

"TUNING THE SHORT-WAVE BANDS" REVISITED: A 1991 INTERVIEW WITH HANK BENNETT

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I expect there are similarities in our shortwave stories. I was raised in the country, my family had little money and my worldly experiences were minimal. It was in the pre-Sputnik days and although my dad was an electrical engineer, the government had not yet learned to appreciate the discipline. Through my dad, I became interested in the mystery of electronics. To foster this interest, he presented me with an old military surplus receiver, a BC-312 M. It was big and it was ugly, but it tuned the shortwave broadcasters, and my life has never been the same. It only took a few minutes of shortwave and overnight my big bedroom closet was cleaned out to become a "radio shack." Only those that have ever experienced the thrill could understand the feeling that ran up my spine when I heard the chimes of Big Ben and realized that I was actually listening to London! That evening I left the farm and toured the world from my bedroom closet. Later, I discovered I could write letters to such exotic places as Peking, Moscow, Prague and Colombo; and, they would write back, sending letters covered with beautiful stamps and filled with pictures to stimulate my imagination. Through a new magazine, *Popular Electronics*, I found there were actually other people involved in "my" hobby. And when I received my WPE400 callsign, I felt part of a large fraternity that elevated me out of my rural setting and made me a part of the world.

I did not do this all alone. I had a wonderful teacher who came to my house once a month to visit me and explain such things as QSLing and receiver operation. Occasionally my teacher would tell me about a new shortwave station or other people in the hobby. Of great importance to me were the monthly loggings he brought, which allowed me, in my isolation, to learn what was being heard and on what frequencies. My teacher was Hank Bennett and he wrote "Tuning the Short-Wave Bands" (later to be called "Short-Wave Report") in *Popular Electronics*.

Hank Bennett wrote his first PE column in May 1955 and continued to instruct both the new and the experienced shortwave listener for 15 years, publishing his last column in August 1970. A number of recent surveys indicate that the average shortwave hobbyist is in his mid- to late 40s. This would suggest that a majority of us look to Hank Bennett as the man who started us and nursed us through the early days of our hobby.

Because I still use tube gear and have remained philosophically a 50's DXer, I was asked by *Proceedings* to investigate the possibility of an interview with Hank Bennett. I asked for an interview and my request was granted. The interview was conducted in February 1991.

I had the personal thrill of meeting Hank and his wife Amelia at the Fourth Annual Winter SWL Fest in Kulpsville, PA on 23 March 1991. The Bennetts had driven 45 minutes in the rain for this brief meeting and they were as bright and cheerful as Hank's old columns were. I found that the Bennetts work as a team—for example, Mea would get up at 1:30 AM, make coffee and hot chocolate, and she and Hank would listen to the Belgian Congo together (yes, you have my permission to show this sentence to your spouse!). Her answers to my questions convinced me that a Hank Bennett interview would not be complete without a few questions directed to Mea, and her answers are included here also.

I hope you enjoy this interview as much as I have enjoyed compiling it.

PROCEEDINGS: Would you please share a personal biography with us? Where are you from, what is (was) your profession? Wife? Children? Etc.?

MR. BENNETT: Both my wife, Amelia, and I are now rated as senior citizens, both of us being 66. She will be mentioned from time to time since she has been in this hobby with me since the day of our marriage in 1948. She is from Wyoming, Michigan; I am from Collingswood, New Jersey. We met through the good efforts of her brother with whom I worked in the middle of a cabbage patch in various areas of France as operators of a field radio station for the 250th Signal Operation Company, on detached service with the 13th Air Photo Group. We have two kids—Marion and her family live nearby; Jim and his family live in Terrytown, Louisiana. We have eight grandkids in all.

I left World War II service with qualifications as 776 (low speed operator), 766 (high speed operator) and 738 (intercept operator). I went in as a PVT, came out as a PFC. I went in at 140 pounds, came out at 144. Both weight and age have increased...

Well anyhow, upon leaving the service, I took a job as stock boy with the world renowned Franklin Institute

in Philadelphia, who had considerable US Navy Research and Development contracts. I stayed as stock boy for one day. After that I became an electronic technician, as a result of being a licensed amateur radio operator (since 1941, as W2PNA and for a period later on, also as K8AVT). The job included constructing chassis per engineering orders and schematics. I stayed there for several years until I got fed up with the Philadelphia wage tax imposed on non-Philly residents, and took a job over here in New Jersey at Schaevitz Engineering, making and testing Linear Variable Differential Transformers and gradually working up to a supervisor that was too high to be in the union and too low in management to be in management. So in 1962 I dumped that and went to work as a letter carrier for the USPS, a job that I was to hold until my recent retirement after 28 years.

