# THE VOICES

of

# **VANPORT**

Radio and the Flood of '48



# The Voices of Vanport Radio and the Flood of '48

# By Dan Howard

2<sup>nd</sup> edition

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Cover: The title and cover layout were inspired by the short-lived *The Voice of Vanport* newspaper whose motto was "News of Vanport – By Vanporters – For Vanporters"

Front Cover Caption: One of the several ham radio stations set up at the Red Cross Portland headquarters during the disaster. A WRL Globe Trotter transmitter is paired with a Hammarlund HQ-129-X receiver. The exhausted expressions tell the story of the long hours served by volunteers during the emergency.

(Photo courtesy of Portland Red Cross Archives).

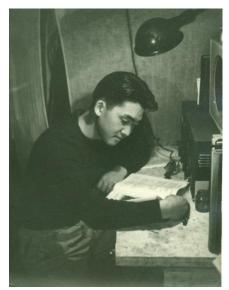
The Voices of Vanport is an official publication of The Northwest Vintage Radio Society, organized in 1974 in Portland Oregon.



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Joe Naemura W7GXA 1941

# **Dedication**

The Voices of Vanport is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Joe Naemura, W7CG, W7GXA. The Naemura's were among the many Portlanders who lost their Vanport homes on Memorial Day, 1948.

# Introduction

It's important to acknowledge the toll that the 1948 flood took on property and lives throughout the Columbia River Basin. And it's also important to acknowledge the issues of inequity surrounding the Vanport Community. Now, seventy years later, the thought of the Vanport flood still invokes feelings of sadness, loss, and frustration in many.

The purpose of this project is not to recount every story of loss, nor gloss over the issues. Instead, by focusing in on a few weeks of Portland's 100-year radio history, and giving ear to the Voices of Vanport, we hope to add a small piece to the mosaic.

To the surprise of many today, radio, as a leading news medium of its day, played a seemingly out-sized part in the 1948 flood event. Through these pages we'll share the results of our research into two important questions:

- ➤ How did the 1948 flood impact commercial and amateur radio stations?
- What roles did commercial and amateur radio stations play in providing warning, informing the community, and coordinating aid during the emergency?

Many people freely helped make this project possible. Please refer to the list of acknowledgements at the end of the story.

Dan Howard 2020

# THE VOICES of VANPORT



Part 1 – Flooding before The Flood

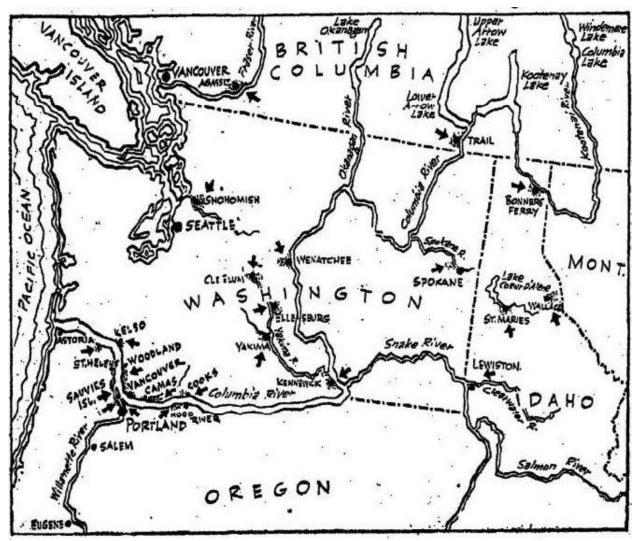


Figure 1 — "Where Northwest's Floods are Wreaking Havoc". Arrows indicate where damage has been caused by flooding and where future damage is feared as the Columbia continues to rise. (Oregonian 5/29/48 pg. 3)

# **Flooding Before the Flood**

The most memorable day in Vanport history was, without a doubt, Memorial Day 1948 when, in the matter of an hour the second largest community in Oregon simply vanished. However, the story begins much earlier and much farther away.

In Part 1 of the Voices of Vanport we'll look at the origins of the flood, the origins of the Vanport community, and we'll look at the role of radio in the flooding before the Flood.

# The 1948 Flood

The Columbia River drainage basin accepts water from British Columbia and most of the northwestern United States (Figure 1).

In May-June 1948, the perfect storm of precipitation and snowmelt drove many of the Columbia's tributaries into flood stage and, in turn, the Columbia itself was outside of its banks for weeks on end. Communities from British Columbia to Astoria, Oregon, were under flood watch and many suffered significant losses.

At the start of this section, Bonneville Dam is shown in early June with a log jam of flood debris.

For many Portlanders, the most familiar part of the 1948 Flood occurred on Sunday May 30, 1948, when the Vanport community in North Portland was suddenly flooded.

In a matter of hours, a city with schools, grocery stores, a post office, and homes for thousands of people was rendered uninhabitable by flood waters that reached 15' deep.

So, what were the origins and Vanport and why was it poised for destruction?



Figure 2 - This 1936 gas station map of North Portland shows the network of lakes, streams, and sloughs that covered the future site of Vanport, Delta Park, and the Portland airport.

# "8400 Acres of Overflow Land Reclaimed" 1

The Columbia River emerges from its narrow gorge just east of Portland. Between Troutdale and Kelly Point, the Columbia broadens and is bordered to the south by a verdant flood plain. A complex of creeks and sloughs drains the Southshore area from east to west.

The Columbia Slough borders the flood plain to the south. The Oregon Slough separates the flood plain from Hayden Island to the north.

article proclaiming the progress of drainage districts in achieving their goals.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The headline "8400 Acres of Overflow Reclaimed" topped a 1922 *Engineering World* 

Until the early 1900's the flood plain functioned naturally as it always had; absorbing frequent spring and winter overflows. Between 1907 and 1909 railroad lines were laid across the flood plain to link Portland with Vancouver, Washington.

The Spokane, Portland, and Seattle (SP&S) line ran straight across on a raised sandy "fill" <sup>2</sup> about a mile west of the current location of Interstate 5. The Union Pacific line<sup>3</sup> curved in from the east and a switchman's shelter was erected where the lines joined midway across.

Although not designed as a flood control structure, the SP&S railroad fill comprised the first artificial barrier to floodwaters in the Southshore drainage.<sup>4</sup>

In the following years, publicly owned drainage districts were formed to control flooding and to dewater portions of the Southshore flood plain so that the land could be converted from grazing and farm uses to industrial and commercial purposes.

The area from railroad fill west to the confluence with the Willamette River

(the Smith and Bybee Lakes area) was not diked.<sup>5</sup>

When US 99 was built, additional fills were constructed on the flood plain. From the railroad fill east to the Denver Avenue fill<sup>6</sup>, Peninsula Drainage District No. 1 "Pen 1" built additional levies and other infrastructure to control flooding in the area where Vanport would be built. The northerly 1000' of Pen 1<sup>7</sup> was a little higher than the rest. The stockyards and the livestock exchange were located here along today's Marine Dr. Most of the rest of the 951-acres in Pen 1 was used for agriculture.

From Denver Avenue east to Fairview, Peninsula Drainage District No. 2 "Pen 2" and Multnomah County Drainage District "MCDD" created infrastructure to control flooding in the areas that would become Delta Park (Pen 2), the Portland Airport and Airbase, farms and industrial areas (MCDD).

Vanport Pg. 9

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> A temporary work trestle was built first. Then, sandy material removed from the St. Johns cut was dumped over the tracks to create a earthen berm to carry the tracks. Clark pg. 352.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Union Pacific's trestle was covered over with sandy material from the Peninsula tunnel project. Clark pg. 352.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> In 1933, Multnomah County built the Portland Road fill immediately west, and parallel to the railroad fill. In essence, the two fills form one

structure. Clark pg. 354. For this story, they will be jointly referred to as the railroad fill.

<sup>5</sup> Large portions would eventually be filled, however. A portion south of Smith and Bybee Lakes became the St. John's landfill. And, to the north and west, fill materials were deposited to create high ground for the Rivergate Industrial Area and the marine terminals.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The fill under Denver Avenue was built by Multnomah County in 1915-1916. Clark pg. 350.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Along Portland Road (now Marine Drive).

# **Building the Community of Vanport**

Most of the land in Pen 1 continued to be farmed through the 1920's and 1930's. One of the first non-agricultural uses was when KGW created a transmitter site in the northeast corner of the lowlands in the early 1930's. They were joined on their 90-acre site by sister-station KEX in 1935.

A 1930's survey of the Pen 1 drainage area noted deficiencies in the levies.<sup>8</sup> Private contractors worked to improve the levies from plans prepared by the The Corps of Engineers. Following completion in September, 1941, control of the district was turned back over to Pen 1.<sup>9</sup>

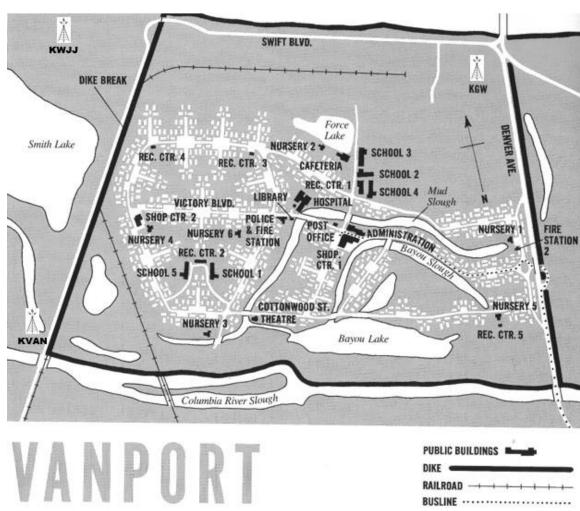


Figure 3 - Vanport community map from Manly Maben's book Vanport

<sup>9</sup> Clark pg. 350

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The survey did not address the privatelyowned railroad fills that formed the de facto westerly dike.

By the summer of 1942, Henry Kaiser's Portland-area shipyards were employing about 46,000 people building ships for the war effort. As contracts for more ships were let, Kaiser expected to expand its yards and double its employment with most of the new workers coming to Portland from other parts of the country. However, the Portland housing stock was already overtaxed. In July, Kaiser proposed construction of 10,000 additional dwelling units (4,000 in Vancouver, and 6,000 in Portland) to accommodate the influx of workers.

Within Pen 1, 647 acres of lowlands were available for potential development, and the land was ideally located between Kaiser's three Vancouver and Portland shipyards. Though the land was low and had a long history of flooding, the recently-improved levies provided some assurance safety.

The Federal Government acquired the land through condemnation and construction began on Vanport, a Federal housing project. Site

preparation began at Vanport in 1942. The first dwelling units became available in mid-December and the project was substantially completed in August, 1943.

The task of creating a city, complete with utilities, in just a few months, during wartime was a staggering undertaking requiring the efforts of 7,000 men and women over the course of the project. Prefabrication and production line techniques were used to expedite the project.

The finished city consisted of 703 apartment buildings and 17 multiple dwelling units comprising 9,942 dwellings.

Services included 181 service annexes, 45 special public and service buildings, an administrative center, a US Post Office, five grade schools, six nursery schools, a police station, three fire stations, five social buildings, a library, a movie theatre, a 130-bed hospital, ten ice houses, service stations, and grocery stores.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Celebration pg. 9



Figure 4 - Advertisement for the August 12th Vanport grand opening celebration (Oregonian 8/12/43)

From the perspective of some who lived there, "[t]he buildings were quickly and cheaply built. With the exception of a few single-story buildings at the east end of the city, all of the apartment buildings were constructed using an identical design. On the first floor, there were six two-bedroom apartments with single-bedroom apartments located on each end of the ground floor.

Access to the apartments was via a stairwell situated between every two apartments. Four of these apartment buildings were connected to a central plant that provided heat, hot water, and electricity. Storage space for each apartment building was also located in that building, as well as a laundry facility with four wringer washing machines."11

Only people employed in defense industries were allowed to apply for housing in Vanport.<sup>12</sup>

Upon arrival in Vanport, most families were assigned to a cramped two-bedroom apartment. "Large families were assigned adjoining two-bedroom apartments on the second floor in the same stairwell with a passage through the wall so the two apartments could function as one."<sup>13</sup>

"There was no insulation in the outer walls of the building and no sound-proofing material between the inner walls, only plasterboard nailed to the studding separated the rooms. Thus, we could hear loud conversations or radios in other apartments quite easily."<sup>14</sup>



Figure 5 - Children relax in a Vanport apartment. (The Bo's'n's Whistle 11/26/1942)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Skovgaard

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Clark pg. 365

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Skovgaard

<sup>14</sup> Skovgaard

# **Vanport After the War**

As the end of World War II neared, fewer new ships were needed. Demand for Vanport housing fell off as defense jobs went away and workers left. As more workers left, remaining residents "in the western part of Vanport were relocated to apartments in the center or eastern end of the project, or they were encouraged to find housing outside of Vanport."<sup>15</sup>

Housing at Vanport had always been intended to be temporary. From timeto-time, particularly after the surrender of Japan, some of the housing was declared surplus. "October [1945] saw the destruction of 1,204 dwelling units west of Lake Street. Twenty-four 14unit buildings went to Los Angeles for veteran's housing. Others went to Bremerton, to Corvallis, to Eugene."16 By May, 1948, 240 buildings, containing approximately 4,000 dwelling units had been removed."17 "All of the housing at Vanport west of Meadows Avenue and most of the housing between Meadows Avenue and Lake Street had been removed."18

Veterans returning to Portland with families absorbed much of the remaining housing at Vanport. Policies were changed to permit veterans to rent the apartments formerly reserved for defense workers. "Early 1946 was the transition of Vanport from the nation's largest community of war workers to a city of veterans. Establishment of Vanport Center College by the state

board of higher education completed the metamorphosis."<sup>19</sup>

# **A Quick Time Out**

We'll pause the Vanport story here.

Before flood waters entered Vanport at the end of May, floods had already hit several communities in Washington and the Willamette River was backing up into Portland's downtown and beyond.

We'll take a quick time out to look at the stories of a few radio stations that were impacted by the "Flooding before the Flood" and then return to the story of Vanport.

<sup>15</sup> Skovgaard

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Old Man River

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Clark pg. 359

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Clark pg. 359

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Old Man River



Figure 6- KPQ's transmitter building goes "rafting." (Wenatchee World photo)

# **KPQ Wenatchee – Maritime Mobile**

The KPQ transmitter site, once known as the "KPQ Ranch," is a flat grassy patch on the westerly shore of the Columbia just downstream from the confluence with the Wenatchee River. What could go wrong?

As the flood surge moved down the Columbia, and water rose inch-by-inch, station engineers, aided by a team of house movers, jacked the transmitter building several feet off its foundation. Then, six huge war-surplus rubber assault pontoons were inserted under the building. Amazingly, when water overtopped the building's foundation, the 30-ton building simply floated.

KPQ was "on the air!" And Maritime Mobile! (or as close to it as they would ever want to be). The building was off its foundation for six weeks, at times floating in as much as 13 feet of water.

Though the building floated, the coaxial cable feedlines to the transmitting towers were lost early. "To keep the station in operation, Chief Engineer George Frese climbed up one of the towers in the middle of the night, in a howling gale, to hang a shunt feed wire. He literally swam around the transmitter building with a pair of pliers in his teeth."<sup>20</sup> Throughout the emergency, power and phone lines to the building were maintained, keeping KPQ on the air.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> The Oscillator pg. 20

Operators commuted to and from the transmitter building in rowboats and worked wearing rubber life jackets.

As you might expect, the radio raft with the transmitter building did not prove to be especially seaworthy. A wing of the L-shaped building was used to store some heavy equipment and thousands of 78 rpm records. Lacking the support of rigid foundation, the old building timbers soon began to sag and the raft developed a significant list.

Announcer Bob Richardson was on duty when a crack began to open between the storage wing and the main building. While he was reading an ad live on the air, a key beam broke and the building tipped, spilling records into the flood water. Rather than the planned announcement, listeners heard Bob scream "...the beam broke – we're sinking!" This, of course, brought folks from all over the area to watch the building founder.

Additional KPQ staff quickly arrived and began using rafts and boats to ferry what they could to dry land and restore trim to the structure. Though they removed most of the equipment from the storage wing, the building continued to list badly. In a last-ditch effort to save the transmitter and keep the station on the air, the engineers used saws and axes to cut the storage wing free from the main building. Once freed, the storage wing quickly sank, carrying thousands of records to the bottom with it. To everyone's relief the remaining structure righted itself and the transmitter remained afloat until the water eventually receded.

Compare the two photos of KPQ's radio raft. Figure 7 shows the building intact. Figure 6 was taken after the storage wing sank. Note the empty rafts to the right of the building and the hole in the siding.



Figure 7 - KPQ's transmitter building before the storage wing went "overboard." (The Oscillator)

# **KPQ's Contributions**

KPQ's broadcasts are credited with saving at least one Wenatchee Valley town during the flood.

Late one night a frantic telephone call came into the station from Cashmere, 12 miles northwest. The Wenatchee River was washing away a dike and more workers were needed. KPQ broadcasted the plea and soon 400 volunteers were on site.

Cashmere's stock of sandbags was quickly exhausted. 8,000 bags were available in Wenatchee, but there were no trucks to haul them. Another radio plea brought trucks of all sizes to the Centennial flour mill to load and haul the sand to Cashmere. The dike held and the town was saved.

