

K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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"Nonmagnetic" Yacht Carnegie

On the Air with S.L. Seaton and L.A. Jones

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

QST, September 1929, "Finding the Expeditions"

Yacht Carnegie Dept. of Research in Terrestrial Magnetism, Carnegie Institute of Washington.

The Department of Terrestrial Magnetism at the

Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C. initiated its study of the earth's magnetism in 1904 and continued until curtailed by World War II. This research entailed literally blanketing the globe to measure magnetic phenomena.

Built in 1909 to perform "ocean magnetic [and electric] survey[s]," the eponymous 150 foot long, "non-magnetic," yacht *Carnegie* was "...brigantine-rigged..." ["12,900 ft. of sail"] with "...not an ounce of magnetic material in her hull or aboard her, even her 150-h.p. auxiliary motor was built of nonmagnetic stuff." Fasteners in her all-wood construction comprised "locust tree nails and copper bolts and spikes." During *Carnegie's* seven cruises between 1909 and 1929 the yacht traveled 297,579 nautical miles (342,447 statute miles) crisscrossing the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Captained by J.P. Ault, her master of 13 years, and manned by "magneticians" and support crew, on this the second year of her three-year world cruise, she was headed for "Honolulu, Apia, Lyttleton [New Zealand], So. Georgia, St. Helena, Cape Town, etc., [departing] Aug. 23." Her radio operator for this portion of the cruise was Stuart L. Seaton, W3BWL, relieving Lawrence A. Jones, 1GO/W1GO. *Carnegie* was assigned call sign WSBS.

Radio Gear Aboard Carnegie

(From: *Scientific Results of Cruise VII of the Carnegie during 1928-1929 under Command of Captain J. P. Ault*)

Transmitter: [O]ne-quarter kilowatt, crystal-controlled, master oscillator, power amplifier outfit using a Western Electric 50-watt tube as crystal oscillator, a 250-watt first amplifier, and a 250-watt second amplifier. The frequency of the transmitter was from 3000 to 18,000 kilocycles.

Transmitter Power Supply: [P]ower supply to this transmitter was taken from a 3-kilowatt, 500-cycle motor generator run by the ship's batteries.

Transmitting antenna: *The antenna used for transmitting had a vertical part 130 feet long and a horizontal part 35 feet long, making a total of 165 feet. This antenna was used with a ground, and the lead from the transmitter to ground was about 12 feet, making an antenna ground length of 177 feet. A counterpoise also was used on 18,000 kilocycles only and its length was about 12*

feet. (According to his May 1931 article in QST, Seaton states, "A ground-connection to the brass sheathing of the hull was used on all but the highest frequencies.")

Main Receiver: *The receiver used for 3000- to 50,000 kilocycle reception was of U.S. Navy design and consisted of a push-pull detector, the output from which was put through a*

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"...locust tree
nails and copper
bolts and spikes."

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL
Editor

Mike Dinelli, N9BOR
Layout

Dick Sylvan, W9CBT
Staff Cartoonist

Rod Newkirk, VA3ZBB
Contributing Editor



Robert F. Heytow
Memorial Radio Club

www.k9ya.org
telegraph@k9ya.org

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Digital Modes

Part II

Paul W. Ross, W3FIS



In our previous article on digital modes, we explored some of the fundamental issues:

- Rationale of using digital modes – power, reliability, etc.
- Basic equipment required – SSB transceivers with digital input capabilities.
- Typical transmission modes – BPSK-31, Olivia, etc.

In this article, I'd like to pick up on the issue of interfaces,

move ahead to what is available for control and encoding/decoding software, and then examine some other useful modes.

The fundamental chain of events in a digital ham system is:

- Encode/decode and/or control program running on a computer. Many choices of good software.
- Computer sound card. Built in to most computers.
- Interface to SSB transceiver. All sorts of options here.
- SSB “multi-mode” transceiver. Helps if it is designed for digital use.
- Antenna and tuner. Nothing special here.

When I put my system together, the issue of a suitable interface was really the most difficult part of the problem to solve. It is clear that the output of the computer sound card likely must be attenuated for input to the transceiver, especially if the microphone jack is to be used. The output from the transceiver headphone jack or auxiliary speaker jack feeds the sound card “line input,” again, possibly attenuated.

