

Ole Refsell – W0TTT



Ole Refsell was born December 1, 1894 in rural Emmet County, Iowa. He owned and operated a farm in High Lake Township near Wallingford, IA where he and his wife Mildred raised two children. He passed away December 1985.

We know little else about his life except that he became a ham in the early 1920's as is documented by his QSL card collection with the oldest postmarked card in 1924. It should come as no surprise that at that time period many in rural Iowa would turn to the radio as a form of communication with very few telephone lines in the more remote parts of the county.

Ole is pictured here sitting beside his home built transmitter as well as other ham gear mounted in furniture pieces in his home. This picture hung in Melvin Breyfogle's ham shack (note the thumb tack marks on the scan) until Melvin's shack was

disassembled in August of 2016.

Melvin S. Breyfogle – W0MDM

Melvin S. Breyfogle about 1953



Melvin Breyfogle began his career as a radio repairman in May of 1947 when he purchased a shop from a family friend. Fresh out of the Navy after duty in WWII and married in August of 1946 his shop had a very humble beginning. Early in 1953, in response to a growing demand for service on two way radios, Melvin took a correspondence course to obtain his commercial license. His plan was to service two way radios for local police and fire departments. As part of the course he was constructing a transmitter for use with the lesson plan. Since his radio shop was very small the only place to keep it was on a ledge in the front window of the shop.

A man came into the shop and introduced himself as Ole Refsell and asked, "Are you a ham?" Melvin said no and explained the transmitter. Ole encouraged him to look into becoming a ham explaining that the transmitter Melvin was building could be

converted to the ham bands. Melvin started learning Morse Code and one summer day Ole drove Melvin to Des Moines to take the test for Melvin's novice test.

He passed the test and immediately took the General Class test at the encouragement of others testing that day when they learned his radio theory was so strong (based on his vocation as a radio repairman). Melvin would relate that the theory was very easy for him but his knowledge of the ham bands was weak as he had not studied them. But using his background knowledge he was able to achieve this level the same day.

Melvin's entry into amateur radio began a 63 year period of working at every level in the hobby and included building many of his own rigs and repairing equipment for many others in the surrounding area. He was very active in amateur radio clubs and was for a time certified to administer testing to others. Many of his friends credit Melvin with their entry and success in the hobby, just as Melvin recognized Ole Refsell (W0TTT) as his first mentor. He made many lifelong friends as a result of his passion for the hobby.