# **KPQ History**

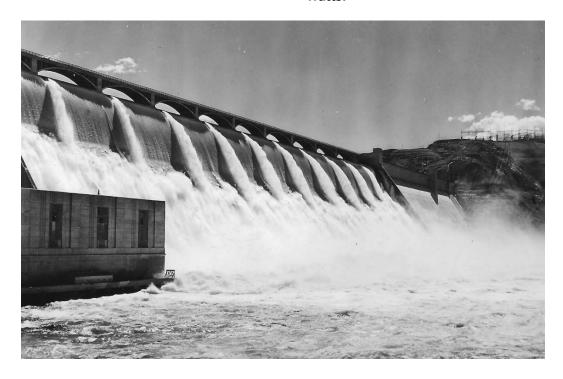
KPQ was first licensed in Seattle with the call letters KGCL on September 3, 1926. In

1928, the station's call sign was changed to KPQ.

After a series of ownership and frequency changes, the station was moved from Seattle to Wenatchee in Central Washington. KPQ began broadcasting on 1210 AM from the Cascadian Hotel in Wenatchee on December 28, 1929. The first transmitting antenna was a wire run out of an eighth-floor window to the roof of an adjacent garage.

In 1937, KPQ leased their current transmitting site along the Columbia River and built a 180-foot tower. An old, small grocery store building was moved in to house the transmitter. The inaugural broadcast from the new site took place on June 27, 1937.

On April 1, 1942, KPQ moved to its present frequency of 560 AM. The old 180-foot tower was replaced with two 300-foot towers and power was increased to 1,000 watts.



# Three Cities & Three Rivers – Tri-Cities

Washington's "Tri-Cities" (Richland, Kennewick, and Pasco) cluster on either side of the Columbia River about where it turns west and heads for the Pacific. The Yakima River flows into the Columbia from the northwest between Richland and Kennewick. Just south of Pasco, the Snake River flows in from the east.

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1948, the Columbia, which had been threatening to flood for two weeks, rose a foot. About the same time the Yakima River, swollen by a cloud burst, became a raging torrent. Overnight, authorities ordered people living along the rivers to leave their homes and by the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup> most had.

"Authorities reported their work seriously hampered by a large amount of telephoning, much believed to be unnecessary, going on between the three towns."<sup>21</sup>

### **KPKW Pasco**

KPKW Pasco (1340 AM), a 250-watt station, was the only commercial broadcaster in the Tri-Cities at the time. The station broadcasted flood warnings and also provided an announcer who toured the area in KPKW's sound truck broadcasting the warning through powerful speakers.

### Richland

In Richland, workers worked around the clock to build a dike around the downtown area. The 12 foot tall dike, dubbed "The Miracle Mile," protected the hospital district and residential areas and saved the sewer plant from contamination.



Figure 8- Richland ARC QSL card 1951

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Tri-Cities Herald 5/27/48

Throughout the flood emergency, area hams volunteered time and talents to serve the community. The following series of vignettes is from the historical pages of the WARTS (Washington Amateur Radio Traffic System) website. Most are based upon the recollections of Harry Lewis, W7JWJ (SK) and his wife Mary, W7QGP (SK).

# **Becoming WARTS**

After World War II, hams began to regain permissions to get on the air. After serving as a flying radio operator during the war, Harry Lewis settled in Richland and began getting on the air.

Harry Lewis served as Chief of Communications for the Security Department of the Atomic Energy Commission, operators of the nearby Hanford facility. While in Richland, he met and married Mary Smith, a native of Kennewick. Harry, and other local hams were members of the newly formed Richland Amateur Radio Club.

In December, 1947, members of the Richland Amateur Radio Club and other northwest hams formed "WARTS." The group maintained a daily schedule on 80 meters (phone) for the purpose promoting fraternity, conveying radio messages ("traffic") and responding to emergency situations.

The club first aspired to sign up 25 members; but the group grew to over 50 in just a few months.

# **Radio River Watch**

Engineer A. Harry Kramer, had a longstanding hobby of carefully studying the behavior of local rivers and had previously worked in flood control in Indiana.

In 1948, while working at Hanford Works power division, he was assigned to plot the water levels in the Columbia and Yakima Rivers and forecast possible flooding.

As waters began rising that spring, he was especially alarmed about the potential for flooding. He reasoned that getting data on water levels at various upstream stations would be key to accurately forecasting the potential risk to the Tri-Cities and Hanford.<sup>22</sup>

Mr. Kramer contacted Tom Nelson, W7QGN, and Harry Lewis, W7JWJ, with a request to obtain river level information from hams living along the Columbia. Each evening the emergency "Columbia Basin Net" convened to exchange information by radio.

In April,1948, Kramer gave the Atomic Energy Commission and General Electric his prediction of a 1948 crest at 352 feet (24 feet above normal). As the spring

of predicting the flood height for that year. Many wagers were made on it. They would keep track of snow depths, weather forecasts and the flood water levels in such rivers as the Fraser in Canada, the Snake, and others that feed into the Columbia..."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Although the idea of an amateur accurately forecasting flood levels on the Columbia seemed far-fetched to me, amateur river-level forecasting was apparently a common hobby. According to Mable Howell Dudley "Before the dams, the old timers could come within inches

wore on Kramer continued honing his forecasts, sometimes hourly. Meanwhile Richland's flood committee acted upon Kramer's predictions and built new dikes and broadened and raised others.

In June, the river rose to 351.7 feet as Kramer had predicted. Because of the accuracy of his work an estimated 3,500 homes were saved, the sanitary and water systems were spared, and

production at Hanford was not impacted. For his forecasting, General Electric recognized Harry Kramer with the Charles A Coffin award.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, he was named "Tri-Citian" of the year and the Harry Kramer Center in Richland was named for him. The "Hero of the 1948 Flood" died in Richland in 1974.

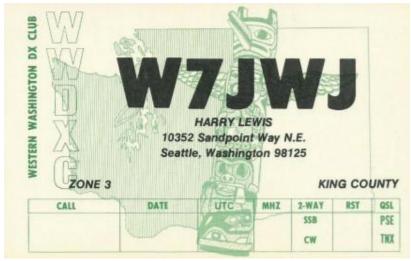


Figure 9 - Harry Lewis QSL card (courtesy of W8JYZ)

# Handling Traffic – Harry Lewis's Story<sup>24</sup>

"The series of floods began at the junction of the Yakima and Columbia Rivers...." "At the time I was employed by the Atomic Energy Commission and stationed at the Richland Airport...."

As the crest reached Richland, Harry had the opportunity to fly a small plane out of the airport on an inspection tour. "Between Richland and the mighty Columbia stood a million-dollar dike built in just three days by the Army Corps of

Engineers. Standing every few hundred feet along the dike was an amateur radio volunteer, most from the Richland radio club and most members of WARTS." At the Richland "Y" where the Yakima enters the Columbia stood a little red barn with only the weathervane on the roof protruding from the surface.

"For the next three days following the peak flooding, I operated Ham Radio from a military tent stationed on a high bank of the Columbia. 1,500 messages were originated, and all signed by military or civilian officials."

<sup>23 &</sup>quot;A Baptism by Water"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> All quotes from Harry Lewis's account of the Columbia River Flood.



Figure 10 - Mary Lewis QSL card (courtesy of W8JYZ)

# Special Delivery – Mary & Diana Lewis<sup>25</sup>

In June, 1948, Mary Lewis (future W7QGP) was expecting the couple's first child.

Although she had plans to deliver at Kadlec Hospital in Richland, the roads were impassable because of the flooding; the main street of Kennewick was under three feet of water.

"Sirens screamed as a National Guard truck with police escort pulled up to the loading bay of Our Lady of Lourdes hospital." "Attendants believing the sirens heralded arrival of an emergency case, rushed out. They looked in the back of the truck and searched high and low for the patient. Confusion reigned."

Mary, who had already walked into the hospital under her own power, was surprised to learn later, that she was the

cause of the kerfuffle. "She had merely obtained a ride in the truck in order to get to Pasco to have a baby." On the morning of June 11<sup>th</sup>, Diana Lewis (future K7ETY) was born.

### **WARTS** volunteers

WARTS founder Rylie (Lewis F Rylie), W7CKT, said that the club was on the air for five days, day and night, during the 1948 Columbia flood.<sup>26</sup>

WARTS set up an emergency station at the National Guard headquarters in Kennewick. Harry Lewis recalled visiting the station and meeting Sam Davenport, W7BIW, of Pasco, for the first time. "Sam was fast asleep on an army cot in front of an improvised station, earphones on his head, cord wrapped around his neck, and a beard that had been growing for a week."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> All quotes from "Warts is Recognized."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> W7CKT letter 2/10/1949

"We handled traffic for the US Dept of Engineers, in Washington and Oregon State. Our organized participation in the Vanport Disaster undoubtedly improved the 'ham' image in the eyes of the citizens and at the same time baptized our new net in the sea of Emergency Communications."<sup>27</sup>

# **The Washington Stations**

In addition to other volunteers, Sam Davenport specifically recalled the following Washington amateurs participating in emergency communications during the 1948 flood:

| W7AAH<br>W7AQJ | Eddie B Pacot<br>Eldred W "Ed" Start | Kennewick<br>Vancouver |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| W7AQ3<br>W7BIW | Sam A Davenport                      | Pasco                  |
| W7BUW          | John Richard "Dick" Borton           | Yakima                 |
| W7BWC          | William L "Bill" Burris              | Pinehurst              |
| W7BX           | Floyd Taylor                         | Richland               |
| W7CKT          | Lewis F "Rylie" Rylie                | Bainbridge Island      |
| W7CUD          | Bryant "Skip" Page                   | Richland               |
| W7EDU          | Kenneth A House                      | Dayton                 |
| W7EGR          | Stanley L "Stan" Archer              | Coulee Dam             |
| W7ENR          | Bryon Ashenbrenner                   | Hoquiam                |
| W7EPS          | Virgil W "Virg" Treadwell            | Yakima                 |
| W7FLE          | Clarence V Hall                      | North Bend             |
| W7GNR          | Maurice L "Morrie" Monson            | Bellingham             |
| W7IQO          | Patrick A Price                      | Burton                 |
| W7IYK          | Walter P Greenwood                   | Coulee Dam             |
| W7JWJ          | Harry W Lewis                        | Richland               |
| W7KIX          | Marvin M McCartney                   | Richland               |

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Rylie W7CKT



Figure 11 – KVAN's brand new Raytheon RA-1000 1KW AM transmitter resting on scaffolding. The photo only shows the <u>very top</u> of the transmitter. It is 84" tall, 48" wide, 34" deep and weighs 2,450 pounds. (Image courtesy of Clark County Historical Museum)

# **KVAN** – Providing Outstanding Service While Out Standing on the Roof

# **KVAN Background**

KVAN's transmitter site, just west of N Portland Road, placed it *outside* the protection of the dikes surrounding Vanport.

As the Columbia's water level increased in mid-May 1948, the water level in the Smith and Bybee Lake wetlands matched pace. Even before water banked up against the low Portland Road dike, the KVAN site was overflowing with flood water.

Just eight months before the flood, KVAN (910 am) relocated its transmitter to Smith Lake from Fruit Valley Road in Vancouver, Washington.<sup>28</sup> The Smith Lake installation featured a new Raytheon RA-1000 transmitter putting out 1,000 watts through two steel lattice towers.

# Rising to the Occasion

As water rose in Smith Lake, KVAN engineers determined that the best way to protect their brand-new \$50,000 investment (and stay on the air) was to "raise the roof!"

After a hole was cut in the transmitter building roof, chain hoists were used to lift the broadcast equipment onto scaffolding - right through the roof. Then, thousands of pounds of sand were poured into the transmitter building to keep it upright and on its footings.

West Vancouver Fruit Valley neighborhood were also submerged by the 1948 flood.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Would staying in Vancouver have spared KVAN from the flooding? Maybe not! As shown in the section on Vancouver, portions of the



Figure 12 – Station Manager Fred Chitty, Assistant Engineer Lee Cabe and Announcer F.C. Hosking broadcasting from the roof of the KVAN transmitter building.

(From The Oregonian 6/5/1948, Image Courtesy of the Clark County Historical Museum))

A temporary shelter for the transmitter engineers was created on the building roof from wood, tarps, and corrugated metal. Broadcasting resumed just as soon as equipment was moved and reconnected.

Lines from the studios in Vancouver were severed during the flood. So, a seaplane was used to bring records, bulletins and news to the transmitter site and broadcasts originated from there. Water eventually rose to eight feet deep in the transmitter building necessitating brief outages while power was shut off to move equipment. And one of the two towers became inoperative during the flood.

To the disappointment of Portland baseball fans, KVAN's premier of "Lucky Beavers" baseball, scheduled for Saturday night, May 29th, was spoiled. However, KVAN remained on the air throughout the emergency – the only Vanport-area station that managed to do so from their original site.



Figure 13 – KVAN Assistant Engineer Lee Cabe (with transcription disc), Announcer F.C. Hosking (seated), and Station Manager Fred Chitty (Image courtesy of Clark County Historical Museum)



Figure 14 - Water has risen to within inches of a war surplus EH Scott SLR-12 receiver, probably the station monitor. (Image courtesy of Clark County Historical Museum)



Figure 15 - The KVAN transmitter building with water up to the eaves. The transmitter protrudes through a hole on the far side of the building, and the makeshift "studio" is perched on the close side. Note the raft in the foreground.

(Image courtesy of Clark County Historical Museum)

# **KVAN Honored**

KVAN was lauded in local and national press for doing an outstanding job of assisting in flood rescue work by transmitting calls for help and supplies.

For days following the dike break, the station broadcasted the names and temporary addresses of survivors who were trying to locate members of their families.

In June 1948, Washington Governor Wallgren wrote:

"If anything further is needed to prove the value of radio, I believe the disastrous flood in central and southern Washington and the need it brought for instantaneous communications and directions to the affected civilian populace further emphasizes the tremendous value of radio in our modern day. Your state government and myself as governor, deeply appreciate the extra effort you, as a station owner and manager, made to keep the affected citizenry informed..."<sup>29</sup>

Even after the water went back down, recovery and restoration of the KVAN transmitter site took well-over a month.

In 1959, KVAN was sold and became KISN. The Smith Lake site continued to have water problems as documented by DJ Pat Pattee's photos from the Christmas 1964 flood.<sup>30</sup> Finally, in 1966, the transmitter was moved to NE 158<sup>th</sup> Avenue in east Portland.<sup>31</sup>

Today, KVAN's former Smith Lake site is home to the KBMS transmitter. Although the KBMS building is hidden down a gated and winding gravel driveway, its trio of towers is very visible from Portland Road just before you cross the Columbia Slough.

https://www.positivespin.us/Pat%20Pattee.htm
<sup>31</sup> KISN's new site was also in the Columbia
Southshore flood plain and was likely swamped
during the Vanport emergency. However, it has

a better recent track record. As part of Portland's emergency well field, the 158<sup>th</sup> Avenue site is still being protected by dikes. Efforts are being made to restore lands around Smith and Bybee Lakes to natural flood plains.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Broadcasting 6/4/48 pg. 25



Figure 16 - NW 10th and Hoyt during the Portland flooding. (Picture Story of the Northwest Flood)

# **KPDQ – Flooding at The Oaks**

Just north of Portland, the Willamette River converges with the Columbia and together they flow the last 100 miles to the Pacific Ocean at Astoria. In bad times, as many of us have witnessed, when the Columbia reaches flood stage, there is no place for the Willamette's water to go, so it floods too.

# **Flooding Along the Willamette**

In 1948, the factors that caused the Columbia River to flood did not impact the Willamette directly. However, as the Columbia reached flood stage in May, water backed up in the lower Willamette causing flooding in downtown Portland and deep into the east side industrial area. Further upstream The Oaks Park in Sellwood was flooded as was part of Milwaukie.<sup>32</sup>

# **KPDQ**

In 1948, two radios stations, KWJJ and KPDQ, had transmitter sites at the Oaks Amusement Park.

John W Davis founded KJXD in 1946. On July 18, the FCC issued a construction permit for a 250-watt station on 800 kc on July 18, 1946. On December 18, 1946, their callsign was changed from KJXD to KPDQ and their permitted power was increased to 1 KW.

KPDQ began broadcasting from Oaks Park on June 30, 1947. Their studio, transmitter, and 260-foot tower were located at the southerly end of the park (KWJJ's towers were at the north end).

<sup>32</sup> Columbia Crews pg. 1

By the last week of May 1948, flood waters had reached Oaks Park. The park was closed to visitors and employees were desperately sandbagging the park's large wooden skating rink floor in a failed effort to preserve it. The Saturday May 29<sup>th</sup> Oregonian carried a photo of the park already under several feet of water.



Figure 17 - KPDQ station at the south end of Oaks Park June 1948. Oaks Park Way is submerged. The Portland Traction Company's Oregon City line runs along the right side of the photo.

(City of Portland image a1999-004-1121)

# **Getting Back on the Air**

"Before water got to it, the KPDQ transmitter was dismantled and hauled out even as water mired the wheels of the truck."33

Because of the flooding at The Oaks, the station applied to the FCC for temporary authority to broadcast from a backup location. FCC granted the station permission to broadcast with 250-watts of power from the home of the station's chief engineer Rod Johnson.<sup>34</sup> Mr. Johnson lived at 3115 NE 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the Alameda Ridge in northeast Portland.

"Within 48 hours KPDQ was back on the air. With the transmitter in the garage,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Broadcasting 6/7/48

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Later, Rod and Betty Johnson owned KWJJ.

antenna across the street, control room in a bedroom and studio in the living room, service was again resumed."35

KPDQ's site at Oaks Park remained submerged for 30 days. Despite operating at reduced power, from temporary facilities, with an improvised antenna, KPDQ was cited, along with other Portland broadcasters for rendering stellar services during the emergency.

