

# VWOA NEWSLETTER

Email Issue #21

2006



Radio Officer Clay S. Scott on duty, in his early sea going life

Remembering “Trials and Tribulations” in the early sea life of a new Radio Officer



Clay S. Scott



SS Joseph Pulitzer, KHLV

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## MY STORY — 60 YEARS AGO

This is a story that embarrasses me to tell, but now that it has been so long ago, I'll tell it anyway. This all happened in early 1947.

When I was young and first went to sea as a radio operator, I was assigned by a one-armed guy by the name of Carl W. Lundquist at the New York office of the American Communications Association as Radio Operator on the SS Joseph Pulitzer, KHLV. The ship was at that time in port at Mobile, AL.

Making an overnight flight from New York to Florida on a big plane and a few stops the next day on a smaller one, I was finally able to join the Pulitzer. After making a few port stops around the Gulf, we eventually set out for Europe. Most days were somewhat routine but also exciting. I was beginning to get the feel of things. Hearing the powerful US coastal stations working traffic was enjoyable and gave me more confidence in being the radio operator. After a few days at sea, I began to hear some of the European Maritime coastal stations working but did not think I could QSO at that time.

When we were about half way across the Atlantic along the Great Circle, one day the Captain — a nice and friendly sort of middle-aged Greek fellow whose name was N. E. Mavroleon — came into the radio room with a message to be sent to the ship's agent in

Rotterdam. At what I thought were appropriate times, I tried to raise one or more of the European working stations, but had no luck for the first couple of days using low frequency.

After a couple or so days later when the Captain questioned me as to whether the message had been sent and I told him about my difficulty in contacting a station, he then advised me to get about it right away and to send it URGENT. Well! What was I to do?

With some confusion about message priority and International Distress signaling, I opened up on 500 kc with a blast of cascading groups of XXX's. Suddenly the frequency became so eerily quiet -- the XXX's had cleared out all the chatter! Right away, then, GLD came on and advised me to shift lower. We then moved down to our working frequencies where I proceeded to send the Captain's message to the agent in Rotterdam. When I had signaled my SK, the GLD operator advised me that this would be reported. It was then that I realized my error, or mistake. I was terribly upset at what I had just done and began to think and wonder what to do about it. The only item of relief that I had was that I could tell the Captain that the message had been sent. I felt so guilty and thought that the GLD operator may have believed that I was intentionally trying to use a pretext of urgent signaling to gain priority for sending an ordinary ship's message.

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During the following days, up until the time we arrived in Rotterdam, I tried to put the whole matter straight in my mind and into a letter to the Chief Operator at GLD, Land's End, England. When I was satisfied with my efforts, I presented the prepared letter to the Captain for his approval or disapproval. After the Captain had read the letter to GLD and had handed it back to me with a knowing smile, I then began to feel a great sense of relief because I had implicated, but not accused, the Captain of any complicity in my crime, for I knew there were laws against what I had done.

The letter was mailed or posted from Rotterdam and some joy was returning to my life. A great time was had while we were in port in Rotterdam, and for the most part, the whole bothersome matter seemed to fade from my thoughts.

Some weeks later, when I had returned home from the SS Joseph Pulitzer, I found that I had received an official letter from Radiomarine Corporation of America with an attached letter from the Federal Communications Commission showing that I was charged by the officer in charge at GLD with non-compliance with Art. 24, Part J, Para 605 Gen'l Radio Regulations (Cairo Revision 1938), improper use of Urgent Signal. This matter was made a part of my record, but no further action was ever taken.

Try to understand, that in this story I was trying to reveal the mind and thinking of a young and inexperienced operator. To that mind and at that time, having some knowledge of the strict rules and penalties governing radio transmissions, my illegal use of the Urgent Distress signal was a crime. But, like a driver who drives best when he can see a cop in his rear-view mirror, I was always reminded by this incident to be careful and correct.

*Clay S. Scott*

Warsaw, NC  
9-1-2006

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Your VWOA Editor notes that the number of new submissions from current VWOA Members on their experiences in Radio and Wireless has decreased significantly and thus the need to go to the ARCHIVES to find interesting facts that I feel should be memorialized.

