

VWOA NEWSLETTER

Email Issue #28

2007



FCC office in Detroit, MI, passed the exam and received my first commercial "ticket". It was dated February 20, 1939

Engineering Student joins Merchant Marine (Recap by T. K. Phelps, W8TP, Feb. 2007)

In 1939 when I was a second year student in electrical engineering at the University of Michigan, I wanted to work as a shipboard radio operator during summer vacations. That meant passing the FCC 2nd Class Radiotelegraph License exam. Using textbooks by famous engineers Nilsson and Hornung, I studied and memorized material and questions for that exam. One of the questions was to draw a schematic diagram of an entire shipboard radiotelegraph station. I memorized the drawing, one section at a time, until I could reproduce it correctly. There was also a Morse Code receiving test at 16 words per minute. I had been a licensed radio amateur nearly six years and was able to copy Morse at about 20 wpm. So I went to the



T. K. Phelps
SS Stanvac Melbourne/HPTQ
September 26, 1941

My next challenge was to find a job as "Sparks" on a Great Lakes vessel. At the University library, I found a listing of companies that operated boats on the Great Lakes (Lakes ships are always referred to as "boats"). I drafted an application letter and sent it about 50 shipping firms. (laborious work: Xerox machines had not yet been invented.)

At length I received two replies, one of which interested me greatly. It was from the Chicago, Duluth and Georgian Bay Transit Co., the "Georgian Bay Line", premier passenger cruise ship operator on the Great Lakes.

I was invited to Chicago where I was interviewed by Joe Sodaro, Chief Operator on SS South American, "Queen of the Great Lakes". He hired me as Third Radio Officer for the coming season and said I should be at the company's winter quarter docks in Holland, Michigan, to board the "South" in June, 1939.

Sodaro was our Chief for the 1939 and 1940 seasons. Our 2nd R/O in 1939 was Alfred H. "Al" Kelley, a young history professor at Wayne University in Detroit, MI.

On Sept. 1, 1939, World War II began in Europe. We three radio officers on the South American published a daily newspaper which we sold to our passengers. Al Kelley was our "foreign affairs editor" and wrote some timely articles about the unfolding war. (Many years later I learned he had passed away after a long and serious illness.)

I worked for the Georgian Bay Line for three summers. But in February, 1941, my funds to continue college were almost depleted. To recoup, I decided to try for work as a Radio Officer on an ocean ship.

I went to New York and joined the Radio Officers Union, a requirement if one wanted to be a merchant mariner. The ROU found me a berth as Radio Officer on an ancient World War I vessel, SS *Alcoa Cadet*/WNEO.

My three month voyage on the *Cadet* took me to every Caribbean island I knew of and some I didn't. In May, 1941, we brought back to the U.S. a bulk cargo of aluminum ore, *bauxite*, for smelting into aluminum metal.

In June, 1941, I was back in the Midwest and joined the SS *Alabama*/WPCT, smallest ship of the Georgian Bay Line as Chief Radio Officer for my third and final Great Lakes season. During that summer I met a young lady passenger from Chicago, Josephine Miles. We were married in Chicago, December 3, 1942. In 2007 we are still together, having raised a family of two daughters and a son. We have five grand-children and two great-grandsons.

At the end of the 1941 Great Lakes sailing season, I returned to Ann Arbor for my senior year at the University of Michigan. But it was not to be; my draft board said they valued my deferment as a merchant seaman higher than a student with a reprieve from military duty. They implied that I would be drafted immediately if I returned to college.

Acting quickly on that warning, I went back to the Port of New York with my friend Charles Macomber who had been my shipmate as

Second Radio on SS *Alabama* during the 1941 summer season. Both of us found separate jobs on tankers.

Macomber joined the fleet owned by Cities Service Oil Co., which operated from ports in the Gulf of Mexico. I learned later that Mac was killed when his ship was torpedoed and sunk in the early months of World War II.

My job was aboard SS *Stanvac Melbourne/HPTQ*, a new Panamanian-registered tanker destined for the Caribbean and South America. We sailed from Staten Island on Sept. 26, 1941.

