

# K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

Volume 7, Issue 10, October 2010



## Turner Calling

*Ulmer Turner, W9UG: SWL, Journalist, Newscaster*

*Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL*

**M**y first recollection of renowned TV newscaster Ulmer Turner (1906-1995) was his closing statement from a special event station located at Chicago's Navy Pier: "And I am Ulmer Turner, W9UG." Turner was

there for the annual International Trade Fair and he made it evident to all viewing that as a professional broadcaster he was proud of his amateur status.

South Carolina born, Turner grew up in the city of Columbia where an early interest in shortwave led to a stint as a shipboard wireless operator and culminated in his highly successful amateur and broadcast radio careers.

In the early 1930s, in Chicago, he worked as reporter and radio editor for the Herald American and Herald-Examiner newspapers. In the 1940s, as radio critic at the Sun, his sterling reputation as newspaperman earned him the title of "Chicago's Senior Kilocycle Columnist." At the Herald-Examiner he scooped the city's other papers with news of John Dillinger's arrival from Tucson following the fugitive's 1934 capture and extradition to Indiana. The Dillinger exclusive came about thanks to the amateur radio station Turner installed at the newspaper; he monitored the radio traffic to and from the airplane transporting Dillinger and his guards.

During the catastrophic 1937 Ohio River Valley flood, Ulmer Turner took an active role in relief communications. W9UG was listed with the busiest emergency traffic handlers: W9AIO, W9PSP, W9ETI, W9WC

and W9CRS. When W9ELL, Louisville, a Naval Reserve station lost power "...Ulmer Turner, Chicago *Herald Examiner* radio editor, arranged for shipment of a gas-engine-driven generator by airplane..." to get the Louisville station back on the air. (See: *K9YA Telegraph*, May 2008, p. 7.)

Ulmer Turner was a television broadcast news pioneer and is recognized as the father of ABC-TV's news department at WBKB,\* (Balaban and Katz Broadcasting [later WLS, channel 7]), channel 4, in Chicago.

In the 1950s, in addition to his TV gig, Turner hosted a Monday-Friday, 15-minute news program *Turner Calling* on WENR-AM<sup>†</sup>. The genius of that program was his use of Hallicrafters receivers to monitor foreign shortwave broadcasts and reel-to-reel tape decks to

record them. That set-up offered a unique news angle and the occasional scoop. *Time* magazine, in a 1953 article featuring Turner, noted: "With the help of a technician, three 35-foot directional antenna masts, eleven short-wave receivers (six are permanently tuned to catch Moscow, London, Paris, Seoul, Buenos Aires

*"Chicago's Senior  
Kilocycle Columnist"*

CONTINUED - TURNER CALLING ON PAGE 7

### Inside This Issue...

<i>Turner Calling</i>	Page 1
<i>Weak Signal Communications</i>	Page 2
<i>The Green Ham Radio</i>	Page 4
<i>Ham Quips</i>	Page 5
<i>Wireless Spark Revisited</i>	Page 6

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

# Weak Signal Communications

Putting the Thrill Back in Ham Radio

Paul Ross, W3FIS



TigerTronics Signalink  
USB Digital Interface

In the past, I've talked about digital modes in amateur radio, such as PSK-31, Hell Schreiber and Olivia in its different incarnations. There are some real advantages to the digital modes:

- Use that nice computer we all seem to have at our fingertips.
- Explore new avenues in communications.
- Avoid getting to know our neighbors too well, by keeping our power down.

Well, where will we go this time in our explorations of digital modes, and, in particular, the “weak signal” modes? There are a number of avenues, but the two I have explored most recently are wsprnet, and JT65-HF, using software from Joe Taylor. These can be downloaded from his site, and quickly set up on your computer. This software is for brief exchanges of information; mostly call sign, location, signal report and confirmation of signal report.

The digital modes generally contribute to greatly improved domestic tranquility, with less racket in the house from the howls and squeaks of strange signals from even stranger places. Fast CW upsets my dog...