In 1993 VWOA presented to LEWIS COE the  
**MARCONI MEMORIAL GOLD MEDAL  
OF ACHIEVEMENT**  
with the following short biography.

Born September 14, 1911 at Kansas City, Missouri. Graduated from high school at Galva, Illinois in 1929 and entered the employ of Postal Telegraph as a Morse operator. The Postal office at Galva had been established in 1891 and the original 12 line cross bar

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switchboard was still in use when the office closed in 1933.

Transferred to the Mackay Radio division of IT &T and took part in the start-up of Mackay's point-to-point service between Chicago, New York and San Francisco. Served successively as chief operator of the Merrillville, Indiana receiving station and the St. John, Indiana transmitting station. While at Merrillville took part in receiving tests to hear VHF signals from the high altitude balloons launched at the strato-bowl in South Dakota.

During World War II was on the staff of Haraden Pratt, Vice President and Chief Engineer of Mackay Radio. One of the last assignments at Mackay was to re-activate the New York harbor transmitter, WSF, which had been closed during the war. Left Mackay in 1945 and worked at a variety of jobs in the engineering field, including building a prototype of one of the first auto focusing process cameras used in photo engraving. Last employment was a Purdue University working with educational television. After retirement in 1972 took up free lance writing and have been a regular contributor to Antique Week since 1983. First book was Great Days of the Heliograph, published in 1987 and devoted to the mirror instruments used for "sun telegraphy." Currently hold a general radiotelephone license, and amateur extra class W9CNY. Live with wife, Alice, on a small farm near Crown Point, Indiana.

In honoring his many valuable contributions to the art of radio communications and author of a number of books on land telegraphy, the Veteran Wireless Operators Association is pleased to award the Marconi Memorial Gold Medal of Achievement to Lewis Coe

In 1996 former VWOA Secretary, Edward F. Pleuler Jr., now SK asked LEWIS COE to expand on some of his biography previously disclosed to VWOA.

The following is the submission received by VWOA. Repeated requests to Lewis for pictures have been unanswered.

Born September 14, 1911 in Kansas City, Missouri. Earliest childhood recollections are of the tall, spidery antenna wires in the backyards of "wireless" enthusiasts. Of course, at that time I had no idea what it was all about.

I grew up in Galva, Henry Country, Illinois, starting about 1918 and saw the beginnings of the "broadcast boom." Started building receivers and eventually go one that actually worked after many attempts. Started listening to amateur radio telephone stations on the old 200 meter band. Decided this was the way to go and finally put together a station of sorts and received my amateur license W9CNY, in February 1927.

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It wasn't easy to get started in those days. There were virtually no practical information available, in contrast with the flood of information available today. By some miracle, the local news stand started carrying QST and my progress was speeded up with that source of information. I say miracle because at that time I was the only amateur in town and probably the only customer for QST at 25 cents a copy.

While in High School, started learning the American Morse code and by the time I graduated in 1929 was able to go to work for the Postal Telegraph Company as a vacation relief operator. Was appointed Manager of the Postal Telegraph office at Galva in 1930.

In 1933 got a transfer to the Mackay Radio Division of IT&T. Mackay was pioneering a new domestic radio telegraph service between New York, Chicago and San Francisco. The Chicago receiving station was located at Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana and I reported to that station in the fall of 1933.

Early work at the receiving station consisted of monitoring the various signals from the Mackay transmitters at New York and San Francisco to determine which would be most suitable when commercial service opened. At that time, there was a great shortage of telegraph facilities between key cities and the radio circuits were kept busy from the start.

About 1938, became Chief Operator at the St. John transmitting station which was the companion transmitter for the Merrillville receiver. This station was located near St. John, Lake County, Indiana and remained in operation until June 1942 when all domestic radio circuits were closed by war-time order.

The Indiana stations of Mackay Radio were taken over and operated by the Signal Corps, U.S. Army. The Signal Corps used the stations to establish a circuit to a projected air base at Churchill, Hudson Bay, Canada. I had been "loaned" to the Signal Corps to help operate the former Mackay Stations.