The *Stanvac Melbourne* was equipped with modern radiotelegraph transmitters and receivers for medium wave (425-500 KHz) and HF, (6, 8, 12 and 22 MHz). SS *Alabama* had the same vintage equipment, but only for medium wave.

Now I began to see some of the world below the Equator. The *Stanvac Melbourne* was in shuttle service carrying automotive gasoline between Port-of-Spain, Triinidad and Santos, Brazil, from about October 1 to early December, 1941.

On December 6, having made a Panama Canal transit, we tied up at Talara, Peru, where we were on Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1941.

Now we began a new shuttle service between Peru and Valparaiso, Chile, carrying aviation gasoline for the Chilean Naval Air Force.

We continued these trips without incident until March, 1942, when we were recalled to New York, at which time, in April, 1942, I "swallowed the anchor" and enlisted in the US Army Signal Corps, Chicago, IL.

In April, 1942 when I enlisted in the Army Signal Corps I was able to qualify to continue my interrupted engineering college studies. In an advance version of the "GI Bill" for college students that came later.

At the end of 1942, as a temporary Civil Service employee, I received my BS degree equivalent from Illinois Tech in Chicago. When I was discharged from the Army in March, 1946, I was hired as a junior engineer by Western Electric in Chicago. I later earned an MBA degree from the University of Chicago in 1955 and worked for WE in telephone switching until September, 1984 when I retired as a senior engineer.

(Recap by T. K. Phelps, W8TP, Feb. 2007)

(END)

VWOA MEMBER NEWS

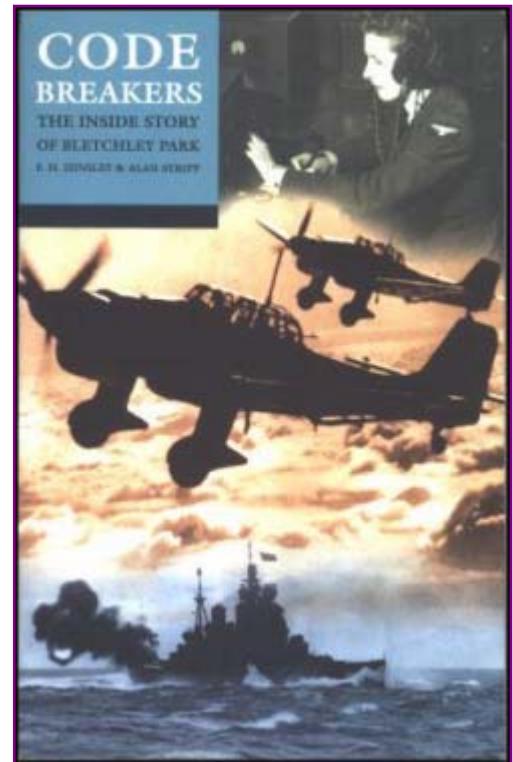
Douglas Stivison, 2nd Vice President, Web Master of the VWOA Web Site and VWOA Historian mentions an interesting Book that can be purchased On Line from Amazon. It deals with a wealth of information on World War Codes and the price of \$12.71 is reasonable these days.

The book provides many details about the code breakers working at Bletchley Park cracking the ENIGMA code.

Much more important, one of the covers of the Book has **VWOA Veteran Member Diana Mackay Eigen.**

For those of you outside the VWOA NY, NJ and PA area, (she is a REGULAR ATTENDEE at all our VWOA functions), she was a radio operator for the Royal Air Force throughout all of WW2. She is NOT credited in the photo or the book, but we all knew and recognized the photo of her. Look closely at the top right hand corner of the book cover, you'll see VWOA Veteran Member Diana Mackay Eigen. **Follow the URL link below the Picture, then click on [SEARCH INSIDE](#) and take the On Line Tour of the Book.**

Diana Mackay Eigen



URL LINK:

[Codebreakers: The Inside Story of Bletchley Park](#)
F. H. Hinsley, Alan Stripp

Doug Stivison NR1A sent us some photos of his visit to China which might be of interest to and bring back some memories from those China Hands among our Members.

