

Surfin': K2ORS Lives!

By Stan Horzempa, W1LOU
Contributing Editor
May 2, 2003

This week, we tune in the year 1965 on the radio dial and listen to a ham from the past who entertained the whole radio world.

You can look it up. Warren H. Ziegler holds the call sign K2ORS, as an homage to one of his early heroes. But not long ago, that call belonged to another ham, now a silent key: the legendary broadcaster and author Jean Shepherd.

I first encountered Jean Shepherd when I was one of those "night people" who stayed up listening to the radio while everyone else, the "day people," were sound asleep. One of my favorite night owl radio programs was Long John Nebel's show on WNBC, on clear channel 660 kHz out of NYC. A typical Long John show was a roundtable discussion with three or four guests spouting off on some esoteric subject like UFOs landing in Yonkers, the Illuminati, the Kennedy assassination conspiracy and so on.



Jim Clavin's [A Salute to Jean Shepherd](#) web site will expand your knowledge about the ham known as Jean, K2ORS.

Jean Shepherd was a guest one morning and the topic of conversation was secret gadgets--technical wonders that really exist, but were unknown to the general public. Jean seemed to be an authority on the subject and he talked about a variety of technical gadgets that were unheard of at the time. I blame sleep deprivation for my faulty memory and today I can only recall one of the secret gadgets he spoke of: a device used by police departments that automatically displayed the telephone number of the caller.

Back in 1965, pulse dialing was the norm and the digital wonder called "caller ID" was far from reality. Yet, Jean was such a great storyteller with enough technical know-how (enough to be dangerous) and he could spin a tale that was very convincing.

I learned later that those secret gadgets did not exist and that Long John and Jean were pulling the collective legs of their listeners throughout the Northeast. Nevertheless, I became a Jean Shepherd fan and started listening to his radio programs and reading his books even before I learned that he was a ham.

In addition to being a great hoodwinker, Jean was a great humorist and told wonderful stories about life in the Midwest when he was a kid after "the War." One of my all-time favorite books was Jean's collection of short stories titled, *In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash*. Some of the stories in that book were bundled together by Hollywood for the movie *A Christmas Story*. Jean narrated that movie and also had a cameo role as the curmudgeon, who informs Ralphie and Randy that "the end of the line (to see Santa) is back there!"

Jean Shepherd fan that I am, I already knew all this before I began searching the Web to learn more about K2ORS. This resulted in finding three sites that I recommend highly to anyone wanting to find out more about the man: Jim Clavin's "[A Salute to Jean Shepherd](#)" site, Bob Kaye's "[The Jean Shepherd Page](#)" and Jim Sadur's "[Jean Shepherd Web Site](#)". Jim Clavin's site even has a [K2ORS](#) ham radio page with audio clips of K2ORS speaking at the 1980 and 1985 Dayton Hamventions, and his intro to the 1976 ARRL Morse Code Training Tape. At Clavin's site you can listen to the audio clips on-demand or download them for later listening.

One of the reasons I became a writer was because I was inspired by K2ORS's work, so it is only fitting that I dedicate an installment of Surfin' to the man who, in my opinion, was the best storyteller of the 20th century.

Until next time, keep on surfin'.

Editor's note: Stan Horzepa, WAILOU, resides in downtown Wolcott, Connecticut, and is a member of the QQCC (QST quarter century club), i.e., he has been a QST writer for 25 years. Since getting his ticket in 1969, Stan has sampled nearly every entrée in the Amateur Radio menu (including a stint as Connecticut Section Manager), but he keeps coming back to his favorite preoccupations: VHF and packet radio. As a result, he runs a 2-meter APRS digipeater and weather station (WAILOU-15) from his mountaintop location in central Connecticut. Stan has been a long time advocate of using computers with Amateur Radio and wrote programs to dupe contests and calculate antenna bearings way back in 1978. Today, he is on the board of directors of the Tucson Amateur Packet Radio (TAPR) and uses his Mac to surf the Internet searching for that perfect ham radio web page. To contact Stan, send e-mail to wailou@arrl.net.