The major problem comes when we have to deal with the “push-to-talk” issue. This means that somehow, our computer needs to usually provide a ground for

the transceiver's push to talk circuit. Oops! We are going to have to couple our expensive computer to our expensive transceiver! Some sort of interface is necessary, as we want to keep the signals from the computer isolated from the transceiver. The most common strategy is the modern equivalent of a relay – an “opto-isolator.” An opto-isolator consists of an LED optically coupled to a photo diode. Light up the LED, and the photo diode conducts. The only coupling is the light from the LED to the photo diode. Where we get the signal to drive the LED is the problem. There are four possibilities I know of to implement PTT:

1. RS-232 serial port. Now infrequently found.
2. Centronics printer port. Even harder to find!
3. USB port. Nice, but we might not have very many of them.
4. A sound card interface. Use the signal presence – VOX, if you will, to provide the PTT function.

Options one and two are what have been classically used. Audio isolation between the sound card and the transceiver is provided with a suitable attenuator and 1:1 audio isolation transformers. You can cook-up one of

these interfaces up from fairly readily available parts, get a kit, or buy one nicely pre-assembled. Check the Internet for some good circuit diagrams.

In light of this – parts are hard to get here in “Slower Lower” Delaware, other than Internet ordering. Since I have a nice digital compliant transceiver, and a laptop with only USB connectors, I opted for the Tigertronics SignalLink™ USB Interface. It is available from a variety of sources, complete with the necessary cables and jumper information for a variety of transceivers.

I figured the price of the interface was comparable to what I was going to pay for the price of the parts alone. If nothing else, troubleshooting would be greatly reduced. Point of fact, I had the SignalLink

“...some other useful modes.”

Tigertronics
SignalLink™ USB
Interface



Robert F. Heytow
Memorial Radio Club

www.k9ya.org
telegraph@k9ya.org

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interface up and running in less than 15 minutes. Most of the setup time was spent searching for my tweezers to connect the internal jumpers. For a modest price, you can get headers that can be permanently wired, so the interface can be used with a variety of transceivers.

An additional cable for rig control was also needed. Since the FT-817ND's rig control (CAT interface) is essentially an RS-232 interface, I needed a cable with RS-232 to USB conversion built in. The Internet is your friend again! Otherwise, you will need a stand-alone USB to RS-232 adapter. The USB cable came with a software driver that creates a virtual COM port on your computer. Of course, if your computer has an RS-232 port use that with the proper cable.

Now, what about control software? This is right up there with who makes the best trucks? Chevy, Ford, Dodge? Wars have been started over less...

Well, cheap is good, free is better, and free and delivered is best of all. Some possibilities, all free:

- Ham Radio Deluxe with its matching DM780 encoding/decoding program.
- Fldigi, a nice all-in-one program.
- HamScope.
- DigiPan.
- WinPSK.

There are others, but these are the major contenders. There is also an earlier version of Ham Radio Deluxe, called FT-817 Commander, which is especially handy for setting up the internal memories in the FT-817ND. That saves a lot of squinting at the nice little display on the FT-817ND!

I settled on Ham Radio Deluxe, after some discussions with other hams as to what seemed to be the one with the least quirks and problems in setup. I actually got the CAT control working a couple of weeks before I got the Signalink USB interface, which had been backordered. For this "old timer" who was used to tweaking knobs instead of setting frequencies with a computer interface, it was a bit of a paradigm shift! After a day or two, computer control seems as natural and as convenient as you might wish.

In my previous article, I mentioned BPSK-31 and Olivia as two of the most common digital modes. Another very interesting digital mode that is worth exploring is known as "Feld Hell."

This mode is derived from some vintage 1930s German technology. It is best described as a text mode that works with graphics. The eye can pull a corrupted and weak signal "out of the mud" with considerable ease.

One modest word of warning. The digital modes tend to have a high duty cycle – this means that essentially full carrier power is transmitted most of the time. This can lead to overheating during a long QSO. My FT-817ND does become slightly warm to the touch on long transmissions when running the full five watts. A little circulating air (larger feet under the rig and keeping clear around it) seems to alleviate the problem satisfactorily.

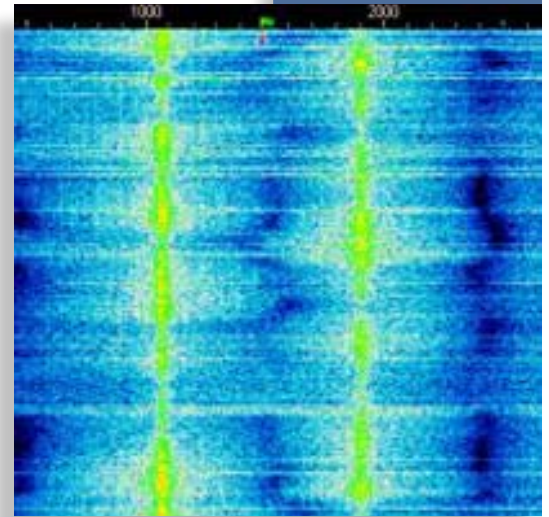
As you will discover, when you start working with digital modes, it is often difficult to decide just what mode you are hearing. Even with a little experience, some of the less common modes are difficult to figure out.

