

**NEW International member, \$28 (\$20 initiation +\$18 yearly sustaining fee). Note that the Initiation fee is a one-time fee to new members. These fees include receiving the Spark-Gap Times via email or via the OOTC website .**

**Renewing USA members \$16 yearly, \$18 Canadian and foreign. These fees include receiving the Spark-Gap Times via email or via the OOTC website. All members are usually billed in February.**

**If you wish to receive the PRINT Spark Gap Times the additional fee is \$6.00 yearly for USA members, including Life Members, and \$7 yearly for Canadian and foreign members, including Life Members.**

**Life Membership dues: Under age 70-\$250.00. Ages 70-89 \$150.00. 90 and above—Free. Note that Life Membership dues do not include the print Spark-Gap Times. The \$6 yearly fee must still be paid for the print copy.**

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT. You are eligible if you had two-way wireless communication 40 (or more) years ago (eligible on Jan 1 of the 40th year) OOTC recognizes your first two-way communication by Amateur, commercial, CB or military operation. Provide proof if possible. If never ham licensed but had eligible 2-way communication, you may also join.**

**OOTC wishes to have extended information about each member, activities and background. This information becomes a permanent and important part of your record as a member of OOTC, making it possible for us to publish your life work and experiences. Information is saved in OOTC archives. We would appreciate a photograph. Send a biography and/or story suitable for publication in the Spark-Gap times on separate sheets of paper, or via email attachment to our Secretary**

**The OOTC, which started in 1947. is solely interested in the history of radio, particularly Amateur Radio, and anyone has had experience with two way wireless communication 40 or more years ago is welcome to join and contribute their communication stories to the organization. We have had more than 4700 members over the past 70 years**

**OOTC PRESIDENT: Skip Amis, N5CFM #4598**  
3301 Gwendolyn Lane, Edmond, OK 73034 [N5VFM@live.com](mailto:N5VFM@live.com)

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**Vice President: Fritz Tender, WD8E, #4567**  
1010 Blacks Rd SE, Hebron OH 43025 [WD8E@arrl.net](mailto:WD8E@arrl.net)

**Treasurer: Joseph Wehner, W8KNO, #4030**  
11924 Alpha Rd, Hiram, OH 44234 PH: 330-569-7718

**Exec Secretary: Phil Sager, WB4FDT #4497**  
7634 Carla Rd, Baltimore MD 21208 PH: 443-854-3130  
[PhilWB4FDT@hotmail.com](mailto:PhilWB4FDT@hotmail.com)

**DIRECTORS:**

**DIST. 1: VACANT**

**DIST. 2: Ronald E. Fish KX1W #4581, PO BOX 4, Circleville NY 10919**  
[ronf404@aol.com](mailto:ronf404@aol.com)

**DIST. 3: Peter Young K3IN, 12434 Creagerstown Rd, Thurmont, MD 21788**  
[Phyoung@comcast.net](mailto:Phyoung@comcast.net)

**DIST:4 VACANT**

**DIST. 5: "Skip" Amis, N5CFM, 3301 Gwendolyn Lane, Edmond, OK 73034**  
[73034n5cfm@live.com](mailto:73034n5cfm@live.com)

**DIST. 6: Troy Wideman Jr, 230 Fremont, Redlands, CA 92373**  
[W6HV@ARRL.net](mailto:W6HV@ARRL.net)

**DIST. 7: Doug Tabor N6UA, 1133 Verlan Way, Cheyenne, WY 82009**  
[dtabor52@gmail.com](mailto:dtabor52@gmail.com)

**DIST. 8: Joseph Wehner, W8KNO, 11924 Alpha Rd., Hiram, OH 44234-9774**  
[jlw\\_usna62@yahoo.com](mailto:jlw_usna62@yahoo.com)

**DIST. 9: Gene Santoski, K9UTQ, 1220 18 th Street South, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494**  
[k9utq@solarus.net](mailto:k9utq@solarus.net)

**DIST. 10: VACANT**

We lost two members of the OOTC board during the past 6 months. In the fourth district Donald Trayes, WN3USA passed away in November. Douglas Tabor, N7UA, from District 0, passed away last Spring. His son, Doug Tabor, N5UA, is now on the board from District 7 .