When the Canadian project was cancelled, it was my job to dismantle the receiving and transmitting station and ship the equipment to the Mackay station at Brentwood, Long Island, New York. There it was overhauled and shipped to a station that Mackay was establishing at Algiers, North Africa.

The remainder of my time with Mackay Radio was spent at the company headquarters at 67 Broad Street in New York. One of my last jobs for Mackay was to reactivate the New York harbor transmitter WSF. The WSF transmitter was located on the roof of the 35 story ITT building at 67 Broad Street. It was remote controlled from an operating room on a lower floor of the building.

The WSF transmitter on 500 khz used a pair of tubes in a push-pull self-rectifying circuit with 500 hz AC plate supply

The 100% modulated signal of WSF was beautiful to copy but devastating to the obsolete TRF receiver in the Navy training planes that were flying in the New York area. The FCC finally decided that communicating with the many ships entering New York harbor was just as important as anything the Navy was doing and WSF continued to operate.

After leaving Mackay in 1945, returned to the Midwest and worked at a variety of jobs in the electrical field. Final job before falling into the gentle clutches of Social Security was Purdue University from 1968 to 1972. While at Purdue was involved with some of the early education television systems.

After “officially” retiring in 1972, took up free lance writing and published many articles in “Antique Week” and other magazines. Wrote my first book “Great Days of the Heliograph” in 1987.

The heliograph book was self-published and my last three books were published by McFarland & Co., as follows;

The Telegraph: A History of Morse’s Invention and Its Predecessors in the United States 1993

The Telephone and its Several Inventors; A History 1995

Wireless Radio A History 1996

All of my books are available through public libraries.

THE END

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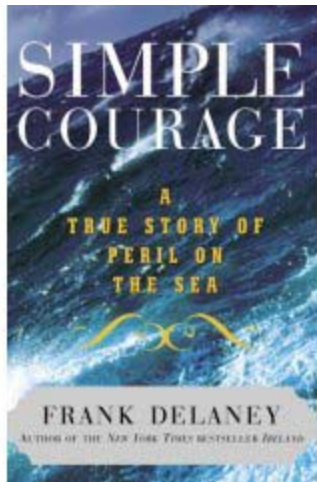
## VWOA MEMBER NEWS

Hi Frank:

Just thought I would pass along news of a recent book published entitled:

*Simple Courage: A True Story of Peril on the Sea* by Frank Delaney. Its about Captain Kurt Carlsen and the *Flying Enterprise* (See below for book write up). *Capt. Carlsen was awarded the VWOA's Marconi Medal of Honor I believe at the Feb 1952 VWOA Banquet at the Hotel Astor in Manhattan, if my memory serves me correct. I was present at that time and met Kurt. Haven't yet read the book by it does mention in passing that he was awarded, among many other awards, the VWOA's Marconi Medal of Honor.*

*Best regards, John McGonigle NX2F*



### From [Booklist](#)

**\*Starred Review\*** Best-selling popular historian Delaney (*Ireland*, 2005) turns his attention to one of the great sea stories of the twentieth century, that of Captain Kurt Carlsen and the *Flying Enterprise*. On Christmas Day 1951, the World War II Liberty ship *Flying Enterprise* began splitting apart in a North Atlantic gale, and her cargo of pig iron shifted. Captain Carlsen saw to the safe abandonment of passengers and crew, then remained aboard to help with salvage efforts. He remained aboard, accompanied only by a young radioman who leaped aboard from a rescue ship, until the *Flying Enterprise* was about to sink under him. Although he may not have displayed the most flawless seamanship in the loading of the pig iron, a worldwide media blitz made him an international hero. It is possible that he was guarding some secret, valuable cargo, and recent dives have revealed that some portion of the wreck had been removed in the interim. Any secret remains unproven, and Delaney's digression to compare Carlsen with his

father seems rather unnecessary; yet this remains a tale certain to enthrall anyone interested in those who go down to the sea in ships. Indeed, it may be the most surefire nautical crowd-pleaser since Gary Kinder's *Ship of Gold in the Deep Blue Sea* (1998). Roland Green  
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### [WENDELL'S NEWS CORNER](#)

VWOA Director, John Chooljian requests that you VWOA Members with high speed internet connections, visit this URL.

