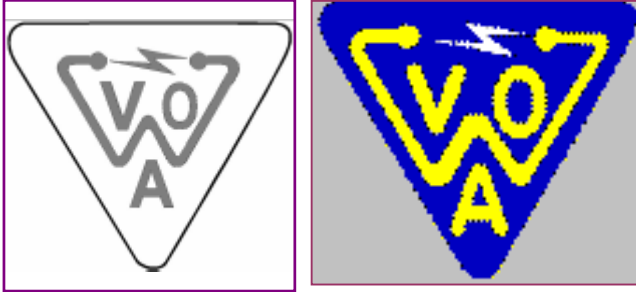


VWOA NEWSLETTER

Email Issue #14

2006



VWOA Life Member William H. (Bill) Millard learned the Wireless Art while enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and would like to hear from others who started their career in Radio while working on the CCC Projects.

He stated that he felt gifted to learn CW and after 47 years gave up his license last month.



William H. Millard and XYL



William H. Millard RM 1 in 1948



*Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)
CAMP SIDNAW, MI in 1938*

MY1997 BIOGRAPHY

As written for Edwin F. Pleuler Jr.,
former Secretary of the VWOA
By William H. Millard W4PBN

I got my start in communications back in March of 1940. I was on my second enrollment in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and was stationed in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan at Camp Luzerne, which was a United States Forest Service Camp. Our project was building a park for summer visitors. We were starting from scratch so to as to speak. There were roads to be built and buildings for lodging, as well as camp sites. It was cold and wet work.

In January 1940, a letter came out from the headquarters located in Battle Creek, Michigan; from where all directives, orders and policy originated for all camps located in lower Michigan. The letter stated that anyone wishing to become a Radio Operator, to sign up and when enough enrollees had shown interest, a class would begin. I was the only person in camp to put my name on the list. I was out on the job in January of 1940 when a truck arrived at the job site asking for me. The driver told me that the CO wanted me back in camp at once. My first thought was that something was wrong at home or I had done something back at HQ and was in trouble.

When I arrived back in camp, I reported to the CO. He asked me if I had signed up for the Radio Operators School. I had forgotten that I had put my name down. After a few seconds of thought, I said Yes. The CO told me to get my gear together at once because a truck was here to take me to where the school was located. It was about eighty miles away.

We arrived in the afternoon at Camp Silver Creek located near East Tawas, Michigan. The class consisted of a total of five prospective trainees. Our instructor was a World War One Veteran and had been an operator in the Infantry. The Educational Officer was a First Lieutenant Reserve Officer and explained what the training consisted of. We were to learn the International Morse Code, message handling procedures and a few "Q" signals. There was no theory or any explanation of how radio waves worked or any thing at all as to how radio waves acted or antennas,...Nothing. I am not sure if our instructor knew much about radio waves, antennas, equipment or any theory. We had very little in the way of training material.

Our oscillator consisted of an old door buzzer, a battery and a straight key of World War One vintage. The course lasted for a period of about eight weeks and when we graduated, all of us could copy code at eighteen WPM. We also learned how to handle traffic and about six "Q" signals. At the end of the training

period we were issued a certificate of completion and assigned to different camps.

I really lucked out on my assignment. I was sent to Camp Hartwick Pines, located near Grayling, Michigan. The camp was composed of Veterans of World War One. The operator that I was sent to relieve had joined the Regular Army as a Corporal and was being stationed at Fort Sheridan, Illinois and did not have to go through basic training. He has only a couple of days to give me any on-the-job help. It was to say the least, a real learning experience.

Here I was, a brand new operator with no experience, in a camp full of strangers and a CO that might expect more than I could deliver. However the CO was a very understanding person and in a week or so I was able to hold my own with the other operators that were stationed around the camps in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

My station was WUEH and if I remember correctly there were four other stations at four other camps. I was responsible for my own camp and four others in the vicinity. Except for the possible training experience and perhaps for the speed of messages being sent or received, I often wondered why there were radio stations in the camps. I know that in three or four days after I received any traffic, a confirming letter would be received by the CO.

We all used bugs for sending our traffic and I purchased the ancient bug from the fellow, I relieved for the sum of three dollars and I imagine that it would be worth a great deal more in this day because of the interest in collecting old keys and bugs. I have and use an old J38 just like the one I used for many years during my Navy career.

I have made inquiries whenever and wherever I have met and talked to anyone that spent time in the Civilian Conservation Corps and none of the former members had any clue about there being radio stations or radio operators in the CCC. I have in all my years as a ham talked to one other ham operator who, like myself had been a radio operator in a CCC camp.

