

## **OLD OLD TIMERS CLUB**

**NEW domestic member \$26. (\$10 initiation + \$16 yearly sustaining fee).**

**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.**

**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 40 th 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 you life work and experiences. Information is saved in OOTC archives. We would 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 4600 members over the past 70 years**

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## **SPARK GAP TIMES, SUMMER 2019**

I regret I've been remiss these last nine months. I thouought I would be retired by now, but instead I'm busier than ever in my store for stamp collectors. There are only two stamp stores left in Maryland, and according to the stamp newspaper Linns, there are only 46 left in the entire country. I regret that my father passed away at 99 in January and that has kept me busy also. (He was in the Marine Corps from 1939-59 and landed on Guadalcanal and later trained Chinese troops behind enemy lines in central China.) So I've decided to get some help with a young lad who will come in once a week for a few hours top keep the OOTC records up to date, so I can have more time working on SGT. I will put out another SGT around Christmas. Don't worry about membership renewal at this time. We will resume our normal continuing membership renewal in the new year. Pip

New Email address?? Let me know!

### **“The Old Old Timers Bluebook”**

A couple of times recently, I have been asked by new OOTC members about the “OOTC Bluebook.” What is it? The “BlueBook”, called by such because the binders of the three-ring notebook were colored blue, contains the history of the first 9 years of the founding of the OOTC, in two editions. The OOTC was founded by Hubert Infgalls, W1NQ, who came up with the idea of a 40 year club of old timers that would get the old-timers ”off the shelf” and back into circulation. Herbert picked 14 old timers who he knew personally were on the air at least 40 years, to start the organization. Among the first 14 members were Roland Bourne W1ANA, a close associate of Hiram Percy Maxim, founder of ARRL, and George Sterling W1AE, who at the time, was head of the Federal Communications Commission.

Although most of the members of the OOTC were hams, there were some who had let their licenses lapse, or were ship and military operators who never obtained a license, were still eligible for membership after 40 years. OOTC started with several phone and CW nets. In 1956, then President Earl Klein (no call) started an OOTC newsletter, which gradually grew into a publication called “Blabber Mouth”. Later the name became “The Spark Gap Times”. By 1956 OOTC had 700 members.

In the late 1950's President Klein had the idea of putting together a book which would list each OOTC member with a short biography and photo. Bert Osborne of Chattanooga, TN volunteered to edit the book. (Bert had been licensed as 8MF in 1916). The first edition of the “Bluebook” listed over 1200 OOTC members and a complete history of the OOTC. A second edition of the “Bluebook:” was published in 1980, added another 1300 members to the book, which listed over 2500 members. Several thousand “BlueBooks” were printed but they are hard to find. Your secretary is

always looking for copies of the Spark Gap Times between 1954-1990

## OOTC AT DAYTON-2019

Last year (2018) your OOTC Secretary missed Dayton due to some family activities coming up at the last minute. This year we made it. OOTC is always in the last tent, usually with the numbers of 6000-6200. QCWA, CW-Ops, Fists, and other ham organizations are in this tent. This year we grabbed 12 new members. Besides the new members, a number of OOTC members stopped by including OOTC Treasurer W8KNO, K5YU, K5RG (see photo), K3DQB, WB2ADF, NH7J, WA1ZMS, WS2Q, N2OCH, and K7PDZ.



Ken, K5RG

## NEW MEMBERS

4707 William Ohrenberger, W9BO, Weeki Wachee, FL licensed 1958 as KN1IIE. Also W3IUN and W9OFV.

4708 David Starley, WA2AVI, Guthrie, OK licensed 1958 as WN2AVI. Also WA3VHQ, WB4LNR and WA4GAK.

4709 Thomas Davis, KV4XN, Bolton NC. Licensed in 1970 as KD4FBN. Worked in Avionics Com/NAV shop in USMC. Worked on F4, A6, and C130 military aircraft.

4710 Ken Edwards, WW5A, Littleton, CO. Licensed in 1964 ass WN4YSF. Other calls, WA4YSDF, N3EEG, WA4SQM, KG6JGB and VQ9KE.