He has provided VWOA with a series of Photo shots taken in Yantai, China last summer. This was the old British treaty port of Chefoo, later

the R&R port for part of our Pacific Fleet in the pre WW-2 era. It is just an hour away from Tsingdao, known both for the beer and the powerful marine radio station originally built by the Germans.

The area has a long maritime tradition and even more of a marine radio tradition.

Anyhow, while wandering around I found the remains of an abandoned Red Chinese Navy radio station. You can see the deteriorating Red Chinese Navy emblem and the old “flat top” radio mast.

By the way, it was spooky to walk around the old Red Navy base knowing that when I was growing up if somebody had said that one day I would be poking around a Communist Chinese Navy base, I would have told them it was more likely that I would walk on the moon.



Red Chinese Navy emblem



Old “flat top” radio mast

Sent: Wednesday, March 28, 2007 3:48 PM

Subject: FW: Fwd: Technology Showdown:

Morse code vs. Text Messaging

>I hope you get a kick out of this.

Bob Marzen K3PWR

>>>Subject: Fwd: Technology Showdown:
Morse code vs. Text Messaging

>>Date: Wed, 28 Mar 2007 06:33:04 -0700
(PDT)

> Live!

<http://clk.atdmt.com/MRT/go/mcrssaub0050001411mrt/direct/01/>

David Ring N1EA

Hey you Maritime Radio and Coastie type of guys!

Does this look familiar to any of you!

I found it just by looking at the map of Homestead! I can even see the base of the tower. Now if I can find the tower in Kenner, LA and the one down in Otis, I'll be happy!

Here is the QTH of WSC in West Creek (at the end of Murphy Drive).

<http://www.google.com/maps?f=q&hl=en&q=murphy+dr.,+west+creek,+nj,+USA&layer=&sll=39.644263,-74.296632&sspn=0.015036,0.028152&ie=UTF8&z=16&ll=39.640562,-74.290452&spn=0.007518,0.014076&t=k&om=1>

Just a bit north of it - on Musa Road in Manahawkin is the site of WOO receiving station - I don't see Musa Road listen anymore. MUSA was AT&T's revolutionary steerable take off antenna for hf used on the trans-Atlantic lines - but by the 1990s the only thing left was the maritime station WOO. The transmitter was in Ocean Gate, NJ / Tom's River, NJ. They had a room filled with 10 kW transmitters. WOO had 390 foot on a side rhombics about every 30 degrees around their coverage area at both the receive site and transmit site.

(Two identical sets of rhombics located 30 miles from each other.)

73

DR

David Ring N1EA reports on Don Berger ex WPD on KKUI and QSOs KSM.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Richard Dillman

Date: Apr 7, 2007 4:31 PM

Subject: [Radiomarine] KSM/KKUI QSO

To: Don Berger

At 1906GMT KSM and SS American Victory/KKUI made contact on 12Mc.

OM Don Berger, ex-WPD, was at the key aboard the Victory ship in Tampa, FL. See: <http://www.americanvictory.org/>

This QSO adds yet another historic ship to the roster of those that have returned to the air on commercial channels using their original call signs and, in many cases, their original equipment.

We owe the men and women who have done the work to make this possible a debt of gratitude. Here at the MRHS we offer a tip of the KSM earphones to the crew at KKUI for a job well done.

Note: When KSM is QSO a ship we key all transmitters so listeners on all our channels can copy at least the shore side of the contact. We also mention the ship's frequency early in the exchange so listeners can try to copy the ship side as well.

