

K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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Hamfest!

We're Looking... Talking... Touching... Doing

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

Sure as the ice splits on the nearby Skokie Lagoons, so is the Hamfest season heralded in northeastern Illinois.

The morning of the year's first spring Hamfest is inevitably frosty. No matter the day's ultimate temperature, the sun rises to reveal a disheartening, gritty layer of frost that soon dissolves under its unblinking stare. There are winter fests of course, but they are pale, indoor affairs—parka-stifled, mere spectators of the real thing.

Thirty years ago, the roads leading to our local version of the best Hamfest, a.k.a., anything held at the Lake County fair grounds in the town of Grayslake, were truly rural; farms, sloughs and empty intersections. Every year we remarked the onslaught of suburbia; traffic lights replaced stop signs as road crossings filled with service stations and strip malls, and farmers' fields yielded to apartment complexes and luxurious homes.

No matter, we closely monitor our animated conversation as we draw near the venue lest we become so engrossed we overshoot our destination. We've done it before, "Wasn't that the entrance?" and we're likely to do it again if we're not careful.

Are We There Yet?

The ticket booth: hands in pockets, arms drawn in to stay the chill, frigid breaths rise above pods

of ticket holders swelling expectantly around still locked gates. While we're waiting let's fill in the raffle tickets, who knows, maybe we'll win—something. "Do you have a pen?"

On the fair grounds, we are faintly amused, as always, to find that, yes, once again, in the sheds aptly labeled, "Swine," are, surprise, Hams selling gear. There, the annual conundrum is reborn: looking over many vendors' fragments (they don't really qualify as

merchandise), one wonders why they expend the effort to haul snarls of wire and chunks of Bakelite so many miles only to haul it back home. Some rusty, not readily identifiable, gear earns a lingering glance, as do some remotely familiar faces and callsigns: "Do I know you?" From the displays, one thing is evident, even as debate over the Morse code requirement storms, there's a very

healthy market for "outmoded" telegraphic instruments as their prices continue to skyrocket. These aren't your father's 50-cent J-38s.

Interesting—here's some gear from Heath, E.F. Johnson, World Radio Labs and Knight. Did I really

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How W7AQK Got (Re)Issued

David Yarnes, W7AQK



Dave Yarnes, W7AQK

In late 1954, I lived in Bend, Oregon. It was there that I discovered Ham Radio. I had just turned 13, and one of my “entrepreneurial” activities was delivering the *Portland Oregonian* newspaper. My other moneymaking ventures were selling (Cardinal) Christmas cards in the winter, and gathering and selling night crawler fishing worms in the summer. There’s an aside to this latter activity, which shows how “uncool” I was at that age. The local ra-

dio station, KBND, had a noontime program where you could list things for sale. I proudly worked up my very own announcement, which unfortunately was broadcast, unedited, all over central Oregon. It simply said, “David Yarnes has worms—call 2249,” that was it!

But, back to my discovery of Ham Radio. The worst part of delivering newspapers was collecting! Every month I would have to make several trips in the evening around my route to collect that month’s bill for the *Oregonian*. Each time I went by this particular house, I heard sounds that were very, very strange. There were voices, tones, pops and crashes. Sometimes the front door was open, and I could really hear things. Occasionally, I heard a clearer voice, seemingly just inside the door, saying something like, “W7UFR has no traffic.” What the heck did that mean? It fascinated me beyond description. I just had to find out.

I don’t know why I felt I had to do it, but I dreamed up a “white lie” about trying to find some address on that street. I knocked on the door! A large, balding man, in bib overalls, answered the door. The sounds came crashing out at me, as just inside the door, in

a small alcove, was this huge array of what I guessed were some kind of radios.

I never asked the question I had invented. “What’s that?” I asked, pointing at the table full of strange equipment. Without hesitation, I was invited in to take a closer look. I later learned the table held a Meissner transmitter (a T-150, I think), and an HRO-50T. A full set of coils for the receiver sat in a small rack next to it, and there were wires everywhere, of course. All kinds of voices were coming out of the receiver, saying, “No traffic” or “Two for Portland,” etc. It was the Oregon Emergency Net in session, and stations all over the state were checking in.

My host was Dilburn Dale Tussing, W7UFR. He worked for the Oregon highway department, which explained the bib overalls. Tussing, kind of a strange name, I thought afterward, but it belonged to a man who changed my life forever. I can never express the gratitude and love I have felt for this old man ever since.

*“David Yarnes
has worms...”*

Dale, he used his middle name, apparently sensed my sincere fascination, and after showing me a little about how it worked, he asked if I knew anything about the Morse code. I did, sort of, from Boy Scouts. He let me listen to some stations sending these dots and dashes. When he told me I was listening to a station in British Columbia that was probably running about 50 watts, I was really amazed; I tried every night to hear Portland or San Francisco radio stations so I could listen to some of the old radio programs. These stations proudly announced they were running 50,000 watts! Even little KBND in Bend ran 1,000 watts. How could these low-power radios be heard that far?