Amelia and I spent our honeymoon at a secluded little lake in the New York Adirondacks (we had intended to go on to Montreal but Caroga Lake proved to be too inviting); returned home, and shortly thereafter, Amelia went with me to Schaevitz where she became an AI coil winder and she kept on with this until kids started showing up. Meanwhile, we were in SWL and ham radio together. She never obtained her ham ticket but when it came to sitting up all night working the rig or tuning the dials she's right in there with me.

Gee. All of that for the first question. Hmmm.

PROCEEDINGS: Now, could we hear about your hobby biography? How did Hank Bennett become a shortwave listener? How long have you been in the hobby? Who inspired you? Do you specialize in a specific geographic area? Do you collect QSL cards? Do you keep track of countries heard and verified (if you do, what are your current numbers)? What do you consider your absolute best "catch?" What is your favorite QSL? How did you become involved in hobby journalism?

MR. BENNETT: How did I become an SWL? It might have made my parents mad at times but when I was a kid, my Dad used to listen to WJZ in New York, on 760 kcs. We were 90 miles from New York and 99 miles or so from Baltimore. WBAL was also on 760 and immediately following the WJZ station announcement, one could easily hear WBAL with their announcement. You understand that they were actually both in the same network so the station breaks were the only thing different in their programming, at least during prime evening hours.

So, if I could hear WBAL without any effort, what else could I hear somewhere other than on 760? I tried many other frequencies between station breaks and often found distant stations. One evening I nailed KOMO, Seattle, in the minute between Lowell Thomas and Amos 'n' Andy. Another goodie was "CJCB, Sydney". My Mom flipped over that one. I HAD AUSTRALIA!!! (Yeah, right.)

I must have been all of 8 or 9 years of age in that time period. Sooner or later I received a 5-tube Emerson receiver in a plastic case and I was off! That was actually my second receiver—I'll tell you about my FIRST one later.

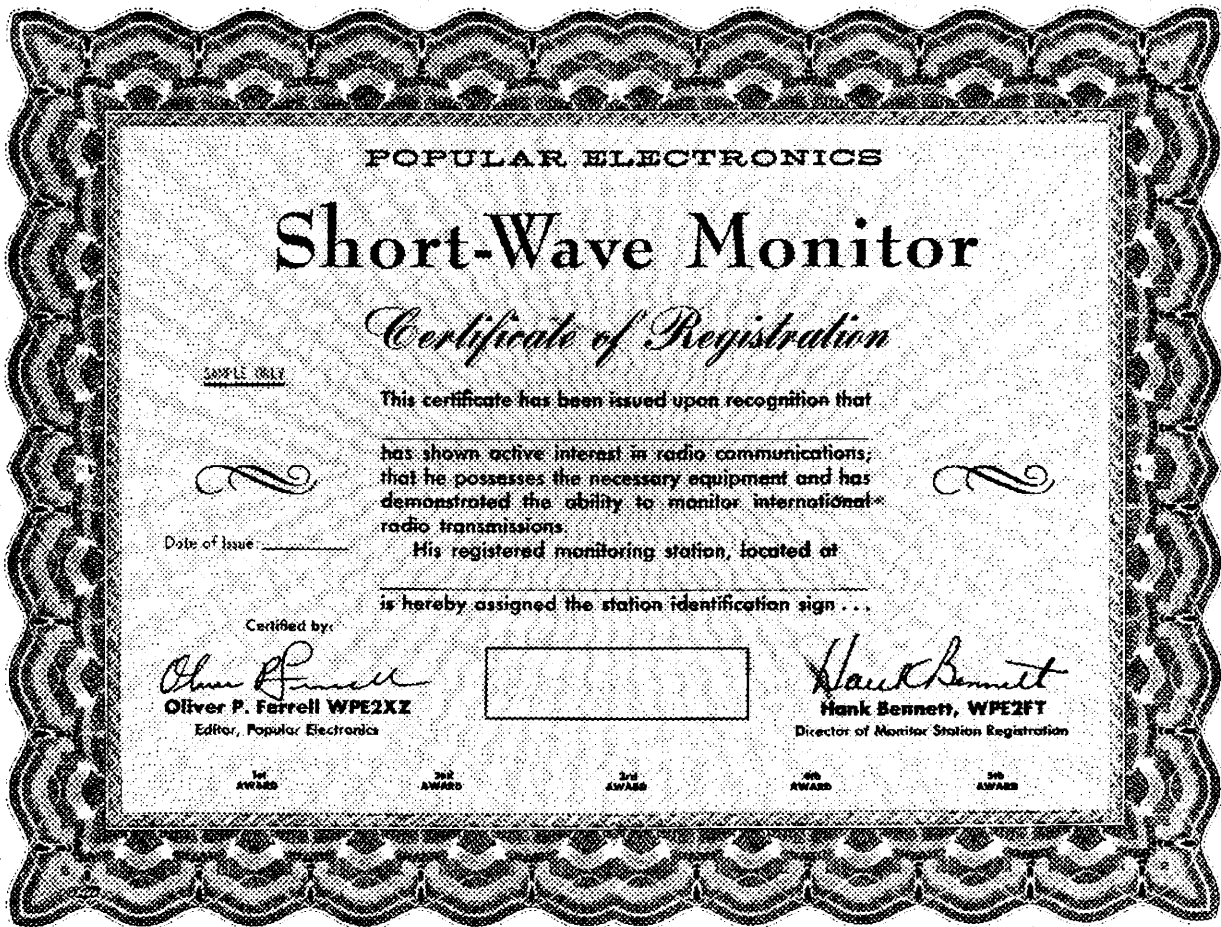
Going back to WWII, during slack overnight periods or when weather prevented the Air boys from flying, we'd switch the BC342 (or whichever one we had at the time) to the BCB and pick up WINS, New York, and other stateside stations; the best catch in mid-France being KMOX, St. Louis, which was verified along with several others. I also received a QSL while in France from TAP, Ankara, Turkey, which caused a considerable number of raised eyebrows from those concerned who did nothing but censor mail.

