

K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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U.S. Antarctic Service Expedition

Amateur Radio at the South Pole, 1939-1941, Part I

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

The United States Antarctic Service (USAS) was established by an act of Congress in June 1939. Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, whose decades long experience at the North and South Poles ideally suited him for the position, was selected to

head the new government agency. In brief:

President Roosevelt to the Commanding Officer of the United States Antarctic Service (Byrd)

WASHINGTON, November 25, 1939.

MY DEAR ADMIRAL BYRD:

1. By the Second Deficiency Appropriation Act, Fiscal Year 1939, approved May 2, 1939, and the Urgent Deficiency and Supplemental Appropriation Act, Fiscal Years 1939 and 1940, approved June 30, 1939, the Congress has made available to the Department of the Interior, under the heading "Expenses, Division of Territories and Island Possessions", a total of \$350,000 for an "investigation and survey of natural resources of the land and sea areas of the Antarctic regions".

USAS's first action was the 1939-1941 U.S. Antarctic Service Expedition. Financed with a government appropriation of \$350,000 (contemporary opportunity cost of that project is \$11,800,000 [<http://www.measuringworth.com>]) and contributions from institutions and individuals, the expedition's goals were both scientific and territorial. Scientific studies encompassed geology, hydrology,

biology, glaciology, meteorology, magnetism and astronomy. Territorial aims included "delineation of the (Antarctic) continental coast between meridians 72° and 148° west" and "to consolidate previous discoveries made in Marie Byrd Land, James W. Ellsworth Land, and Hearst Land by Byrd, Ellsworth, and Wilkins, respectively." Also, to "place Heard Island and the Ellsworth and Byrd Lands under U.S. jurisdiction, should that be deemed necessary."

That was for public consumption, not revealed to the public, however, its unstated goals were to lay claim to large tracts of the South Pole for colonization, exploitation of natural resources and strategic military purposes. Untold was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's directive to Admiral Byrd, "Members of the service may take appropriate steps such as dropping written claims from airplanes, depositing such claims in cairns, et cetera,

which might assist in supporting a sovereignty claim by the United States Government. Careful records shall be kept.... No public announcements of such act shall, however, be made." Records in the form of "... film, in writing, even in paintings." were promoted with the caveat that "...no one outside the Antarctic Service must gain access to such materials."

*"...no one...
must gain
access..."*

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Dear Hiram

Dayton Hamvention®

Bob Cashdollar, NR8U



Fritz, WD8E

Well, we survived another Dayton Hamvention®. This year reminded me of years past when the hamfest was held late in the month of April. The weather was in a state of constant flux. Friday when Francis “Fritz” Tender, WD8E, and I arrived, it was almost Fall, cold with a steady wind from the west. In the afternoon the skies turned a bit black and the wind and rain blew through the flea market.

But it didn’t seem to stop anybody from searching out that “must have” item. I saw a lot of people hurrying out of the flea market area clutching something large in their arms. To me, the flea market seemed larger than I remembered from years past. The rows were pretty much filled in all the way to the ends.

Several of our ham friends were first time sellers in the flea market. They were amazed how fast they sold just about everything they brought by the close of the flea market on Friday evening. I saw them inside Saturday and asked, “Who is watching the store?” Their reply was there was nothing left “to watch.”

Saturday really turned into a “Dayton of old” day when during the day it rained, the wind blew, and according to some accounts flea market vendors and patrons were hit by hail.

Fritz and I spent most of Friday and Saturday inside checking out some of the forums and your ARRL area. As usual, the area around the League was packed with people checking out the League’s various offerings.

A lot of the League officers were in evidence during the times we visited the their area. Most notable was Kay Craigie, N3KN, your president of the League who looked like she was having a good time shaking hands and talking with the visitors.

The League, in honor of the 100th anniversary of its founding, was handing out gold colored commemorative coins to most everybody who visited the League area. I mentioned to Fritz that these coins were probably going to show up on eBay® on Monday. It was Tuesday before someone was selling one for \$25.00 and calling it “rare.”

On Saturday, I went to the contest forum and as usual had to sit on the floor. As the ham population grows older, I wonder if this limits some people from attending the more popular forums.

While I was walking around inside, I noticed a lot of small individual booths were sitting empty. I mentioned this to Fritz and he agreed there seemed to be areas where there were small booths that were empty.

Friday night we had a nice dinner at an Outback steak house with members of the Satern group. Fritz is the Monday net control operator for the Satern net on 20-meters.

