

VWOA NEWSLETTER

Email Issue #19

2006



Left to Right: Ann & Alan Ehrlich, Jolanda Kintzer and Bernie Flatow



Left to Right: Jules Sackman, Ethel Johnson, Valentina Siderenko & John Chooljian



Left to Right Diana Eigen, Mary Ann & Bob Marzen, Wendell Benson and Frank Cassidy

Alan Ehrlich, VWOA President plans for the VWOA Business Luncheon for Saturday, 1 PM November 4, 2006 at the Seamen's Church Institute in Manhattan.

We are giving all our Metropolitan Area Members plenty of time to arrange their schedules and firm up their calendars, so that they can attend this meeting and show their support for VWOA.

Our 2006 Awards Luncheon held in New Jersey enabled several VWOA Members from New Jersey and Pennsylvania to attend for the first time and enjoy the company of other VWOA friends and their invited guests.

Here are a few photos received from Rick & Donna Kenney on the Day of the 2006 Awards Luncheon.

Tom St John-Coleman's Memories of Wireless as written to Edward F. Pleuler Jr., former Secretary of VWOA

As a schoolboy, I lived on the west bank of the River Mersey from where I could look across to the long line of Liverpool docks and watch the shipping. I hoped I would follow many of my friends and go to sea.

My Aunt gave me a toy telegraph key with code embossed on its bakelite base. War came and I was evacuated to the North Wales coast. I became interested in electricity and taught myself International Morse, a few letters every week, on my way to and from school.

Back home in 1944, I borrowed Karl Baaralag's "SOS – Radio Rescues at Sea" from my local library. I took it to heart. There was no doubt, after that, what my future profession would be. I read about heroes like Arthur Finch, assistant steward of the unlucky freighter "Tashmoo" in 1928, whose resourcefulness in resuscitating his ship's burnt-out radio gear earned him a testimonial scroll of the Veteran Wireless Operators Association.

Straight after school I was a cadet at The Wireless College, Colwyn Bay, trained by

its Chief Telegraphy Instructor H. A. ("Tubby") Nelson.

After being in the RAF, going to sea with the Marconi Company and the Union-Castle Line and working for Reuter's News Agency – with a short spell in between as a Flight Radio Officer – I ended up where I'd decided the most intensive wireless operating was: The Coast Wireless Service of the British Post Office.

At Anglesey Radio GLV on 2 December 1966, I push-biked to work in near hurricane winds that had been roaring across the island all night and were to persist all day. I confess, my mouth went dry when one of the two night staff from whom I took over said "Let me put you in the picture . . ." They had become involved in no less than four simultaneous distress and urgency cases which were still in full swing. The night complement of two men in such a station would be stretched by a single distress. More so, with two cases. But four . . . !

There was no let-up all that day for those of us on duty. Three of the casualties involved were the British "Grit", the United Arab Republic "Helwan" and the Greek "Nafsiporos". The name of the fourth has vanished from my mind. All were able to receive assistance.

A few days later the station had a call from Colwyn Bay where, in retirement, Tubby Nelson had listened on his personal communication receiver throughout December 2nd, becoming aware that two of us who manned 500 kHz telegraphy and 2182 kHz telephony turn-about during that time had been his personal trainees, more than twenty years before. His "Well Done" over the phone was all we needed.

All my years in our profession, I didn't imagine that I would one day be admitted to membership of the VWOA. When it happened, in January 1995, it was the proudest moment in a career I have never regretted choosing.

The most important learning experience I encountered in operating was, I think, the primacy of listening over transmitting, together with the discipline – initially taught me by a Land's End (GLD) veteran – of finishing one task as far as possible before going on the next – especially in a highly-charged situation such as distress with a minimum of staff.

Two of the most significant changes in today's methods of Wireless communication, in my opinion, are the loss of human insight and responsibility for particular localities and their activities as a result of centralised control. Also, high-speed data communication and near saturation speech coverage have tended to discourage the economy of expression which is the essence of manual telegraphy.

Information overload is a problem which an intervening communications specialist can help to control.

To a person wishing to become a communicator in code or voice, I would offer the advice that brevity and accuracy are operationally more desirable than quantity and speed.

