

OLD OLD TIMERS CLUB

SPARK GAP TIMES December 2020 VOL 3

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
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11924 Alpha Rd, Hiram, OH 44234 PH: 330-569-7718

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DIST. 3: Peter Young K3IN, 12434 Creagerstown Rd, Thurmont, MD 21788
Phyoung@comcast.net

DIST:4 VACANT

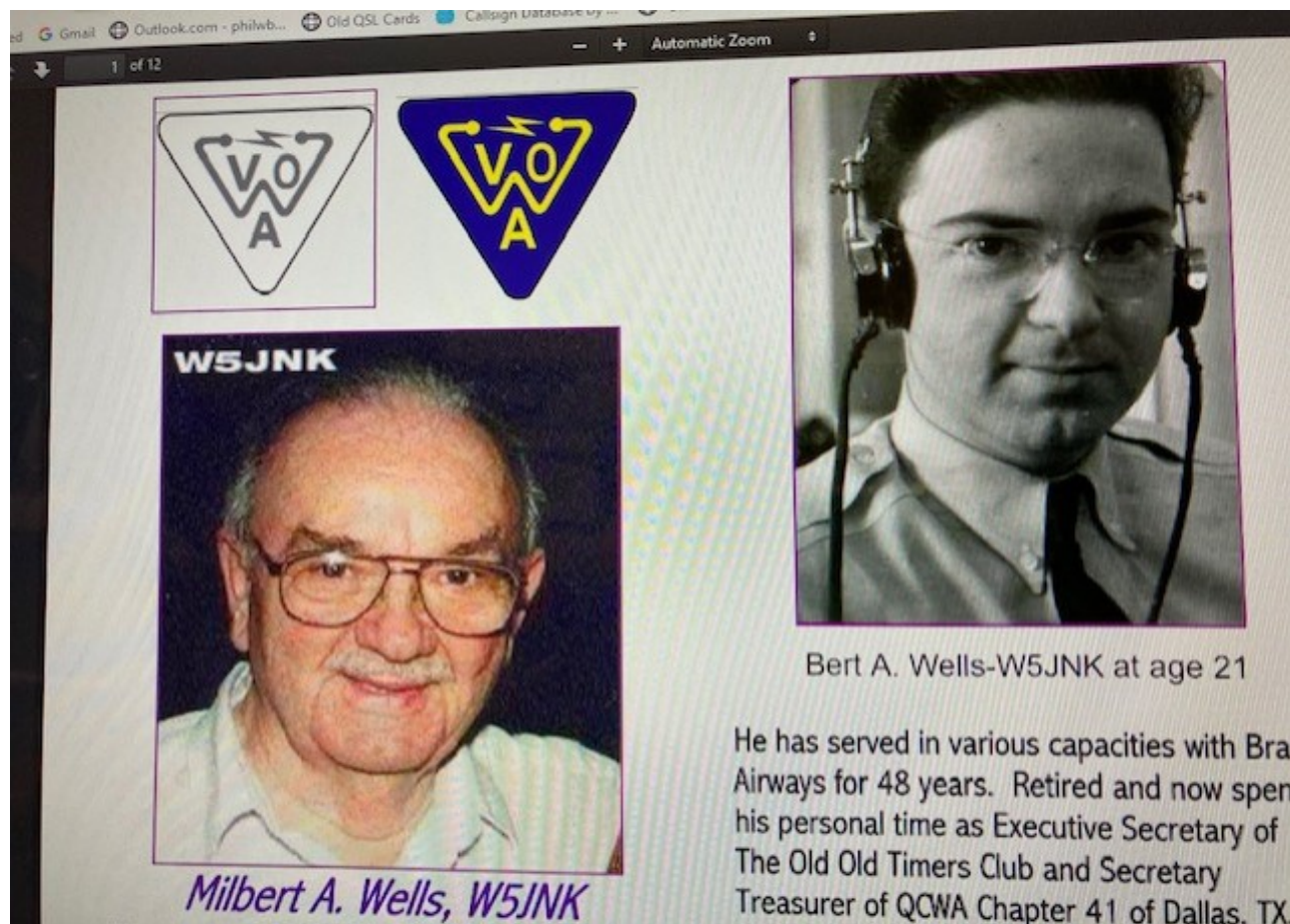
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DIST. 9: Gene Santoski, K9UTQ, 1220 18th Street South, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494 k9utq@solarus.net



