

THE HISTORY OF THE BVARA

THE 1940s

BY RICH SOLTESZ, K3SOM

THE 1940s

When the 1940s began, war had already broken out in Europe. Four days after the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941, all U.S. ham operations ceased.

World War II would change everything.

During this decade, evidence of club activities, equipment, and the identification of individuals from the clubs begins to surface. We continue our high-

level review of the culture, the current events at that time, both locally and globally, and some of the obstacles those hams faced during and after the war years.

GLOBAL EVENTS IN THE 1940s

With the entry of our country into World War II, the Great Depression abruptly ended and new priorities changed the landscape completely. The world was in a struggle for power and for survival. The Battle of Britain in 1940 was crucial for British survival. December 7th, 1941 was a day "that would live in infamy" for all Americans. Anne Frank from Amsterdam went into hiding in 1942. That same year, the Bataan Death March of 72,000 American and Filipino soldiers tragically ended many lives in the Philippines. Later that year the Battle of Midway and the Battle of Stalingrad took place. The Guadalcanal Campaign began in 1942. Nazi leaders attended a conference that same year to coordinate the "final solution to the Jewish question" – the systematic genocide of Jews known as the Holocaust. June 6, 1944, also known as D-Day, was the very first day of the massive and amphibious Normandy Invasion of Europe by the Allied Forces. In May 1945 Germany yielded to unconditional surrender and the Empire of Japan finally surrendered in September 1945 shortly after two atomic bombs were dropped on her cities.

So many battles, so many places, so many deaths, so many atrocities, and so many examples of courage, bravery and valor – these are the global events that must never be forgotten or allowed to be re-written.

With World War II ended, the

U.S. and the Soviet Union began a long and complex Cold War that would last for decades. But for the remainder of the 1940s, returning U.S. soldiers settled in for peacetime and began the start of a new "baby boomer" generation.

INDUSTRY AND HAMS SUPPORT THE WAR EFFORT

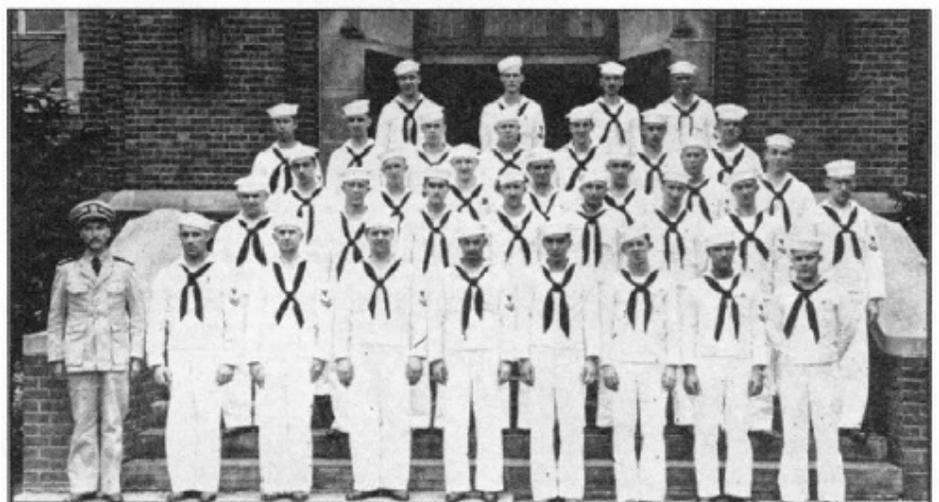
The 1940s arrived with U.S. hams still active on the air, but DXing was essentially a thing of the past. Then came the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941; the U.S. was suddenly at war. Amateur activity in the U.S. screeched to a halt, although those on the home front kept their technical and operational skills honed on 112 MHz as members of the War Emergency Radio Service. This service was important and was taken very seriously by the participants, but it still lacked the freewheeling pleasures of normal ham operations.