On Saturday night, we met some hams from our hometown area at a Texas Roadhouse and spent a nice evening talking about past hamfests and contest operating.

As usual at the Hamvention® anyplace you went in the evening you had to wait a while before being seated. But to the credit of both places, they handled the crowds well.

“Dayton of old”



Salvation Army Booth Inside Hara Arena

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The Mighty Little Rockmite XCVR

Darron Sanchez, WA5TCZ

Let me tell you a story about *my* Rockmite transceiver. I bet your story is just about the same as mine, except the ending.

Originally available from Dave Benson, K1SWL, of Small Wonder Labs, Rockmite kits are now offered by Rex Harper, W1REX (<http://www.qrpme.com/>). The rigs are available for 80-, 40-, 30- and 20-meters.

My Rockmite

It was a joy to receive my easy to build and hassle-free Rockmite from Small Wonder Labs. The building instructions are great and the features the completed rig offers are amazing for a low-cost radio.

- RF output 1/2 watt at 12 volts
- Automatic offset, reversible
- Built-in Iambic keyer, 5-40wpm with a 700 Hz sidetone
- Two frequencies from a single crystal at the touch of a button

I wonder if you did the same thing I did after building my radio, worked five or six stations at 1/2 watt and put it on the shelf; that was about six years ago. Every time I sat down to do some CW I would see the little rig sitting there. It finally got the best of me, so on 11/09/2012 I dusted it off and powered it up. Wonder of wonders, it still worked.

I made up my mind that the time had come to really wring this thing out and see what it was made of. On 20-meters my Rockmite has a 14.060 crystal, with a reverse sideband of 14.059.5. I started out slow, at first running 1/2 watt.

Using my Cushcraft three-element beam, at 60 feet and fed with HeliAx®, my confidence with the little rig skyrocketed after I worked 91 stateside stations. Wow, that's pretty good QRPp.

I figured let's drop the power and see what happens. Here's what I achieved.

- 300 milliwatts, four stations
- 200 milliwatts, eight stations

- 100 milliwatts, one station
- 50 milliwatts, 18 stations
- 40 milliwatts, five stations
- 30 milliwatts, three stations
- 20 milliwatts, two stations
- 10 milliwatts, two stations

Running QRPp

With one milliwatt, an amazing story. During a QSO with Gary, N2ESE, in Stanhope, N.J., a distance of 1,160 miles from my Greenwell Springs, La. QTH, we started at 30 milliwatts. Gary asked how low could I go and I told him one mW.

He said try it and then stated he was copying enough to make a valid QSO. Wow, one milliwatt, made my day, month, and year. Thanks Gary. I had no

idea I could make a valid QSO at one mW—the beam did all the work. How much power did the antenna radiate after feedline and SWR losses?

I found it takes some time to make contacts at QRPp power levels. On 20-meters, where I have made all of my contacts, what seems to work is getting on around 5 pm local time. There is

always more activity on the bands when people get home from work and sit down at their rigs. If you try to time your activity around the gray line this helps a great deal.

You can also listen for your signals on the reverse beacon network, see which stations are receiving you, and point your beam in their direction. The time of year is also a factor; I think winter months, when QRN levels are lower, are better for QRPp.

I can't wait to see what the winter months bring to improve conditions. All this helps, but time and determination are what pays off.



Rockmite XCVRs

“Wow, that's pretty good QRPp.”

CONTINUED - MIGHTY LITTLE ROCKMITE ON PAGE 6



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You're Never Too Old

Part II

Scott Laughlin, N7NET



“Are he and Marjorie coming by here?” Charlie asked.

“Yes, he and Marjorie have a thirty-day leave and they want to spend some time with us.”

“That will be nice. He’s been away his entire adult life,” complained Charlie.

Sandra called Mike that afternoon and alerted him that his dad was at loose ends since being forced out at the mill. Life went on. One day merged into the next, and before Charlie realized it Monday

was upon them, and Mike was calling from Boise, Idaho. They’d bought a new car in Virginia and had spent several days sightseeing while motoring from the Atlantic to the Pacific. They would arrive the following morning. True to his word the two of them arrived before ten o’clock the following day.

A couple of hours after their arrival, and the initial excitement had faded somewhat, Mike and Charlie strolled out toward the barn.

“Mom said you retired from the mill.”

“It was their idea, not mine. They gave me two months to prepare before turning me out to pasture. I didn’t own a bolt in the place. What’s to prepare?”