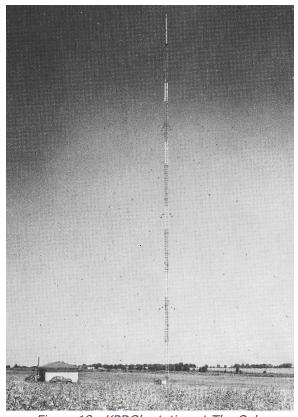


Figure 18 - KPDQ's station at The Oaks

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Broadcasting 6/7/48



Figure 19 - Wilbur Jerman using a raft to survey the damage to the KWJJ transmitter at Smith Lake. (Courtesy of Ron Kramer)

# **KWJJ**

# **KFWV**

The origins of KWJJ date back to 1925 when Wilbur Jerman went on the air from his Mt Tabor home with five-watt KFWV. Soon, he'd built a new 50-watt transmitter. The station's studio was set up in his living room and the transmitter was located in a second floor bedroom.

When money got tight, and Mr. Jerman was concerned that debt-collectors might seize the station, he quietly moved it to his father-in-law's farm on

Portland's outskirts. At the time it was feasible to move a station (and move it back) with little expectation of consequences from regulators.

# **KWJJ**

KFWV officially became KWJJ on June 24, 1927.<sup>36</sup> The new callsign honored owner Wilbur J Jerman's initials. The stations studios were located in downtown Portland, but the transmitter remained Jerman's home on Mount Tabor until the mid-1930's.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> US Radio Stations as of June 30, 1927

On October 25, 1935, KWJJ applied to build a new station at Oaks Park.<sup>37</sup> As shown below, the transmitter building at the Oaks was built on pilings several

feet tall. Likewise, the transmission lines to the two towers were carried on wooden trestles.



Figure 20 - KWJJ transmitter building and towers at Oaks Park ca. 1940. Note the trestles carrying the transmission lines out to the towers.

(Photo from the Wilbur Jerman Estate, Courtesy of Ron Kramer)

# **Smith Lake**

On February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1947, KWJJ applied to move its transmitter and increase power from 1 kw to 10 kw<sup>38</sup> and their application was approved May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Between April 5<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>, 1948, KWJJ moved into its new 24-acre transmitter

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Broadcasting 11/01/35

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Broadcasting 2/10/47

site at 4350 N Suttle Rd.<sup>39</sup> The new site was on the north shore of Smith Lake, less than a mile west of Vanport.

At Smith Lake, KWJJ used a new Westinghouse 10-HV-1 transmitter and two towers to broadcast 10 kw (directional) during the daytime hours. 40 However, they continued to use the Oaks Park site for nighttime broadcasting (1 kw non-directional) pending approval to increase nighttime power to 10 kw.

Like the KVAN site, KWJJ's Smith Lake site was outside the protection of the Pen 1 Drainage District dikes. So, as the Columbia River rose in May 1948, their new transmitter was soon threatened.

Meanwhile, the rising Columbia was also causing the Willamette River to rise, inundating KWJJ's old site at Oaks Park. By the end of the month, the Smith Lake site was off the air. The transmitter building at Smith Lake was half-full of water, and Wilbur Jerman had to resort to visiting by raft.



Figure 21 - Oaks Park June 1948. Water surrounds the KWJJ building (center). (Courtesy Oregonlive.Com).

<sup>40</sup> Craig Addams email

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Craig Addams email

### **Back to The Oaks**

Fortunately, when the KWJJ decided to locate at Oaks Park, Mr. Jerman's team had the foresight to erect the transmitter building, tuning shacks, and towers on tall pilings. As shown in the photos, transmission lines to the towers were held high on wooden trestles. So, when the plant at Smith Lake went off the air, KWJJ was able to move back to Oaks Park and resume day and night operations despite the flooding. Though engineers had to come and go to the station by boat, KWJJ stayed on the air.

# **Emergency Broadcasts**

During the Vanport emergency, "KWJJ turned its broadcast services over to the use of relief agencies...All commercial broadcasts were dropped."<sup>41</sup>

"Of the non-network stations, KWJJ and KVAN did the best job of assisting in rescue work by transmitting calls for help and supplies.

Manager Bill Richardson, of KWJJ, and his staff worked night and day for three days broadcasting names and temporary addresses of survivors who were trying to locate their children or other members of their families."<sup>42</sup>

# **After the Emergency**

KWJJ was able to make repairs at Smith Lake and resume operating 10kw full time at the end of July. 43

Once the station was again operational, plans were made for a longer-term solution to the flood threat. During December, 1948, the station began doing early signoffs at 11:00 pm which afforded construction crews a few hours each night to work on raising the plant higher above the flood plain.

Despite KWJJ's hasty retreat to the Oaks Park site, the plant there had actually been on the market since the move to Smith Lake. On June 10, 1948, the FCC granted an application for KBKO (1290 kc) to use KWJJ's old plant.

Flood waters at Oaks Park weren't gone for about a month. Remodeling began following KWJJ's return to Smith Lake in July and the KBKO began commercial operation on January 10, 1949. In November 1952, the station became KLIQ.

KWJJ's problems at Smith Lake did not end in 1948. In the Columbus Day Storm (October 1962), KWJJ lost one of its towers and part of its transmitter building due to wind and rain. They were able to continue broadcasting with one tower until repairs were made.

KWJJ finally abandoned Smith Lake in 1966 and began broadcasting from a site in East Portland.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Broadcasting June 7, 1948

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Billboard June 12, 1948

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Pioneer Mikes pg. 398

# THE VOICES of VANPORT



Part 2 – Memorial Day 1948

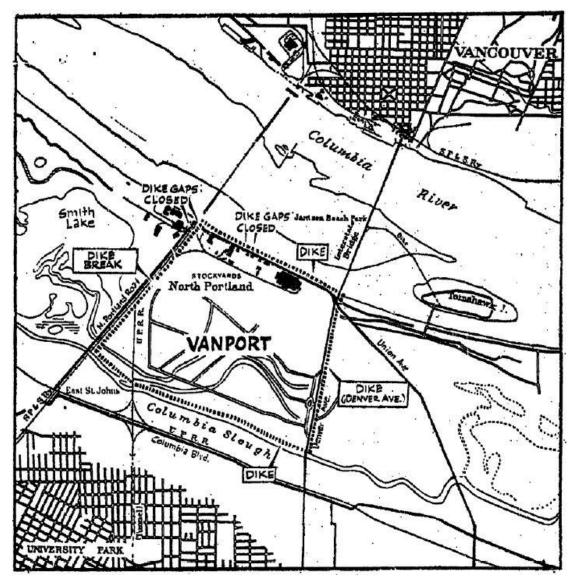


Figure 22 - Map of Vanport showing the dikes and breach point (Oregonian 5/31/48 pg. 4)

# "The River has Taken More Than the Lowlands"

"I suppose that everyone in the Northwest finds himself unable to keep his mind on his work. The flood keeps slipping silently into one's thinking. I have seen people stop what they were doing, without being aware of stopping, and look straight ahead without seeing.

The river has taken more than the lowlands.

Monday afternoon, the day after the river broke, my wife and I had planned to play golf, but it was a no go. Instead, we decided to gather some extra clothes, and we took them down to the church. Then we came home and listened to the radio until the middle of the night.

What can be said at a time like this?" Del Milne44

<sup>44</sup> Looking in the Rose Bowl

As we pick up the Vanport story here:

- We'll take a look at the roles of hams in preparing for the flood and in sounding the alarm
- We'll share some stories from folks that lost homes in the flood.
- And we'll look at the stories of the two "Vanport" radio stations, KGW and KEX.

## **Emergency Planning**

Though officials expressed confidence in the dikes right up to the time of the breach, flood-watching and contingency planning had been going on for weeks.

On May 20<sup>th</sup>, Emergency Coordinator Al Davis, W7DIS, acting on information received from Portland officials, alerted the local ARRL Emergency Corps members and briefed them on what their jobs would be "just in case."

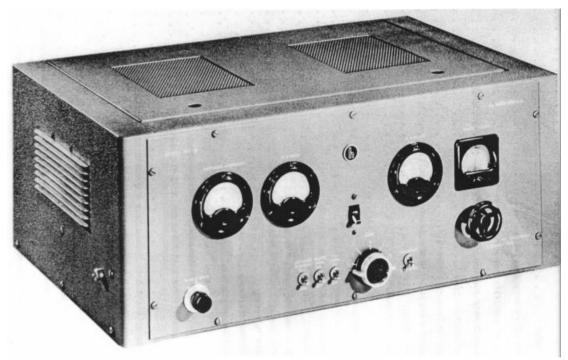


Figure 23 - Hallicrafters HT-9 transmitter, 75 W AM, 100 W CW, 80-40-20-10 Meters

### **W7WJ/7 Red Cross Control**

"Disaster plans were discussed, laid, and action started on relief work in the Portland area, with the ARRL Emergency Corps "AEC" being provided a radio room in the Red Cross disaster headquarters building at SW 15<sup>th</sup> and Alder Street.

An HT-9 transmitter and suitable receivers, antennas, etc. were quickly installed to establish a net control stations for the 28 mc group using the call W7WJ/7<sup>45</sup>."<sup>46</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> The temporary Red Cross station was under the control of W7WJ, Hal McCracken.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Clark pg. 371

On Wednesday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, Red Cross Disaster Committee met to discuss contingency plans. Of special concern was the region's ability to provide emergency housing and services for the 18,500 Vanport residents. Following the meeting, relevant subcommittees including information, communications and radio were alerted and requested to be ready for mobilization. "Wednesday evening, amateur radio operators associated with the Red Cross were alerted and requested to have their mobile units ready for operation."<sup>47</sup>

Modes of communication in the disaster area included: 48

- 2-meter (144 mc) AM (voice) pointto-point
- 10-meter (28 mc) AM mobile and fixed point relay
- 75-meter (3 mc) "phone" (voice) fixed point, portable, and mobile
- 80-meter CW (Morse code)

"Work was chiefly by voice in the Portland area with CW being used for long haul traffic in and from the area."<sup>49</sup>

On May 27<sup>th</sup>, the Portland Red Cross disaster committee met with the AEC planning committee and representatives of the local clubs in order to perfect plans."<sup>50</sup>

"Point-to-point service on 144 mc was established between many strategic points on the premise that telephone facilities would either be jammed or wiped out completely if any areas became inundated."51

The headquarters station included net control for the twenty-five amateur radio operators began using cars equipped with 28 mc mobile radios to assist Red Cross observers, survey parties, and dike watch. Amateurs accompanying staff from the Pen 1 and Pen 2 drainage districts in provided ongoing status reports to Red Cross headquarters.<sup>52</sup>

"Point to point service from disaster headquarters to the County Sheriff's office, Coast Guard, and 75-phone and 80 CW liaison stations were established on 2 meters." 53 At times messages were relayed by a mobile station atop Rocky Butte just south of the Portland airport.

After the breach, the 28 mc net enabled the Red Cross headquarters to contact relief-survey parties at remote points in the flood area. "The mobile units also served the Army Engineers and other relief officials with speedy communications direct to disaster headquarters concerning food, supplies, and personnel."54

"At the same time, the (30-member) gang on 3.941 mc were lined up to serve the Coast Guard, Army Engineers and any other groups which might call for service along the Columbia from

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Clark pg. 371

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Preliminary Disaster Committee Report pg. 35

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Preliminary Disaster Committee Report pg. 35

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> QRR pg. 38

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> ORR pg. 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Clark pg. 372

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Preliminary Disaster Committee Report pg. 35

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> QRR pg. 39.

Pendleton through Astoria and Klipsan Beach, WA."55

"On 3.540 mc, Robert Brown, W7VT, was requested to become master control for the Portland-area CW operations, handling bulletins, traffic, routing, etc."<sup>56</sup>

"In the evening of Friday May 28<sup>th</sup>, all of the Disaster Sub-Committees and all of the Volunteer Services were put on a 24 hour basis, all posts being manned [and] the radio stations were in full operation at Chapter House...."<sup>57</sup>

"A radio station was opened alongside the County Sheriff radio dispatcher which proved to be a most important contact. A request to set up a station along side the City Police Radio was declined."58

#### The Flood Alert

Portland radio stations broadcast a flood alert on Saturday night May 29th. In an abundance of caution, "...some residents moved their belongings into attics and upper floors. Few imagined the possible extent to which water levels would rise." 59

Some might have done more or evacuated completely. However, options were limited for families that relied solely on public transportation. Others were out of town for the holiday weekend. And some simply had no other options available.

Appeals were made by radio and the press for all who had moved to register with the Red Cross.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> ORR pg. 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> QRR pg. 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Preliminary Disaster Committee Report pg. 7

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Preliminary Disaster Committee Report pg. 7

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Wikiwand.com/en/Vanport,\_Oregon



Figure 24 - Breached railroad fill photographed on Monday May 31st, 1948. ACME Telephoto.

## The Breach

"As I walked up to the switching station, I noticed two men standing on the station platform, leaning against the railing and looking out over the flooded scene in front of them. I must admit it was frightening to look out over all that water, which was flooding much of the land and buildings around Smith Lake, especially on the north end where a lumber company, a radio station [KWJJ], and other businesses were located. All of the buildings at the south end of the lake [KVAN] were now underwater.... By now, the lake had risen sharply and had completely covered the road near the Columbia River. The river, the lake, and the Kenton [Columbia] Slough were now one large body of water...." Dale Skovgaard<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Skovgaard

### **Sunday May 30th**

"Sunday morning, May 30<sup>th</sup> dawned – Memorial Day<sup>61</sup>. In Vanport, telephone exchanges were jammed with the calls of anxious residents trying to make arrangements for friends or trucking firms to move their belongings out of the area ... just-in-case." <sup>62</sup>

"In spite of printed reassurances by the governing authorities which had been delivered to every home in Vanport that very morning, many of Vanport's citizens knew that the swollen waters of the Columbia were at that moment fifteen feet above the elevation of the highest point in Vanport." <sup>63</sup>

#### W7DHX - Don Smith

"It was under these conditions that Don Smith, W7DHX, first drove his mobile into the threatened community itself to offer his services to authorities. The 'Red Cross Disaster Car' card, which had been issued to all the mobile amateurs attracted a large number of desperate citizens seeking help. Don found himself in the middle of a pitiful cluster of people pleading, crying, and sobbing for assistance ... a woman with a bedridden 80-year-old mother and without the money to get a taxi ride from the threatened area ...a person with three blind people to care for and

no means of summoning assistance...a man with three children with measles whom no one would carry to safety." <sup>64</sup>

"Don did what he could and then returned to his home. Shortly after his arrival there the sheriff's office sent word requesting his assistance and, after a conference with the captain-incharge<sup>65</sup> and the Vanport Housing Authority, Don went to work. As they were readying a place in the sheriff's office for him to set up his equipment, another of the countless stream of reports that the dike had broken came in to the desk sergeant. For several days the authorities had been faithfully checking each such report only to find it the result of exaggeration and excitement. Because the alreadyoverworked sheriff's cars were at the time out investigating previous reports, the desk sergeant asked Don to jump into his car and check on the latest report...."66

# "QRR...The Dike is Broken"67

As Don Smith, W7DHX, arrived on the scene of the rumored breach, he was just in time to see another portion of the railroad fill wash away.

Don's flash message "QRR, QRR, QRR - W7WJ FROM W7DHX – THE DIKE IS BROKEN AND WATER IS POURING

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Prior to 1971, Memorial (or Remembrance) Day was observed on May 30<sup>th</sup> on whatever day it fell (in this case a Sunday).

<sup>62</sup> QRR pg. 106.

<sup>63</sup> QRR pg. 106.

<sup>64</sup> QRR pg. 106.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> In May, 1948, the Captain Mearl C Tillman was in charge of the Vanport precinct. Twenty-

two deputies were assigned to the precinct and they shared three or four cars with two-way radios and three motorcycles. Clark pg. 370. <sup>66</sup> QRR pg. 106.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> At one time the code "QRR" was the land-based equivalent of SOS.

INTO VANPORT! SEND ALL AVAILABLE HELP. PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE" went out on the AEC 28 mc mobile net.<sup>68</sup>

While awaiting acknowledgement of his report, and before he could swing his car around, the flood had risen to the level of Don's running boards.

Shouts of eyewitnesses alerted the operator of the Vanport warning siren and the wail of the alarm soon filled the city's streets with people.<sup>69</sup> And about a minute later the first row of homes was hit by water.

Because the homes had already been removed from the west end of Vanport, the distance from the breach to the nearest dwelling was over 1,850 feet.<sup>70</sup>

"The first wave ...spread out flatly and people ran from the houses to find the water ankle deep. Another widening break in the dike released a fresh outburst of water which flowed quickly over the first and rolled through the city at the three-foot level. Successive breaks raised the waves to about six feet in ten minutes, according to

evacuees." Showers of spray flew into the air as the waves hit structures.

