Ottawa Amateur Radio Club

Groundwave

P.O. Box 8873, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1G 3J2

Check out our Web Page: ***www.oarc.net***

December 2005

Don't forget Trivia Night at the December 14 club meeting. Lots of fun and prizes.

And from and ad in "QST": 'Tis the season to give, receive, and transmit.

In that vein, December 17, 0000 2359 UTC is the RAC Winter Contest. The club will be operating a multi-transmitter, multi-operator station using the Ontario RAC call sign, VA3RAC. I will shortly have a web page on the OARC website with information on the available band/ mode/time slots. If all goes well you should be able to sign up for slots on the web site.

Ian Jeffrey, VE3IGJ

DECEMBER MEETING 7:30 pm, December 14th in the Honeywell room at Ottawa City Hall

In This Issue....

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Articles may be submitted for use in this publication provided that they portray events or activities that promote Amateur Radio. Letters and comments are also welcome. Submissions may be made by mail addressed to the Editor care of the OARC, or by e-mail to "ve3igj@rac.ca". Deadline for submissions occurs three days after the regular monthly meeting of the OARC.

Please support your local radio organisations. They support you!

Club Information

The Ottawa Amateur Radio Club Inc. is an association of Radio Amateurs devoted to the promotion of interest in Amateur Radio communications in the National Capital Area and to the advancement and achievement of club members.

Regular Meetings of the OARC Inc. are held on the second Wednesday of each month (except July and August) in the Honeywell Room (2nd floor of the Old Teacher's College) of Ottawa City Hall (formerly Regional Municipality of Ottawa Carleton Headquarters) on Lisgar Street. Meetings commence at approximately 19:30 hours. Further details about each meeting is elsewhere in this publication.

Executive Meetings of the OARC Inc. are normally held on the first Wednesday of each month at 19:30 hours. Contact the President to confirm the date, time and place of the next meeting.

The CAPITAL CITY FM Net meets every Monday at 20:00 hours on the club repeater **VE2CRA** to pass traffic and to make announcements of interest to Amateurs in the National Capital Region.

The SWAP Net is a service provided and conducted by Ed Seib, VA3ES. This feature appears on theCapital City FM Net. To list items and make inquiries, call Ed at 613-738 8924 or e-mail him at va3es@rac.ca. Also available on the web: http://www.igs.net/~swap.

The POT-HOLE Net is a SSB/HF net sponsored by the Ottawa Valley Mobile Radio Club and is conducted every Sunday at 10:00 hours on **3.760 MHz**. All amateurs are welcome to check in.

The POT-LID CW Net is an informal slow-speed **CW** net sponsored and conducted by Ed Morgan, VE3GX, and meets every Sunday, except during July and August, at 11:00 hours on **3.620** MHz, to promote interest in CW and CW procedures.

The QCWA CHAPTER 70 Net meets every Thursday evening at 20:00 hours on repeater VE3TWO **147.300+.** You do not have to be a QCWA member to participate.

The Ottawa Valley VHF/UHF SSB Net is sponsored by the West Carleton ARC. Look for it every Tuesday night (except the first Tuesday of the month) around 21:00 on **144.250,** (roll calls after net on 50.150, 432.150, 222.150, and 1296.100.) Horizontal polarization is preferred.

VE3TEN

Tuning in the beacon so that it makes sense requires you tune to **28.175** on **cw** and read the tone that is there . The spaces between the elements are the higher tone. If that doesn't work, tune to **28.175.28** on **lower sideband** for better results.

Voice (VHF) 146.94/146.34 100Hz output tone
(UHF) 443.300/448.300

VE3TVA Amateur Fast Scan Television Repeater
Video/audio beacon & input 439.25 MHz (audio sub. 443.75)
Video/Audio output 914 MHz (FM)

IRLP Node 2040 146.94/146.34 (VE2CRA/VE3RC)
(Code 411 for info) (Code 204 for activity)
(Code 88 for time)
For further information please contact the Repeater Chair.

Note: The IRLP link is not connected to ECHOLINK. Please do not try to connect using the alpha keys on your keypad. It just confuses the operator.