At the start of hostilities some

51,000 Americans were licensed as radio amateurs. It has been estimated that approximately 25,000 of those served in the armed forces during World War II. Another 25,000 served in critical war industries, or as instructors in military schools. Amateurs formed a valuable pool of trained technicians and operators and were in high demand by the military. By 1942, there were approximately 15,000 Amateurs in the US Military.

Unlike World War I, the ARRL stayed open for business for the duration. QST continued to be published, although with fewer pages than before as a result of wartime paper rationing. ARRL publications were used heavily for military and civilian training, and a special Defense edition of the ever-popular Handbook appeared in 1942.

By June of 1941, tubes and other components were in short supply; each time the military asked hams

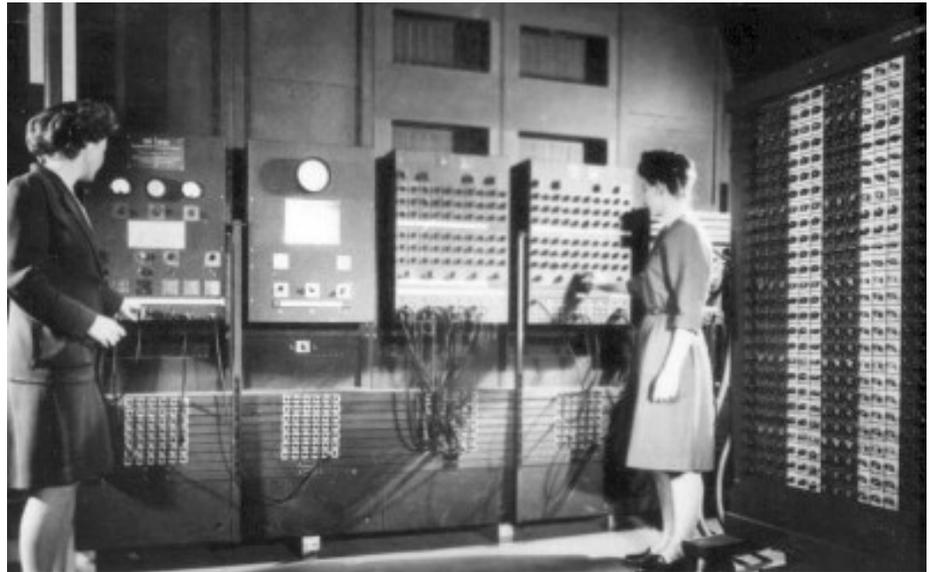


Hams in Navy Radio Training (RT) Class at Grove City College, 1942

to donate parts, they were flooded with whatever was needed.

Many US hams were recruited for a Civilian Technical Corps to operate and repair British radar equipment. Also at this time, the Office of Civil Defense, at the offering of the ARRL, created a CD communication system with ham radio as its backbone.

Code breakers in England in the massive Project Ultra could recognize German operators from their CW swing, clicks and habits.



Two women operating the ENIAC computer



Hams helped any way they could during the war

The British developed the first programmable computer, containing 1,500 vacuum tubes, to break the German codes. This technology preceded the American ENIAC Electronic Computer of 1945.

TECHNOLOGY EVENTS IN THE 1940s

World War II stimulated the development or invention of many technologies and products including radar, ballistic missiles, jet aircraft, the Jeep, the atomic bomb and so much more. More peaceful developments during the 1940s included nylon hosiery, the Slinky, microwave ovens, Velcro, Tupperware, and the Frisbee.

In the sciences, developments included quantum theory, nuclear physics, game theory, cryptography, radiocarbon dating for archaeology, and more.

BEAVER COUNTY IN THE 1940s

In Beaver County, many industries

sprang up to support the needs for war material. The 1940 U.S. Census reported that the population of the county totaled 156,754 people. In 1943 The Koppers Company, Inc. established the Kobuta plant in Potter Twp. for the manufacture of butadiene (synthetic rubber) and styrene (special plastic). These materials were vital to the war effort. After the war in 1948, WBVP was established, becoming the first radio station in Beaver County.

