

# K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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## In the Beginning... Ham Radio

*Amateur Radio in the Chicago Daily Tribune 1915-1925*

**Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL**

For anyone who has ever performed research at a library or other records repository it is nothing short of miraculous to be able to access the immense wealth of materials available online and from the specialized databases available at community libraries and universities.

Although ham radio infrequently appears in contemporary newspapers, a search of the archives database of the Chicago Daily Tribune newspaper for the period 1895 to 1981 revealed 1,878 articles containing the term “amateur radio”—an embarrassment of riches. Here’s a sampling of early treasures.

(Note: The text in quotes follows the word choice, spelling and grammar of the original.)

### Public Service Sans Covenants

**August 8, 1915: “INTERESTING BOYS”**

The first amateur radio article found in the archive is illustrated with drawings, not photographs, and opens with a discussion of the federal government’s plan to organize amateur radio operators into a “new public safety wireless service.” Such a service will be mandated to “...give protection to life and property in times of disaster...” Assigned to the organization of the new service is J.F. Dillon, a U.S. radio inspector.

The article then showcases Alfred Trodson, a 15-year-old, “ham’ wireless operator,” of Battle Creek,

Michigan. The centerpiece of Alfred’s station is the “wireless tower 125 feet high” he constructed in his backyard. With that structure he can “cut in’ on from Atlantic coast stations and he can read anything that is sent out from the ships and stations on the great lakes and interior posts.”

### President Wilson Speaks

**March 6, 1916: “WILSON FOR RADIO CORPS.”**

President Woodrow Wilson endorses a plan to organize hams to serve with the United States military: “The plan is to organize radio operators throughout the country into signal corps and give them military training, as outlined by the National Amateur Wireless Association.” This, the President writes, “undoubtedly would be a valuable asset to the nation,” in a letter to J. Andrew White, then acting head of the National Amateur Wireless Association.

Following the war years and the government’s embargo on amateur radio and the service again appears frequently in the pages of the Chicago Daily Tribune.

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“...an  
embarrassment  
of riches...”

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# Product Review

The K9YA Telegraph Staff Reviews the MFJ-929 Intellituner

Mike Dinelli, N9BOR; Dick Sylvan, W9CBT and Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL



MFJ-929 Intellituner at  
ARS W9CBT

*Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.*

Mark Twain (1835–1910), U.S. author, *Huckleberry Finn*, 1884.

## N9BOR

I grew up in the 60s—dreaming and drooling over Allied Radio catalogs. I wore the

covers off every one I ever owned. By the time I earned my ham ticket, vacuum tubes were a thing of the past for most, but not for me.

I assembled my dream station—a Drake C-Line—loaded. I manually tuned the transmitter; used a crystal calibrator to ensure I was on frequency; used “spot” to match my separate XMTR and RCVR and manually tuned large variable capacitors and a big roller inductor to guarantee a 50-ohm load.

Last year, after celebrating my 25th anniversary as a ham, I bought an all solid-state rig with synthesizer and LED readouts. It wasn’t exactly state-of-the-art, as it was 20+ years old—but boy could I change bands quickly. I knew I was getting spoiled with modern gear—it was just too easy. At least I still had my manual antenna tuner.

Don’t get me wrong, I have used plenty of hi-tech, modern gear—just not in my shack. I have fun telling hams what gear I’m running. Many of who say they used to have an old “fill-in-the-blank” rig and wished they hadn’t sold it. Throughout the years, most of my acquisitions were rigs older than my C-Line. I discovered Dow-Key relays and cathode keying. Real radios not only glow in the dark (think mercury vapor rectifiers), but could kill you if you touched the wrong thing!

When asked to review an automatic antenna tuner, I knew I was getting into dangerous territory. The MFJ-929 Intellituner is a mere wisp of a tuner compared to my vintage behemoths. However, I learned it quickly and painlessly did everything I needed it to do and more. Without reading the manual, I had it working within minutes. Matches were accomplished on all HF bands. Once while tuning on 80-meters, I heard a loud “Q-R-P” in Morse code. The Intellituner was telling me to reduce power. Initial tuning should be done at 10-watts (CW, FM or AM) although it can handle 200 watts SSB/CW. My bad—this is getting way too easy!

