

“...the service he provided individual hams was just as important as the service hams could provide to the community...”

## New License, Not New to Ham Radio

By Kyle Martin,  
WA7KM

Dad-N7BCY had asked me before he passed away to write an article for the next newsletter about the experiences of a new ham. The reality is that even though I've only been a ham for a little over a year, my experiences with Ham Radio started long ago. I don't really remember my dad not having a Ham radio. I remember his Ham Shack in Shelton. With the microphone safely removed, he showed me how to find people from all over the world to

listen to. Back then, my dad was a Ham Radio operator, and that was cool. I'd hear call signs like N7BAA over the radio. The occasional gathering at American Lake was fun for us as kids, even though we would occasionally interrupt things. When I was about 11, the first MARA convention was held in Klamath Falls, Oregon. Our camping spot was right next to the Dave Christiansen-KD7UM family's spot. Allan Packer-WA7BKD, had his family nearby and all the boys began friendships that would be renewed every few

years. It was also the first time that call signs like W7UFM had a face to go along with a voice that I heard when dad was on his radio.

As I got older, I would tease dad about having a nerd hobby, but secretly I was proud of him. Things like packet radio intrigued me. I had been using a computer for a number of years by this time, but didn't have a lot of experience using it as a communications tool. We moved to Vashon Island, and I began to see that the service he provided individual hams was just as important as

*(Continued on page 4)*



[www.MercuryNorthwest.org](http://www.MercuryNorthwest.org)

PO Box 252  
Issaquah, WA 9802

## Election Results and Conference Dates

### RESULTS

The MNW elections resulted in the following board for 2010:

President-Kyle Martin,  
WA7KM

Vice President—  
William Harding,  
KE7DEM

Secretary Treasurer—  
John Callaghan,  
KE7BAR

Board Members At  
Large—Vic Bak,  
K3SHD—Terry

Reams, KB7IFR

Bylaws revisions were ratified by the membership unanimously and will soon be posted on the website.

### CONFERENCE

MNW 2010 Annual Conference will be held May 14th and 15th at Ensign Ranch near Cle Elum, WA. Details will be posted on the website as they emerge. Rue Palmer, W7RUE and Tom

Gibb, W7TAG will board to co-chair this year's conference.

Ensign Ranch has a variety of lodging options. We encourage families to attend..

Spread the word. You don't have to be a member of MNW to attend, but most people who attend recognize membership to this prestigious organization to be the greatest value in the history of earth.

### Inside this issue:

Mercury Memos	2
President's Corner	3
Dick Nielson	4

# Mercury Northwest

## Mercury Memos

By John Swapp, K7CXJ

Memo 1: They are -call letters

Memo 2: Short Wave Listening (SWL)

Memo 3: WWV and WWVH time tick

Memo 4: Signal reports (again)

Memo 5: AM Broadcast Stations DXing (Hear All States)

1. Use call letters to call the station. The only time that “just announcing your call sign” works is on a repeater or on a net when net control will respond. On HF, I’ve heard a QSO end, two operators sign off, then someone else comes on the frequency and just gives their call sign. Who is that station calling? That’s why the FCC calls them call signs.

2. Short Wave Listening (SWLing). Most modern amateur radio transceivers have general coverage receivers. There is a whole world out there in the HF radio spectrum outside of the amateur radio bands. One interesting example is airline radio traffic over the pacific between San Francisco and Honolulu. These are mostly commercial flights but an occasional private aircraft and military aircraft is heard. These aircraft are giving their current position and the estimated next check point. Two very good frequencies are 5.574 mhz and 5.547 mhz USB. Best in the evening time. As I’m writing this, I’m listening to “Dragon Niner” give his position to San Francisco. It’s fun! I also just heard “Shanghai Cargo 6631”.

3. WWV and WWVH time tick. So you want to know the correct time! The exact time! Use your general coverage receiver and listen to 2.5 mhz, 5.0 mhz, 10.0 mhz, 15.0 mhz, and 20.0 mhz. Put your receiver in the AM mode. The time will be announced every sixty seconds in Coordinated Universal Time, aka Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and also Zulu time.

Listening to these frequencies will also give a hint as to how HF propagation is “cooking” at that time of the day.

The [National Institute of Standards and Technology \(NIST\)](#), formerly the National Bureau of Standards, broadcasts a time and frequency service from stations [WWV](#) in Fort Collins, CO and [WWVH](#) in Kauai, Hawaii., commonly known to mariners as the “Time Tick”, used as an aid in celestial navigation. Included in these are hourly voice broadcasts of current high seas storm warnings for the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf of Mexico provided by the National Weather Service.

Discrimination between the two stations may be accomplished as WWV uses a male announcer for announcement of time, while WWVH uses a female announcer. The audio portions of the WWV and WWVH broadcasts can also be heard by telephone. To hear these broadcasts, dial **(303) 499-7111** for WWV (Colorado), and **(808) 335-4363** for WWVH (Hawaii). Callers are disconnected after 2 minutes. These are not toll-free numbers; callers outside the local calling area are charged for the call at regular long-distance

rates. The telephone service is very popular. The WWV number receives over 1 million calls per year, and the WWVH number receives more than 50,000.

For some further information on WWV, WWVH and time signals worldwide, see [NGA Publication I 17 "Radio Navigational Aids"](#)

4. Signal reports. This is an important protocol. To say someone’s signal is “**S-10**” is not correct. It’s **S9 plus 10 db over 9**. Signal reports are listed on a scale of 1 to 9.

Also, it doesn’t help much to say, “**You’re S9 into my location**” when the station doesn’t know your location.