I regret to inform our membership of the passing of "Bert" Wells, W5JNK #2951, on January 24, 2021. Bert was the executive Secretary of the OOTC for over 20 years until 2014. I'm sure that 90% of our present membership had some dealings with Bert while he was Secretary. Bert was born in Iowa in 1920, and licensed in 1936 as W9YLB. In 1940 Bert moved to Dallas and received W5JNK. He was employed by Braniff Airways as a radio operator aboard C-47's. During WWII, he served as an Army Corps enlisted reservist ferrying supplies from Goose Bay, Labrador, to Greenland. After the war, he continued to work at Braniff until 1988. Bert joined OOTC in October 1991 as a life member.

When I first met Bert, he was 94 years old, anxious to move to California to live with family and grandkids. I was surprised that at his age he had digitized all of the OOTC files, conjured up an OOTC web site and kept it current. Its not that easy to keep track of older folks moving about to live with family, retirement homes and the like. He was obviously devoted to the OOTC and spent much of his retirement time on OOTC affairs.

The membership extends condolences to Bert's wife, Nadine, W5ZUT.

TWO TALES OF THE WIRELESS PIONEERS

By Henry Dickow (SK)

Both taken from the 1971 Yearbook of the Society of Wireless Pioneers p.32, and 33
edited by WB4FDT

“THE DOG HOUSE”

What was the “doghouse”? I find it mentioned among many OT ship operators on the West Coast.

It turns out that the “doghouse” was a hotel in San Francisco that many ship “wireless” operators would stay at between jobs, in the 1912-22 era. The “Doghouse” was actually named “Alpine House” and apparently its early advertisements showed a large picture of a St. Bernard dog, hence the nickname, “Doghouse”. The hotel was located at 450 Pine Street, just a few blocks from the Marconi headquarters in the Merchant's Exchange Building, where many steamboat operating companies, brokers and insurance carriers had their offices.

The Doghouse was leased and operated by a one-time land-line telegrapher named L. B. O'Brian and his friend, Hamilton. The advertised room rates were 50 cents to \$1 per day. The hotel's fame were worldwide among ship brass pounders. One brass pounder would tell another that, upon reaching San Francisco, “they would meet at the Doghouse”.

The Hotel wasn't much, but it was home to many a wireless man waiting for a job and a place to bum a drink from a more fortunate telegrapher, fresh from a job with a fat pay-check in his wallet. The former site of the “Doghouse” is now part of the Bank of America Building.

(2) “BRASS-POUNDERS”

The expression “brass pounder” is credited by Marconi Wireless operator C.J. Weaver of the S.S. Philadelphia right after the turn of the century. Telegraph keys were generally made of brass except for the lever, which was hardened steel.

The first Brass Pounders didn't pound Brass...in fact, the first telegraphers weren't required to have a knowledge of code! Incoming signals were printed on a paper tape, similar to the well known ticker tape, by a machine called an “inker”. The receiving operator then converted the incoming characters into letters of the alphabet, with the aid of a codebook. This was quite slow, and it was quickly apparent that “brass-pounders” could achieve much higher speeds and save much time.

The early wireless telegraph key was a crude and massive device. It resembled a pump handle in appearance. Some called it a “pump”, others dubbed it “the grasshopper”. The old wireless keys were difficult to manipulate. They were required to make or break a heavy

current, and some keys had large cooling fins. Some keys were designed to fit special conditions, such as flameproof keys used on early submarines and aircraft, to prevent fire and sparks.

5

In the earliest days the dots and dashes of the code were of necessity sent slowly. The unsteady, rasping sound of the wireless spark was such that the code characters would have been unrecognizable if sent at too great a speed. Thus, the first wireless messages were transmitted at a rate of only 10 or so words per minute. As technology moved ahead, so did the code speed and by WW1 most operating speeds of 20-25 wpm were required of ship operators.

A few wireless and telegraph men were born to the telegraph key. Some had a sending style so rhythmic, so steady, so completely devoid of error, that the product of their nimble fingers was like music to the ear. Strangely enough, some of the best telegraphers were musicians!

A few wireless men became famous. Thomas Edison started out as a wireless operator. In his later years Edison was nearly totally deaf, and was able to communicate with his friend, Harvey Firestone, another former telegrapher, by tapping on Firestone's knee with his finger.

