

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.

KEITH ZIMMERMANN K5WX #703

I began writing this spotlight article about what I've done over the years, but I soon realized that it was looking like my obituary! It's clear to me that amateur radio has been, still is, and always will be an amazing hobby. But even more, it is a way to communicate, to share, to learn, to teach, and to discover. It never ends and I'm not ready to either!

GETTING STARTED

I remember getting my Novice license (WN5ZBN) in 1969 as a teenager. I first got on the air with a low power, crystal controlled, one-tube, CW transmitter kit. All I had for a receiver was an old, very used National NC-98 general coverage receiver that I had used for years as a Shortwave Radio Listener. That's all I could afford. My very first contact from Texas was on CW with a ham in Massachusetts. That year was near the peak of sunspot Cycle 20 and you didn't need more than a few watts to contact anyone. I was so amazed following my first QSO that I had to walk out to the backyard and just stare at my wire dipole antenna strung across the roof of the house. How is that possible, I asked myself? I still do that some days!

During those early years, I developed some good friendships in a Boy Scout Explorer post that focused on ham radio and meteorology, two of my favorite things. I went on to get my Extra Class license and bachelors and masters degrees in Environmental Engineering and Meteorology. I enjoyed a great career developing some of the



early computer models related to atmospheric dispersion of air pollutants and the control of air pollution.

CW TRAFFIC NETS

But over the years, ham radio has allowed us to have more than fun. I operated in the ARRL CW traffic nets passing messages almost every evening on 80 meters. We helped during hurricanes and other emergencies. One of the most rewarding times was helping families find other family members that had been separated during the fall of Vietnam in 1975. I remember temporary

camps for the refugees in Florida, Arkansas, Pennsylvania and California. At the time, CW was about the best way to accurately send messages with names of folks from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia that most of us Americans are still working on pronouncing. We helped many families reunite through the messages that were relayed using CW across the country.

QRP OPERATIONS

I've always loved operating QRP CW. I went through a number of different rigs including the Heathkit HW-7 and the Ten-Tec Power Mite and a few others along the way. I've found that operating QRP in contests, even with just wire antennas, is easier than most people think. It seems like the contest stations with the big guns and multi-tower antenna farms are willing to make the effort to log a contact, even when the QRP signal is a little weak. Operating Field Day with a QRP setup requires a lot less equipment than when running high power.

NEW FRONTIERS

And then, just like a lot of us, I had a quiet spell with amateur radio taking a backseat to starting a family. But, after a dozen years or so, I got back into amateur radio as packet radio and satellite communications were beginning to be more widespread. It was rewarding to assist in the development of a packet radio network on two meters linking hospitals across my city. About the same time, I enjoyed doing some experiments with the International Space Station's repeater to test different simple antennas that could be used. That resulted in an article appearing in QST magazine in 2004.

Now, here we are in an age with incredible digital radio systems that can make computer-to-computer contacts with low power at the bottom of one of the weakest sunspot cycles on record. But for me, I can't wait for sunspot Cycle 25 to takeoff so we all can have more fun trying out new wire antennas, learning new things, and participating in QRP CW Sprints with NAQCC. We've only just begun!



TRANSATLANTIC QRP WITH G3ZRJ —AND SOME GREAT ANTENNA ARTICLES

At about 2330Z on 3/19 I called CQ on 40-meters expecting to enjoy a typical regional QSO. I was very surprised to have Tony, G3ZRJ, answer me! With several repeats we managed to complete a minimal QSO (339's) "across the pond." Afterwards Tony looked me up on QRZ.com and learned about my NAQCC activities and decided to join himself. He is now member #10707. We have exchanged a couple of emails and he sent me a link to a very good free antenna e-magazine at [antentop.org](http://www.antentop.org/library/files/IP_for_QRP.pdf), and specifically to some projects focused on QRP at http://www.antentop.org/library/files/IP_for_QRP.pdf.

73, Paul - N8XMS #675
100% QRP CW