

Ed Raser Wireless Pioneer

(One of the really great wireless pioneers and long active in the *Old Old Timers Club* is Ed Raser, OOTC 2nd District Director, is here for the edification of the OOTC membership, the story of his illustrious radio life.-Ed.)

This is the story of one amateur radio operator who has really lived over a half century of wireless and radio. His early interest in wireless soon developed into a lifetime of activity which has dominated most of his waking hours, providing a satisfying career as well as rewarding friendships among the amateur fraternity.



Experimenting with coherer detecting devices as early as 1908 at the age of nine, Ed joined up the next year with Hugo Gernsback's Wireless Association of America, one of the earliest wireless clubs in the world. By 1910 he had worked a distance of ten miles with a quarter-inch spark coil, homemade tuner, a piece of silicon mineral, and a 75-ohm telephone receiver. The call letters were then "RE", his initials in reverse!

After the Radio Law of 1912, he made his appearance at the

Philadelphia Navy Yard and took the examination for an First Grade license. He recalls that the license was signed by a Lt. S. S. Payne, USN, as the Navy was the only government agency authorized to conduct examinations at that time. His brand new call letters were then 3NG. By 1915 he was working stations 400 miles away with a 1-kw KW Packard transformer and homemade rotary gap, using only a galena mineral detector, loose coupler and Brandies phones for receiving.

The impending war in Europe put an end to his experimenting. So not to be completely frustrated, he enlisted in Navy as a wireless operator, and served a three-year hitch aboard various ships and at shore stations. During this period, while serving on detached duty at the Cape May Naval Air Station, he installed and test hopped the first E. J. Simon 1/4 KW, 500 cycle spark sets ever to go aloft in an airplane, and using long trailing wire antenna. Other duty stations were on sub-patrol boats, and after hostilities ceased, at coast stations NAH, NAI and NSD.

Ed had received his First Grade Radiotelegraph license before War I. After his Navy service he continued as a commercial wireless operator at both land and shipboard stations. In 1919 he was operator aboard the coaster S. S. LAKE STRABO, KEBR, on runs between New England and Gulf ports. In 1920 he transferred to the new collier S.S. ETHAN ALLEN, KUJQ, which carried a 2 KW Federal arc set. On its maiden voyage to Balboa and Chile he maintained contact over most of the trip with Charleston Navy Yard, NAO, and Colon, Panama, NAX, there being few stations along the way able to receive the ETHAN ALLEN's arc signals. During his maritime days he worked for such early operating companies as Kilbourne and Clark, Marconi Co., and Tropical Radio Telegraph Co:

In April 1915 Ed had joined up with the then newly organized American Radio Relay League. He became the 381st member of this organization, which now has over 100,000 members throughout the U.S. and Canada. He immediately became active in long distance relay and traffic

handling, and was assigned in May 1916 to old Trunk Line C, the then very busy line operating between Boston and Washington, D.C. He also was one of the first ORS (Official Relay Station) appointees in 1922, the year when this appointment was created. During his some 47 years of traffic work, dedicated to serving the public and amateur radio, Ed has held all ARRL field positions and appointments, as well as that of elected Director of the League for a two-year term.

In 1922 he received Special Amateur Station License number 9, and with it the call letters 3ZI. This allowed him special wavelengths out of the 200-meter amateur band for long distance relaying of messages. He and Irving Vermilya, WIZE, are the only two original east coast "z calls" left on the air today as far as it is known—all others are reassignments. Other early two-letter calls were 3NG and 3CS, both well known sparks until 1924.

Amateur radio-wise, having passed through all the various stages of spark transmission from 1/1 inch spark coil to the booming 1 KW sync-spark set in the middle 20's, Ed finally saw the light when a little 7 1/2 watt tube began to run rings around his "Big Bertha." In late 1924 he gave in to the less noisy tweet of the CW signal. Then came the 5 watt "Colpitts" and "TNT" circuits, with basketweave coils and honey-comb tuners, all of which led up to the present pretty desk-top gear of today.

As a pioneer broadcast engineer on 1922, Ed was to help establish WMAL, Trenton's first station, and later to design and construct the city's first 500 watt station, WOAX, which was considered high-powered at that time. His last participation in commercial radio came in 1935-6, when he returned to sea for the Columbian Steamship Co. Plying the banana boat routes, he served aboard the S.S. COLUMBIA, WKEG, the S.S. PASTORES, KDED. His trips to Haiti, Jamaica, the Canal Zone and Columbia brought him in contact with many a Caribbean wireless station operator.