4711 Dale Unger, WB3BEE, York PA . First Licensed 1976 as WN3BEE

4712 Wilbur "Foster" Eich, WA4AZA, Florence AL, First licensed in 1953 as W4AZA. Other calls KH6FSY. See biography in this issue.

4713 Gary David Gray W6DOE, Anaheim CA . First licensed in 1963 as WB6HUQ.

4714 Jeff Freedman K7JF, Gig Harbor, WA. First licensed 1969 as WN7MHP. Other calls, WA7MHP and WB9PNX.

4715 Barry Siegfried K2MF, Lutz, FL First licensed 1964 as WN2NWM., 38 years with WCBS radio as Broadcast Engineer.

4716 Louis Axeman N8LA, St Louis MO. First Licensed 1976 as WD8DNZ

4719 Foster Eich, W4ZAZ, Florence, AL licensed 1953 as WN4AZA. (See his bio on next page)

4720 Robert Goldstein, N2OCH, Shirely NY Licensed in 1970

4721 Larry Card, W9CC, Grteenfuield IN 46163 Licensed 1958 as WN9LMG. Navy radioman aboard USS Peregrine 1963. US Army Security Agency

4722 Ken Scodovad, KE8UR. Elyria, OH, licensed 1971 as WN8CKX

4723 William Marx, W2CQ, Ft Lauderdale, FL Licensed as KN2PEQ in 1958 Also K2PEQ, K4ABC, K2UJ and WM4CQ.

4724 Harvey Mitchell K5YU, WN5YYQ in 1968. Seabrook, TX. Also AA5YU, XP1XBU and YN6HM

4725 Don J. Moriarty W9RA. Buchanan, TN, WN9KXE in 1979, also AJ9W and VE2GCT

4726 Terry Jones, W8JE, Arcanum, OH. KA8AML in 1978.

4727 Brian Justin WA1ZMS, Forest, VA. Licensed 1976.

4728 Harvey Klein, WS2Q, Morristown NJ, licensed 1969 as WN2JHT.

4729 Jess Young, W8JY. Augres, MI. 1960 Military hi-speed CW op, licensed as KB8IQX, and N8LYM.

4730 Lauren Rudd, KD8PZ, Sarasota, FL licensed as KN3MKN in 1955.

4731 Angus Macfeeley NH7J, Wahiawa, HI, licensed 1967 as WN1KRR. Also AH6DR and KL6DE.

4732 Mike Glass, N9BNN, Lebanon, IN licensed 1969 WN9CWV.

4733 Raymond Lotyenero W8GR, Medina OH, licensed 1968 commercial, first ham license in 1986 as KA8ZEZ.

4734 Geoffrey "Jeff" Morse K7GA, Yuma, AZ, licensed in 1958 as KN7HOZ

4735 Rocky Cookus, AE7US, Portland, OR, licensed as WB6CMP in 1976. Battalion Radio Operator, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division.

## **W4AZA “Foster Eich**

I was first licensed in 1953 at age 15. I have been continuously licensed since. I had studied for several years before I took the exam. I took the Novice exam and passed the written and code tests easily. Knew I couldn't pass 13 wpm code, but I also took the general/technician written exam. I never expected to pass it I just took it to get a look at it—after all, it didn't cost anything. To my surprise, I passed! I was licensed as WN4AZA (novice) and W4AZA (technician). I never operated under the Tech license, it it made it easy to upgrade, all I needed was to pass the 13 wpm code test. I was veery active in high school and college, but haven't been much active since 1960.

I started out with a used Hallicrafters S-40and a 25 watt CW transmitter that I built from a Ameco kit. It was not an AC-1. The power supply and xmir were on separate chasis, and the xmtr used two tubes; a 6V6 and a 6L6. Instead of a meter to tune the final, it used a flashlight bulb. You tuned for the “dip” at resonance!! It probably had 12 wats output on a good day. It cost \$30, but that was a lot of money for a farm boy. Had more fun with that rig than any other!!