Then Dale asked if I wanted to learn the code. “Sure,” I said. Whereupon he invited me back the following Sunday morning to start learning the code. Then he



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gave me a book with the letters of the alphabet, and their code equivalents. He had been given the same book when he learned the code.

I ran back home, and I don't think my feet touched the ground more than two or three times! I was going to learn the Morse code, and I might talk to British Columbia too. Moreover, for the next couple of months, that's what I did every Sunday morning. During each session, Dale would give me five or six new letters or numbers to learn, and he would patiently send me those characters with his small code oscillator.

I learned pretty quickly, according to Dale. However, Dale didn't feel comfortable trying to teach me any theory, so when the time came, and my code speed was around 10-wpm, he said he needed to turn me over to someone else. This "someone else" was Carl Austin, W7GNJ.

Now, every kid in town, at least those who had a bike, knew who Carl Austin was. He was that crotchety old guy in a wheelchair who owned the biggest bicycle store in town. We hated to go into his store because he didn't seem very friendly, but if you needed your bike fixed, you had to do it. Soon I learned his gruff manner was because he suffered terribly from debilitating arthritis. He was in constant pain. His hands were badly deformed by the arthritis, and he had to grab things with just his thumb and first finger—very much the way a crab grabs something. His legs were so bad he could only "scoot" around in his wheel chair using his heels. I don't think he weighed more than 90 pounds. He was absolute skin and bones.

Carl wasn't a grumpy old man at all. He was in pain, yes, but like Dale and even more so, he was a "giver" to anyone he could help. Taking me on as a student was only a small beginning of the generosity I received from this man.

Twice a week, in the evenings, I went to Carl's house joining a family of four who had already started theory classes with Carl. Actually, that family had five members, but their oldest son, Alan, already had his license—W7SBR. Later, the other four became W7ZLR, W7ZLS, W7ZLT and W7ZLU—the Jorgensens.

Approximately sometime in early May, the Jorgensens sat for their exam. Carl didn't think I was ready. I wasn't! Nevertheless, it lit a fire under me and I really started studying harder. Two weeks, or so, later Carl said I could give it a try. Since we were more than 75 miles from an examining point, Carl gave me the test. The code was no problem. I was really doing well with that. But, I think he had misgivings about my theory ability. Fortunately, my studying paid off. He looked over my exam, winced a couple of times, but I could tell that overall he was pleasantly surprised. He sent it in, and the wait began.

It was July before the envelope came. It was a small one! That was what I was told to hope for, since it meant a license was inside, and not a rejection letter. I tore open the envelope and there it was—W7AQK! I was a Ham! I couldn't believe it. Nobody was home but me, so I ran to my neighbor's house. The lady there had almost become my surrogate mother, as my mother died a few years earlier. My dad had only recently remarried. Anyway, I managed to knock her teapot on the floor in my excitement. Proudly, I showed her the license. She was very happy for me, and didn't even fuss at me for breaking her teapot.

Well, that's how it happened, but I would like to tell you a bit more. Earlier I said that being Carl's student was only the beginning of his generosity to me. I was a Ham now, but I had no equipment. So, Carl bought a BC-348 for me from a Ham in Portland for \$60. He used his own money. In turn, I would pay him \$5 a month until the \$60 was repaid—no interest. Carl didn't even ask if I could get my parents to do this for me, he just did it. Now I had a receiver!

After a month or two, one night at the local Ham club meeting, the Central Oregon Radio Associa-

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W7AQK/QRP

*"Now I had
a receiver!"*



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Ensure the Line Unbroken

Charlie Young, AG4YO



I long for the sound,
of pure and melodious note,
wafting into the air,
aloft the distant currents float.

As balmy days,
the cool nights follow,
so too, the sound transcends
cities, forests, hollows.

Not like the robin's chirp
nor hammer upon metal rake,
but like the loon, the softness
murmurs across the summer lake.

As waves soft upon the beach flow,
notes bathe my brain in warmth hushed,
thus in the mist the words appear. . .
into my mind they softly rush.

Then, my turn comes, and my hand too,
upon the key now is unfurled,
I warmly send the music back
its journey halfway 'round the world.

From measured tones the sweetness goes
and with exchange the very reason,
my mind to another's joined
in this and every earthbound season.

On that day so long ago
what things could Samuel Morse have thought?
That in the ages his life passed,
we'd know the joy God hath wrought?

And continue on unfettered,
his work to pass to future generations,
our hands gently stretched in friendship
across the many nations.

Thus, upon our shoulders fall
the solemn duty of that noble token,
to see the knowledge passed along
and ensure the line unbroken.