As I have mentioned, I became licensed as a ham operator in 1942 when callsigns were being held up due to the war. Next year will be a half century for me as a ham. I suppose if you consider my earlier escapades on the BCB, I guess my total years as an SWL, in one way or another, would now total about 60 years.

Actually, no one person actually inspired me. As I've described a few paragraphs above, I inspired myself. This stuff of hearing distant stations was GREAT!

I have never specialized in any certain geographical area. And yes I did collect QSL cards for a long time until I became more heavily involved in writing and at that time, there just wasn't enough time to tend to QSLing. I still have all of my veries in scrapbooks, carefully stored. I cannot honestly tell you of my correct country totals heard or verified. As for my best catch (and veri) I would claim that to be W8XO, 700 kcs., Cincinnati; WLW's superpowered station (after midnight). Why? Here's where my FIRST receiver comes into being. This logging was done on a 1901 Westinghouse cats-whisker crystal set—no tubes, no batteries, no AC or DC; simply the cats whisker, a galena, a coil, an antenna, ground and a set of "cans" (earphones).

In modern times, or with more modern equipment, my best BCB catch would be KULA, in Hawaii. My best shortwave catch...*which is still yet to happen!* ...would be Radio Tahiti. I have also logged and veried a number of European BCB stations. As a shortwave editor for more years than I care to remember, my first love was—and is—BCB. One of my favorite QSLs was from XERA, Villa Acuna, Mexico, when they were running 250,000 watts, which was denied by many people, but I do have the QSL to prove it and one can still find a copy of that QSL in an old, old copy of RADEX. XERA was so strong that evenings it would block out local (15 miles) 50,000 watt KYW. My most interesting catch would have to be Radio Ceylon with their late evening (sunrise, their time) sitting up exercises with an announcer that often appeared to be three sheets in the wind. Or crocked. Use your own adjective. Hi!



Another of our favorites for many years was the International Goodwill Station in Leopoldville, Belgian Congo, with their fabulous dark hours (our time) musical programs of waltzes and the like. We lost many sleeping hours to ORU!

