

CQ de WA2LQO

Sixty Nine Years: 1944 -2013

The official voice of the Grumman Amateur Radio Club

May 2013 VOLUME 86 NUMBER 5

How I Became a Ham (continued from April 2013)

By Bob Wexelbaum, W2ILP

Synopsis: Last month I wrote about my early preparations for the technical parts of the amateur radio exam. Now I will explain about my early Morse Code preparations.

W2NSH had given me the phone number of Johnny (Kalman Katona) and told me that Johnny was also preparing for the ham exam and was looking for another beginner to practice code with. I phoned Johnny and he told me that I could visit him at any time that I was available, but we might get interrupted if he was needed to fix things for the tenants of the apartment house where he was the superintendent.

After my school day was over I went directly to Johnny's basement apartment, where he lived with his wife and daughter. The janitor's apartments were not usually very pleasant because the garbage was fed to the basement by what were called "dumb waiter shafts", to be loaded into garbage cans and held for the next sanitation truck pickup. In addition there was the coal burning furnace that was a source of lots of coal dust. The super's job included shoveling the coal into the furnace and shoveling the ashes out of the furnace into ash cans that were collected along with the garbage. Although this might seem to be an unwholesome environment, I was led through a series of clean rooms, which were the home of Johnny and his family, at the end of which was Johnny's radio room. He was an avid shortwave listener (SWL) and the room was devoted to his HF radio, log books and QSL cards. Middle aged Johnny was a plumber, a steamfitter and an electrician. I dunno if he was licensed for those trades but apartment building supers had to be ready for any emergency which might occur. Johnny had not only built his own beam antennas but he had built similar antennas for many hams, all using a design called "Plumbers Delight". Since he had all of the tools needed for cutting and threading iron water or gas pipes, he did not use aluminum, which made his beams sturdy but heavy. Johnny was a muscular weight lifter. For his job, he had to be. The center piece in the radio room was of course Johnny's HF receiver. It was not a Hammarland, National, Hallicrafters or Collins receiver. It was a less common RME-70 receiver. It was made in New York State by Radio Manufacturers Engineers, Inc. I was impressed by how its illuminated meter and dials looked. Like W2NSH, Johnny had an RF converter ahead of it for use on ten meters in order to improve sensitivity and reject images. For code practice Johnny had a unit that was made by a company called Telectro that was out of business even when I visited Johnny. The unit had a vacuum tube audio oscillator that drove a small external speaker. In addition to being able to key the oscillator with a key, it had a method of recording and playing back Morse. You must realize that at the time there were no magnetic tape recorders yet. The Telectro machine punched holes in paper tape to record Morse and played back the paper tape by keying the oscillator. The mechanism utilized an electric motor whose speed could be controlled by a rheostat. The motor drove the paper tape over keying contacts to play back and over a die which got punched by a solenoid that was driven by the key when you wanted to record. Recording was a very noisy process. The motor also had to drive a reel via a belt to wind up the paper tape. It didn't always work well...which often led to spilled tape. We were both at about the 8 word CW speed level and were in need of practice. We both listened to W1AW's code practice sessions, Johnny on his RME-70 and me on my regenerative receiver, but it was not enough for us to practice sending and receiving whenever we wanted. I said that there were no magnetic audio tape recorders at that time...but there were steel wire recorders. There was such a costly recorder, labeled RCA, that was made in Germany. I later had the voluntary job of operating one for my high school speech therapy class.

Anyway, Johnny and I spent more time talking about SWLing than practicing code. Johnny offered to sell me the Telectro unit for \$5. I could also get lots of rolls of paper tape free from a ham who worked on Wall Street. It was the same as “ticker tape” and most of the confetti that got thrown out of windows on famous heroes in parades. I didn’t have \$5 at the time, but he told me that once I passed the ham test I could easily resell the Telectro. He wanted to get rid of it himself because he planned to rent an Instructograph machine that was often advertised in QST. This machine was professional and was the one that was then being used by the FCC for CW testing and in military schools. It punched dashes on one side of a wider paper tape and dots on the other; so that it keyed like a semi-automatic key (bug). In the middle there were sprocket holes.

SWLing included sending QSLs to hams whose signals we could receive and sending signal reports to DX commercial stations. Radio Netherland not only sent me a QSL reply, but they gave me the schedule of their ham related English broadcasts. They gave a good course in radio propagation both on the air and free by postal mail. I took the course and learned many facts about the layers of the ionosphere, etc.

