

# LETTERS

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## EDITOR'S SOAPBOX

### Computers & Radio is Back!

As we all know, the world of radio is becoming ever more intertwined with the world of computers, and to become comfortable with either one has been a slow learning curve for many. That's why we are delighted to reinstate our longtime *Computers & Radio* column with an author who is experienced in both worlds.

The name **Brian Wood W0DZ** should be familiar to you, because he has already been thoroughly introduced in the October feature article *Living the Dream*. That article focused on Brian's fascination with radio, his career with Hewlett-Packard, the evolution of his company DZKits, and the Sienna computer-based radio he designed. Brian's first article in *QST*, "A Microprocessor Controlled Contest Accessory," appeared in April 1982, long before personal computers were common gear in most ham shacks.

Meeting the diverse interests of *MT* readers isn't easy to do within a limited number of pages, so *Computers & Radio* will appear quarterly, starting with this January issue. It will be in rotation with two other quarterly columns: *SkySurfing* radio astronomy (by Jeffrey Lichtman) and *SkySurfing* amateur radio satellites.

We can now announce that the amateur satellite edition of *SkySurfing* will be authored by **Keith Baker KB1SF** (whose article is this month's lead feature). We are honored to welcome Keith, who has long held leadership positions with AMSAT (the Radio Amateur Satellite Corporation), to the *MT* staff of writers.

You'll also be glad to hear we are very close to filling the vacancy left by Clem Small's retirement from the *Antenna Topics* column. The author of this month's antenna article (which had been submitted as a freelance feature) is certainly one of the contenders for that monthly column. Stay tuned for that announcement next month if possible.

As Managing Editor, I am relieved to be able to start the New Year with the full complement of top-notch writers, in the feature section as well as in the regular monthly departments. It bodes extremely well for 2010 to be one of the best years yet in *Monitoring Times*' always comprehensive coverage of the spectrum – dc to daylight!

Rachel Baughn, Managing Editor

*This column is open to your considered comments. Opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of Monitoring Times. Your letters may be edited or shortened for clarity and length. Please mail to Letters to the Editor, 7540 Hwy 64 West, Brasstown, NC 28902 or email editor@monitoringtimes.com*

*Happy monitoring!  
Rachel Baughn, Editor*

## Harry Helms

We were saddened to hear that Harry Helms W5HLH lost his extended battle with cancer on November 15, 2009, in Fort Mill, SC, at the age of 57. Harry Helms is the author of over a dozen books on technical and radio-related topics, such as *Electronic Circuits Cookbook*, *All About Ham Radio*, *Shortwave Listening Guidebook*, and *Handbook of Radio Communications Servicing and Maintenance*. A former editor for such publishers as McGraw-Hill and Academic Press, he was co-founder of LLH Technology Publishing. He also wrote for magazines such as *Popular Communications* and *Monitoring Times*.

Thanks to a note from Thomas Giella NZ4O on QRZ forums, we were led to a touching farewell written by Harry Helms in August in his blog: <http://harryhelmsblog.blogspot.com/2009/08/greetings-from-fort-mill-south-carolina.html>

We extend our condolences to Harry's wife Di, his family and close friends. Harry was always generous in sharing his knowledge, his time, and his opinions, and he will be sorely missed by the entire radio community.

## More on Alfred Vail

"As usual your magazine continues to have a very good mix of well written articles that cover many aspects of radio, communications and related matters and I enjoy reading it cover to cover every month. I really enjoyed the Morse Code article by Greg Smith in the Sept 09 edition, but wish that he had mentioned that Camp Alfred Vail in Oceanport NJ (later renamed Fort Monmouth) was named after him.

"There are also many other buildings named after other radio pioneers who were in the US Army Signal Corps Labs, such as Major Edwin Armstrong inventor of the superhet, FM and other items, and the builder of the incredible Alpine tower in Alpine NJ. See [www.monmouth.army.mil/historian/](http://www.monmouth.army.mil/historian/) for more information.

"It's a shame that all this history and legacy of innovation will be lost with the wasteful and harmful BRAC closure of Fort Monmouth in 2011 and its relocation to Aberdeen Proving Ground in MD.

Steven Pizzo, Toms River NJ

Steve later added, "Check out the documents on the link (above); there is lots of good stuff on Alfred Vail and others. One actually says the army meant to name it after another Vail who was the head of ITT who provided many engineers to the army in support of the war effort and helped them obtain the land."

Author Greg Smith WB2PPQ replied to Steven: "It was important to me that Alfred Vail receive credit for his technical efforts and for

the code protocol known as Morse Code. I have received requests from two libraries to have this issue of 'Monitoring Times' in their Reference Departments, one being Morristown, NJ.

"For many years I had a second home close to you in Monmouth Beach and bicycled through Oceanport on many occasions. The closure of Fort Monmouth was a bad decision for many reasons.

"Here is a link that mentions Camp Alfred Vail, a wonderful honor for a great inventor. <http://iagenweb.org/greatwar/tcs/alfval.htm>

## Remembering the Regency TR-1

"The latest issue just came in and is one of the best! Thanks so much.

"All of you will enjoy (hopefully) these links about the first ever transistor radio, the Regency TR-1:

\* This is a 1955 "Industry on Parade" clip showing how they built them – note the solder bath "Ferris Wheel" – OSHA would have a fit today! : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKln6zTy4C8&NR=1&feature=fvwp>

\* Here is a blog link with more interesting info including mp3's of an actual restored TR-1 playing- veeery interesting:

[http://blog.wfmj.org/freemform/2005/10/still\\_portable\\_.html](http://blog.wfmj.org/freemform/2005/10/still_portable_.html)

"My grandmother was a "contester" and gave me one of these things in 1956, with the case and earphone. It gave out sometime later, probably due to a bad capacitor. It was salvaged for parts when we became hams....oh the humanity!..."

"These things go for \$700 and up on Ebay now, no matter how they look and even if they don't play...."

Ron Smith

## The Buzz

Allen Lutins wrote to Ken Reitz with the following correction to the final item of the November Communications column, which referenced a tone imbedded by an Austrian station to repel mosquitoes: "The frequency was off by a factor of 1,000. This is no doubt due to the way large numbers are written in Europe, where periods (or a space-ed), rather than commas, are used to separate groups of three digits. The '14.850 Hz' frequency cited is actually (in U.S. representation) 14,850 Hz, or 14.85 kilohertz. This makes sense if you consider that 14,850 Hz is the 18th harmonic of 825 hertz; it would be hard to believe in a base frequency of 0.825 Hz (of which 14.85 Hz would be the 18th harmonic)!"

"Thanks for all the great information conveyed in the remainder of this month's column!"

Allen Lutins KC2KLC