

# 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.

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.

## TOM GLADIS, AB8RL, #8386



This year 2018, I will celebrate my 50<sup>th</sup> year in amateur radio. I was licensed in 1968 under the call sign WN3KQA at the age of 14. Originally from Aliquippa, PA, I passed the general license in 1969, becoming WA3KQA, a call I held for many years. Back then to upgrade, meant a trip into Pittsburgh to be tested by the FCC at the Federal Building. The FCC came to Pittsburgh every three months. Once you were told you passed, you had to wait for the new license to arrive in the mail. The wait period was usually between 6-8 weeks until the new ticket arrived.

My first station back in 1968 was Knight Kit T-60 transmitter, a Drake R-4A receiver and a 40-meter dipole antenna. The Drake receiver was top of the line at the time. My dad who also was a ham, WA3APD (sk 2010), won the Drake R-4A as first prize at the Warren Hamfest, Warren OH in 1967. As a novice, CW was the primary mode but 2-meter AM was allowed as well. The 2-meter station consisted of an Ameco TX-62 transmitter, the Drake R-4A with an Ameco 2-meter nuvistor converter to an 8-element beam on a tower up 40 feet. On 2-meters you would call CQ and tune the band for a response. Back then, activity was plentiful and it was fun to work openings into Canada, New York and Michigan.

Popular Electronics magazine always did a brief novice profile each month. A picture of my novice station and brief description appeared in the August 1969 magazine, page 104. It can still be found on-line today.

I was featured in a February 1970 QST article, titled "A Long-Delayed Echo AR" on page 30. I had been in QSO with WB6VKV on September 22, 1969. It was discovered our signals went out into outer

space and back. We could hear our transmission on our receiver come back many seconds after the end of the transmission. The echoes were studied in detail by O.G. Villard W6QYT of the Radio Science Laboratory at Stanford University. The time-delayed transmissions were like from the movie "Frequency" (but not nearly as long)!

My father and I had the fun of building Heathkit's in the 60's and 70's. Heathkit was about the only affordable equipment for most hams at the time. I can still remember the smell of solder as my father put together an HR-10 receiver. I couldn't wait for a radio to be completed to see if it would work. I still have an original SB-200 amplifier and a HW-2036 synthesized 2-meter transceiver that we built. Both still work to this day.

I am one of the original TEN-TEN NET members with #1401. My 10-10 certificate was issued 10-1-70. The certificate has the crossed American flag and California Republic flag on top of it. Very few of these certificates were issued before the flags were replaced with 10-10 International. I attended Penn State University from 1972-76. I was a member of the Penn State Amateur Radio club K3CR. The equipment at K3CR was a Collins S-line with an SB-220 amplifier. Virge Neilly was trustee for the organization at the time.

In 1985, I moved to Scott Depot, WV due to a job transfer. I worked for over 32 years for Airborne Express / DHL and still remain in transportation today.

On March 18, 2000, I upgraded from Advanced class to Extra class at the Charleston WV hamfest. My CW skills were very good and have continued to get better over the years. I successfully had to pass a 20 WPM CW test in order to earn the Extra license that year. A month later the 20 wpm Extra code element was reduced to 5 wpm. I earned the Extra license the old fashioned way. I decided at that time to upgrade my license to obtain a new call sign assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> call district and was assigned AB8RL.

I became interested in QRP back in the 70's. I built a transmitter out of Popular Electronics using a 5673 single tube – crystal controlled. Output was about 5 watts and it worked! Making a contact with lower power was fun. The 40-meter band coil was wound on a plastic prescription bottle.

My most memorable Amateur contacts were with the International Space Station NA1SS.

I was introduced to NAQCC through John N8ZYA, Vice-President of NAQCC who would always set up a table at the Charleston WV hamfest. In addition to John, WV8DH was another active NAQCC member who got my interest in NAQCC. I was impressed with the NAQCC website and its primary interest to foster Amateur radio via CW and low power. In addition, how do you beat free?

I try to participate in monthly sprints whenever I can. When I do, I admit that I pound hard for two solid hours with no breaks. I try to make as many contacts as I can. I've been fortunate to place #1 several times in the 8<sup>th</sup> district hand key category. During NAQCC Sprints, I only use a hand key. My hand key is still my original Speed-x key I used as a novice starting in 1968. That key has been used for 50 years.

My only QRP radio is a Youkits HB1B which I find to be a quality 4-band transceiver that works very well. I bought it at Dayton several years ago. I am impressed with the excellent receiver and an internal battery that has excellent life before needing charging.

My primary station today is an Elecraft K3S with the matching KPA500 amplifier. The K3S is a super radio for pulling out weak signals. It has outstanding filtering. On most Sprints, I use the K3S backed down to 5 watts. The excellent receiver is needed for weak signal QRP work.

Once in a while I will fire up a vintage Drake TR4CWRT transceiver. It is amazing the quality SSB and CW reception the old Drake radios had in comparison to today's modern solid state radios. I can A/B switch the old with new and receive some of the weakest DX signals on both.

Two items in recent years have further sparked by interest in ham radio. The first is an effective logging program which I found using Logger32. The second was putting up effective antennas that work. A few years ago, with the assistance of local hams W8TN and K8RRT, a DX Engineering 40/30 vertical was installed above ground with two above-ground radials each for 40 and 30 meters. The antenna has outperformed anything I ever used. I have worked the rarest of DX on 40 and 30 meters.

The future of Amateur Radio QRP operations is bright. More radios are available than ever before with more coming out every day. QRP radios may just be the hottest amateur radio item in the hobby today.

In addition to being a member of the NAQCC and ARRL, I am the Treasurer of West Virginia Amateur Radio and also a member of the West Virginia DX Association.

I hope to work many NAQCC members in the future months ahead.

