

Ham Radio Friends and Elmer's Tributes

I am looking for help from the ham community. My website "QSL Cards from the Past" at www.w8jyz.com has sections dedicated to listing tributes to hams both living or SK called "Gone but not Forgotten" and "Living Hams who have made Notable Contributions to our Hobby". Bob Ballantine, W8SU has been most gracious by contributing a large number of these tributes to my site.

Bob and I had hoped that more tributes would be sent by others feeling the need to contribute stories of their friends or families or Elmer's. There are many stories and tributes out there waiting to be told about hams from all walks of life who spent their time in the our hobby contributing to their communities, their radio clubs or just enjoying being a part of Ham Radio History.

So go spend some time at "QSL Cards from the Past" and read some of our stories and tributes and then get busy writing about your favorite ham or Elmer and forward them to me at: w8jyz@arri.net

Posted By WA3LWR
October 14, 2009 Posted By WA3LWR

Lee Jerauld, W3VAP

Thirty five years ago, I was a 16 year old with some interest in ham radio and took a free Novice class taught by Lee Jerauld, W3VAP. Prior to the exam he worked with me and even then I just passed the Novice.

When trying to get my General, in front of the FCC, I failed it several times, but Lee kept encouraging me and I finally got it. Lee was the EC for ARES, Radio Officer for EMA, set up the first real VHF repeater and held many club offices. He never sought praise, but was always out there helping others. He is now retired and not nearly as active but without him I would never have become a ham, and an Elmer for others. I also became the EC, Radio Officer, club officer, etc. and have taught several classes. Lee taught me what being a ham and an Elmer means. I salute him and hope others will praise their Elmer's.

Hi Bob,

October 17, 2009

Very interesting website! Great idea about writing up stories about hams that have made a difference. Here is mine:

Jim Richards, W8OO.

Jim and his wonderful wife Phyllis, moved to Keyser, WV from the DC area where he worked for the Naval Research Lab. After retirement he wanted to move back to his home town and its relaxed atmosphere and fortunately for me, found a house just two streets from where I live.

As in many cases, I first noticed a ham antenna in the back yard. I stopped one day, rang the door bell and introduced myself. This was the beginning of one of the most rewarding friendships I've ever had.

Although I had at that time, been a ham for 20 or more years, compared to Jim I was still in the Novice class. His background provided many hours talking about his experiences as a young ham that wound coils on cardboard oatmeal containers to his professional career as a self-taught electronics engineer and designer.

During his career, Jim worked for Westinghouse and spent countless hours keeping the Westinghouse robots, Elektro and Elektro's dog, Sparko operational at the 1939 New York World's Fair. He also worked on the installation of the 50,000 watt transmitter at KDKA in Pittsburg. Eventually Jim went to work for the Navel Research Lab where his work ranged from microwave effects on flesh to ultrasonics to military needs.

It was one of the later that created sleepless nights for him. Jim told me that NRL and two other entities competed for a sea mine detector that would be mounted on submarines during the later part of WWII. Jim's design won the competition and his design was mounted on three submarines. After the subs had been at sea for two weeks, he was told that they were going to attack shipping inside one of Japan's major ports. They would have to navigate through curtains of sea mines in order to get within torpedo range of the ships in the port. He couldn't talk about it because of security and this mission was on his mind constantly, even in his dreams. He said that the atomic bomb was dropped before the subs reached the Japanese port and they were diverted.

Jim also had 29 patents with his name on them but since he worked for either the NRL or another company, he received no compensation for them. He did invent and develop an ultrasonic detector for which he was granted a patent which would have made him a multi-millionaire. It was so sensitive that it could detect the fetal heartbeat of a baby long before any other method in use at the time. A pharmaceutical company stole his invention and simply told him, "sue." Since he couldn't afford to sue he received nothing. This invention has developed into the ultrasound testing that is presently used in medical institutions all over the world.

Jim's expertise at home brewing equipment was second to none. His creations were a work of art. I was fortunate to have met Jim and his advanced "Elmering" to a 25 year ham serves me to this day. I also felt fortunate that I was able to help Jim during his last years with the "new" invention, the computer. Because of him I found it necessary to learn about computers that enabled him to track amateur satellites. It was through Jim that I heard my first amateur satellite, AO-10, which was the spark which turned into a flame for another facet of amateur radio.

Jim has been gone for many years but his influence on the world lives as building blocks for modern technology and for this old ham.

73

Allen T. Poland Jr. K8AXW