Tom St John-Coleman

Braintree, Essex, England CM7 2LU

28 July 1997

VWOA Life Member

Tom St John-Coleman had also written to Ed Pleuler when he first joined VWOA and his letter was published in the **SPRING VWOA NEWS LETTER 1995**. I found the subject interesting and hope you pre 1995 Members and New VWOA Members do also. The Article is republished in its entirety.

Comments from Ed Pleuler in 1995:

"The following was written by one of our newer Member, Tom St. John-Coleman. Not only did he work at DKA - GLD — GLV and GCC at one time, he later served as Ass't Superintendent and Superintendent of medium and short range Coast Stations Operational Planning in the 80's."

THE BRITISH COAST YESTERDAY, TODAY – TOMORROW?

“How do you see the future of our coast stations?” The question was put to the writer at a Post Office (later British Telecom) promotions Board in 1970. “I see it as a network of self-contained units, each of which can communicate with the others as well as with ships” — was the sort of thing I said. “I think it is something we ought to hold on to for good.

From the reactions on the interviewers’ faces, this was not the answer they’d hoped for. Perhaps my reply showed better ideas of service than of the economics to finance it. “Centralisation” was the word in the minds of those who interviewed me that day. In just over a decade their thoughts turned in plans.

When I attended that promotion board, the chain of eleven manned medium-range marine coast stations was, basically, not very different from the beginnings early in the present century. This was certainly so in telegraphy, with which the coverage of the British coast was generous. The names, the callsigns and the “personalities” of those stations will have been familiar to many members of the Veteran Wireless Operators Association long before the writer first started to work in the in 1957.

North Foreland/GNF was a bungalow in a Broadstairs residential street, Niton/GNI a cliff-

top block overlooking the English Channel. Land’s End/GLD was king of the Western Approaches on 500 kHz. Ilfracombe/GIL was next to an industrial estate at Mullacott Cross, Devon, Anglesey/GLV, the successor of Seaforth, on Mt Nebo, 500 ft above the Lynas Pilot Station for Liverpool. Portpatrick/GPK looked across St George’s Channel to the Irish hills. Although Oban/GNE did not operate on 500 kHz it contributed to 2 MHz coverage of the rugged western edge of Scotland. Wick/GKR was in a long, grey building opposite a school on the edge of town. Stonehaven/GNE was 15 miles south of Aberdeen, involved with the offshore oil and gas industry which boomed there. Cullercoats/GCC was on a tiny promontory jutting out from the promenade at Whitley Bay and Humber/GKZ hid below the sea wall at Mablethorpe — probably the only coast station in the UK ever to have been in “distress” itself, in the East Coast floods of January 1953.

What has become of them in 1995? Oban, Ilfracombe and Anglesey have been closed for years and North Foreland, controlled through Niton, is never manned. Instead of consoles, control panels and a colony of people, one expects to see the VDU and keyboard — with a telegraph key the last symbol of our order. “Centralisation” evolved into “Distributed Operational Control” (D.O.C.) in the the 1980s, based at first on north and south centres, now combined into one.

In this final state of D.O.C., any or all of the eight remaining main stations can be controlled from any one of their number. Additionally, the still-lively long-range complex called Portishead Radio/GKA at Highbridge, Somerset, also the medium range stations – and this has become the usual practice at night. Dispersed operators attend local stations as traffic requires during the day.

Even before D.O.C., with the development of small, easily-operated FM VHF radiotelephone equipment, there was a need to fill in gaps in line-of-sight coverage of the areas between the manned stations. From the 1970s numerous remotely-controlled VHF units began to be sited, often in situations also used by other authorities. It could be said that Ilfracombe and Anglesey, retaining remote VHF service, live on in this way at least in name.

Radiotelephony in the 2 MHz band is offered by all eight main stations with the addition of a relative newcomer in the 1980s, Hebrides Radio/GHD, remotely controlled across Scotland by way of Stonehaven and located on the western edge of the Isle of Lewis.

Radioteletype facilities, once confined to the oil and gas-related stations in the north east, have been provided at other stations like Niton and Land's End. "Navtex" enables automatic transmission of navigational safety messages from selected stations. The Coastguard have taken over responsibility for distress coverage

on VHF but our coast stations retain it on MF – at least up to the time of writing.