Got my General ticket one yer later and built a 75 watt cw xmtr from a handbook design. Later I bought a Glob Scout which put me on AM phone. Still later I got a Heathkit 400 xmtr and SB300 receiver.

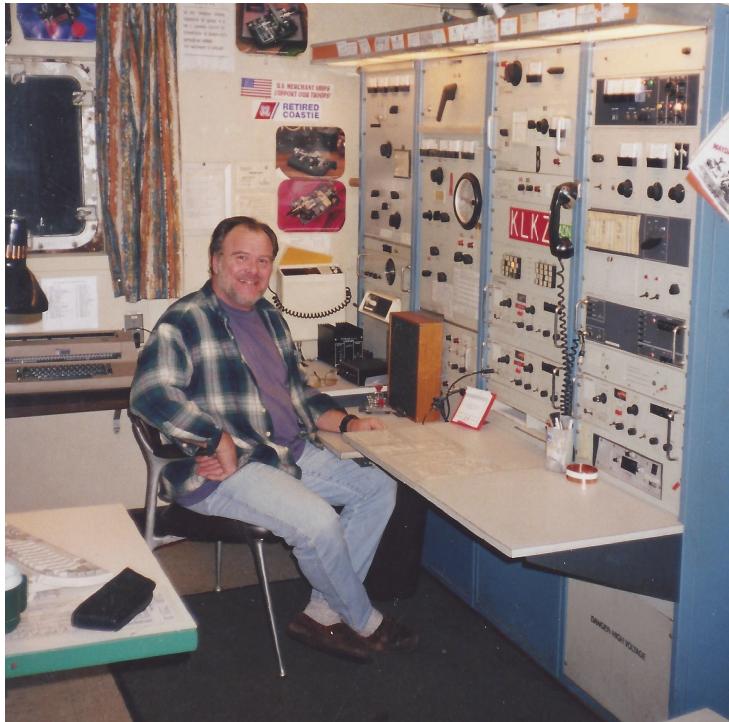
As my family grew I didn't have much time for hamming, but I always kept my license. When I was in the Navy andhad nospace for an HF rig, I built a Heathkit 2-er and used it to renew my license for my needed operating time.

I was off the air from 1990-2015. I gave my rig to some missionaries. After I retired my wife and I were driving through the country. I was admiring an antenna and my wife said “I want you to get a rigand get back on the air”. Gotta keep the XYL happy so I knew I had to relearn a lot, so I started with a the class license manual and worked my way up to Extra. Recently Ibought a FT1200. I have a short wire antenna in the attic (covenant restrictions) but an elmer helped me get everything set up and demonstrated that it worked. So, since March 2017 I'm on the air! Hope to get a mag loop up in the yard soon.

I have a wife, 3 children and 9 grandchildren. I made my living practicing

medicine for 48 years, but have also been a minister for over 30 years. I retired from medicine and the last few years I have been a half-time minister. Keeps my brain active. I am also a VE and am teaching license classes and Scout radio and electronics classes. 73 Foster Eich, W4AZA

W4AZA



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### "T. R.T AND THE GREAT WHITE FLEET

BY RAY GREEN W4BMF AND TONY THUMA\\  
FROM THE 1971 ISSUE OF THE YEAR BOOK, 1971 OF THE SOCIETY OF WIRELESS  
PIONEERS

1914-16 or so...

“T.R.T.” stands for The Topical Radio Telegraph Company. As early as 1903 ships had been set up with spark communications equipment. TRT was incorporated in 1907 and had the distinction of being the oldest U.S. Owned communication company. TRT was closely affiliated with the “United Fruitboat Company”. This company imported bananas and other tropical fruit into the U.S. Any delay in shipping could cost the company thousands of dollars in rotten fruit.. The fruit had to be at a certain temperature, and often the the company would send radio messages to the fruitboat demanding that the captain himself check the temperature of the refrigerated bananas.

About 1913, TRT set up a number of its own stations to communicate with its ships.