Note: The IRLP link is disabled during the Capital City Net each Monday. It is disabled from 2000 to 2145 Mondays except for May to August when the link is disabled from 2000 to 2020.

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Minutes

The **OARC monthly meeting** was held at Nov 9th, 2005 at Ottawa City Hall, Ottawa, ON and was called to order at 19:41 by Secretary Richard, VE3UNW. 27 were present including 1 guest.

19:33. Ian, VE3IGJ dropped some **newsletters** from other clubs and some spare **Groundwaves** at the front.

19:34. Ian, VE3IGJ announced the **RAC Winter Contest on Dec. 17th**. He asked if any present wanted to participate. No takers immediately, but Mike, VE3FFK needed a bigger calendar to check. He later said he was available (and presumably interested).

19:41. In Diane's absence, **Richard, VE3UNW** opened the meeting and put out a call for guests. **Matthew Petch** responded and said hoped to be licensed one day. He received free coffee for coming out tonight.

Richard asked for any changes to the **last month's minutes**. None were offered.

Three **Joe Norton** applicants have submitted this year, so the committee of Dave, VE3TLY, Harold, VA3UNK and George, VE3BNO will be busy. The Joe Norton Award will be handed out next month.

Haves and Wants:

Dave Parks reported a **lost (stolen) rotor** still in the box as well as **a 12 volt power supply and a laptop**. Please be on the lookout.

Dave, VE3TLY will be a **6 metre rover** on the November 12th in grid **FN26**. He has a 3 element beam and will be on the calling frequency 50.125

Kris, VE3URL found help with the 2m radio.

The Ministry of Transportation is looking for **a radio dispatcher**. Any member of the executive should be able to provide details.

Dates to Remember

2005

September 3	OARC Hamfest and RAC Forum
September 30	Membership Renewal Deadline
November 2	Joe Norton Award Submissions Due
December 17	RAC Winter Contest

2006

February 11,12	Canada Ski Marathon
April 12	Homebrew Night
June 14	OARC AGM and Elections
June 24,25	Field Day
July 1	RAC Canada Day Contest

Diane, VA3DB **arrived** with the laptop, projector and sound system in tow, so Harrie and Mike will be able to present.

Dave, VE3TLY **introduced Harrie Jones, VE3HYS**. Harrie was licensed in **1978** and due to his work at CFRA, George, VE3BNO had him involved with the repeater in no time. In **1985**, Harrie agreed to be the club's technical and repeater chair. He is currently the **Director of Engineering for CHUM radio** in Ottawa.

Dave, VE3TLY **thanked** Harrie, VE3HYS at 20:54.

Mike, VE3FFK gave a sneak preview of next months **Trivia Night**.

The night business, having been concluded, broke for **coffee**.

The **50/50 draw** happened without my recording it (I was still hyped about Trivia Night). I seem to recall that $20 was up for grabs and our guest made the draw.

After a bunch of coffee and talk people left.

Signed Richard Hagemeyer, VE3UNW

OARC secretary.

NA QRP CW Club

Only 18 months old, the North American QRP CW Club (NAQCC) club has already attracted over 1,000 members to date. A group dedicated to promoting 5 watts or less QRP, CW and simple wire antennas (single element verticals, dipoles, etc.), it aims to demonstrate that hams can have a rewarding and enjoyable experience despite limitations they may have on equipment and finances.

Although there is an obvious overlap with existing societies such as FISTS and the QRP ARCI, the NAQCC has features that make it very attractive in itself. It is simple to join and has no dues, for one thing. And it concentrates on encouraging operating participation and skill development, which is needed in the face of other claimants' challenges to us to prove that our ham bands are serving a useful purpose. I counted about a dozen Ottawa-area hams on the membership list, as well as Contest Club Ontario president VE3KZ and active contester VA3NR. In our own club, new ham Martin, VA3SIE, has become known for his Maple Island activation trial run during the club's monthly weeknight sprint in September. Martin I and I both recently qualified for the club's 1,000 miles per watt award (4,800 and 3,800+ miles), while Martin won the monthly sprint award for highest score by a contest newcomer.