We have 9 new members since September. Continuing memberships will be billed shortly.

### **THE HISTORY OF THE AMATEUR RADIO CALLSIGN LICENSE PLATE**

Your editor thought this was a new area to research, but I found much of my information came from a QST article in January, 1995, by Mike Ludkiewicz, W1DJG (SK in 2018). Mike had completed a complete set of all 50 states of Amateur Radio license plates, (plus DC) and after his article was published in QST, he put together a second complete collection of all Amateur Radio plates from their first year of issuance.

What state did the first amateur radio license plates come from? Well, that depends on how you define an amateur radio license plate. Most amateur radio license plate connoisseurs define it as when a state legislature passes a bill specifically for amateur radio operators, or a state's Department of Motor Vehicles adds a new rule specifically for amateur radio license plates. Usually there is no or little additional cost, and the plate may say "amateur radio" or "radio amateur" on it. Some states may require a radio to be in the car at all times.

On the other hand, a "Vanity" license plate can be for any citizen to put whatever they want—within reason—on their plate, usually with higher costs, and this can include amateur plates.

The first amateur callsign license plate was a vanity plate available in Michigan in 1938. It was only available that one year, and amateur radio plates were not available again in Michigan until 1954. The first "real" amateur plates started in 1950, with Florida and Mississippi. In Florida, amateur plates were made through the efforts of State Senator Lloyd Boyle, W4IMJ. Georgia followed. In 1951 Louisiana, Tennessee and Nevada were added, and in 1952, Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, Minnesota, Missouri, Virginia and Wisconsin also joined. The second to last state was Massachusetts in 1965, (requiring a \$40 fee!), and the final state was Kentucky in 1973.

According to W1DJG's research, in 1995 18 states had no additional charge for the license plate, and 19 had a fee of \$5 or less. A quick review on the internet now

shows some states have extra fees of \$25 to \$50. The 1957 Connecticut plate was the first ham plate to utilize a special ham related symbol, the spark, to individualize their ham plate. Both Alaska and Hawaii were Territories when they issued their first ham plates. Hawaii had an undated plate issued in 1961 that used a windshield sticker for validation.

I have a detailed account of the 1952 effort in Virginia to arrange for the preparation of amateur license plates, from the "Virginia Section Bulletin", June 20, 1952;

- 1) "Ham plates will be issued only to applicants holding currently-valid ham tickets and having bona-fide mobile installation in the automobile".
- 2) "The cost to exchange your current plates for the new ham plates is expected to be about \$4.00. You would retain the small "52" tab."
- 3) "Distribution of the plates is to be handled by the License Plate Committee, headed by Carroll Melton, W4NV, rather than through the usual channels, according to present plans, so as to reduce the administrative burden of the special plate issue on the Division of Motor Vehicles".
- 4) W4NV urges individual hams (and clubs) DO NOT WRITE to the Division of Motor Vehicles regarding this matter. A deluge of inquiries could undo the efforts of the committee, should the DMV conclude that the project involves a major exchange of correspondence with the hams of Virginia. Direct inquiries to W4NV, 1117 Cambridge Crescent, Norfolk."
- 5) A letter from the Commissioner of DMV C. F. Joyner says, "this is a new innovation for us in the issuance of tags and so long as the privilege is not abused, I am willing to continue."

Its interesting to note that the amateur License Plate Committee used their own application form, approved by the Virginia DMV. Licenses were first issued in September, and many applicants got their plates at the Roanoke Division Convention in Richmond in early October.

