

Washington D.C. maintains a list of national treasures. Here in Holland, we have one of our own, and his name is Ernie Lloyd, and his call is W8EL.

So how did it all start? Ernie tells that there were three seventh graders in the Wahpeton, North Dakota area who hung around together and they were interested in getting their ham licenses enough that they studied and managed to get their code up to the then required 10 WPM. The nearest FCC examining point, however, was 250 miles away in Minneapolis. The only local ham was more interested in talking on



75 phone than helping the youngsters, so none of the three got their licenses. Even so, they built equipment. Ernie rewired a surplus BC-348 receiver from 24V to 12V and built a 6V6 -807 transmitter that never got on the air, and his young friends did similar building and modifying. They were serious, but the local ham just didn't care. To this day, Ernie holds the view that those who are lucky enough to be licensed should be willing to help those who are not. In looking back at his amateur radio history, it makes Ernie incensed when he realizes that this lack of concern from the only local ham cost him the years of 1948 to 1961 from enjoying the greatest hobby, or in his words, the "family of hobbies", that we are lucky enough to have.

But it all started again when Ernie was on an orchestra tour to the southern states, when he picked up a copy of the Amateur's handbook in the fall of 1960 in Indianapolis. Ernie ended up getting licensed in 1962 when he took the novice exam from the owner of a ham radio store in Asheville, North Carolina while on an Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra tour. It took several months for the license of WN2AFO to reach Ernie in New York City, where he lived in between orchestra seasons.

While Ernie had his novice, he was not immediately active. He ended up taking the amateur general class exam at the old Federal building in lower Manhattan in May or June of the following year. At that point, he had not yet had the chance to make a novice contact so he bought a Drake 2B receiver and an Eico transmitter kit. These were built while visiting his parents in Minnesota, where he finally got on the air and made a novice contact on 15 meters. That was his only novice contact, because finally his general ticket for WB2AFO came in the mail the next day and Ernie used that all summer in Wyoming on 20 CW, where he owned all of two crystals. That summer was great for Ernie, for a WB2/7 was a novelty - there were still very few WB calls- and stations would call his peanut whistle out of curiosity!

Ernie changed his call to WB9JYM, since he had moved to Indiana, but continued to operate portable 7 for five more summers in Wyoming. In 1967 he moved to Michigan, where he had the

WA8ZSM call. In 1969 Ernie took and passed the extra class at the Detroit Federal building, and in 1975 changed his call to W8EL, a great CW call, which lets you get in and out of a DX pileup while a station like WB0JJJ is still sending his call!

But with Ernie, there is more to tell than just amateur radio. If Ernie had to apply for a job at Walmart, he could not claim to have a high school diploma, but he has a Bachelors, a Masters and a PhD! While Ernie was a junior in high school, he found out that what he needed to get into college was a certain number of high school credits in specific fields. All he needed was a social studies class, so Ernie took that in the summer after his junior year, and then went to college in 1950. Starting out with mathematics major, he switched to music performance, and then transferred to the Juilliard School of Music in NYC. Yes, that Juilliard School!

His fate in life was to change there, much to his delight. For Juilliard is where Ernie met the love of his life, Pollee, where they both played piano. Ernie was at Juilliard from 1953 to 1955. These were Korean War draft times, so after two years at Juilliard he enlisted in the US Military Academy band for three years to avoid driving a tank! Oh, the Masters and PhD? In music theory and literature. How many ham radio operators have that?

Pollee and Ernie were married in 1957, played symphony jobs for a year apart, and then had a series of jobs together culminating in the Indianapolis Symphony where they spent six years and Ernie rekindled his early interest in ham radio.

Being on the road for a 30 day orchestra tour almost caused their first child to forget who his parents were, so Ernie and Pollee moved to Central Michigan University, where Ernie taught cello. Pollee taught flute part time at Alma College, Delta College, and she also played first flute with the Saginaw Symphony. Ernie had worked out a master's degree at Butler University, where he also taught cello (and consequently had to take a degree in Music Theory).

Somehow Ernie then wound up teaching Computer Science quarter time, then half-time, then three-quarters time, and finally transferred to the Computer Science department for the last fifteen years of teaching.

Ernie's career background? Try math major, music major, three years as Army bandsman, ten years as a symphony performer, 15 years as a college music teacher, then fifteen years as a Computer Science professor. After a little over 30 years at Central Michigan University, Ernie and Pollee retired to Holland in 1998, and moved to Freedom village because of Pollee's illness in 2004.

Now at Freedom Village, Ernie devotes his time to taking care of Pollee. In his few spare minutes, he has a great time enjoying his hobby of ham radio. His equipment? It includes a Kenwood TS-2000 for SSB, and his favorite radio, a kit-made Elecraft K2 for CW. He supplements these with a very old Heathkit SB220 linear amplifier which he uses mostly on SSB.

But his antennas? Ernie has an advantage over many of us. He has a SteppIR beam which sits on top of the Freedom Village building at 120-140 feet above the street. That beam is supplemented

by an off-center fed dipole at about 90 to 100 feet above ground, but only 15 feet above the roof. This is fed by SGC 500 watt auto-tuner. If you are ever around the downtown Holland area, take Lincoln Avenue north to Windmill Island, and take a look to the west. A SteppIR at 140 feet. It's a beautiful thing.

Ernie's main love of ham radio is CW operating. Indeed, while I was visiting and interviewing him, he turned up the volume on the K2 and worked a Switzerland station on 15 meter CW. Ernie likes DX, but he is not a QSL card collector. Ernie's skilled hands can tickle a Bencher paddle as well as many musical instruments. He also is into building and fixing various electronic gear. He would like to get into more work with computers, but does not currently have the time.

Among some of his most interesting moments in amateur radio? Talking to some of the old-timers who were there when! One of his contacts was a Dutch officer on a cruise ship which visited Holland in the 1960s.

What facet of amateur radio would he still like to try? Moonbounce, although that does not fit his current residence. Maybe Windmill Island would allow a 21 foot dish?

Ernie has so much to do, but in his words his newest career is a practical nurse, taking very good care of his life partner of 55 years.

Closing comments. Ernie told me that it looks like he just passed his 50th anniversary of being in ham radio. If you hear him, congratulate and thank him. If you have never had the opportunity to talk to this amazing person and fellow ham radio operator, please make the time when you hear him on the air. We should emulate his zeal for life and his hobby. In the Holland area, Ernie is one of our treasures.

Written by Tom Bosscher, K8TB March 2012

More pictures below.....



**Ernie holding an "InstructoGraph"
Morse Code reader**



Ernie and Pollee in their college years



Ernie's operating position



And his most impressive SteppIR beam, up 140 feet!