

# K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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## Zeh Bouck

*Pillar of Early Radio Journalism*

**Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL**

**B**rowsing an on-line index of *Boys' Life* articles I noticed a number of them concerned radio: "The Radio Tower," October 1924, November 1924, December 1924, January 1925, February 1925; "A Great Two-Tube Receiver," March 1925;

"How to Build a Wavetrap," June 1925; "How to Build a Resistance Coupled Amplifier," August 1925; "How to Build a Radio Receiver for \$5.52," September 1925; and "How to Make a 'B' Battery Eliminator," October 1925.

You won't find the author of these articles without digging around a bit. It's a name missing from our collective memory of illustrious early Hams. Before researching this article I had never heard it spoken nor seen it printed anywhere. I was soon to discover he was a frequently published author of technical journals and books; contributor to pulp magazines and newspapers; an aviation radio pioneer; participant in the shaping of commercial broadcasting and Amateur Radio lawmaking; and a nationally known spokesman for the Amateur Radio Service.

His fellow Hams knew him as 2PI and the world knew him as Zeh "Jack" Bouck, but he was born J.W. Schmidt (he started using his pen name, Zeh Bouck, in high school) in New York on April 3, 1901 and died a scant 45 years later on August 28, 1946. His father, John A. Schmidt, was a German immigrant and merchant, and his mother, Alice White, a descendant of Governor William C. Bouck of New York (1843-1845).

**1924—He Was 23-Years-Old**

From the report of the *United States Department of Commerce, Recommendations for Regulation of Radio, Adopted by the Third National Radio Conference, Called by Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce, October 6-10, 1924*, Chairman Hoover says:

*AMATEURS*

*Nor have we overlooked in these previous conferences the voice or interest of the amateur, embracing as he does that*

*most beloved party in the United States—the American boy. He is represented at this conference, and we must have a peculiar affection for his rights and interests. I know nothing that has contributed more to sane joy and definite instruction than has radio. Through it the American boy to-day knows more about electricity and its usefulness than all of the grown-ups of the last generation. I have during the past year somewhat*

*extended this wave band. I hope that this conference may dismiss the objections that have been raised to this action.*

The luminaries of "Subcommittee No. 5: Amateur Problems" included H. P. Maxim, E. H. Armstrong and Zeh Bouck.

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*"...H.P. Maxim,  
E.H. Armstrong  
and Zeh Bouck."*



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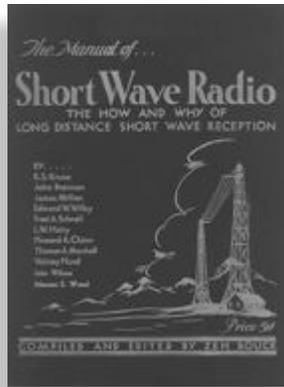
Early commercial radio broadcasting was still sinking its foundations when, in 1924, there arose the *Radio Broadcast* magazine competition, "Who is to Pay for Broadcasting and How?" where a prize of \$500 was offered for:

*A workable plan which shall take into account the problems in present radio broadcasting and propose a practical solution. How, for example, are the restrictions now imposed by the music copyright law to be adjusted to the peculiar conditions of broadcasting? How is the complex radio patent situation to be unsnarled so that broadcasting may develop? Should broadcasting stations be allowed to advertise?*

On the panel of contest judges: "Zeh Bouck, one of the best known radio authors in America."

### He Soars

Not despairing the handicap that necessitated his use of crutches, he became a celebrated expert in the then embryonic field of avionics. Putting theory into practice, he was the operator of 2XBQ aboard a Stinson Detroiter, a single-engine, high-wing monoplane, on the first flight from the U.S. mainland to Bermuda on April 1, 1930. The flight was sponsored by his employer, the Pilot Radio and Tube Corporation of Brooklyn (subsequently he would work for J.H. Millen), so the Stinson was dubbed "Pilot Radio."



According to a New York Times article he maintained "two-way radio communication" between the plane and the "Manhattan radio station" of the newspaper. "The dots and dashes were so clear that the words were not repeated as is in ordinary code practice."

America's love affair with radio was equaled only by its infatuation with aviation. A July 18, 1929 news story describes the "Aerial Hitch-Hiking Couple," Mr. and Mrs. Lucien Zacharoff, "two young Brooklynites" who were "...crossing the continent by aeroplane, 'begging' free rides at various airports..." "Zeh Bouck, then chief engineer of Pilot Radio Laboratories, assisted by getting them aboard the Stinson on a flight from Roosevelt Field on Long Island to the airport at Albany, New York.

### A Flight to Buenos Aires

Bouck was editor of *The Manual of Short Wave Radio*, copyright 1930, by the National Company. The *Manual* included articles by radio pioneers including James Millen and Fred H. Schnell. Schnell, 1MO, was one of the team of Hams who, in November 1923, inaugurated "...two-way amateur transatlantic communication..." with stations in France on 110- and 100-meters.

Bouck's article in the *Manual*, "Short Wave Reception, Circling the World With Simple Receivers," discusses his flight to Buenos Aires and the global network of commercial shortwave radio stations that facilitated international radiotelephone calls.