## W9CBT

This was a fun test on a very interesting product, the MFJ-929 Intellituner. It’s a versatile instrument that does everything you could want from an autotuner and more. I was anxious to try it out and quickly hooked it up to my Kenwood TS-850SAT transceiver after disabling the rig’s built-in autotuner. I tried all bands 40- through 10-meters (I do not have antennas for 80- or 160-meters)—for a perfect match on every band. I have three W9INN dipoles (40 through 10, WARC band 30-17-12-meters and 10-meter monobander) and was able to load the rig into all the dipoles with no problem.

Bypassing the Intellituner, I enabled the 850’s autotuner and compared results with the MFJ—identical—and the frequency readout matched the 850’s. I know my Kenwood is quite accurate, so it was nice to see the Intellituner agreed.

Turning my attention to my QRP rigs, I ran the Intellituner with my three MFJ QRP transceivers: models 9030, 9020 and 9015 (30-20-15-meters respectively). I also have a TenTec T-Kit for 40-meters and, finally, a Radio Shack HTX-100 for 10-meters (5/25W). All but the HTX-100 share rather inaccurate silk-screened analog dials. I tested the rigs one at a time with the appropriate antenna.

*“...this is getting way too easy!”*



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One feature that delighted me was the ability to determine my actual operating frequency. The Intellituner, according to the 850, was right on the mark in determining where the little transceivers were emitting. The Intellituner returned a perfect match on all bands and all antennas. I was very pleased with its performance and it provides the operating parameters the small transceivers lack.

I was wondering if I would have enough power to drive the Intellituner and found it required only two watts to function. It is rated to handle a maximum power output of 200 watts—more than enough for most hams.

The MFJ-929 uses a separate 12VDC, 850ma wall wart power supply—available as an accessory. There is provision for two antenna inputs—very handy. When the unit is off it is bypassed. Four memory banks offer over 2,500 memories per bank. It is very easy to operate. The LCD digital readout displays not only frequency, but also forward and reflected power and SWR simultaneously. It offers touch-up inductance/capacitance adjustment, which I did not need to use. All functions are available via push buttons. There is a jack on the back for a radio interface.

For any ham without an autotuner-equipped rig, or who doesn't want to keep readjusting their manual antenna tuner, the Intellituner would make a useful addition to their ham shack.

### K9PL

Rather than move my Yaesu FT-1000MP with its built-in autotuner from its hallowed position on the

shack desk, I tested the Intellituner with the MP's shack mate; the more austere and peripatetic FT-840, displacing its dedicated manual tuner, a Tucker T-1000 (Vectronics). It took but a few minutes to move the 10-80 meter (WARC excluded) fan dipole's coax to the FT-840 and Intellituner. A power lead to the tuner and I was in business. There's not much to say, the Intellituner did everything I asked of it the first time and for the rest of the weekend it spent in the K9PL shack—it was set and forget—providing a flat or nearly flat SWR everywhere I used it, on every band, from low band edge to high band edge.

The 1000MP has no problem finding a match on the 10- through 80-meter fan dipole. It is not happy tackling the WARC bands with that antenna; the SWRs are well beyond the 1000MP autotuner's abilities. There was no such problem with the Intellituner, that antenna and the FT-840 on the WARC bands and it complied with whatever was asked of it. That is to say, it made the rig happy, no power fold-back, but a contented rig does not equal a great performing antenna—but it did get me on the air.

The Intellituner's backlit LCD display provides a myriad of information including SWR, peak or average forward/reflected power, frequency, antenna in use, L/C tuner values, on/off

indicators and more. There's also an option to choose a bar graph display of forward and reflected power. If there's any downside to this wealth of choices it's that I found the constantly changing information in some display modes quite distracting; so I switched to a more static display for most of my operating time with the tuner.

