K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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Kay Kibling, W2HXQ, & Ruth Nichols

"The Hams Join Up"

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

As a bright and curious child did you ever get absorbed in a game of "Dictionary"? That is the solo pursuit where looking up a word, archetypically in your Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, for some class assignment spurred a concatenation of look-ups. This continued to the point where the player realized time's a wastin' and the homework would never get finished, or the young scholar was called to dinner.

With age, for many players, the game advanced to the World Book or Encyclopedia Britannica versions–one encyclopedia entry launching the search for another. The 21st century edition takes place on the Internet via search engines and links within blogs and articles.

"The Hams Join Up"

Performing research for my October 2013 article, "Our Radio Amateurs," I came across the November 1941 *Popular Science* article, "The Hams Join Up." That unsigned article touched upon some of the same subjects covered in the Dreher and Bouck article, i.e., American hams and their role in the coming war.

Both articles formed part of a prewar effort to avoid repetition of the U.S. government's WWI blanket prohibition of amateur radio operation. Now, for the coming conflict, organizations and individuals proactively sought to justify amateur radio for the useful roles it had always played, domestically and internationally, and would, hopefully, continue to play for the war's duration. It was the time to promote, educate, inform and reinforce ham radio's positive public image.

To that end the article focused on three organizations: Amateur Radio Emergency Service (A.R.E.S.), Naval Communication Reserve (N.C.R.), Army Amateur Radio Service (A.A.R.S.), and two individuals: Mrs. Kay Kibling, W2HXQ, and aviator Ruth Nichols.

The emphasis was on training, the prime mover of the A.R.E.S. and A.A.R.S. "When the present war began, officials in England, Canada and Australia discovered that hardly more than five percent of the radio amateurs in those countries were qualified to pass the code-work test required for military radio men. By stressing the training of hams in the United States, the Government is building up a reserve upon which it can draw in time of need." The A.A.R.S. net met weekly, Sunday, for an hour.

"lightning-fast auxiliary system"

Some "20,000 amateur short-wave stations" across the U.S. were organized into nets. They formed a "lightning-fast auxiliary system of special value in flashing word of aerial raiders and in directing the activity in communities under attack." These nets were organized under the auspices of the American Radio Relay League's 600 emergency coordinators.

Continued - "The Hams Join Up" on Page 7

Inside This Issue...

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"Was it Better Than Sex?"

John Swartz, WA9AQN

Lee Davis, WD9IDS

One of the truly amazing features of our amateur radio world is that it attracts people of such varied backgrounds, interests, talents and abilities. Would it be anywhere near as much fun if we were all electrical engineers, or accountants, or whatever? In what other activity would you find the range of personalities we have as companions on the airwaves just by twisting the dials of our transceivers? Over the history of our hobby our numbers have included King Hussein of Jordan, Arthur Godfrey, Chet Atkins, General Curtis LeMay, Joe Taylor, Yuri Gagarin, Walter Cronkite, Barry Goldwater, the list goes on and on. The amateur bands are full of many more otherwise anonymous or less well known personalities of equally diverse talents and interests who all have one thing in common a love of the magic we have found in the airwaves.

One of the lesser known of these stars is a local fellow in central Illinois who has recently retired from a long career in meteorology. I recently spent some time with him to ask the age-old question that inevitably comes up in our avocation.

"…a love of the magic…"

His name is Lee Davis. His amateur radio callsign is WD9IDS. Here's what he had to say.

Me: Lee, you recently retired from a long career in meteorology. How did that start?

Lee: Well, John, it's funny, but I didn't start out to be a meteorologist. I really was a broadcaster who just happened to drift into meteorology.

Me: Tell me about that.

Lee: Well, I've been interested in meteorology since I was a kid, I guess a lot of us were to some extent. But I started in broadcasting after high school graduation in 1964. I worked at a lot of radio stations over the next 30 years before getting a part-time job as a weathercaster in 1994.

