

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Each month one of our members is randomly selected and asked to share their ham radio biography with all of us. Questions or comments should go to Paul, KD2MX.

DISCLAIMER: Any views expressed in this section are those of the submitting member and may or may not be those of the NAQCC or its officers.

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My interest in radio all started when I was about 13 years old and my friends and I found an old radio receiver in the attic of an old garage. Well we had to immediately plug it in and see if it worked. I remember the tubes inside because they glowed, but the thing I found most interesting was all the stations I could hear were sending what sounded like Morse code and the people talking sounded like Donald Duck. Where that old radio ever wound up I don't know, I have gone searching for it many times.

I enjoyed the radio on an intermittent basis, not understanding much except that it was short wave and stations could be heard over very long distances. The Morse code was always a hook for me though. I just couldn't understand how somebody could understand it that fast. Then CB radio came along and boy did that light me up. I could talk back to people and there was an abundance of other CBers just waiting to hear you call, but that fad got to be such a hindrance to itself that I soon lost interest in talking to anybody. Then I mostly just enjoyed listening to the different operators and especially the coming of evening when I could hear far off stations bouncing signals off the atmosphere. I never really understood how they were doing it at the time but it sounded cool and I sure didn't want to be a kid asking dumb questions about such simple matters.

Then as with everybody, life kinda got in the way and I had to focus on raising my kids and providing for our family. Looking back, I could have found the time to get my ticket and begin learning the craft, but

for no good reason I just never did. I still enjoyed listening to shortwave on a little portable radio that I had bought. Then as my kids grew and left to follow their own paths I suddenly had lots of time to read and begin to really study the why and how radio worked, especially short wave radio. All that talk from years ago about bouncing waves off the atmosphere was now understandable. It was a foregone conclusion that I would have my ticket shortly after that. So I went and took my Technician test in 2011, then my General in 2012. I now hold a General ticket with my sights set on the Extra soon.

I've had some very good Elmering from some local hams. John Colson (KC7BJY), runs the local radio club and was more than happy to show me the ropes. He lent me some equipment and I got a little 2-meter rig on the air so I could start getting comfortable talking on a repeater. I remember him telling me that this was not CB and not to use any of the jargon that I had used so many years back. Looking back I am glad that shortwave has guided itself away from that jargon because I think that was the problem with CB back then. Shortwave needs to stay just as "grounded" as it is.

John (KC7BJY) guided me to another great elmer, Dale (WB7DJ). Dale and I became fast friends as he was planting the bug to become proficient at Morse code. I was immediately transported back to that dusty attic, but this time it was even better because I could make out a letter here and there, then another, and boy was I ever excited. I study every day for at least a few minutes and am getting pretty proficient at copying and I'm also working to make my sending as good as it can be. I have found I am most interested in CW. I will occasionally listen to SSB to get info when there is a hurricane bearing down or something like that, but 99 percent of my radio time is spent either listening to or sending Morse code.

I find that I enjoy listening to all the different stations the most, just as I had in days gone by. I occasionally run one of my radios (Kenwood) at 100 watts but mostly run my QRP rigs and study the way the propagation is working. I find it absolutely amazing that I can transmit to another ham thousands of miles away with just 5 or less watts. I am thankful that there are hams out there that will pull those little signals out of the mud and work me, so I try to return the favor by tuning and listening for the faintest of signals, then the fun starts, adjusting filters and RF gain and sometimes standing on your head to just get that little bit of improvement so you can get that QSO.

I really enjoy and would like to endorse to everyone several QRP events. First is NAQCC, their monthly sprints are a great place for a beginner to practice working contests in a non-contest environment, very friendly and helpful operators too. Next is the QRP foxhunt. If you have never done one of these you are missing a fun event. The great thing about this event is it will teach you how to get through a pileup. That may be old hat to a lot of you but trust me, working the fox in a 60 or 70 person pileup with QRP is a ball. The last event I really enjoy is a 100 watt affair, it is the CW fun events. A person preregisters and then is assigned a group of words, the contest starts and your goal is to exchange as many words as accurately as possible with other hams trying to get you their word. All three of these events have helped me to become a more capable CW operator. I imagine I will always be a CW man, but to everyone their own. I don't think any one mode is any better than the other, I just think you should be the best at the mode you choose as you can be.

Outside of radio I own a small grocery store in our town of 1500 people. We are located 100 miles from the nearest Walmart or McDonalds and still know most everybody in town. Winters here are cold, but not as bad as you would think. The biggest problem living here is the isolation. Those people that are more comfortable and self reliant enjoy this corner of the world very much. Walking and fishing tend to be where you will find me when not at work or on the radio. So far I have met very helpful and courteous people in the hobby and try to return the same. I think the thing I like the most about the hobby is it lets you find your level of comfort and doesn't force you any farther than you want to take it.