The MFJ 929 Intellituner is a useful tool and I was pleased with its simplicity, ease of setup, seamless functionality, display options, construction quality and appearance. As in all things: YMMV.

*The MFJ-929 Intellituner is manufactured by MFJ Enterprises, Inc. PO Box 494, Mississippi State, MS 39762. <http://www.mfjenterprises.com> M.S.R.P. \$219.95.*



Top View of MFJ-929 with Cover Removed

*"As in all things:  
YMMV."*



Rear View of MFJ-929 Intellituner



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# My Old Radio Literature

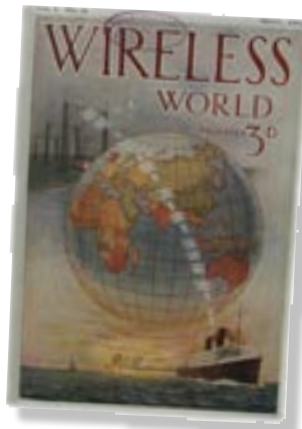
**Gorm Helt-Hansen, OZ6GH**



A Small Sample of Gorm's Collection

I started collecting old books and magazines about radio technique about 40 years ago. With the help of many good friends and by advertising in the Danish ham radio magazine *OZI* now have a fine collection of 1,013 books and 8,485 magazines. It is my interest in radio that made me start collecting and I think it is interesting to follow the evolution of radio technique from its very beginning to now.

Besides trying to build up complete collections of radio magazines I also try to find all copies of various book series, which can be a time consuming task. Sometimes it is possible to find some very rare items, for instance, some years ago I found a *Festschrift* (celebratory publication) for the expansion of the German radio transmitting station Nauen in 1920. Everywhere I go I look for old radio literature and being a collector I have this special good feeling every time I find something new to add to my collection.



Magazines from other countries are very difficult to find. Mostly because the areas of distribution are limited to the countries in which they are published and many are discarded after reading. Living in Denmark I have almost all issues of Danish radio magazines, only the very first magazines are very difficult to find, and by pure luck I found the British magazine *The Wireless World* from its beginning in 1913 and *The Wireless Engineer* from 1923. I also found some old German magazines and one French magazine. Apart from these magazines and *QST*, which I have from 1925, *CQ* and *Ham Radio*, I have no radio magazines from other countries. Books, on the other hand, are exported to booksellers all over the world and can be found in private hiding places and at antiquarian bookshops.

You can find much interesting information in the old literature. Did you know the integrated circuit is not a new invention? In fact, the first integrated circuit was made in 1926 when the German firm Loewe made an amplifier with three tubes and with all resistors and capacitors in one glass bulb. All that was needed to make a complete receiver was a tuned circuit, a speaker and batteries. Loewe also made an RF amplifier with two tubes. In an attempt to avoid paying for the grid patent, the German company Telefunken tried to use a metal cylinder outside the tube as the controlling element and I know of a Danish company doing the same. But it only lasted a few years—it did not work very well in practice. The principles of black and white television, as we know it, were described in a 1924 article in *Wireless World*. You can see much more in my Web page: <http://hjem.get2net.dk/helthansen>.

I don't think I ever will stop looking for old radio literature—it is fun and educational. And it is very important we preserve radio literature for the future. ■

*Gorm Helt-Hansen, OZ6GH, is 59 years old and started building crystal receivers when he was 9 or 10 years old. He first earned his amateur radio license in 1965. As an electronic engineer, Gorm has worked with mobile radio communication, ship radio communication, handheld communication, industrial electronics and now with the Danish CAA working with voice communication maintenance.*



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# WWII Radio Op

## Chronology

**Russell Richardson, AE4NY**

November, 1941 – enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force and assigned to induction center in Illinois.

Assigned to Keesler Field in Biloxi, Mississippi for basic training. Pearl Harbor occurred while at Keesler.