Me: There's been a lot of rain and snow over that time. How did you catch up on how it all gets here?

Lee: You're right, I did need to learn how it all works so I enrolled at Mississippi State University, getting through the courses I needed. I then became a full time television meteorologist in 1997. It just seems like yesterday, but I spent 19 years at the same TV station and retired as chief meteorologist in March 2013. It was a pretty good gig and I enjoyed it a lot. Ask me about the weather.

Me: Wow, Lee, that is fascinating, but we're really here to talk about amateur radio, so let's shift to the important stuff. You've been a licensed amateur for many years. When did you start?

Lee: Like a lot of us in the early baby boomer era, I started out as a short wave listener. Some may even remember when *Popular Electronics* magazine issued "call signs" to SWLs and I received mine, WPE9ERO, in the early 60s.

Me: I forgot about those, I had one, too . . .

Lee: It didn't take long and I got my Novice as WN9HET in March of 1963. That was when the Novice couldn't be renewed.

Me: Yeah, it was up or out . . .

Lee: Then later the FCC changed that and I got my second Novice in 1972 as WN9LJI. I wasn't able to get on the air much, so I didn't get my code speed up. Finally, in 1977, I got my current callsign as a Novice and got on the air. In a year I upgraded to general as WD9IDS.

Me: I wonder if you could go back and claim the old WA9HET as a vanity call? Isn't that what you would have had if you had upgraded then?

Lee: Probably could . . . I'm pretty attached to IDS at this point, though.

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Me: Do you ever go out and chase bad weather? I mean, like, when you were in the school in Mississippi, did you ever get a chance to go out in one of those planes that flies into hurricanes?

Lee: No, but I have had a really serious interest in aviation since I was in high school. I even took the ground school course, and eventually after college graduation, when I had some cash, I took flying lessons and got my license.

Me: Wow, you mean you're also a licensed pilot?

Lee: I am, although I haven't been flying much in recent years. Now that I have more time, I think I'll get back at it again. I just fly for fun, on nice days. I don't think I'm going to fly into the eye of a hurricane, though! I've gotten smarter as I've gotten older.

Me: How long have you been flying?

Lee: I started taking lessons in November of 1969 and got my private pilot license on June 18, 1970.

Me: Lee, that's a date to remember, like when the FCC issued you your first Novice ticket, but let's get back to the main subject. Have you ever operated aeronautical mobile?

Lee: Well, as a pilot you really need to pay attention to what you're doing, full-time. None of this distracted driving stuff. Seriously. So I've not, but from the ground I worked a guy who was aeronautical mobile once on 2-meters with my HT.

Me: Have you had any close calls in the air?

Lee: No, not really, but it has been fun. I especially enjoyed doing some aerobatics in a buddy's Pitts Special S2A, single engine, open cockpit. That little plane only weighs 850 pounds; but it's powerful and is a highly responsive plane.

Me: Well, what was the single most exciting or dangerous thing that ever happened to you in an airplane?

Lee: Well, there was one pretty good one. Really. Being in media has afforded me a lot of opportunities. I've flown numerous Stearman aircraft, a T-6 Texan, L-39 jet trainer, but clearly the high point of it all was a ride in the back seat of the United States Navy Blue Angels' F/A 18 Hornet, Blue Angel 7.

Blue Angels
Photo: WA9KRL

Me: You're serious?

Lee: Yep! I got the opportunity when they offered it for media people in the area where the air show was being held.

Me: Man, that's every kid's dream! What happened?

"What happened?"

Lee: We took off, he accelerated to 175 knots, lifted off to about 50 feet, packed up the landing gear, then accelerated to 225 knots and stood that Hornet on its tail. That was about four and a half Gs for a second or so. I think we were probably gaining altitude at about ten thousand feet a minute. I've never seen such a sight.

Me: That's incredible.

