

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.



KEN GIES, KN2G, #4886

Hi there! My wife Jill, KC2YLE, of 28 years and I live in central New York on 15-acres in a mobile home with a small barn containing my draft ponies and a few goats and rabbits. We are happy empty-nesters having successfully evicted four functional adult children. Two are hams but presently inactive, one being in college and the other supporting our first two grandchildren. I finished my college education with an A.A. in General Studies which foreshadowed my entire working career...

I make hay the old fashioned way with my ponies and put it up loose without a baler or tractor. (No, I am not in any way Amish.) I have plenty of room for my antenna garden (not enough antennas to call a farm yet) and a corner of the living room for my ham shack. I am a homebrewer at heart. I have fabricated several of my own horse-drawn devices including a ground drive power take off unit to power a tractor drawn hay tedder, a 73-foot freestanding vertical antenna, a cootie key, several primitive bow and arrow sets, a tarp tent and alcohol stove for camping and my own greenhouse frames from 1 1/2" schedule 40

pipe. I also write articles for a magazine that caters to draft horse farmers. I love singing and playing my tenor banjo, too, but it ain't pretty.....

My occupational activities are equally diverse. I have been a logging camp cook, a logger, oil field hand, forest fire fighter, ice road trucker (before it was cool), electronics assembler, janitor, mechanic, writer, and farmer to name a few things. My wife and I had our 15-year-old business incubating and hatching poultry fail a year ago. It has led to a period of redefining ourselves. So, at present I am best described as a hobby farmer who drives a truck part-time and preaches part time. I also collect and sell scrap metal as opportunity arises.

Like many hams in the 50+ bracket, I have had a few health challenges. The one that has affected me most for the long term is from Valentine's Day of 2015. I had some sort of brain explosion that almost killed me. The doctors have no idea what caused it or why I am functional today with no loss of body motion, etc. However my mother and wife tell me that I don't remember some important events from the past. It has also affected my processing speed. I don't do as well with complex thinking and numbers, always a struggle, are now noticeably more difficult. Sometimes I mix numbers up. It happens when quoting a scripture reference at church, or reading a bill of lading when trucking. However I am surrounded by very gracious people and it is kind of like our little family joke when it happens. The annual Field Day is more difficult than it used to be with all the noise and traffic too. Even being a word guy has been affected. This little blurb has consumed several hours as I sort through my thoughts and repair a gazillion mis-typed words. (Gotta love those spell checking red lines!) Plus, my wife, an English major, always checks my work to make it better.

Radio really became part of my life in my early teens when the CB craze hit and my dad had trucker songs on vinyl extolling CB in pieces like "Convoy". We had a number of CBs in our tractors and trucks on our 2500 acre ranch in northern British Columbia on the Alaska Highway. It was a time of fantastic propagation and sometimes we could not contact the base station because the skip from Texas washed us out! I remember working skip at night under the northern lights too. The next year I built my first shortwave kit radio from Radio Shack and got hooked on listening to AM broadcasts on the low bands.

This brings me to why I enjoy the NAQCC so much. I will never be a top contender in the sprints (not enough brain left), but the excitement I get contacting Florida, Michigan, or even another New York state station with 5 watts on my homebrewed cootie key, inverted-vee fan dipole or my new vertical equals any rush I got as an ice road trucker in my adrenaline seeking youth. The relaxed and friendly group is more like a visit to a coffee shop than an "in your jugular" fast paced contest. I also appreciate the patience of the volunteers who have had to help me with logging errors numerous times. QRP fits seamlessly into my compulsive minimalist mentality alongside horses, primitive bows, stone tools and human powered gardening.

So, when I am not driving truck or helping a soul in need, I participate in the sprints. It keeps me on the air, fascinated that I can manipulate an electromagnetic mini-pulse of energy from my FT817 into a wire and have it leap off into the ether and be captured by another ham's wire, made into intelligible communication and then sent back again with a "GL es 72 dit dit"

dit dit

The photo shows me with my homebrew cootie key which I use in all the sprints, a flintknapped glass arrowhead I made, and my ft 817 and other gear in my "hamshack corner" of our living room.

