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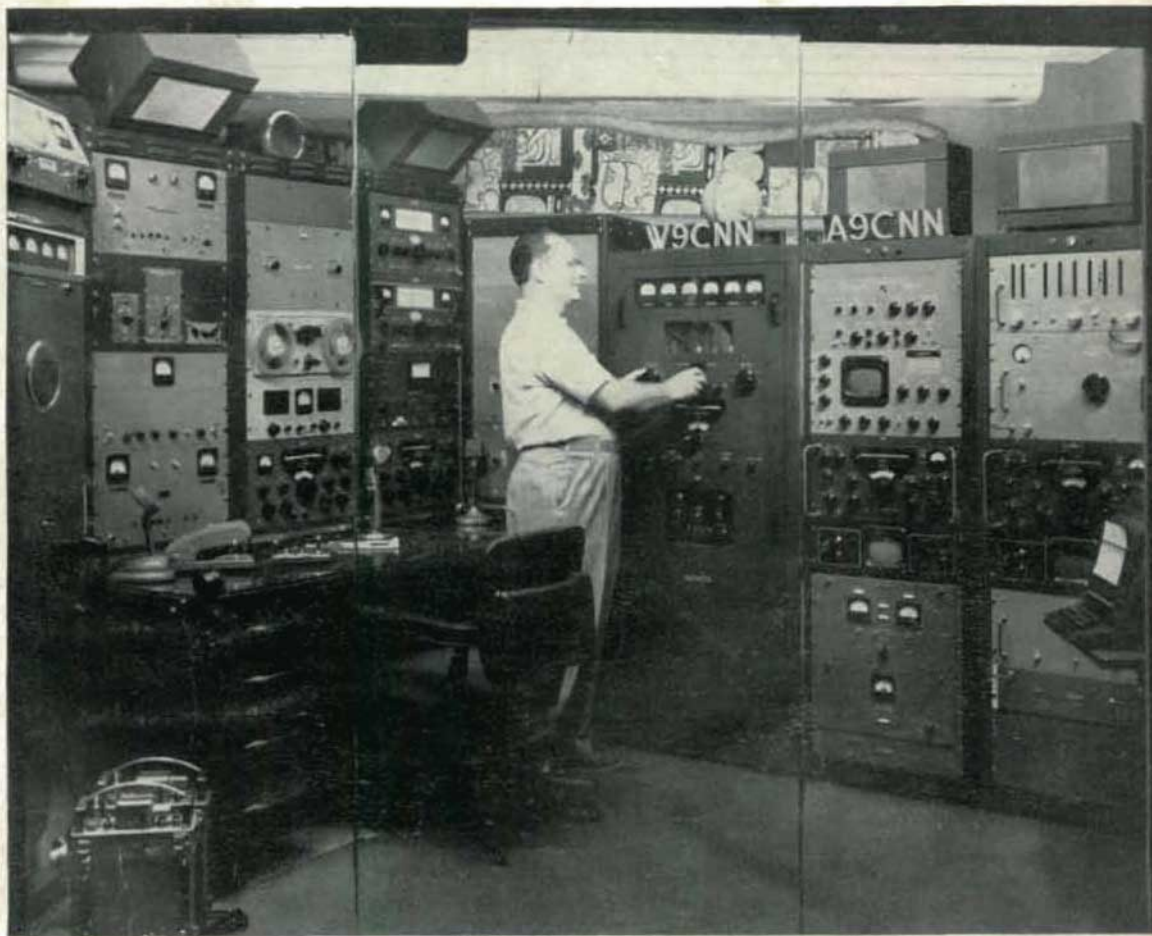
CQ

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**RADIO
AMATEURS'
JOURNAL**



THE "SHACK" AT W9CNN

. . . de K2ORS

Jean Shepherd, K2ORS (ex-W9QWN, -W8QWN, -W3STE), one of the most erudite network personalities here discusses some of the Grand Olde Dayes of Ham Radio. Jean may be heard on most Mutual Network stations daily from 12:10 to 12:30 p.m. EDT, and in New York from 5:30 to 5:45 p.m. weekdays, Saturdays 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. on WOR (check local sked for Sat. network show).

For the past twenty years or so I have been reading and digesting intellectually everything I have been able to lay my hands on pertaining to ham radio and the allied arts. This goes back to the days when "high fidelity" was a term used to describe a man who was either well married or too old to care one way or the other. Hugo Gernsback was a sort of Bernarr McFadden of the self-taught-engineer school of basement fuse-blower. Probably even a few of you with us today wrote letters beginning:

"Dear Hugo (Ed.): Pertaining to the circuit diagram on page 39 of the Aug. issue (*Short Wave Craft*, Vol. IV, pp 39) of 'The Two Tube Doerle DX-2.' I find that when R5 is changed from 5,000 ohms to 500,000 ohms, the 'DX-2' regenerates nicely, but when I go back to 5,000 ohms as given in your diagram all I get is a hum in the phones. Otherwise I think your magazine is great and I especially like the SWL corner. Why not have more fiction like 'The SOS Boys At the Seashore' (Mar. SWC)? All my friends thought that was one of the best stories they had ever read. So did I. . . ."

