sponsor, every two years, YL International Meets. They have been very successful and popular, amongst the YL community worldwide.



# Palermo 2002 YL Meet

QSL Card





# International YL Meet 2002

## Palermo, Sicily



This 2002 International YL Meet was a great success,  
thanks to YL , Ruth IT9ESZ, and lots of YL support.

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