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Title: Saving History (Robert C. Gold, W9DHL, SK)

Author: John H. Dilks III, K2TQN

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OLD RADIO

Saving History

The story of Robert C. Gold, W9DHL, of Lomoni and Ames, Iowa; KH6JU of Honolulu, T.H.; W3PDA of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and finally WA2IIB of Mt Laurel, New Jersey—and what he accomplished—might have been lost forever if it were not for one last telephone call. One of his neighbors knew that Bob would not like to have his treasured ham radio station thrown away, as the house was being cleaned out, in preparation for it being sold. She finally contacted Phil Vourtsis, President of the New Jersey Antique Radio Club.

The NJARC is a radio-collecting club whose members have varied radio interests. Because I was one of the ham members, I was asked (along with Marv Beeferman, secretary of the club) to inspect the station. Upon discussion with the neighbor and the club's board members, it was decided to make an offer for the radio equipment, and our offer was accepted.

We immediately stopped the throwing out of all the radio room "junk," as the neighbor-volunteers who were helping to clean up the property called it. They didn't know we wanted that stuff too. A few items were lost to the trash man, but most of the usable papers and parts were saved.

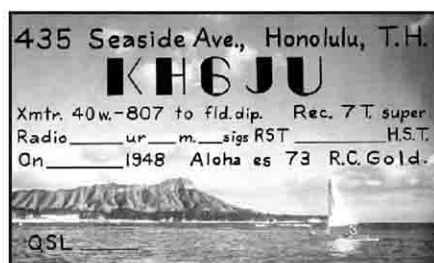
It's important to note here that we all need to spend some time when cleaning out a SK's ham shack to preserve what we can. If you get the opportunity to purchase some or all of an estate, ask your friends for help. Look for photos and papers that show parts of our hobby's past. Once it's thrown away, it's too late. If you're not interested in the history, please find someone who is and ask them to go along.

As our club members went through the piles of papers, we found that Robert C. Gold was an engineer and a significant player at RCA during the early days of color television. Among the papers were manuals, schematics, design notes and project reports on the development and early marketing of color TV. There were some 35-mm slides of the RCA "TV Road Show" taken at various locations around the world. Unfortunately, some of the papers were damp, moldy and in some cases unusable. There had been a minor flood at one time.

Bob had become ill in the 1980s, and then was in a nursing home for a while before he became a SK. His bride and love of 53 years, Jean, also became ill and



Robert Gold, KH6JU, at his Honolulu station in 1947. Bob was returned to Hawaii for a few years after the war by RCA to help straighten out its property and equipment used by the Navy.



Robert Gold's QSL card from Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii, in 1947.



Robert Gold working on his antenna in Lamoni, Iowa in 1939.



All the black front panel parts from the last station were placed in the 6 foot 6 inch cabinet for this photo. K2WI intends to try to rebuild this rig as close to original, as the present condition of the various units will permit. Most units have been modified over the years.



Robert Flory, K2WI, peeking through the racks, as units are being removed.



This is Robert Gold's friend, Stewart Wight, W9NMA, handling ARRL traffic from Iowa in 1939. The transmitter is one designed by Gold.

Some Memories of my Brother, Robert C. Gold

By Myra Gold Steinbrink

When 13-year-old Robert Gold was in the 8th grade he designed and built an electric map of the United States. I don't remember exactly how it worked, but there were two wired pointers, and when the state or capital was touched the corresponding state or capital would light up. Everyone marveled at his invention.

In 1932 when Robert was in high school (probably 15 or 16) he built a radio and walnut cabinet to house it for our parents. They had this radio for over 30 years. In 1937 on my 16th birthday (Robert was 21) my brother let my girlfriend and me spend that Sunday talking to ham radio operators all over the country. He had recently built his first "rig," which took up one whole little room on the second floor of our house. He later built a combination shop/ham radio building in our back yard. There was always a steady stream of friends who spent a lot of time in that building.

I remember he erected two very tall antennas for that equipment, one on top of the building, the other in a pasture across the street. Electrical storms were always a concern, and I remember when one was struck by lightning. There was also a fire in the radio building. On both occasions Robert got the fires out before the local fire department arrived.

Robert joined RCA in the summer of 1941. I rode with him in his new car to Kansas City, Missouri, where he was first assigned, but not for long. He was one of the first persons chosen by RCA to be taught the complexities of radar and sonar. A short time later while still working for RCA he was assigned to the US Navy as a Naval Technician, a post he held all during World War II.

After the war Robert was stationed at the New York City office and I remember him telling me when there were only 50 TV sets in the whole city and he was assigned to service them. He knew David Sarnoff (head of RCA) and worked a number of times with Dwight Hemion, winner of 24 Emmy Awards, who directed some of the "specials" that NBC produced. Robert mentioned having been the first to televise the birth of a baby for a hospital or medical school.

In 1957 he traveled to Japan for RCA, to introduce color TV. He said, that at that time the Japanese were having trouble getting color to work properly. He spent quite a bit of time working with the engineers there; some of that long time was because of the language differences. Eventually the Japanese figured it out with his help.

RCA was always sending him to international trade fairs in such places as Greece, Italy and Germany. Robert and his crew received an Emmy for the process that connects a number of unrelated commercials together—something we naturally take for granted now.

He was at the Berlin Wall, on May Day just after it was built, broadcasting this event to the world. On the other hand, in 1950 he broadcast the 50th anniversary of the Nobel Prize, and demonstrated the same for the King of Sweden and Sweden's Parliament. Later he was in charge of building the television display for the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. He also authored several technical manuals for RCA.

When he traveled to other countries, he made it a point to look up and find fellow hams. He would visit them and see their stations. It is my feeling that during the 40-plus years spent working for RCA, he never really lost his love of being a "ham" radio operator.



Robert Gold in his US Navy Technician uniform. He was employed by RCA and assigned to the Navy during WW II.

is still in a nursing home. Without children, and with no local relatives, there was no one to look after the home.

One Word of Caution!

Upon entering the shack on the first trip, I found the ac power still turned on—on the operating console and to all the equipment. In all that time—perhaps as long as 15 years—no one had turned it off. I carefully removed the plugs, one by one. Even though Bob was an engineer, and over-designed his station for safety, in later years he used lamp cord extensions. Never assume the power is off. In situations like this, take your time to be safe.

Removing the Equipment

Luckily, many hands make light work. We had a good turnout to remove and haul away the station and other radio items of interest. Also fortunate is the fact that there are so many varied interests in our club. All the papers will be examined and reviewed with knowledgeable eyes. I'm sure there will be a few good articles written on their contents, and eventually the more important papers will be placed with an appropriate museum or library.

Bob was also quite a transmitter designer. In 1938 he, with lifelong friend Stewart Wight, W9NMA, started a custom manufacturing shop. Several of their designs were built, sold and used on the air. They had customers from California to Rhode Island. After college they dissolved their company, Gold & Wight, and went on to their own radio and electronic careers. Many of his early designs have survived.

In a future column I will feature some of his ham designs and station equipment. If you would like to see more of Bob's station, visit my Web site: www.eht.com/oldradio/arrl/index.html.—K2TQN QST