Lee: Oh, it gets better. He flew down to a military operations area down around the Illinois River for practice. Then he showed me the inside of a few of the Blue Angels maneuvers. It was really something. We flew inverted, just hanging from the seat belt. Rolling out, he accelerated to about 650 miles per hour. He flew a maximum angle of attack loop and it was during that one that he pulled more than six Gs. Even though they had prepped me on how to stay alert, I couldn't keep the blood in my head and I took a little 15 second nap. Out cold. They gave me a videotape of that. He kept chuckling and saying, "You're ok… you're ok." Sure. All my blood was in my feet! When I got out of that plane I was soaking wet. I think I might have been a little pale. What a ride!

Me: Wow, that is phenomenal. Lee, I know we are running out of time. That incredible adventure leaves me almost speechless, but there is really just one more question I have just got to ask about that . . . . ■

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Back to the Old Days

Teleprinter Exchange on a PC

Nico de Jong, OZ1BMC

Some time ago, the Danish IT Museum received some teleprinters from various sources.

Up to the 1980s, teleprinters were the preferred way of communication between many companies, as the communication happened instantaniously, even quicker then today's text messages. They were also used for sending telegrams between state-owned PTTs in various countries. For this purpose, there were various nets, one of them was called GENTEX, which connected the European post and telegraph offices, coastal radio stations and some commercial telegraph companies, like Commercial, Western Union, etc.

My experience is from the Dutch PTT, where I was a teleprinter operator in The Hague. The photo above shows one of the teleprinter rooms in 1962.

Back to the Data Museum

As there were 6-7 teleprinters "in stock" in various states of (un)usability, I proposed the creation of an exchange, so we could show the unwashed what a telegraph office looked like before the introduction of fax and e-mail.

Well, I found out that you should never stand out from the crowd, as I was immediately selected to do that project. So, the hunt for useable parts started. There was an abundance of teleprinters of various types (speed, character set, parity), so to have them communicate, I would need some software to iron out incompatibilities. This was not a major problem, as I had been a programmer since 1969, and had written Pascal and Delphi programs since 1986.

The next job was to find out how to interface to a PC. From my radio amateur days, I knew I would need a current loop, with anything from 20 to 80 mA, depending on the printer. This would need to be interfaced to a serial interface, so the printer could be connected to the COM port of a PC. In order to set up an exchange, an adapter with eight COM ports would be nice, so we could accommodate eight printers.

The interface I decided to use, was found at www.baudot.net (Thanks, Gill). However, as I would do the speed conversion, support various character sets, etc., through software, the microprocessor and associated hardware were not implemented. On the other hand, I needed functions for Connect, Disconnect and Local.

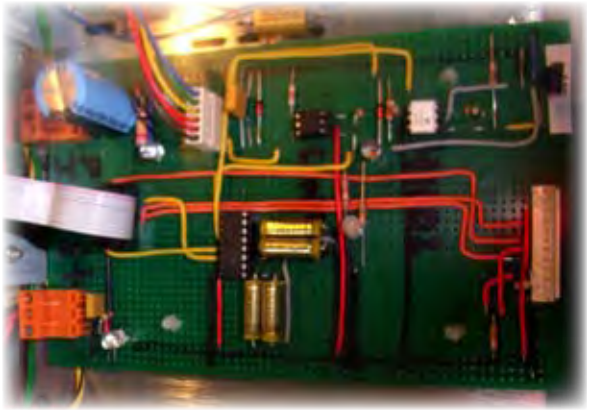
Connect is used for telling the software that I want to call somebody, so the proper routines can be started.

Disconnect does not need to be explained.

Local is a function used for punching paper tapes, and to prevent interrupts from callers while doing so.

These functions were accomplished by pulling some pins on the output connector low or high.

Eventually this resulted in the board, shown below:



The 3-pin connector at the left is for +5 volt, the one at the top (behind the blue capacitor) is for the 120V I use for current loop. The 6-pin connect in middle connects to a telephone jack, for connection to the printer, and the 12 pin connector at the right connects to the three buttons I talked about just before.