I'm not sure that you asked but here's another answer anyhow and this is where I may be tooting my own whistle. Back in the late 30's and very early 40's, before I had my own ham ticket, I would listen to various hams locally on the 160 meter band, which would come in all over my little Emerson set on the BCB. I think I probably visited just about every one of the 40-odd hams in our town bothering heck out of them. One in particular, W3BWI, took me under his wing and helped me for hours and hours AND HOURS with the code. He taught me code, he taught me technical points, he even taught me the facts of life when my Dad suggested that I was staying at W3BEI's more than I was at home. W3BEI and I would work (and set up and take down) the public address system at our local high school football games. At one point, after I had flunked the FCC code exam for the fourth time, W3BEI took me in hand and crammed morse code at me until neither of us could see straight. I went the next day and passed.

Anyhow, I had received so much help from so many hams in our town, and so many spare parts and just general radio stuff, that I swore to myself that if I could ever get my license and get on the air, that I would spend the rest of life trying to help others who were new to the hobby. I have tried to do just that.

PROCEEDINGS: Do (did) your hobby activities have a positive influence on the other aspects of your career and life?

MR. BENNETT: Really, the only way that my hobby helped me while I was in electronics was one day when engineers at Schaevitz Engineering had something on their low frequency 'scope, and they asked me to try and identify it. It was a British CW station on 16 kcs but I cannot recall the callsign (GBY, GBZ, or something similar). They were transmitting a morse running marker at about 8 words per minute. This may not sound like much speed but for copying CW on a scope or by lights, 8 wpm is high speed.

PROCEEDINGS: It is said that through an editorial in the *Newark News Radio Club Bulletin* you were the spark that led to the start of the Association of North American Radio Clubs (ANARC). What events guided you to the con-

cept of a cooperative club organization?

MR. BENNETT: Despite anything that has ever been printed in the past, the idea for ANARC was mine. I had been following for some time the activities of a combined union of European radio and SWL clubs and I was so impressed by what they were doing that it seemed like a good idea for North American clubs to try, since there was so much bickering and dissention among the clubs. After I had editorialized it in the NNRC, I asked Don Jensen if he would take on the chores of organizing what was to become ANARC. I was not a key member in it in any sense, nor was I asked to be, but it was my idea and my offer to Don to consider taking it over. He accepted and for a long time it seemed like it was working.

PROCEEDINGS: The Newark News Radio Club was one of the oldest clubs. When and how did you become involved with the club? What jobs did you hold? What led to the demise of the organization? Do you still see any of the "old gang" from the NNRC?

MR. BENNETT: The NNRC was one of the oldest clubs. Correction: it was THE oldest club; it was the pioneer of all radio and SWL clubs. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of the club's history but it goes way back to one day when a group of hobbyists gathered in—I believe—the offices of the *Newark News* newspaper and opened operations. I became involved just after the WWII years (in fact I may have been a member before 1943 but I can't remember for sure). I began sending in reports and in 1948 I was asked to take over editorship of the shortwave column from James Hart, who wanted to retire from the writing chores but remain active in the operation of the club. I took it over on the condition that I could pick my own editorial assistant and as it turned out, Amelia and I became co-editors. She would handle the reports and a lot of the other administrative work and I would do the actual work of putting the reports onto stencils. In later years when the North Jersey group became too small to get the bulletin run off and mailed out each month, we offered to take it over. Amelia resigned as co-editor and was immediately appointed Vice President and Publisher, a job she was to hold until the club folded due to lack of funds and dwindling membership, as all clubs were then experiencing. We very rarely see any of the old gang anymore. Truth is, most of the old gang has passed on. Dick Labate, Irv Potts, Walt Townley, Les Kraemer, Bill Fallender, John Tweedie, Carl Lord, Harold Robinson, Dick Deneker, John Sanderson—I could go on and on. Still around are charter members Gene Bataille and Bob Koppelon, and subsequent member and officer Murray Buitekant, but there aren't many left otherwise, and certainly no one here in South Jersey other than Tom Sundstrom.

PROCEEDINGS: A mythical country, Nibi Nibi, was reported in your NNRC column in late 1958 or early 1959 (and, in fact, you published a disclaimer in your March 1959 *Popular Electronics* column). The whole thing became quite famous. What was your involvement with the great Nibi Nibi hoax?

MR. BENNETT: Nibi-Nibi. Ah yes. I was 'taken in' with that one much like certain others. It didn't take long, however, to find the culprit and we immediately barred him from any further published DX activity. There isn't much else that I can tell you on that subject.