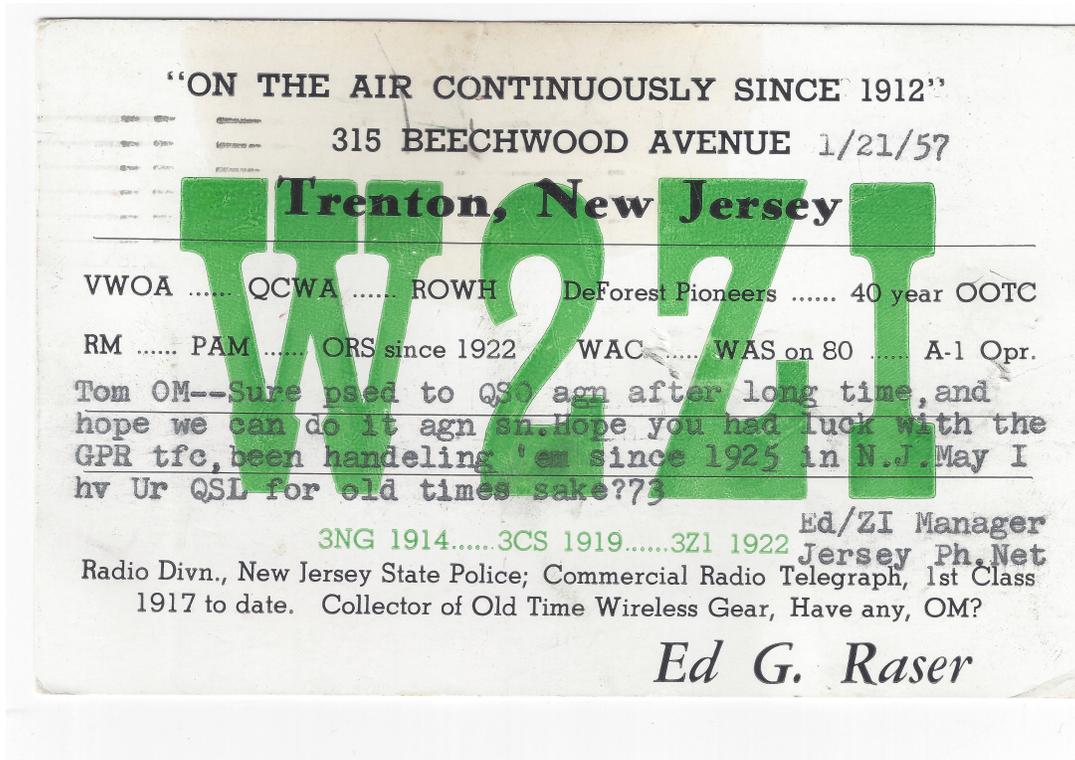
25 years ago I gave my Connecticut ham plate to a fellow who was collecting them in North Carolina. A few years ago, an OOTC friend, WA4SDE (sk) noticed my Connecticut plate at a yard sale in Virginia. He was nice enough to buy it for \$2 and mailed it back to me!

**KEN GOODWIN, K5RG**

We had a nice picture of Ken in our last issue but we forgot a short Bio that went with it! Here tis!--Ken joined OOTC in 2003. He got interested in amateur radio as a ten year old when he visited the station of KV4BQ . He was first licensed 5 years later as K1ONW. He got interested in traffic handling in 1963, checking into the Eastern

Massachusetts CW Net. Thru the nets, Ken met K2KIR/W2RU (now an ARRL Director and OOTC member) who introduced him to the higher level CW nets including the Eastern Area Net. In 1968 Ken moved to Texas and became the net manager of the Texas CW net.

He changed his call to K5RG, which happens to be his three initials of his full name. It turned out later that it is a “virgin” call having been saved for Navy Reserve stations sometime back and never assigned. Ken is still active in the various Texas nets and the Central Area Net (CAN).



**ED G. RASER W2ZI**

I ran across this 1957 QSL card—it reads: ”W2ZI--ON THE AIR CONTINUOUSLY SINCE 1912”. I went to look up W2ZI and found he was one of the earliest members of the OOTC #38. His Blue Book biography says the following: #38, Edward Raser, W2ZI, ex-3NG, ex-3CS, ex-3ZI, ex-3AOV, ex-3CMH, ex-W3ZZB! His first two-way communication was in 1910 when he was 11 years old. Joined the ARRL in 1915 and was a land commercial operator. He spent most of his career as the Supervisory Engineer of the New Jersey Police Radio System”.