The 5.25" form factor enclosure I used comes from a SCSI streamer.

So, after some hard work, I had four printers running.

For those who want to build something along those lines: the various parts are still available from Mouser in the USA and various sources in the EU.

Now to the Software

Ideally, everything could be driven by interrupts, but I chose to use a method I learned many years ago, while programming a mini bank system. It was called "states

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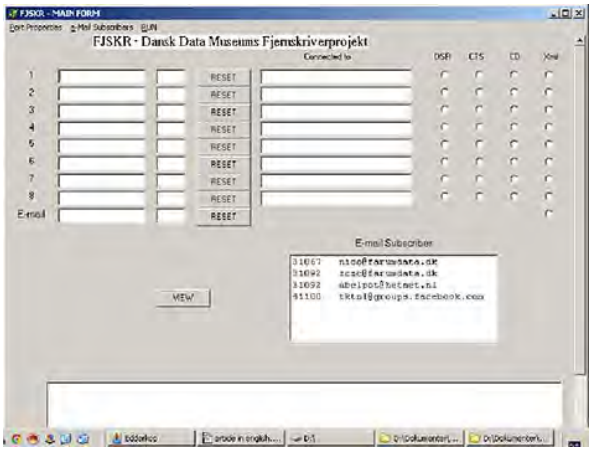
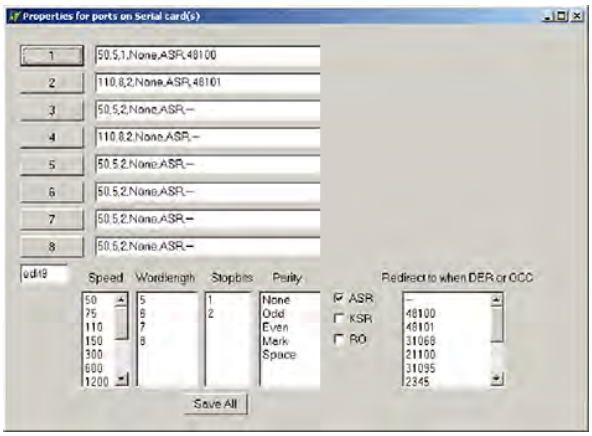
and screens." The principle is that when you get into a certain state (e.g., when dialling a number), you stay in that state until something specific happens, e.g., pressing disconnect or pressing the + sign to indicate that you finished entering the subscriber's number. State changes are accomplished through the use of return codes.

The programs start screen looks like this.



The first thing to do, is to define the port properties.



In this case, printer 1 runs at 50 Baud, 5 data bits, 1 stop bit, no parity, it is an ASR (meaning it can run off prepunched tapes), and the subscriber number is 48100.

In case of disturbance, out of service, etc., telegrams can be redirected to some other subscriber (not yet fully implemented).

When that is done, subscriber numbers can be linked to e-mail adresses.

Having done all this, it's time to get productive.

Yellow means the printer is either in Local state or switched off. In either case, we cannot talk to it.

Red means the COM port is not available.

Green means go ahead.

The next column gives the state a printer is in; 00 is "communicating," 20 means "ready, I am waiting for action," 40 means "Local – I'm punching tapes," 99 is the graveyard state. The only way out of this state, is to press RESET. As in all software, errors might occur, so there is a RESET button, re-initiating the printer and its routines. It should end up in state 20.

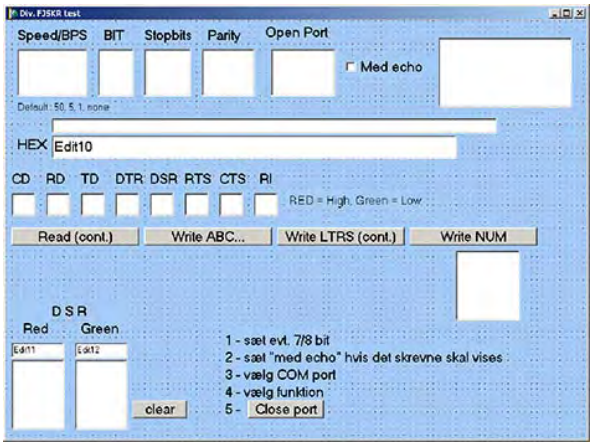
Connected to shows who is talking to whom.