The strength of the club is without doubt the dedication of its founders, John, K3WWP and Tom, KB3LFC. John's personal website is chocked full of helpful information on many facets of operating as well as reprints of his FISTS QRP columns submitted over the years. His QRP-CW-simple wire antennas logs and records for normal and contest operations are also there, which I find to be a good measure by which to judge what I can expect of QRP hamming for myself. His results are remarkable, including excellent performances in RAC tests. And of course, John's 11-year, 4000+ "Streak" of a QRP QSO a day is updated daily. John's personal website is found at: home.alltel.net/johnshan.

The NAQCC website is similarly well maintained. Award, challenge and sprint results are updated promptly as are the membership lists. Current member number information is made available for the General Logger contest software the day of a sprint. (The freeware GenLog is just about right for casual contesters such as me.) The two-hour sprints are slow to medium speed CW on approximately 7.045 and 3.560 MHz, with encouragement to learn proper exchange and logging procedure. The club web address is www.arm-tek.net/~yoel.

I hope that this club can maintain its high standard of service in future and that many more will join its ranks. We can use more participants to share in the fun of the weeknight sprints. Those QRP signals are a lot louder than most people think they ever could be!

Bob, VA3RKM

Where Did "CQ" Come From?

Extracted from ARRL Contact

The term goes back to the telegraph days preceding radio. Around 1903, ships in the trans-Atlantic trade were starting to be equipped with wireless telegraphy. The operators were usually transposed landline telegraphers who went to sea with the new field of radio. Morse code and many of their telegraphic abbreviations came with them including "CQ", which had been used to attract attention of all the operators along a wire.

CQ seems to have first been used immediately before the official time signal at 10 a.m. and also notices of general importance. This use continued at sea and it became a general call to all ships.

Not long after, the Marconi Company recognized the need for a universal distress signal and issued the following general order: "It has been brought to our notice that the call CQ (All Stations) while being satisfactory for general purposes, does not sufficiently express the urgency required in a signal of distress. Therefore, on and after the 1st of February, 1904, the call to be given by ships in distress, or in any way requiring assistance, shall be CQD."

Unfortunately, no one seems to know which ship had

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Mk's Words

Another month, and still no snow, therefore, no new antennas up in the sky. The old ones are still working, but there's always room for improvement. The week I'm writing this is supposed to be the last one for "yard waste" pickup this year. Consequently, I have been out in my yard a lot more than usual. While raking leaves, I have been looking at those trees thinking about exactly where best to run the various wires through them. Meanwhile, a bit of pruning keeps the branches away from the power lines. It's always best to do this before the two come into contact. Meanwhile, in the FRONT yard, after picking all the leaves, I decided to mark the cover for the water shut off valve. If your house is of a certain age, there is a metal disk marking this spot on (or under) your lawn somewhere. Usually I put a tin can over it, but being more lazy than usual, I decided to push a stick in the ground to mark it. Since I had cut up all the wood sticks lying around and stuffed them into leaf bags, the only thing left was a fibreglass stake used for antennas, straightening tomato plants and other household chores like that. Well I stuck it in beside the cover plate, and gave it a shove. It went in! All 5 feet of it. One New Year's, a long time ago I said I wanted to put in a real (i.e. not just the third wire on the outlet) ground system. (You knew this would be getting back to ham radio sooner or later didn't you?) Anyway, I figure a 10 foot length of half inch copper pipe should just about do it. I'm still pondering whether a piece of solid wire (more robust, more DC current capacity) or some braid (lower inductance, more flexible) would be best. So the best bet, I suppose is to run both from the pipe to the fence (about a foot in my case). It can follow the fence line (along the ground) to the house. From there, it can go vertically until it gets to the station. (Do I use too many parentheses? They were on sale this week.)

In other news...
The SLVRC (Saint Lawrence Valley Repeater Council) held their meeting Nov. 6. As those of you at the last OARC meeting may have heard, they decided to require all new co-ordinations on 2m and 70cm to have CTCSS on the input and output. They also recommended the same to VE3KBR and VE2CRA.