A recent innovation has been to prefix the actual transmission with an identification mode, known as a "Reed-Solomon ID" code. The newer releases of encoding/decoding software suites incorporate this feature. Use it!

And last, but not least, digital modes make for a much happier XYL. You don't have to mess with earphones to

keep the room quiet. Simply turn off the speaker and let the computer do the work.

See you on the Waterfall! ■



Digital Waterfall Display

*"...who makes
the best trucks?"*

Call for Articles

Have a story to share? An experience to relate? Some gear to review? A technical tip to dispense? Feeling didactic or pedantic? Write it up, add a couple of appropriate photographs and send them off to the *K9YA Telegraph*. Hams worldwide will thank you, and so will we.

Here's the place to start:

http://www.k9ya.org/write_for_us.htm



Robert F. Heytow
Memorial Radio Club

www.k9ya.org
telegraph@k9ya.org

E.F. Johnson Radio Restorations

Chuck Hurley, K1LTI



Chuck Hurley, K1LTI, with Some of His Restored E.F. Johnson Transmitters

My firm, E.F. Johnson Radio Restorations, is all about preserving the past with a touch of modern materials.

As received every unit is carefully evaluated for restoration with discrepancies noted. Special attention is given to any undocumented changes and modifications that may have been made. Every effort is made to return the unit to its original condition and design so that someone else working on it in the future will have a

solid baseline from which to work.

First, each unit is disassembled and thoroughly cleaned. All units receive new electrolytic and paper capacitors. Dual capacitors are custom made to replicate the originals—mostly for installation convenience. Tubes are tested, graded and cleaned.

Resistors are checked to assure they are within tolerance.

The face and case of each unit are completely stripped of paint. The case is primed, sanded and reprimed with basecoat sealer, then the basecoat color is applied and finally the clear coat is sprayed on. The face is filled where necessary, welding extra holes as needed, primed with an etching primer, reprimed and finish sanded, painted with the main color and taped off and painted with the second color. The face is then wet sanded with 2000 grit paper until absolutely smooth. Next, silk screening is done and when completed the face is cleaned and clear coated. Finally, the face is carefully wet sanded and buffed to a brilliant shine in a four-step process.

New pointers are installed in each knob and each knob is thoroughly cleaned and then clear coated. The Valiant II knobs are buffed to a shine. VFO dials are cleaned with plastic polish and all indicator lamp housings are buffed.

The Ranger II and Valiant II are done in a slightly different manner. The case for these units is powder coated and the face sprayed with a mat finish clear coat. Either way, you will have a trophy-quality piece of equipment to use and display for many years to come.

Once the face is done, each unit is carefully reassembled. In the case of the Valiant I the VFO and vertical shield behind the VFO are machine buffed to a brilliant shine. The chassis and coils are hand polished. The Valiant I and II lend themselves nicely to this treatment as you can look down from the top through the case perforations and see all the components. With the unit reassembled, capacitors replaced as aforementioned, resistors and tubes replaced, as needed, it is time to tune for maximum smoke!

Each unit is thoroughly tested to the original specifications and then run for a day on the bench. Finally it is put through the “On The Air” test. If all is well the case goes on and a new instruction manual provided.

My goal is simply to provide you with a working piece of amateur radio history that will perhaps last another 50 years if properly operated and maintained. Of course, I am here to repair anything that might happen to any unit.

“...all about preserving the past...”

Chuck Hurley, K1LTI, was licensed in 1962 as KN1TLI and within a year earned K1TLI as a Technician Class. As with many of us, raising a family intervened and although not always active he kept his license renewed. When the upgrade to General Class was offered by a grandfather clause, Chuck jumped at the opportunity. Although he felt a little guilty for not having earned it.

About six years ago Chuck decided he needed to pass the Extra Class test in order to feel that he indeed belonged. That done, he started to acquire old tube radios, a.k.a. boatanchors, he never had the experience as a youngster to use. It opened up a whole new world and as you can see, an expanded avocation using the many skills he acquired over the years. ■



Robert F. Heytow
Memorial Radio Club

www.k9ya.org
telegraph@k9ya.org

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Rod, VA3ZBB/W9BRD



Rod Newkirk, *K9YA Telegraph* contributing editor and ham radio legend, is on the mend. Rod is recovering from a stroke and is convalescing in a rehab hospital.