The DSR CTR and CD buttons show the physical state of the COM port. As pressing Connect, Disconnect and Local physically affects the COM port, you can in fact see here which buttons are being pressed. More on that later.

Message ident shows a number of predefined messages. A message can be selected and either be shown, or sent to a subscriber. The right hand table shows which subscriber number is connected to which e-mail address. It goes without saying, that you cannot specify the same subscriber number for defining a teleprinter AND an e-mail address.

One thing remains to be discussed, testing a box and the teleprinter.

A very simple program has been developed for testing the connections and the switch box. The main (and only) screen is here.



When the program is run, values will be shown in Speed, BIT, etc., so you can select the parameters you need. When a port has been selected, you can see the state of the Port (CD, RD), which means you can test whether the buttons function correctly.

When pressing "Read (cont.)", you will continuously read from the keyboard. Pressing "Write ABC..." will generate a message like "ABCDEFG 12345."

So, now you can show young people that text messages are not the fastest way to communicate something, just show them this system, preferably with printers in different rooms.

Have fun! ■

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Custom QSLs by Jeff Murray, K1NSS

By the Creator of Dashtoons

"I've been drawing cartoons and playing radio since I was a kid and I'm too OM to change."

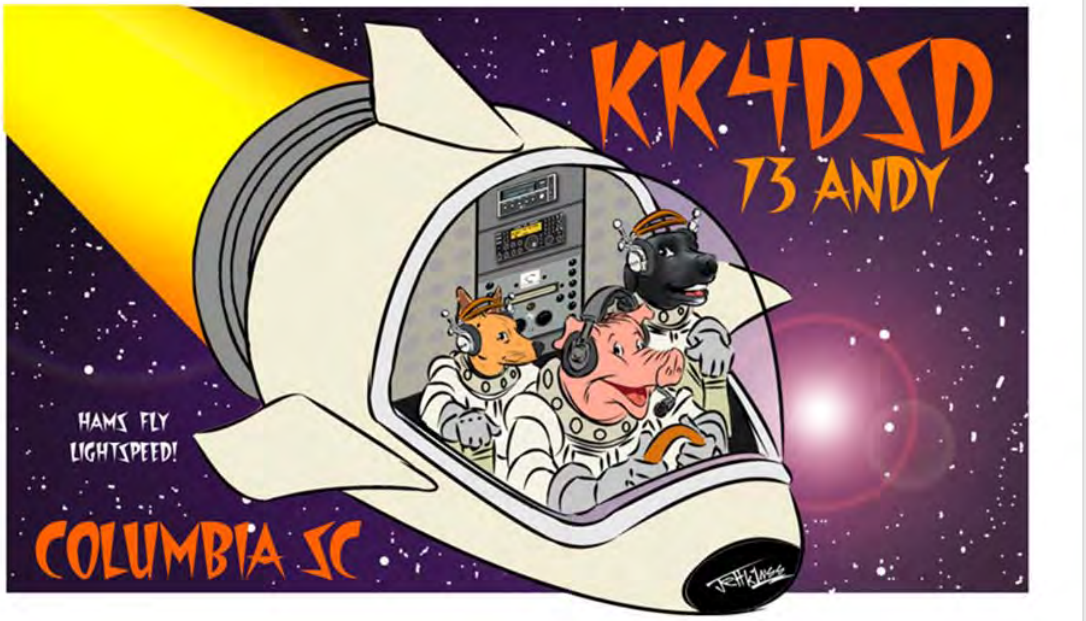
So says Jeff Murray, aka Jeff, K1NSS, creator of Dashtoons webcomic and now designer of custom QSL cards.

