

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.

JOCK IRVINE, N1JI, #7012



My interest in radio started during the summer of 1984 when I was home from college and working the 3:00-11:00 shift at the New Hampshire State Hospital. I was having a hard time unwinding and getting to sleep after work until I discovered AM talk radio. This was before talk radio became mostly politics and there were a lot of interesting programs to listen to as I lay in bed before going to sleep. Before long I discovered that I could tune in stations from New York City, Washington, D.C., Detroit, and even Chicago with my little clock radio. This seemed magical to me and I would often tune around just to see how far away I could hear. I still get that magical feeling when working a DX station today, knowing that I've made a direct connection, using just a piece of wire hanging in my back yard, to another part of the world.

I finished college in 1986 and joined the Air Force Band stationed at Pease AFB. I went in as a tuba player (my major in college), but I picked up bass as a secondary instrument after a couple of years. I didn't think much about radio until one day in 1989 when we were finishing up a tour of upstate New York. It was a 10-12 hour bus ride back to the base and, having just finished the book I'd brought with me, I had nothing to read.

A friend loaned me his copy of "The Complete Shortwave Listener's Handbook" and I read it cover-to-cover during the drive. By the time we arrived back at the base I was hooked. The next morning I went to Radio Shack and bought a DX-440 shortwave receiver, which you can just make out in the top right of my photo. After a couple of weeks, and a lot of listening, I knew I wanted an amateur radio license so I went back to Radio Shack and bought a set of Gordon West's Morse Code tapes.

I had a lot of fun listening to those tapes and I found that learning the code was pretty easy for me. By the end of a three-day weekend I was finished with the tapes and CW has been my favorite mode ever

since. Soon I was out of the Air Force and back in my home town of Concord, NH. I learned about a Novice class that was being run by the Contoocook Valley Radio Club and my father and I signed up. At the end of the class we both passed the code and theory tests and our call signs were issued on December 26, 1990; KA1WYD for me and KA1WYE for my father. We both have vanity calls now and his is K1FLI.

I was very active in amateur radio for over ten years but eventually my attention turned to other things; family responsibilities, a satellite radio receiver in the car, etc. Sometime around 2005 I was setting up a home office for my music business and anything that wasn't music related had to be moved out of the space. Since my radio equipment just seemed to be gathering dust, I boxed it all up and stored it in the basement. I think I always knew I would be coming back to the hobby though, because I made sure to renew my license and I never let my membership in the local radio club lapse.

I came back to radio about three years ago when one of my sons was starting his freshman year at Keene State College. I had replaced the satellite receiver in my car with a smartphone and was disappointed to find out that most of the drive to campus is a dead zone. As I was wondering how to make the trips more interesting, I remembered the Ten-Tec Scout sitting in a box in my basement - Eureka! A ball-mount on the fender (It's an old car) with a couple of hamsticks completed the setup and I was back on the air with my first QSO on November 24, 2012.

I think what first attracted me to QRP is its simplicity. A complete station that you can fit in a backpack vs. one that fills a desk. And, the fact that QRP is less likely to cause RFI is a real plus for me in my crowded neighborhood (The houses here are less than twenty feet apart). When I found the NAQCC and K3WWP's websites, it was sort of like that time on the bus when someone handed me a copy of "The Complete Shortwave Listener's Handbook;" I read just about everything on both sites and, when I was done, I was hooked on QRP. K3WWP's site in particular showed me that it's possible to be successful with low power, even from a small city lot like mine. At the end of last year, I replaced my 100 watt transceiver with a KX3 and now I'm 100% QRP.

My favorite NAQCC activities right now revolve around the awards program. After investing in a KX3 I want to make sure I use it, so I'm working toward the QSO-a-Day award. At first I thought that making a QSO every day would be a real challenge, but once I got into a regular routine, I found that it's really not too hard. As I write this I've already made it through the first seven months of 2015 and I'm pretty sure I'll make it through the whole year.

Another award I'm working on right now is the participation award, which means I'm taking part in the challenges and sprints each month. Thanks to the NAQCC, I'm spending more time on the air than I ever did before. I want to thank everyone who participates in the club activities, as well as those who volunteer their time and make donations, for making this such a vibrant club.

Music has been the one constant in my life and I've been performing in one group or another since I was fifteen years old. Currently I'm playing bass in about a half-dozen jazz and blues groups. This may sound like a lot, but no single group seems to get a lot of work these days, so I'm really just playing five to ten gigs per month.

After the Air Force, I found a day job working with computers and I just finished my 22nd year as the director of IT for a small school district here in New Hampshire. I'm making a career change next fall and I'll be in the same district, but teaching computer and music classes instead of running the computer systems. I have a wonderful wife and four kids who are 9 months, 3, 21 and 23 years old. We all live in a house that's just over 1000 square feet, which makes the KX3 an ideal HF station! My entire shack fits on a youth desk and several shelves in a corner of our bedroom.

I hope to hear you during one of the NAQCC sprints - 72!