"The water first filled the sloughs and drainage systems" <sup>71</sup> which absorbed some of the shock. The water advanced eastward across Vanport at walking pace. Even so, "witnesses to the flooding of Vanport estimate the time...to fill the Vanport area as between 45 and 75 minutes." <sup>72</sup>

#### The Evacuation

Sheriff's deputies immediately began to "circulate through Vanport operating their sirens and giving the alarm. Three engines of the Vanport Fire Department also circulated through Vanport with their sirens operating." <sup>73</sup>

"The Housing Authority of Portland had previously arranged to have a sound truck stationed at the Vanport administration building in Vanport. As soon as word of the breach was received, the sound truck was dispatched to give warning and provide evacuation instructions...." 74

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> QRR pg. 38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> 18,500

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Clark pg. 359

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Clark pg. 374

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Clark pg. 374

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Clark pg. 373

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Clark pg. 373

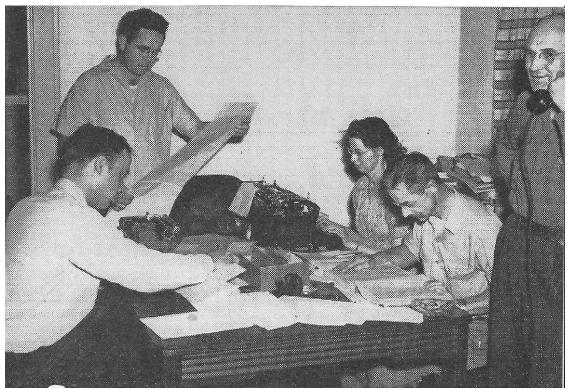


Figure 25 - Emergency Coordinator Al Davis (standing) scans listings on the IBM Personnel File, in search of more operating personnel. At the table, Bruce Stokes, W7EXQ, Elizabeth Mohr, and Larry Grace scan Call Books and telephone directories for operator listings. Clifford Olson, W7ICA, is at the microphone of the 144 mc intercom radio reporting the relief operator schedule for the coming day.

(Image courtesy of QST 9/48).

#### **Activation**

"With the break in the dike, W7GCZ, Dean Elder, along with many others, went on a 24-hour schedule. The disaster was now going full blast. The tempo of events increased in a dizzying crescendo as each minute grew into days. Old timers...young squirts...wives...YLs...stray military personnel...ex hams...ex-commercial operators...perfect strangers all — suddenly swung into action together, rolling up their sleeves and plunging into a race against time. New stations to be set up...more circuits needed...more operators needed to man them."75

Jim Larsen, W7DZL, was in charge of the Red Cross headquarters amateur radio team which included:

- Dave Barr W7KOF
- ➤ Don Smith W7DHX
- ➢ Bill Lucas W7AEF
- Clarence Wood W7KER
- ➤ Hal McCracken W7WJ.<sup>76</sup>

Representatives of established 80-meter traffic nets in Oregon, Washington, and California called in on 3540 kc at frequent intervals, reporting traffic, and moving to an alternate frequency with one of the Portland traffic men to clear traffic as directed by W7VT. In this way

<sup>75</sup> QRR pg. 106

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Radio Plays Role pg. 9

the emergency channel, 3540 kc, was kept cleared for traffic of the highest priority. Constant contact with the W6OT, the Oakland Radio Club, at the Oakland Red Cross chapter was maintained.<sup>77</sup>

On the second floor of the Red Cross headquarters Sunday night, a radio communications system kept messages flowing to all parts of the Vanport disaster area. Al Davis said that, "On a visit to Red Cross disaster chairman Edward Valentine's office, I counted 120 messages from network operators. Glancing through some of the air reports I noted such fragments of information as: 'Leak in dike at such and such a place'; 'Dike's just burst a block away'; 'Boats needed for fireman at \_\_\_\_\_."<sup>778</sup>

#### A Second Station

On Monday May 31st, "when the first impact of the Vanport traffic load lightened somewhat, a second radio center was established at the Army Engineer district headquarters. Dual 144 mc intercom positions were installed there to tie the new center into the existing nets. The Emergency Coordinator, Al Davis, transferred his headquarters there from the Red Cross Offices."

### **Voices of Vanport**

Here, we briefly shift away from the emergency narrative and share stories from some of the Vanport survivors.

We also get to meet several of the hams who were living in Vanport at the time of the flood.

See Appendix 1 for the names of more hams along with photos and QSLs.

# We had no Warning

The flooding at Vanport is a story of misery and loss – plain and simple. The typical evacuee's story sadly goes something like, "We had no warning – we barely escaped with the clothes on our backs." While researching the Voices of Vanport, I discovered several first-hand accounts that tell the story in a way that I cannot.



Figure 26 - Escaping Vanport with clothes and not much more. May 30, 1948.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> QRR pg. 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Radio Amateurs Helpful

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> QRR pg. 106

### The Teacup

My grandfather served in the South Pacific where he contracted yellow fever and dengue fever. Following his discharge, my grandparents and mother found an apartment in Vanport. When they evacuated, they left in their car with the clothes they were wearing.

After the water receded, they were allowed to return to their apartment to see if anything was salvageable.

Nothing was.

Finally, they spotted an unbroken teacup and saucer pinned to the floor by the leg of the dining table. They took it home and kept it as a souvenir.<sup>80</sup>



Figure 27 - The Teacup



## The Refrigerator

Vanport apartments typically came furnished with a small two-burner stove and a tiny oven. Most families made do with the undercounter two-shelf icebox that held a twenty-five-pound block of ice that had to be replaced every third day. Some did a little better.

"My uncle, not believing the false assurances voiced over the radio, had rented a pickup truck and piled his family, a few belongings, and the homealone children from next door, into the truck. Before he drove away, he decided that he could not leave the new refrigerator behind.

He managed to clunk it down the staircase, out the door and up into the back of the truck. Uncle Art drove off the traffic-jammed road and across fields to escape the water. Everyone survived and the new refrigerator had a decades-long life in its new home, Milwaukie, Oregon."81



<sup>80</sup> Anon.

#### The Vandals

"It was Memorial Day, 1948, and my friend and I were walking along the railroad tracks on the way home from fishing for catfish in the Columbia Slough. While we walked we threw rocks at the insulators on the power poles. When the poles started falling over on themselves and water started rushing over the tracks, we thought we had caused it. We were so scared, we ran home and confessed to my dad."82

#### True Friends

The evening before the flood occurred, we were visiting friends and we heard a radio alert to the effect that flooding was imminent. We did not own a vehicle and were dependent on public transportation.

\*

Our friends drove to our house on NE 47<sup>th</sup> and moved some of our furnishings to the attic. A few items were transported back to their one-bedroom home and we took up residence in their garage.<sup>83</sup>

# \*

#### A Few Clothes and a Radio

"Heroics were legion as the flood struck. People jumped into the water to aid strangers. Many dropped armloads of personal possessions to help others. Children were tied together to prevent straying.

One small boy was seen trudging along clutching only an air gun. One woman, dazed, pulled a child's wagon, loaded with a few clothes and a radio. A child sat atop the radio."84

# Running boards

"We were the last ones out of our immediate neighborhood. As we turned from the parking lot into the street, the muddy swirling water was a few feet away. I remember a policeman yelling at us to hurry. And I have a vivid picture of a Pepsi-Cola truck rolling toward the flood, with two men lustily letting it be known that they had room for persons and baggage. They did have room. More room than my driver.

But I preferred to stay with my own brood. And so I balanced myself on the running board of the Dodge sedan — auto designers of a few years ago turned out models better suited to the demands of such moments as these than the streamlined chariots of today — meanwhile keeping my knee pressed against the one large suitcase for which there was not room anywhere else."85

<sup>82</sup> A Story Behind the Vanport Flood

<sup>83</sup> Rootsweb.com

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Heroism

<sup>85</sup> Vanport Disaster pg. 81

# The Deputy

I was in Vanport when the first threefoot wave of water whirled down the streets.

I whipped my motorcycle down the project's winding curves, the siren full open and shouted to everybody I could see to run for his life.

Other deputies and I picked up kids from the street – every kid we could find – and thrust them into cars with orders to the drivers to get the hell out of there.

That first wave of water hit Denver Avenue fill in 12 to 15 minutes; within 30 minutes the entire project was filled with water on which floated debris from the wreckage of apartments.... We had to fight with some people to get them out and in a few cases we actually had to draw our guns to back up orders which would save lives.

Some of the people were sitting in their kitchens drinking beer. They thought that it was a joke about the dike breaking. They looked out into the street but couldn't see the water because of the curves in the streets.

When the water did come around, a lot of them had wasted most of the time we were able to give them to save their lives.

Lyle Cocking Multnomah County Deputy Sheriff<sup>86</sup>



Figure 28 - "Contemplation" (author's collection)

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<sup>86</sup> Deputies pg. 17

# **The Vanport Hams**

A search of Radio Amateur Call Books yielded this list of a dozen hams with home addresses in Vanport at the time of the flood:

| William O Eden       | 10508 N Island Ave           | W7HWC       |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| Robert W Evenson     | 10707 N Force Ave            | W7LDF       |
| Robert W Glaze       | 1902 N Victory Blvd          | W7AFL       |
| Everett J Gottschalk | 11206 N Lake Ave             | W7DZY       |
| Gerald S Kraxberger  | 11007 N Lake Ave             | W7JSO       |
| Joe Naemura          | 10316 N Force Ave            | W7GXA, W7CG |
| Delbert L Shampine   | 2204 N Victory Blvd          | W7KPK       |
| Albert L Smith       | 9901 N Denver Ct             | W7LGV       |
| George E Wann        | 3606 N Victory Blvd          | W7JXN       |
| 9                    | 2602 N Broadacre St          | W7GBW, W7MB |
| Howard F Wright      | 3510 N Cottonwood St Apt 713 | W7KQY       |
| William H Young      | 2708 N Broadacre St Apt 3655 | W7DCJ       |

Here are some stories of the Vanport Hams.

# **William Young W7DCJ**

William Young, W7DCJ, was hosting a Sunday dinner party at his Vanport apartment when the dike broke.

Since Mr. Young and one of his guests were blind, the rising flood water and surrounding chaos made finding a path to safety especially challenging.

Wendell Williams, W7HVX, helped the Young family and their guests escape in knee-deep water.<sup>87</sup>

| <sup>37</sup> QRR pg. 36 |  |  |
|--------------------------|--|--|



Figure 29 - Joe Naemura QSL card

| PORTLAND, OREGON<br>16320 S. E. Division St.<br>ARRL - RSGB  | Dear OM:  Your first QSL card for this QSQ and this station were lost in the   |  |
|--|--|--|
| RADIO LUBAK RST 569  QRG 14 MC CW-FONE  JULY 6 1946 1995 GMT-PST  ROVE 1912 XMTR PPHONE  JSO W ANT 2 DIFOCE  DX 40 Z LICC  UR QSL would be greatly appreciated.  JOE NAEMURA | disastrous Vanport flood of 245 0 Very luckily my log book a sie with me at another town when the bad been going to college and a small portable station.  I would appreciate another can from you so that I might get my DXCC and WAZ certificates.  Thanks and 73. |  |

Figure 30 - Reverse side of Joe's QSL. Note the special message regarding Vanport.

# Joe Naemura W7GXA (W7CG)

Joe Naemura was born in Gresham, attended Pleasant Valley Grade School and Gresham High School.

As a youngster he developed a love for baseball, playing on leagues in east county. And he was a loyal Mariners fan, seldom missing a chance to watch or listen to a game.

Joe got his first ham license, W7GXA, before the war and also served commercially as a ship's radio officer.

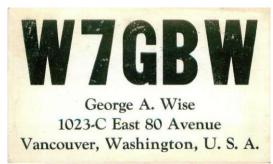
After being interned with their family at Minidoka in Hunt, Idaho, Joe and his brother Roy volunteered for military service. Roy was killed in Italy as part of the highly-decorated 442<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment. Joe was diagnosed with tuberculosis and spent time convalescing at the Veteran's Hospital in Walla Walla.

After returning from internment, Joe's family found housing at Vanport, one of the only options open to Japanese Oregonians at the time.

Joe's mother, Seki, was at home on Memorial Day, 1948. With just moments to evacuate, she placed Roy's posthumously-awarded Silver Star and Purple Heart medals and his coffin flag in the family's bag from the internment camp and climbed over the dike.

When the flood struck, Joe was away attending school at Oregon State College working on his medical degree. Despite his family's losses, Joe got on the air with his low-power station at school and assisted with emergency traffic for which he was recognized in QST.

Hams were allowed back on the air in the fall of 1945, following World War 2. Joe got relicensed and resumed chasing "DX" and collecting QSL cards. Unfortunately, his substantial QSL card collection was stored at his family's Vanport apartment and was lost in the flood. Undeterred, Joe went on to log an impressive amount of DX in his decades-long ham career.



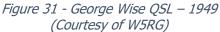




Figure 32 - Helen Wise QSL - 1958 (Courtesy of K8CX)

# George and Helen Wise W7GBW (W7MB) & W7RVM

George Wise was born in Portland in 1920. He served in the US Army during World War 2 and joined the Merchant Marines after the war, serving in both the Atlantic and Pacific. George and his wife Helen lived in Vanport at the time of the flood.

Like his friend and Vanport neighbor, Joe Naemura, George Wise resumed chasing DX as soon as he could get back on the air. By the time that the flood hit Vanport, George had already received QSL cards back from over 100 countries. This was fortuitous because, in late May, George's QSL cards were at the ARRL offices in Newington, Connecticut, being verified for his DXCC award. Thus, unlike Joe's QSL cards, George's were spared from the flood.

As shown by the address on George's 1949 QSL (Figure 29), the Wise family may have been among those who found temporary housing at one of Vancouver's housing projects following the flood.

George and Helen eventually settled in southeast Portland and he worked in marine electronics.

In 1955, George became a charter member of the Willamette Valley DX Club. His prowess for working foreign amateurs was legend. He was the first ham recognized for talking with amateurs in 100 countries on 5 different amateur bands ("5 Band DXCC" #1). He was the first ham from the northwest acknowledged for talking to 100 countries on 160 meters (similar to the am broadcast band). And, by getting QSLs from every recognized country in the world, George held top ranking on the DX "honor roll" for many years. George passed in 1996 at the age of 76.

Helen Wise was licensed as W7RVM in the 1950's and her QSL card is shown above (Figure 30). The fabulous cartooning on Helen's card was done by W7ESJ, "Connie" Conyngham. Connie was another Portland ham involved with Vanport. The "Junior Ops" shown running around the ham shack likely represent the couple's children George, William, and Eileen.



Figure 33 - KGW's Western Electric Model 1-B AM transmitter (date unknown). KGW installed this 1 kw transmitter at their downtown station in 1926 and moved it to Vanport in 1931.

(Oregonian files from KGW AINW report)

# **KGW**

KGW moved its Western Electric transmitter and towers from downtown Portland to land off of N Denver Avenue August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1931. The 90-acre site, just northeast of the future site of Vanport, gave KGW room for future expansion. And, the high water table at the site provided a substantial performance gain. At Denver, the 300' steel lattice

towers from downtown were again used to support a flat top antenna.

A few months later, on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1932, KGW marked ten years in the business with a celebratory "KGW 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program" that was heard over the NBC Orange and Gold networks.

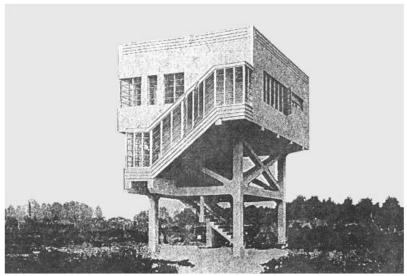


Figure 34 - The original appearance of the KGW transmitter building at Denver Avenue. (The Oregonian 8/2/31 from KGW AINW report).

The transmitter building at the Denver Avenue site was designed for KGW by Claussen and Claussen in a Moderne design. As such, the structure featured numerous steel-framed glass windows and a smooth stucco finish over a base of reinforced concrete and structural clay tile. The top floor was the main

transmitting facility. The lower floor contained a small fuel room. And the base was purposely left open. 22'-high reinforced concrete pilings supported the upper floors with the intention of protecting the transmitter rooms and offices from flooding. The building reached a 32' overall height.

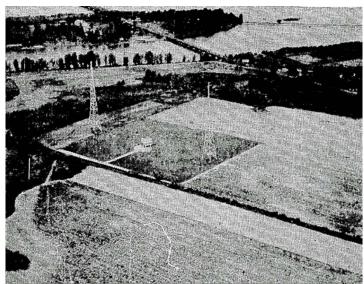


Figure 35 – View of the KGW site in April 1934. The Oregon Slough and Hayden Island run across the top and Denver Avenue and the Interstate Bridge cross the upper right corner. The twin 300' towers dominate the site. In a few years, the surrounding fields will become Vanport.

(The Oregonian 4/8/34 pg. 4).

# "The World's Largest Toothpick"

When KEX went on the air Christmas Day 1926, their studios were downtown in the Terminal Sales Building. The KEX transmitter was near the corner of Buckley Avenue and East Glisan Street (today's 122<sup>nd</sup> and Glisan).

When the Oregonian puchased KEX in 1933, arrangements were made to move their studios to the Oregonian Building.

KEX's old transmitter and towers were left at their East Portland location, and a new transmitter and tower were erected at KGW's Denver Avenue site.

Rather than using another flattop antenna, a unique vertical antenna was hung from a 300' tall spar affectionately dubbed as "The World's Largest Toothpick."

Three trees, each over 100' long were floated to Portland where they were milled and painted. Five coats of a special non-metallic white paint coated each piece.<sup>88</sup>

The finished mast sections were returned to the river and floated to a spot near the Interstate Bridge where they were hauled out and taken to the Denver site.

