

Amateur Radio Club --

In touch with the world

by Kerry Kitchenham

Dick Shave of Southamton is a ham radio operator. He has been pursuing his hobby since 1946 but he says he can't remember a time when he was not interested in radio communication.

Dick is one of the 60 or so members of the Georgian Bay Amateur Radio Club that sit down at their equipment at night and talk with a network of friends around the world.

Oblivious to the visits of trick or treaters, Dick Shave spent Hallowe'en night in his radio shack passing on messages to the southern Ontario radio net. This is one of many activities open to amateur operators.

It is hard to believe that the sophisticated and expensive equipment used today had such humble beginnings at the turn of the century.

In the early 1900's the only form of radio

communication was at low frequencies using a Morse key and a spark coil. It was known that higher radio frequencies existed but it was thought at the time that they had little value to communications.

These frequencies were given to amateurs to experiment with.

At this time, the North American Amateur Radio Group was formed, and through groups like this startling discoveries were made.

These early experimenters found that using low power an high frequencies messages could be "skipped" over great distances.

Governments, realizing the commercial and military possibilities of this form of communication started to allot frequencies for various uses and to start licencing procedures.

By the start of World War 1, licencing was started in

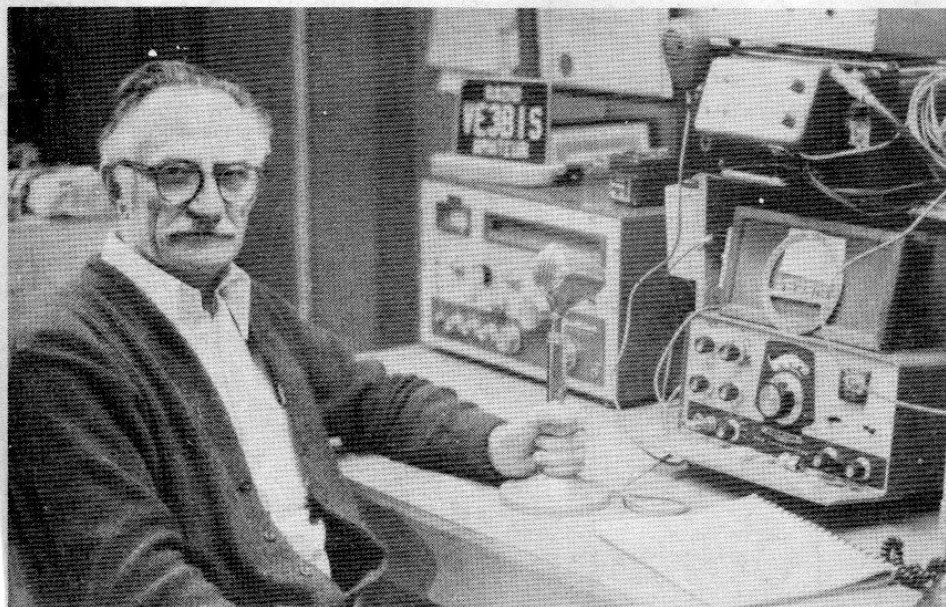
Canada and examining depots were set up to ensure that operators met a high standard of technical expertise.

The government felt that the commercial, aviation and nautical uses of the radio would endanger lives if the operators were not qualified. This was the origin of the Amateur Radio Certificate.

Upon receipt of this certificate, one can operate on many segments of the spectrum, from 1800 Khz to thousands of Megaherz.

The amateur operator-experimenter is permitted to build and test his own equipment.

Almost a hobby in itself, the exchange of QSL or contact cards has become highly organized. When ham operators make contact with each other they exchange these cards by mail with information on equipment, conditions and time of contact. Most countries now



Dick Shave and his "radio shack".

have QSL bureaus where confirmation of contact cards can be exchanged on an efficient basis. The cards are sent to a central address for distribution in bulk to different countries.

Dick Shave said he has about 200 or more cards, some from little known countries such as Tonga and Lichenstein. A very rare card these days is one sent during the 1950's from the Belgian Congo, now Zaire.

Some operators make a point of working distant parts of the world for new and different cards.

Shave said that although, hams talk with people around the world, they try to remain as politically neutral as possible. "We try not to get mixed up in politics," he said, "We have to assume that no matter where the guy is, that he knows what he's doing."

With the flick of a switch and the twist of a dial Shave was in contact with a genial fellow named Jack on Lasqueti Is. "...about 60 miles up the coast from Vancouver." Jack said he was looking forward to a trip to

a television picture can be beamed across a continent. Moving pictures are not possible as the screen is scanned only once every eight seconds where as a regular television screen is scanned sixty times per second.

Other operators prefer to spend their time using the Morse code with hand keys and semi-automatic and electronic keys.

Dick Shave said that although the thoughts of qualifying exams for operators scare some people away from ham radio, he is glad of it. "You've got to work at it and that's good because it keeps people who aren't serious off the air." Ham's have their equipment looked over regularly by a government inspector. They are also monitored every day by government stations.

By and large, however, the world of ham radio is self policing. Bill Taves, a Port Elgin operator said "The difference between a ham and a CBer is that if a ham gets out of line on the air, he hears about it a lot quicker."

Ham operators, no

have been introduced to the world of radio through the Citizens Band sets that are so popular.

The Georgian Bay Amateur Radio Club sponsors classes for those interested in obtaining their Amateur

Radio Certificate. One course will be given in Owen Sound in November and one is currently underway in Flesherton. A class was held in Southampton last year but the club has not seen a need to run one this year. One could be started,

however, if there is enough demand, Shave said.

Dick Shave does not kid anybody about the test, "We demand a deposit and a lot of work but if anyone is interested they'll get going."

looking forward to a trip to the mainland to see his family on Nov. 12. He must have been well travelled because he added "That sure is a beautiful part of Ontario you're in, it's a part I wouldn't mind living in myself."

Technology today has allowed hams to enter other fields of endeavour. Members of the American Amateur Radio Relay League have financed the orbiting of six communications satellites. One such satellite was in orbit before any others. It is still operable today, although not in general use.

These orbiting relay stations are financed by the contributions of hams around the world. They are put in space by piggy backing them with other hardware destined for orbit. A whole new generation of Satellites awaits orbit in 1978.

Bob Young of Port Elgin has an interest in the little known field of slow scan television. Using this method,

Ham operators, no matter where they are, are always ready to lend assistance in times of emergency. Dick Shave was given an award for his work in relaying messages during the Winnipeg flood a few years ago. Hams around the world gave assistance in carrying messages during the Guatemala earthquake.

Bill Taves said he listened in on a real life drama that occurred near Frobisher Bay. In an isolated community, a child had fallen and sustained head injuries. There were no doctors in the area, only a make nurse and a teacher. A ham operator called North Bay for a plane to be sent while other operators contacted a doctor to give advice and alerted the Sick Children's Hospital in Toronto. The child lived thanks to the prompt, concerned action of the radio buffs.

In recent years, many of the people getting ham licences