That our sons too, one day,
will know the loving melody
of mankind's history told aloud,
by the tapping of a simple key.

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Military Surplus Radio BC-348

A Tale of Youthful Joy and Sorrow

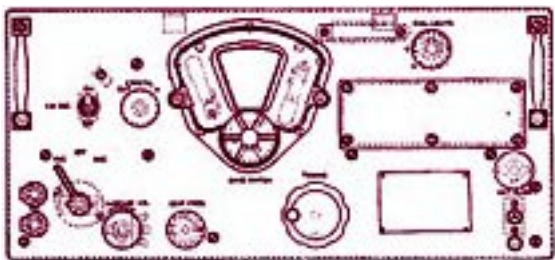
Stan Shure, W9GXJ

In the immediate post-WWII period, when I was 14- or 15-years-old, I lived with my parents in an apartment building on Chicago's northwest side. My friend, Shelly, lived in the same building and was learning Morse code for a Boy Scout merit badge. From him I first learned of the wonders of shortwave radio and that he was on the waiting list at Allied Radio for an "Ecophone" receiver, which cost over \$40.

That summer Shelly got a job at Riverview, Chicago's huge amusement park, where they needed extra help at their three photo galleries. Well, I got a job working in the darkrooms, developing and printing photos. I worked 2 pm to midnight, six days a week, and received ninety-cents an hour. Suddenly, I became wealthy!

Shelly was the photographer and barker. He would shout, "One-dollar a picture, fifty-cents a person, everyone gets a picture!" On weekends there was a sea of white-sailors from Great Lakes and Glenview Naval Air Stations—they'd come to meet girls.

There were three radio shops close to where I lived. In the window of one of the shops was a console radio for \$35, a Zenith with shortwave bands, but I couldn't figure out how to get it home, or where I would put it when I got it there. Then I spotted a brand new radio in the corner of the shop. It was small compared to the Zenith. I asked about it. The



shop owner said it was a military surplus BC-348 shortwave radio. It was the most impressive radio I'd ever seen, and it cost \$50. That was a lot of money, but I had a good-paying summer job.

After paying \$50 cash and carrying it home—about four city blocks—I put it on the living room floor of our apartment. I turned the knobs, the band switch, and the dials and then removed the BC-348 from its case, revealing the dynamotor, myriad metal tubes, a mass of wiring and parts. It was very impressive. It was

fantastic; I was overwhelmed with happiness. One thought entered my mind after I calmed down a little. I hadn't the faintest idea how to get it to work, since it ran on 28 volts DC. My electrical knowledge was limited to wiring a doorbell.

At this point, my mother came in from work, looked at the radio on the living room floor, and asked,

"Stanley, where did you get that black box?" "I bought it," "What is it?" "It's a very complicated shortwave radio." "What did you pay for it?" "I paid \$50." She seemed irritated and said, "Take it back where you got it and get your money." My happiness vanished and now I was in trouble.

One of my friends came over the next day, while my mother was home. He took the handle at one end of the radio while I took the handle at the other end, then all three of us walked back to the radio shop where I received a refund. That was almost 60 years ago. I still remember my first love affair with that brand new BC-348 shortwave radio. ■



"Stanley, where did you get that black box?"



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tion, I saw Carl and Dale talking. Every so often, they looked my way. Then Carl got the attention of the group and pointed out that there was a new Ham in town (me!), who had a receiver, but no transmitter. Whereupon he announced he and Dale would provide all the parts to build one, but I had to build it—at least with Carl's supervision. Can you believe the generosity of these people? However, there was one condition! The transmitter would not really be mine until I had collected 150 QSL cards confirming CW contacts! No phone contacts! The transmitter wouldn't even have a modulator.

These guys weren't just generous—they were smart! Can you think of a better way to make sure someone became reasonably proficient at CW? I can't. Well, it took awhile, but I got the 150 QSL cards. Remember the old Walter Ashe cards, and the World Radio Labs cards? I got a ton of those. I used them myself—100 for a dollar!

The neat part, though, was building the transmitter. We did it in Carl's bike shop. Every day after school, for a couple of weeks, I would go to Carl's shop. I watched as Carl sketched out a schematic for the transmitter. It took him about five minutes! We made just about everything from scratch. We made the chassis from sheet aluminum, we wound most of the coils, we even made the power transformer—Carl had a foot-powered device that would wind the wire

over each layer of paper as we built the transformer around the plates used in the core. Carl did much of the work, and it still amazes me how he could do all the things he did with those terribly crippled hands and feet. This was not a five or ten watter. It used an 807 in the final, and was VFO controlled, pretty darn stable too! Eighty meters only, but back then 80 CW was a great band. It worked great, and from the very first time we put power to it.