OK, what do you need for experimenting with weak signal techniques?

- A good modern SSB transceiver, preferably one with digital input and control capabilities, but this is not strictly necessary.
- An interface (which can be home-built, if you wish). I like the TigerTronics Signalink USB unit, which can be purchased with all the necessary cables, and draws its power from your computer. It took me all of 15 minutes to get it up and going, and most of that was finding a

pair of tweezers to plug in the necessary internal jumpers.

- A reasonable computer: something running Windows XP or Windows 7 will do the trick. Linux and Macintosh systems are also satisfactory, but suitable software may be more difficult to come by.
- The appropriate software. The vast majority of the software is cheap, free, or best of all, free, and delivered!
- An antenna—with weak signal systems, unless you are doing Earth-Moon-Earth (for the truly dedicated!), a minimal long-wire antenna will suffice, with a decent tuner. I have even used a “Miracle Whip” QRP antenna on my Yaesu FT-817ND for field and demonstration use.

Weak signal technology is a real opportunity to put some of the thrill back in ham radio! There appear to be limitless avenues to explore, all at your fingertips. Boredom is not going to be your problem!

*“Fast CW upsets  
my dog...”*

Fundamental to working with weak signals, you need a good clock. The weak signal techniques involve transmitting and receiving at specific intervals, typically on the minute. Also, there are agreed-upon frequencies or sections in specific bands where activity takes place.

Weak signals are right up there with the proverbial needle in the haystack!

You can reasonably expect to copy or be heard by stations at quite substantial distances, even when there appears not to be any sort of signal present. I have worked as far as 11,000 km with one watt, a whip antenna, and a bit of luck. Shortly, I shall hook a flatulent firefly to the antenna...

Since we are not working with a lot of power, a good antenna match is necessary, and a reasonable antenna even more necessary. However, if you are plagued with deed restrictions, as I am, it is just fine to hang up a piece of wire in the attic.

The only operational caveat I would suggest is that the weak signal modes are “key down,” as transmission is



Robert F. Heytow  
Memorial Radio Club

www.k9ya.org  
telegraph@k9ya.org

K9YA Telegraph

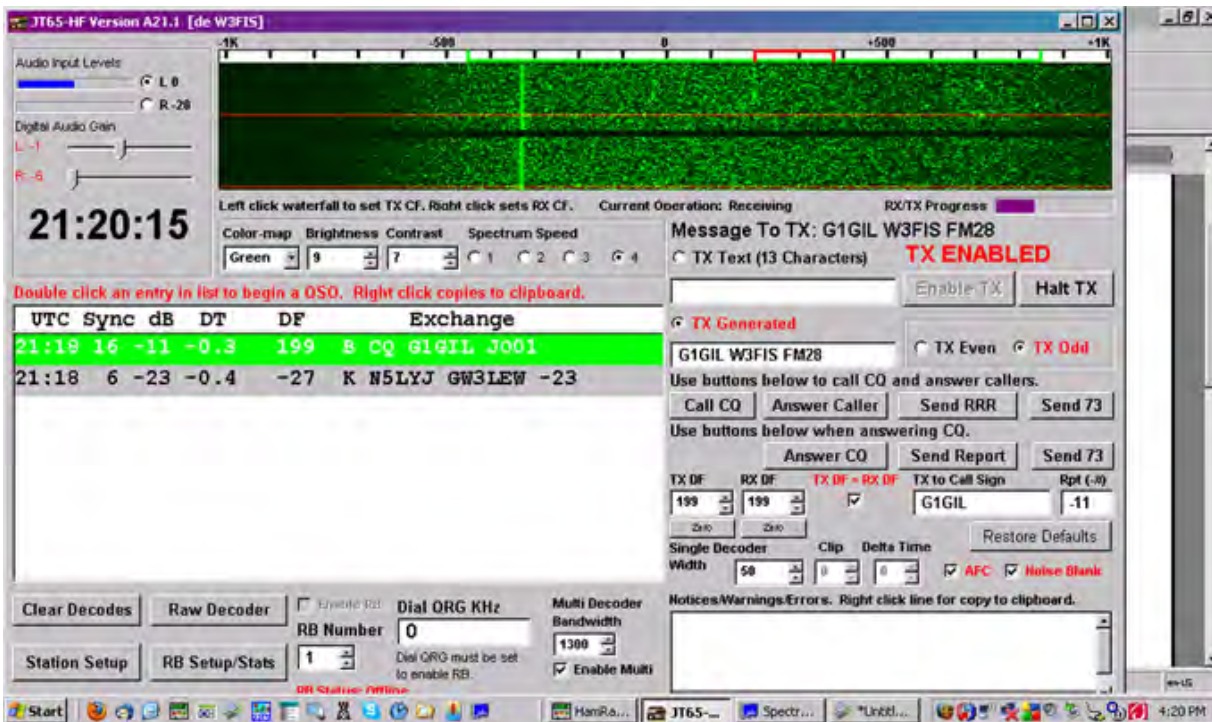
essentially continuous. That means that you can easily overheat your finals. With my Yaesu FT-817ND, which can put out five watts, I cut back the power to one watt, which is more than sufficient. I have had a little trouble triggering off “touch” switches on the XYL’s china cabinet, but some ferrite chokes from Radio Shack took care of that. Again, the issue of domestic tranquility...