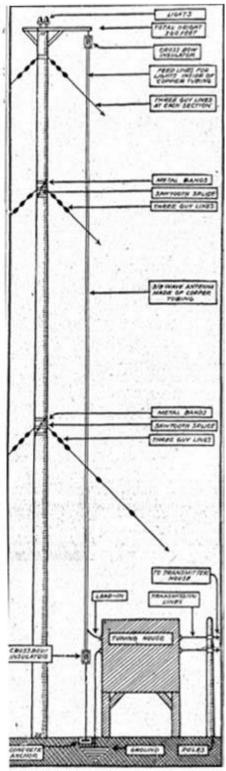


Figure 36 - KEX tower diagram (The Oregonian 4/29/34 pg. 44)

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Eventually wide bands of orange paint were added to enhance visibility for aircraft.

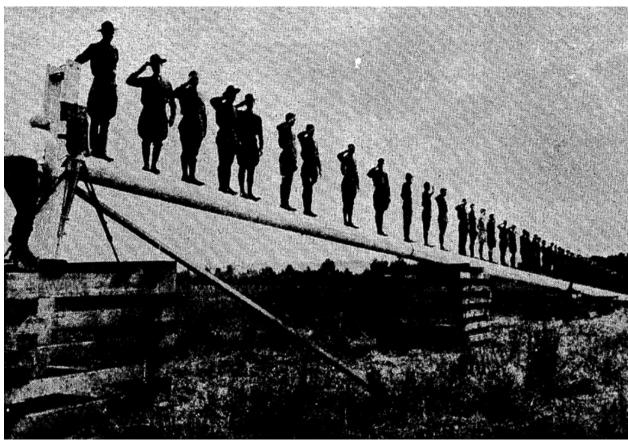


Figure 37 – 85 Boy Scouts from "radio troop 99" pose on KEX's tower while Universal Newsreel films. (The Oregonian 5/27/34)

The novelty of such a tall wooden radio mast was not lost on the media. Universal Newsreel cameras filmed 150 Boy Scouts standing and marching on the mast. Among them were members of radio "troop 99, attached to KEX, the only offical radio Boy Scout troop in the country."89

Famed radio announcer Graham MacNamee narrated the "talkie" which was screened locally at the Broadway and Music Box theatrers and then distributed nationwide. The press touted the KEX tower as the tallest wooden structure in the US.

Local papers published enthusiastic predictions from representatives of local lumber mills who proclamed that this project spelled the beginning of the end for steel radio masts.<sup>90</sup>

KEX's choice of a vertical radiator was also novel for the time; most broadcasters still favored flattops. However, KEX was not the first to go vertical - WLW had already christened its 800' steel monopole in Cincinnati OH.

The first section of KEX's spar was sunk in an oil-filled 10' deep concrete well and secured with guy wires. Then, the other sections were put up using a gin pole. The radiator was a 1" copper pipe

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> The Oregonian 5/19/34 pg. 1

<sup>90</sup> Moyes 5/3/34

that was held about 6' away from the spar by insulators and an outrigger (see Figure 34).

The aircraft lights at the top of tower were powered by lines running inside the radiator.

The arrival of KEX required remodeling and expanding the KGW transmitter building. The top floor was expanded to about twice its original size to accommodate KEX's new 5 kw transmitter. KGW upgraded to a new 5 kw transmitter at the same time.



Figure 38 - East view of the KGW transmitter building in 1934 with the KEX wooden mast in the background. Note that the top floor has been significantly expanded. The lower portion of the building was enclosed in1949 when the facility was rebuilt. This created a ground-floor garage space and an apartment on the second floor.

(Oregon Historical Society Negative # 26903 - from KGW AINW report)



Figure 39 - Base of KGW's new 625' tower with one of the 300' towers in the background. (Oregonian 8/15/37)

On August 14,1937, KGW upgraded from its flattop antenna system and began using a new 625' Truscon tower, the "West Tower."

Twenty-miles of copper ribbon were buried in the swampy-soil to create a ground plane for the half-wave vertical radiator.

The tower itself was on a 60' deep foundation, supported by an 18" base insulator and numerous guy wires, and topped by a 1000-watt aviation beacon.

On December 25, 1941, the "East Tower," a second 625' Truscon vertical radiator was erected and nighttime power was increased to 5,000 watts.

KGW's old 300' steel towers were pulled down and scrapped in November, 1937.



Figure 40 - KGW-KEX towers viewed from the Denver Avenue southbound exit from Vanport. Ca. 1947. (Oregon Historical Society negative OrHi 37471)

# **The Vanport Celebration**

On the evening of August 12, 1942, a crowd of nearly 6,000 gathered at the Vanport movie theatre for the Vanport grand opening ceremonies (see page 12).

KGW broadcast the ceremonies with Homer Welch, KGW's program director, acting as master of ceremonies. Abe Bercovitz conducted members of KGW's station orchestra in performing specially-arranged musical tributes to Vanport. He was joined by: Neva Clark, soprano; Johnny Harell, baritone; Ron Salt, comedian; Glenn Shelly, pianist; Patsy Bauman, popular singer; Ralph Hamilton, accordionist; and Pat Smith, tenor.<sup>91</sup>

### **Duopoly**

In 1944, The Oregonian sold KEX due to the FCC's duopoly rules. However, their transmitter remained at KGW's Vanport site until a new site in Clackamas was ready.

KEX moved to Clackamas in April 1948, avoiding the flooding at Vanport by a matter of a weeks.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Celebration pg. 9



Figure 41 - Vanport May 30, 1948. The lone surviving KGW tower stands in the upper righthand corner.

Lands east of Denver Avenue (bottom left) are not yet under water.

#### The Flood

KGW's Denver Avenue transmitter site was located at the farthest point from the breach in the railroad fill. So, when the fill broke through on May 30<sup>th</sup>, it took the flood waters nearly an hour to reach the station.

After seeing the water approaching from a station window, transmitter operator Clyde Bruyn shut down KGW at 5:20 pm and made his way downstairs. By the time he was headed out of the site, water was swirling around the wheels of his car.

After reaching higher ground, Mr. Bruyn stopped and watched the action. Flood waters were picking up and carrying along large chunks of debris. Soon an apartment building crashed into one of the 22' pilings supporting the transmitter building.<sup>92</sup> Then, at 5:51<sup>93</sup>, a building struck one of the guy wires

supporting the East Tower, causing it to crumple into the flood. KEX's 300' wooden tower went next.

Eventually, only the top few feet of the transmitter building remained above the flood, with water waist deep in the equipment rooms. All of the transmitting equipment was destroyed and only the West Tower remained.

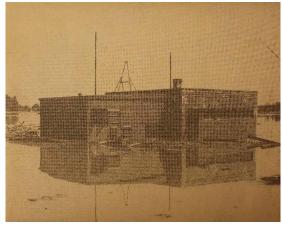


Figure 42 - KGW transmitter building (The Oregonian 6/1/48)

93 Vanport pg. 108

<sup>92</sup> Behind the Mike pg. 18

# **Moving to Mount Scott**

Within hours after the Vanport site went off the air, The Journal's KALE offered KGW the use of an auxiliary transmitter at their not-yet-opened Mt. Scott site. "Chief Engineer Harold Singleton, technical supervisor Earl Peterson and technicians Art Bean and Daniel Wilhoit worked all night adjusting the equipment to KGW's frequency and making minor repairs." <sup>94</sup> KGW was back on the air within about 14 hours.

"By 4:30 Monday morning KGW was feeding the news of the Vanport tragedy to NBC (they made eight network news releases) and by 7:30 am, the station was back on the air, using the KALE facilities, with flood warnings, disaster news and relief pleas, with free time available to all disaster agencies."

KGW operated from KALE's Mt. Scott location from May 31st until June 26th.

In the meantime, they took delivery of a new General Electric transmitter and installed it at their recently opened Healy Heights location<sup>96</sup> where it joined their FM plant.<sup>97</sup>

The site at Vanport remained under water for several weeks and it would be almost a year before it was rebuilt.

# Rodgers Jenkins – W7HSZ<sup>98</sup>

Rodgers Jenkins first exposure to radio came during the early 1930's at his

father Byron's radio store at the corner of SW 2<sup>nd</sup> and Morrison in downtown Portland. During the lean depression years, hams building their own stations were regular customers for used tubes and parts, often salvaged from obsolete trade-ins.

By the time Mr. Jenkins began attending Benson High School, ham radio was his main hobby. After graduation, he worked at KGW's Denver Avenue transmitter site doing monitoring and maintenance.

During World War II, the Navy sent Mr. Jenkins to Hawaii where he spent two years at Pearl Harbor repairing electronics on ships of all sizes.

Following the war, he resumed working at KGW's Vanport transmitter. And, after the flood waters subsided, he took part in clearing out the mud and water that had filled the transmitting building.

After leaving KGW, Rodgers Jenkins was an early Tektronix hire, working at their original location at 7<sup>th</sup> and Southeast Hawthorne.

Later, he turned an interest in electronic organs into a new business, Rodgers Organs. Rodgers Organs sold home, church, and theater organs, including a special deluxe model for Portland's Veterans Memorial Coliseum when it was built in 1960. Later, he founded Rodgers Marine Electronics, catering to the needs of area boaters.

<sup>94</sup> KGW, Portland's Pioneer Station pg. 5

<sup>95</sup> KGW, Portland's Pioneer Station pg. 5

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> 4545 SW Council Crest Dr.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Behind the Mike 6/25/48 pg. 18

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Biographical material on Rodgers Jenkins from "Rodgers Marine Electronics Celebrates 40 Years of Service" by Tim Jenkins.



Figure 43 - Components of the new Raytheon transmitter being hoisted through a third-story window. (Broadcasting 4/11/49)

# **The Raytheon Transmitter**

In 1949 KGW completed the restoration of its Denver Avenue site. A \$1 million upgrade to its plant included a new 5,000-watt Raytheon transmitter and new Fisher guyed radiator to replace the

East Tower that was destroyed in the flood.

In the early 1950's an RCA Model BTA-5-F transmitter was installed, and in 1979 a Continental Model 315-R1 transmitter was added<sup>99</sup>.

removed at that time. The RCA equipment was abandoned in place.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> The Raytheon transmitter remained in place until the building was vacated when the property was sold. The Continental was also

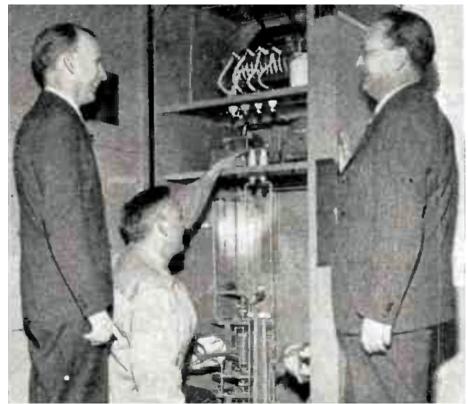


Figure 44 - KGW transmitter techs examine the new phasing unit. (L to R) Arthur Bean, joined KGW in 1931, Clyde Bruyn, 1933, and Clarence Carlquist, 1925. Clyde Bruyn was on duty when the flood hit. (Broadcasting 4/11/49)



Figure 45 - Inaugurating KGW's new Raytheon transmitter. (Left to Right) KGW manager H. Quenton Cox, MJ Frey general manager of the Oregonian, Portland Mayor Dorothy McCullough Lee and Oregon Governor Douglas McKay (Broadcasting 4/11/49)



Figure 46 - Picture of the RCA Model BTA-5F transmitter taken during the 2004 historical survey of the transmitter building. (KGW AINW Report)

# **Closing the Denver Avenue Site**

In May, 1999, the Port of Portland purchased KGW's 90.5 acre Denver Avenue<sup>100</sup> site.

Expansion plans at Portland International Airport called for filling wetlands. So, in exchange, plans were made to remove the infrastructure at the KGW transmitter site, replace invasive plants with natives, and to create a wetlands habitat.

In December, 2000, the two KGW towers were taken down and the copper wires forming the ground planes were dug out and removed.

The transmitter building and site access roads were left intact for another five years. During this period, the transmitter building was listed on Portland's Historic Resource inventory as a Rank III<sup>101</sup> resource and was recommended for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. However, the building was razed anyway in 2005.

After KGW vacated the site, the building interior was significantly vandalized and the structure showed the effects of flood damage. Removing the transmitter building cleared the way for full implementation of a Wetland Mitigation Plan, creating a wetlands where the KGW Denver Avenue transmitter site had been.

southeast entrance to the Portland Expo Center parking lot.

 $<sup>^{100}</sup>$  The Denver Avenue site was eventually given a "real" address, 10000 N Expo Road. Its gated access road lead south from Expo Road near the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Rank III history resources are inventoried but are not afforded protection.

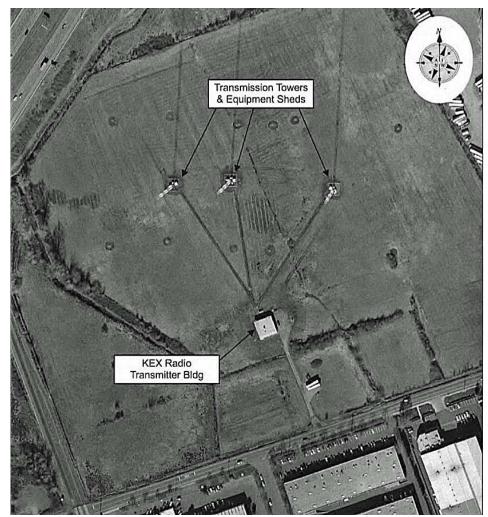


Figure 47 - Aerial of the 46-acre KEX site near Clackamas (ODOT 2008)

# **KEX – A Near Miss**

On August 25, 1933, NBC sold KEX to The Oregonian which already owned KGW. In 1935 the KEX transmitter was moved to KGW's Vanport location where they used a separate 300' tower.<sup>102</sup>

On December 28, 1944, because of the FCC's duopoly ruling, The Oregonian sold KEX to Westinghouse. While Westinghouse prepared a new transmitter site for KEX, they continued

transmitting from KGW's Vanport location.

Finally, on April 8, 1948, KEX moved to 9415 SE Lawnfield Road, near Clackamas, OR. The new transmitter site featured a Westinghouse 50-HG transmitter and three 455' Blaw-Knox center-guyed vertical radiators. Power increased from 5kw at Vanport to 50kw day-and-night at Lawnfield, making KEX Oregon's only 50,000-watt station.<sup>103</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> See the KGW article for more history.

<sup>103</sup> KE7GGV.tripod.com

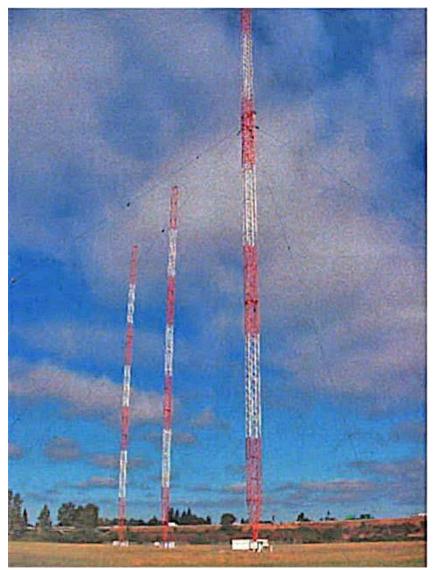


Figure 48 - Blaw-Knox 455' center-guyed towers erected in 1948. (ODOT 2008)

KEX's timely move out of Vanport, just seven weeks before the flood, spared them from any flood damage. However, their former 300' wooden tower was felled on May 30<sup>th</sup> when a floating apartment building drifted into KGW's site.

Like other Portland broadcasters, KEX was lauded in the press for their work

during the 1948 flood. "KEX was credited with giving the first news of the Vanport dike break. When Producer Ken Finley, who lived at Vanport near the dike, heard the first rush of water he looked out, grabbed the phone, and notified the KEX newsroom. The warning was promptly aired, in fact so promptly that the Vanport Deputy Sheriff's office denied the flash!"<sup>104</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Broadcasting 6/07/48

# THE VOICES of VANPORT











Part 3 – The Response



Figure 49 - Flood survivors spend the night at the Portland American Legion Hall (ACME Telephoto)

Before, during, and after the flood at Vanport, commercial broadcasters and the rest of community did everything they could to help. In part 3 of the Vanport story, we'll focus on the response to the disaster in the immediate aftermath of the flood.

"Warnings of disaster were flashed to the community when the danger became apparent. Appeals were broadcast for rescue workers, trucks, and other facilities."<sup>105</sup>

"Radio appeals for food and clothing brought thousands of persons to

Portland grade schools, the Red Cross and Salvation Army headquarters...."
"Stations quickly rounded up all available personnel. Special events crews were assembled. Skeleton holiday staffs were filled up and sent out with tape and wire recording equipment and generators. News from the stricken area was given top priority, with scheduled programs abandoned. Bulletins from the Red Cross and rescue authorities were broadcast."

107

"Loyal staffs worked around the clock – often three or four times- with little thought of personal danger or sacrifice involved." <sup>108</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> Flood Role

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> Food, Clothing Given pg. 3

# Changes

The events of Memorial Day only marked the beginning of changes for the former residents of Vanport and for the community at large.

Initial efforts were aimed at rescue and recovery. Soon the focus shifted to providing basics to those that left Vanport with little or nothing.

For various reasons families were split up during the evacuation. The Red Cross began registering the displaced people and local radio stations began broadcasting names and locations of survivors to reassure concerned friends and family to help reunite people that had been separated. "There were 700 names on the list. But, through a

broadcast of the names the list was cut in half by refugees who had heard their names mentioned among the missing."109

The role of hams shifted following the initial flooding. Some continued to handle message traffic in and out of the region. Others provided communications at the former Vanport site, assisting with rescue and cleanup efforts and keeping watch on the dikes that were still standing.