Another youngster pounding brass for the Marconi Company, worked his way up to the highest level of the company, correctly foresaw the huge potential in radio broadcasting to the public, and in later years again foresaw the potential in television, was David Sarnoff, who became President of RCA.

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Another name needs to be noted here, Ted McElroy, was able to send and receive at a speed of 76 words-per-minute, a world record, sending with his Vibroplex bug and recording what he had received with his typewriter. His sending style was so perfect that, when reduced to normal speeds of between 25 to 40 wpm, was indistinguishable from the manual. A flawless, two-fisted, hard-drinking, high-living telegrapher, he was the best of his trade.

CODES ON STAMPS

D.K. deNuef, WA1SPM (SK)

from The Old Timers Bulletin, September 1981

“As any seasoned philatelist can tell you, the depicting of simple telegraphic codes on postal stamps issued years ago was not especially a rarity. But one of the most interesting stamps to appear and which caused some confusion amongst even experienced communicators was the 5 yen stamp reproduced above which was released by Japan on October 6, 1954. This commemorated the 75th anniversary of Japan's joining the International Telecommunications Union.

These communicators who had forgotten about the old Japanese telegraph code were puzzled by the top strip of tape from an old telegraphic ink register. In that code it reads “KO-

KU-SAI” the Japanese word for “International”.

On the right side, running from top to bottom is a strip of “Wheatstone” perforated transmission tape in the same code, which reads “Denki” meaning “Electrical” in Japanese.

On the bottom of the frame there appears a real brain twister for many. It is a strip of 6-unit Japanese teleprinter tape which reads “Tsushin” (Communications), followed by “Rengo” (union) and “Kamei” (accession”) and then 75 “shunen (years). (The Japanese at that time used a triple-shift teleprinter keyboard which facilitated the transmission of the full set of Roman letters and the Arabic numerals, plus the 48 “iroha” (ABC) extremely simple Japanese phonetic characters. The full Japanese written language made up of some 1300 symbols. Modern Japanese teleprinters are capable of transmitting most of those characters over a 50 baud telegraphic circuit.)

Finally, on the left hand margin of the stamp, there appears a strip of conventional radioee4 circuit syphon recorder undulator tape (call “Andurata” as spoken by old time Japanese operators) again reproducing the old “kata-kana” code—reading “Kinen” meaning “Commemorative”.

The two line inscription in Japanese characters in the upper portion of the stamp translates into “International Electrical Communications Union Affiliation 75 year commemoration”. A very old Japanese Morse telegraph tape inker (with a key on base) is depicted in the center of the stamp. The stamp is generally considered to be the most unique ever issued from the standpoint of telecommunications code history.”

The stamp can be easily obtained from stamp dealers today for a dollar or two.



HUGO GERNSBACK—BROADCAST PIONEER, INVENTOR, AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER

By Myron Shaw



Hugo Gernsback 1884 - 1967
[Photo by Bob Hertzberg]

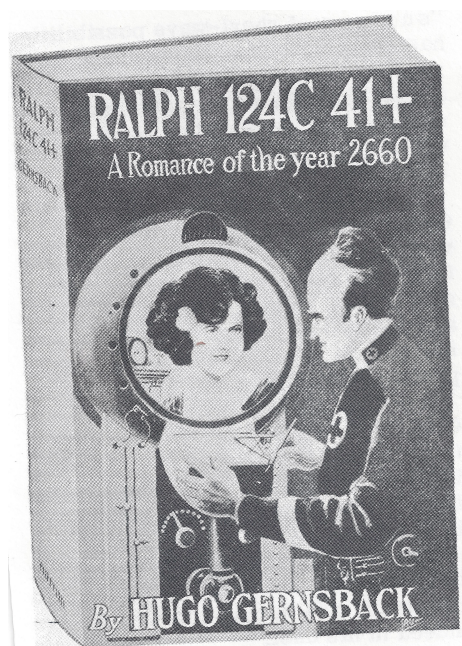
(mostly taken from The Old Timers bulletin, September, 1977)

Your editor was in a QSO a few months ago, and I mentioned Hugo Gernsback. The other station didn't have a clue as to Hugo Gernsback was. I was completely astonished, especially since the two of us were discussing science fiction novels.

At his death in 1967, at the age of 83, Gernsback held 80 scientific patents. Beginning in 1908 Gernsback had initiated the publication of more than fifty periodicals, ranging from humor through economics, photography, aviation, and crime detection. In 1908 Gernsback published the worlds first radio magazine, "Modern Electrics". This magazine eventually evolved into todays "Popular Science". In 1912, he began publication of "Electrical Experimenter" which became "Science and Invention" in 1920.