Ed was probably best known as the owner of the “W2ZI Museum and Library”, and was an active collector of Old Wireless Equipment. SGT says the Museum consists of early amateur, Navy and commercial ship gear, including a Marconi 1901 receiver. It includes over 350 pieces of equipment. A picture of it is in the February, 1964 SGT, along with a larger biography. (Unfortunately, the picture does not reproduce well). Ed

passed away in 1985 at the age of 86.

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His biography says Ed joined at the age of ten with Jugh Gernsback's Wireless Association of America, one of the earliest wireless clubs in the world. By the age of 11 he had worked a distance of ten miles with a quarter-inch spark coil and a home made tuner, using "RE", his initials reversed, as his call. After the Radio Law of 1912, he went to the Philadelphia Navy Yard and took the examination for an Amateur First Grade license. Ed recalls that the license was signed by a Lt. S. S. Payne, USA, as the Navy was the only Government Agency authorized to conduct examinations. His call was 3NG.

By 1915 Ed was working stations 400 miles away with a ½ KW packard transformer and home made rotary gap, using a Galena mineral detector, loose coupler and brandes phones for receiving. He joined the ARRL as its 381<sup>st</sup> member in April 1915 and became active in long distance relay and traffic handling and was assigned in May, 1916 to Trunk Line C, the then very busy line operating between Boston and Washington DC.

With the start of WWI, Ed joined the Navy as a wireless operator and served three years aboard various ships and shore stations. While in the Navy, he installed the and tested the first commercial E.J. Simon ¼ kW, 500 cyle spark set ever to go aloft in an airplane, using a long trailing wire antenna. After the war, he continued as a wireless operator aboard ships and shore stations. In 1922 he received a "Special Amateur License and with it the call of 3ZI. This allowed him special wavelengths out of the 200 meter band for long distance relaying of messages.

Ed became active as an early broadcast Engineer, but again went to sea as a wireless operator in 1935-36. After WWII, Ed perceived the idea to run an "Old Timers Night Roundup". Held in Trenton NJ each year during the month of April, the annual event has run for 16 years and has perpetuated Old Timers Night affairs being run all over the country.

### **SILENT KEYS**

Regret to report we lost two members of our Board of Directors:

District 4: #4544 Donald Trayes, WN3USA, Frostproof, FL, first licensed in 1969 as WN3NLP. Also WN4CVH.

District 7: #3113 Gene Tabor, KB7QG, South Ogden, Utah, first licensed in 1954 as K9BXC. US Marine in WWII as a radioman. Gene had been an OOTC member for 26 years.

#3441 Jerry Sager KG7ZF, Prescott, AZ, first licensed 1955 as K2QFR. Other calls KA1BAB.

#3835 Donald Letcher, W7OTA, Show Low, AZ, first licensed in 1954 as WN5JBK. Also K7ENS.

#3934 Lyman H Beman, W6GP, Carlsbad, CA, first licensed in 1938 as W6SGQ. OOTC Life member.

#4237 James Barrett, K3CKT, Takoma Park, MD, first licensed at age 16 as W4KVM. Extra Class in 1953, also Second Class Radiotelegraph and First Class Radiotelephone licenses. He was one of the earliest members of the Potomac Valley Amateur Radio Club (PVRC), having joined in 1948. USAF 1951-2. Other calls KG1JB and KH6DVD.

#4629 Robert Garland, WX3S, Perkasio, PA, first licensed in 1963 as KN3ZJF.

### **UNABLE TO FIND**

#4287 William T. Burke W1LDG, Massachusetts. Call has expired

### **NEW MEMBERS**

#4736 Charles Miller N6KW, Seattle WA first 2-way 1967 as WN6VKV

#4737 Janice St Louis W2GSY, Geneva, NY. First QSO 1959 as KN3IXC\*\*

#4738 Jay King, W2AFE, Fremont, CA first QSO as WB2LGE in 1977\*\*  
 \*\*Note: Mother and son—see story on next page

#4739 Richard Babow K6KFS, Tucson, AZ first QSO 1980 as N6DGG.

