



Amateur radio 'hams' working battleship Massachusetts equipment are (l-r, standing) Frank Benevedes, Cal Ellin-

wood, Robert Howarth, and Glenn Fadden. Seated at the radios are Dan Alexander (left) and Wayne Souza.

—Journal-Bulletin Photo

Big Radio Set on Battleship Back In Business After 20 Years

By JIM B. SLEDD

That's a Russian trawler coming to another Russian off the coast of Cod," Horatio Gray said. He clamped on a headset and looked down yesterday before the Navy radio receiver.

Another, stronger, signal came

through a moment later and he identified its familiar but cryptic "beep-da-beep-beep" as the RCA station at Chatham.

The radio set he was listening to is one that had been standing mute nearly 20 years. He was in the combat information cen-

ter of the decommissioned battleship Massachusetts in Fall River.

Mr. Gray and other radio "hams" from Fall River and Somerset were aboard the ship observing an annual "Communications Weekend" field day. In

which an estimated half of the more than 300,000 licensed amateur radio enthusiasts in the United States and Canada, sharpen their skills and renew distant contacts to be better able to serve in emergencies.

(For four days the only non-military messages in and out of Alaska after the Good Friday earthquake were handled by hams.)

For 10 days, 30 to 40 volunteer members of the Fall River and Somerset Amateur Radio Clubs worked to repair, restore and replace the neglected communications equipment aboard the battleship for the weekend field day. As a part of the observance, they announced they would send, free of charge, overseas messages for visitors to the ship.

Using much of their own modern equipment club members were relaying radiograms to other hams throughout the country. In the stack of radiograms waiting for transmission yesterday afternoon was one to a Marine sergeant in Viet Nam and another to an Air Force man in Goose Bay Labrador.

Glenn Fadden president of the Fall River club said that the military messages will be relayed via the Military Affiliate Radio Station. Off-duty military men with official sanction handle this "morale traffic" he said.

Meanwhile other members of the club were acting as guides for the public to show them through the newly-opened communications center on the fourth deck which is just behind the bridge. At their own expense members have installed a teletype printer in one of the compartments to show visitors how Navy messages were handled during the ship's active life.

Members were also trying to get an old radar scope working again.

Mr. Fadden said the club will be on the ship until 5 p.m. today to continue handling messages for the public and to show visitors through the communications center of the battleship. They hope to get enough club volunteers to make this a regular weekend feature throughout the summer.

The two clubs have a membership of about 60 area residents. Mr. Gray who was operating the big receiver to the delight of visiting youngsters was one of the original founders of the Fall River club which he said was started in 1921.

"We used to be in the old Haffenreffer House then" he said. "Carl Haffenreffer was one of our original members. We were just kids in the eighth grade trying to learn about this new thing they called 'radio'" he laughed.