Mike detected the bitterness in his father’s voice. “So what are you doing with your time?”

“Oh, lots of things. I watch a little television and I read the daily newspaper. That keeps me pretty busy. We thought about getting a motorhome, or taking a trip, or even renting motel rooms along the way. But it seems like the preparation for a trip is more bother than we care for. It’s easier to stay home.”

“And?”

“We kind of like our creature comforts. You know, up at seven, a cup of coffee with the morning paper.

A nap in the afternoon. Maybe watch a movie in the evening on Netflix.

“How about your old mill friends. Are any of them still around?”

“Not really. Most of them moved away to live with their kids. Some even died.”

“You and I were CB’ers back in the sixties. You remember?”

“Yes, I do,” Charlie said, smiling as he thought about the old days and radio handles—Wedge, Fish Bone, Dog Breath, Dirty Hound Dog.

Have you ever thought about doing it again?”

“I have. I installed a CB up in the shop. You can see the antenna from here,” Charlie said, pointing to the vertical attached to the roof gable. “It’s a different group now. Lots of rotten language and such. I don’t even dare turn the thing on while your mother is

around. She doesn’t like to hear it at all.”

“That bad, huh?”

“Oh yeah.”

“We’ve talked about amateur radio before. Would you reconsider earning your ticket?”

“Oh, no. I’m not interested in that Morse code stuff. Besides, it’s too expensive.”

In spite of the reasons for not considering amateur radio, Charlie led the way into the shop. It was a room that had been framed off in the barn, probably an old horse stall at some earlier time. Charlie had framed it and finished it off with wood paneling purchased at wholesale price from the mill where he worked.

The floor was carpeted and two overstuffed chairs occupied a space on each side of a table on which sat his CB as well as a laptop.

“Dad, I see you have a computer.”

“Oh yeah, I use it mostly for the word processor. I do a little creative writing now and again. We have an Internet connection and your mom and I generally watch our movies in here.”

*“You and I were
CB’ers...”*



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“Really! I’m impressed. Then we could email back and forth.”

Charlie nodded. Email didn’t really interest him that much. It was kind of like reading a book—the person who wrote the message wasn’t really there; kind of like footprints in the snow. He switched on the CB and dropped into one of the chairs while motioning Mike into the other one. The radio was silent, so Charlie rotated the channel selector until he came upon an individual calling himself Waterman. Waterman was discussing the drain field for his septic system. A couple of kids in a Dodge Power Wagon had done some four-wheeling behind his house and crushed enough of his drain tiles that his toilet was backing up. He paused, and then called them some colorful names while the other party laughed.

“See? They didn’t do that kind of stuff when you were a kid and we had a CB going,” said Charlie.

“What else do you and Mom do together?” Mike asked, trying to figure a way to reintroduce amateur radio.

“Well, we bought your mom a Kindle E-book a few months ago. She gets on line and downloads her favorite books. She discovered a lot of novels set in the Amish communities and quilting. You know your mom has always quilted. But what attracts her even more than the quilting is that the authors don’t use colored language. That’s real important to her.”

Mike decided there wasn’t any way of easing his dad into the amateur radio world. He was just going to have to broach it and see where it went.

“When we talked about amateur radio a few years ago a person was required to copy thirteen words per minute to get a General Class ticket. It’s not that way anymore, Dad. Now you only need to copy five.”

“That’s interesting Mike, but don’t you think I’m a little old for even five words?”

“You are never too old, Dad. Never.”

Charlie studied Mike’s face for a moment, then his eyes dropped back to the CB transceiver. “That’s almost doable, isn’t it?”

“It IS doable.”

“So what’s the advantage of amateur radio over CB?”

“Well, you can talk to folks further away and meet more people. The amateur world polices itself, as far

as the language and rules go. And there are radio nets kind of like CB used to be in the old days. They cover every subject under the sun—fishing, Bible study, airplanes, cars, gardening, you name it. Some nets meet every day. Others meet once each week. Above all it’s a place to make friends, friends who aren’t going to drop in while you’re taking a nap or eating dinner.”

“But there’s still this code thing. I don’t think it would be very much fun visiting with someone using code. It wouldn’t be worth the cost of a radio,” argued Charlie.

“You get your General license and you can use the microphone. And cost? Not a problem there either, Dad. I bought a used solid-state rig that does code as well as sideband. It was offered at a brother-in-law price and I couldn’t turn it down. If you’ll earn your license it’s yours to use and keep.”