He hopes you get a chance to take a look, it's about our TROOPS IN IRAQ. Be sure your sound is on.

<http://www.clermontyellow.accountsupport.com/flash/UntilThen.swf>

Be patient while it downloads. It's worth waiting for.

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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.

We would prefer to hear from you by Email at:

[ftcassidy@optonline.net](mailto:ftcassidy@optonline.net)

Or

[wenben@nyc.rr.com](mailto:wenben@nyc.rr.com)

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*F. T. Cassidy  
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**2006 ANNUAL BUSINESS LUNCHEON**

The 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Business Luncheon will take place on Saturday, November 4, 2006 at the Top Deck of the Seamen's Church Institute, 241 Water Street, New York City.

The Reception and Cocktail Hour will start at 1 PM followed by the Luncheon at 2 PM. You will have a choice of grilled salmon, ½ roast of chicken, or filet mignon for the main course. The cost will be \$35 per person.

The Speaker for the Business Luncheon will be Author Frank Delaney, author of *Simple Courage: A True Story of Peril on the Sea*.

His talk at the Luncheon will be entitled **"The Extraordinary Tale of a Radioman"**

**Please use the coupon below to make your Luncheon Reservations, which must be sent to the VWOA Treasurer to arrive no later than October 16<sup>th</sup>.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Detach Coupon Here** \_\_\_\_\_

**2006 VWOA BUSINESS LUNCHEON**

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Main Course Desired

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Number of tickets \_\_\_\_\_ at \$35 each for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check totaling above payable to VWOA, Inc. and mail to the VWOA Treasurer, J. Michael Shaw, 11 Caton Terrace, Caldwell, NJ 07006-4808 **to arrive no later than October 16, 2006. Be sure to also enclose this sheet.**



## About Frank Delaney

Frank Delaney was born in Tipperary, Ireland, and after a fledgling career in banking became a broadcaster with RTE radio and television, the Irish state network, working on documentaries, music programmes and finally as a newsreader. In the mid 1970's he joined the Northern Ireland region of the BBC in Belfast as their current affairs man in Dublin and covered an intense period of the virtual war known as the Irish 'Troubles.' Later, after half a decade of reporting bombings, shootings kidnappings, sieges, he moved to London where, perhaps as an antidote, he began to work in arts broadcasting. *Bookshelf*, which he inaugurated for BBC Radio Four, became an award winner; on television he wrote films for *Omnibus* and other arts programmes and in the early 1980's hosted his own talk show, *Frank Delaney*, featuring an array of cultural and literary personalities.

Among hundreds of other broadcast contributions, Delaney also created *Word of Mouth*, BBC Radio Four's highly rated show about language, and wrote and presented *The Celts*, a six part television series, seen in forty countries and still in active video and DVD distribution. Between his BBC radio and television shows, and later his BSBSky/Fox Network international Cable TV show, *The Book Show*, he has taped interviews with hundreds if not thousands of writers, including most of the significant authors of our time.

[Simple Courage](#) is his sixth work of non-fiction; in 1979, his own first book, [James Joyce's Odyssey](#) was published to critical acclaim and best-seller status. Since then, Delaney has written five other books of non-fiction, nine novels, one novella, and a smattering of short stories published in both magazines and collections. He has edited compilations of essays and poetry, and written screenplays, among them, *Goodbye Mr. Chips* shown on ITV in Britain and Masterpiece Theater in the USA.

[Ireland, A Novel](#), his most recent fiction, has been on the New York Times best sellers lists in both hardback and paperback and on many other bestsellers lists across the US and the UK.

Frank Delaney has three sons, Francis, Bryan, and Owen and a granddaughter, Poppy Beatrice. He lives in New York and Litchfield County, Connecticut, with his wife, Diane Meier.