

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.

DAVE KUKULKA, AB9BZ, #9309



I became very interested in electronics while in grade school, back when CB's were very popular. I couldn't afford a CB radio but I had a multimeter and a huge Tektronix oscilloscope to tinker with. I would hang out at Radio Shack, Olson Electronics and Howards Electronics in Chicago looking for components for that next circuit to fix or build. I used to love reading Radio Electronics and Popular Electronics magazines and would get many ideas from them.

I began working in electronics/radio in the 80's while serving in the US Navy, receiving an Electronics Technician rating with specialties in HF communications, then later mainframe computers. While serving in the Navy, my hobby interests turned to computers, starting with the Timex/Sinclair ZX81, then Commodore 64/128, and finally IBM machines. However, while onboard ship I picked up a Sangean ATS-803 and began shortwave listening.

I got started in ham radio 18 years ago, after earning a degree in Computer Information Systems and while working my 48+ hour full time job. I needed a new challenge to pass the time that was previously spent in class or studying. I worked the midnight shift, six days a week, so I would be up at 2:00AM on my day off, a perfect time for working with the radio.

I had to pass the 5WPM code test for the General, so I spent a few months listening to code tapes while driving to and from work. Then I picked up a Small Wonders Labs SW-40+ QRP transceiver kit as well as a Ten Tec Argosy and made a few contacts at 2W at a very slow speed. It was quite a thrill for me to make contacts using QRP and my simple wire antenna.

I took a break from ham radio when I decided to resume my studies in grad school for Computer Science. And then later again took another break, but recently had my interest reignited while chatting with a coworker. It is interesting to see how the ham radio hobby has evolved over time, and it is challenging to get back into the original digital mode of operation - CW.

I really enjoy building radio kits, antennas, keyers, etc. and getting them on the air. I have built the Small Wonders SW-40+ twice (sold the first), Pixie II, PSK-20 Warbler, a uBitx, a few antenna tuners, and accessories such as the K1EL K10 keyer and a Hi-Per-Mite active audio filter. I'm awaiting the arrival of a QCX-20 and QCX-40 for this coming fall/winter projects. Getting my CW up to a usable speed again has been a real challenge for me. It seemed that no matter what I did, I could not get my speed above 10WPM.

I was fortunate enough to get into a CWops class last April which really helped to keep me focused and motivated to move forward. My instructor, Jack, W8KR is very passionate about CW operating and his guidance has been so very helpful and appreciated. I have recently started on the CWops Level 2 journey in September with Mark, K5GQ and again feel fortunate to have another very dedicated and knowledgeable instructor.

After completing level 1 of the CW Academy, I started working some sprints. It has been quite a challenge making just a few contacts. I'm still working on finding an effective antenna that I can quickly and easily deploy in the field. I've tried a linked dipole, end-fed half wave and a Crappie Pole vertical.

I hope to improve my CW proficiency over the next few months and I'm looking forward to working you on the bands soon.

