

My Introduction to Amateur Radio

During my High School years I was a member of the Army Cadet Corp which had as part of their equipment one of the Model 19 sets which were in use by the military for field communications at that time, thus piquing my interest in Radio Communications. After High School I enrolled in a course at the Calgary Technical School which prepared one to write the Department of Transport examination required to obtain a Second Class Radio Operators Certificate. It was here that I was first introduced to Amateur Radio via the Calgary Tech Amateur Radio station VE6IT which was set up in the class room and we were encouraged to use during Noon hour break, any contacts made were made using Morse Code.


I obtained the Radio Operators certificate in early 1956, the DEW (distant Early Warning) Line was under construction and I was hired immediately by the Department of Transport as a Radio Operator. I spent the next ten years at several DOT stations in the Northwest Territories operating radios but did nothing further with amateur radio at the time, although Amateur Radio was never far away. On the first station I was assigned to one of the other operators was busy building a Viking Ranger kit and then putting it on the air on the Amateur Bands.

In 1965 I was issued an Advanced Amateur Radio Operator Certificate however I did not get very active on the bands until the late 1970's after we had moved into the house we built in Fort Smith, NWT. Here, I was finally able to setup an amateur radio station and get on the air as VE8LH. MY first station consisted of a pair of Drake Twins, a separate receiver and transmitter which could be cabled together to operate as a transceiver, a light three band beam on a Radio Shack tower mounted on my outside deck and a forty meter dipole antenna. The Drake twins were later replaced by a Yaesu model 757 transceiver which I continued to operate with until I retired and left Fort Smith in 1989. I enjoyed operating both ssb phone and CW and since there are very few active VE8 amateur station on the air you were very popular if there was a contest in progress, with many stations wanting to work a rare VE8 callsign!

In 1988 the Trans Polar Ski Trek from USSR to Canada took place and communications for this endeavor were handled by amateur radio operators from Canada and the USSR. There was intense interest in this adventure in Fort Smith because one of the ski team members was the Anglican Church minister from Fort Smith. Canadian Amateurs in the NWT were operating under a special event call sign prefix CI8 for this event, and was a high light of my amateur radio experience in the north.

Attached is a copy of the QSL card from CI8C the main event station located at Resolute Bay NWT indicating the date and time that CI8LH made a contact with that station.

Len VE7XLH ex VE8LH

CI8C RESOLUTE NWT/CANADA	TRANS POLAR SKI TREK USSR TO CANADA 1988					
	QSO WITH	DATE	UTC	BAND	MODE	
	C18LH	3.3.88	1555	7060	SSB	57

ICOM STATION: IC761, IC2KL, IC275H, IC2AT, ICA2

(Resolute: 74.43N 94.59W)

OPERATOR: *Garth VE3100*

On March 3, 1988, a joint Soviet/Canadian Expedition left from the Severnaya Zemlya Archipelago in the USSR to ski 1750km via the North Pole to Cape Columbia on Ellesmere Island, Canada. All communications with the Expedition were handled by Canadian and Soviet radio amateurs. Radio equipment provided by ICOM included HF and VHF base stations, amplifiers, with 2-metre handheld and VHF-AM rigs to communicate with the supply aircraft. Using the facilities of SARSAT/COSPAS satellites plus UoSAT with its digtalker, the trekkers were able to navigate across the Arctic ice, carrying 90-lb packs for three months.

Our thanks to all who participated in this historic international venture, demonstrating the value of Amateur Radio to the world. QSL via Box 313, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada M3C 2S7

QSL cards provided by Fred Hammond VE3HC, Hammond Manufacturing Co. Ltd.