Now, what about software? As I said, free is best. Two packages are of especial interest. The first is wsprnet, which is a beaconing package. You transmit your Maidenhead grid square and call letters. Responses are logged at an Internet central database. I find this an excellent way to assess various band conditions. Also, a contact map can be derived from the database.

Now, how do you do a “real” QSO? The JT65-HF program is the one for this. It is derived from the program used for Earth-Moon-Earth contacts. However, this version is tweaked nicely for HF contacts on all the commonly used ham bands. A CQ or QSO is established with a 13-character message of grid square and call letters. A response, usually in the form of a signal report, is exchanged. The duration of the QSO is pretty well determined by your patience. It is not for people in a hurry to rack up all those cool DX rag chews!

The following is a typical screen capture of a JT65-HF session.

See you below the noise level! ■



Screenshot of JT65-HF QSO

## STOP THE PRESSES!

GREAT CAESAR'S GHOST! BUDDING JIMMY OLSENS AND LOIS LANES NEEDED. THE DAILY PLANET, AKA, K9YA TELEGRAPH, SEEKS ARTICLES. SEE YOUR WORDS AND PHOTOS DISSEMINATED WORLDWIDE! CUB REPORTER? NO PROBLEM, YOUR COPY WILL BE EMENDATED BY THE K9YA TELEGRAPH'S TEAM OF PROFESSIONAL EDITORS. STOP THE PRESSES!

[HTTP://K9YA.ORG/WRITE\\_FOR\\_US.HTM](http://k9ya.org/write_for_us.htm)



Robert F. Heytow  
Memorial Radio Club

[www.k9ya.org](http://www.k9ya.org)  
[telegraph@k9ya.org](mailto:telegraph@k9ya.org)

# The Green Ham Radio

*Eyeglass Case Center Insulator*

*Cliff Cheng, Ph.D., AC6C*



**M**y family and I were customers of the For Eyes optical dispensary chain since they moved into Los Angeles in the 1980s. The eyeglasses they sold came with a plastic case (Photo 1a). The cases wear out in a few months—the lining wears out and/or the hinge breaks. Most of their employees, except one very rude clerk, were willing to replace them. This nasty clerk wanted to charge me and was unwilling to let me place the broken case in a recycling bin.

She stated For Eye's policy was to throw them away and not to recycle. I wrote to letters of complaint to the CEO, Phillip Wolman, of For Eyes and was blown off. We are no longer customers of For Eyes!