I completed my allotted time in the Summer of 1941. Except for unusual cases most everyone was able to stay for a period of twenty four months. I was given my honorable discharge, which was somewhat like the Military Discharge. I hitchhiked to Detroit, Michigan to live with a Sister who had gotten married and her husband had gotten employment with the Chrysler Corporation.

I worked that Summer for the Good Humor Ice Cream Co. I worked in the plant and helped make the Good Humor pints, quarts and cups that the Company made at that time. When the season ended, I worked briefly for a store that sold and serviced home entertainment

radios. I remember also the FM Radio was becoming quite the thing.

I enlisted in the US Navy in December of 1941 and was sent to the Boot Camp in Rhode Island. In Boot Camp every one was given a test to determine if any of us had any aptitude at all for learning the Morse Code. I remember that test consisted of two letters of the code being sent and the idea was to put down as to whether the letters being sent did or did not sound alike. I not only put down as to whether the letters sounded alike or not, I also put down what they were. Needless to say, I was number one on the list to be sent to a Navy Radio School after my recruit training period was complete.

I was transferred to the Navy Radio School located in Noroton Heights, CT. The Course was about three months long and we were instructed by both Officers and enlisted Radiomen. We had to learn how to touch type, some theory and military message handling procedures. I graduated fourth in a class of approximately one hundred fifty radio operator trainees. Out of this Class, ten of us were given the rating of Radioman Third Class and were dispatched to ships and shore stations around the world.

My first ship was the USS Arkansas. The Arkansas was one of the very few left over and still active from WW1. I remember her very fondly and spent almost four years on her.

One of the most memorable things during my stay on the old Arkansas was our effort to learn the communication methods of the German Submarine Service.

The Germans, only for their Submarine Fleet altered a few characters of the International Morse Code. Another Radioman and I learned this peculiar code and stood around the clock watches tuned to the four known frequencies that the German Submarine Service was using. Most of our vigilance was at night when the subs would surface and send very short and very fast messages back to the shore stations. It was of course all a cipher system and everything we copied was turned over to a pair of crypto experts that were on board at that time. It was very tedious, as we had to keep a constant ear on the assigned frequencies, so we could catch any transmission, however short and quick. I did all of this in 1943.

I had a cruise on an old Cruiser for a special assignment. Then I spent a time on a Destroyer Escort and took part in a submarine hunt.

In 1945 I was transferred off and assigned to a brand new Cruiser. The USS Los Angeles. I was sent to the USS Los Angeles to assume charge of the Radio gang. We were on our way to Okinawa, when the Atomic bomb was dropped, so we missed out on that affair.

My most memorable experience, I suppose, was the Submarine Service Monitoring and submarine hunting in the North Atlantic.

After the landing at North Africa in 1942, our ship's Captain was the Senior Officer Present Afloat. It was our duty to send all operational and administrative traffic back to Washington. I would get on the key at about midnight and send a stack of messages back to the States. Most of the time I would have to go to the Station at the Panama Canal and have that Station relay for me.

At the Normandy landing, I was the Radioman that handled spottings from the Infantry spotters on the shore. This was handled by CW for most part.

During the years of peace before the Korean War can along, I served on a shore station as an instructor for budding Radiomen. I served at North Island, San Diego and later as Chief of the communication station at the CB Base in Port Hueneme. Later, I served on a Destroyer and again was assigned to a shore station for a special assignment. For this job I had to have a top secret clearance. I finished my career as an Instructor in a Naval Reserve Facility.

I suppose, I am among the old timers that still have love for high speed CW. I do like RTTY and once in a while a little SSB Phone. I do not begrudge the younger people with their no

code and easy obtainable licenses. I do tell those of all ages to try the old fashioned CW, if at all possible.

To me CW is an art form, and should be preserved. I first became licensed as an Amateur in 1957 and been active ever since. I am a member of the ARRL, OOTC, QCWA as well as VWOA. I hold an Extra Class License.

If there is anyone reading this and knows or remembers the few radio ops who were members of the Civilian Conservation Corps, I would be very please to hear from them.

William H. (Bill) Millard W4PBN

VWOA MEMBER NEWS

We sadly report that we have received notice recently of the following SK VWOA Member:

LCDR WILLIAM C. SHALAG USN (Ret)
SK 02/18/2006

VISIT www.VWOA.org on the internet!!!
Doug Stivison our 2nd Vice President and Web Master of the VWOA Site has recently put the SPARKS AT SEA presentation by VWOA former 1st Vice President Miles D. MacMahon PhD available for ADOBE READER PDF file download and viewing. It is a great Wireless History Lesson to be shared with your friends and Grandchildren.