While publishing "Electrical Experimenter" Gernsback also published annual catalogues of Electro Importing Company. Founded in 1904, this company was the ONLY and original concern in America selling solely experimental electrical goods. The first amateur wireless outfit in America was made and sold by Electro. For his contributions to early wireless, Gernsback is sometimes called "the father of amateur wireless."

We started off in this story about Science Fiction. In 1911, Gernsback wrote what considered to be his most important work, Ralph 124C 41plus.



This science fiction novel predicted rather accurately the progress of science and invention for the next half century and beyond. The novel was serialized in “Modern Electrics” in 1911. It contains a description and illustration that could be used to teach radar today. The imaginary equipment was actually used to locate a space vessel.

Ralph 124C 41plus also mentions two way television, (Gernsback is credited with coining the word, “Television”) tape recorders with quarter inch tape, night baseball, artificial silk and wool, stainless steel, and flurescent lighting.

Gernback is heralded as the “father” of modern science fiction and the top writers of science fiction are awarded statuettes named “Hugos”, in Gernsback honor.

SILENT KEYS

#3156, Jay Luster, W6QHD, 96, Henderson NV. First licensed as a Novice in 1953.
Life member OOTC

#2567, Jim Hisserich, AF0F, 95, Ironton, MO. First 2-way 1943. First licensed 1977
as WD0ATD. Life member OOTC

UNABLE TO LOCATE

ROBERT A WELLS KA1GSX, Last known address : Livingston, TX

WHAT IS A “CARGO GRADE???

NOTICE TO APPEAR FOR EXAMINATION—

This is a 1923 postal card from the Department of Commerce to appear for a Commercial First Grade license. But what I don't understand are the two grades of amateur license: the card notes: “Amateur First grade” and “Cargo” grade. What is “Cargo Grade” in the amateur service? The Department of Commerce only had two grades of amateur licenses, First and second Grade, but in 1923 added an amateur Extra First Grade for CW operations between 150 and 200 meters.

The only difference between the First and Second Class amateur license was that the Second Class amateur was unable to physically attend a Department of Commerce examination, so the exam was given by a local ham in some instances, or sometimes Army or Navy offices. Perhaps the Amateur Second Class was called a “Cargo Grade”.

None of my FCC buddies have ever heard of it, and I find no information on it in the Antique Wireless Association web site. Any ideas?

Form 770
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF NAVIGATION

SERIAL No.

NOTICE TO APPEAR FOR EXAMINATION

SIR:

1. Referring to your application for license as radio operator under the grade checked below, please appear for examination at 10 o'clock a. m. on Wednesday, June 20th, 19 23 at Civil Service Room,
Federal Bldg., Columbus, Ohio

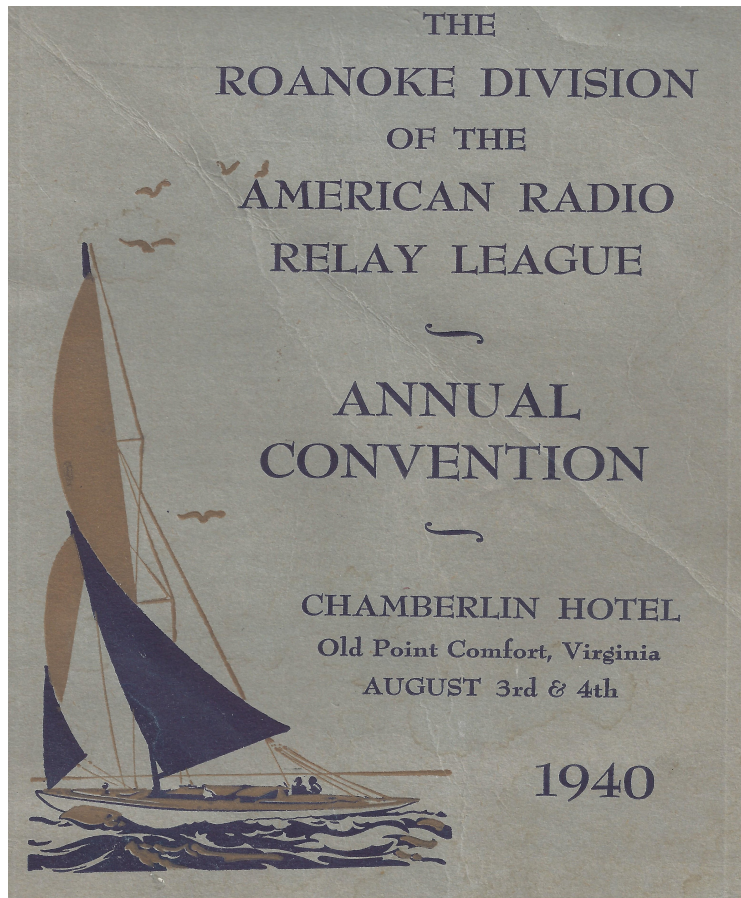
2. Bring this card with you to the examination room.

