

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Each month one of our members is randomly selected and asked to share their ham radio biography with all of us. Questions or comments should go to Paul, KD2MX.

DISCLAIMER: Any views expressed in this section are those of the submitting member and may or may not be those of the NAQCC or its officers.

DAVE HOUDE, W4DUK, #0617



My QTH is in southwest-central Virginia, at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains and a few miles from the small town of Bedford, home of the National D-Day Memorial. I have been licensed since 1991.

My interest in QRP was born of necessity. For the first six years after getting my ticket, I ran 100W CW and SSB, doing just fine with a dipole on a larger lot. Then I moved into a townhouse with a very small back yard, using a sloping inverted-vee with the apex just outside of my second floor shack window. When I first fired up at 100W as usual, my digital shack clock began flashing strange digits and I could hear myself on my phone answering machine (remember those?). Since I could not easily change the location of my antenna, I decided that I had better reduce my power. Being familiar with the concept of QRP operation, I cranked my power down to 5 watts and gave it another shot. All the weird interference effects in the shack stopped. And what I discovered was that I was still making plenty of contacts. Cool! I have been operating QRP CW as my primary mode ever since.

My first HF rig was a used Ten-Tec Corsair II, and it continues to be my flagship CW rig to this day. It has a hot receiver with great filtering. I use it exclusively with straight keys, mostly a Speed-X standard key and, for special occasions such as ARRL Straight Key Night, a circa late 1800's Bunnell land-line telegraph key (shown in photo). That key was used by my great-grandfather in his general store and post office in rural western Pennsylvania. My other HF rig is a Yaesu FT-450D using either the Speed-X standard straight key, or Kent paddles with the rig's internal keyer. Both rigs drive homebrew simple wire antennas including my trusty end-fed Zepp that covers 160m to 12m, and a 10m folded dipole. I'm putting the finishing touches on a 40m Rockmite in an Altoids tin, and I look forward to getting it on the air very soon.

As far as NAQCC activities are concerned, I really enjoy the monthly sprints and try not to miss a single one. I also enjoy making contacts for the Friendship Club award, especially those longer ragchews that are worth four points each. Lately, I've been getting into the monthly challenges, which I do find...well...challenging! I will admit that I occasionally crank up the power and work other modes, so you may hear me running phone or data from time to time. However, QRP CW definitely remains my favorite method of communication.

I am retired from a career as a systems engineer supporting the Department of Defense. I stay plenty busy with my wife Linda working our little spread in the country, Duck Ridge, with its good-sized vegetable garden and fruit tree orchard. I tend to keep an eye on the sky, and volunteer as a SKYWARN severe weather spotter. My other interests include fishing, trains, machine maintenance/repair, and old-time clawhammer banjo.

72/73, and see you down the log.

