

CQ de WA2LQO

Seventy Two Years: 1944 -2016

The official independent voice of the Grumman Amateur Radio Club.

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THE VOICES OF RADIO by Ed Whitman, K2MFY

Hardly a day goes by without the news media flooding the air waves with headlines of “Breaking News,” “News Alerts,” “Latest Updates,” etc. These pronouncements over the TV, radio, e-mails, text messages, tweets, and other modes of instant communications swamp our senses. For people of my generation, the first indication that news was being made in real-time was hearing a bulletin broadcast from a radio set. This little box of electronics was the pathway to the reality of events happening in the world. That concept got me thinking about how radio has generally affected my life over the decades.

I believe my first recognition of radio’s consequential effect came during the 1940s, when my family sat around our kitchen table and heard the somber voices of radio news announcers describing the latest war details. I remember hearing details of battles fought in foreign places and watching the concerned expressions on my parent’s faces. In my teens my dad bought me a shortwave radio for my birthday. I wasn’t sure what I should listen to with it, but I threw some antenna wire out of the window of my Brooklyn apartment house and tuned the radio dial. I heard foreign voices, squeals, noises, and signals. Gradually I got familiar with the tuning and was amazed when I heard a British announcer identifying the “General Overseas Service of the BBC,” followed by the chimes from the Big Ben Tower of London. I was fascinated by the propaganda broadcasts in the evening from Radio Moscow and the early morning chirping of the kookaburra bird that was the identifier of Radio Australia. Eventually I purchased a shortwave listener’s guide so I could find the times and frequencies of the English-speaking broadcasts emanating from foreign countries. As my interest grew I learned Morse Code, took the FCC test to get my ham radio license, and eventually I also was able to communicate with hams throughout the world, albeit from my puny little home station.

When I started college I became addicted to the late night broadcasts created by Jean Shepherd on WOR radio. Shepherd could talk, and talk he did for hours, touching listeners intimately as if speaking to an audience of one. I would always try to schedule my Monday morning classes late so that I could listen to Shepherd’s entire Sunday night broadcasts. I was amazed how his iconoclastic ramblings would touch all aspects of life with his warmth, humor and adult story-telling.

On a different note, one of the most terrifying and ominous phrase that I recall on radio is the start of an announcement: “We interrupt this broadcast...” On the night of October 4, 1957, while doing my homework and listening to the radio, I heard that statement: “We interrupt this program to bring you a special news bulletin. Please stand by.” I was frightened because

bulletins were often predators of bad news. After a pause that seemed to last forever, the announcer reported that, "Radio Moscow claims tonight that the Soviet Union has launched an Earth satellite...details to be provided when known." I had just worked out some physics problems on trajectories and motion and now was extremely glad that I was studying engineering in college. As the days passed details described the world's first artificial earth satellite, dubbed "Sputnik," which was about the size of a basketball, had a beacon signal transmitting on approximately 20 MHz. One night I carefully tuned my shortwave radio to the assigned frequency and waited. Eventually out of the noise I heard a faint "Beep, beep, beep..." signal. As seconds passed the signal got louder and then faded into the noise level. Excitedly I called my parents and we anticipated a wait of about one and one-half hours for the next orbit. As expected Sputnik's signal appeared out of the noise, got louder, peaked, and then disappeared. I pictured little Sputnik circling in orbit above my apartment house. My parents were a little concerned. Never before were the skies over the United States so violated by an object controlled by a hostile power, orbiting several hundred miles overhead, visible to the naked eye and audible to any SWL.

A singular tragedy of life became apparent to me on the afternoon of Friday November 22, 1963. My wife had a little pink girly-type five-tube radio that she brought to our apartment when we were first married. The radio developed a hum and I agreed to fix it during my lunchtime at work. On that afternoon I repaired the radio by replacing an electrolytic capacitor and the hum was gone. While testing it, I heard an announcer interrupt a broadcast to report that shots were fired at Kennedy's presidential limousine in Dallas, Texas. I was shocked. I changed the station to make sure that I was not listening to a crank broadcast. But I heard the same bulletins on other stations. I ran out of the lab and shouted to other employees who were eating lunch and told them shots had been fired at the presidential limousine. Everyone ran back into the lab with me. I turned up the radio volume so that all could hear. After a few minutes the room was filled with employees. We were all staring at the little pink radio. It was telling us about of the death of the 35th president of the United States.