Assigned to Scott Field in Illinois near St. Louis to attend radio school.



Assigned to the 31st Fighter Group stationed near New Orleans and immediately shipped out to Ft. Dix, New Jersey prior to sailing to England on the Queen Elizabeth in June, 1942.

The 31st Fighter Group was part of the famous 8th Air Force. The 31st Fighter Group was involved in the infamous Dieppe Raid that proved so disastrous for the Canadian forces involved.

Involved in the invasion of North Africa at Arzu near Oran, Algeria. October, 1942. Thirty-first attached to the 12th Air Force.

Went through the Tunisian campaign including action at Thelep and the infamous Kasserine Pass action where positions had to be abandoned and retaken (see the slide of the “hole in the hill radio room”).

From North Africa we went into the invasion of Sicily on D+2. Still with the 12th Air Force. Late summer of 1943.



From the Sicily campaign the 31st was involved in the invasion of Italy at Salerno on D +2 or 3. Fall of 1943.

Returned to the States in January, 1945, on rotation to be reassigned to a new theater. Fortunately the war ended before this occurred. Returned to Miami for a few months and finally mustered out at Camp Attabury, Indiana in early September, 1945.



**Russ Richardson  
WWII Radio Op**



### Seeking WWII & Korean War Radio Ops

The *K9YA Telegraph* seeks to record the wartime experiences of WWII and Korean War radio operators, both military and civilian.

If you are a WWII or Korean War radio operator or the relative of a veteran operator and you wish to share your wartime experience with the worldwide amateur radio community, please forward your story with appropriate photograph(s) to [telegraph@k9ya.org](mailto:telegraph@k9ya.org).



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# Jim OM, We Hardly Knew Ye

*But What a Way to Go*

**Rod Newkirk, VA3ZBB/W9BRD**



In today's flashy world of supersonic aircraft, efficient SSB, featherweight GPS gear, etc., it's hard to imagine how old-fashioned wireless could have served aviation in the early years. The stuff was so darned heavy and cumbersome to have aloft. Charles Lindbergh, for his heroic solo Atlantic crossing in 1927, had to do without it in favor of extra petrol. Risky business made even riskier.

Lindy's next endeavor was flying around the Americas with new XYL Anne as goodwill ambassadors. Realizing the need for reliable air-ground communications, Mrs. Lindbergh turned herself into a competent CW operator to augment her navigation duties. She never did become a ham, though. No Elmers around, I guess.

In the summer of '37 famed aviatrix Amelia Earhart and navigator Fred Noonan mysteriously disappeared while island-hopping the Pacific. Operators anxiously awaiting their arrival on Howland Island found AE's final frantic voice transmissions unintelligible. Wireless historians opine that failure to familiarize themselves with CW sealed their fate.

Eccentric millionaire Howard Hughes, on the other hand, grew up with radio in Texas as amateur 5HG. For his record-breaking DX flights in the late 1930s he made sure to use a global network of expert CW hams to keep him posted on weather and airport matters. Around the

same time ill-fated dirigible technology came along with more airborne CW. The Zeppelin or Zepp antenna is still a ham favorite.

All this bug-twiddling nostalgia comes to mind in rambles through my yellowing W9BRD logs of yore. Recorded therein I find local QSOs with boyhood friend W9ZTN. The entries remind me of a time when airport radio ops, until supplanted by teleprinter, were the cream of Morse expertise, lightning fast and precise. Many could be 'heard displaying their skills on the amateur bands. To us teen-aged tinkerers they were gods among men, turning craft into high art.

Radio Corporation of America was running a radio school in downtown Chicago prior to WWII. Despite the persistent Depression, its graduates were eagerly snapped up by industry, especially aviation. The various communications courses, fueled by corporate subsidy and demand, cost a tidy bundle. In a stagnant cash economy the school was far too expensive for the kids of precariously employed wage slaves.