Still others worked with authorities as the flood waters worked east through Delta Park and the airport. And new groups of hams were called to action as flood waters threatened downstream communities.



Figure 50 - Soldiers and Volunteers use a DUKW to search through Vanport.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Broadcasting 6/14/48 pg. 25

The former site of Vanport was now a swirling lake full of dirt, debris, drifting buildings, and belongings. The National Guard activated four amphibious DUKWs.

The DUKWs, numerous Coast Guard boats, and fair number of private craft searched through the flood waters in search of survivors. Survivors were found clinging to debris, sitting on the roofs of buildings, and calling for help from second-story windows.

"One auxiliary Coast Guard crew removed a couple by chopping a hole through the thin wall of a house that had titled at an angle, sealing all the doors and windows." 110

The Oregon Civil Air Patrol "CAP," deployed its heavy radio truck to the site. "CAP planes volunteered to patrol the dikes in the Portland area and provided communications and supplies to isolated towns like Kalama and Woodland where planes, using the isolated highway for an airport, ferried in food and medical supplies."<sup>111</sup>

Forty members of the Coast Guard, reinforced by ninety auxiliary members, participated in waterfront patrols. "Eight motor surf boats from Oregon coastal stations, a 138-foot picket boat, four communications trucks from Seattle, a plane and a helicopter..." were joined by a fleet of private craft. 112

Though Vanport was under the jurisdiction of the Multnomah County Sheriff, the Portland Police played an active role in the response and recovery. Portland Police Chief James Fleming pointed out several specific contributions. "About 70 men of the detective division are on the front lines of the flood, stationed in two-way radio cars on the dikes providing communications for the military and other agencies on the front lines." 113

The Portland Police radio division "handled 2,275 logged radio calls in the first 7 ½ hours after the river smashed into Vanport."<sup>114</sup>

"A dozen officers who lived in Vanport lost everything when they turned to help others escape. So did thirteen city firemen. Patrolman Jim Sergeant, spent two days on continuous flood duty in charge of two Sea Scout power lifeboats in the Vanport lake area." 115

The Army deployed over 1,000 soldiers throughout the flood area from Troutdale to Clatskanie, bringing with them additional DUKWs from Fort Lewis. Likewise, the Oregon National Guard was deployed in-strength.

A 450-man detachment from the Navy base at Tongue-Point battled flood waters at Clatskanie "with trucks, heavy earth-moving equipment, and radio-equipped communications cars."<sup>116</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Heroism pg. 12

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> Valliant Efforts pg. 21

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> Valiant Efforts pg. 21

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> Valiant Efforts pg. 21

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Valiant Efforts pg. 21

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Valiant Efforts pg. 21

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> Valiant Efforts pg. 21

Once the initial recovery at Vanport was over, concern turned to looting. Deputy sheriffs patrolled and guarded Vanport from June 5<sup>th</sup> (when the State Police turned it over to them) until September or October, 1948.<sup>117</sup> "Arrangements"

were made...by which former residents of Vanport could go into the area to search for their property. A pass system was established...and no person without a pass was allowed to enter the Vanport area."118



Figure 51 - Utility workers repair lines behind a barrier of sandbags (ACME Telephoto)

Meanwhile, telephone lines, power lines, and other utilities had been damaged and needed to be restored, or at least

capped-off. In various places mine detectors were used to locate water main cut-offs and pipe-line breaks.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Clark pg. 371

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Clark pg. 371



Figure 52 - Telephone linemen work near flooded Vanport to re-establish telephone communications. (ACME Telephoto)

# **Telephones**

In March 1947, the telephone company installed the "TYler" manual telephone exchange in the Vanport Administration building. Residents placed calls by lifting the receiver off-the-hook and giving the desired number to an operator, who placed the call for them. Before Tyler, Vanport numbers were served by a patchwork of exchanges including GArfield, MUrdock, TRinity, TUxedo, UNiversity, and WEbster exchanges.<sup>120</sup>

"I picked up TYler 0860 at 4:15 and a man yelled, 'The dikes have broken...." Peggy Benjamin, Vanport telephone operator.

"The switchboard lights were heavy at 11:00 am when I came on duty, May 30, and they stayed heavy. About 2:30 the supervisor in charge was notified by the Housing Authority to be prepared to notify the Vanport people, if the warning signal sounded." 121

When Vanport flooded two-hours later, seven of the nine TYler telephone operators lost their homes.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> Voice of Vanport pg. 2

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Peggy Benjamin's Story pg. 3

The TYler operators and other employees at the exchange were among the last to leave, remaining at their posts as long as they were allowed. "Over and over they gave out warnings for Vanport residents to leave their homes. The power had been turned off, but the warnings were continued until

the switchboard went dead."<sup>122</sup> "Finally we ran out and at the time we could see the water coming down the slough in high waves..."<sup>123</sup> "One operator ran to her nearby home for her two small children, and with them caught the last bus to get out of the flooding area."<sup>124</sup>



Figure 53 - They put others first. Seated (L to R) Operators Neva Jones, Eva Hardegger, Bernice Marx, Carol Hunter, Peggy Benjamin. Standing: Chief Operator Abina Pendergast, Esther Lacy, Arloah Blair, Switchman Harold Tambling, Edna Kelly, Evening Chief Operator Jennie Schon.

(Pacific Telephone Magazine)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> River on Rampage pg. 2

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> Peggy Benjamin's Story pg. 3

Mobile telephone cars were brought to the site immediately after the flood for use by relief workers and law enforcement. Emergency telephones were established at key points. And six telephone booths were set up on Denver Avenue.

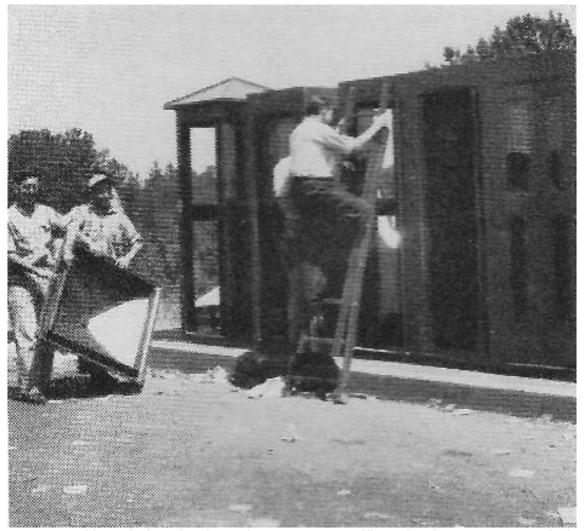


Figure 54 - Building telephone booths on the Denver Avenue fill. Six booths were set up overlooking flooded Vanport to serve relief workers, law enforcement, and reporters. (Pacific Telephone Magazine)

When the Denver Avenue fill failed on Monday night, it carried away two crucial cables, cutting off telephone service between Washington and Oregon. Early on Tuesday, 100 of the more than 600 circuits had been reestablished.



Figure 55 - Senior Repairman Vic Turnbull crouches in the stern of an army "Duck" as duplex telephone wire is pulled across the Denver Avenue gap. (Pacific Telephone Magazine)

An Army DUKW laid the first duplex wire across the Denver Avenue gap and larger emergency cables were laid down from a barge. A diver inspecting the cables quickly determined that they had never reached the bottom and would be vulnerable to being cut by debris or snagged by boats. A 30-ton pile driver

on a barge was summoned, driving pilings so that the cables could be lifted out of the debris-filled water and cross the 600-foot wide Denver Avenue gap on poles. Emergency repairs were completed on June 8<sup>th</sup>.



Figure 56 - Laying emergency cables by-barge. (Pacific Telephone Magazine)

Vanport's manual TYler telephone exchange was never re-established. Vanport numbers were already scheduled to cut-over to Portland's new TWinoaks exchange on July 31st and given dial-service. Of the 1,750 lines on the TYler exchange, 1,170 were submerged with Vanport. Those outside the flooded areas and were cutover to TWinoaks within 48 hours by Western Electric crews working around-the-clock.

## **Towing Houses**

In the weeks before the flood waters subsided, moving and securing large floating debris became a priority; both to get it out of the way of reconstruction and to keep it from drifting and causing damage as had happened at KGW.



Figure 57 - Towing floating homes in Delta Park 6/5/48. (ACME Telephoto)

## **Closing the Ham Net**

"The week following June 6<sup>th</sup>, when the need for ham facilities tapered downward, was one of consolidation and standby, with equipment installations remaining intact in case of further use, and men getting much needed rest and going back to jobs from which they had been absent."<sup>125</sup>

"On Wednesday, June 16th, almost three weeks after the start of the operation, the dismantling of the amateur nets was begun. The job could finally be classified as completed, with all agencies assisted heaping high praise upon the emergency work of the amateurs. Among those served were the Coast Guard, Army, Navy, National Guard, Red Cross, U.S. Engineers, Sheriff's Office, Civil Air Patrol, State

<sup>125</sup> Preliminary Disaster Committee Report pg.36

Police, public utilities, and others. Upwards of 10,000 messages were handled...in the Portland area alone."<sup>126</sup>

Part of the legacy of the organizational efforts for the ham response to Vanport was the creation of the Oregon Emergency Net (OEN).<sup>127</sup>

"Amateur radio assisted in every way it could, handling communications, patrolling the river, and working closely with police, military and service organizations, when the "break-through" occurred. For eight days emergency operations continued, twenty-four hours a day. During the first three days no traffic was handled except high priority emergency, rescue, medical and housing. The greatest share of these operations were handled on ten meters on such frequencies as were quickly available to most operators." 128

After the first three days, Portland Amateurs began working through the tremendous backlog of health and welfare traffic that had accumulated. Amateurs "...found themselves deluged by the amount of traffic waiting to be moved into and out of the area. Phone stations picked any frequency in the 75 meter phone band that seemed clear and announced that they were ready for incoming messages. Much of their outgoing traffic was very difficult to move due to scattered operations and insufficient and uncertain statewide coverage.

The emergency operations had clearly demonstrated the need for an organized statewide amateur emergency communications network and the subject of forming such a network was taken up by a committee of Portland amateurs, headed by the ARRL Emergency Coordinator of Multnomah County (Al Davis, W7DIS)."129 This led to the establishment of permanent 80-meter traffic handling networks running both CW and phone.



Figure 58 - A Southern Pacific steam crane with a pile driver rebuilds the washed-out trestle (Oregonian photo)

# **Restoring Train Service**

On Sunday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, just a week after the tragedy, the SP&S reopened the rail line between Portland and Vancouver. The gap in the fill that had allowed flood waters into Vanport was bridged by a new wooden trestle. The new trestle has since been covered with soil, just like the previous fill. And there still is no actual dike protecting the west side of Pen 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> ORR pg. 108.

<sup>127</sup> The Oregon Netter 9/2008 pg. 3

<sup>128</sup> Oregon Emergency Network – It's History pg.4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> OR Emergency Network–Its History pg. 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> Trestle Spans Break pg. 11



Figure 59 – 1949 "Vanport Wrecking Co" ad from the Beaverton Enterprise.

# **A Few More Words About Vanport**

In about a year's time, the site that once was home to 40,000 people had been cleaned out and reduced to foundations and roads.

Despite the tragedy that had occurred there, it did not take long for street racers to realize that the miles of abandoned pavement suited their needs just fine. "Outlaw" races soon began occurring on the flat roads of old Vanport. By the 1960's, the Portland International Raceway had been built on the easterly part of the site.

In 1971, the Heron Lakes Golf Course was dedicated on the westerly part of the site.

# The Rest of the Story

Most histories of the 1948 flood focus only on the devastation that took place within Vanport. But there is so much more. The story does not end with the terrible events of Memorial Day or the radio stations that were wiped out by the flood.

In the next few pages, we'll look at how other Portland broadcasters played key roles during the emergency.

Part 4 takes us east as the flood waters break down dikes and inundate Delta Park, the airport, and miles of east county.

Finally, Part 5 will take us to Vancouver, Sauvie Island, and points west as we look at the heroic efforts to save the downstream communities.



Figure 60 - Vanport July 1949. The remaining structures appear to be water towers and the central steam buildings that heated each cluster of apartments. (Ackroyd Photography Inc)



Figure 61 - CS Jackson, KALE's general manager, pilots The Journal's "Newsroom Dragonfly." Sadly, Mr. Jackson was killed in a crash in December 1947. The Journal soon had a new "dragonfly" and used it at locations up and down the Columbia during the flooding. (The Newsroom Dragonfly)

# **KALE / KPOJ**

# **A Little History**

KALE's transmitter site on Eastview Drive, had a sweeping view of the 1948 flood, from Troutdale almost to the airport. The location, atop Mount Scott southeast of Portland, was never in danger of flooding. But KALE was thoroughly involved in the Vanport Emergency, nonetheless.

From September 1932 until March 1946, The Oregon Journal newspaper, Portland's evening daily, owned two AM stations, KOIN and KALE (1300 KC).

In March 1946, The Journal sold KOIN to the Marshall Fields Department Store which was expanding into media at the time.

Despite the fact that the two stations were no longer under joint ownership, they continued to share a common site at 5516 SW Barnes Road (Sylvan Hill).

# **Expansion**

Even as The Journal newspaper expanded into AM broadcasting in the 1930's, in the 1940's the company aspired to expand into FM broadcasting and television. Following World War II, work began on the Mount Scott site. On June 6, 1948, just a week after the dike broke at Vanport, KALE went live with AM and FM at the Mount Scott site under their new call letters KPOJ and KPOJ-FM.

## Thomas "Tom" James

Tom James, a NVRS charter member<sup>131</sup> and past president, was hired by KALE in 1944 as their equipment engineer. Tom stayed with KALE/KPOJ until 1969.

Tom was born in Riverside, Washington, in 1911. He and his wife Dorothy joined the NVRS in 1975 after seeing an article in *The Oregonian* and being invited by Pete Young.

Dorothy was active in the NVRS Power Supply (women's auxiliary) and also served as a board member of Oregon City's Buena Vista Club, which ensured our access the Buena Vista Club House where we held meetings for our first 15 years.

Readers of the NVRS Call Letter from the 1970's and early 1980's will surely remember Tom's regular column "Atomospherica" that featured his old radio-themed poetry.

As an example of Tom's ingenuity and sense of humor, a shelf near the door to his workshop held a horn speaker that played permanently. The secret? Tom built a tiny crystal set tuned to one of the local stations and placed it in the horn speaker's base. The only external evidence was a single antenna wire.

Tom James, known by many as "our friendliest member," died in 1984.



Figure 62 - Tom James, KPOJ Equipment Engineer, 1948 (Meet the KPOJ Staff)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup> NVRS members who joined during the Society's first year are considered charter members.

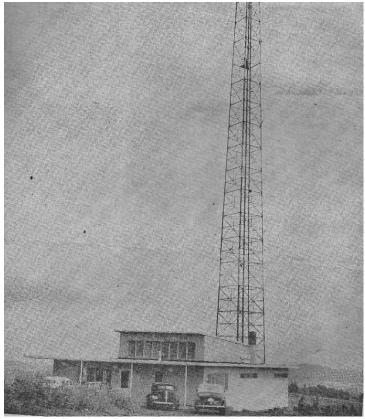


Figure 63 - KPOJ AM/FM transmitter site on Mount Scott in 1958 (Ours Ahead)

# May - June 1948

KGW (620 AM) belonged to The Oregonian, Portland's other daily newspaper. Despite the competition between the papers, when flooding put KGW's transmitter out of commission on the afternoon of May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1948, The Journal's KALE made a spare transmitter<sup>132</sup> available to them at their yet-unopened Mount Scott site.<sup>133</sup>

"Working all night, the KGW staff headed by Chief Engineer Harold

Singleton had the station on the air by 7:30 the next morning."<sup>134</sup> Thanks to KALE, KGW was only off the air for about fourteen hours.

Meanwhile, KALE went on 24-hour duty from its Sylvan site with news bulletins and flood information. At the station's urging, "the Portland Grocers Association made food available to refugees and bakeries reopened and worked all night to supply bread and bakery products to the homeless." 135

the Hallock & Watson transmitter was lost when the KPOJ transmitter building burned in March 1986.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> We believe that the spare transmitter KGW used may have been KALE's 500-watt Hallock & Watson transmitter, made here in Portland ca. 1930. KALE had been keeping it as a spare and brought it with them to Mount Scott. Along with many of the station's other historical artifacts,

<sup>133</sup> The Oregonian 6/1/48

<sup>134</sup> Broadcast 6/7/48

<sup>135</sup> Broadcast 6/7/48



Figure 64 - KALE's Lou Gillette (left) interviews a Vanport survivor (courtesy of Ron Kramer)

In addition to passing along official reports and bulletins, KALE deployed staff to flood locations to gather first-hand news. Joe Stein, KALE's pilot-reporter used the station's new helicopter to report news on the flooding and to give the Journal's photographers an aerial platform from which to document the disaster. KALE flew Dick Wesson, their overnight DJ, down to survey the damage caused when the dike broke at Woodland.