The stations were: Boston, WBF, Miami WAX, New Orleans WNU, Mobile WNN, and Burwood WBW (Louisiana). All were on 600 or 675 meters and down.

These high powered stations were of real early vintage—real block buster spark sets of 20-25 kilowatts. High towers and multiple strand antennas. Large generators, tall compressed air condensors, giant helix's for tuning, all carefully mounted on long porcelain insulators and most interesting—the spark gap—a large motor twirling a two to three foot disk at 2300 to 5000 rpm. It had studs mounted around its perimeter and its stationary posts had disks mounted on them to rotate slowly to keep things cool as possible.

The keying of this giant transmitter was not in the primary of the step up transformer as it proved too sluggish, so the secondary or high-tension circuit was broken by a two-contact key mounted on a shaft mechanically. It had two blower motors at each contact point to blow out the arc as the keyer sent its dots and dashes. When the op over in the control station worked his transmitter there would be two solid blue crackling balls of flame at those spark gap posts with a high pitched 500 cycle ring to it. The noise was deafening and the “blue flashes” could be seen way off shore by passing boats!

In New York City the Banana boats docked at Pier Nine. They were quite distinctive in their white hulls abnd white diamond set in a red background. They were colored white because a white hull lowered the temperature in the hull by 10 degrees, needing less refrigeration for the fruit. The fleet also had specialized repair equipment on Pier Nine for the fleet.

In New Orleans the bananas and fruit were often quarantined for a short period so the small transmitting station in Burwood was maintained to facilitate the wireless needs of the arriving and departing banana boats as to time the refrigerated railroad cars waiting in New Orleans to load.

There were many TRT stations in Central America, but the one most folks have heard about is Swan Island, near Cuba. It is a tiny island mostly inhabited by the radio operators, cooks and maintenance men. Prior to WWI, it was a high powered station, and very busy. All of the traffic from New Orleans was sorted and moved out to all the Caribbean and South American stations.

The operators on these ships had on board a 5KW spark station, usually with a range of several hundred miles. Static was the real problem on such low frequencies, and it wasn't until the invention of tubes and the finding of “short waves” after WW1 solved that problem.

Radio operators aboard ship had a real class time. A good wireless job, paid \$75 monthly and operators got to travel to see the world. The Banana boats also had passengers, usually between 30 and 60, and the operators often dined with the passengers. All radio operators had to be dressed in spotless starched whites at all times when on deck. Often the Senior operator entertained passengers and many passengers spent happy hours talking to the wireless operators.

During WWI nearly all the banana boats were sunk, usually carrying frozen beef to France. The authors conclude "it would be hard to understand the way of life in the early days of the wireless. But it was fun...the good food, the easy life plus the travel and comforts of a good wireless job was something doubly appreciated by us who can now think back about how wonderful this kind of life was!!

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## HAM RADIO AND STAMP COLLECTING

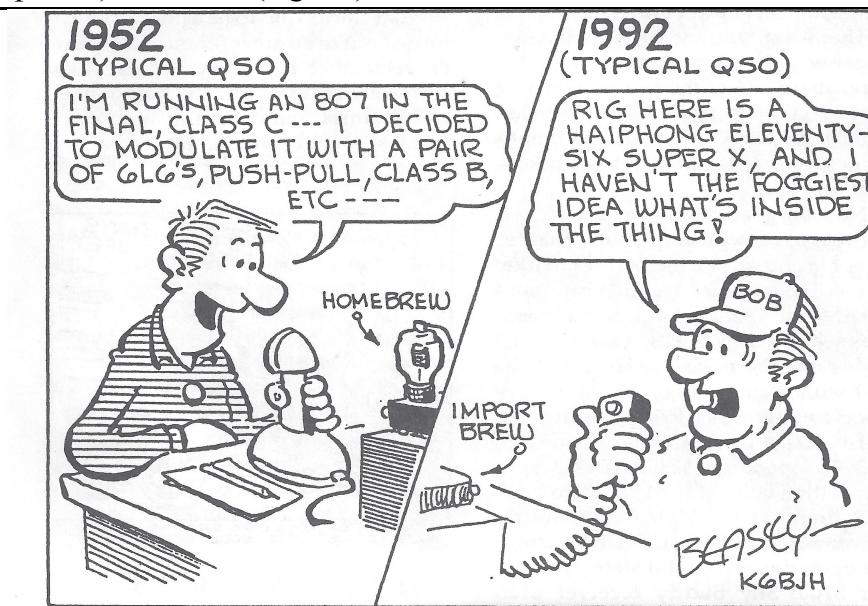
Its not often that Amateur Radio and stamp collecting collide on the same postalcard, but this common 1934 card from a SWL in San Francisco to a ham in Rainier, Oregon (call unknown) does. Obviously the SWL knows the amateur. Unfortunately, the writing is very small so it is difficult to reproduce;