I do not want For Eyes' cheap eyeglass cases ending up in a landfill so I repurposed them and helped the environment at the same time by practicing green ham radio. I use the cases to hold batteries and parts. In my KX1 kit, I use the inside of the cases for batteries and the outside to wind my wire antennas around. I thought of another use, to make a center insulator out of them. For this project I wanted to use available parts choosing to spend under \$1.24 on hardware using eyehooks and 54 cents without eyehooks. The rest of the parts and supplies came from my junk box. I borrowed a Dremel® rotary tool for this job. You can get by without a Dremel® using a packing knife and a few other simple hand tools.



Photo 1a



Photo 1b

The first thing I did was to prepare the case. I removed almost all the fabric lining except the bit that would not scrape off (Photo 1b). With the Dremel® I cut off the hook support and cut V-notches on each side of the case's bottom lid for the eyehooks and used epoxy to secure (Photo 2b). I did this job as an after dinner project. I set the eyehooks in the case with epoxy and then went to sleep and let it cure overnight.

Installing the SO-239 requires the most care in this project (Photo 2a). If the SO-239 sits too far back, you will not be able to mount the PL-259 securely. Your eyeglass case may have different dimensions and the SO-239 may sit differently in your case. Screw a PL-259 onto the SO-239 when selecting where to position the SO-239.



Photo 2b

*"...helped the environment..."*

The Completed Project



Robert F. Heytow  
Memorial Radio Club

[www.k9ya.org](http://www.k9ya.org)  
[telegraph@k9ya.org](mailto:telegraph@k9ya.org)

**K9YA Telegraph**

If I were to do this project from scratch, rather than with available parts, I would get a SO-239 with a small flange. With a smaller flange, the SO-239 could move closer to the front of the case, making screwing on the PL-259 easier. The smaller flange is typically a specialty item and costs more than the regular flange model.



Photo 2a

Next I wired the SO-239 to the eyehooks. However, the eyehooks broke off when I attached the antenna wire. Trying to epoxy metal eyehooks to plastic did not work well. I may later experiment with cutting a slit into the case so a fender washer on each eyehook could more securely attach to the case.

As it turns out I think not using eyehooks works better; better strain relief. I bought a small screw, two washers and nut for 26 cents and placed them on the flange. One side of the antenna is attached to the flange. To avoid attaching the other side of

the antenna directly to the center wire side of the SO-239, I took one of the eyehooks and made it into a post for that side of the antenna. You could use a bolt if you do not have an eyehook on hand. An eyehook has the advantage of letting you connect the center insulator to an antenna support. I ran a wire to the center of the SO-239. If you are QRO, use heavier gauge wire (Photo 3a). I spent about 88 cents for hardware and was able to practice green ham radio by preventing a plastic eyeglass case from going into a landfill.



Photo 3a

Seal the case with epoxy. Avoid duct tape if you are leaving the eyeglass case center insulator outdoors for long; it may not stand up to weather. Happy QSOs!

*Acknowledgement: Thanks to Earl Winter, Ph.D., KI6EAL, for his assistance.*

Copyright © 2010, Cliff Cheng, Ph.D.

## CW, The Fun Mode

### A New, Free, Brochure for Clubs

The staff at the *K9YA Telegraph* is pleased to announce its new publication *CW, The Fun Mode*.

*CW, The Fun Mode* is a three-fold, full-color, brochure targeted at newly licensed and upgraded amateur radio operators. The brochure highlights the many joys and advantages of Morse operation and suggests routes to its acquisition.

*CW, The Fun Mode* features a cartoon by *K9YA Telegraph* cartoonist Dick Sylvan, W9CBT, and offers a selection of notable CW quotations.