#4940 Thomas Thomson, W9CHP, Kimberly WI, first commercial radio 1959.

#4741 Peter Bradley N1ADX, Westborough, MA, First QSO 1978 as WB1GDF.

#4742 Mark Montandon W0BW, Merriam KS. First licensed 1964 as WN5KCW.

#4743 Daniel Pope, N8ZP, Flushing, MI. First licensed 1968 as WN8BHP

#4744 James Adams, KB9JMV, Bargersville, IN Commercial license 1978.

**\*\* OOTC 1547 was W2AFE**, Clifford Daykin, on the air in 1914 with spark coils and crystals. Later rotary gaps up to 1922. Licensed in May, 1920 as 8AFE. As call areas changed, he became W2AFE. Radio was his lifetime avocation which he passed on to his family. He passed away in 1997.

In 1959, Clifford's daughter, Janice surprised him as her first QSO as Novice KN3IXC. Another ham told Clifford a Novice wanted to work him, so shifted to 3705 and Novice KN3IXC said, "This is your daughter Pop". Janice later got her General and is still active today as W2GSY and is new OOTC member #4737.

Jay King, W2AFE, is Clifford's Grandson, and was licensed as WB2LGE in 1977. His first QSO was also with his grandfather. His job takes him abroad and he is often on the air. He now has his grandfather's callsign and is new OOTC member #4738.

### **THRILL OF A NEW HAM** **by Bill Engs, W6TCY, OOTC #4410**

(Edited from April 2006 SGT)

It all started in the summer of 1946. Two teenagers, my friend Gil and I had been experimenting with a private telephone scheme and listening to radio broadcasts with crystal detectors. One day we spotted an article in "Popular Science, "Listen in on hams with this one tube super regenerative receiver". We conned our fathers to buy us the components.

....When I fired up my set, I didn't hear anything for a while, then a heard a short wave broadcast station. I wanted to hear hams on the ten-meter band, so I shortened the coil. There they were—local hams, W2QLZ, W2MXK and others on ground wave.

By the spring of 1947 I was ready to take the FCC test. I took off from school, took the train to New York City, and rode the subway to the building where the FCC was located. I failed the CW exam. For the next 6 months I practiced code, by October I was ready and skipped another day of school. I passed! A few weeks later I received my Class B ticket with the call W2WLY.

I built a 6V6 crystal oscillator transmitter for 80 meters. It checked out OK, but I had difficulty mastering the skill of antenna loading. On January 16, 1948 I was playing with my one tube setup when I found to my surprise that I could light a bulb quite brightly by moving the link to the opposite end, the antenna end of the coil. I also noticed a greater rise to the plate current when the rig was tuned to a certain point. The next morning a local ham called and said he would listen for me while I made various

adjustments, and he heard me. I was thrilled! However, my key broke down, and it took much of the day to fix it. Finally, 6:30 pm, Saturday, January 17, I was ready! 9

I called W3IMA, but nothing happened. I called W2WXN and no reply. Then about 7pm, I called W1FOO. He came back.. This is the never to be forgotten moment that we amateurs have when we have nailed our first station. I was surprised, horrified and delighted all at the same time. He was in Hartford and I got RST 569x. I was shaking. My heart was pounding and it was the greatest moment. I had conquered the ham band. I called and called all the evening, but conditions were bad, and no more comeback. I wasn't disappointed, but pleased. A new ham was on the air. I was age 15. I continue the hobby to this day. (and Bill is still active today).