Charlie was silent, mulling over this new turn of events. In a way, Mike’s offer was a golden opportunity. He was running short of things to fill his days. At the same time earning a radio license was going to involve a lot of work he wasn’t sure he could handle.

“You’re a ham, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I am, Dad.”

“Do you suppose that if I get this General license and I used that radio you

mentioned, we could visit back and forth, once in awhile, at your convenience, of course?”

“Absolutely, Dad. Without question. Before it’s time for me to head on to San Diego I’ll hang a wire antenna up for you. With your eighty acres of pasture and woods there won’t be any problems with neighbors squawking about radio interference.”

Charlie nodded. He didn’t say anything, but Mike could tell by his smile the answer was yes.

Mike wondered if his father would question the fact he had brought a study guide, tapes, and CDs after speaking with his mother on the phone. They were still in their wrappers. But his dad never questioned



“It IS doable.”



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CONTINUED - YOU’RE NEVER TOO OLD ON PAGE 6

QRPp is not easy, but it can be done. A lot of hams do QRPp with attic antennas—talk about a challenge.

To get to QRPp power levels with my Rockmites I drop the voltage to 9V—RF output will be 3 mW, add an attenuator to the antenna line to drop power output to 1 mW.

I built each Rockmite breadboard style on its own finished board. This way each transceiver can be used individually. The complete setup is built to hold the WM2 wattmeter, the Rockmites, and the Bencher paddle, as seen in the photo.

Rockmites Today

When I started this project I bought all my Rockmites from Dave Benson, K1SWL, at Small Wonder Labs. Dave was always helpful and did his best to make things work for your build. He has now retired and is no longer kitting. Small Wonder Labs is shut down, but Dave stated he would keep the Web site open for a year.

Thanks Dave for your help and devotion to the QRP community, I hope you have a long and enjoyable retirement.

Rex Harper of QRP ME, W1REX, worked a deal with Dave Benson to continue selling Rockmites.

Troubleshooting

I was having trouble with my 20-meter Rockmite and by chance found Chuck Carpenter, W5USJ, on the QRP-L reflector.

I sent him an e-mail telling him of my problem with the Rockmite 20; he replied, send it to me. Chuck has a thorough understanding of Rockmites. He can fix most we mess up. However, Chuck is retired and, at his discretion, accepts only a limited number of repairs. His fix-it prices are very reasonable. Thanks for your help, Chuck.

After finding out that Rex Harper of QRP-Me would continue the Rockmite line, I wanted to read the write-up on his Web page. I was surprised to find that Chuck Carpenter and Rex made changes to the Rockmite and changed the one surface mount component to an easy to solder chip. It seems the SM chip was troublesome for many hams. That's why Chuck has the know-how to fix the little transceivers; he knows them like the back of his hand.

I don't know where all of this is going, but I am having a great time chasing stations with low power. It truly is a challenge and you have to stick with it. When you make the longest contact the thrill is worth the effort.

Now, time to work some DX. ■

Sunday we debated on going to the hamfest location and decided we had seen and done everything we came to do and see. So, after a nice breakfast at the hotel we packed up and headed for home.

On the way home, we discussed the rise in value of the prizes the hamfest offered. Kenwood donated the top prize this year, the just introduced TS-990 listing at \$8,249. The number nine prize, the last listed, in the major prize category, came in at \$1,000 and was a StepperIR Antenna System. We both agreed that winning the top prize would get you a visit from the IRS as a "bonus."

Thankfully, for the 35th year in a row, no one called and told me I had won the top prize. ■

CONTINUED - YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD FROM PAGE 5

that. Before Mike and Marjorie set out for San Diego Charlie had earned his Technician license and then his General. As promised, Mike hung a G5RV antenna and ran the coax into Charlie's newly appointed radio shack.

"How are we going to find each other out there in the airwaves. Mike?"

"Tune in to the Maritime Net. It's at 14.300 MHz." I'll try to be there about one o'clock Pacific time each Saturday. I'll email you if I can't make it. When the NCS asks if you want to make a contact you tell him yes. He'll give you time and that's when you call me. If I'm there I'll respond and then we can change frequencies."

Several weeks passed before Mike had his station up. The following Saturday, after an email message, Charlie checked into the Maritime Net and asked for a contact and followed through with Mike's call.

Mike responded.

"Mike! Is that you?"

"Sure is, Dad. Let's move up ten."