The Emergency Measures Radio Group (EMRG or Ottawa ARES) has another repeater up and running. It is VA3OFS on 146.670-, with a 136.5 Hz CTCSS tone on the output. It is located in Barrhaven and is designed for regional coverage in the south of the city, as well as filling in some gaps that VA3OCE in Alta Vista has in its coverage. This is another of a series of repeaters designed to provide coverage in a smaller community or area of the city. In Cumberland, VA3EMV EAST on 146.985- (100Hz in/out) serves the same purpose. There will be others in the West later.

On Oct 29/30, a bunch of us were out overnight playing radio for the Lanark Highlands rally again. It's always a fun gig, and I don't think any of our ops lost their dinner this time, although many of the rally navigators apparently did. (A word of advice, don't, if you are feeling queasy, push the boom mic out of the way before you ...) Those Lanark ARES hams do a good job, with their repeater and trailer getting better each time out. Shortly after we were done with the car rally the same hardware (and some of the same operators) were back in service doing the Halloween patrol.

The next rally on my calendar is the Tall Pines out of Bancroft on Nov 26/27. I expect I'll have more to say about that next month. Give Ross, VE3WOD a holler if you want to help out.

Before that, the VE2OJ crew has a test and tune weekend, to get ready for the 160m CW contests in December and January. It is easier to string those giant sized 160m antennas when the snow isn't up to your knees. The crew and equipment will be a bit different this year, so we really need some rehearsal time.

There is another stint at Collegeville, the federal government emergency preparedness college coming up too. As I said to the person scheduling us, "I'm still learning, so keep scheduling me to come back" Besides, they put on a pretty good lunch. Does swapping a day and a half of your time for lunch qualify as a free lunch?

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Transmitter Power, Antenna Gain, and Coax Loss Tradeoffs

By Ken Larson, KJ6RZ

In the 1950s and 60s many hams built their own transmitters for the simple reason that commercial transmitters were too expensive. For example, a Johnson Viking II transmitter cost $300, which doesn't sound too bad until you stop to consider that a new Ford or Chevy cost $1,000. The alternative was to buy cheap war surplus radios and use the parts to build one of the transmitters shown in the Radio Amateur's Handbook. In a way, that was more fun. As far as power was concerned, you had control! You could push your transmitter as hard as you dared, to squeeze every bit of power out of it, even to the point where the plates of the transmitter's output vacuum tubes glowed cherry red.

I was convinced in those days that if I could just get another 20 watts of output from my transmitter that it would make all the difference in the world at the receiving end. If I could just get those extra 20 watts that rare DX operator in a distant land would see my signal jump from a pitifully weak whisper to a loud boom that he could not ignore, and I would get that contact. Today I know that little extra power would not have made any difference at all. However, I still have an intense desire to push my transceiver to its maximum power output to get a DX contact. But it doesn't stop there. I want every dB of gain that I can possibly get out of my antenna. As far as coax is concerned, I want that big, heavy, hard to handle, expensive coax because I don't want to loose any of my valuable watts getting from my transmitter to the antenna. Does all of this pushing, shoving, and optimization really make a difference? Probably not!

It turns out that you must increase the output power of your transceiver by at least 3 dB in order for the person you are talking with to notice any change in your signal strength. For your signal to sound twice as loud, you must increase your power out by about 9 dB.

How much is a 3 dB increase in power? A 3 dB power gain is equal to a twofold increase in power (3 dB = 2).