On second thought, M. Gernsback was a sort of Tom Swift-type who never seemed to bother with technical niceties but was more involved with the grandiose sweep of imagination. I wouldn't have been surprised if he had begun an article with "Bless My Buttons, Tom, but you'll just have to wait until I finish the Electric Rifle before you plan a big game trip." We ate it up. I remember one gem in particular that appeared in the "Letters to the Ed." department of *Short Wave Craft* during those halcyon days. It seems that the guy had been worrying about getting his technical terms straight and he felt he had something big by the tail.

"Dear Ed.: I have been reading about 'hand-capacity' in your articles for a long time now and it has been bothering me. I have never been able to find out just how 'hand-capacity' is measured even in our local library, which has all the back issues. I suggest that some standard be set up to measure this phenomenon. For example, use a size 8 hand (Sears Roebuck Standard), Male, held one inch from an ungrounded aluminum panel to denote hand-capacity of ONE HAND. We could figure fractions of that by using one or two FINGS . . . (short for finger). Of course, I know that there are lots of details to be figured out on setting up a standard of this sort, but why not put it up to the rest of the gang?"

This is not an exact quote but I wish it were. The Letter really did appear and it caused quite a technical brouhaha before the storm subsided. If any of you ex-winders-of-tickler-coils have a rare copy of one of the numbers of *SWC* containing some of the correspondence pertaining to "The Hand-Capacity Issue," I would mightily enjoy owning it. In fact, I have a mint-conditioned pair of 2A5's which I would gladly swap for a readable copy. They make fine modulators for the new carbon plate 210.

Then who can forget the *sturm und drang* that roared for months when the first beam power tubes hit the market? Beam Power was to the radio business for a while what Chlorophyll was to the Wallflower Trade a few months back. Only more so. The first articles I can remember about them promised more power and glory to the lucky user of a pair of 6L6's than an ad for a Buick Roadmaster does today. And with about the same fuchsia shaded prose. These articles made much of the "fact" that the beam power tubes didn't need to be neutralized. To a guy who had tried to neutralize a single 801 in the dark of the moon, this was a better deal than the one the Tasty Yeast Jesters offered teen-age girls suffering from acne. And we bit. I'll never forget the rig I built from one of those articles. Nor will the FCC. I worked ten guys the first fifteen minutes of operation before I found out that I didn't have a crystal plugged in. I was logged on 45 frequencies on 12 bands including one that was being used at the time by a champion flagpole sitter working a county fair in Kan-

[Continued on page 115]

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sas. And he welched to the FCC. With the crystal plugged in, I was logged on 46 frequencies. But that was the only thing my old Bliley BC-3 could contribute to the cause. Flagpole sitters were a rum lot anyway. Even with the key up, I got an S6 from a Panamanian freighter off the coast of Greenland. I snagged an SWL card from a guy who logged me while he was trying to copy EAQ on the 25 meter band. He said I put in a better signal on 25 at his QTH in Sydney than W8XX. He also said my programming was better. At the time, W8XX was featuring Pick and Pat so I lay this snide remark to traditional British Colonialism and the doctrine of "The White Man's Burden." That rig was a good start in the direction of solving the age-old academic problem of perpetual motion. When I turned the a-c power off, I dropped only two S units in San Diego on the police frequency, but the RI later said that this was due to a high line noise level at the receiving end. I finally had to bury those two 6L6's in moist loamy ground a quarter wave deep (49 Mc) wrapped in All Purpose Reynolds Wrap cut to the frequency. And even now when the QRM drops off among the press freqs down around 11 Mc on quiet winter nights a knowing listener can hear the low raw a-c note with the characteristic chirp that can mean only one thing. Those two benighted bottles are still carrying on in the old tradition. It kind of makes me feel warm inside to know that I have contributed something, however small, to the cosmos. Which isn't quite what I had in mind at the time but after the FCC had restored my license on a probationary basis and I was again allowed to operate on a strict supervised fifteen minute per day schedule on 144 Mc. only (ICW), I began to take a broader view of the affair. Today the RI and I have many a laugh over a glass of stout about whole thing. He's even been able to talk the "Front Office" into giving me an extra half hour per day on the band. I guess with the new administration things are easier all around.

These days I am engaged in writing my memoirs and really don't have much time to putter about the "shack" as we used to call it in the old days (see cover). But from time to time over a quiet pipe and with a few novices gathered at my knee I find myself recounting the tales of the exciting pioneer days when our only contact with the outside world was the latest *Allied* catalog which was always placed lovingly alongside our precious copy of the last issue of the *Johnson & Smith Mammoth Novelty Book*. Needless to say, both were well thumbed as well as index-fingered. Occasionally these youngsters, while munching the cookies my XYL always provides for them, will ask me "how did it feel to live in the Olden Dayes?" and I find I can't really answer them. . . .

JEAN SHEPHERD

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