One of our neighborhood ham gang did manage to matriculate at RCA tech thanks to the largesse of relatives. Such good fortune couldn't have happened to a nicer guy than Jim Ewing, W9ZTN, whose genial personality and smooth fist stood out from the start. By the time most of the rest of us were entering military service in response

to Pearl Harbor, Jim already proudly wore the natty uniform of a Panamerican Airways flying radioman. One of our guys had really made it, an adventurous wartime-civilian career doing just what he wanted to do.

But perhaps Jim's cup was a little too full. Life certainly is a puzzle, a labyrinth of choices, twists and turns. Word from mutual friend Phil Simmons, W9VES, soon brought shocking news that W9ZTN had become a Silent Key. His PAA plane had crashed into a remote Andes mountaintop. This was my first brush with amateur radio mortality, a totally devastating downer. I can still see enthusiastic young Jim Ewing showing off the Czech QSL card he received from OK1BC for a 40-meter QRP contact in 1938. It featured a color cartoon of Mickey Mouse jumping up and down on a straight key. ■

*"Life certainly is a puzzle..."*



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## Signals Heard 'Round the World

Rapid progress was being made, almost daily, as radio signals bridged vast distances.

### November 28, 1922: "LONDON HEARS AMATEUR RADIO OF CHICAGOAN."

Wherein operators of the Burndept Company, wireless engineers, in London, England report hearing the transmissions of both commercial and amateur radio stations. Heard were WJZ in Newark, N.J. with a musical program (first American music program heard in Europe) and nine amateurs, including the Chicagoan.

### December 19, 1922: "U.S. VOICES RACE OVER OCEAN ON AMATEUR RADIOS."

Now, "scores" of radio signals emanating from 125 American hams taking part in the "Trans-Atlantic Tests" are heard nightly in Great Britain. The legendary and irreplaceable F.H. Schnell (See: *K9YA Telegraph*, November 2005, "Zeh Bouck," page 7) organized the ARRL-sponsored Trans-Atlantic Tests. The signals were also reportedly heard in France and Switzerland.

### May 11, 1924: "NEW ZEALANDER HEARS 500 U.S. CODE SENDERS"

F.D. Bell, a "prominent New Zealand radio experimenter, has heard 500 American amateur stations." Mr. Bell says, "Reception from amateurs in this country is becoming altogether 'too easy.'" In a letter to the ARRL he continues, "It has come to this, that any one with a single tube and a two coil circuit can hear a dozen on any single night, and the receiver that won't bring them in is a 'dud.'"

### May 25, 1924: "U.S. AMATEURS HEARD IN TESTS WITH ARGENTINA"

A report datelined Buenos Aires indicates that during tests, "Argentine amateur radio operators received signals from North American stations 1XZ, 1ABF, 4IZ, 1BQ, 2ADB, 5BPA, 9UA, 3OII and 6VJ..." on "...two wavelengths, 120 and 180 meters." Also, "The Argentine station CB8" had a two-hour contact with 2AC in New Zealand—a record-making QSO.

## Q-Signals Anyone?

### September 13, 1923: "SEES WORLD PEACE PROMOTED BY RADIO"

"The ability to communicate easily between individuals is the goal toward which we must work," said Irving Herriott of the Chicago Radio Traffic Association in his speech presented at the banquet of the ARRL convention in Chicago. "We shall accomplish between countries what has been accomplished between sections of this country, where radio has made cities more than mere names to the people of other cities miles away."

Chief supervisor of radio of the U.S. Department of Commerce, W.D. Terrell states that, "In 1913 there were only 1,296 licensed amateurs in the United States" and "Today there are nearly 18,000." Chief supervisor Terrell suggests a "universal code" to "facilitate converse between nations."

### February 3, 1924: "EXPECT RADIO TO HASTEN USE OF WORLD TONGUE"

"Owing to the growing interest in private communication among the nations of the world on short waves by amateur radio telegraph operators, officers of the American Radio Relay league have begun efforts to bring about communication through a common language."

