

Eunice Randall Thompson “ER - 1CDP - W1MPP” *1898-1982* A lady of many firsts! In the early 1900's around Mattapoisett SE Mass, was the young daughter of Mrs. George P. Randall. Eunice graduated from Fairhaven H.S. in 1917. Their farm location still rural, Eunice's father was a farmer and a brother operated a mill. Somehow Eunice became fascinated by the science of ham radio. Her first station which she built herself, was simply “ER” - it was a time when you used your own call since radio was still not regulated. Eunice impressed regional director of the ARRL, Irv Vermilya with her technical skills.

The following partially scripted by Donna Halper, a respected media historian, whose research has resulted in many TV and radio appearances. She had authored three books and most recent of which is “Invisible Stars” A social history of women in American Broadcasting.”

Not content to stay on the family farm, Eunice moved to Boston, with the plan to study art and drafting at Mass Normal Art School, ER found she was proficient at drafting and applied for an opening at American Radio and Research Company.(AMRAD). They opened a broadcasting station in 1918; it was mainly operated by Tufts College students. (AMRAD's founder Harold Power was a Tufts College alumnus) but now that the AMRAD factory was expanding, some of the non-student workers also took their turn keeping the station on the air. Among them was “ER” Eunice Randall..



All the amateur stations were taken off the air during World War I, but as soon as it was legal to do so, the AMRAD station (Known as 1XE) but referred to in the news as “The AMRAD Station” or the Medford Hillside station, resumed its broadcasts. It was highly unusual for women to work in technical professions back then. Eunice was not typical of her generation; not only was she an experienced ham radio operator but she now wanted to work with the men building radio receivers. Her drafting skills were very precise and she wasn't afraid to learn new jobs.

At some point in 1919 Eunice became an announcer for the station, it included giving nightly Police reports. ER was the first woman on the air in greater Boston. By 1921 she was not only helping with the engineering, doing announcing and at times sending out code so that any amateurs listening could get some code practice, she had also gotten a sponsor and was now the “Story Lady.”

At least three nights a week, our subject read bed time stories to the kids, sponsored by Little Folks Magazine. By 1922 1XE received its standard broadcast license *WGI* assigned by the DOC. Eunice remained in her dual roles of draftsman and WGI announcer. When the factory needed her more, she spent more time there, when the radio station beckoned, she did that - in fact, when a guest didn't show she and another of the engineers sang duets! The newspapers referred to ER as the “Radio Mother:” because her bed time stories were very popular with youngsters all over New England. Unfortunately the station operated on a shoestring and seldom got the publicity it deserved. She represented AMRAD at several radio shows and it certainly must have encouraged other young women to see her demonstrating equipment and broadcasting. Continued on page two.

The Boston region would eventually be home base to a large share of electronic research Labs and radio companies such as; General Radio (National) Raytheon; Submarine-Signal; MIT research Labs; A.R. Little research; Sylvania and Hygrade; Bell and Howell to name a few.

Unfortunately, Eunice Randall's radio broadcasting career was cut short by the fact that WGI and its parent company AMRAD ultimately went bankrupt. Leaving the air in the spring of 1925, never to return. She continued to work as one of the few women engineers, and also continued her involvement with ham radio. During WW2 she and a number of other amateurs did volunteer work as part of the War Emergency Radio Service.

Then over time, Eunice taught many young amateurs what they needed to know to earn their license. Eunice and her husband Ken Thompson, (W1PS) a former AMRAD engineer were married in 1948, who were long time Boston residents. They moved up to Maine for their retirement years and then on to Orange City Florida. Our subject expired in 1982 at age 78.

Ken the OM and Eunice both OOTC members and spark operators had collected a substantial size antique radio collection, befittingly they donated their collection to the Northeast Wireless and Steam Museum. Your author had often wondered if a QSL card would appear of Eunice Thompson W1MPP. Sure thing it did late November of 2010. Through the courtesy of Tom K8CX and his Ham Gallery on the Internet.

Partially scripted by Donna Halper stated earlier and comments by Erica Plouffe of the Standard Times. Added note Eunice was a member of the IRE eventually the IEEE. Thus the Mattapoisett lady and her soothing voice that floats through the air, lulled to sleep thousands of kids within a 1000 mile radius with her songs and bed time tales. ER made a dent in this old world and she enjoyed her firsts in the trade.

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