COMMERCIAL :	AMATEUR :	TECHNICAL :
First grade. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	First grade.	Experiment and
Second grade.	Cargo grade.	instruction grade.

H. S. Pyle
Examining Officer.

11-5127

1940 and 1966 ARRL Roanoke Division Convention Programs



PROGRAM

Sunday, August 4th, 1940

—:—

Sunday Morning —Fishing, Golf, Swimming, Sightseeing, etc.

12:30 PM to 1:00 PM—DX ROUND-UP

Even though DX has disappeared, Dan Smith, W3CHE, will be master of ceremonies while the DX boys tell how they do it.

1:00 PM to 2:00 PM—Luncheon Period.

2:00 PM to 2:30 PM—GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Director H. L. Caveness, W4DW, will act as Chairman and introduce the distinguished guests.

2:30 PM to 3:15 PM—Lt. Comdr. John L. Reinartz, U. S. N. R.

3:15 PM to 3:30 PM—Intermission.

3:30 PM to 4:30 PM—A.R.R.L. MEETING and Discussion of League Affairs.

President G. W. Bailey, W1KH, and Secretary A. L. Budlong, W1JFN, will head the meeting and bring the latest news from Headquarters.

4:30 PM to 6:00 PM—Swimming and Preparation for the Banquet.

6:00 PM to 8:00 PM—BANQUET and PRIZE DRAWING.

PROGRAM


devoted entirely to

amateur radio

The
ROANOKE
DIVISION
ARRL
CONVENTION

**NATURAL BRIDGE
VIRGINIA**

**MAY 28-29
1966**



SPONSORED BY THE ROANOKE VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

PROGRAM
FRIDAY MAY 27, 1966

REGISTRATION-----1900 - 2000

SATURDAY MAY 28, 1966

REGISTRATION-----0900 - 1730
 NASA FILM--Friendship 7 & Gemini 4-----0900 - 1100
 RTTY-----1100 - 1200
 LUNCH-----Dutch Treat-----1200 - 1300
 ROANOKE DIVISION MEETING--ARRL-----1330 - 1430
 BREAK-----1430 - 1500
 VHF SESSION-----1500 - 1600
 HOME BREW SESSION-----1600 - 1700
 TRAFFIC-----ARPS-----1500 - 1700
 BREAK-----1700 - 1730
 HAPPY HOUR--AUDITORIUM-2nd FLOOR-----1730 - 1830
 BANQUET-----MAIN BALLROOM-----1830 - 2030
 BREAK-----2030 - 2100
 DANCE-----MAIN BALLROOM--MUSIC BY TIDES-----2100 - 0100
 WOUFF HONG CEREMONY--DANCE BREAK-----2300 - 2345

SUNDAY MAY 29, 1966

REGISTRATION-----0900 - 1200
 MARS-----Combined sessions-----1000 - 1100
 MARS-----Separated sessions optional-----1100 - 1200
 LUNCH-----DUTCH TREAT--REGISTRATION CLOSED-----1200 - 1330
 CLOSING--AWARDS--PRIZES-----1330 - 1500