This adorably obstinate Old Man works out of his *Studio Shack of Solitude* nestled in New York's Catskill Mountains. Jeff draws on ham experience beginning in the early 1960s as WN2/WB2EXW farther upstate.

A student of the funnies since childhood, Jeff feverishly copied *Mad Magazine* artists and learned to lightning draw Fred Flintstone's head on bar napkins to impress women. During the 1980s, while wisely keeping his day job as an aerospace process engineering support tech, he drew non-ham cartoons for a bunch of big city alternative papers including the *New York Press,* Baltimore and D.C. *City Paper*s and the *San Diego Reader,* plus editorial cartoons for a chain of suburban Boston weeklies.

Working closely with clients, Jeff helps bring their ham style to life as printer-ready, high-resolution digital art.

Continued - Custom QSLs on Page 8



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Continued - "The Hams Join Up" from Page 1

Military Affiliates

Once 6,000 hams strong, the Navy Communications Reserve had recently ended its amateur nets "because virtually all its members had been called to active service." However, through this period, the still active 2,500-member Army Amateur Radio System was expanding its role. During the summer of 1941, unlike previous summers over its 15-year existence, A.A.R.S. nets continued throughout the season and did not observe its usual hiatus commencing the last Monday of May. Rather, A.A.R.S. "members stayed at their keys… transmitting, free, thousands of messages to men in Army camps…."

Thanks to the A.A.R.S.'s emphasis on training with "key work and the use of the radio telephone" one east coast ham had "attained the amazing mark of 65 words a minute when receiving text matter sent by international code."

A.A.R.S. membership was open to any licensed amateur radio operator "who takes part in its regular drills and is able to send and receive 15 words a minute…." Practice sessions were held seven days a week with master station WLM in Washington, D.C. occasionally serving as net control.

WARA

The 100 members of the Westchester Amateur Radio Association (WARA), founded in 1935, operated what was designated, "One of the most complete amateur set-ups in the country…" WARA members "spend part of every Sunday rehearsing for wartime and peacetime emergencies."

According to the February 1942 *QST* article, "Westchester County's Hams Are Prepared," in May 1941 WARA "undertook to investigate the possibilities of ham radio as an aid in local civilian defense." Those members with portable sets were occupied with spotting aircraft; watching out for "imaginary fifth columnists"; stationed at the Kensico Dam, 15 miles north of New York City; and positioned at other strategic and sensitive sites. Those working from their home stations relayed messages to "fire departments, police headquarters, hospitals, and Red Cross stations where other amateurs are standing by to receive them."

Following the outbreak of war on December 7, 1941 "the name 'Westchester Amateur Radio Association' has been suspended 'for the duration.'" The new organization was named the Westchester Defense Volunteers, Radio Communications Unit.

"distinctly laudatory"

Kay Kibling, W2HXQ

WARA member Kay Kibling, W2HXQ, of Rye, N.Y., organized and administered training courses for amateurs and non-amateurs. Described as "one of the country's foremost radio hams," Mrs. Kibling explained the "term 'ham' as applied to amateur radio operators is distinctly laudatory and unlike the same term applied to actors." She was a member of the "U.S. Army amateur radio system of the Second Corps area" and was trained in "army procedure and is amateur emergency coordinator for Westchester county." At her home she conducted classes for amateur radio operators and planned "to give similar instructions in hamlets, villages and cities of all sizes." In 1941, thirteen women earned emergency radio proficiency certificates at her recent series of classes.

She hoped to "prepare amateur operators to be ready to fill in any emergency during which the normal communications are disrupted." Mrs. Kibling believed that, "Such preparedness… is vital to a well rounded national defense program." Providing a personal example of such efforts she described her activities during the hurricane of 1938 where she "handled 700 messages, aiding the Coast Guard, the Red Cross and local doctors." She obtained "[f]or an ailing 14-year-old youngster… badly needed blood donors." She emphasized that amateur radio was "an invaluable aid to the authorities in times of distress and a vital backstop to the nation's communications system."