PROCEEDINGS: In your NNRC column, you always lamented that others were hearing Radio Tahiti but you had not heard it. Have you now heard it?

MR. BENNETT: Radio Tahiti. Yeh, right. No, I still haven't heard it. You'd think that if my 25 watt W2PNA could be heard and worked by LA7Y in Norway, I'd be able to hear Tahiti. Hasn't happened yet. Yet...

PROCEEDINGS: You had a dedicated core of reporters both at Newark News and at *Popular Electronics*—folks like Grady Ferguson and George Cox. Did you ever meet any of your more faithful reporters? Do you still correspond with any of them?

MR. BENNETT: I surely did have a good bunch of dependable reporters with me at NNRC (and at PE, too, for that matter, with most of them contributing to both columns). George Cox got married and forever dropped out of sight. Grady Ferguson is gone as are most of the others. John Beaver dropped me stone cold and I have never received any answer from him as to why. He was one of my best reporters but to this day he has never replied to any of my follow-up letters. While I rarely correspond with any of the remaining old-timers, I will surely answer them should they write in. I do, however, hear, increasingly, from old time WPE people that are returning to the hobby.

PROCEEDINGS: The hub of shortwave activity in the '50s was generally considered to be in Europe. What was going on in European clubs in the '50s that was special?

MR. BENNETT: I'm not really sure of anything special that was going on in clubs in that part of the world other than the fact they had a good bit more inter-club cooperation and friendship than was prevalent in North America.

PROCEEDINGS: What was happening with American club activity? Were most clubs national or were there lots of "local" clubs? Were you involved in other clubs, or the beginnings of other clubs?

MR. BENNETT: Yes, there were quite a number of North American clubs at one time. Let's see if I can recall—National Radio Club—BCB only. Far as I know, still in existence. United 49's DX Society—didn't last long. Grand National SWL Club—I believe Lavoyd Kuney, Detroit, was in that one. R9LL Listeners League—another quick one to start up and die out. Universal Radio DX Club, on the West Coast; for years one of our main competitors but operated by a one-man board who did a great job until he passed away. International Radio Monitors was one of the great ones but I can't really remember much about it or who operated it. Seems to me it may have been based in Utah. One other club, which is probably still in business, formed out of NNRC members in the Baltimore area and was headed by Reuben Dagold. I wrote for them until Dagold and lifelong friend Carroll Weyrich, and a few others, violently disapproved of my editorials defending one Glenn Hauser who was being verbally abused by his own club. I was thrown out and that probably put the lid on any further editorial work on my part.

PROCEEDINGS: When *Popular Electronics* started in October 1954, Ken Boord of *Radio-TV News* was the shortwave editor. In May 1955, the column was split, with you taking the shortwave broadcasting side of the hobby ("Tuning the Shortwave Bands") and Roger Legge taking the amateur side ("Touring with Roger Legge"). How did you come to replace Ken Boord? Did you continue your column in the Newark News Bulletin while you wrote for *Popular Electronics*? Did Ken Boord return to *Radio-TV News*?

MR. BENNETT: It was rumored that Ken Boord left *Popular Electronics* over a pay dispute. I was contacted probably because the Editor of PE was O. Perry Ferrell, who, in turn, was a NNRC member.

Yes, I continued writing for both NNRC and PE at the same time, using information interchangeably but in a different format. NNRC was by frequency and PE was by country. Later on, Wayne Green started up his own magazine in New Hampshire and he wanted me to write similar columns for him. That lasted only a very short time, however, and my work with him was just sort of terminated by agreement and in cordial form.

I almost forgot to mention that I have also written a number of columns for *Monitoring Times*.

PROCEEDINGS: Even though Newark News Radio Club's membership was international, there was a tradition of local meetings on the East Coast. Who were the usual attendees at these meetings and what went on at a typical meeting? Did the Newark News Radio Club take an active role in "shaping" the future of the hobby? How many people belonged to NNRC at its peak? Were most of them active?

MR. BENNETT: I began attending local NNRC meetings in 1948. They were held at homes of various officers, directors and, at times, members. We've been to meetings from central Connecticut to Eastern Pennsylvania, and several times to our home but for the most part the meetings were held within a few miles of the greater Newark, N.J. area. In later years we had a few meetings in Newark at one of the *Newark News* offices. There were also yearly conventions at various places.