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

REGISTRATION--WIDDERS CLUB-----VIRGINIA RUDOLPH PRES.
 RTTY SESSION-----BOB RUDOLPH K4ACZ--BEN GIVAUDAN W4GJY
 DIVISION MEETING ARRL-----P L ANDERSON W4MWH
 VHF SESSION-----HARRY WELSH K4MKO-----ED TILTON W1HDQ
 HOME BREW SESSION--JOE GALESKI W4IMP--BOB SHACKELFORD K4WKH
 TRAFFIC SESSION--BOB PHILLIPS W5VZO/4 H J HOPKINS W4SHJ
 ARPS-----PETE CHAMALIAN W1BGD
 HAPPY HOUR--Courtesy, ROANOKE VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
 MARS SESSION MC-----[ARMY]-----TED MATHEWSON W4JF
 MARS ARRANGMENTS--GARLAND BATES W4ZZV--BOB ANDERSON K4UMK
 MARS NAVY-----CHIEF RADIOMAN BILLY GRAY, USAF
 MARS AIR FORCE-----MAJOR RICHARD B WAREING, USAF
 DX SESSION-----VIC CLARK W4KFC--PETE CHAMALIAN W1BGD
 BANQUET MC-----JOHN FERRELL K4YZN, PRESIDENT RVARC
 BANQUET SPEAKER INTRODUCTION P L ANDERSON W4MWH
 BANQUET SPEAKER--THE AMATEUR BALANCE--BILL GRENFELL W4GF
 SWOOP CEREMONY ROSINA WELSH K4PAN
 PROGRAM-----JIM EVANS K4RDT..Chmn--EARL WOOD W44HYA
 OFFICIAL CONVENTION STATION-----JAMES W BOTSFORD W4MFK
 PROGRAM COVER & SIGNS-----BOB RUDOLPH K4ACZ
 PROGRAM PRINTING-----EARL WOOD W44HYA & MRS EARL WOOD
 PROGRAMS-----Courtesy-----RADIO COMMUNICATIONS INC

These two programs were given to me some years ago by Ted Mathewson, W4FJ/W3FJ who was at both conventions, some 26 years apart! The 1940 Convention program is actually 20 pages, 18 of which are advertisements. I did not copy the Saturday 1940 program, because the meetings started at 3 PM, and were mostly interested in Emergency Communications, and traffic net meetings. The local Radio Inspector of the Norfolk District, did give a brief speech concerning FCC orders affecting amateur radio. I did notice that "Bus" Etheridge, W3HAE, conducted the traffic meeting. Bus was later W4KYD and K4IX. He remained active in the Virginia nets for many years and became SK about 5 years ago. The most important session was the ARRL Meeting which featured the President of the ARRL, G. W. Bailey and ARRL Secretary A. L. Budlong "Bud". The meeting ended with a banquet and prize drawing.

The 1966 program starts at 9 AM Saturday and ends Sunday afternoon. Again, meetings include an ARRL Roanoke Division meeting, traffic meeting, VHF meeting, homebrew session, MARS sessions, where Ted Mathewson W4FJ, is listed as the Army Mars Master of Ceremonies. W1BGD is listed twice, once with the DX session and once with the ARPSC (Public Service) session. W1BGD is now W1RM and is still quite active 53 years later!

Other names in the program include Vic Clark, W4KFC, who later became an ARRL Director and ARRL President, Ed Tilton, W1HDQ, who worked for ARRL and encouraged VHF operation, and Bill Grenfell, W4GF, who headed the FCC Amateur and Citizens Division in Washington. The traffic session was run by "Hoppy" Hopkins W4SHJ, a Pearl Harbor survivor, who served as Virginia Section Manager for 6 years. WA4MWH, P. L. Anderson, was the ARRL Roanoke Division Director and was the keynote speaker.

Lastly, on the last page of the program, was a list of Silent Keys. The first listed was J. Fred Wolford, 3CA. Fred was one of the earliest amateurs in Virginia, getting his ticket about 1917. He originally worked as a telegrapher for the railroads. He was very active in traffic handling and in 1920 was the District Supervisor of Southwest Virginia in charge of maintaining traffic schedules—then called "lines", and later was the first Section Manager of Virginia. The Roanoke Amateur Radio Club now has his callsign (W4CA).

Wayne Nelson, W4AA, OOTC 143, licensed in 1916 as 4DV.



WAYNE M. NELSON
CONCORD, N. C. 28025

W4AA

LICENSED NOV. 24, 1919
BY DEPT. OF COMMERCE

Member: RCA (Radio Club of America); AWA (Antique Wireless Assn.). Life Member: ARRL (QST); OOTC #143 (Old, Old Timer's Club); QCWA #2343 (Quarter Century Wireless Ass'n.); SWP (Society of Wireless Pioneers).
Jan 1916 upped code speed copying NAA wx sigs. Apr 1916 Pre-WW One 4DV.
Aug 1926 Commercial op license. Oct 1929 Amtr First. Jul 1952 Amtr EXTRA.