### **CHARLES WICKER, K4ITV #4178**

First licensed in March 1959, after building a Heathkit SW receiver and teaching myself 5 WPM code, as KN4ITV a Novice and upgraded to General within 3 months then upgraded to Extra after a few more years. Spent many years with the Virginia CW net and VSN as an ORS/RM/EC/DEC. Interest in DX picked up in 1979 and now have DXCC-CW 286 with 6 more worked/confirmed but not submitted. Became interested in packet during it's heyday, ran a BBS and SYSOPed a number of nodes and later APRS digipeaters, but CW is my first and continuing love.

Born in 1927 and retired from the flat glass business in 1995. Also married to the same woman since August 1949 and a WW-2 vet. Now in my elder days I suffer from Macular Degeneration and eyesight severely impaired, have hearing aids but still love to operate CW and a member of CWOPS. Have owned a lot of equipment since building my Heathkit DX40 and shortwave receiver kits to get started. Simple station now consists of a Yaesu FTDX1200, Ten-Tec Pegasus, homebrew G5RV @ 45', 80m inverted vee @ 40, and an old tribander @ 70'. Continuous membership in the Bristol Amateur Radio Club and ARRL since 1959 but unable to participate due to restricted driving privileges. What a wonderful hobby!

### **PIONEER AMATEUR RADIO CLUBS IN VIRGINIA**

By WB4FDT

The first amateur radiio club in Virginia was probably organized in Richmond, VA just prior to WWI. There is mention of it in a 1917 Richmond Times Despatch article. That is all we know. The founding of the next radio club, the Tri-County amateur Radio Club, again in Richmond, after WWI is better chronicled;

“The amateurs of Richmond, Virginia, met at the John Marshall High School on

January 17, 1921 and formed the Tri-County Amateur Radio Club. There were 40 men present, and Mr. C. D. Blair (3HO) Traffic Superintendent, Central Virginia, was elected Advisory Chairman, and Mr. George Robinson was elected Permanent Secretary, and Mr. Orris M. Selph acting Chairman. Meetings are on the first Monday in every month, room 207, John Marshall High School at 8pm.”

“A schedule regulating transmitting and receiving was adopted providing air time between 6am to 5pm. 5pm to 6pm—standby for U.S. Bureau Market Report. 5-6pm--local traffic, 8-9:30pm—standby for radiofone, music and concerts from local and long distance radio-telephone sets, 9:30-6am—solely for relay work. This was approved by all members present and the schedule is in effect immediately”. The Tri-County Radio Club affiliated with the ARRL almost immediately after it was formed.

There is also mention of another amateur radio club Richmond called the QSA Club, located in South Richmond. It also affiliated with ARRL in 1921 but I can find no further mention of it. Another early club was the Hampton Roads Radio Association, which is mentioned in the August 1920 QST. I've been told this club was active for a number of years but again, I can find no further information about it.

The first college club was probably University of Virginia. October, 1920 QST states:

“Word has come from the Radio Club of the University of Virginia to the effect that their station will be in operation at an early date, certainly by the last of November. The UVA station, 3YV, is now on the air. Roger Wolcott advises me that a permanent apparatus will be in place by December first, and they expect to maintain a watch up to 1am.” The UVA Club first affiliated with the ARRL in June, 1921.

Other mention of College club stations include 3YK/3BQ at Virginia Military Institute, 3CCB at Washington and Lee College, 3FV/3DT at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and a station at William and Mary later W4PYN.

**ITINERARY OF A MARCONI OPERATOR**  
CHARLES ELLSWORTH W1TU, OOTC #48 (SK 1968)  
From June 1964 Spark Gap Times

This is one short story of a series of articles about Charles Ellsworth, an early Marconi operator aboard ship in 1913.

“I was offered a one-trip relief radioman's job on the old SS Bermudian, a british ship running between New York and Bermuda. This was my first assignment to a british passenger liner as a wireless operator and there were differences. In most of my previous jobs aboard ship I had eaten with the crew. Now I was told I would have to wear a white suit and would sit at the head of a table in the first class dining salon. I

would also have the exclusive use of a room steward, or valet, who served tea in the wireless room every afternoon at 3PM, and took care of my clothes and shined my shoes!

