

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.



JIM CRITES, W6JIM, #9833

I can trace the spark that ignited my interest in radio back to 1975. I was ten-years-old when my father gave me an old straight key/oscillator combo. It was powered by a D-cell battery. It was the kind where you had to adjust a screw that vibrated into a small plate to create a very ugly buzz. I messed around with that oscillator for hours, although eventually it went into a drawer as other things grabbed my attention.

In 1978 I got a CB! I was in middle school and it seemed like everyone had a CB. Every day after school I would talk to my friends (Superman, Space Cowboy and Tron). I was Banshee. Those were the days...I finished my CB career as I entered high school.

In 1985, a few years out of high school, I joined the Air Force. What I had initially planned to be a four-year stint turned into a military career of over 30 years. And this brings us to my ham radio career.

In 1996, I was home on leave visiting a friend who was a ham. He encouraged me to study for a test session that would be in a few days. I crammed for the test and Bingo! I was a "No-Code Tech", KF6FCV.

When I returned to my duty station, Misawa Air Base in Japan, I joined the Ham Club on base, the Misawa Area Amateur Radio Club (MAARC). I applied for a reciprocal license and was given 7J7ACM. My first club, and what a great bunch of people, all 10 or 15 of us! Now I wanted to get on HF! Soon I upgraded to Technician-Plus and then General.

My first Rig was a 50W Ten-Tec Scout. My first antenna was a homemade vertical made with speaker wire cut for 15 meters. I only had two ground radials! But even with that modest set-up, I never had to look long for a QSO. It's funny looking at my old log book. For my first three years all my QSO were with Asia and Eastern Europe, with an occasional USA. Now it's just the opposite!

After Japan, I was stationed in Iceland, where I operated as KF6FCV/TF. Then, I came back to the United States in 2000. I squeezed in time to work with MARS when I was stationed in Texas operating as AFA4JC. In 2015, I retired from the Air Force and moved to my present QTH.

With all that moving around, I'm still working on my WAS award! But in 2018 I did finally find the time to upgrade to Extra. Big thanks to the Mount Diablo Amateur Radio Club for their training and assistance. A few days after my upgrade I applied for my current call, W6JIM...How could I pass that up?

Why QRP? As I mentioned above, in the beginning, even with my meager set-up, I was never at a loss for QSOs. I would dial down the power of my Scout to QRP levels because I felt like I was wasting power (that's my frugal nature!) and because making it more challenging made it more fun!

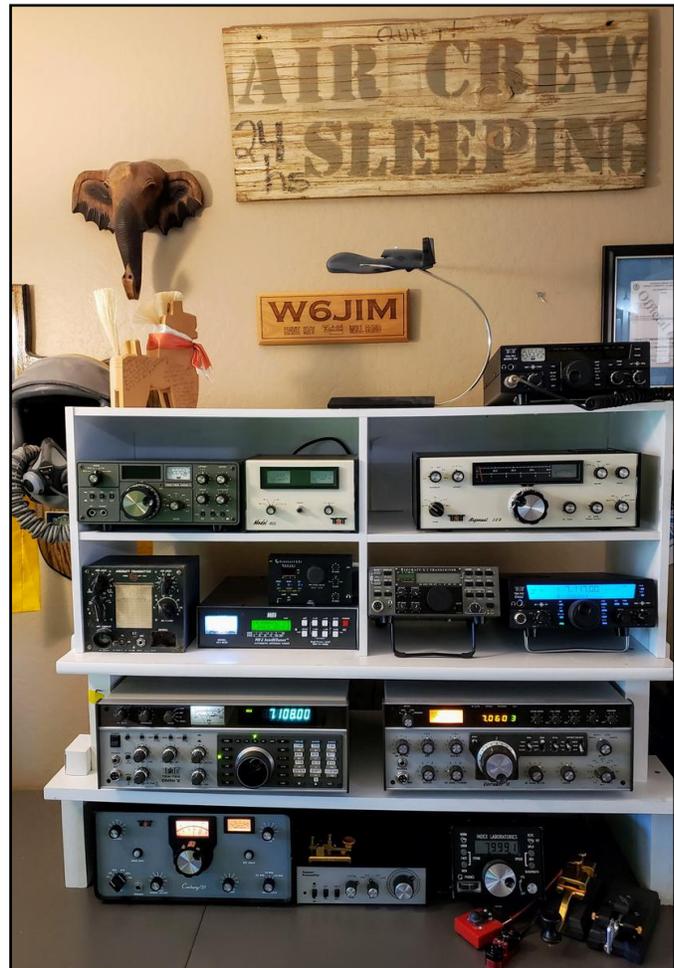
I always loved the idea of using equipment that I could build myself. So started my journey into kit building. And again, this fell right in line with QRP. I started with kits like: Tick Keyer, Rock Mite and WM-2 meter, and worked my way up to kits like: Wilderness SST, Ten-Tec 1340 and finally my Elecraft K2. And antennas....I have loved experimenting with wire antennas over the years!

Why CW? I don't know for sure. It has grown on me to the point that my last SSB QSO was in 2006. I guess it goes back to that spark in 1975 when my father gave me that old key. Maybe it was watching all those WWII movies when I was a kid, and watching the Morse Ops passing crucial info to their leadership. Maybe it's the fact that it just makes sense that if I want to get the most efficiency out of my equipment, CW wins. The main reason is simply this: CW is just more fun!

Interesting thing. When I learned CW with my first paddle, I didn't know which paddle was supposed to be the dit or dah. I made a guess. I guessed wrong. So now I work a paddle "backwards". I'm right-handed so my thumb makes the Dahs and my forefinger makes the dits. Only disadvantage I have found so far is that I can't use a bug! Maybe that's for the better!

I generally gravitate to my Ten-Tec or Elecraft. My Ten-Tec Eagle gets the most work right now, But I love the sending tone of my Omni-V. So soothing!

For QRP I go to my K2 for serious work. That's why I built it. But for rag chews I go to my KX1, Argosy II, or my Index Labs QRP Plus if a little drifting is OK! I have a few old broken Ten-Tec Argonauts that I hope to have on the air one day.



I've been through a lot of keys and paddles and settled on two from Begali. The HST and the Blade. For QRP I'm now using American Morse Equipment MS-2 key & Mini-B paddle.

I did not become familiar with the NAQCC until my CW Club, The Long Island CW Club became a Chapter. Soon afterwards, I joined myself, and wow do I wish I had joined sooner! I am always looking forward to the Sprints. Since I joined earlier this year, I haven't missed one yet. Otherwise you'd call me a rag chewer. I love to meet people and learn something about them.

Well that's way too much about me (don't you think!) I really enjoy the club and plan to be around for a while. I look forward to meeting you all on the air!

73

Jim

W6JIM