So, if your transceiver is running 100 watts, you must increase your transceiver's output to 200 watts in order for the person you are talking with to notice any increase in your power. If you wanted your signal to sound twice as loud, you must increase your power to 800 watts (9 dB = 3 dB + 3 dB + 3 dB = 2 * 2 * 2 = 8)!. Clearly, increasing power by 20 watts, say from 100 to 120 watts, is not going to make any difference at all to the person receiving your signal. On the other hand, if you cut your power in half from 100 watts to 50 (a 3 dB decrease in power), the other operator will hardly notice any drop at all in your signal strength. So why beat your transceiver into the ground by running it at full power? If you run at 75 watts instead of 100, your transceiver will run cooler and no one that you talk to will know the difference. There is someone who may notice the difference however, your neighbours. If you are having interference problems, cutting your power level in half could solve those problems without having any noticeable affect on your ability to make contacts. For example, when I operated on 10 meters at 100 watts, my lawn sprinklers would turn on whenever I keyed my transceiver. When I dropped to 50 watts, the problem went away. Running at 50 watts turned out to be a great water conservation technique.

What about antennas? The same 3 dB rule applies. You can go to a lot of trouble and expense on 40 and 80 meters putting up phased vertical arrays to achieve 2 or 3 dB of gain. But 3 dB of gain will hardly be noticeable to anyone listening to your signal, so why bother? The threshold in antenna cost verses performance gain is around 6 dB. If your antenna provides 6 dB of gain, operators listening to your signal will notice a difference. Your signal will not be twice as loud, remember you have to get 9 dB of gain for that to happen, but at 6 dB the gain will be noticeable. The table below puts antenna cost verses performance gain somewhat into perspective. This table compares various Yagi beam configurations to the performance of a dipole. The table shows the dB gain, relative to a dipole, achieved by each of the antennas. The antennas get more expensive as you go down the table. The table also indicates the increase in signal strength observed by the S-meter on a distant transceiver that is receiving

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your signal.

The cost verse performance trade-off for the transmission line connecting a transceiver to an antenna is similar to the antenna cost trade-off. However, this time the trade-off relates to the difference in loss between two types of transmission lines, for example, between two different grades of coax cable. As an illustration, 100 feet of LMR 400 coax used to connect a transceiver with a 10 meter antenna will produce a loss of 0.7 dB. If standard RG-8/X coax is used instead, the loss will be 2.0 dB. The difference in loss between the two types of coax is 1.3 dB. Is it worth buying the more expensive LMR 400 coax to reduce loss by 1.3 dB? Probably not. The strength of your signal in this example will sound the same to other hams regardless of which type of coax you use. Notice in making a comparison between two types of coax (or two types of antennas, etc.) it is the difference in loss (or gain) that is important, not the actual loss (or gain). At UHF frequencies, the differences in loss will be greater. 100 feet of LMR 400 coax at 440 MHz has a loss of 2.7 dB. In comparison, RG-8/X has a loss of 8.1 dB. The difference in loss is 5.4 dB. In this case the more expensive LMR 400 coax may be worth the money. LMR 400 coax is relatively thick, stiff, and difficult to work with compared to RG-8/X, particularly inside the radio shack. Suppose that you use 75 feet of LMR 400 to get from your 440 MHz antenna to the wall outside your radio shack. Then you use a 25 foot length of RG-8/X to come through the wall and into the radio shack because RG-8/X is smaller and easier to handle in the shack. What performance penalty will you pay for doing this? The loss of 25 feet of RG-8/X is about 2.03 dB. If you brought the LMR 400 all the way into the shack, the loss associated with the additional 25 feet of LMR 400 would be 0.68 dB. The difference in loss is approximately 1.36 dB, a negligible amount. Using RG-8/X within the radio shack is thus a good choice since it simplifies cable management within the shack and provides negligible additional loss.

In making trade-off comparisons, you have to look at the total system as well as the individual components. For example, a 2-element, 10 meter Yagi antenna (4 dB gain over a dipole) feed by LMR 400 coax (1.3 dB gain over RG-8/X coax) produces a total system gain of 5.3 dB compared to a 10 meter dipole fed with RG-8/X coax. The total system gain of 5.3 dB probably is worth the effort, even thought the gains between the individual components was not that attractive. The system trade-off can easily go the other way as well. At 440 MHz, 100 feet of LMR 400 coax has a 5.4 dB performance gain over RG-8/X coax and is clearly better. However, if your transceiver has power settings of 5, 10, and 50 watts, and you can hit all of the area repeaters at 10 watts using RG-8/X coax, why upgrade to LMR 400? Unless you are running from batteries, using LMR 400 coax so that you can drop your transmit power to 5 watts probably is not worth the trouble or cost.