Attendance was usually limited to officers and directors plus a scattering of appointed members but guests were cordially invited to attend any meeting. When the meetings were held in various homes, each person was asked to donate a couple of bucks each to help the host and hostess with refreshments and dinner. A typical Board meeting dinner consisted of ham, roast beef, turkey, salads, hot veggies, dessert, and literally no limit on drinks although NO ONE was ever known to drink to excess. We had Jews, Catholics, Protestants, a Quaker, and who knows what else and all in all it was the most cordial bunch of people that I've ever known. Events at a typical meeting generally pretty closely followed regular Parliamentary procedure. General attendance was from 15 to 25. How many people at its peak? Tough question—400-500 perhaps, maybe more. Surely seemed like many more when Amelia and I were running bulletins off, collating, folding, stuffing, sealing, and stamping! Several of the board members were active at the dials; some were not but had been in the past. Poor old Ben Feinstein, our secretary for many years, bought a brand new Super XXX receiver of some sort and it wasn't until a few months later when we met at his home that he learned—from us—where the AC on-off switch was.

PROCEEDINGS: The first offer of a WPE registration certificate appeared in the March 1959 *Popular Electronics*. Where did the idea for the WPE call sign/registration program come from? Who administered the program? How long did it last and how many certificates were issued? Why did the program stop? When did the WDX program start and who started it? How many WDX certificates were issued? I understand there was an earlier registration program than the WPE program. What do you know about this program?

MR. BENNETT: WPE-WDX. This first began by Joe P. Morris in Cleveland sometime before 1959; I can't come up with the date. His format was WRO (as opposed to WPE and WDX), I believe; anyhow he found that it became

too much to handle and PE took it over (I do not know what was involved in the changeover) and they made it WPE for obvious reasons. They began publicizing it in the magazine and soon found out that they had a real hot one on their hands to the extent of having several members of the office staff in on overtime just to handle certificate requests. This overtime did not set well with the people that controlled the money and when I found out that it was to be dropped, I asked for and received permission to take it over. (Make that WE asked—Amelia and I). Since then (1970) we have issued *thousands* of certificates. Our main reasoning for continuing WDX was to make available to all hobbyists the opportunity to have their own individual radio identification, which would be similar to actual call signs but still different enough to cause no conflict. Our program and identification was approved by FCC (although no one at FCC would probably admit it) and the only complaint that we've ever received was from several Canadian recipients who claimed their government was making inquiries about those illegal (?) call signs appearing on our certificate envelope to them. We dropped our procedure of showing their identification on the outside envelope and nothing further has ever been heard on it.

PROCEEDINGS: In all your years in the hobby, other than being on the ham bands, and now, on CB, were you ever actually on the air from a broadcast station?

MR. BENNETT: Yes, I was. Once. At one time I was able to con one of the operators at local WKDN, 800 kcs, Camden, New Jersey, to put on a dark-hours test program for NNRC and anyone else listening. The name of the operator shall remain nameless because of his later heavy involvement with Radio Swan. We went on the air somewhere around 2:50 AM, and stayed on until 4 AM and encouraged listeners from the world over to call in and tell us that WKDN was being heard loud and clear.

We received one telephone call. The guy lived about two miles away in the shadow of the Camden-Philadelphia bridge. He was also irate, to put it mildly. His clock activator was set for WKDN's morning sign-on and we woke the poor guy up in the middle of the night. At least we succeeded. We received one phone call! That was my only experience in an actual on-the-air situation.

PROCEEDINGS: What do you see for the SWL/DX hobby in the future? What aspects of the hobby are in Hank Bennett's future?

MR. BENNETT: As for the future of the SWL/DX hobby, I wonder. Over the past years it has dropped down to the point where the clubs have really been hurting. More recently it shows, from where I stand, a slight increase. But for the most part I just don't see any real big interest such as there was 20 years ago. Sending reports and getting verifications is becoming a lost phase of the hobby. Simply exchanging SWL cards among others—a practice that was widespread years ago—is now virtually extinct. I personally feel that in the coming years there will be far less international broadcasting and virtually no reporting/verifying.

As for my future—I had and gave my best shot. I was on top of the editorial heap for far longer than I ever should have been (with total journalism training of zero), I wrote and had a book published, and I'm content to sit and watch the up and coming people have their turn. Glenn Hauser is probably top man in the hobby right now, but there is still plenty of room for people that want to get active and to operate clubs and to write articles and they should be given every chance to show their stuff, just as I was given the chance. For us, we're happy in continuing the WDX program.