VY 73,

Richard Dillman
Chief Operator, KSM

The Radiomarine list brings you information about the on-the-air activities of the Maritime Radio Historical Society including stations KPH, KSM and K6KPH. For more information see our Web site at:

<http://www.radiomarine.org>

VY 73,
MRHS
Yahoo! Groups Links

<*> To visit your group on the web, go to:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Radiomarine/>

<*> Your email settings:
Individual Email | Traditional
<*> To change settings online go to:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Radiomarine/join>
(Yahoo! ID required)
<*> To change settings via email:
<mailto:Radiomarine-digest@yahoogroups.com>

mailto:Radiomarine_fullfeatured@yahoogroups.com

<*> Your use of Yahoo! Groups is subject to:
<http://docs.yahoo.com/info/terms/>

Dear Francis:

You need to know how much your newsletter is appreciated. The answer - greatly.

I treasure the copies. After reading I have been binding groups, i.e. 1 to 10 and 11 to 20 etc.

My friend, Alex Newbold (W6MMG) who is also a member of VWOA does not download from the web. I have been sending him the bound copies. His comment. "When I received the copies of the VWOA newsletter from you I spent the afternoon and evening reading them. I just could not stop until I had read every one cover to cover. Most interesting stories by real people. Thanks"

I have a story to tell. I will try to get it in to print and send it along. I sailed as a ship radio operator from 1942 to 1945. In fact, I have several short sea war stories to tell -- just need to get them into print.

Thanks again. I know being an editor is difficult work. I was the editor of a technical journal for several years. It has to be an act of love.

CUL 73s Jim Jolly W6RWI

WENDELL'S NEWS CORNER

Wendell R. Benson brings to your attention:
Another fine one Wendell - As always, we see many things that we saw, thru the eyes of our ex classmates. I hope to someday (before it's too late) to put my stuff on paper, but there's not much that you haven't seen before.

The report on the Red Oak Victory is very familiar to us here in Tampa. We are restoring the Radio Room of the museum ship ss AMERICAN VICTORY We have the main antenna and rcvng antennas up and thought we had the HF xmtr going but it failed (mechanical trouble rather than electronic) at the last minute and I was unable to tune it up for a whack at KSM. It'll happen though and it's good working on a Victory again!

73

Don Berger W4CQC for W4AVM
ROU Cert 2889
Hoffman Island R-15

From: Cy Brill
To: <wenben@nyc.rr.com>
Sent: Monday, March 26, 2007
1:14 PM
Subject: VWOA newsletter

Just finished reading fine copy of latest edition, always enjoy exchanging sea stories especially with the "new group" of

youngsters with 6 month endorsements that came after WW2.

I managed to meet up with some of them at WSL especially Jim Friel, a damn good operator. If the new crop of operators were like him then they got my respect and admiration for taking us out of the vacuum tube era into digital and earning some respect aboard their ships thereby enhancing further respect for our profession.

Incidentally many years ago I submitted an article which was published in the Hoffman Island newsletter. It was an interesting story of my last voyage where Murphy's Law prevailed throughout a 78 day voyage to West Africa.

If you think it is worth repeating for the VWOA newsletter, I can forward a copy to you. It is four pages long, titled "The Jinx".

73s—Cy

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

From: PAUL RAICHUR
To: Wendell Benson
Sent: Tuesday, March 27, 2007 7:21 AM

Good Day,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.
Am well by God's grace.

Am sorry for maintaining Radio Silence for so long.
Have been receiving all communications regularly.
Please convey my apologies to Frank Cassidy.

Am in my 3rd year of service with Coastguard Northern Region,
at the New Zealand, Auckland Marine Rescue Centre,
as an Overnight Radio Operator.

God Speed & 73,
Paul.

From: Ben Russell N6SL
To: [Wendell R Benson](#)
Sent: Tuesday, March 27, 2007 8:37 PM
Subject: Re: N6SL Info

Wendell,
I will follow up after we get back from the cruise. I am sure he knows my old shipmate

Jack Lally W1HDC. Jack and I shared the M/T Hunter Armistead/WFKW until Ingram sold the ship to EXXON. Sam Margolis also was at WSL for years and used to occasionally trade ships with Sam and visited him on LI. Sam had one of the old Sears and Roebuck kit homes in Southampton within a few miles of WSL.

