

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.

RICHARD BUDNY VA3RSA #10427

Hello, my name is Richard VA3RSA and I was licensed in 1995. I've included two photos. The first one is me in my tent with my first boat anchor station during FD 2002 with the Scarborough Amateur Radio Club. The second photo is my portable FT-818 QRP station in August of 2020. When it comes to QRP operating activity, I'm a "rookie" and in 2020 I decided to do something about it. With the solar cycle on the upswing, I decided that this was the time to get ready for QRP—something which I've always wanted to do in a meaningful way.



THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

At 10 years of age I got my first crystal radio set and my love for radio grew over the years so much so that I wanted to be an electrical/electronics engineer. I learned about ham radio and Morse code through our Boy Scout leader. What wonderful tours of his late 60's ham shack we had, and what a shack it was because it occupied several rooms throughout his attic. In early high school I built my own tube regenerative receiver. It was truly magical when I first powered it up and suddenly heard through the headphones the characteristic and dramatic "Yankee Doodle Dandy" sign-on music by the Voice of America as it rose and fell through the QSB, something that I will always remember. In grade 10, I had the good fortune to obtain a war surplus No. 19 set which I used to listen to ARRL CW broadcasts on 40 and 80 meters. Somehow the CW was more genuine, more meaningful, when heard through the No. 19 set, at least I thought so.

GETTING LICENSED

I got my ham license in 1995 after surviving the busy years of university, getting married, and helping raise two kids. I ended up as a mechanical engineer and ham radio was a way to get back to my radio roots. Initially I spent too much time at hamfests buying up old boat anchors and other vintage radio gear. One night, when tuning a vintage tube radio, I heard 1920's music. This was too good to be true—it was "magic." I had discovered Rich Conaty's "Big Broadcast" show on 1560 WQEW. After getting serious about ham radio, I fi-

nally got on the air in Feb. 2001 with my CW station—a Heathkit DX-40 transmitter and HR-1680 receiver (see tent photo). And yes I raised an antenna during a raging snow storm just to get on the air—I had to fix RFI issues. Around 2003 I passed my 10 wpm "Advanced" CW test before CW testing was completely eliminated.

EARLY QRP DAYS

My first QRP rig, circa 2002, was a homebrew one-tube 1929 style Hartley transmitter built for the Antique Wireless Association's Bruce Kelly contest. Input power was about 5W DC at 500 V plate voltage and I made QSOs with it on 80 meters. But I was interested in QRP earlier than that. I started collecting QRP internet articles in the late '90s and one of the posters at that time was Peter Parker VK3YE who still runs a QRP YouTube channel. A big influence on me was the release of Yaesu's FT-817 in 2001 and all the articles related to it. I always wanted to get an FT-817 but instead got the FT-897 in 2003. I met the Rev. George Dobbs G3RJV (SK), founder of GQRP Club, for an eyeball QSO at Dayton Hamvention about 2003. Over time I collected numerous QRP publications by the GQRP, by Doug DeMaw W1FB (SK), Wes Hayward W7ZOI, and Dave Ingram K4TJWJ (SK)—I really enjoyed his CQ magazine articles about vintage QRP tube gear.

RETIREMENT AND CW RADIO SPARKS REIGNITED

I retired at the end of Summer 2018 and at first was too busy having fun with my other hobbies like R/C airplanes. Then in late December, I watched some YouTube videos on FT8 and the Icom IC-7300. I was curious about FT8 and wanted to give it a try. I was running FT8 by Feb. of 2019 and I worked DX in spite of my modest antennas. My main antenna is an inverted vee fan dipole up 25 feet—a homebrew clone of the Alpha Delta DX-CC antenna. And then I happened upon a YouTube video called "Why You Should Join the



SKCC” on the QRP School channel. I brushed up on my CW and joined SKCC in Nov. 2019.

THE YEAR 2020—A GAME CHANGER

It was Jan. 2020 and Covid-19 was in the news. For about two months I was glued to the news channels and disregarded everything else. By mid-March I had enough with the news, the lockdowns were coming, my other activities would soon be curtailed, so I restarted ham radio activities in a big way because I could do that from home. I watched a lot of YouTube videos on portable QRP and decided that I wanted to try that. Once things opened up again in the Summer I bought an FT-818 because I always wanted to have one (the little brother of my FT-897). I built some portable QRP antennas and started doing QRP park portable (see photo 2 for my FT-818 setup) and was amazed at the low QRN levels on the bands and that I could hear weak signals. I can't wait to do more portable work when the weather improves. I joined NAQCC and other QRP organizations and bought the Icom IC-705 when it became available (little brother to my IC-7300) and used it for genuine QRP QSOs.

WHERE AM I NOW?

Now I'm doing CW mostly since it is more interactive than FT8 and there seems to be a lot of camaraderie between CW hams and especially so with the QRP folks. QRP is an evolving activity for me as I learn to deal with high QRN levels at my

QTH (surrounded by typical consumer electronics QRN). I have a hard time receiving weak QRP signals. Also I'm learning that I need better transmit antennas because the QRP stations don't always hear me or maybe they are struggling with high QRN levels like me? I also learned that you should never leave two CW keys side-by-side for any length of time because they multiply, hi, hi. I now have an additional two Vibroplex bugs, two CW paddles, and a cootie key in the mail. I'm starting to really enjoy CW with my slowed-way-down Vibroplex bug at a blistering speed of about 10-12 wpm.

THE MAGIC OF QRP

I am still amazed by QRP as a radio activity and that communications can work at low power. I recently tuned up my IC-705 at 1W and forgot to switch back to 5W but I still made a QSO during one of the NAQCC sprints! Recently I received an email from a 2W QRP operator thanking me for the great RST 559 report and that I was his first Canadian contact. He was using a rain gutter antenna to boot! I had to tell him I was not known for my honest RST reports and 559 was just easy to log. But I listened again to the QSO recording and told him that yes he had a good signal and I could not tell he was QRP. The coming solar maximum promises to be an exciting time for QRP. Let the adventure continue!

72, Richard VA3RSA.