Relief Wings

Ruth Nichols, famed record-breaking aviator, established Relief Wings* "an [air ambulance] organization of amateur airplane pilots" in 1939. During Relief Wings training flights, where they practiced "the best methods for aiding stricken communities," the pilots liaised with ground-based amateur radio operators "by means of small two-way short-wave sets." In December 1941 Relief Wings merged with the newly founded Civil Air Patrol.

(*Incorrectly cited as "Mercy Wings" in the *Popular Science* article.)

Continued - "The Hams Join Up" on Page 8

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Continued - Custom QSLs from Page 6

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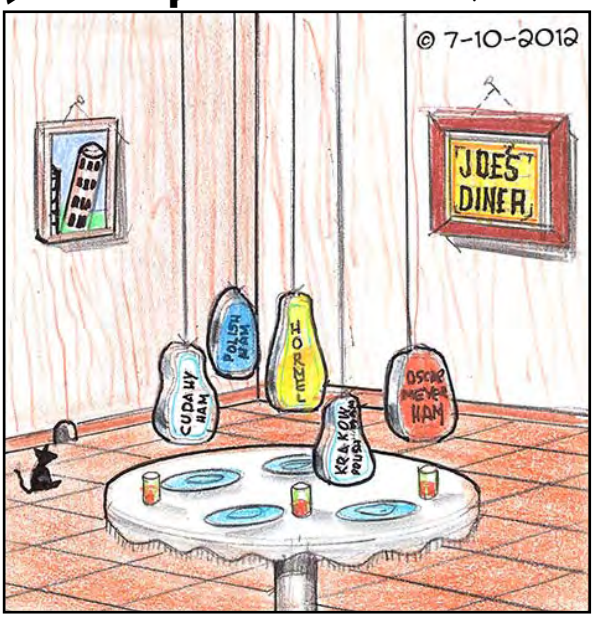
http://k9ya.org/write_for_us.htm

Ham Quips

DICK SYLVAN, W9CBT



HAMS HANGING OUT AT A RESTAURANT

Continued - "The Hams Join Up" from Page 7

Chicago Daily Tribune
August 13, 1942
Women in War Work . . . .
Supplementing a news item describing a new cadre of British "flying nurses": "This service is of particular interest to those Americans who know about Relief Wings, Inc., which Ruth Nichols of Rye, N.Y. has organized… [she] is convinced that air ambulance planes for immediate use in evacuating or transporting emergency and special patients by air is necessary here, and she has been working since a year and a half before the United States entered the war to promote this 'humanitarian air service.'" Amongst the list of Chicago area socialite sponsors of Ms. Nichols' organization was Thorne Donnelley, W9PZ, who in 1933 had thrown a daylong ham fete at his Lake Bluff, Illinois estate to complement Chicago's Century of Progress World's Fair and concurrent ARRL convention. (See: *K9YA Telegraph*, August 2011)

1939 New York World's Fair

In 1939 Kay Kibling served as "Secretary, Chief Hostess and custodian of the W2USA license" for the W2USA Radio Club station located at the New York World's Fair. At W2USA she and Dan Lindsay, W2PL, "were amongst the most active" operators at that station. Photographs accompanying the July 1967 *73* article, "World's Fair–1939," describing the World's Fair station picture her manning the 80-meter CW rig (supplied by the Kenyon Transformer Company) and a National receiver and the 20-meter station, equipped with a National HRO receiver and "glass-enclosed" National NC-600 transmitter.

The "Forty Traffic System" at W2USA originated thousands of the always-popular sent-from-a-world's-fair-radiograms where Mrs. Kibling was kept busy transmitting visitors' messages. (See: *K9YA Telegraph*, October 2009) ■

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