Well, that was almost 50 years ago. Next July will be my 50th year in Ham Radio, and I have been enthusiastic about the hobby the whole time. I still work mostly CW (yes, Carl and Dale, your plan worked!), and there have only been very short periods of time when I haven't been active.

Within a few months of getting on the air, I became a net control station for the Oregon State CW Net, but that was interrupted by our move to New Mexico. I went into the military before college, and for a while, I was an instructor at the radio school at Ft. Knox, teaching others to learn Morse. In addition, at Ft. Knox, I ran the MARS station (K4WBG) for a time. Then I went to Berlin, just before and during the period of the creation of the Berlin Wall. That was another day and time I will always remember, of course. Among other things, I ran the MARS station (DL4QF) in Berlin for a time. I was in charge of the Berlin Command CW radio room, escorted convoys through East Germany from Berlin to Helmstedt to maintain radio communication and various other radio-related tasks.

Somehow, I was sidetracked, since professionally I am a CPA! Job transfers took me all over the U.S. The last 15 years of my working life have been as the CFO of a bank here in Arizona. Not much radio relationship in any of this, but maybe that's why I love the hobby so much. It's my refuge. Now, I am substantially retired, only doing projects to stay on the medical plan until I reach age 65, which is still a couple of years away.

Since the early '70s I have been a dedicated, but not fanatical, QRP'er and love to build my own stuff when the opportunity arises. I operate CW mobile a good bit too. My pride and joy is probably my K2. My Sierra runs a close second. I do have some QRO gear—but there are no KW amps at my operat-

MORSE TIPS & QUIPS



SPEAKING IN MORSE CODE IS
INTERNATIONAL!



ing position—I just don't think I need them. My antennas aren't much to talk about, as we have antenna restrictions (doesn't everybody?), but they work. I also like to chase DX. I have two serious vices (my wife would say I have more)—I buy/build too many radios, and I hate to sell anything!

A few years ago, I was having a nice CW chat with Steve, W7QC. Steve acquired his father's old call through the vanity program. I re-acquired my original call, W7AQK, the same way. Steve commented that my call sounded familiar. I knew from years back that the original holder of W7AQK had been a man in Idaho. Well, Steve didn't know him, of course, but he had a lot of stuff that used to belong to his father. Apparently, his father, and the original W7AQK, were once part of a group of friends who gathered regularly on and off the air. A few days later, an envelope arrived from Steve. Inside was a picture of that group, kind of like a certificate. There, in the middle, was my predecessor, as well as Steve's dad. That picture now holds a prominent place in my shack.

As you can see, I am an active Ham who loves the hobby. However, this is not so much a story of me as it is about two fabulous people in my life, Carl and Dale. What I am is not very significant compared to what they were. Carl and Dale have been gone a long time now, but not a day goes by when I don't think about how incredibly blessed I was as a young boy to have them as mentors and friends.

I suppose this has rambled on long enough. I hope that there is something of interest in my ramblings that made it worthwhile for you. Anyway, thanks for "listening!" See you at Dayton—or, how about 40 CW? ■



hunger after these bulky forms? Yes. Even when viewed by the reflected light of sophisticated 21st century rigs, they maintain a definite charm. They are the stuff of full color QSL cards, meant to bask in the amber glow of fond memories in a knotty pine-paneled shack.

On the midway something is made obvious by its absence; where's the heady aroma of sizzling pork fat and onion? Gone are the outdoor food vendors with their bratwurst and onions, replaced by a sanitized, but not scent-free, indoor cafeteria. More things change as, inevitably, time whisks away our old, old-timers and fewer friendly, familiar, wrinkled faces brighten the day. Once-, and twice-a-year, Hamfest-only, friends pop into view as the mind registers the rarely seen face and generates the name and call belonging to it. A short, enthusiastic chat ensues and the periodic friendship is renewed for another year.

Every year there's new faces, that's good; but, every year there's shorter walks to the furthest displays, less merchandise available and a smaller crowd of parked vehicles means we can park closer as attendance drops—not good—even if more convenient.

Manufacturers, where are your big displays? Gone. We miss seeing the latest rigs up close. We miss your free regalia and souvenirs. Are we no longer a large enough share of your market?

By noon we share a knowing glance, we're dragging and so is the Hamfest—vendors grudgingly pack up their wares while others unceremoniously dump stuff into 55-gallon drums. Ah, sweet irony, the rapid transition of price-tagged treasure to still price-tagged junk. We have time for one quick excursion of the grounds; we want to make sure we haven't missed anything; we know we haven't, but we want to linger in this episodic Amateur Radio phenomenon, before finally heading home.

Too many Hamfests have attained venerable institution status; in our heart of hearts, we're not quite sure why we still attend; yet, not to attend would be blasphemous. ■

CQ Field Day de K9YA K
1A IL TU QRZ K9YA FD

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