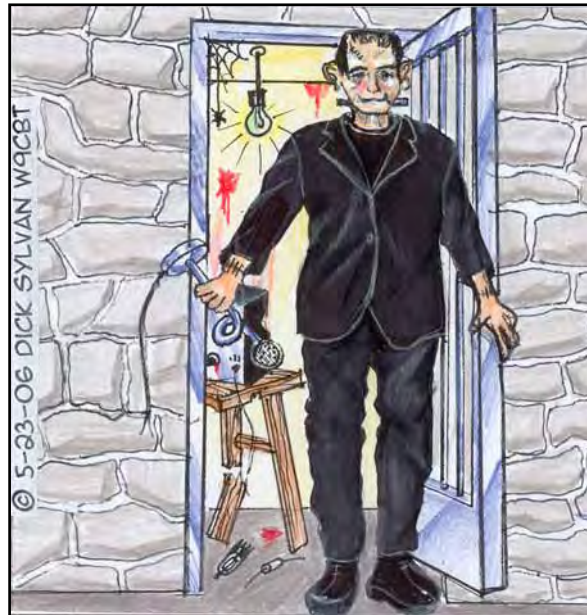
*CW, The Fun Mode* is available, free, to clubs and individuals. The brochure includes a space for clubs to add their own contact information.

*CW, The Fun Mode* may be downloaded at:

<http://www.k9ya.org/downloads/K9YA-CW%20Brochure.pdf>

## Ham Quips

DICK SYLVAN, W9CBT



RADIO CONDITIONS IN THE SHACK ARE  
MONSTROUSLY BAD!



Robert F. Heytow  
Memorial Radio Club

[www.k9ya.org](http://www.k9ya.org)  
[telegraph@k9ya.org](mailto:telegraph@k9ya.org)

# Wireless Spark Revisited

Joe Medsker, K8LKC



They say necessity is the mother of invention and it is these thoughts of “how do we do it?” that has created our modern tools. How much more could our forefathers have accomplished if they’ve had just a small home computer? We will never know.

To me it is interesting how things began. You just don’t pick up a hunk of wood or stone off the ground and make a highly technical device. But, nevertheless, in

time, things do come into being.

## Ether

It is so easy to forget the hard work and ideas of the people who made the devices we now take for granted. Radio is no exception. For instance, in 1678, Huygens, a Dutch mathematician of astronomy fame, came up with the idea of an invisible substance that light traveled through called “Ether.” A Spanish physicist delivered a speech before the Academy of Sciences “On the Application of Electricity to telegraphy,” December 16, 1795. One hundred years before Marconi. In 1837 Samuel Morse applied for a telegraph patent that included a code to be used with the device. (U.S. patent number 6,420.) In 1845 Faraday, noted for such things as his “Faraday shield,” believed in Huygens’ theory and demonstrated that electric and magnetic forces also travel through this same medium. In 1873 Maxwell formulated the rules for these invisible forces and suggested there must be waves much like light waves, but at much lower frequencies. Hertz, in 1888, demonstrated the electric waves and showed they do follow the same rules as light. In 1894 Marconi, a teenager at the time heard of the experiments of Hertz and thought of sending telegraph signals without wires. As you can see it took many steps to get where we are today.

“...CW was  
the first digital  
mode...”

If we look at what Marconi had to work with, we find some interesting facts. Marconi did make the first practical wireless telegraphy system but he did not invent all the parts. There were a number of ready-made parts available at the time and he used these in different ways than they were intended to be used. It took his ingenuity and genius to assemble these into a working system that produced a much different product than the individual parts would suggest. Who at the time would have thought of using a high voltage spark coil and an electric doorbell to send and receive telegraph without connecting wires? This is exactly what Marconi did!

## Reproductions

So, how did it really work? One way to find out is to build reproductions. My reproductions are all working models of the originals. They are used to inform our fellow radio amateurs just how far radio communication has advanced in a hundred years.

Come to think of it, my dad was born in 1895, one year before wireless. In his lifetime he had seen most of the high-tech inventions come into our daily life. He started to school on horseback, read by oil lamp, and saw men walk on the moon—all in one man’s lifetime.