Famed newsman Lou Gillette (Figure 59) surveyed the flooded Portland Meadows

racetrack and interviewed survivors. In keeping with the technology of the time, Lou's report was delivered to the station on a wire recording. 136

In the mid-June, KPOJ capped-off its flood reporting with "a one-hour documentary on the past, present, and future of the Columbia Basin flood, using wire recorder, shortwave, eyewitness accounts and interviews with supervisory authorities." <sup>137</sup>

<sup>137</sup> Broadcaster 6/14/1948

<sup>136</sup> Broadcast 6/7/48



Figure 65 - KOIN transmitter Nov 1932. (NVRS archives)

# **KOIN**

From September 1932 until March 1946, The Oregon Journal newspaper, Portland's evening daily, owned two AM stations, KOIN (940 KC) and KALE. The stations shared a transmitter site at 5516 SW Barnes Rd atop Portland's west hills (Figure 65).

KOIN moved from 940 to 970 KC on March 29, 1941 due to the NARBA (North American Region Broadcast Agreement) Treaty Allocations. <sup>138</sup>

In March 1946, because of duopoly concerns, The Journal sold KOIN (5kw, daytime-only) to the Marshall Fields Department Store which was expanding into media at the time.

Even though KOIN and KALE were no longer under joint ownership, they continued to share the Sylvan site until KALE moved to Mount Scott in June 1948.

During the Vanport emergency, KOIN served as a liaison between the American Red Cross and the other Portland broadcasters. In this role, KOIN studios had a direct line into Red Cross headquarters; they received and relayed news bulletins out to the other stations, lessening the burden on the Red Cross.

Additionally, KOIN's staff met with the other agencies responding to the emergency to facilitate the exchange of information. One of KOIN's liaison staff was news reporter George Wann, a Vanport resident, who lost everything in the flood.

KOIN fed ten shows to the CBS network, helping cover the disaster for listeners nation-wide.

When KOIN staffers were covering Vanport activities on June 2nd, a helicopter crashed almost in their laps. Coast Guard Lt Bill Williams was taking Life Magazine photographer Johnny Flores on an inspection trip over the flood area. While at an altitude of about 500' over the inundated Portland Meadows, the engine failed on their Sikorsky helicopter.

"I fought every inch of the way to get to dry land. We were about to make a normal (dead engine) landing when suddenly the motor started again and something gave way. I was hit on the head and the next thing I knew we were sitting on the ground with wreckage all around us." 139

The impact broke off the main rotors and snapped off the tail boom. Williams and Florea were catapulted forward and broke the plexiglass cockpit bubble with their heads."<sup>140</sup>

The wreckage landed in a garlic patch just 50 feet south of the flood-swollen Columbia Slough. The KOIN news staff quickly loaded their station wagon and drove to the crash scene just off of Columbia Blvd.

After the wounds of the smiling but badly shaken men were tended to, interviews were recorded. Tape was rushed back to the KOIN studios and broadcast within an hour of the crash."<sup>141</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> Broadcasting 9/15/1940

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> Oregonian 6/03/48

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> Oregonian 6/03/48

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup> Broadcast 6/14/48 pg. 64

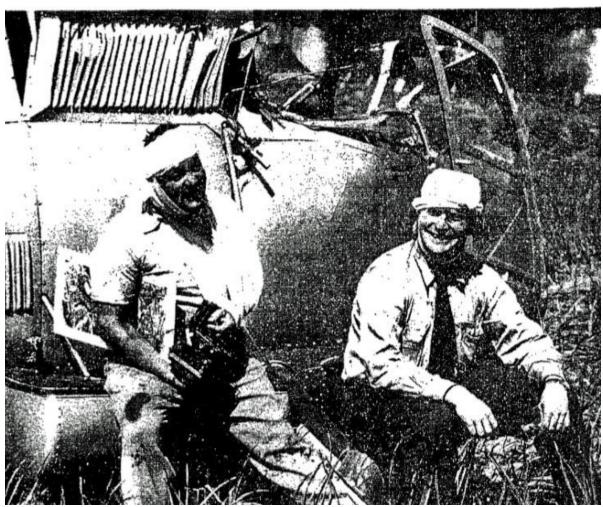


Figure 66 - Their heads are bandaged, but Life Magazine photographer Johnny Florea and Coast Guard Lt Bill Williams still muster smiles as they sit among the wreckage of their helicopter. (Oregonian 6/3/48)



Figure 67 - KXL transmitter and tower at the Town of Harmony (Courtesy of Ron Kramer)

# **KXL**

At the time of the 1948 flooding, KXL was broadcasting 10kw (daytime only) from the "Town of Harmony," property that became part of the Clackamas Town Center shopping center campus in the 1970's.

In order to better serve the community during the flood, KXL petitioned the FCC by telegram for authority to broadcast twenty-four hours a day, asserting that thousands of lives and millions in property were imperiled (Figure 68).

The FCC agreed and KXL began broadcasting around the clock on Monday, May 31st. They continued broadcasting 24-hour emergency information through Thursday, June 3rd.

KXL carried 576 bulletins in the first 48 hours after the Vanport dike broke. "KXL kept the entire XL network – many of whose stations are in the flood area – supplied with advance information on nearing flood crests."<sup>142</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>142</sup> Broadcasting 6/14/48

"As a follow-up of the disaster, KXL wired all Senators and Congressmen from Oregon and Washington [in support of] aid that the federal government might be expected to give to rehabilitate the 18,000 citizens of Vanport and surrounding territory along the Columbia."<sup>143</sup>

It seems very fitting then, that KXL was one of two stations selected to cover President Truman's June 11<sup>th</sup> Portland speech in which he promised \$10 million in immediate aid for flood victims.

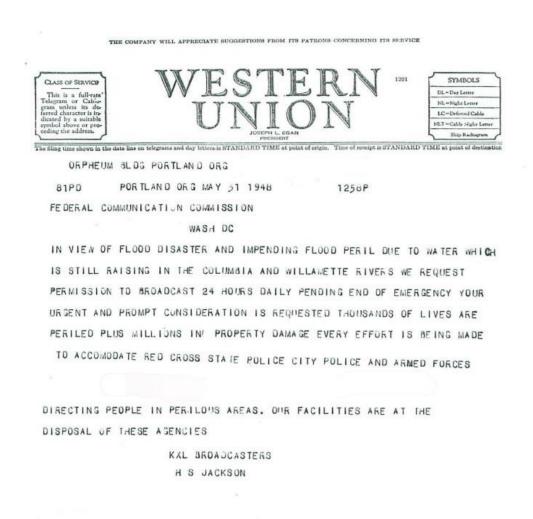


Figure 68 - Telegram from KXL to FCC requesting permission to go to twenty-four-hour broadcasting for duration of Vanport emergency. (Courtesy of Ron Kramer)

Vanport Pg. 86

<sup>143</sup> Broadcasting 6/14/48



Figure 69 - The Independence President Truman's DC-6 at McNary Field June 11, 1948 (Willamette Heritage.org image 2007.001.2095)

# **The Truman Visit**

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1948, President Harry S. Truman visited Portland during a whirlwind tour of the West Coast. The President's DC-6, dubbed "The Independence," could not land in Portland because of the flooding. So, after flying over sites along the Columbia, the plane landed at McNary field in Salem. The President travelled

from Salem up Hwy 99-E (no I-5 yet), arriving at Portland's Civic Auditorium.

At 1:00 pm the President's speech<sup>144</sup> was broadcasted over KGW and KXL.<sup>145146</sup> Loudspeakers were placed on the auditorium steps so that those arriving too late to get seats could hear the speech.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup> Read the full text of the speech in Appendix 3

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> Pioneer Mikes pg. 397

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> The speech was reportedly not carried by the national networks. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/ppotpus



Figure 70 - President Truman signs \$10 million aid bill for flood victims during Portland visit. (AP Wire Photo)

The President's speech was followed by a conference with federal, state, local, and Red Cross officials on flood conditions. A few minutes later, there was a signing ceremony where the President approved a promised emergency Joint Resolution of Congress, appropriating \$10 million in immediate aid for flood victims.



Figure 71 - General Philip Fleming describes the damage at Vanport to President Truman.

To the right stands Julius Krug, Secretary of the Interior and

Col. TD Weaver, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (AP Wire Photo)

Before leaving Portland, the President's entourage drove out to see the damage at Vanport. Though the initial flooding had wiped-out Vanport almost two-weeks earlier, the flood had yet to begin receding and the scene was still quite sobering.

Rather than returning to Salem by motorcade, the President boarded a train at southeast Portland's Brooklyn Yard as flooding still had downtown's Union Station closed during the President's visit.



Figure 72 - Flooding at Union Station in northwest Portland, June 1948

Though it has nothing to do with the flood, in the interest of political fairness I feel obliged to mention that Democratic President Truman's 1948 Republican opponents were here first – about three weeks before the President came.

Minnesota Governor Harold Stassen and New York Governor Thomas Dewey held a debate at the KEX studios in Portland on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1948 in advance of Oregon's May 21<sup>st</sup> Republican primary. The debate was carried by Portland stations KALE, KEX, KGW, and KOIN and by three national networks (ABC, MBS, and NBC). The hour-long broadcast was made without commercials and was heard by a national audience estimated at 40 million.

The Portland debate is noteworthy as being the first presidential debate broadcast by radio<sup>147</sup> and is credited with helping Gov. Dewey win the Oregon primary and eventually the Republican nomination.



Figure 73 - The Dewey-Stassen Portland debate May 17, 1948. Gov. Thomas Dewey is standing. His opponent, Gov. Harold Stassen (dark suit), looks on from the left-hand table. Multnomah County Republican Chairman Donald Van Boskirk (center table) moderated. Each candidate made a twenty-minute speech followed by an eight-minute rebuttal.

Note the tour de force of microphone flags from Portland radio stations. (ACME Telephoto)

from the University of Rochester http://hdl.handle.net/1802/2134

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup> This was also the first time that a U.S presidential debate was audio-recorded. The audio of the debate is available for download

# THE VOICES of VANPORT



Part 4 – The Spread



Figure 74 - Looking south over Denver Avenue on May 31st. The ramps on the lower left lead to the underpass where crews are fighting to keep Vanport flood waters from flowing into Delta Park.

(Oregon Historical Society photo ORHI 24149)

# **Delta Park**

# **Denver Avenue (US Hwy 99W)**

After the railroad fill to the west of Vanport breeched on May 30th, Vanport filled with water to a depth of about 13 feet. The fill under Denver Avenue on the easterly edge of Vanport was next in line to feel the pressure.

The Denver Avenue fill was constructed by Multnomah County in 1916 at the expense of the Interstate Bridge Commission (IBC) as a southerly approach to the Interstate Bridge. A suction dredge pumped sand from the Oregon Slough to the site of the fill. The IBC transferred control over the fill to Multnomah County on January 1, 1929, who transferred it to the State Highway Commission on March 26, 1937.

During the construction of Vanport in 1942, workers tunneled through the fill and created an underpass to accommodate the ramps from northbound Denver Avenue. This gave Vanport access to the nearby Jantzen Beach amusement park, the Interstate Bridge, and the Vancouver Shipyards. It also compromised the fill's effectiveness as a dike. To compensate, the Army Corps of Engineers surrounded the cloverleaf on the easterly side of Denver

Avenue with a ring dike to reestablish the dike's integrity.

Evacuees from Vanport fled to Denver Avenue, often on foot because of the jam of cars on the exit ramp. Soon relief workers and spectators added to the congestion (Figure 74).

As water rose against the Denver Avenue fill, a culvert south of the underpass began allowing water to flow into Delta Park. "More than 50 men labored unceasingly filling sandbags and throwing them in. They [even] threw in bales of straw. A DUKW tried to force debris into the leak which appeared to be undermining the highway. Eventually floodwaters caused the failure of the culvert and significant erosion of the dike. Traffic on Denver Avenue was stopped shortly after midnight. When daylight came and no progress had been made toward plugging the leak, a call went out for steel matting."148



Figure 75 — Water boils against the Vanport-side of the Denver Avenue fill at the site of a failed culvert. Workers are using a bulldozer to push rock and surplus aircraft landing strip mats into the gap in an effort to prevent a breach. (ACME Telephoto)

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>148</sup> Oregonian 6/01/1948 pg. 11

"At 5:30 a.m. the effort to plug the leak was abandoned. Thirty minutes later the first lane of the concrete pavement was gone. The concrete partially plugged the hole and the flow of water dropped to possibly one fourth of its previous volume. At 7:30 a truckload of steel matting arrived." Then the focus shifted to securing the ring dike at the underpass.

Concerned that the ring dike would not hold, a crew of 100 workers, led by Gordon Black, labored all day Monday to shore it up.

By nightfall on Monday May 31<sup>st</sup>, crews thought that ring dike had been sufficiently reinforced. At 9:15, Black saw water starting to stream from the easterly side of the dike and ordered workers to run for safety. Within a matter of minutes, the stream turned into a torrent as large sections of the dike blew out.

"As they watched, the current dragged one of Vanport's multiple-dwelling units toward the underpass trestle. The house snapped off a tree and rammed into the trestle underpinnings, grinding them to splinters. Then the house poked its way over the debris and tumbled over a 15-foot waterfall, turning end for end and smashing into matchwood." 150

## **Union Avenue (US Hwy 99E)**

Like Denver Avenue, Union Avenue (now M L King Jr Blvd) was built atop a fill. The two joined just south of the Interstate Bridge, creating the triangle-shaped Delta Park. Like Denver Avenue, Union Avenue was perforated with road underpasses and culverts. The Denver Avenue failure on the night of Monday May 31st allowed water to surge in and fill the area east to Union Avenue.



Figure 76- Flooding at Delta park and Vanport. To the right, the Interstate Bridge and the flood-swollen Oregon Slough. Near the top, the broken railroad fill. In the center, Vanport. Denver Avenue cross the middle of the photo, joining Union Avenue at the south end of the Interstate Bridge.

<sup>150</sup> Portland OR Dike Break Flood

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>149</sup> Oregonian 6/1/48 pg. 11



Figure 77 – June 1<sup>st</sup> - Looking west across Union Avenue at the Flooded Amphi-Theater drive-in. (ACME Telephoto)

As Delta Park filled, The Portland Speedway motor racing track was submerged as were the grounds of the Portland Meadows horse racing track.

500 thoroughbreds were relocated to the stables at the state fairgrounds in Salem. Stranded owners and their families were lodged in the 4-H dormitories.

The drive-in "Amphi-Theatre," whose sign promised they'd be open "rain or shine," was also swamped.

The Union Avenue fill has a similar history to Denver Avenue. It was constructed of dredgings by Multnomah

County in 1916 and later transferred to the State Highway Commission. While crews worked to reinforce the Denver Avenue fill, separate crews "had been working on the Union Avenue fill, preparing sandbags to stop the culverts under the fill the moment the Denver Avenue fill gave way."<sup>151</sup>

Just an hour after the Denver Avenue fill failed, water reached the Union Avenue fill, causing the road to buckle and sag. When Multnomah County Sherriff Martin Pratt closed Union Avenue to traffic, the last connection to the Interstate Bridge and Vancouver, Washington, was closed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>151</sup> The Oregonian 6/1/1948 pg. 11



Figure 78 - In the foreground, the Union Avenue fill has been overtopped.

The Amphi-Theatre Screen shows just south of the breech.

To the left of center, the bleachers at the Portland Speedway rise out of the flood.

Between midnight and 1:00 am on June 1st, the Union Avenue fill was reported breached in two places; a culvert failed near the drive-in and a second breach occurred near the intersection of Union and Denver Avenues.

Overnight, water continued rushing east toward the Peninsula Drainage Canal dike near 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. Although flood waters did not recede for weeks, crews had the Union Avenue fill repaired and ready for traffic in about two weeks.<sup>152</sup>



Figure 79 - Repairing the Union Avenue fill. (Oregonian photo)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>152</sup> Oregonian June 11, 1948 pg. 1

Three vastly different views of the Union Ave Auto Court, just east of the Union Ave fill.



Figure 80 - Union Ave Auto Court from a tourist postcard.



Figure 81 - View of the Auto Court in early June, 1948 with only rooftops showing above the debris-filled flood. (Disaster in God's World)



Figure 82 - After the waters have gone back down. A lot of the debris has already been picked up. The bungalows are off their footings. Note the water lines on the shingles. Doors and windows are open for mucking out and drying out. (Courtesy of Doug Magedanz)



Figure 83 – Bill Lucas, W7AEF, radioing-in a status report on the flooding. (Courtesy QST September, 1948)



Figure 84 – Stan Rand, W7ASF, demonstrating his portable radiophone. (Courtesy Popular Science August, 1935)

### **W7AEF - Bill Lucas**

Local hams may remember Bill Lucas, W7AEF, from the days when he owned Portland Radio in downtown Portland. Bill was the designated "ten-meter supervisor" for the Vanport emergency.

Even as Don Smith's (W7DHX) message that the dike had broken went out to the Red Cross headquarters, Bill was operating mobile from the streets of Vanport. The district dike superintendent was riding along that afternoon directing operations with a portable P.A. system.

Upon hearing W7DHX's message, the dike superintendent exclaimed "Let's go" and they raced to the center of Vanport where they met W7ASF, Stan Rand. They drove together, bumper-to-bumper, toward the west side of Vanport, seeking to determine the extent of the dike break-through.

Suddenly, the superintendent saw the approaching water and shouted, "Quick, turn around! There'll be fifteen feet of water here in nothing flat." Reversing course, the convoy made its way to a high point along Denver Avenue from which the superintendent was able to resume directing operations with the continuing help of Stan and Bill.

## W7ASF - Stan Rand

In the 1930's Stan Rand was a member of Hood River's Crag Rats mountain rescue team. In the image above, he's shown demonstrating a portable "radiophone" transceiver of his own design. The complete unit, including batteries weighed only 28 pounds making it practical to take on rescue missions. The Crag Rats' base station in Hood River was KIJY, and their portable unit was KIJZ. Both were licensed for 100 watts on 2.728 mc.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>153</sup> QST 9/48 pg. 38.