PROCEEDINGS: Thank you, Hank. And now for Mea. You were much more than an "understanding spouse" when it came to Hank's hobby involvement. What was your personal involvement in the shortwave listening hobby? What are your views of the hobby, past, present and future?

MRS. BENNETT: I became interested in the hobby of Shortwave Listening and Ham Radio when Hank and I were going together in 1947-1948. I came east to visit him and his family and sit with him at his radio while he talked to other hams; we also listened to broadcasts from stations in many countries. It was very interesting. After we were married and settled in our home, we'd spend evenings spinning dials and Hank would tell me who we were hearing. Often times we would go to bed early, then get up in the middle of the night to listen to the very enjoyable dark-hours programs of music from ORU, the International Goodwill Station, in Leopoldville, Belgian Congo.

When the Newark News Radio Club asked Hank to have a go at the shortwave column to replace Jimmy Hart (who had his hands full with his own weekly shortwave column in the *Sunday Newark News*), he agreed on the condition that he could have me as his co-editor. We had a lot of fun putting the columns together each month. And we would be in frequent attendance at the monthly Board of Directors meetings which were usually held in the homes of the various officers and directors. I soon found out that radio families contained some of the nicest people that I have ever known. It was fun hearing about verifications, QSL cards, kilocycles, morse code, and the million other things that go into shortwave listening. Once a year we would host a Board meeting and we would have officers and direc-

tors in from Connecticut to Maryland. One year was most memorable—our home, at the time, was one block from our local firehouse. On the day of our meeting, our town hosted a humungous firemen's parade and there were fire trucks in from Podunk to Lower Japip. The poor guys (and ladies, too) who came to our meeting had to walk upwards of eight blocks to get around the fire trucks that were everywhere. We were also one block from a local church that played church music on their outdoor public address system every Saturday at 6 PM for a quarter hour. Our meeting was in the side yard of our home. Need I say more? The yearly meetings at our home did require a lot of advance preparation but this was greatly overcome by the many friendships that were resulted.

Then, when we took over the bulletin, much more time was involved in mimeographing, collating, folding, stuffing, sealing, weighing, and stamping, and, finally, mailing. I would spend a couple of days doing all the mimeographing and then we would all get together (daughter, son, scattered friends of the kids) and we could finish the job in one evening.

On the much more recent scene, we've just added two-way radio to our car in the form of CB radio. Oh, we've listened to the CB'ers many times but to be actually handed the mike and told to talk is an entirely new dimension of the hobby as far as I'm concerned. Our first contact was with a prospective ham operator in Runnemede, New Jersey who was obviously at the same point in the hobby as Hank was in 1939—just about ready to take the FCC ham radio examination. We wished him a lot of luck and he was most appreciative. This was, for me, virtually an entirely new experience, since it had been many years since Hank and I built a two-meter rig and yakked with the local guys—until the rig blew up. But to talk to someone while going up the highway is still a brand new experience for me—for both of us—and, well, you guessed it, we like it! If you should happen to hear someone with a handle of MAMA MEA or HANK THE CRANK it just might be us. (P.S.—we do encourage reception reports and we will QSL!)

Right at present it seems to be my opinion that many of the shortwave stations do not actually encourage reports from listeners to the extent that was the case in the past. A lot of stations have so-called "mailbag" programs and this enables them to get a good idea where their listeners are, and where their signal is going. Letters are answered on the air and this eliminates any need for sending out QSL cards. It would further seem to me that many stations have their own (paid?) monitors in various parts of the world, thus making reception reporting and QSLing a matter of courtesy rather than of necessity.

Nevertheless, there will probably always be stations that will continue to be interested in listener reports and keep a pile of QSL cards on hand for replies.

In closing, Hank reminded me that there was one form of verifying that became extinct many, many years ago. Back in the dark ages, probably the 1920's and perhaps into the early 30's, many stations verified with EKKO stamps. These were metallic stamps, about the size of postage stamps, that had the station call on it. These were, indeed, prized, and the only ones available today are those that may be in the hands of collectors. They were unique, indeed.

PROCEEDINGS: Thank you very much, Hank and Mea, for sharing your hobby and personal lives with us.