



Ham radio operators Fred Speckeen and Lorne Juul-Anderson talk across the world

## Hams across the world united

by JOHN POPE  
Citizen Staff Reporter

Becoming an amateur (ham) radio operator is a bit like having a baby, says Frank Gibbons, president of the Fort George Amateur Radio Club.

"It takes about nine months for most people to qualify." That's why there are only 20 active hams in Prince George, who spend anywhere from \$40 to \$5,000 on equipment they use for everything from helping the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) in emergencies to contacting as many different countries as possible.

Most of the city's hams joined others throughout North America this past weekend during the 40th annual field day for hams.

The field day is designed to find out the location and number of radio contacts that may be established during a 24-hour period.

This information is used in preparing for emergency situations.

From a base at Links Lake near Canadian Forces Base Baldy Hughes, members of the Ft. George Amateur Radio Club were able to establish 825 contacts throughout the western hemisphere including Alaska, Argentina, Florida and Hawaii.

Among the local operators is Diana Vanderzande, who has contacted 110 different countries since moving to Prince George in September.

She describes herself as a "rag-chewer", or person interested in talking with operators in-depth once contact is established, instead of just exchanging technical information on equipment used or the strength of the signal.

Then there's operators like Gibbons who has a directional antenna and other equipment modifications that allow him to concentrate on a particular area.

Which means almost anywhere in the world. Whole or partial bans on amateur radio exist only in Iraq, Kyber Republic, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Turkey, Vietnam, and the People's Republic of Yemen.

Gibbons says most operators have communicated with Russia, but admits "you usually don't get into anything heavier than the weather."

Since most operators speak English, oral communication is easy.

And most operators will send QSL cards with their address, and sometimes a picture, if requested.

But most amateur (ham) radio operators are interested in the experimental side of radio.

Once they establish a contact in a short distance, many will try it again by coming in from the other way around the globe. Or move on to different areas in a new country.

Since about half of the operators in Prince George are working in fields directly or indirectly related to electronics, according to Gibbons, an industrial education teacher, many find radio communication a natural outlet.

Some start out with Citizens Band (CB) radio and move on to amateur (ham) radio when they want more of a challenge.

One of these is Fred Speckeen, 15, who became interested last year after an army signal corps veteran showed him how he took Morse code during a visit to his parents' home.

Bill Broeksma was also 14 when he first became interested during the Second World War on the Japanese-occupied island of Java.

Short-wave radio had a special meaning for Broeksma, since it was the only means Bill's family had of finding out the truth about current events.

But getting into amateur (ham) radio is not just a matter of having an interest in it.

A tough screening process requires potential operators to learn Morse code and be able to put themselves through a rigorous training program with a radio theory section equivalent in difficulty to a senior secondary course.

Which is why only six of 15 people finished a basic nine-month course offered last October by the Ft. George Amateur Radio Club.

Two of these, Fred Speckeen, 15, and Lorne Juul-Anderson, 16, did survive to show other younger people that it can be done.

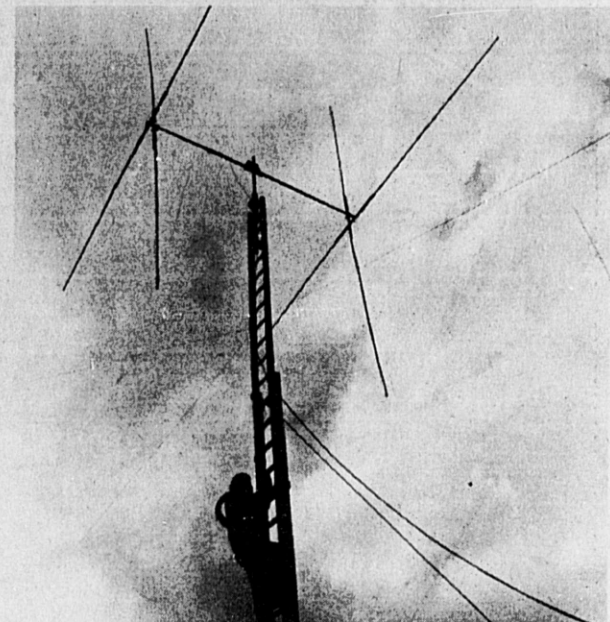
They got past the initial test for licensing that requires a person to give and receive Morse code at the rate of 10 words per minute, which Gibbons says is fast enough so a person "can't just learn a letter but must be able to assimilate it into his mind."

