

There have always been questions among current and past club members about the origins of our club and some of the past activities. Several months ago I volunteered to look into some of our old records and jog the memories of our long standing members. With this in mind, I contacted club historian Mike VA3MP and received three large boxes of old bulletins, pictures and other odd assorted documents. I'm looking forward to looking at the old minutes stored in a file box I created when secretary in the mid/late 1980's and currently held by the current secretary.

While I am neither a writer nor an historian, I will attempt to put forth some of the history of our club. So – what would you like to read about? How would you like it presented? – Chronologically? By topic?

My aim in taking on this project is to pull together the documents we have in our history files and information, pictures, and a letter made available to me by Paul Cassel VE3AVY/VE3SY (sk) during many discussions over several years we had while sitting and enjoying the evening air at the Home Depot and other car shows -- Paul showing off his Mustang Mach 1 and me my vintage Pontiac.

Should you read something in these ramblings that does not make sense or you have a better memory or some other supporting documents, please contact me so I can make it right. ve3mah@bell.net

Part 0 “BS” (Before SWARC)

There are several sources of very complete early history of Amateur (Ham) radio in Canada. The ARRL, of course, presents the US history.

The Kitchener Waterloo Amateur Radio Club (KWARC) started a history project in 1982 and includes some very good early information from the memories of past members. You can access this from the KWARC web page, 6th radio button down on the left or; <http://www.kwarc.org/history/index.htm>

Another very informative paper, written in 2007 by Wm. J. Gillis VE1WG, covers the early history of Amateur Radio development during the period 1911 to 1927 specifically in the Maritime Provinces. This can be accessed at http://www.maarc.ca/Amateur_Radio_History.pdf

In Canada, prior to WWI, there was much experimentation with this new form of communication called wireless. The Radiotelegraph Act passed in 1905 under the ministry of Naval Service was modified in 1913 to include formal licensing of “Amateur Experimental Stations.” Today, the “Amateur Radio Service” is defined in the “Radio Act” under Industry Canada. All amateur activities were closed down by the federal government for the period 1914 to 1919 due to WWI and again during WWII.

Initially, call signs issued to amateurs consisted of 2 letters (often the licensee's initials) prefaced by an “X” to denote “experimental”. After WWI, the “X” was dropped and starting in 1919, a regional number designator was used to preface the 2 letter call sign. As an example, the call sign 3AA was issued to a Mr. W. L. Love of 136 Main Street, Galt. The 1923 call sign records from the Naval Service lists 12 licenses in Galt, 1 in Preston and 1 in Hespeler. Kitchener amateurs numbered 12, Waterloo 0 and Guelph 7. In 1927, the country preface “VE” was added to create the present day call sign format.

In the early 1930's, as more ‘men’ became interested in amateur radio, the need to form a club of like minded individuals spawned the formation in 1933 of **The Radio Club of Galt**. This group from the surrounding areas of Galt, Preston, Hespeler, Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph met in the fall at the home of Jim Sweet 28 Cameron St. Galt. Jim was first licensed in December 1934 as VE3AAI. I met Jim in the mid 1970's and learned a great deal by visiting his station in the end house on the right of Fifth Avenue in Galt. Even though he was behind a very high hill, there was quite a lot of activity on the low HF bands. In 1936/37, the club name was changed to **The Progressive Radio Club** to better reflect the aims set out by club members, they being “training and keeping up with developments in the art.”

The Progressive Radio Club prospered through the late 1930's with many activities including meetings at the YMCA's in Kitchener, Guelph and Galt, a Hamfest held at the Walper House (Hotel) in Kitchener and picnics in Brantford and Puslinch until the federal government stopped all radio activity for the duration of WWII.

One of the largest undertakings of the new Progressive Radio Club was to, in 1946, set up and operate the ARRL Field Day. The chosen site was well outside of town at the south east corner of highway 24 and Eagle Street – the present site of the Home Depot store and giant fountains. This area was known as Clearview Heights. Later businesses at this intersection had names like Clearview Textiles (who I worked for during the summer of 1969). Below are 2 pictures, courtesy of Paul VE3SY (sk) showing some of the setup.