Following the success of tests that proved it was possible to communicate worldwide, the League thought to facilitate the exchange of ideas through a common, universal language. Kenneth B. Warner, ARRL secretary, suggested either Esperanto or Ido. Warner leaned toward Ido (also called Ilo), because in his opinion, "...Ido is decidedly the better for amateurs, both from a grammatical point of view and because of its vastly more extensive vocabulary." Continuing, he says, "...the league is prepared to adopt the latter (Ido) for amateurs, provided it has the approval of radio men in all of the other countries. Until then American slang must prove incomprehensible to foreign listeners."

### March 22, 1925: "AMATEURS PLAN FORMATION OF WORLD LEAGUE"

At the congress held in Paris to establish the International Amateur Radio Union (I.A.R.U.), ARRL president Hiram Percy Maxim and secretary Kenneth B. Warner represented the United States. Among the matters under discussion at the congress was "...the selection of an international auxiliary language."

Today, if amateur radio operators use any universal language it must be Esperanto. In my collection I



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have several QSL cards from Esperantists and one from an Esperanto radio club, none in Ido.

There's an Esperanto ham radio Web site at: <http://esperanto.org/ilera/ahistory.html>

## Don Wallace, W6AM, ex-9ZT

March 23, 1924: "WALLACE, 9ZT, GIVEN HOOVER CUP FOR 1923"

Before he became famed California DX'er Don Wallace, W6AM, he was Don Wallace, 9ZT, of Minneapolis, Minnesota. In 1924 he was awarded the "Department of Commerce Cup" by Commissioner Herbert Hoover who presented the annual award "...to the owner of the best all-around amateur station, home designed and constructed." "9ZT has been recognized both east and west of the Mississippi as one of the most reliable relay stations for handling code traffic destined across continent."

## When the Net's Slow

November 28, 1923: "12,300 Miles, 5 Minutes, New Speed Mark for Radio"

For the amateur radio service a record-breaking time in miles per minute was established when "...a message sent by Boyd Phelps of this city (Hartford, Conn.) to Capt. Donald B. MacMillan's schooner Bowdoin, now frozen in off Greenland, was relayed via Catalina Island, Cal., to the vessel and an answer received here (Hartford) five minutes and sixteen seconds later." The distances? From Hartford to Catalina Island, 2,500 miles; 3,650 miles to a location near Etah, Greenland where the Bowdoin was situated; and back.

## Tiny HTs Nothing New

November 16, 1924: "STAGE SET FOR CHICAGO'S THIRD BIG RADIO SHOW"

Amongst the displays at the show described as "...the largest and most complete exposition of its kind ever presented in America," were "...twenty of the world's smallest practical radio devices." Included in these miracles of miniaturization none of which weighed more than an ounce were: "...a workable loud speaker ...made of solid gold... less than five-eighths of an inch long and one-half inch high"; ...a perfect telephone receiver... which is considerably smaller than a shoe button"; a "...crystal set which actually receives broadcasting is but three-eighths of

an inch square"; and another crystal set "...about the size of an ordinary dice, which has a perfect little tuning coil, crystal detector, and two little switches mounted on a Lilliputian panel."

Featured at the radio show was the "short wave Flewelling station, 9-XBG." The station was located in the same booth housing the ARRL and the Chicago and Milwaukee amateur radio clubs. Radio station 9-XBG transmitted "Code work, together with music and speeches..." and "will also conduct several experiments."

## Shoulders of Giants

It's obvious from all this that in the first decades of the 20th century, amateur radio was very much in the public's eye, ear and mind. Amateur radio was THE cutting-edge in communications science as it made news establishing its good name in the national psyche as it broke records, made strides in technology, pioneered new frontiers, worked for the public good, spawned legendary human beings and spun the saga that is now our history, the birthright assumed by every amateur radio operator upon earning our licenses and finding a role in that grand and continuing story. ■

## CQ FD de K9YA K9YA FD

### Ham Fables DICK SYLVAN, W9CBT



HUMPTY DUMPTY HAD A GREAT FALL