It's a whole lot quieter on the 500 kHz over this side, these days. Osten/OST, Norddeich/DAN, Boulogne/FFB (and Scheveningen/PCH on working frequencies) are still about. So are the Danes, the Norwegians, the Swedes, the Spanish and the Portuguese – and others within earshot of a small portable receiver here in Essex. But the British don't seem to be around much any more. Weather forecasts by telegraphy cease in 1994 and, somehow, we seem to have lost our sense of "place." The man who eventually answers on GNF may, after all, be sitting – lonely, one supposes – before his VDU at GLD. I do notice, though, that several of your cross-channel ferries still favour 500 kHz as they come and go between here and the Continent. I wonder if their radio officers think, as I do, that there never will be a frequency or a mode to beat 500 kHz W/T for sheer immediacy, reliability and tidy brevity – all good, uncomplicated qualities any time, but especially when the crossing's rough.

Tom St John-Coleman 1995

EDITORS NOTE:

In June 2006, while my wife Marilyn and I were minding Grand Children for a period of 2 months in Upper New York State, Middle

Pennsylvania and South Florida, I received in my absence a letter that was sent to me via the VWOA Post Office Box. Some parts of it I will share with our VWOA Members.

Dear Frank,

I don't think, since 1995, when I was admitted into the VWOA, I have seen such a fine production of the Yearbook. Thank you very much indeed for it. I particularly value the beautiful print of the painting by Frederick Roe on the back cover and I will treasure it permanently. In fact, I think I will frame it.

Frank, being a member of the VWOA has been a matter of pride to me and it will always be so. When I was still at school in the 1940s my imagination was decidedly caught by Karl Barslaag's "SOS — Radio Rescues at Sea" in which I first saw mention of the VWOA. That book more or less determined my career. But I never dreamed that I would one day be a Life Member of the Association.

Because I do not have a personal computer, and therefore no access to the internet, there are sometimes problems in forwarding information to me. So, much as I like to receive any items the VWOA puts out, I will not ask you to send me my newsletters by post — even though I would be willing to pay extra postage. I would, however, like to continue getting the Yearbook, the list of members and anything else it is vital for me to have.

I am a serious short wave listener in terms of broadcasts and whatever CW I can still find — plus monitoring the CW amateur community to keep my morse in good shape! I send my warmest most sincere good wishes to you, Frank and hope that we shall one day meet. I would like to have been able to attend one of the dinners, with my wife Margaret, but we haven't managed it yet. We did get to New York City once and went down to the Memorial in Battery Park.

Yours very sincerely,

Tom St John-Coleman

EDITORS NOTE #2:

Tom also made a monetary donation to VWOA to underline how much his membership means to him.

We at VWOA sincerely thank him for his kind words, written contributions to our Newsletters and his monetary donation.

VWOA Member Robert C. Marzen Jr. K3PWR
A very active communicator in VWOA as well as a Coast Guard Veteran, wants to make sure all the other "Coasties" in VWOA received the following message:

Admiral Thad Allen speaks to the Men and Woman of the United States Coast Guard

From: Allen, Thad Admiral
Sent: Thursday, August 03, 2006 3:21 PM
Subject: Coast Guard Day

To the Men and Women of the Coast Guard:

Today marks the 216th Birthday of our Coast Guard. This anniversary offers us a moment to celebrate our rich history, reflect on our past and focus on our future. The Coast Guard's unique legacy as America's lifesaver and maritime guardian evolved from the selfless courage and unflinching determination of our predecessors. It is in their honor that we celebrate today.

In 1790, Congress authorized secretary of the treasury Alexander Hamilton to build a fleet of ten cutters to secure our freedom and protect our coast. For the next eight years, the Revenue Marine was the nation's only naval force. Over time, it evolved and acquired new responsibilities to meet the growing needs of a democracy in the early years of a new nation.

The world has changed dramatically since 1790 and continues to change with every day. The global war on terrorism, the Maritime Transportation Security Act, The Homeland Security Act, the National Strategy for Homeland Security, and the National Strategy for Maritime Security have given the Coast Guard additional areas of mission emphasis. Meeting those new maritime security demands, while sustaining the trust and confidence of the public we serve in preserving our maritime safety

and exercising our maritime stewardship duties, requires us to continually challenge ourselves and improve the way we do business. By focusing on superior mission execution in all that we do, our active duty, reserve, civilian and auxiliary men and women are meeting these challenges head on, often times in unique and innovative ways. I am proud of these tremendous efforts and your hard work.