Another disaster occurred on the morning of January 28, 1986 which I first heard about by radio. I was planning a spring cruise and was told to call a certain travel agency in Florida for a good deal. When I telephoned the travel agent she said to hold on for a few minutes while she looked up the details. As I was waiting, the holding music came from a Miami radio station. While listening to the local Florida news and the cool weather forecasts, the station suddenly was interrupted by a special bulletin from the NASA Kennedy Space Center launch site. The announcer reported that slightly after one minute into the Challenger Space Shuttle launch the vehicle had suddenly exploded and burst into flames, setting off a series of explosions climaxing with the Challenger erupting into an enormous fireball and disintegrating into the Atlantic Ocean. This announcement was terminated as my travel agent returned and began to give me the cruise details. I interrupted her and asked if she had heard the latest news bulletins. When she said, "No," I suggested that she turn on the radio and listen to the terrible news. At that point we both hung up our telephones and raced to our radios or TV sets for more information.

I recall another catastrophe that I first became aware of by radio. I was driving to work on the morning of September 11, 2001 and, as usual, I was listening to the morning antics of

Howard Stern and company on my FM dial. Around 8:50 AM Howard stopped his daily tirades. He said that he had received a bulletin about a plane that had crashed into one of the World Trade Center Towers. Strange, that fall morning was exceptionally clear and bright. I remembered that a plane had crashed into the top floors of the Empire State Building back in 1945, but it had been overcast and foggy when that happened. As Howard discussed the new “accident” with his radio staff, they broke off and an official bulletin confirmed the tragic news in detail. I arrived at work at 9 AM, told some of my coworkers what I just heard, and ran to turn on the radio at my desk. Some of the workers walked into the main conference room and turned on a large screen TV set to see the news. Shortly the room was filled with personnel, hearing, gasping, and sobbing, as the attacks on both of the WTC Towers developed.

Radio has played an important part in my life. Not just in the active hobby sense, but as a vehicle which has time-stamped and prioritized specific images into my mind. Some are memories of enjoyment, but many are visions of horror, initial disbelief, or disaster. It is often said that radio is the “theater of the mind.” In my case that theater is a cast of announcers who describe what eventually become historic facts, equated by time coincidences with events from my own life. Gradually news bulletins have progressed from radio to TV, internet, texts or tweets. However nothing can replace the foreboding audio message interrupting normal radio broadcasts that start out: “We interrupt this broadcast for an important news bulletin...”

PRESIDENT'S NOTE by ED GELLENDER, WB2EAV

Reading K2MFY’s article in this newsletter, I see he too listened at night to Jean Shepherd on the radio. The show was on from 11:15 to midnight Monday through Friday on WOR-AM (710) and always opened with his musical theme, the Fast Track Polka, complete with the well-known bugle notes associated with horse racing. In my case, I could only stay up to listen on Friday nights.

He would always talk about growing up near Chicago with his friends Flick and Schwartz. His father – always referred to as “the old man” - was another recurring character. Occasionally he would get into his ham radio exploits, complete to humming morse code. One evening I caught the callsign that he used back then; I remember it to this day – W9QWN.

Later he did a fair amount of work in television, books and movies, with titles like “In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash” and “The Phantom of the Open Hearth,” but his enduring legacy is the 1983 film “A Christmas Story,” about his attempts at ten years old to get a BB gun for Christmas. I still see it on TV now and then, and enjoy it every bit as much as I did the first time. It is classic Shepherd, complete with his voice (as narrator) and our old friends from his radio show. It captures what it is like to be a kid better than anything else I have ever seen. His recollections of the old man are spot-on, absolutely nailing the quirks of all the dads I knew as a kid.

When Jean P. Shepherd, K2ORS passed away in 1999, I cried.
Ed, WB2EAV

GRUMMAN AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING / EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING 3/16 /2016

The meeting was called to order by Ed, WA2PYK 5:30 PM

TREASURER'S REPORT – Ed, WB2EAV

Finances are in good shape.

REPEATER REPORT – Gordon, KB2UB

Repeaters are working.

VE REPORT – Ed, WB2EAV

No VE Session in March.

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

Net Controller: Karen, W2ABK

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, W2ABK ARES/RACES NETS: Mondays.

MEETINGS

Board Meetings of the GARC are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month, starting at 5:30 PM they are combined with General Meetings that start at 6:15 PM, at the Ellsworth Allen Park in Farmingdale.

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. The membership roster has not been updated to delete Silent Keys and to enter new e-mail addresses for remaining members and friends.

PUZZLE

This month's question is:--

What is a *bistable multivibrator* circuit?

- A. An AND gate
- B. An OR gate
- C. A flip-flop
- D. A clock

Last month's question was:-

What is the *skin effect*?