RADIO TECHNOLOGY AFTER THE WAR

By the beginning of 1945 it was clear that it was only a matter of time until the war would draw to a close. Some hams in New York were so certain that peace was nearly at hand, and that ham radio would have a future following the war, that they kicked off a new magazine called CQ in January 1945. Hostilities finally ended on August 17th of that same year. Only

hams started experimenting with SSB at Stanford University. A decade passed before SSB was a common sound on the bands, but it did ultimately displace dual-sideband AM phone, except for a relatively small number of AM aficionados. These folks, quite simply, will always enjoy operating the old rigs and enjoy the sound of a well-adjusted AM transmitter.

HAM CLUB AND MEMBER ACTIVITIES

Local hams actively played many key roles during World War II. As ham radio activities resumed, we get a glimpse of BVARA members in the late 1940s participating in Field Day. Participants included Andy Voinich, W3LCH, Bob McClain, W3VRZ, and his son, Bobbie, and "Big John" Bilinecz, Jr., WA3ECD at the controls of the equipment of John Wojtkiewicz, W3GJY.

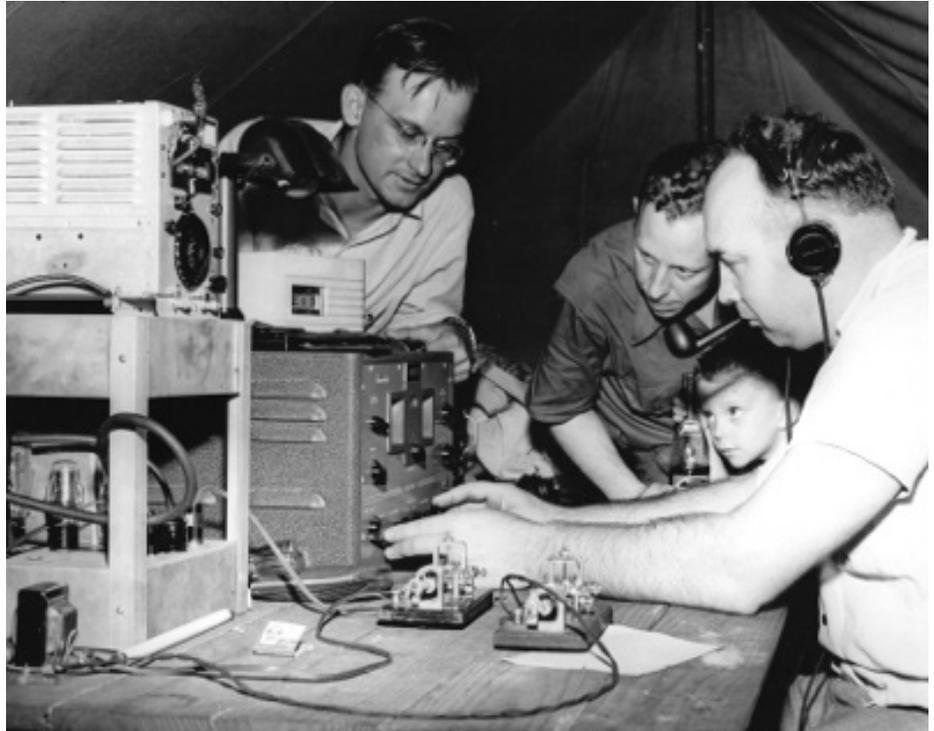
Rounding out the club pictures is a photograph of the equipment of Thomas W. Roney, W8SGJ prior to the redistricting of call areas that took place just after World War II (see "A Glimpse at the BVARA...." at right).

NEXT MONTH

Next month we'll move ahead to the 1950s and continue our journey as we follow the middle history of the BVARA. We'll look at what was happening around the globe and locally during the 1950s. We'll also expand on our coverage of BVARA hams, including their many activities and their equipment. Stay tuned! -

A GLIMPSE AT THE BVARA DURING THE 1940s

Two photos from the archives of the Beaver Valley Amateur Radio Association.



BVARA Field Day during the late 1940s



W3GJY Station in the early 1940s