

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.



LOU AXEMAN JR., N8LA, #2358

My intense general interest in radio began in early 1948 at the age of four when a severe ear infection, rendering me temporarily nearly deaf, required me to press my ear against the speaker cloth of our console radio to hear my favorite programs.

My interest in ham radio began in 1956 as I attended some license training sessions held by Ben Hassel, W8VPC (SK), a "proto Elmer." That year, a friend and I purchased Heathkit AR-3 receiver kits. His kit, soldered with a soldering gun, worked fine when aligned by Jack Saller, ex-K8DBV (SK), while mine, soldered with a woodburning iron, would not work despite Jack's best efforts. Jack also became a "proto Elmer" when, in my presence, he worked "across the pond" (Lake Michigan) from Michigan to Wisconsin with his DX-35 and Command Set. My 9th grade science teacher, Gil Pearsall W8HEZ (SK), became another "proto Elmer" when, with a code practice oscillator in class, he sent "CQ DE W8HEZ" that I, having memorized the code characters, verbally translated.

However, since my "people skills" left much to be desired, I never aggressively pursued social relations with these "proto Elmers" nor with my school mates who were hams. I did purchase the 1957 edition of the ARRL Radio Amateur's Handbook, peruse the Electrical Laws and Circuits chapter, and drool over the ads in the Catalog Section (136 pages!)

Amateur radio then went to a "back burner" with me until 1976 when a fellow G.M. employee, Jim Blake, then WB8YSC, became my actual Elmer by tutoring me and administering my novice exam. Hal Bell, WA8LAY (SK) became an "auxiliary Elmer" when I attended one of his license training classes while being tutored by Jim. Upon passing the novice exam, I purchased a TS-520 and awaited my license. It arrived, with the call WD8DNZ, in late November 1976.

I cut a dipole for the 15-meter novice band, hung it in a second floor bedroom, and got on the air, making my first contact on December 2, 1976 UTC. In 1978, by then N8LA, I attended the second meeting of the newly formed Michigan QRP Club, founded by Ralph Burch, W8LCU (SK), and was assigned the membership number MI0078. This began my real interest in QRP. I picked up a used HW-8 and, guided by Ralph, installed an SO-239 and 8 ohm audio transformer in it. Every QRP contact with it thrilled me and inspired my 1981 purchase of a new TenTec Argonaut 515.

After decades of QRP contacts and life's ups and downs, I relocated to St. Louis, MO from East Lansing, MI where my dear XYL, Kathy, and I married in 2000. I was relatively inactive until 2010 when Jim Cline, KC0DTD, helped me realize that I could have a shack in our laundry room with an antenna around the roof parapet of our condo complex fed through the shack window and up the shaft outside it.

My favorite ham radio sub activities are some contests: ARRL International DX CW; first place QRP Single Op, Section 2011, Division 2015; ARRL 10 Meter CW; first place QRP Single Op, Division 2013, Section 2015; ARRL 160 Meter CW; first place Section 2013; and last but not least, NAQCC Sprint; second place 0 Division straight key simple wire antenna a few times! I also rag chew and will pause in a contest to rag chew anytime.

All of my QRP contacts are memorable, especially those with NAQCC members. One memorable QRP contact occurred in the NAQCC Milliwatt Sprint on June 19, 2014 UTC. Using a Two Tinned Tuna transmitter at 250 milliwatts and a Neophyte receiver, I called CQ for the entire two hours of the Sprint, only making one contact. That contact was with Lawrence, AD0BI, who was using a KX1 at one watt to an inside antenna around the ceiling of his fourth floor condo one block from me. Before that contact, we were unaware of each other but have become great friends since then.

I own too many QRP and QRO rigs, keys, and bugs to list, but one of my favorite keys is TOCK (Tricked Out Crappier Key.) It has a plastic base with a large piece broken out of its rear, a U-shaped piece of metal with small holes to hold its lever, a ballpoint pen spring, and a knob that screws into a headless screw that screws into its lever. With this key plugged into my KX3, with Begali Adventure paddles attached but not plugged into it, I won first place in this Division in the 2015 ARRL International DX CW Contest!

Other hobbies include growing food plants and irises, reading, bicycling, and talking back to the radio and TV. One other hobby closely related to CW is American Morse, formerly used over wires by railroads and Western Union. Most Saturdays between 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. Central time, a number of us gather in Ferguson, MO with our Morse Telegraph Club Chapter President Derek Cohn, WB0TUA, for online American Morse Code chats with other club members.

I was employed as an hourly autoworker for 30 years (four years on the line and 26 years in skilled trades.) My loving XYL is Kathy, former English Department head at Clayton High School in suburban St. Louis, whose almost infinite patience I try nearly every day. Our daughters/step daughters are Lorraine Axeman, KA8LDJ, former researcher for Jeopardy!, and Carmela Axeman Bracco who has a

Master's Degree in teaching the Learning Disabled and is certified to teach the Emotionally Impaired as well. Our cat children are Grace and Joy in heaven and Hope who is still with us.

Finally, the person who built the AR-3 that worked never became a ham. He had to console himself by earning a Ph.D. in physics from Harvard along with a person named Joe Taylor who, I believe, is a ham who dabbles in QRP modes.