I had gotten a toy printing press as a gift from my Aunt Sarah. It used fonts of rubber alpha- numerics which you mounted on a crank driven drum. There was an ink cylinder which inked the rubber type and the main drum also drove paper under itself so that the print got stamped on the paper. This nice thing about it was that it exactly fit post cards. With this crude machine I printed my SWL cards. For US hams I used penny postal cards. For DX hams and broadcasters I used card stock and put 5 cent stamps on the cards (which was the rate for international sea mail post cards.) I sent no SASE, IRCs or money but there were lots of QSLs mailed to me by hams and broadcasting stations, where I guess that they realized that I was only a kid. I took my SWL card collection to school when I was in eighth grade. I wanted to show them to the Geography Class. (They did not have Social Studies classes then, but instead they had History and Geography Classes.) The Geography teacher was a nut case. I won’t say much more about him other than he demanded the undivided attention of the class when he was lecturing. He often remarked that we shouldn’t take notes in his class, because he wanted to lecture to children...not pencils. Unfortunately I was looking at my treasured QSL card collection and he believed that the cards were distracting me from his talk about Newfoundland. He grabbed my collection and ripped up all the cards and threw them into the waste basket. It took all of my self-control to hold back my tears! Next month I’ll tell you about holding in my tears in another situation. (To be continued)

PRESIDENT’S NOTE by ED GELLENDER, WB2EAV

It is now getting toward that time of year to start thinking about ARRL Field Day on Saturday June 22 and Sunday June 23. It is the time to let family and friends know that you will be participating in a weekend-long self-improvement session, immersing yourself into the mysteries of HF propagation. This year we have a new location for Field Day, at an otherwise familiar location. We have often held club picnics at Marjorie Post Park in Massapequa, but this time we will not be by the gazebo as we are for picnics, but rather will be in the park building nearby. We will probably start setting up antennas at about 10 AM Saturday to be ready for the official 2 PM start, with take-down at 2PM Sunday. Let us know if you are coming.

If anyone is not familiar with Field Day, it is an emergency preparedness exercise disguised as a contest. The idea is to contact as many other stations as possible in the allotted time. If you always struggle to find what to say during a contact, then Field Day is perfect, where you can run off immediately every time and not be thought rude. It’s a wonderful thing.

Directions: Seaford Oyster Bay Expwy (NY 135) south to the very last exit for Merrick Road (NY27A) east and proceed 3 miles to Unqua Road. Turn left onto Unqua for 500 ft, left into the park, and yet another left to get to the parking lot. We will be in the building between the parking lot and Merrick Road.

If you prefer to travel from Suffolk on Sunrise Highway, just past the Sunrise Mall you can turn left onto Unqua Road and go about ¾ mile to the park on your right.

Last month I mentioned the upcoming ARRL Hudson Awards Luncheon. I now have some particulars, but I doubt if any GARC members will want to make the trip. If you do, it is Saturday Nov 2 from noon to 4 PM at the Newburgh, NY Ramada Inn, ¼ mile from the Thruway exit 17.

Ed, WB2EAV

**GRUMMAN AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING 4/17/2013
By Karen, W2ABK**

The meeting was called to order by Ed, WB2EAV at 5:35 PM

TREASURER'S REPORT – Ed, WB2EAV

Finances continue to be in good shape.

REPEATER REPORT – Gordon, KB2UB

146.745 is intermittently noisy.

NET REPORT – Karen, W2ABK

Thursday night net at 8:15 PM on 146.745 MHz had 2 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 1 check-in.

VE REPORT – Ed, WB2EAV

The VE session was canceled due to the applicant's schedule change.

OLD BUSINESS

Ed, WB2EAV provided a brief introduction to software defined radios (SDR).

NEW BUSINESS

Ed updated the Northrop Grumman situation.

PROGRAM

Gordon, KB2UB demonstrated the Elecraft KX3 Ultra-Portable Radio, which is an SDR in a miniature package.

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, W2ABK

ARES/RACES NETS: Mondays.

MEETINGS

General Meetings of the GARC are held on the third 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.

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

I was recently contacted via e-mail by Vince Loschiavo N2AIE who used to work with me at the Rockwell-Collins Service Center in Lake Success. After they closed he worked as a Field Service Engineer for Litton and did lots of worldwide traveling, but now he is proudly back working for Rockwell-Collins again at their home base in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He wanted to show me the flexible cockpit trainer used to train pilots of new commercial aircraft, all set-up with the latest instrument, navigation, and communication control panels and displays. The system is called The Virtual Avionics Procedure Trainer (VAPT) and it used to train commercial airline pilots on the ground. The instructor uses a computer to initiate lifelike scenarios. It may also be used to verify related software. Here is the link:-

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHfLOft5C4Y>

Forgive me for sending this Rockwell-Collins advertisement, but the trainer shown was actually partly designed by Vince and he is now a licensed pilot himself and trains the pilots of the future.