In conclusion, when making trade-offs between transmitter power, antenna gain, coax loss, and total system performance, it is the dB difference between the options available to you that is important. A difference of 3 dB will not be apparent to the hams that you are communicating with. They will hardly notice the difference if you run your transmitter at 50 watts instead of its maximum 100 watt output power. A difference of 3 dB or less between two antennas, two types of coax, or two system implementations is usually not sufficient to justify higher costs. However, a difference of 6 dB may justify the more expensive approach.

Extracted from the Conejo Valley Amateur Radio Club Tech page web site (http://www.cvarc.org/tech.html) and used with permission.

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apparently been in distress and had been ignored when it just sent "CQ". But why the letters CQ? - They're from the French, sécurité, (safety or, as intended here, pay attention). French still is the official language for international postal services, and the word sécurité is used to mean 'pay attention'. "CQ" said in French sounds like sécurité.

Note: CQD was later changed to the better known SOS.

Merchant Navy Sparks

Recollection of Ernie Brown va3oeb@rac.ca

In London we were accommodated at Ambassador Hotel in Upper Woburn Place. We were given funds to replace lost clothing. I was a tourist in London for a few days, then we were offered two weeks rest and recovery time at a resort, with a choice of the Highlands in Scotland, or the seashore. I chose the Highlands. The rest of the officers elected to go to the seashore. I went by train to Pitlochry in Scotland, where I enjoyed walking the trails in the woods and the hills. [At the time I was under the impression my purchases of clothing and the holiday were being paid by the shipping Company. However when I was finally paid off in Canada I found all my purchases and holiday expenses were deducted from my back pay!]

Back in London on August 8th, I was told to report to the motor vessel TUVA in the King George Docks, in the Port of London. This was another Dutch ship, with a mainly Dutch crew, and a British Chief Wireless Operator. We left port a week later, sailing up the east coast in a small convoy, with barrage balloons flying to discourage dive bombers. We docked at Sunderland, where cargo was loaded. Among the crew on this ship were the two Dutch gunners who had been on the MAASDAM. As loading continued, I had time to explore Sunderland, and to visit Newcastle by bus. Loading was finished on the 24th and we sailed that night. We sailed around the north of Scotland to Loch Ewe to await a westbound convoy. We sailed Sept. 1st with a large convoy, leaving it on the third day to enter harbour at Reykjavik, Iceland, and drop anchor on the 4th. The docks in the harbour could accommodate only three ships, so we remained at anchor until the 10th, with the city on one side of us and a snow-capped mountain rising on the other side of the harbour. While off-loading proceeded night and day, I had time to explore the city, visit the local theatres, and found the "swim-bath", an enclosed swimming pool with natural hot water from the many hot springs not far from the city. The hot springs were the heat source for the whole city, and there were many greenhouses, especially those attached to restaurants. I learned to swim at the "swim-bath". The captain arranged a bus tour for those interested to the Geysir, and its associated hot springs, to the Gullfoss (Golden Falls), and to an extinct volcano crater with a lake in its bottom. The landscape appeared to be rolling grassland, with some shrubs, but no trees that I recall.

We left the dock Sept. 27th, and remained at anchor in the harbour, until sailing on the afternoon of the 28th.

We were a small convoy, the weather was rough, and I was seasick. I was on watch at 4am Oct. 2, when we were torpedoed. The chief operator was out of his bunk immediately to take over the watch, while I proceeded as before to dispose of the code books in the weighted sack, and then to get the emergency radio from its stowage and take it to my assigned lifeboat. The ship was settling by the stern as the boat quickly filled with officers and crew assigned to that station, and when the captain joined us the boat was launched and pulled away from the sinking TUVA. [I learned later that the second boat had also loaded and pulled away, but that the damage in the crew's quarters in the stern, where the torpedo exploded, was very extensive as the gun platform had collapsed into that space, pinning one man in his bunk. His mates could only give him a bottle of booze and leave him. The stairway to the deck had collapsed, but two of the young men were able to climb through a hole to the deck. They then pulled their mates up through the hole. They were commended for bravery, and medals were subsequently awarded. Only one of them got home from later ship assignments to receive his medal. Some of the crew had cut a float loose and one seaman had jumped into it, breaking his legs. Others had jumped into the water then climbed onto the float.]