Mile smiled, turned the frequency dial up ten as instructed and gave the radio a gentle pat. This is better than the old days, he muttered to himself before keying the transmitter. ■



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The Service Expedition (also known as Byrd's Third Antarctic Expedition or Little America III) was the first United States government (U.S. Navy, Departments of State, War, Interior and Treasury) financed expedition to Antarctica since Navy Lt. Charles Wilkes led the Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842. The Service Expedition commenced November 1939, departing from the Boston Navy Yard, and concluded May 1941.

Despite President Roosevelt's directive that "No public announcements of such act shall, however, be made", contemporary newspaper and magazine accounts, apparently uncensored, proclaimed the expedition would lead the first "attempt by any nation to establish a polar land claim on the basis of permanent settlement."

Byrd hoped "to claim for the United States all of the Marie Byrd Land and the adjoining James Ellsworth Land." Because the expedition planned to explore and "possibly claim" the Weddell Sea quadrant, that goal ran afoul of both Argentina and Great Britain who independently claimed the same area.

Chicago Daily Tribune
July 30, 1939
Hear Argentina Bids for Land in Antarctic Area
Opposed to Extension of Monroe Doctrine

U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull denied reports of Argentina's opposition to the United State's proposal to extend the Monroe Doctrine "into Antarctic Regions through a colonizing expedition this fall under Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd." Hull stated, "There have been no messages nor any communications nor notes of any kind between the two governments-and that is all I know thus far."

Unlike today's stance to maintain a pristine Antarctica, in 1939 the land mass was valued for its strategic location and as a base for whaling operations and future air transport. The South Pole was also prized for its "substantial deposits of coal, oil, copper, nickel and tin..." to be tapped, as needed, during an extended period of global warfare.

Chicago Daily Tribune
December 3, 1939
America Looks to Antarctic as Final Frontier
Expects Byrd Expedition to Stake Claim.

The U.S. was the only nation "represented at the south

pole which has not laid formal claim to the land areas there. If a declaration of possession is made, it must come from congress on the basis of recommendations of the present expedition."

To assist this major strategic directive, amateur radio was chosen "to carry the entire load of personal messages from members of the ice party." This decision differed from Byrd's second Antarctic expedition of 1933-1935, where commercial radio operator Mackay provided that service.

Neu-Schwabenland

Looking ahead to a time when it would be drawn into the wars in Europe and Asia, the U.S. effort was accelerated by the German Antarctic Expedition of 1938-1939. The German expedition commanded by Capt. Ritscher of the freighter/seaplane tender MS *Schwabenland* claimed "more than 200,000 square miles of the Antarctic, thus making it the first Nazi colony [*Neu-Schwabenland*] outside Europe."



Admiral Richard E. Byrd

"Neu-Schwabenland"

Angelica, N.Y. Advocate
August 24, 1939
Modern Pioneers Head for Antarctic, Hoping to Start New American Colony

Reporter Clyde Pearson, "And so for the next two years we'll hear lots about the Antarctic as the expedition's ships come and go, and as the magic of wireless brings your newspapers constant

reports of this unique land-staking junket into the ice-crust wilderness."

Expedition Vessels

U.S.M.S. *North Star* (WPG-59): Expedition support ship, wooden hull, 1,434 tons, 225 feet long with a 41-foot beam and a reinforced prow, displaced 2,200 tons. She was powered by one McIntosh Seymour Diesel engine, single propeller, 1,500 shp, and made 13 knots. Originally built in 1932 in Seattle, Washington for the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, she was re-commissioned in the U.S. Coast Guard and later the U.S. Navy. *North Star* was the last wooden ship in the U.S.C.G. and transported the Snow Cruiser. Captained by Lt. Comm. Isak Lystad.



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U.S.S. *Bear* (AG-29): Steam-powered (300 ihp) barkentine sealer, 703 tons, constructed 1874 in Greenock, Scotland with a six-inch thick wooden ice-breaking hull. Leased “on a dollar a year basis” by Byrd to the U.S. government, she was re-commissioned in the U.S. Navy in 1939. *Bear* transported Byrd’s Barkley-Grow seaplane; Lt. Comm. Richard H. Cruzen captain.

