

# 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.

## STEVE SZABO, WB4OMM, #5915



I got my start in Ham Radio like many – in the Boy Scouts. On a weekend camping trip (June 1967) in Montrose, NY, a local radio club set up for Field Day adjacent to our campsite. One of the hams showed me how to operate on 20M phone. I wound up spending the night and wee hours of the morning making contacts on the radio! I was hooked! Later that year, Santa Claus (My Dad) was generous for Christmas, as we both went to the Heathkit Store on 45<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City (we lived in Manhattan) and purchased an HW-16 for \$115.95 – quite a bit of money in 1967. Studying for the Novice License (with no help, no Elmer, no Mentor), I tested successfully in late 1970, after two tries at the CW test! Yes, I passed it the second time and I got my Novice license in February 1971 and became WN2TAW.

A Junior in High School, I soon discovered girls and money (part-time work) and while I dabbled a bit on the radio (crystal control and 40W out to a poorly constructed dipole wasn't much to brag about), I made few contacts, all in the New York City area. I really didn't get back to the hobby until after I got married and moved to the Daytona Beach, Florida area (Port Orange, just South of the World's Most Famous Beach – the City where I still live). It was now early 1975 and I was now WN4OMM; a year later the FCC sent me a new license/call out of the blue. They changed me to WB4OMM (still a Novice Class, but they did away with the "N" designator). My first ever DX was a fella in Aruba on 40M CW. I was calling CQ and he responded to me with his "PJ" call, and I must have asked him a dozen times "agn?"

because I couldn't figure out the "screwy" call. I finally realized he was DX. I have no idea who it was, as the log I had with all of maybe 20 or so QSOs from my NYC and initial FL contacts through the end of 1975 got lost.

A divorce in 1976 would sideline me for a few years until 1979 when I bought my first house. I was still using the HW-16 (now with the HG-10B VFO). Propagation was great at the time, and I loved working 15M DX on CW (novice license, remember?). Purchasing a Heathkit HW-8 in 1979 got me into QRP. (No, I don't have that radio anymore – but wish I did!). I got remarried in 1980 and bought another house in 1981. I went from the HW-16, to a Heathkit HW-100; then a Yaesu FT-101EE, and a later, a Kenwood TS-520S. All the "usual toys" of a '70s era ham!

Kids and lots of overtime sidelined me again until 1986. Then I got involved with a vengeance! I started working the Novice bands regularly, getting Worked All States on CW in 1987 with the HW-16 and a 4BTV vertical antenna (talk about doing it the hard way). Then came the TS-520S, a tower and beam, and a Commodore 64 computer! I started contesting in 1987 and still love it today (the NAQCC Sprints are my favorite ham activity!!). There's a photo of my "computer assisted" station for the CQWW Phone Contest in the Contest Report of the CQWW in CQ Magazine in 1989 – the TS-520S, the Commodore 64 and CT Contest Logging Software – contained in the caption was the phrase, "the future of contesting". Boy, were they right!

I finally upgraded to General in 1990 (yep – 19 years with a Novice License!). I purchased a new Yaesu FT-767GX, and now had a HP 8088 (IBM Clone) Computer. Wow! I was big time that year!

Now in my fourth home, I have "The Dog House" – a 12x14 shed in the backyard as my "Ham Shack" - my XYL's idea! Really!! It is all about ham radio. With the exception of Satellite (I have the antenna, and I'm now trying to make a QSO), I have pretty much worked all the modes and bands available – but I like QRP-CW the best. My home station is a Yaesu FT-2000 with all the toys, but I regularly use my Elecraft KX-3 for contests. I also have lots of "home built" kits for QRP and QRPp.

Over the years, I have been fortunate to get all of the "usual" awards (5BWAS, 5BDXCC, etc.....). I stand at 326 on the DXCC list and have many contest certificates and plaques for my finishes. My proudest – I broke the World Record in 2014 for 20M QRP Unassisted in the CQWW RTTY Contest (I still hold the US Record for that one), and still the 20M North American/US Record for 20M QRP Assisted SSB the same year. Not quite CW....but still QRP! I have lots of "top Ten" finishes and Zone/ Division/Section Contest Awards. I've been lucky enough to finish 1<sup>st</sup> in my area/category in NAQCC Sprints a few times.

The QRP CW bug got really big when I started doing the "Parkpeditions" with a few other local folks some years back – the NAQCC Florida Chapter. I have lots of fun doing this every month, and over the years have made some great "friends" on the air! I finally got to eyeball some at Dayton a few years ago (W4KRN, K4BAI, WA2JSG, N2EI - just off the top of my head – and many, many others). I particularly like to send out "custom" QSLs for some of our outings. The Parkpeditions remain my favorite "outdoor activity". I look forward to each and every one of them! My NAQCC-FL Chapter folks are the best! Every outing is an adventure!

I'm currently the NFL Section Manager for the ARRL (2<sup>nd</sup> term); an Official Observer and Volunteer Examiner, and I belong to: NAQCC, SKCC, the Flying Pigs, QCWA (Life Member), OMISS, PODXS, The Rag Chewers Club, the Old Timers Club, The Wouff Hong Society and so many other "clubs" – but I enjoy NAQCC the most. I guess the fun of CW, the thrill of QRP sometimes using stuff I built has some "magic" in it for me (I am still amazed at what QRP CW can do!) - and the great folks and activities in NAQCC are additional reasons why it is my favorite Club and on-air activities. People are everything!

I'm also blessed to have an understanding "radio-proof" XYL. I'm a "semi-retired" Police Captain for the

Daytona Beach Police Department – which means that while I did officially retire in 2010, I now only work for them 30-40 hours a week! I also teach at the University of Central Florida (Go #15 Knights!) part-time.

I have a web page at [www.wb4omm.com](http://www.wb4omm.com) that has most of this “stuff” on it for your enjoyment. A page is dedicated to “I Built This”, “NAQCC-FL Chapter”, and “The Dog House”. I hope you can find the time to take a look! Yes, that HW-16 is there!