We are still tying up things to get ready for the cruise. We have been on 6 different HAL ships and always enjoy the voyages. (bus man's holiday)

I updated QRZ.com when we moved and then changed address with FCC on line so all info concerning me is current on QRZ.com.

Many thanks for the telephone call, I see we share many of the same ideas. Down here the local QCWA chapters seem to be strong and active. Our local one (CH 62) meets every month and sponsors a ham club so there are two meetings per month. W8EK is president of both.

I am back on the air but with limited antennas. This retirement community does not permit outside antennas and the attic crawl space seems quite limited. At the moment I have a horizontal loop running around the garage interior wall about 6 inches from the ceiling. It has a total length of about 80 feet and works OK on 30/40/20 meter bands. Each home in the area is on its own lot and is fee simple. Lot size is only 60 X 90 feet. The previous

QTH had a log 240 X 200 feet and plenty of trees. I had 2000 feet of wire up in the air and was able to get good signals on the air.

You mentioned WLO when they were on the dock using a 200 watt RMCA rig. During the summer of 47 I managed to QSO them from a liberty ship SS Governor Sparks/KHWH from Galveston, TX to Germany and back. Kept a schedule on 6 MHz. Signals were never that good but we kept in touch with Waterman HQ in Mobile.

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73, Ben, N6SL

From: "Curt Phillips W4CP"
To: "Discussion of QCWA"
< Sent: Wednesday, March 28, 2007 2:50 PM
Subject: [QCWA] Satellite phones vs. HF ham
radio

> Even without the Chinese "satellite killer" spacecraft, satellite comms
> can still let you down.
>
> Perhaps some of you saw the ARRL statement on this, but for those of us
> who didn't, it's covered here in a short news-clip from the April issue of
> Monitoring Times magazine:
>
> Globalstar Satellite Problems
>
> The American Radio Relay League recently distributed a warning that "Our
> served agencies are increasingly relying on satellite phones for back up
> communications and some think it has lessened the need for HF and the
> other services provided by amateur radio. You should refer your emergency
> management contacts to a recent SEC filing made by Globalstar. The
> performance of the S-band power amplifiers in the company's satellites is
> degrading, likely due to radiation exposure. ... there is apparently a
> significant chance that the new satellites won't be up in time and that
> sometime in 2008 substantially all of the Company's currently in-orbit
> satellites will cease to be able to support two-way communications
> services!"
>

Wendell Benson provides Interesting developments

From: "ARRL Web site"

<memberlist@www.arrl.org>

To: <wenben@nyc.rr.com>

Sent: Friday, March 30, 2007 1:10 PM

Subject: Watch for bogus e-mails about arrl.net service.

To NLI ARRL.NET subscribers
from SMLIST

Please note the following information provided by members of both the ARRL Web Development and Public Information Offices.

Recently there has been a flurry of bogus emails sent to various people which claimed to be from the "arrl.net user support team." In actuality, they are bogus and an attempt to get recipients to follow their instructions which will download a program making their computer send out the very spam they lie about preventing. If you happen to get one of these, DO NOT follow the instructions! In the meantime, we will do what we can here to track and eliminate the source of these malicious emails.

The ARRL goes to great lengths to protect and prevent problems to the email systems for our members and staff.

While the Internet is still a wild and untamed

cyber-world, we will continue our efforts to protect our members.

We at VWOA want to thank you for your favorable responses to your VWOA Email Newsletter.

We can only continue this form of Celebrating the Past if all of our VWOA Members make known some of their personal special events that contributed to their career in Wireless. with the rest of your VWOA Members.

We at the VWOA Newsletter would like to hear from you and try to pass along to the rest of the VWOA stories of events that you have experienced and that you feel the rest of the membership would enjoy hearing about. Send us a picture or two and we will try to include it in one of our Email Newsletters

We would prefer to hear from you by Email at:

ftcassidy@optonline.net

Or

wenben@nyc.rr.com

but if you must, send mail to:

VWOA

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New York NY 10272-1003