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OLD RADIO

This is a new column about old radios, old ham radios to be exact. Sometimes they're called *boatanchors*. Sometimes they're called antiques. Whatever you want to call them, if you like old radios and radio history, this is your column! Each month we will try to cover another area of collecting, profile a collector and profile another old radio.

John Who?

First, I would like to tell you a little about myself, John Dilks, K2TQN, and how I became interested in ham radio and in collecting radios.

It began the summer I turned 12. My dad borrowed a National NC-100-XA receiver for the summer from one of his friends. We set it up in the workshop, put up an antenna and turned it on. The sounds of 80 meters came flooding out of the speaker. I was amazed to hear people talking to each other. I was forever hooked. A couple years later, in high school, I finally got my license: KN2TQN.

My first station consisted of a homebrew single-6V6 oscillator, made from ARRL's *How to Become a Radio Amateur*. It was exactly like the one in the October 1999 *QST*, page 29 ("Regeneration and Crystal Control," Jerry Svoboda, KB2QIU). The first receiver I owned was a 1937 National NC-81X. I paid \$35 for it from an older ham. I didn't realize it then, but I had just purchased my first old radio.

When you're a new ham, people tend to give you things. My first *really* old radio was just such a gift: a Pilot Super-Wasp made in 1929. I looked it over and decided to dismantle it and build something else with the parts. This is where my dad stepped in and explained what an important radio this was and how he would have given a right arm for such a radio when he was my age. We (mostly my dad) decided to keep it intact and store it in the attic where I wasn't allowed to touch it.

A few years after high school I started to collect, slowly at first. I found Morse keys were inexpensive (this was the 1960s) and nice to have. Then came an occasional receiver and transmitter. Over the years I found tubes, microphones, speakers, magazines and books, which all followed me home.

Over the last few years I have had a strong desire to display my collection. I started by hauling a vanload of heavy boxes to local ham club meetings. It took a long time to set up the display, and afterwards a long time to repack everything. The talk

usually lasted 20 minutes, followed by a hands-on look at the collection by those in attendance. After arriving back home, I had to remove everything from the van and store it. It was becoming a real chore. I had to find a better way to display my collection.

The solution came in the form of an old RV-like mobile office. A collector friend told me about such a vehicle in an upcoming auction. It was a 1973 Dodge-powered, twenty-seven foot long office with only 39,000 miles on it. After purchasing the RV, I spent the next eight months building the display in it. Since August 1998 I have traveled over 12,000 miles to hamfests and radio events. (See September 1999 *QST*, page 71.) Perhaps we will meet at a hamfest or radio event this year!

Old Radio Profile: Pilot Super-Wasp, 1929

First advertised for \$29.95 in the June 1929 *QST*, the Super-Wasp was an immediate success. Here was an affordable kit radio designed by Robert S. Kruse, WIBAO. Amateurs were eager to move up to the short waves, and this radio would do it in style!

Popular features included: increased sensitivity and selectivity made possible by the "tuned" screen-grid RF stage, universal wavelength range—it tuned from 14 to 500 meters and absolutely no "hand capacity" effects (completely shielded). The package included an easy to assemble kit of parts with large blueprints showing part placement and other details.



Many of the popular radio magazines of the day carried articles touting the features and successes of this radio. Hams and short-wave enthusiasts everywhere were buying or duplicating the Super-Wasp. Thousands of kits were sold. Many young hams bought kits and assembled them for less-talented neighbors and friends. This created a "cottage industry" and a little extra spending money for more ham radio equipment.

The Super-Wasp pictured here is the one given to me in the 1960s. For more detailed information you can visit my Web page at: <http://www.eht.com/oldradio/arrl/index.html>.

Conclusion

In the future I hope to hear from you. If you have something to share, take a photo, write a short description and send it in. If you'd like me to address a particular subject or piece of hardware, I want to hear from you. Just drop me a letter or e-mail at the address shown on this page. **QST**

Collector Profile: Paul Wolcott, N2JTD

Paul enjoys collecting, restoring and operating his old radios on the air. Everything in the accompanying photo is operational. Shown are two of the favorite stations he uses in the "AM Windows" on the 160, 80 and 40-meter bands. The Heath DX-100 transmitter and Collins R-390A receiver is his favorite AM combo. Paul also uses the Heath DX-60 and Ameritron AL-811 amplifier on 80 and 40 at times. The Kenwood TS-450S is used for his SSB contacts and the Kenwood 231A for local 2-meter work.

"I find that the reliability of the older radios is amazing," Paul said. "They keep on going, and they are fun to operate. I like Heathkit gear the best. They have good manuals, which makes them easy to work on. For this reason alone, Heathkits should be considered by new collectors."

During the 1960s Paul discovered ham radio while in middle school. During a visit to the school library he found a copy of *QST*. As Paul thumbed through the magazine he became more and more excited about Amateur Radio. Every month, as the new issues appeared, Paul would be the first to check them out. He particularly remembers the photos of all those great stations and the fun their operators appeared to be having. So for him, collecting old radios comes almost naturally.