OM's,
My XYL asked me to move my stamp collection out of the guest room to make more room for guests. In the process of moving the boxes I saw the stack of VWOA-related stamps that I put aside several years ago intending to put up on the web. I finally just sat down and did the first four images.. I thought you might want to see the result. When you click on the little image to view the big image, they really seem to snap. Some of these are really outstanding designs. By the way, I carefully chose stamps that were cancelled and did everything either larger or smaller than actual size to avoid any legal problems with displaying stamps that might be counterfeited. I've got quite a few more, but this is as much time as I can steal right now.

www.vwoa.org/SBStamps.htm

73, Doug NR1A

WENDELL'S NEWS CORNER

Wendell R. Benson brings to your attention a URL which deals with the biography of the founder of Mackay Radio & Telegraph Co

Visit a very enlightening Internet site on the History of Mackay Radio.

<http://www.mackayhistory.com>

Of special interest when you reach this site is the left PANEL:

Click on SITE Navigation

Scroll down to item 5, cable and telegraph

Click on Mackay Radio

When Wendell Benson, former Mackay Radio employee, who had service at WSL, as well as on ships in the US Navy and Merchant Marine, (See VWOA Email Issue #1 Wendell R. Benson featured Biography), alerted some of our Email Corresponding

VWOA Members of the URL associated with Mackay Radio. He got a few early responses from some of the Non Maritime Members. The following is a good example of the Chatter.

----- Original Message -----

From: George Levites

To: wenben@nyc.rr.com

Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2006 5:47 PM

Subject: 67 Broad St & etc.

Wendell >

How long did WSF remain in operation at that address? I recall seeing, some years back, obvious wire antenna arrays atop a building in the Times Sq. area - but think it was a Press Wireless operation.

Also, when you were at sea, how did you correct your radio room clock? Did you use WWV or another equivalent standard time signal -or- did you compare it with the ship's chronometer. Many ship's clocks were made by Chelsea out of Boston and not all of them were real good time-keepers.

73 de George K2MYR

----- Original Message -----

From: Wendell R Benson

To: George Levites

Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2006 10:38 PM

Subject: WSF

WSF was at 67 Broad St from the late 20's until 1968. The transmitter was an old Federal Electric probably 2KW output. I believe it was the only coast station using an mcw signal on 500 and everyone recognized it. On 442 our working freq we used an A1 cw signal. It was against FCC regs to use mcw there.

When the decision was made in 1968 to remote the station to WSL, they installed a modern 1 KW Mackay ship xmtr in our operating room on the 33rd floor. It was not mcw and it didn't seem to have the strong

signal the old xmtr had. The oprs at 67 Broad never used the new xmtr--it was remoted to WSL. When it was operating OK that way, they closed down the operation at 67 Broad on the 33rd floor. From street level you would never have noted the wire running between the poles at the top of the bldg. Time signals. FCC regs required an entry in the log everyday regarding the reception of a time signal and what changes were made to the clock--corrected or not corrected. There were many time signals available through out the world and we did not rely on WWV.

A good reliable time signal in Asia, was to listen to the BBC on HF. Their "6th dot" time signal was very accurate. There was an audio line with a plug on it that we plugged into to provide a time signal to the chart room where the ships chrono was located and the 2nd mate or another officer would record the record for the chrono.

It was sometime in Sept '68 that I was transferred to the 4th floor and the tech opns center which meant, no more WSF Operations at 67 Broad.

Wendell

From: "David J. Ring, Jr." <n1ea@arrl.net>

Date: Fri, 17 Mar 2006 06:47:07 +0000

Francis 'Frank' Allan Chapman, NR1X (SK)

We had just visited Frank in October 2005 and took some wonderful pictures of him - one of him that was really amazing, a dual portrait of himself, as seen on the Dedication page of his book, "Talking to the World from Pan Am's Clippers"

<http://www.flyingclippers.com/postflight/6891-7.html> and as seen as he was signing the book for me. Frank was a FRO - Flight Radio Officer and a superb high speed morse operator.

Visit the following URL for very detailed information on Francis 'Frank' Allan Chapman, NR1X (SK) at:

www.douglasfuneral.com/

Select [Obituaries](#) Search Last Name [Chapman](#)

[73/88 de N1EA and KBORQN - David and Cheryl Ring, ARRL, SOWP, VWOA](#)

Wendell recommends a visit to URL:

<http://www.forgotten-ny.com/STREET%20SCENES/governorsisland2/govisl.html>

to those of you who attended the many wonderful VWOA Luncheons and Awards Dinners at Governor's Island in the New York Harbor.

We at the VWOA Newsletter would like to hear from you and try to pass along to the rest of the VWOA stories of events that you have experienced and that you feel the rest of the membership would enjoy hearing about. Send us a picture or two and we will try to include it in one of our Email Newsletters.

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We would prefer to hear from you by Email at:

ftcassidy@optonline.net

Or

wenben@nyc.rr.com

but if you must, send mail to:

VWOA

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