Gibbons says some people are able to learn the initial Morse code requirement within 50-70 hours, "but other slow people like me take 480 hours."

If the speed and theory requirements are passed after a three-hour exam, a certificate of proficiency and a licence is issued. This licence costs \$13 and must be renewed each year.

Although a person is required to operate on Morse code initially, he may communicate by voice after establishing his radio proficiency.

A second advanced licence may be obtained after a year's experience, when a person passes another three-hour exam on more sophisticated radio theory plus the ability to send and receive 15 words a minute in Morse code.



Lorne Juul-Anderson services aerial during ham radio field day at Links Lake

### GARDEN COLUMN

By ALICE WOLCZUK



Clematis is one of the most beautiful of the climbing vines. The flowers are large and are produced profusely over several weeks. The plant can be long lasting if it is in a suitable location.

Unhappily, we are not able to grow very many varieties in Prince George. The hardiness ratings for Clematis are 4 to 9 while we enjoy a paltry Zone 3. Yet such is the vigor of the plant that we can grow some of the more adaptable varieties with a high rate of success.

The species *C. tangutica* has proven itself fully hardy in our area. It will reach a height of eight to 10 feet and needs no cutting back. The thin wiry stems will leaf out fully each spring with little or no winter kill. The flowers are nodding, fairly large, two to three inches across when folded out, in a bright yellow color. The pods following are fluffy heads of silky seeds. It is a good cover for a fence or trellis.

Of the hybrids, the variety Jackmanii is the hardiest and is the most likely to do well for us. Despite the lack of full hardiness, there are some lovely ones in our area that have thrived for many years.

One of the reasons Jackmanii is so successful for us is that it does its flowering on new growth and if the winter has not cut it back for you, you should prune hard, meaning to just above the first bud.

If you find some unfamiliar hybrids that you would like to try, select those that must be pruned hard each spring.

Clematis like a fairly light soil, with some lime and well-rotted manure added. For a little extra protection set the plant deep enough as to cover the first leaf joint.

For winter, mulch around the plant (as soon as the ground is frozen) to a depth of four to six inches with any light material that will not pack. Leaves, grass clippings, or sawdust would not be suitable for these tend to cling tightly together. Shavings sit relatively loose and would make a good cover. Peat moss could also be used but don't forget to add some lime in the spring. A dressing of well-rotted manure is not only beneficial but will also make a good mulch.

Clematis like to have their roots cool. To help create some coolness for them, plant a few annuals that are not too heavily rooted so that their spreading branches can give them a bit of shade.

## Trucker awarded Cross of Valor

OTTAWA (CP) — Twenty-two persons were awarded decorations for bravery, two posthumously, at an investiture at Government House today.

Governor-General Jules Leger presented the Cross of Valor, Canada's highest decoration for bravery, as well as seven Stars of Courage, the second highest decoration and 14 Medals of Bravery.

Kenneth Bishop, of Lloydminster, Sask., received the Cross of Valor for saving the life of a fuel tank truck driver.

Driver George McAldie was thrown from his truck after it collided with another truck at Vegreville, Alta. March 30, 1974. Fuel from Mr. McAldie's truck spilled out and ignited, surrounding him with flames.

Mr. Bishop suffered severe burns when he rescued the driver.

Since bravery decorations were created in 1972, the Cross

of Valor has been awarded five times, three posthumously. Awarded the Star of Courage were:

—Joseph Pelletier of Bas-sano, Alta., who drowned while aiding in the rescue of two girls, Josephine Eagle and Thelma Wells, in the Bow River near Cluny, Alta., July 29, 1973.

—Master WO David Monteith and WO Dennis Weber, of 402 Air Reserve Squadron at Winnipeg, for their part in attempting to rescue the pilot and co-pilot from a Canadian Forces plane that crashed at Swallow Lake airstrip near Thunder Bay May 19, 1974.

—Master Cpl. William Wacey, of Courtenay, B.C., for a 13-hour helicopter rescue of survivors of a 70-m.p.h. wind-storm which swept the Straits of Georgia March 30, 1975.

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