

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.

CHAS POWELL, NK8O, #5873



I was a short wave listener from a young age. I built the requisite crystal sets, and later had a Lafayette KT-340 SW receiver that my dad and I built over Christmas in about 1965. I flirted with commercial radio in college, but I didn't get fully into Amateur Radio until age 30. I am a long time license holder with a relatively short time on the air. My first license was issued to me in Canada, VE3OCF, under the guidance of a "Master of Morse", Eric Stabler (SK). At the time, the basic license in Canada required 10 WPM. Eric neglected to tell us that he was sending at about 20 WPM and we didn't know any better. When I took my first exam, I thought they had played back the tape at the wrong speed! Some of you may remember the old Wollensak tape recorders, with playback at 3 3/4 or 7 1/2 inches per second. I'm sure the younger guys won't. I managed to take my US Amateur Extra exam at the last FCC administered session at Buffalo, New York. I was given the call sign NK8O and I have kept this despite many moves across the country.

I operated QRO when I was in Canada, but after moving back to the US, the radio hobby went on the shelf for about 25 years. My interest in QRP evolved from looking for an inexpensive way to get back into the hobby, about 2 1/2 years ago. With a Ten-Tec R4030 in hand, I went about getting my fist back in order. With a makeshift dipole at 8' off the ground, one of my first contacts was with Nicaragua. I thought this was pretty cool, but more important, I was hooked once again. I had a Kenwood TS-440SAT available, but when I finally dusted it off my immediate reaction was "too easy". I think I tuned up on 17 meters and worked Senegal on the first try. I was cured of 100 watt rigs.

My favorite operating mode is casual. I'm not a big fan of contests, but I occasionally participate. The NAQCC challenges and the SKCC sprints are great because they are brief, and the goal is participation. The over-achievers can rack up the points, but the rest of us can just have a little fun and not worry about it too much. I do like impromptu operations in the park, from hotels, and while traveling. I had the good fortune of operating from Tanzania in 2012. Even with low power and a long wire antenna, the DX crowd was ready to pounce. I also love to rag chew.

The current equipment is based around a KX3. I still use simple wire antennae. I have a variety of straight

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keys, paddles, and a Vibroplex bug vintage 1960s, but nothing more exotic than that. I use a Birdie mini key for SK operations while portable, and currently I'm using a Vibroplex "Know Code" SK at home with a variety of paddles. I'm hopeless with a bug. The state of amateur radio gear after 25 years is nothing short of astonishing after many years away.

My other hobbies are really in the category of busman's holiday. As a physician and pediatrician, I greatly enjoy mission medicine. I currently am retired from office medicine and I now devote my time mainly to hospital work. My favorite work site is in the NICU, but I am doing some traveling and relief work as well. My children are grown, and we managed to get that last of them through undergraduate training. My wife also is a physician, but there is little chance of her taking any interest in Amateur Radio.

