

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 PRATHER, WB9HFK, #8381



I became interested in radio and electronics while I was in grade school. My first receiver was an old Zenith console radio that sat idly in the corner of my bedroom. (I still have it!) I plugged it in and began tuning around to see what I could hear. My father shortly after added a random wire antenna in the attic and I could actually begin to hear various shortwave signals. I was hooked! I spent a lot of time at the dial and found various shortwave broadcasters and some hams who were running AM phone.

From there, I read every book in the grade school library on radio and electronics. I experimented with various simple projects such as electro-magnets, and simple light circuits. I then built several crystal sets.

About this time, my father got into CB and setup a base and mobile stations. These were used in the family farm business. He was also a 'ham' at heart and enjoyed chatting with his farmer friends in the evenings. I learned how to install mobile units and tune the antennas while still maintaining my very active SWL activities on both the SW broadcast and ham bands with a Hallicrafters SX-99 that I bought used with money saved from lawn mowing.

Finally, in high school, I came across a local club that was running a 'ham radio class', and I immediately signed up. In short order I had passed my Novice test and waited for what seemed like forever to receive my license in the mail. I was WN9HFK.

I built a Heath HW-16 and got on the air in short order, using a vertical and a dipole. I was pretty shaky

at first - but, with practice, became very comfortable on the air. Slowly, my code speed increased. Unfortunately, when I upgraded to General and became WB9HFK, I sold that HW-16.

I was fairly active on HF and VHF until marriage and a family came along. During those years, I was off HF, but pretty active with VHF and UHF with the local ARES/RACES and keeping up with local friends.

In 1997, I got the bug to get back on HF, and built an OHR-100A for 40M and put up an OCF dipole. In short order a vertical went up, and more rigs came along. I bought an MFJ-9030, built a TenTec 1320 and an original Rockmite. I found that I enjoyed QRP operation. I joined QRP-ARCI, and the QRP-L email list, and read everything I could find to get up-to-date on the latest in HF and QRP. I graduated to a full 100W rig with an IC-718 and now an IC-746Pro. When you hear me in a NAQCC Sprint, I'm likely running the '746' throttled back to 5W. And, using one of my J-38 keys.

These days you'll hear me in most of the 'big' Contests running both CW and SSB. Most of the time at 100W with a vertical and wire antennas from a city lot. I also have come to enjoy the State QSO Parties. I'm active in the SKCC as well.

While relatively new to the NAQCC, I've been active in the QRP Foxhunts since their beginning, and try to catch the other QRP events throughout the year.

When retirement comes I plan to spend more time in the lab building/experimenting with QRP rigs and chasing DX, contesting, and ragchewing.