In the lifeboat, in the wind and waves, we were pitching quite steeply and I was not feeling very good. Out of the darkness a ship was suddenly beside us, and we were able to step onto the deck of HMCS St CROIX. All our crew from the two lifeboats and the float were taken aboard. As we came aboard we were directed to different quarters. I was directed below into the crew quarters, as I was not

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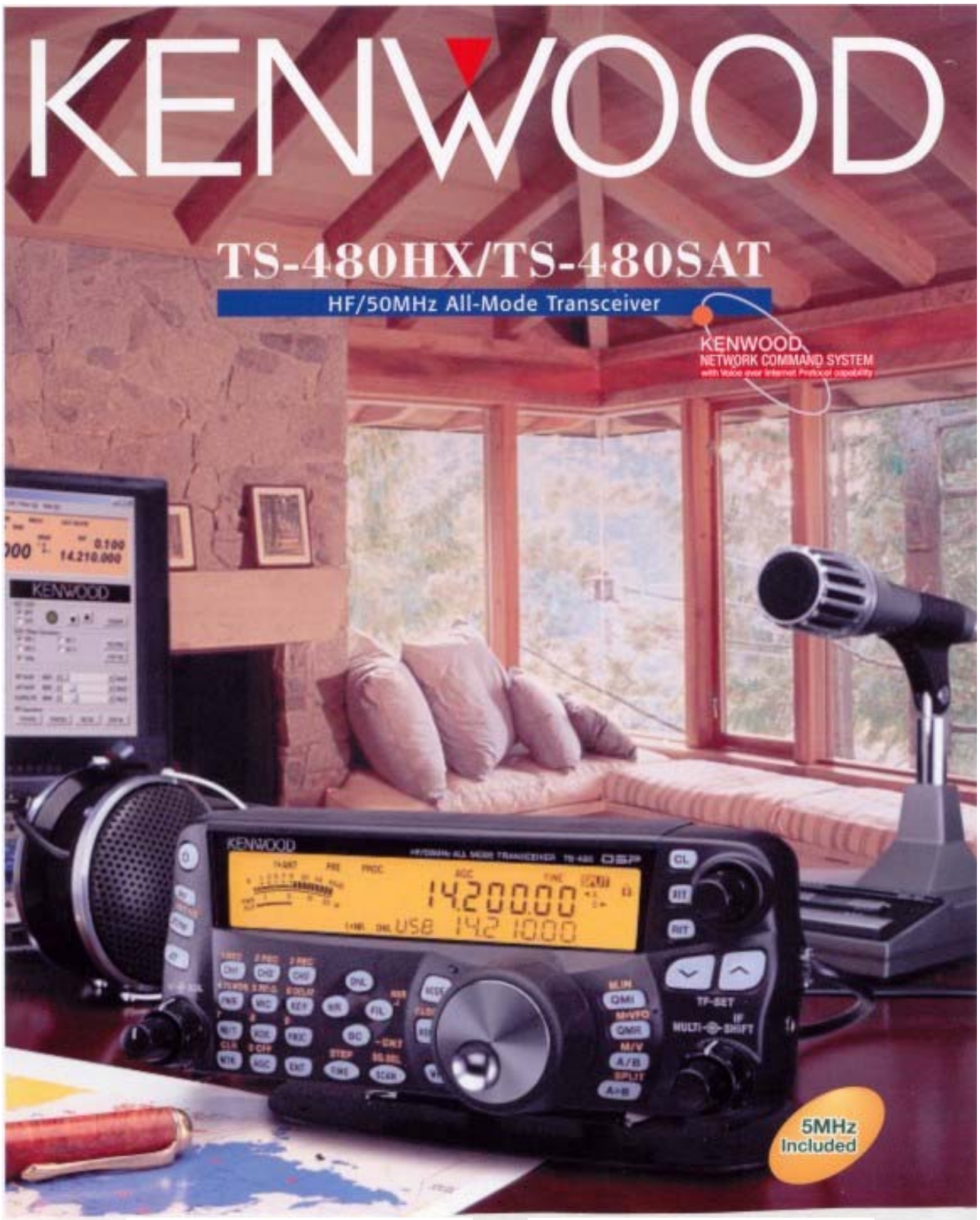
wearing an officer's cap. I climbed into a third tier bunk and happy to be warm and dry, drifted off to sleep. I wakened feeling pretty queasy and climbed down from the bunk and headed for the companionway to the deck. Once in the fresh air I felt better and the first person I saw was our first mate. It turned out he was looking for me as I should not have been in the crew quarters, and he directed me to the petty officers quarters in the forecastle. The ride in the destroyer was quite rough, compared to the freighter, and I was seasick until we reached St. John's harbour. Because the St CROIX, a four-stacker destroyer obtained from the USA, was low on fuel, as well as provisions, she headed directly for Newfoundland.