Collins builds all the navigation and communication black boxes that modern airliners need to comply with FAA regulations. When there are multiple manufacturers, all the competing boxes must comply with the same AIRINC and FAA standards to work with different instrument panels controls and displays.

There is nothing secret about this video, as it is advertised for commercial aviation, although it can also be used to train military aircraft pilots. Note that mechanical meters and CRTs have been replaced by touch-screen flat displays and touch surface push buttons, similar to those now used in tablets, lap-tops and cell phones. Gone are the “grain of wheat” or type 328 28 Volt panel lights that kept burning out. They have all been replaced by LEDs.

PUZZLE

Last month I asked this question from the Amateur Extra Class Exam:-

FCC licensed amateur stations may use spread spectrum (SS) emissions to communicate under which of the following conditions?

- A. When the other station is in an area regulated by the FCC
- B. When the other station is in a country permitting SS communications.
- C. When the transmission is not used to obscure the meaning of any communication
- D. All of these choices are correct

The correct answer is D. *But be aware that there are other restricting limitations.*

This month I ask another question from the Amateur Extra Class Exam.

Which of the following is an advantage of CMOS logic devices over TTL devices?

- A. Differential output capability
- B. Lower distortion
- C. Immune to damage from static discharge
- D. Lower power consumption

GARC 2013 Officers

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1 Yr. Board Member: Dave Ledo, AB2EF

1 Yr. Board Member: Jack Hayne, WB2BED

1 Yr. Board Member: George Sullivan, WB2IKT

Newsletter

CQ de WA2LQO is published monthly by the Grumman Amateur Radio Club for its members and friends.

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Contributing writers: All GARC members (we hope). To submit articles or ham equipment advertisements contact the editor. Articles will only be edited when permission is granted by the author.

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 are given at Briarcliffe College, 1055 Stewart Avenue, Bethpage, NY in room: Long Beach #5. Ham Exams are: Element 2 – Technician, Element 3 - General, Element 4 – Amateur Extra Class. All applicants must pre-register 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

Time creeps up on us faster than we sometimes expect. I thought that I had lots of time to finish this newsletter but now I recognize that this month started on a Wednesday and the board meeting is next Wednesday (the second Wednesday of the month). The tradition is to fold and staple the newsletters at the board meeting...so I had better finish this newsletter as quickly as possible. Enough said.

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HAMS AT THE BOSTON MARATHON

I had often wondered whether the volunteer amateur radio participation at marathon race events was primarily an ARRL publicity stunt to promote the hobby. Who needs ham communicators now that so many people have cell phones? After the April 15 Boston Marathon, my skeptical opinion has changed drastically. As everyone now knows, two bombs exploded near the finish line, killing three and injuring hundreds. According to the ARRL there were over 200 ham radio volunteers from various clubs and groups participating in a well-planned and organized consortium called Marathon Amateur Radio Communication (MARC). Immediately after the explosions it was not known if there would be more bombs and cell phone service may have been shut down for fear of cell phones being used to trigger additional bombs. What is definite is that simple overloading made it difficult to call or text a message. A part of a printed circuit board found in the wreckage showed that the bombs were triggered by the 2.4 GHz remote control from a toy car. The thwarted attempt to bomb Manhattan several years ago used a garage door remote control. Who knows what device might be used if there are future such bombings? While cell phones were not working, hams were still able to communicate. As is traditional for the Boston Marathons there was coverage by State and Boston Police as well as medical volunteers from the American Red Cross. The hams were ready to communicate and the Red Cross was ready to provide emergency first aid. Victims were stabilized and ambulances were dispatched. Three hams went to the Boston Marathon Net Control Center, others set up a base station at a consolidated first aid station, including a computer. Hams were sent to shelters at nearby churches and schools to provide communication as runners were moved. The hams addressed the emergency calmly and professionally for 24 hours following the bombing.

The bomber brothers were identified by pictures taken by a store surveillance camera, as well as members of the crowd. I have come to the conclusion that now the probability of noticing anyone planting a bomb, leaving unattended packages, shows no interest in the race itself, or otherwise behaves suspiciously may be high enough to prevent others from terrorizing...unless they are suicidal. We need many eyes, ears, cameras and radios at such events...and hams have the radios! That being said, in my opinion potential heroes are heroes, just like the many police, firefighters, FBI, and Army reservists that joined in the manhunt for the perpetrators. All have been commended by the TV stations and newspapers...*except* that I saw no mention there of the unsung heroic Hams who participated at the Boston Marathon.

--w2ilp--

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