

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, at kd2mx@arrl.net.

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.

Chris Gay, KU4A, #1960



Although I have been interested in ham radio for as long as I can remember, I was 20 years old before I met someone that was willing to Elmer me. I met Wally, now K0TSI, while we were both studying engineering at Ohio State. Despite us both being busy with school work, Wally kept after me and I got my Technician license one year during summer break.

The concept of "QRP" didn't mean much to me at the time, but I started out running low power anyway with a homebrew transmitter that I had built from plans in an ARRL publication. Technicians had novice privileges on some of the HF bands, and I was thrilled to be able to make some QSOs on 80m and 40m CW before packing up and leaving Columbus after graduation to take a job in Lexington, Kentucky.

Once I got settled in Lexington I typically operated at power levels closer to 100 watts. Somehow I came across the QRP-ARCI. In those days, "QRP" was considered "100 watts or less". So I qualified for "QRP operation". It wasn't too long after that that the generally accepted definition of QRP as "5 watts or less" was fairly universally adopted. But since my equipment was capable of more, I generally operated with 100 watts.

A few years back, Bob, AF4OI, decided to start a local QRP club called "KY-QRP". It was a great group, and I decided to get active in "true" QRP. Not content with "turning down the power" on a standard transceiver, I purchased an MFJ-9040 and began pounding brass on 40m. It was a lot of fun, and it took me back to my roots of enjoyable ragchews on CW. I also like various competitions, and Bob started a Miles-

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Per-Watt contest. Guess who won for 40 meters :-).

I wanted to expand my horizons a bit, and the introduction of the Yaesu FT-817 grabbed my attention. I bought one at the Huntsville, Alabama hamfest, and this great radio really ramped up my QRP operation. I had always been a contester, and I found myself more and more often entering the QRP category. And, I now could enter the Miles-Per-Watt contest on more than one band :-).

The current membership of KY-QRP is very big into field operation. It took me awhile to gather up everything, but I managed to put together a complete kit for field work, built around my trusty FT-817. We've operated from city parks, farms, and the Kentucky Horse Park campground. The fun and comradeship of those events is something special.

Somewhere along my travels around the Internet, I stumbled upon the NAQCC. The thing that I noticed about it that sets it apart from other clubs is that it is an OPERATING club, with many various operating activities and awards that can be obtained.

My favorite NAQCC activity by far is the monthly Sprint. I'm on the Honor Roll having operated in 63 of them. I typically make just a few QSOs in a half-hour or so. But in August 2013 I made 30 contacts which stands as my personal best. In any event, thanks everyone for all the Sprint QSOs down through the years!

Among the awards, the Participation Award is my favorite. In honor of K3WWP, I decided awhile back to try to maintain a streak of consecutive months with at least one participation point. Now, this is nothing like John's incredible QSO-a-day streak that goes back decades. But it is something that is a challenge for me. I've had at least one participation point every month since September of 2007. Some of the monthly challenges are interesting, too, so I often get the 3 points for doing both activities.

Another award I like is the Friendship Club, and I just recently got my endorsement for 500 points. I enjoy having a list of all the NAQCC members that I have worked, all sorted by membership number. I've worked many of you multiple times, but it is always great to add a new one to my list.

Around the shack I have two of the MFJ monobanders, and an Argonaut 509 as well. But for operating I always seem to gravitate to my beloved FT-817. At home I have a tribander at 45 feet, and various wire antennas for the other bands.

In 2010 I retired from IBM after 33 years of service as an electrical engineer and computer programmer. I do part-time contract work, but since I gave up the full-time grind I've had a lot more time for radio. So, I'm looking forward to seeing you all on the bands!