- A. The phenomenon where RF current flows in a thinner layer of the conductor, close to the surface, as frequency increases
- B. The phenomenon where RF current flows in a thinner layer of the conductor, close to the surface as frequency decreases
- C. The phenomenon where thermal effects on the surface of the conductor increase the impedance
- D. The phenomenon where thermal effects on the surface of the conductor decrease the impedance.

Answer: The correct answer is A.

GARC Officers

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Newsletter

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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 – Technician: Element 2, General: Element 3, and Amateur Extra Class: Element 4. Time and location may be changed, and sessions may be cancelled if no applicants make appointments. The fee for 2016 is \$14. All applicants must pre-register with Ed Gellender wb2eav@yahoo.com. All new applicants should be aware that they must write their Social Security number on the application form if they have not gotten an FRN number. Applicant for an upgrade must bring both their present license and a photo copy of it. All applicants should bring picture ID such as a driver's license. Study material may be obtained from ARRL-VEC at <http://www.arrl.org>, W5YI-VEC at <http://www.W5YI.org> or other VECs. All VECs use and update the same Q&A pools.

Editorial

Both Ed Whitman, K2MFY and GARC President Ed Gellender, WB2EAV wrote about Jean Parker Shepherd, K2ORS (1921–1999) in this newsletter I want to remind all who may not have read my initial articles about Shep, which I wrote, when I took on the responsibility of editing this NL and filling it with original articles whenever there were none submitted by GARC members. My policy was to never copy stuff from QST or other ham pubs, but to attempt to be ORIGINAL. I had contributed some poems to previous issues but the very first articles that I wrote as editor on February and March of 2005 were about Shep's "Christmas Story" and how it got amended in Shep's keynote speech at the an ARRL Hudson Division Convention at a Playboy Club in McAffe, NJ. Perhaps rather than go on egotistically with my own autobiography I should go back to stuff that I wrote eleven years ago and see how it aligns with the way Ham Radio has changed today and how it has remained the same. I can remember that Ray, W2DKM told me that he liked my "Christmas Story" articles. They attempted to be humorous. I wrote them as a narrator trying to mimic the style of Shep himself. I wrote them after having read most of Shep's books. To tell the truth I did not initially like Shep's WOR broadcasts but became a fan after seeing "A Christmas Story" and hearing him speak as a stand-up comic in person. In memory of W2ORS let me post a message in his honor to all his ham radio brothers: "Flick Lives! Excelsior you Fatheads!"

I wanted to buy a leg lamp and put it in my front bay window but my XYL wouldn't let me..

73 de w2ilp (Illuminated Leg Prize?)....Don't shoot your eyes out!

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MAN MADE INTERFERENCE

There have always been bootleggers (unlicensed operators) and trolls on the ham bands. There have always been lids using obscene language, racial and religious slurs, to bad mouth normal hams; and many have purposely jammed ham QSOs. In the past many hams learned to ignore those types of interferers; a concept based upon the fact that offenders often stop if they don't get recognized. There is no fun for them if they can't get us angry and cause us to respond by cursing them in useless revenge. Now the ARRL and affiliated clubs are calling for actual reports of malicious transmissions on ham radio frequencies. As of now they have not been able to get as many reports of actual times and frequencies of manmade interference, as had been expected. The truth is that although a US Constitution's first amendment guarantees of "Free Speech" may apply to what is said on FaceBook, it does not apply to what may be said on ham radio bands. Every time there is an election all the candidates go around shaking hands and picking up babies, and some go as far as offering to enforce laws that are already on the books, if those laws are important to a large enough group of potential voters and harmless to most law abiding citizens. And so it is that there is a bi-partisan Bill in progress to increase the penalties to all who cause harmful interference to Commercial Radio Broadcasting. The ARRL wants that bill to also apply to those who illegally interfere with any Ham Radio communication. IMHO, except in the case of interference to first responder emergency communication, ham radio interference is part of the challenge of the hobby. The FCC can't even enforce laws that would eliminate unwanted robotic telephone calls and phony computer repair services that put more trogons into your hard drive than they remove, if you refuse to pay them. Now we have questions about just what drivers need to be updated and how far into the cloud we need to get recognized by which cloudy apps. Is it all there only to make it easier for undesired repetitive advertisements to reach us?...Ugg...and I remember to drink my ovaltine...if only because I have earned an Orphan Annie decoder. I pay my credit card bills on time and don't need a loan from Bridget, Rachel or Lisa. On the other hand, I am not a philanthropist. I live on a limited budget that is not as great as most others in my zip code, but I seem get targeted by every charity that exists. -w2ilp- (Increase Legal Penalties)