The foreword to *Trouble Finder and Service Manual*, compiled by Zeh Bouck, M.I.R.E, Experimenters Publications, Inc., N.Y., 1930, says this about him [note: edited for clarity]:

*We feel that this entire subject is one which can interest every radio owner and serviceman, and that there are few men in the country who could handle the work as masterfully as Zeh Bouck.*

*Mr. Bouck has been very active in radio for many years. He has contributed to many of the leading periodicals; has designed and has built almost every type of radio receiver and transmitter imaginable, is at present consulting engineer for several radio companies; a licensed radio operator and, incidentally,*

*Managing Editor of the new Mackinnon-Fly magazine, "Aero News."*

*In the selection of the material for use with the gleanings from Mr. Bouck's pen, we believe our readers will agree that the choice has been excellent and that this volume sets a new pace in the service field.*

To convince young people they could financially succeed in the razor thin days of the Great Depression he wrote, *How to Make Money in Radio Servicing*, N.Y., Teck Publishing Corporation, 1932, 130 p. and *Making a Living in Radio*, Mc-Graw, N.Y., 1935, 222 p.

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Built-in, mini color TV—Great idea! I like to watch Cubs' baseball games while operating. Now I can view them right in front of me without craning my neck to see the TV across the room.

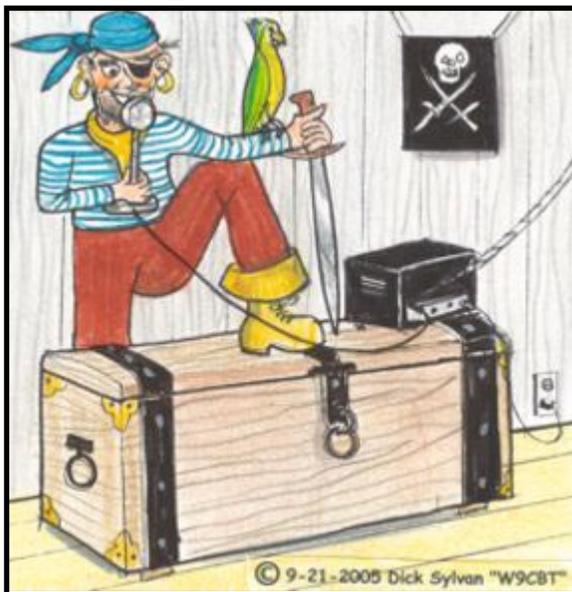
Credit Card Slot—Worrying how you might pay for this unit? No problem. A handy credit card reader will accept your credit card and issue a receipt. (Accepts Visa, MC and AMEX only)

Non-slip rubber feet—My favorite feature. No more having the rig sliding around the desk. This rig has four solid feet. In keeping with today's casual look, the feet are wearing non-slip rubber flip-flops. This baby's going nowhere!

Bottom line. All I can say is I have waited for this unit for years. What a rig! I asked what the selling price is and the engineer said, "If you have to ask, you can't afford it." I guess that tells you something. ■

[Editor's note: Since this article was written, the FFT-1 manufacturing facility in Outer Mongolia mysteriously burned to the ground. All tooling and components were destroyed. The company has since declared bankruptcy. Sorry, this unit is no longer available.]

## Ham Lingo "Pirate Radio"



"Avast Ye Lubbers—I Really am Operating a Pirate Radio Station!"

It wasn't all technical books and manuals, Bouck was frequently featured in popular and pulp magazines—a few titles and their publications: "Tails Up!" *Cosmopolitan*, July 1932; "Signal Eighty-two," *Top-Notch*, May 1936; "Staged at 10,000," *Clues*, June 1937; and "Our Radio Amateurs," (co-authored with Carl Dreher), *Harper's*, October 1941.

That's just a brief glance at the very short, but very full life of Zeh Bouck, a noteworthy and tireless participant, innovator, promoter and memoirist of radio in the first half of the 20th century. ■

CONTINUED - BEGALI FROM PAGE 3

But, actually, this is not a Begali review, so much as an appreciation of a newfound friend, which makes CW all the more pleasurable.

A key is a very personal piece of equipment. This is my story. How about you? What works for me may not work for you. Have you found a key that makes your heart skip a beat every time you sit down to pound some brass? Tell your story. It's part of the adventure. ■

## Have a Ham Radio Holiday Story to Share?

*Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire,  
Heathkits 'Neath the Tree*

Do you have a Ham Radio holiday story you would like to share?

Good fellowship on the air. Memorable holiday QSOs? Your radio club's Christmas party. Local Ham Radio holiday traditions? Successful wish list placement strategies? Your favorite wish list item—did you get it? Delaying your family's holiday dinner to get "just one more" new kit component soldered in place. Delaying your family's holiday dinner to get "just one more" QSO into the logbook? Displaying the shack to visiting family members: "You mean you can talk around the world on that thing?" and "Why does that clock read 23:30?" The annual quandary: Ring in the New Year with 'nog or Straight Key Night natter?

Spread glad tidings! The *K9YA Telegraph* is now read by Amateur Radio operators in 90 countries.

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