“**The weak signal go again**” (!) How about that one? Have you ever heard someone say that during a net operation? If you were calling, how would you know you were the weak station?

5. AM Broadcast Band DXing. Some years ago, I was up on a mesa in Southern Nevada listening to my car radio. It was just at dusk (grey line) when I heard WBZ in Boston! Their frequency is 1030 khz. Massachusetts to Nevada on the regular AM Broadcast Band. That is fun! I’ve also heard WSM, 650 khz, in Nashville and WLS, 890 khz, in Chicago. Take a look at this website:

<http://www.ac6v.com/clearam.htm#50>

That would be a “kick” wouldn’t it? To hear all 50 states on AM broadcast radio!

## The President's Corner

By Kyle Martin, WA7KM

I appreciated the chance to finish out my dad's term as president of Mercury Northwest. I was recently going through some of his radio stuff and found some of the documentation from the founding days of MARA. From that time down to the reorganization of Mercury Northwest and up to his passing, this organization, and more importantly the people in this organization, meant a lot to him.

I also appreciate being able to continue as president into 2010. This will be a great year for MNW. We will be redesigning our website as we move it to a

commercial host. I also look forward to seeing the results of the research groups as they continue in the testing that they have been doing. I think that the co-chairs for the conference this spring will do a fantastic job, and that this conference will be something that future organizers will look to as a template of how to do conferences right.

William Harding, KE7DEM, has been leading the Snoqualmie Chapter as we've turned that into a more formal organization including monthly in person meetings. It's provided a wonderful opportunity for in person training and fellowship. We've seen positive results and I look forward to

other chapters also taking things up a notch.

We, as always, need your help. We are specifically looking for an editor for the newsletter. If you, or someone you know, have the skills, or the desire to have skills, to help MNW this way, let me know.

I've learned a lot this past year, and I appreciate the input and counsel of seasoned hams and the energy and perspective of the new hams in MNW. I am always open to ideas and suggestions, so let me have them! I love the purpose of this organization and look forward to doing my part in helping MNW reach it's full potential.

*"I love the purpose of this organization and look forward to doing my part in helping MNW reach it's full potential."*

## Net Notes

By John Swapp, K7CXJ  
Net Manager  
Mercury Northwest Roundtable  
Net

Here are some current facts and figures about the net:

As of November 2009,  
Number of stations on the roster: 60  
States and Provinces represented: 8  
Alberta, British Columbia, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington

### VHF Check-ins

Please note that these figures are

what have been recorded by the Net Manager. It's possible I may have missed some of the reports. These numbers are of value in that they show a trend in the amount of activity in the local nets.

Also, we want to report MNW nets only even though it's hard to separate MNW from Emergency Response Communications (ERC) Nets.

These figures are the approximate total number since January 2009.  
Calgary AB 17  
Grants Pass OR 42  
Herriman UT 31  
Klamath Falls OR 114  
McMinnville OR 4

Longview WA 113  
Monmouth OR 5  
Olympia WA 65  
Spokane Valley WA 10  
Victoria BC 8  
West Cascade (Now Snoqualmie) 114

These are obviously not totally accurate. You may have forgotten to report them. I may have forgotten to log them, but this is good information. Please keep sending the VHF reports and remember to separate the MNW stations from the ERC stations if possible.

## ...Not New

*“Radio was a huge part of my Dad’s life, and he had a vision of what Mercury Northwest could be.”*

*(Continued from page 1)*  
the service hams could provide to the community in an emergency. Conventions in California and Utah would follow. All the kids in the Christiansen and Packer families were older now. We visited Disneyland and SeaWorld together. We went ice skating during the summer in Utah. My brothers and I visited baseball card shops with the Christiansen and Packer boys. Brother Packer also had a daughter close to my age, though I tried not to let anyone see that I noticed that. These were fantastic experiences that I had thanks to my father’s involvement in Ham Radio. I began life on my own and radio became less a part of my life. I was busy with my own hobbies and my own family. It wasn’t until

I found out that I didn’t have to learn code that I became interested in getting my ticket. I never had a desire to learn code. Still, I didn’t make definite plans to get my license until I learned of an exam session in Issaquah a little over a year ago. I emailed to tell them I would show up for the exam, brushed up on the Technician material and took the exam. I passed the General exam two weeks after that. I figured I was on a roll, so I got my Extra a week later.

I was quickly invited to join the stake ERC activities. I bought a new 2 meters rig and a used HF rig. Dad came over and he helped me put up my antennas after years of me helping him with his. I started checking into the ERC nets and the Mercury Northwest

HF net. I’ve enjoyed my involvement in all these activities.

The morning Dad passed away, we talked about radio. He had just ordered a 6 meters rig and wanted to tell me about it. Radio was a huge part of my Dad’s life, and he had a vision of what Mercury Northwest could be. The more I work with the organization, the more I seem to catch that vision. Mercury Northwest would surpass even his wildest dreams if half of us put in half of what my Dad put into it. Dad asked me to write about the experiences of a new Ham, but I couldn’t. Because of my Dad, I’ve been experiencing Ham radio my whole life.

## Dick Nielson, WA7QNE (SK)



Dick Nielson, WA7QNE, Shelton, WA, passed away Oct 19, 2009 at Mason General Hospital.

Dick was a pioneer in the early

days of MARA in the Northwest.

He was also a Ward Emergency Communications Specialist at the time of his pass-

ing. He had been in and out of the hospital several times in the past years, but his was very active up until the last few weeks. Possible cause of death was kidney failure.