

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.



BRIAN THRELKELD, KQ4MM, #9228

My first exposure to shortwave radio was in the basement of my childhood home with an old ARC-5 that my dad said came out of a WW2 B-25 bomber. I connected a set of earphones and ran a wire all around the basement back to the antenna post (I still have that ARC-5). At night I could tune in WWV on 5MHz and listen to the time and reports, and then the 80M ham band where I could hear all of those strange garbled voices (SSB) and morse code. Some of the morse code was slower and I was able to write down the dahs and dits and decode it.

Quickly I decided I wanted to learn morse code so my dad and I built a Radio Shack oscillator. Armed with that oscillator, a key, and a book on how to learn morse code, off I set on this new adventure. I did eventually learn most of the characters, and could copy the novices on 80M, but as time went on, friends and other adventures soon took the ARC-5's place for this 9-year-old boy.

Fast forward to 1985, I'm in the USAF stationed in San Vito dei Norman, working in the air force post office when I stumble across some SWL cards someone was receiving. Seeing those SWL cards peaked my interest in SWL so I ordered a Kenwood R2000 and began SWLing most every night and mailing out reception reports the next morning. I quickly amassed quite a collection of SWL cards and neat SWAG from the many of the stations to which I sent reports.

About three years later, I was relocated back stateside to Keesler AFM Mississippi which is where I was licensed in 1989 as N5OBF (Technician). I quickly brushed up on my morse and soon upgraded to General, then Advanced. I passed my Extra written, but never could break the 20WPM barrier to finish the upgrade.

The club at Keesler (K5TYP) at the time was very active and had a nice station. That, plus being solar cycle 22, meant I was able to work much DX on SSB so I let my morse skills get rusty. In December of 1992, I decided to separate from the USAF and moved back to my birth QTH of Huntsville Alabama.

As a result of this move, starting a new career and raising a family, most of my spare time was taken up, and amateur radio became a passing interest. Now 25 years later and living near Nashville TN, a casual conversation with a dear friend resulted in me obtaining some of her late father's (Bill Lockin - W9KAC) gear. Unfortunately I only met Bill a few times. He was a WW2 veteran and flew C-47's during the war, but he was a fascinating person that I wish had been my Elmer.

The ICOM 751a of Bill's turned out be non-functional and unrepairable but the bug had bitten and this brought me back into amateur radio as of this past May of 2017. With a new found love of morse, I began the relearning process via the LCWO site. I now can send and copy about 10-13 WPM with hopes of getting a little faster, while still keeping accuracy paramount.

As I got on the air, I quickly came across the great people at SKCC and then of course NAQCC and my path was set. I disconnected my microphone and stowed it away in my desk drawer. It is CW-only for me now. Now a few months down the road, I think many morse operators are naturally drawn to QRP at some point. For me, it just seemed a natural progression of my morse adventure to combine QRP with portable outdoor operation.

Currently I enjoy the NAQCC and SKCC sprints, rag chewing, chasing DX when I can hear it on my end-fed wire (which isn't very often), and restoring and using old keys. Being a straight key only guy, and having some nerve damage that causes a slight tremor in my hands, I found by experimentation, that cootie-style keying was the method for me.

I currently use a Kent SP-1 wired as a cootie, but recently purchased a Bunnell double-speed key from member Steve Morris W5BIB (Thanks Steve). This Bunnell cootie will end up being my primary station key and the Kent will be relegated to QRP portable operations.

I also have a nice 1941 Vibroplex original standard that I plan to attempt to learn someday as well. Interestingly, my late grandfather was a freight agent and telegraph operator for a railroad in Mississippi and this was the kind and vintage of Vibroplex that he used on a daily basis. I also enjoy using my J-37 and Begali camelback, amongst others, on occasion as the mood strikes me.



When I'm not pounding brass, I like to be outside boating, hunting, hiking, camping and just generally enjoying the great outdoors. I work as an IT manager for Sanmina Inc. and plan to retire in a few more years, God willing.