Betty, VE3ZBB, his bride, reports Rod's recovery is progressing nicely. Recently, Rod came home for a visit. Wasting no time, Rod's skilled fist filled the airwaves with Morse's music from his own shack.

Both Rod and Betty are grateful for the outpouring of support by *K9YA Telegraph* readers. The *K9YA Telegraph* will gladly forward your get well wishes. Send your messages to Rod and Betty at: telegraph@k9ya.org.

Ham Lingo

DICK SYLVAN, W9CBT



OM, OB, OT, OW

The forms of address we hams use in QSOs reflect a shared heritage reaching back over a century to our earliest years. Indeed, they were borrowed from landline telegraphers' lingo and that fortuitous loan insured their survival into the 21st century.

Today, apart from 19th century theatrical offerings and period novels, it's not often we encounter the salutations old man (OM), old boy (OB) or, dare we quote it, old woman (OW). All three are found in the 1927 edition of the ARRL's *The Radio Amateur's Handbook*. Young lady (YL) is listed, but not XYL. Somewhere, but not in this edition of the *Handbook*, may be found old top (OT); a term seemingly derived from Edwardian drawing-room comedies.

old man

Noun

1. *Informal one's father*
2. *one's husband*
3. *an affectionate form of address used to a man*

old boy

Noun

1. *a male ex-pupil of a school*
 2. *Informal, chiefly Brit*
- a. *a familiar form of address used to refer to a man*
b. *an old man*

Collins Essential English Dictionary, 2nd Edition
2006 © HarperCollins Publishers 2004, 2006

Now, out of context, we'll leave you with the familiar BUG. What do we find in 1927? The expected "Vibroplex key" and the now lost to the mists of time: "amateur radio 'fever'." ■

"Sweepers" Banished

Noted in the June 2009 review of the NorCal 2N2/20 QRP transceiver kit was the presence of sweepers marring its otherwise excellent performance. This problem, arising from self-oscillation (Q17) in the rig's RF stage, was cured following rig designer Jim Kortge's suggestion to replace R67 a 27 ohm resistor with a 33 ohm resistor. This did the job with no sweepers from start up to operating temperature. ■



Robert F. Heytow
Memorial Radio Club

www.k9ya.org
telegraph@k9ya.org

two-stage, audio-frequency amplifier. (The May 1931 article indicates it was a “Marshall type high-frequency receiver having a frequency-range of 3000 to 60,000....”)

Other Receivers: *A receiver made by the Radio Engineering Laboratory* [REL founded 1921 by Charles M. Srebroff]

was used as an emergency in case of failure of the main set. This was a regenerative detector, two-stage, audio amplifier outfit that tuned from 3000 to 20,000 kilocycles.

A honeycomb-coil type receiver was used for long-wave press and also for receiving broadcast programs.

The Amateur Experience

Prior to Seaton assuming the radio operator position, the previous operator, L.A. Jones, found he “...was able to arrange frequent schedules with amateurs in various parts of the United States, Honolulu,

Jamaica, and Panama.” He found it “...necessary to communicate with the American Radio Relay League station W1MK at Hartford, Connecticut, which had been continuously helpful on this cruise, through two relays, namely, Yosemite, California, (W6CIS) and Fort Madison, Iowa (W9BCA). Thus it was possible to keep the office fully informed of the daily progress and of urgent needs.”

“The American radio [sic] Relay League with headquarters in Hartford recommended our first operator, Mr. Jones, and cooperated with us throughout the whole voyage. The value to us cannot be exaggerated of the services rendered by hundreds of amateurs throughout the world.” (Lawrence A. Jones, 1GO, wrote *QST*’s “With the Route Managers” column, 1927-1928, and penned some news items during that time period.)

Jones and Seaton, in addition to their radio duties and as members of the “scientific staff,” were assigned a daily four-hour shift to take magnetism readings and perform computations (their job description titled them, in addition to their other duties, “computers”).

Radio Highlights

Jones and Seaton maintained daily scientific and personal communications with the rest of the world via a network of widely dispersed amateur radio operators.

“On the night of June 1 the positions of a typhoon for the two preceding days were received by radio from the Manila Observatory through amateur station K1AF.” (More likely KA1F, KA1 being the pre-WWII Philippines prefix.)