We reached St John's the afternoon of Sept. 6th, and went ashore to spend the night in a hotel, while the injured seaman was taken to hospital. The Red Cross distributed ditty bags with toiletries and socks for each man. The next day we were taken aboard the St CROIX and she set out for Halifax. We arrived in Halifax on the 9th and were accommodated at the Halifax Hotel. We were given advances on our pay and went shopping for clothing. The captain was waiting for clearance from the shipping company to pay me off and release me to go home. Finally on Sept. 25 the captain arranged to pay me wages due, and undertook to forward to me the survivor's indemnity, which was being questioned by the shipping company. I flew home on Sept. 26th. [Some months later I did receive a settlement, paying the survivor's indemnity in full, but deducting from it the cost of my "holiday" in Scotland, and the clothing I had purchased in London.]

I had expected to apply for another ship, after a period of rest at home. However a Department of Transport advertisement, recruiting radio operators for a job in Ottawa, caught my attention. I responded to the ad by mail, and received a telegram asking when I could report! I reported to Ottawa in January 1942, and learned that the job was intercepting German wireless traffic, working at the Ottawa monitoring station. Thus my career as a Merchant Navy "Sparks" came to an end.

At the monitoring station I found that a number of the radio operators were ex-MN operators, while others had come right out of radio schools. Some operators with a year or more of experience had been recruited from their ships to provide a basic group of experienced operators, some of whom became shift supervisors. Their experiences varied from round-the-world travels, to commuting to the Caribbean and back, and a few had had encounters with the enemy. One chap could probably claim the shortest shipboard experience, having signed on a ship in New York, and three days out of the port being torpedoed, and spending the next three weeks in a lifeboat. Another chap had been on a Norwegian tanker and in the port of Cardiff had experienced a near miss of a high-explosive bomb in an air raid. With no evidence of serious damage the ship set out for North America. About a week out of port the engines failed due to sea water in the fuel. The captain would not agree to break radio silence, so they drifted with wind and currents for 40 days, seeing no other ship. As the Atlantic currents carried them within reach of Bermuda, they broke radio silence to call for a salvage tug. A tug located them and towed them into port where repairs could be made and they later went on to the Port of Galveston to check their repairs, and to take on a new cargo for the UK. In the ships mail waiting for them was a letter from Department of Transport to this radio operator, advising him that there was a job for him in Ottawa if he wished to accept it. He consulted the captain about leaving the ship, since any foreign person entering the US on a ship was supposed to depart with that ship. The captain's response was that if he wanted to accept the job, he could be across the border before anyone would be looking for him. However, to get authorization to pay him off, a release paper had to be presented for signature at the Norwegian Consulate. He took the paper to the Consulate and it was duly signed – by the Nazi German officer in charge!

To be continued ...



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