

September 2, 2000

## **Hamfester's Radio Club**

by [Bill Simons, W9BB](#)

I first attended Hamfesters in 1939 when I was 12 years old. At that time I lived at 7437 Chappel Avenue, (2100 east) in Chicago. The Club then met at the Viking Temple, at 69<sup>th</sup> and Emerald Street in Chicago. I had to take the 75<sup>th</sup> Street, Streetcar, to Halsted Street and transfer to the Halsted Streetcar to get to the meetings. At that time I did not know any of the members but made new friends at the meeting.

Hamfesters used to send Code Practice on 160 Meters, and I frequently used that service. I was also provided hints on how to get the code speed up and my father gave me a present of a Sky Buddy S19R Receiver. I soon got my code speed up to 15wpm and went downtown to take the tests. Even though I did not feel good when I took the tests I later learned that I had passed. Two days later my Doctor found that I had Pneumonia. I received the call W9YXJ, in 1941.

When I attended Hamfesters I was introduced to many of the Members, one of them was Cy Reed, W9AA. When I was introduced to W9AA, I did not know whether I should get down and kiss his ring or what. I was very impressed with his call letters. I also met Archie Karraker, W9AVE, Les Morey, W9KBO, Zach Roserman, W9RT, and Frank Galaher, (call forgotten), who was the FCC Inspector that gave me the ham test.

I operated on 40-Meter CW, using a converted Cathedral Radio and my Sky Buddy Receiver. I tore the radio apart, except for the power supply and the audio output stage. Then I converted the audio output stage to a Crystal Oscillator, and had about 5 watts output.

World War 11, started at the end of 1941, and of course many of my friends were called into service. I was then 14 years old. I stayed with Hamfesters through out the war but to conserve on expenses the club meetings moved from the Viking Temple to a small factory owned by one of the members, Hank Woods. Hank did not have a ham license but was a loyal member of the club.

During the WW2, I became involved with the War Emergency Radio Service, WERS, and operated on both 2 ½, and 1 ¼ meter AM, using the call letters WHHI 29 and WHHI 140. The south side of Chicago was covered by a control station, WHHI 4 and this station was under the supervision of Les Morey, W9KBO.

After the war ended and the hams returned to the air, I served as Ticket Chairman at Hamfesters, first postwar Hamfest. Zach Roserman, W9RT, was involved with the Red Cross, and he brought a Red Cross Ambulance to show at the Hamfest. I also loaned my Instructograph to Hamfesters for use in sending their code practice on 160M. I never did ask to get it back.

Metro Amateur Radio Club  
<http://www.qsl.net/mac>

I then went to college, got my degree from IIT, got married to my wife Erika, and had our first child, Laurie. We then moved to Skokie Illinois, in 1957, 43 years ago. There we had our son, Ken, who became WB9YDD; He has been licensed for over 25 years and now lives in Minnesota.

About 25 years ago, the FCC permitted Extra Class operators to select their own call letters, from a list of all available 2-letter calls. My first thought was Cy Reeds call, W9AA, but I learned that this call was assigned to the Hamfesters Memorial Station. My next choice was W9BB and I received that call about 25 years ago.

My working career includes 7 years with the Commercial Microwave Division of Motorola, and from there I joined Shure Brothers, Inc. I formed the Shure Ham Club and was the Project Manager for Share's first Ham SSB Microphones, the Model 440, and 444.

At Shure, I was Corporate Director of Purchasing, and then the Plant Manager of their largest Plant, in Evanston Illinois. While at Shure we hosted a Hamfesters Meeting in our Cafeteria. I believe this was about 25 years ago.

I am presently the Treasurer of the MAC Radio Club. I am also a member of the NIDXA, and was formerly a member of the SRO, and am still active on most bands.

*The September 2000 MAC meeting had a presentation by Bob and Wanda Hotz who are historians for the Hamfesters Radio Club. Bill Simons, presented this article on his early amateur radio experiences to the Hotzs'. Bill's article was published in the October 2000 issue of Hamgab, which is the newsletter for Hamfester's Radio Club.*