The gear I built is demonstrated at radio clubs around the area so they can see for themselves how it started. The

early wireless radio equipment reproductions are fun to play with. No, you can’t use them on the air! Don’t even think of it! But used for demonstration purposes they are nothing short of fascinating to the viewers. It is interesting to watch the faces of people who have never seen such devices operate. They can’t imagine a radio system without tubes or transistors or integrated circuits or computers to make them work. Nevertheless, it does work, and for as simple a system as these were, it worked quite well. It even saved lives.

As our technology grows we become more and more dependent on it. Is this really bad? Who can say? Technically speaking, CW was the first digital mode of transmission. Some would like to get rid of it. Not me!

CONTINUED - WIRELESS SPARK ON PAGE 8

The Author’s Homebrew  
Untuned Non-Syn-tonized  
Wireless XMTR



Robert F. Heytow  
Memorial Radio Club

www.k9ya.org  
telegraph@k9ya.org

K9YA Telegraph

and Melbourne) and three tape recorders, he collects most of the short-wave signals aimed at the U.S.”

Some of his radio-assisted news scoops included the fall of Dien Bien Phu, Viet Nam and Russia’s first underground atomic bomb detonation. Beginning December 1955 *Turner Calling* ran for a time on WBKB-TV, 11:30 pm, with the same program format. (See: *K9YA Telegraph*, August 2007, p. 6.)

A newspaper display ad Sept. 17, 1953 promoting *Turner Calling* read:

*Tune in Tonight  
a NEW idea in  
news broadcasts...*

TURNER  
CALLING

*Monday  
through  
Friday*

10 to 10:15 P.M.

WENR

Hear the news that makes tomorrow’s headlines—*direct* with Ulmer Turner. Broadcasts from all over the world, picked up on Hallicrafters short wave radios are re-broadcast to you. Don’t miss this new kind of news show!

brought to you by  
Hallicrafters

*World’s Leading Exclusive Manufacturer of  
Communications and High Fidelity Equipment,  
Radio and Television*



Members of the Career Academy School of Broadcasting directing faculty are Howard Miller, John Cameron Swayze, Robert St. John, Ulmer Turner, Fran Allison, Westbrook Van Voorhis and Earl Gillespie.

Ulmer Turner retired as a broadcaster in the mid-1960s, but not from broadcasting. In the late 1960s Turner, with radio and television notables Howard Miller (Chicago disc jockey and talk radio host), John Cameron Swayze (NBC, ABC, newscaster), Fran Allison (*Kukla, Fran and Ollie*), Westbrook van Voorhis (announcer/narrator) and Earl Gillespie (sportscaster) served on the faculty of Robert St. John’s Career Academy School of Broadcasting. The school, heavily advertised at the time, eventually utilized several educational facilities in the U.S. and Canada and offered courses by correspondence. The onsite course “...duplicate[d] actual broadcasting conditions, with fully equipped studios and engineering facilities,” ran four months and cost \$800.

Ulmer Turner, W9UG, became a silent key on March 22, 1995 in Orlando, Florida.

Asked in an interview what he hoped listeners would take away from *Turner Calling*, he stated: *I think that many newsmen insult the public by trying to think for them. I feel that my prime mission is to inform.*

#### References

Chicago Tribune

Milwaukee Sentinel, November 5, 1957; February 11, 1968

Orlando Sentinel, March 25, 1995

*Billboard*, September 27, 1947

*Harper’s*, October 1941: pp. 535-545

*Nostalgia Digest*, April-May, 1987

*QST*, March 1937

*Time*, September 21, 1953

*TV Forecast*, Chicago edition, May 21, 1949; June 17, 1949

*Broadcasting Year Book, Volume 1965*: Ulmer Turner at WAAF

*Encyclopedia of Radio and Broadcasting: The Man Behind the Microphone*, 1968: “Ulmer Turner, founder of ABC News, Chicago.”

