

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.

MARK SWARTWOUT, NX1K, #1949



When I was 15 I was looking for something in the attic. I don't recall what I was looking for, but I came downstairs with a box of interesting looking gadgets. "Dad, what is this?" I asked. "Just something I was interested in but never had time to pursue" was his response. Inside the box was a Knight Ocean Hopper regenerative receiver from Allied Radio, complete with the coils for various bands. We quickly hooked it up and were able to tune in some shortwave broadcasts. Also in the box was an ARRL Handbook from the early 60's. After looking through that Handbook I was hooked.

Using the yellow pages I found a local ham club (the DuPage Amateur Radio Club) and found out when and where they were meeting. Dad and I attended their Novice Class and got our Novice licenses in July 1968. My first call was WN9ZII. I operated a lot of CW on 40 and 15 meters that year. I upgraded to Advanced in 1969 and became WA9ZII. After college I got married and moved to Virginia in 1974 and became WA4KKC. I hated to give up the ZII rhythm but in those days you had to change calls when moving to a new district. I kept that call until we moved to Massachusetts in 1982 and I became KB1XK. Later I upgraded to Extra in early 1990s and took the call NX1K. I kept that call when we moved to Wisconsin.

I got interested in QRP while living in Massachusetts and am a charter member of the New England QRP Club (#8). We operated battery power Field Day several years from the windmill site in Princeton, MA. From home I operated in many QRP events using an HW-8. One of my fondest memories is

finishing the Norcal 40 kit from the Norcal QRP Club. After checking it out I hooked up the antenna and tuned around. I heard a station calling CQ with a call sign prefix that I didn't recognize. I thought "why not?" and gave him a call with my 900 mW transceiver. Much to my surprise and delight he came right back and we exchanged signal reports and pleasantries. Later I checked the atlas and found out that his Belize QTH was about 2000 miles away. This was my first 1000 miles per Watt QSO.

Through the local radio club (Central Massachusetts Amateur Radio Association) I was a volunteer operator for the Boston Marathon for several years up through the 100th running.

We moved to Wisconsin in late 1996. For a while I was traveling daily to Chicago (90 miles each way) which left little time for radio. My main operating event those first few years back in 9-land was working QRP Field Day with Chapter 162 of QCWA. I joined NAQCC (member 1949) in 2007 but was still not able to be very active in radio.

I got back on the air in earnest in 2014. My goal for 2014 was to complete Worked All States CW/QRP which I managed to finish in August. On December 18, 2014 I worked my last two W1AW portable stations, Georgia and Hawaii, giving me W1AW WAS (plus DC). In early 2015 I got close to WAS/CW/QRP on 20 meters (49) and 40 meters (49). In June 2016 I got the last state (IN) confirmed for WAS on 20m. But I still need Alaska on 40m. Chasing these awards gave me great practice at working pile-ups and a real feel for my station's capability.

After years of reading about it, I finally tried the QRP Fox Hunt beginning with the Summer session of 2015. It's a fun sesqui-hour on Thursday nights in the summer. I managed to get 11 pelts in each of the Summer 2015 and 2016 Hunts. 2017 was a bust because of being out of town and other commitments. I hope to do better in the Summer 2018 (20 meters) hunts.

In November 2016 I formed a Family Radio Club with other ham members of the Family and obtained Dad's call WA9ZDC for the club. Two daughters and one son-in-law have ham licenses.

Another recent first for me was my first trip to the Dayton Hamvention in 2018. I also attended the Four Days in May (FDIM) gathering that same week.

My station is a Yaesu FT-817 at 5W that I have used for several years. This is now accompanied by an Elecraft KX2. Home station antennas include a doublet for 30, 20, 17, and 10 meters in the attic and a 40-meter 1/2 wave end-fed in the back yard for 40, 15, and 12 meters. I use a Nye Master key that I have had for 30 years and a Navy flame proof key that I picked up in September 2014. In Fall 2015 I added a Kent SP-1 that I have wired as a Cootie Key. In Spring 2016 I got a Czech Army key from eBay. I really like the feel of this one. For portable operation I also use the Palm Portable Key (a straight key) and the Palm Mini Paddle.

I operate portable when I get a chance, particularly when visiting family. I like to experiment with different types of portable antennas. The picture is from Field Day 2018 with the Milwaukee Radio Amateurs' Club (W9RH). I was using the KX2 with a W1SFR end-fed antenna.

July 2018 will mark 50 years since my first Ham license. Even after all that time the hobby still holds a great deal of fascination and enjoyment for me. One of the best parts of the hobby is meeting so many great people around the world. I hope to meet many of you in the Sprints or on the air for a chat.

72/73 de Mark/NX1K