October 8, 1934. To Joe McKay, 1<sup>ST</sup> and A Streets, Rainier, Oregon:

"Dear Joe. You came in fine saturday night—loudest and best station on band. Got your messages at 11:55 and 12:30 AM. Except when W6QRO (maybe 6ORO) fresno comes on your frequency and completely smothers you. He gave you a long call after you called CQ but you didn't hear him. How come? He must be a new station. First time I've heard him. He was only on Saturday night. DX is sure swell. Heard K6YAL Larry, and stations all over but QRM was very bad with too many hams on at once. Did you listen on 160 or W6IVN San Francisco?

John Adams went to Portland, got married, and is back in SF working across the street at 29 Glary(?) a stamp shop. How is business? Its picked up here. I will be listening next Saturday night at 11:30 PM. You seemed to have greatly improved your rig; 5R9 and fine quality (must be phone) 73 OM. (signed) Rossi"

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## **IS HANDLING TRAFFIC STILL RELEVANT TODAY?**

As OOTC members, the answer should be a resounding yes! After all, why was the ARRL named “American Radio Relay League”? It was founded to form a core of the best operators who could relay traffic. By handling traffic we are following in the footsteps of the earliest amateurs. As a historian, this reason alone is enough to keep traffic handling going.

After WWII, ARRL traffic manager George Hart conceived the National Traffic System (NTS) to efficiently relay large amounts of traffic throughout the country. Most traffic nets belong to the NTS System. But with today's computer gizmos and the internet, handling traffic seems abit old fashioned. But as our friends in the Bahamas, and a few years earlier in Puerto Rico and New Orleans found out, a disaster can put all communication, including the internet, out of business. A trained hams with dipoles, car battery and a transceiver could and did send alot of welfare messages to relatives in the US.

Another reason is training. For new hams learning CW, or just learning traffic etiquette, listening or checking into a net several times each week is great practice. You also get to know a lot of folks in the nets, locally or state-wide.

I mention all this because the traffic nets, especially CW ones, are experiencing attrition in their ranks as the retirement rate of current operators exceeds the rate a new recruits. I remember Vic Clark W4KFC (SK) once mentioned that when he was Section Manager in 1952, nearly 20% of the hams in Virginia would check into at least one of the nets.

It seems to me that the demise of the traffic nets began in the early 1990's with the end of the ARRL Communications Department (CD) QSO parties. In order to participate in these popular parties, one had to have an ARRL Appointment. In order to get an appointment, most ops had to be active in the traffic nets and submit a count of passed traffic. Once the CD Parties were gone, many folks no longer needed to keep up with their appointment and became less active in the traffic nets.

Its interesting to note that in the ARRL Board of Directors meeting last January “Affirmed its support for NTS and recognized the value of ...”NTS” and its “large core of experienced operators”. I hope we see more recognition about traffic handling in QST. Maybe we can get some OOTC members back into their local and state nets...

## **OOTC NEEDS A TREASURER**

Our OOTC Trerasurer, Joe Wehner, W8KNO, is ready to retire from this important position after nearly 20 yrs on the job. The job is not difficult, but does involve keeping track of the checking account and depositing checks. For further information, Email or write to Joe at his address on the second page.