Some of the early members active in organising the Progressive Radio Club are well known local amateurs and some with very close connections to our present day club. Fred Hammond VE3HC (sk) of Hammond Manufacturing was one of those who went on to promote amateur radio world wide and to supply anyone needing parts; Newt Good VE3CY (sk) a distant relative of mine from Waterloo; Con Gorth VE3UM (sk) who's call was saved to be used by the Cambridge DX Society; Stan Jackson VE3AIX (sk) who was a prominent business owner of a Pharmacy/Radio/TV/Photo shop in Hespeler. I met Stan around 1966 through my uncle, who went to work for Stan about 1927, and visited his secondary 'shack' in the upstairs of his store at 22 Queen Street East. Stan's' main shack was at his home at Puslinch Lake; Jim Sweet VE3AAI (sk) who also became a founding member of our present day club; and Bill Martin VE3IC (sk) who I believe to be the father of current club member Hugh Martin VE3IHM.

After WWII, there was a major population jump including many new amateur radio enthusiasts in the area and the Progressive Radio Club disbanded with clubs being formed in Kitchener Waterloo and Guelph. The South Waterloo Amateur Radio Club formed officially in 1964.

Following is a letter from Ernie Crump VE3OU in Preston written to Ross Carruthers for the KWARC project indicating the beginnings of SWARC.

(Received from Paul VE3SY (sk) and used with permission from Ernie VE3OU)

790 Regent Street,
Cambridge, Ontario,
N3H 2V3
Jan 20, 1984.

Ross Carruthers,
256 Alexandra Ave.,
Waterloo, Ont.
N2L 1M8.

Dear Ross,

At the Cambridge DX Society dinner last week, Marshall VE3KK stated that you were interested in the formation of the South Waterloo Amateur Radio Club.

Since then I have tried to track down the original minutes of the early years of the club to no avail. The latest minutes the present secretary has are from 1978.

I was one of the founding members and the first holder of VE3SWA. I secured that call for the club at its inception in 1964.

The driving force behind the founding of SWARC was George Jefferies who at that time was not licenced and I was. He coerced me into helping him start the club and arrange a course to get him and several others licenced. George became VE3EUQ shortly thereafter. At that time I was VE3EGG.

Other originals, or soon after inception members were:

Murray Fisk who became VE3FUU
Dave Dixon who became VE3DXO
Ron Schindler VE3DXI
Keith Kaufman VE3CTY, Earl's late brother.
Russ Tousaw who became VE3GMJ
Len Morris who became VE3FJB
Dave Bell who became VE3CSB
Bruce Tawse who became VE3CET
Stan Jackson VE3IC
Neil Hancock
Bill and John Woodfield VE3CYK
Ralph Korchensky VE3EUK
Paul Cassel VE3AVY, now VE3SY

It would appear that the original lists and minutes have not been passed on to the secretaries and have been lost during the twenty plus years.

George Jefferies passed away in 1971/72. He was the force behind the club. I was overwhelmed by his enthusiasm and secured the call and wrote the

original constitution, conned my dad into printing QSL's, letterheads, cards etc for free.

I sure miss George and his infectious love for his new found hobby.

Here's hoping that this letter has cleared up the birth of the SWARC for you. If there are any other questions please call me at home.

Best of luck,

Ernie Crump VE3OU, ex VE3EGG.

While Ernie states he does not know where the original minutes of the first meetings are --- stay tuned to the next instalment for the reveal of some documents I remember filing while secretary in the 1980's.

Did You Know?

Cambridge actually has at least 2 Amateur Radio clubs. The second was started by members of SWARC in 1978 to honour a past member. Anyone know/remember the name and purpose of this club? Hint: They used to issue an award certificate. (not sure if the award is still available – I have mine) Watch for a short story in a future column.

Anyone remember this long time amateur, club member, mining engineer avid DX'r and field day operator?

Hint: Past member of SWARC but lived (lives) in Lyndon

Answer in the next column.