*A History of Chicago Television News Presentation (1948-1968)*: “Prior to 1960, WBKB had relied upon Ulmer Turner to carry the role of featured news personality.”

CONTINUED - TURNER CALLING ON PAGE 8



Robert F. Heytow  
Memorial Radio Club

www.k9ya.org  
telegraph@k9ya.org



Robert F. Heytow  
Memorial Radio Club

www.k9ya.org  
telegraph@k9ya.org

K9YA Telegraph



### Airship USS Los Angeles

The July 2008 *K9YA Telegraph* article “USS *Shenandoah*” reviews amateur radio’s interaction with the U.S. Navy airship. Evidenced by a December 1928 *QST* news item, the American amateur radio community and the U.S. Navy enjoyed a continuing relationship during the Navy’s period of engagement with lighter-than-air vessels.

October 6-8, 1928 the USS *Los Angeles* (callsign, NERM) was enroute from her mooring at Lakehurst, N.J. to the Naval Helium Production Plant at Ft. Worth, Texas. Oddly, according to the *QST* article, the Ft. Worth facility “had no radio installation.” Therefore, local amateur radio operators were requested to supply gear capable of communicating with NERM.

W5AVS came forward with a transmitter utilizing a UX-852 vacuum tube. That rig was set up at the helium plant and a group of hams including “Gordon Cail White, E.M. Frost, and Karl Kilander” worked in shifts to maintain constant communications with the airship on 3,490 kc.

*Los Angeles*’s commanding officer, Charles E. Rosendahl, in a letter to the Navy Department, commended the “improvised amateur station.” He recommended the Department thank the operators “for their conscientious and untiring efforts during the flight, and their excellent spirit of co-operation.”

*QST* reminded readers that amateur stations were not normally authorized to communicate with naval stations. In this instance a special order permitted the operation.

This was USS *Los Angeles* flight number 132, departing 10/06, at 06:38 and arriving 10/08, at 18:37; duration of flight 48.12 hrs.

(Flight data from *USS Los Angeles: The Navy’s Venerable Airship and Aviation Technology*, William F. Althoff, Potomac Books, Inc., Washington, D.C., 2004 ISBN 1-57488-621-5) ■

CONTINUED - WIRELESS SPARK FROM PAGE 6

We radio amateurs should be ready and able to provide communications in times of disaster. What better way than CW? I can make a CW transmitter work in almost any situation, but I can’t say that about other modes. CW even works with a pair of flashlights and for distances that would amaze you. Maybe I’m just an “Old Geezer” and can’t take change. However, CW is still the best mode and it gets through when other modes have failed. Don’t throw it out, master it. Remember this, old tools are used to make new tools. ■



CONTINUED - TURNER CALLING FROM PAGE 7

*How to Write for Radio*, James Whipple, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., York, Pa., 1938: “Ulmer Turner, radio editor of *The Chicago Herald and Examiner*.”

*Radio Manufacturers of the 1920’s*, Vol. 1, Alan Douglas, Vestal Press, NY, 1988, ISBN 1-886606-02-1

\*To celebrate Turner’s first year at WBKB-TV soda maker PAR-T-PAK offered “...two free bottles of Par-T-Pak Beverages.” Coupons were dispatched to those sending a card addressed to Ulmer Turner at WBKB, Chicago 1, Illinois. The lucky coupon recipient need only pay the bottle deposit. “Remember, it’s ‘Ulmer’s treat’”

†WENR founder E. N. Rauland was concurrently the owner of the All-American Radio Corporation. All-American, then All-American Mohawk after its acquisition of Mohawk Electric Corporation, a firm with connections to Wurlitzer as its provider of radio cabinets. Divesting his interest in the company, Rauland eventually established a new All-American Radio Corporation. In the late 1940s All-American was sold to Zenith Corporation becoming its vacuum tube manufacturing subsidiary. ■