Ed's interest in military radio stayed with him for many years. In 1926 he enlisted in the 112th Field Artillery, Headquarters Battery, N.J. National Guard, where he became regimental communications sergeant and senior signal instructor. In 1933 he transferred to the 119th Observation Squadron, Army Air Corps 6 Reserve, based at Newark, N.J. He was' Communications Chief of the squadron, with supervision over twenty communicators, two ground stations and 13 observation aircraft types 0-46 and 0-47. During World War II he was engaged in vehicular radio development work as a radio engineer for the Signal Corps Radio Laboratories, Fort Monmouth, N.J. He traveled over most of the eastern United States on various communications missions, for the Army, Air Force and other agencies. One of his most notable assignments was to President Roosevelt's security network, with his headquarters in the White House.

With all his on-the-air activity, and with commercial operating in between, Ed has found time to be active in radio club work. He served in 1915 as secretary of the very early YMCA Radio Club of Trenton, N.J. He joined the Trenton Radio Assn. in 1920, and was a co-founder of The Delaware Valley Radio Assn., Inc., now (1963) in its 43rd year. He is also a member of many other radio organizations: The Radio Club of America (the world's first radio club), Charter Member of The DeForest Pioneers, The Veteran Wireless Operators Assn., Life Member of the Quarter Century Wireless Assn., Morse Telegraph Club of America, Charter Member of the Old Old Timers Club (40 years in radio), The Antique Wireless Assn., and Senior Member of the Institute of Radio Engineers.

He still holds Commercial Radiotelegraph License, First Class, and an Amateur Extra Class License of early issue. He has been cited five times for the AR RL Public Service Award Certificate, for the Delaware Valley Radio Association's Silver Cup Award for faithful service, the Achievement Statuette conferred by the Conamaugh Valley Radio Association of Johnstown, Pa., and the A-I Operators Certificate.

Ed is probably best known for his Wireless Museum, with its large collection of antique radio equipment dating back to 1899, when Marconi first came to America. His collection of historical

books and papers on the art of wireless and radio number over 250 volumes, and represent some 35 years of research work. This unique exhibit is open to all visitors by appointment, and is located at 19 Blackwood Drive, Wilburtha section, West Trenton, N.J. It is suggested that those interested in viewing the Collections, either call TU 2-6645, or write ahead for an appointment, so that no one will be disappointed in case Ed is not at home. There are over 400 pieces of old radio and wireless gear on display, so one can be assured that a visit will be most interesting and worthwhile.

Along with the above activity, Ed found time to run the original Old Timer's Nite Round-Up. Held in Trenton each year during the month of April, the annual event has run for 16 years. His Old Timer's Nite Round-Up idea, which originated in 1945, has been perpetuated in Old Timer's Nite affairs being run all over the country.

Presently employed as Supervising Engineer and Technical Advisor to the N.J. State Police Radio System, he pioneered the early FM systems, having installed the second state-wide system in America or elsewhere. After some 22 years in mobile radio work, Ed is about to retire from police radio activity and settle down to enjoying his several hobbies. So ends the saga of a very active wireless man, now enjoying some 55 years on the air and covering just about all phases of "the wireless game".

Ed was born April 1, 1899. He was first licensed in April, 1914 as 3 NG and he presently holds an extra class of an early issue. He and his XYL just recently returned from an eventful trip to the South Sea Islands, New Zealand and Australia aboard the S. S. Monterey of the Matson Lines. Last year the Rasers toured Europe and the British Isles.

Ed was hospitalized on May 28 this year for surgery but pulled through ok. On July 15 he reported, "Sitting up at home but weak, so weak I can't even pound a 'mill'. Hi. Had to learn to walk all over again. Sure I'll have my 'sea legs' again in a few weeks. "

Ed became a Silent Key on October 23, 1985.

Silent Key

EDWARD G. RASER, W2ZI

Edward G. Raser, W2ZI of Trenton, N.J. died on Oct.23. Ed was "Dean of the Collectors". He built his first receiver in 1910 and was a ship operator in his youth. In time he became a broadcast engineer and eventually retired from the New Jersey State Police Communication System. W2ZI started acquiring his fabulous wireless collection nearly 60 years ago. In time, it became one of the nation's finest. Many of the pieces are in the AWA Museum. We've lost a great wireless pioneer and historian.