“Radio conditions were good and schedules were maintained every night. Exceptional cooperation has been shown by our amateur friends, and especially by the ‘San Francisco Examiner’ radio station KUP.” That same Hearst traffic-handling station (also cited as “amateur station KUP” in one reference) would later monitor submarine *Nautilus*’s 1931 cruise to the North Pole (*K9YA Telegraph*, March 2010).

“Jones kept us in constant communication with shore through amateur radio fans. Messages were exchanged with friends and family almost daily, and if any item of real interest was picked up from news-broadcasts, it was posted on the chart-room wall.”

“Seaton had also noted a severe decrease in radio signal-intensity on the seven-thousand-kilocycle band. These observations indicated the earth was having a ‘magnetic storm’ so a radiogram was sent to the Cheltenham Observatory in Maryland and to Mount Wilson in California for confirmation. Their instruments had indeed recorded severe disturbances during this period.

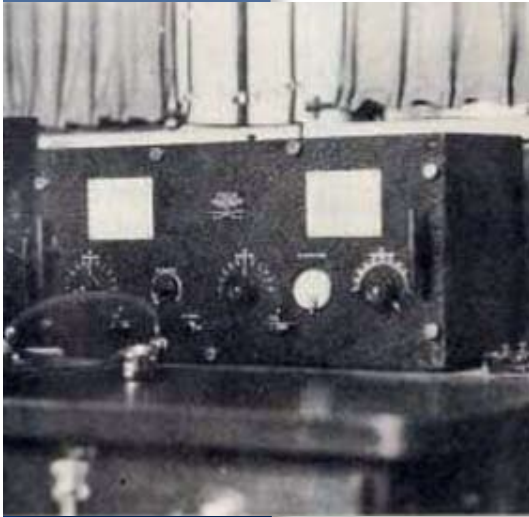
During these days Seaton rigged up a shorter radio antenna which increased the strength of the time-signals about seventy per cent.”

“Daily schedules with many amateurs in the United States, Hawaii, and Australia had brought us the news of the world, and kept us in constant touch with our home office. As an instance to show the faithful services of these enthusiasts, we might

mention the operator of station W6DZY. He transmitted a two-hundred word technical message for us and finished by stating that he had just broken three fingers, owing to the fall of a piece of heavy machinery.”

“Radio conditions became very poor during the last week of November (1928) and almost all our contacts were lost. W1MK of Hartford (4,500 miles distant), our old stand-by, was the last to go. For several days they sent us messages ‘blind,’ for their signals were received with the usual strength while ours were inaudible in the United States (at first attributed to an antenna fault, then to poor propagation). Jones was able to pick up their broadcasts, one of them being a cheery Thanksgiving message from the folks at home.”

“Radio conditions were good...”



The Radio Receiver Designed by the Naval Research Laboratory and Used on the *Carnegie*.



Robert F. Heytow
Memorial Radio Club

www.k9ya.org
telegraph@k9ya.org

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The *Carnegie's* Thanksgiving menu for November 28, 1928 included *Crème de Plankton* and *Pâtisserie Short-wave à la Hartford!*

Nearing Christmas, radio conditions improved causing Captain Ault to state: "The modern Santa Claus apparently saw the frolicsome reflecting layers and radio waves as he passed along on Christmas Eve and set things right for our benefit."

From May 1928 to November 29, 1929 *Carnegie's* radio operators passed "...250,000 words of official and personal traffic...through amateur stations."

Chicago Daily Tribune: November 30, 1929

Blast Wrecks U.S. Scientific Ship, 5 Others

Dispatches from Apia, Samoa, tonight said the yacht Carnegie, nonmagnetic scientific vessel of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C., exploded and burned at Apia harbor at 1:20 p.m. today [Friday, November 29], causing the death of the captain, J.P. Ault.

The *Carnegie* exploded while taking on gasoline, the yacht and five nearby vessels were burned "beyond salvage." Seaton was not aboard that day, "having gone ashore with two other crew members...on a collecting trip and did not return until about three hours after the tragedy."

Only the Beginning

A tragic ending for the *Carnegie* and her master, but not for radio operator S.L. Seaton (1906-2006).

Stuart Luman Seaton's career following his time aboard the *Carnegie* was long and luminous. It spanned much of the twentieth century as he earned great accomplishments in academia, business and government.