With the arrival of our 217th year of continuous service, we can look forward to the promise of more opportunities to serve America, and even more challenges. I reaffirm my commitment to each of you on this special day to ensure that our Coast Guard men and women are the most versatile workforce in government, equipped with the most capable fleet of ships, aircraft and boats, along with the most effective systems that will support them. We have an extraordinary legacy of excellence as America's Coast Guard. We will build on that legacy. We will rise to meet the challenges facing us. And we will remain always ready.

Happy Birthday and Semper Paratus!

Admiral Thad Allen

WENDELL'S NEWS CORNER

----- Original Message -----

From: Wendell R Benson
To: Clay and Margaret Scott
Sent: Saturday, July 22, 2006 1:23 PM
Subject: Re: Andrea Doria Story

Clay:

You should read the story. It is very detailed on the web.

Several years ago Cy Brill (mgr of WSL) told me he had printed 75 pages.

I'm sure it has grown in size since then. There are so many links to click on.

The main address is <http://andreadoria.org>
One of the links of particular interest is
<http://andreadoria.org/therescueships/default.htm>

When this event happened I was still sailing and happened to be home at the time. I knew many people who were involved in this operation. I didn't start working at WSF until Oct 1963 many years later.

In the rescue ships link it mentions Coast Guard radioman RobRoy A Todd on duty at NMY copied the SOS and started the wheels moving at the CG. I worked with him at WSF for several years where he was our teletype opr. He never mentioned

this event. I have located him in Oregon and we have been exchanging emails.

The 4-mid opr at WSF was Cy Brill. When he was transferred to WSL I was his replacement at WSF. He was very involved in phone traffic with the Italian Line and Swedish American Line that evening. The morning opr at WSF was Walter Key W2DES.

He was very busy with traffic from the Kungsholm. I worked with Walt several months when he was a relief opr at WSF. Somewhere in the story it mentions also that a tanker out of Boston went to assist. The opr was Ray Maurstad who I knew from the ROU. We were both waiting for ships at the same time. He is W3HUV.

I suggest a visit to that call on qrz.com for a large bio. He has published a book.
I believe the name is SOS KOREA 500. He happened to be in South Korea when the North Koreans invaded the South and he passed the word to Gen MacArthur.
73 Wendell

Here is some chatter between VWOA Member Pat O'Brien K8LEN and Mike Shaw K2LRE, our VWOA Treasurer that I came across in the Memory Trail.

----- Original Message -----

From: "p obrien" <obie47165@yahoo.com>

To: <k2lre@aol.com>

Sent: Monday, August 21, 2006 8:16 PM

Subject: ADAK

> Hi Mike

> Yes I was at the tropical paradise of ADAK from 1973 to 1976<I had to stay

> because of the beaches>

>

> I was stationed on a buoy tender 1973 uscgcc balsam, then the Ironwood 1975, and then to enjoy more adventure to the radio station NOX , it was housed in the Navy receiver site for LF receivers.

> I of course was a RM1 on the buoy tenders operating 500 and 8 megs, also at the Amver , OBS station and monitoring and operating 500, what a busy place 300 plus obs/amvers/radio traffic in 24 hour period, but a lot of fun.

> I operated 20 meters while there a swan cygnet<it was a drifter>.

>

> I saw adak, the aleutian islands, port moller, dutch harbor, shemya, and attu also putting around laying buoys in the Bearing sea, and of course, came back in 1978 on an ice

breaker , then going to point barrow also and > then to the pole for six months..

>

> Anyhow I retired from the AIR NTL GUARD<KENTUCKY>, in 1991, you guessed it > radio operator..cw...

>

> Active on ham bands<cw>, and cwcom on the internet and American morsecode <learning also on the net<KOB>.

>

> I think ADAK closed in the late or early nineties.

> Information..I was talking to a chap in ALASKA on cwcom on the web<cw>, > and his relative goes to ADAK in the summer to make sure the runway and > certain buildings are kept up<some contracted company>.

> I heard it was called the town of adak now..

> Thanks for sending the e-mail, enjoyed it.

> Yes I belong to the coast guard cw ops assoc.

>

> 73

> PAT/K8LEN

>

> <HTTP://www.webspawner.com/users/dx700>