

It All Started When.....

By Dave Lugo, W5TAZ

Growing up in West Tulsa was a great childhood for me. We lived in the old part of West Tulsa, back then it was a different place than it is now. Today all the communities in West Tulsa are lumped together in that description. Red Fork, Carbondale, Garden City, they were all classified as different communities.

We lived between the two refineries at 19th and Maybelle. It was a great place for a kid with an adventurous nature to spend his days. There were all kinds of things to explore and get into. The lazy days of summer seemed to drag out forever. The endless days of exploring the banks of the Arkansas River, wondering aimlessly up and down the railroad tracks until we were tired, chasing the rabbits around and getting into mischief was my main goal in life, My mom kept a close rein on my brother and I and bless her heart, we put her through more than her fair share of trials and tribulations. I don't believe I was a problem child, but I was all boy.

In December of 1963 we were anxiously awaiting the arrival of Christmas. If ever there was a time of year I put out the effort to be on my best behavior, this was it. We had a white Christmas that year. It was a cold snowy night and a magical Christmas eve I still remember. In our family we opened presents on Christmas Eve.

This Christmas I received a present that I still remember that influenced me to this day. My mom and dad gave my brother and I a set of hand held walkie - talkies. They were a set of those that operated on the channel 14 of the 11 meter band and would talk for every bit of a block or two. That night I was fascinated and put on my warmest clothes and set out in a blinding snow to walk around the block so I could test these new toys.

This is what started the life long obsession with radios. The sounds that came out of this thing were great! The band was open and I remember hearing people on there that just fascinated me to no end. I tried to talk to them but the only one who heard me was my brother. He stayed home in the warm house to talk to me, he was always brighter than I was.

Spring came and I sat out to scour the dumps and junk yards for old radios. Looking every where I could for any type of radio, the only ones found were the old bake lite bodied AM broadcast band desktop models. For some reason, people seemed to think they were junk, to me they were shiny new play toys of endless fascination.

With a little tender loving care and a wiggle of a part or two, they could be made to work again, those that couldn't were dissected for scientific purposes. The problem I found with them was in the antenna. I learned early that if a new antenna was put on them you could hear all kinds of wonderful things!

I went to bed nightly listening to all sorts of radio programs. Dick Tracy serials, Buck Rodgers, The Life Of Rielley and many more were heard by this young man which helped spark a vivid imagination. The over night hours were a wonderful time in my childhood, as long as I didn't wake mom and dad up.

Short Wave listening has become a major part of the hobby for me. Scanners for the local stuff and short wave receivers for the rest of the world occupy a lot of space on my desk top. AM is seems to be overlooked by most folks today, we seem to prefer the smooth broadcast qualities that our FM car stereo provides or the surround sound of the newest home stereos with DVD or CD players.

I urge you listen to the AM band late at night the next time you can't sleep. Tune the VFO slowly and listen for the exotic station that is not usually heard. Some very interesting things are still abundantly available floating around out there in RF land.

Today my fascination with radio has evolved into a monster, as my wife of 29 years tells it. She understands my obsession and lets me do most anything I want in the radio world. Bless her heart, when I first turned to ham radio she thought I was putting up a bunch of new clothes lines for her, I put up with it for 4 months before I got so fed up with the high standing wave due to all that wet laundry on my HF Dipole that I had to tell her the truth. 73 and happy SWL'ing.

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