



## THE HISTORY OF THE BVARA

# The 1950s

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# The 1950s

The decade of the 1950s saw significant activity within the BVARA. War surplus equipment as well as significant “boat anchor” equipment found their way into many stations of BVARA members.

During this decade, increasing evidence of club activities, equipment, and the identification of individuals from the clubs becomes available. We continue our high-

level review of the culture, the current events at that time, both locally and globally, and some of the activities of the BVARA.

### GLOBAL EVENTS IN THE 1950s

At the beginning of the 1950s, a cold war competition had begun between the United States and the Soviet Union. This competition steadily escalated throughout the decade. The post-World War II economy was in high gear now. Clashes between communism and capitalism dominated the decade, especially in the Northern Hemisphere. The conflicts included the Korean War in the beginnings of the decade and the beginning of the Space Race with the launch of Sputnik I by the Russians. Along with increased testing of nuclear weapons, this created a politically conservative climate. In the United States, the Red Scare (fear of communism) caused public Congressional hearings by both houses in Congress and anti-communism was the prevailing sentiment in the United States throughout the decade.

In 1950 the first modern-day

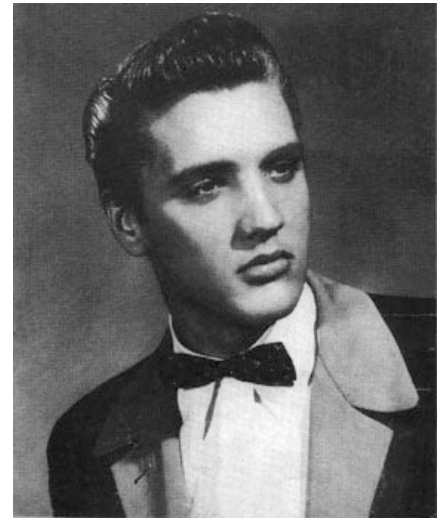


Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier of Monaco

credit card was introduced. That same year President Truman ordered construction of the Hydrogen bomb. In December 1952 the Great Smog killed nearly 12,000 people in London. In 1953 the first issue of Playboy Magazine appeared. Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norgay succeeded in climbing Mt Everest. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed for espionage against the US that same year. In 1954 the British launched an expedition to search for the Abominable Snowman. That same year the Nautilus Nuclear-powered submarine was launched. In 1955 Disneyland was opened and the McDonald's Corporation was founded. In 1956 Elvis gyrated on the Ed Sullivan TV show, Grace Kelly married Prince Rainier of Monaco, and the Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Canal crises dominated world events. In 1957 Dr. Seuss published The Cat in a Hat. In 1958 Boris Pasternak refused to accept the Nobel Prize, Chinese leader Mao Zedong launched "The Great Leap Forward." That same year NASA was founded and the Lego brick was introduced. In 1959 Castro became dictator of Cuba and The Sound of Music opened on Broadway.

### TECHNOLOGY IN THE 1950s

Television gained maturity in the 1950s and by the end of the decade most American households owned a TV set. In 1954, RCA introduced the CTC-1, the first color TV to utilize the NTSC video standard. It



1954 Promotional Photo of Elvis Presley

was expensive however, and black-and-white sets would remain the norm for the next decade. The Chevrolet Corvette became the first car to have an all-fiberglass body in 1953. In 1954 Bell Telephone labs produced the first solar battery. In 1954 you could get a yard of contact paper for only 59 cents. Polypropylene was invented in 1954. In 1955 Jonas Salk invented a polio vaccine which was given to more than seven million American students. In 1956 a solar powered wrist watch was invented. After the Russian launch of Sputnik I, the space race went into high gear. Commercial passenger jet service began during the 1950s.

### BEAVER COUNTY IN THE 1950s

Brady's Run Park, located on Route 51, the largest of the Beaver County parks, opened to the public in 1950. Many Field Day events by the club were held here after the park opened. The Beaver County Humane Society received its



## BVARA FIELD DAY IN THE 1950s

Some very good pictures of the 1950 Field Day effort at Edgewood Park speak volumes of the people, the equipment, the team spirit, and the experience shared among members.



corporate charter as a non-profit, charitable organization on August 10, 1950. The big snow that fell on Friday and Saturday, November 23-24, 1950 caused considerable problems.

The 1950 US Census reported a total of 175,193 people in Beaver County with 26,132 people in Aliquippa. The J&L Historical Society organized a ceremony dedicating a black granite monument outside the city's police station. The monument recognized former Jones & Laughlin Steel Corp. and LTV Corp. workers "who made the impossible possible in the production of steel." By 1950, J&L was the fourth-largest steel producer in the world. In 1967, the company's Aliquippa Works employed 14,000 people. LTV bought the company in 1968.

The "Conway Project" of the mid 1950's had a great impact on the Conway roundhouse. 35 million dollars was spent to upgrade the yard and other facilities at Conway. 145 miles of new track were laid in the classification yard which now measures four and one-half miles long and three-fourths of a mile wide at its widest point. In the engine house eight stalls and an office were torn down. They were thought to no longer be needed as there were no longer any steam locomotives operating through Conway. A boiler room was added in a section of the old backstop, which was to supply steam for heating all the buildings in the area and replace the old power plant that had been torn down.



## BVARA Field Day Results

Year	Xmtrs	Call	Contacts	PWR	Hams	Points
1952	5	W3VRZ/3	868	A	12	8055
1953	4	W3VRZ/3	749	AB	20	5382
1955	4	W3VRZ/3	479	B	18	6717

From top of page 7: Bob Peters, Stan Dobrowski, W3LRS and Bob McClain, W3VRZ at Field Day 1950; Stan Dobrowski, W3LRS and Ad Davidson, W3LDZ at Field Day 1950; Fred Ziegler, W3BSF at Field Day 1950; Arch McAlister, W3OEW at Field Day 1950; BVARA Field Day results in the 1950s

## HAM EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

With the continued availability of surplus equipment, many hams took the path of adapting this rugged equipment to amateur radio use. The pages of QST and CQ Magazines provided many ideas for the enterprising and technically capable club ham.

"Boat anchor" receivers and sometimes matching transmitters during the 1950s really earned their reputation. They were heavy, solidly built, and performed very well. Pictures of equipment that club members used on Field Day and in their home stations aptly illustrate the impact of these technologies.

The first Collins transceiver the KWM-1 appeared in 1957, and this was followed two years later by the KWM-2, which basically combined the circuits of the 75S-1 and 32S-1 in one case. For the enthusiast it is a stirring sight to lift the lid when the radio is switched on, to see a whole family of tubes glowing and to feel the waft of hot air! SSB had arrived big time, and the fundamental design of this transceiver created a paradigm shift that has endured into the 21st Century.

## HAM CLUB AND MEMBER ACTIVITIES

A very popular activity for the BVARA was Field Day. From the pages of the December QST issues, published results for three of the years in the 1950s chronicle the scope of effort put forth by the members of the BVARA.

## NEXT MONTH

Next month we'll move ahead to the 1960s 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 1960s. The CB explosion was just beginning and later had a profound influence on the BVARA. We'll highlight BVARA hams including their many activities and their equipment. Stay tuned! ➔

## MEMBERS OF THE BVARA AND THEIR STATIONS

Two more pictures of the ham stations of club members round out our glance into club history.



Ken Castelluci,  
W3GAE at his Home  
QTH



Eddie Woodson,  
WN3SIJ's novice  
station