Dogs and Tanks

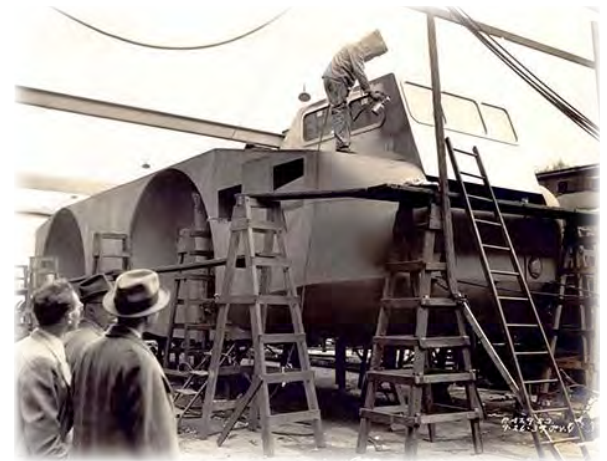
Dog teams: 130 “Sledge dogs drugged with opiates, each in its aluminum crate, [were] flown to points far inland. Motorized vehicles: one light artillery T3E4 tractor and six demilitarized light “Army tanks” (prototype A2M2 tanks “powered by an air-cooled radial aircraft engine... open top... no gun turret... extensions added to its treads”) were used to tow aircraft, haul personnel and freight and perform exploratory missions.

Snow Cruiser

Designed by Dr. Thomas C. Poulter of the Armour Institute of Technology (later the Illinois Institute of Technology) in Chicago and paid for by that same entity at a cost of \$150,000 (\$2,515,133 in 2013 dollars). On loan to the U.S. government, the diesel-electric behemoth was 55’ 8’ long and weighed, varying by account, between 37,000 and 45,000 pounds unladen.

Two 200-250 horsepower GE diesel-electric engines powered the electric motor in each of the Snow Cruiser’s independently steered four wheels shod

with 10-foot diameter Goodyear tires. The vehicle’s capacious interior housed a control room, machine shop, radio gear, galley and photo darkroom, bunkroom, spares storage area and engine room. Referred to as *Penguin I*, it was designed to carry upon its back a “five-seat cabin biplane.” Unfortunately, at its destination the already overweight Snow Cruiser was unable to transport the aircraft for any considerable or useful distance.



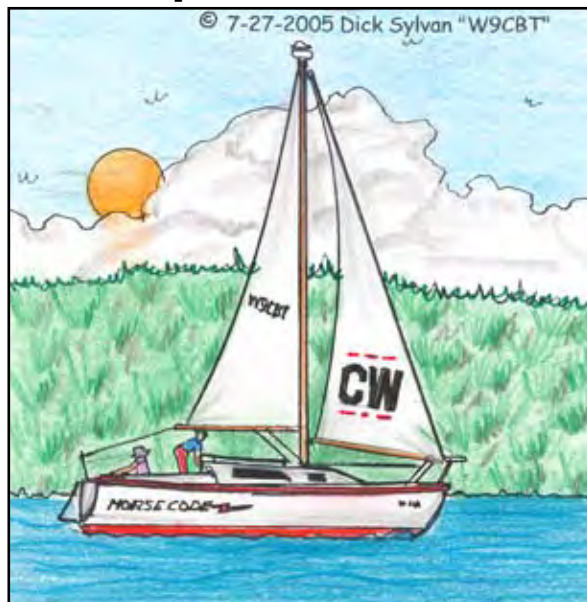
The Snow Cruiser’s cross-country, 18-day, 1,020-mile road trip to rendezvous with the *North Star* in Boston was beset with breakdowns. The problems first presented themselves beginning in Chicago during a 13-mile test drive on city streets. Departing the Pullman Works where it was assembled to the parking lot at Soldier Field on the city’s lakefront, the “automatic jack used to change the elevation of a wheel was blamed for the longest of several halts.”

This malfunction delayed its departure from Chicago and was the first of the problems that plagued the vehicle from Illinois to Massachusetts. For example, in traveling through central New York State on the Cherry Valley Turnpike (U.S. Rte. 20) and stymied by a 12’ 8” clearance railroad underpass, the 15’ high vehicle lowered itself on its hydraulic jacks to negotiate the passage. Another version, perhaps apocryphal, of this event records that a young boy’s suggestion to release air from the 10-foot tires dropped the behemoth enough to clear the underpass.

Approaching a hill in the same area the Snow Cruiser required the services of a large public works truck to tow it up the incline. “In the course of its journey through mountains, hairpin curves, and narrow streets, it had two accidents and caused the largest traffic jam in history when 70,000 cars were backed up for 90 miles outside Boston, their drivers agog and furious, as the mammoth vehicle was given the right of way.” ■

Ham Quips

DICK SYLVAN, W9CBT



ANTIQUATED TECHNOLOGIES?



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