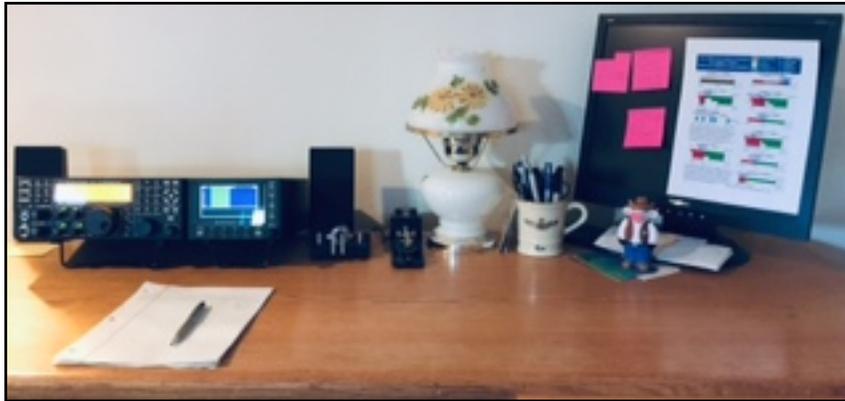


MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



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.



LEE BROESTL, AA5LH, #5349

I've been a ham operator for over 50 years. Always exciting, challenging and one never knows where/when/what mode the 'thrill' QSO will rock the moment.

My primary operating mode has always been that of Morse Code/CW. However, before Amateur Radio launched into my life, a slight back story is necessary. Back in the mid-1960's, I was a Second Class Boy Scout (BSA), wishing to become a First Class Scout. I suspected Morse would be a huge challenge. My learning plan attempted to memorize individual letters/numbers A-Z/1-10. The passing criteria was to receive a 20-word message within a non-defined time limit. Trying to accomplish this test was very frustrating. Shortly afterwards, I quit the BSA. I thought mastering the Morse Code was an insurmountable feat.

When I was a sophomore in high school, I had two friends deeply involved in an early development of a new and bold social media platform-Citizens Band radio (you know, Breaker/Breaker, Ch.1-9). Since I was not 18 years of age, I went to my Dad asking him to sign the required FCC application, as my associate's Dads had done. As a strong individual, he knew such radio use was a folly. His reasoning was a high school student didn't need be tempted away from his required studies. My Dad stated that if I REALLY wanted to work Radio, I would be involved in KNOWING/LEARNING Amateur Radio! I realized right away though that this different style of radio required Morse. Gone were my thoughts of being on the radio.

Within a month my Dad handed me an article in the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper highlighting the city wide Ham Radio activities. Also it mentioned of a club offering Novice license classes for new applicants. These sessions were held one night a week for ten weeks. My Dad offered this to me as a Father/Son activity. Though my Dad never got deeply involved, it set a fire of interest within me. I was surprised learning Morse quickly by 'grouping' similar sounding patterns for different characters. I still have that Ameco Code manual, Mastering the Morse Code.

After attending this class, I passed my first Novice license test, result: Callsign-WN8CPJ! Now I was really excited. I had challenged and won against my unease of the Morse Code. A friend of my parents, who was a ham (WA8SAM-SK) offered to become my 'Elmer.' It was impressive to visit his shacks. There were two separate, full operating Collins 'S-Line' stations operating on his property. Completing his station were two 50' foot towers and many wire antennas. He routinely had a scheduled QSO with a South African friend. SAM offered me a Collins 75-A4 Receiver with which to build my first station. For my transmitter I constructed a Heathkit DX-60. Another ham gave me a 3-element 20-15-10 meter Yagi antenna. Not to be left behind, I planted a 50' tower at my parent's house (before nasty HOAs).

I operated as a Novice for two years, the normal duration for this type of license. I had many wonderful QSOs around the USA/Canada. There was no renewal for Novice licenses. It was expected you would upgrade to General or a higher class of license prior to expiration. Since my first license had expired, I needed to retest which I did with the new Callsign-WN8OFB. Quickly (within months), I upgraded to my new General license - WB8OFB.

During the next 17 years, my code speed increased dramatically but my electronic theory knowledge stagnated. Until the FCC published the respective grade Question Banks and instituted Incentive Licensing (capping HF frequencies on General/Advanced licensees), it took me numerous tries to upgrade my General license. Finally in 1987, I achieved my Amateur Extra. Truly, it wasn't the 20 Words-per-Minute code speed which worried me.

Though I've been licensed for a half century, I've not owned many, different radios or antennas. Despite this, there have been many unique operations. My present HF transceiver is a Elecraft K3/P3. Present antenna is a G5RV, strung as an Inverted VEE. I've owned only four HF radios (Icom-720A, Heathkit SB-104 & Collins Rcvr/Heathkit DX-60 Xmtr). There have been many different station locations but two that deserve to mention. As a professional pilot, I've operated HF Aeronautical Mobile on the Boeing 747-400 & USAF RF-4C. Also, I've been licensed while living in Germany (DL4SL) & Korea (KD9LB).

As mentioned earlier, my primary fun mode of operation is CW/Morse. I estimate CW ops are 95% of my ops time. I'm usually operating QRP (<5 watts output). For five years, I've been operating PSK and RTTY using an Apple MacBook laptop. I've investigating moving into FT-6, but not totally grasping the concept or operational procedures. I expect swapping out my G5RV antenna to a horizontal loop within the coming month.

There are many aspects/modes which attract the human operator to new, focused technologies. I've been drawn to CW because of my past story. Yet, I can see various distinct modes which can draw other hams to their 'go-to' ops. There are many different areas I thought I would never dabble in. One of these areas, which popped forth in 2018 has been contests/challenges. NAQCC has matched my love of CW/QRP with a specific monthly challenge. It has given me the incentive to possibly dare to run with the Big Dogs in larger contest events. Antennas with their finicky requirements coupled with a strong hope for higher performance/less noise have driven me toward new antenna solutions.

Amateur radio has always been a big tent allowing any ham the latitude to find their likes/challenges. I hope that next generations will be drawn to the many wonders of Ham Radio, especially CW. At whatever modes/power levels allowed. QRT, my friends.

CUL/73s
AA5LH