Early on the aim and trajectory of his career was evident. From electrical design draftsman at the Potomac Electrical Power Co., Washington, D.C., 1922-29; to magnetic observer for the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism, Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1929-46; Huncayo (Peru) Magnetic Observatory, 1931; and assistant at the Watheroo (Western Australia) Magnetic Observatory, 1935-38.

Following studies at the University of Maryland (1932-1934) he continued at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks where he completed his Bachelor of Science (1942) and Doctor of Science (1949) degrees. In 1948-1950, he served as the forward-looking director of the Geophysical Institute at the U of A where he earned the appellation, "Visionary."



Dr. Seaton's post U of A career included physicist, USAF (1946-48); president, Geosciences Inc. (1950-54); consultant, geophysics (1954-57); consultant, U.S. Army, Ft. Monroe (1957-62); and technical assistant, instrument research division, NASA Langley Research Center (1962-72). In his lifetime he published more than 100 scientific papers and held many patents.

His amateur radio career as W3BWL, OA4U, VK6MO and K4OR mirrored his professional work with 12 articles and correspondence appearing in *QST* between 1929 and 1994. These articles from 1929's "Increasing Transmitting Antenna Efficiency" to 1982's "More on Unguided Light Beams" trace the arc of scientific advancement over the more than six decades he contributed to the journal.

S.L. Seaton's Articles and Correspondence in *QST*

January 1929: Increasing Transmitting Antenna Efficiency

May 1931: Amateur Radio As an Aid to Terrestrial-Magnetic Research

June 1931: A Self-Contained 200-Watt Transmitter

May 1932: Investigating the Directive Properties of an Amateur Antenna

July 1933: OA4U—On the Roof of the World

November 1935: A Consistent Antipodal Experimental Circuit

May 1936: A Resonant Loud-Speaker for C.W. Reception

June 1938: A Final Amplifier Tuning-Matching-Coupling System

November 1941: A Multiband End-Fed Antenna (*Hints & Kinks*)

July 1973: A Secure Feeling (*Correspondence From Members -*)

January 1982: More on Unguided Light Beams (*Technical Correspondence*)



The Scientific Personnel of the Carnegie on Leaving San Francisco in September 1929.



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November 1994: Wrist Rest For Keyboard Operators (*Hints & Kinks*)

Throughout its 100-year history the amateur radio service has been blessed with individuals like Stuart L. Seaton. Hams whose genius, imagination and daring insured amateur radio's globe spanning reach was employed for the good of all mankind.

His contributions to his vocation and his avocation were significant. Exemplified by his work aboard the *Carnegie* the two passions entwined—one synergizing the other.

Dr. Seaton stated it best at the close of his May 1931 *QST* article: *Thus we find that amateur radio is of great service to an organization devoted to the most exacting of scientific researches and appears to be gaining in usefulness as the respective fields of investigation broaden.* ■

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<http://www.olderadio.com/archives/hardware/rel.htm>

A Personal Note

While researching this article another op kindly furnished a lead to a friend of Dr. Seaton, Jim Wise, W4PRO. Here is Mr. Wise's reply to my query.

Yes, indeed, I did know Stuart Seaton very well and his Australian born XYL, Nancy. When I lived in Hampton, Virginia, Stuart and Nancy lived only a few miles from my home.

I first met Stuart at the PTA meeting where he delivered a very interesting presentation on his world travels on old ships mapping the earth's magnetic field. He didn't mention amateur radio, but I had a feeling he must be a ham to have spent so much time away from normal means of communication. So, after his presentation, I introduced myself to him, which started a long friendship.

Stuart was a scientist at NASA's Langley Research Center in Hampton where I spent most of my working years. I saw him at work occasionally, but never worked with him directly.

*After his retirement, he and Nancy bought a sailboat [the 44-ketch *Que Coisa*] and made a round-the world trip. They made a limited number of copies of a book chronicling the voyage, and gave me one of the copies, which I still have.*

Stuart also wrote a how-to book on using a sextant. I also have a copy of that.

DX'ing has taken me to many overseas countries, many far off the beaten path, and I habitually visited Stuart and Nancy after a trip to share my photos and story with them. Stuart did not belong to any of the local radio clubs that I know of, so he would not have seen my photos otherwise.

Nancy still lives in their waterfront home in the Fox Hill Section of Hampton. She turned his ham radio gear over to me to pass on to needy hams, which I have done.

Jim Wise, W4PRO (W8YHV, VP2MDX, FG0CXV, CE0 EASTER ISLAND, SV5, VP5VEC, A52PRO, 9N7PR)

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Memorial Radio Club

www.k9ya.org
telegraph@k9ya.org

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