I picked up a white uniform coat with three wide gold stripes on it at a hock shop for \$5 and bought three pairs of white pants, and a pair of white shoes. When I boarded the ship, my entire wealth consisted of \$3.00.

The SS Bermuda passenger list included the elite of New York City on Bermuda vacations. After departing New York, the bugle blew for dinner at 7pm. I arrived in the first class dining salon looking like an Admiral in the Swiss Navy. I was escorted to my own table with all passengers looking on and wondering who this high ranking officer was. I had seven people at my table which included the President of the Morgan Bank and other wealthy brokers from Wall Street.

When I started to sit down, the passengers at my table rose to introduce themselves. The passengers at my table were discussing railroads and bridges and I went right along with them. After the finger bowl had been served, the President of Morgan Bank asked me if they could get the stockclosing prices for certain stocks. I invited them up to the wireless room and called the New York Herald wireless station and requested the closing prices.

After I had furnished the stock prices, the Morgan Bank President reached inside his pocket and took out a 20 dollar bill and handed it to my valet in appreciation for services rendered. After the passengers left the wireless room, I got my 50 percent of the \$20.00, which represented a week of salary!

I only made one trip on the old Bermuda, and the Captain told me at the gangway should I again come aboard as a wireless operator, to leave the Admiral's uniform ashore!.”

### **OOTC PRESIDENT COMMENTS:**

I have two items to present to you, the readers: One is this reoccurring interest in in old Crystal set receivers and their construction. Secondly, is a renewed interest and the construction of both the solid-state versions, and also the original vacuum tube Whaddon MK VII [Paraset] model stemming from the vintage WWII spy radios, which were made in Britain around 1941.

The first item, the Crystal Set Receiver, has been around since before the 1900's; but my interest and that of many radio buffs are focusing on those made in the 1920's and probably a little bit before. Many of you reading this page, may have built them

when you were much younger, and even may still have one stashed out in your garage or storage shed somewhere.

The Crystal Radio was invented by a long, partly chain of discoveries in the late 19th century, which gradually evolved into a more and better practical radio receivers which moved on into the 20th century. The earliest practical use of the crystal radio was to receive Morse Code (CW) signals which were transmitted from the now vintage spark-gap transmitters by the early amateur experimenters.

The one I am currently building, but waiting on parts, is the Oatsbox Receiver, or more commonly known as the Oatmeal Box radio. There is so much information on how to build these, and those similar to it, are out there on the net. You can now create an interest by working with your children, grandchildren, and even your great-grandchildren to possibly stir up an interest in radios and ham radio to them.

As an update, we now have so many kits available on line for little to nothing in cost. I bought one the other day for my grandson, the size of a credit card for around \$3.00, and with free shipping. And most of you who are devout QRPers, may have already found small transceivers sets, both SSB, CW, and can include WIFI, to build for all of the bands. The cost runs from about \$6.00 and can go on up from there. If you have debilitating factors which prevent you for building a kit, they also come assembled for just a couple of bucks more.

Many of you may remember the Tuna Tin Two, designed by Doug DeMaw, W1FB, SK, was available around 1976. He was prolific in his designs and had authored many texts on the subject of radio design, which are still available on line, along with his texts.

Lastly on the WWII topic and my favorite, is the Paraset. It is now available, and comes in two solid state DIY versions, one for 80 meter and the other for 40 meters. They can be purchased from the QRPGUYS.com as well as other QRP clubs.

But many aficionados are still dedicated to the original design, the tube version. Most all of the parts available are original equipment manufacturer, OEM, or new in box, NIB, or new old stock, NOS and are readily available on line. We also have a page on Facebook dedicated to the Whaddon MK VII, aka; the Paraset; as well as there are volumes of articles and photos, and a vast number of help pages that can be found on line dedicated to this awesome little 2-band radio.

In closing, nearly all of these radio transceivers are CW, and what I'm noticing is that many of the populous are seemingly regaining an interest in Morse code and wanting to learn more about it.

So have a blessed one and until then, "Skip" Amis K5CFM