Figure 85 - Chuck Austin, W7LBV (Salem High "Viking" 1949)

## W7LBV - Chuck Austin

During the week following the loss of Vanport, 16-year old ham Charles E "Chuck" Austin was surprised to be called out of his classes at Salem High School.

In 1946, Chuck joined the Salem High Radio & Electronics Club, W7BPN. Using the club's Hallicrafters S-20R receiver and code practice records, Chuck learned Morse code while he studied theory for his license. Although he passed the theory on his first try, it took a second Greyhound bus ride to the Portland FCC office to pass the code. Chuck received his first ticket April 11, 1947. Soon, he joined the Oregon Emergency Net and began handling traffic.

Carl R Lindstrom, W7KHV, was Salem High's electronics shop teacher and the trustee for the club's call, W7BPN. It was Mr. Lindstrom that came to get Chuck out of class that day with news that ham operators were urgently needed to help with the flood

emergency in Portland. After getting permission from his parents, Mr. Lindstrom drove Chuck to the home of W7IIJ, Donald Johnston at 154<sup>th</sup> and SE Stark St. In Chuck's words "It was the most beautiful station I'd ever seen." With a mix of commercial and home brew equipment, including a 1 KW amplifier, and a dipole mounted on high poles, W7IIJ had a plenty strong signal.

Even after the community of Vanport was lost on May 30th, hams remained on duty, day and night, coordinating relief efforts, handling communications in and out of the area, and keeping watch along the dikes up and down the river. Stations operating low-power on 80 meters had little problem being heard during the day. However, at night, as long-distance propagation improved, interference from stations outside the area became a real problem. Sleeping days, Chuck's job was to monitor the emergency calling frequency during the overnight hours and, when necessary, ask the nonemergency stations to move to other frequencies ("QSY"). As reported in QST magazine, Chuck and W7FNZ, Milton "Tiny" Marsh, also provided a "much needed link with the Oregon Traffic Network,"154 a CW net.

After several days of operating, Chuck returned to Salem, although by then school had let out for the summer. Chuck continued participating with the Oregon Emergency Network for another year or two after high school. Today, he lives in retirement in Salem although he has never retired from amateur radio.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>154</sup> QST 1948\_09 pg. 39



Figure 86 – The junction of the Peninsula Drainage Canal and the Columbia Slough. Water has broken through the canal walls and is racing east toward the airport. (AP Wire Photo 6/12/48).

# **The Flood Continues East - Portland Airbase & Airport**

"The City of Portland undertook to provide clean fresh water from the Columbia River to flush waste from the Columbia Slough by dredging a canal between the river and slough in 1919. This provided the required water and also a minor navigation channel for 27 years. Then, in 1946 a permit was obtained to build a levee of sand at the Columbia River end of the canal and

install two 48-inch pipes to pass flushing water. These pipes soon clogged with sand and became unusable during the 1948 flood, and were never reopened."<sup>155</sup>

When designing the Peninsula Drainage Canal, engineers were constrained by the relative water levels in the Columbia River and the Slough, a mile way. A slope had to be maintained in order for water to flow through naturally without pumping. Consequently, to maintain a steady grade, the canal wasn't so much "dug" as "built," being bordered on both sides by substantial berms.

As shown at the start of this section (page 88), the berms lining the Peninsula Drainage Canal, provided a temporary barrier to the eastward movement of the flood. When the photo was taken on June 1st, Columbia Edgewater Country Club on the westerly side of the canal (center right) was inundated but Riverside Golf and Country Club (bottom center) was still dry.

The reprieve lasted only about 10 days. But, it bought precious time for the Portland Airbase and Portland Columbia Airport to prepare.



Figure 87 - Waters are moving east after breaching the Peninsula Drainage Canal. The area from 33rd Drive to 47th Avenue is rapidly filling. At this time, 47th Avenue was the airport's westerly boundary and main access road. Note the runways and terminal building in the upper right corner.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>155</sup> Columbia Slough pg. 10

## **Portland Airbase**

As dike after dike broke, staff at the Portland Air Guard Base initiated plans to get their assets out of harm's way.

Sergeant Jack Klein, returning home on an off-duty Sunday afternoon, received a message to call the base. "When I called, Capt. Gemmel informed me that the [Vanport] west dike had just breached, and I need to report as soon as I could...and to wear a sidearm if I had one.<sup>156</sup>"

Sgt. Klein arrived at the squadron headquarters where he was greeted by

the commander, Maj. Cladius G Farrow, and a small group of officers and non-commissioned officers. They began loading up files, typewriters, and other equipment and hauling everything to another unit member's home near the base.

This small team of about ten men worked all night and into the morning. "They removed weapons from the vault and secured...most of the equipment at the Colwood Golf Course on the corner of Alderwood Road and Columbia Boulevard." 157



Figure 88 - K7FAN QSL with P-51 Mustang.
In 1948, the Portland Airbase had 25 of these lightning-fast fighters.
K7F callsigns were issued around 1950 to Air Force stations in the Northwest. K7FAN was Roy Howard at Gowen Field, Idaho. K7FAJ was Ralph R E'Del at the Portland Airbase.

All capable Air National Guard aircraft<sup>158</sup> were flown to the Salem Municipal (McNary) Field.

Air Force Reserve aircraft were flown to McChord AFB outside of Tacoma, Washington. Planes that could not fly

were towed up Alderwood Road and secured at the Colwood parking lot.

"Eventually Klein would have 30 young airmen under his watch, all issued carbine rifles to keep order and protect the government property at Colwood...."<sup>159</sup>

bombers, a C-47 cargo plane, and a dozen lighter aircraft.

<sup>156</sup> Hughel pg 1

<sup>157</sup> Hughel pg 1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>158</sup> The Oregon Air National Guard's planes included 25 F-51 Mustang fighters, 3 A-26 attack

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>159</sup> Hugehl pg 1



Figure 89 - View from the Portland Airbase Control Tower. Note the wire antennas in the foreground. (Courtesy Oregon Air National Guard)

On Wednesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, the airmen...moved into the gymnasium at Kennedy School at NE 33<sup>rd</sup> and Killingsworth. Lumber was laid down to protect the gym's maple floors and steel lockers and other equipment were moved in creating a temporary orderly room. Like other Portland Schools,

classes at Kennedy School were cancelled for the year following the Memorial Day flood. Sixty-five Portland elementary schools, including Woodlawn and Kennedy were converted into temporary shelters for displaced Vanport residents.<sup>160</sup>



Figure 90 – The flooding destroyed a two-year investment at the airbase and was followed by months of repairs and restoration. (courtesy Oregon Air National Guard)

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>160</sup> Floods of May-June 1948 pg. 10



Figure 91 - Looking east over the airport and airbase in 1960. The airbase facilities are shown to the right of the main runway. 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue runs along the airport's west boundary. The large square shows the extent of the original runways. In 1953, the airport was expanded east through the former Alderwood Golf Course. (City of Portland image A2001-059.145)

# **Portland-Columbia Airport**

Portland's first commercial airport was dedicated in 1927 at Swan Island. By 1935, the Port of Portland had determined that a larger airport would be required and there was no room to expand at Swan Island. 700 acres were purchased at the airport's current location in northeast Portland and over 1,000 WPA workers helped with construction.

New dikes were erected to help protect the airport from flooding. And over 4 million cubic yards of fill were brought in to raise and level the site.

When the airport was opened October 13, 1940, it was called "Portland-Columbia Airport" to distinguish it from Swan Island.

The Army Air Corps used the new airport throughout World War II.



Figure 92 - Flooded tarmac and hangars at the Portland Airbase. (Courtesy Oregon Air National Guard)

Like the Portland Air Base, the airport was put out of service as the waters from Vanport worked their way east in mid June.

On Sunday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, the airport was closed because of the threat of flooding. On Monday May 31st, evacuation of the field was ordered by the Army Corps of Engineers. "The army, the airlines, the national guard, and half a dozen aircraft operators awoke that morning to the blare of radios and the glare of headlines telling the story of the city that was Vanport, the worst disaster in Oregon's recent history. They didn't want to be next. Before noon they had moved out of Portland-Columbia airport – planes, pilots, and personnel."161 Commercial traffic at the airport was rerouted to Salem

As soon as the air traffic subsided, Civil Aeronautics Authority staff began dismantling the airport's instrument landing system and radio equipment. The airport weather station was also dismantled.<sup>162</sup>

To accommodate the additional traffic, Salem's control tower, which had been out of service since the end of the war, was reactivated with radio equipment brought from Portland. The Salem post office abruptly became the distribution point for much of the Northwest's air mail when planes were diverted from Portland.

After the flood breached the Union Avenue fill, only the berms bordering the Peninsula Drainage Canal protected the airport. On June 11<sup>th163</sup> the canal walls broke at a point near a pump

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>161</sup> Oregonian 6/27/48

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>162</sup> Oregonian 5/31/48

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>163</sup> Flood of May-June 1948 pg. 12

station. Water flowed through covering an additional 10,000 acres and flooding the airbase and the airport. At the crest, flood water stood 8 to 10 feet deep in the passenger terminal and offices.

On June 29<sup>th</sup>, three of the four large air carriers that had moved to Salem (Western Air Lines, Northwest, and West Coast) moved to the hastily-upgraded Troutdale Airport east of Portland. This left only United Air Lines at Salem. Commercial traffic did not return to the Portland-Columbia Airport until mid-September.

# The Flooding Peaks in East County

After passing the airport, flood waters continued moving eastward, following

the sloughs to their origins near Fairview Lake. At peak flooding, water covered much of the lowlands between US Hwy 30 (Sandy Road) and Marine Drive from Parkrose nearly to Fairview.

"There was no widespread destruction of buildings as had happened at Vanport. The water rose slowly and current was not perceptible after the peak was reached." 164

"My parents, living in Parkrose had to evacuate...their home at 105<sup>th</sup> and Simpson. I have a photo of them in a rowboat looking into a window of the house a few days later. The water was still above the windowsill and had been up to the ceiling of their house. My grandmother lived just down the street and never went back."



Figure 93 — Parkrose-area homes are still partially under water in this photo taken June 21<sup>st</sup> from the Goodyear blimp

<sup>165</sup> Anon Freepages.Rootsweb.com

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>164</sup> Flood of May-June 1948 pg. 12



Figure 94 - Flood waters surge over 138th Avenue on their march to East County. Soon after this photo was taken the entire area was inundated. In the center of the photo, water is flowing through where Costco stands today. Most of the agricultural area shown has since been converted to various commercial and industrial uses. In the early 1960's the "142nd Avenue" cross-dike was built just east of 138th, dividing the drainage district in half and providing protection against another district-wide flood. (AP Wire Photo)

Waters eventually approached Blue Lake, about twelve miles east of Vanport but were stopped there by a natural dike.

Flooding did not significantly subside for about two weeks. All the lowlands east of Delta Park and north of the Columbia Slough were submerged for 28 days.



Figure 95 - Eldon Stevens keeps watch on a dike near Blue Lake. He's using a Type SX 30-40 mc transceiver made for the US Forest Service by Radio Specialty Manufacturing Company here in Portland. (Oregonian photo 6/3/48)

# THE VOICES of VANPORT



Part 5 - Vancouver and Points West



Figure 96 - The Interstate Bridge with the Columbia River at flood state. Looking south from the Vancouver shore. (Image courtesy of Clark County Historical Museum)

# **Vancouver**

Low-laying areas along Vancouver's waterfront suffered the same fate as other communities along the Columbia. The shipyards were awash. Vancouver's Pearson Airpark was partially underwater. The waterfront Alcoa plant became known as "ALCOA Island" as flood waters surrounded it. The Fruit Valley neighborhood west of the city was evacuated after water rose high enough to enter the sewer system.

On Friday May 28<sup>th</sup>, national guardsmen from the Vancouver barracks, worked with members of the Red Cross to evacuate 200 families of the Fruit Valley neighborhood to McLoughlin Heights.

With the Interstate Bridge closed to all but emergency traffic, the Vancouver barracks

were opened for refugees, including 107 former Vanport residents. 166

NVRS member Bob Walters recalls his father (Bob Sr.) returning to their home after working some very long days. Bob Sr. had an EE degree from the University of Minnesota. During and after the war, Bob Sr. was employed by the Bonneville Power Administration.

Although Mr. Walters was the Operations and Maintenance head at the Ross Substation east of Vancouver, he was tasked with keeping water out of the ALCOA substation and protecting power to the aluminum plant during the flood. Bob said that his dad worked several 12-18 hour shifts during the emergency.

<sup>166</sup> Flood of 48



Figure 97 - ALCOA substation, sandbagged but still functioning, during the 1948 flood. (Image courtesy of Clark County Historical Museum)

The ALCOA plant, built on the Vancouver Lake lowlands, was completely surrounded by water at times and was dubbed "ALCOA Island." Employees came and went by boat and helped sandbag the ALCOA site.

Despite the flooding, the plant continued to function behind dikes 15 to 20 feet high. The Vancouver ALCOA plant was shuttered in 1986 and the site has been redeveloped as Terminal 5.



Figure 98 - ALCOA Island during the 1948 flood. (Image courtesy of Clark County Historical Museum)

At the worst of the flooding, "Vancouver was virtually cut off from all avenues except the air as rail lines in all directions were either severed or in an unsafe condition. Trains from Seattle were coming south only as far as Kelso. The tracks were under water near Kalama. Water had softened the roadbed about 100 miles east of Vancouver..."<sup>167</sup>

Vancouver was further isolated on the evening of Monday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, when the interstate telephone lines to Portland were lost when the Denver Avenue fill washed out. With this, the mission of the Vancouver-area hams expanded from providing communications for the local emergency to handling essential messages across the region.

Members of the Vancouver Amateur Radio Club, W7AIA, were credited in *QST* for their efforts. Local nets were established on 144 mc. And the W7AIA club station participated in the 3.941 mc emergency net, serving "the Coast Guard, Army Engineers and any other groups which might call for service."<sup>168</sup>

# Dr. Vernon J "Doc" Bird (7FH, 7ZK, W7ZK)

Dr. Vernon J Bird was born January 14, 1899 in Rio Dell, California. Shortly after he graduated from Vancouver High School, he got his first amateur radio license, 7FH, on July 6, 1917. As an employee of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Co., he began working as a wireless operator for the Pacific Steamship Company. In August 1917, he set sail on the SS Spokane. He also served aboard the SS Senator, and the SS Admiral Dewey, traveling up and down the Pacific Coast and to ports in the far east.

After several years at sea, Dr. Bird returned to Vancouver in 1922. In 1927, Dr. Bird graduated from North Pacific College of Dental Medicine and began his dental practice.

After an absence from the airwaves, Dr. Bird was relicensed in 1939 and was able to regain one of his early calls, W7ZK. In the 1920's, calls starting with Z (7ZK), were reserved for "Special Amateur Stations." His commercial experience qualified him for a Z call in 1922 which carried with it privileges to operate in the 375 meter commercial band as well as the 200 meter amateur band.

QST mentions Dr. Bird's participation in the Vanport communications. We speculate that his commercial CW skills would have made him a valuable member of the 80 meter traffic nets. However, he also enjoyed operating 10 meters mobile, especially in the 1950's. So, he may have been part of the Vanport 10 meter mobile net as well.

Dr. Bird's grandnephew, Mark Richardson, a long-time Vancouver ham and NVRS member, applied for his current call, WA7ZK, in honor of Dr. Vernon Bird's legacy.



Figure 99 - Vernon Bird in 1919 from Application for Seaman's Certificate of Citizenship (Courtesy Ancestry.com)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>167</sup> Flood of 1948

# Robert M "Sparky" Sherman (W7EEA)

Along with several other Vancouver hams, Robert "Sparky" Sherman, W7EEA, was cited for his service during the Vanport emergency. Sparky's willingness to serve was so legendary, that the Cark County Amateur Radio Club named their Community Service Award in his honor.

The Sparky Sherman Community Service Award was established in 1982 and is awarded annually to the Clark County ARC member making the most significant contribution to public service. "For years Sparky was the most visible ham in the vicinity, and many were enriched by knowing him." 169

Blind from birth, Sparky Sherman graduated from the Washington State School for the Blind "WSSB" in 1932 after which he continued his formal music education at the Portland School of Music. Sparky played piano professionally with combos and jazz bands in the Portland

area in the 1930's before returning to WSSB as a teacher in 1947.

Sparky and Helen Lessard were married in 1943 and enjoyed nearly 40 years of marriage. In addition to raising a family of three, Helen and Sparky housed students who attended Emil Fries Piano Hospital where he taught. Helen volunteered at the WSSB, was active in Camp Fire Girls and scouting, and was named Clark County's Mother of the Year in 1961. Sparky and Helen were both active in the Lions Club and other civic activities.

Sparky was first licensed about 1934. He kept the call W7EEA until his passing in 1982. Later his son, James D. "Jim" Sherman (SK), used W7EEA in honor of Sparky.

After decades of teaching and volunteering, Sparky was asked if retirement had crossed his mind. His response? "I've always said that it's better to wear out than rust out." 170

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| RADIO KATFIP<br>DATE 6-28-81   | XMTR Swan 500                          |

Figure 100 - W7AIA QSL card. Today the Vancouver Amateur Radio Club is the Clark County Amateur Radio Club

<sup>170</sup> The Touch of Music pg. 6.

<sup>169</sup> K7GIT.com/awards.htm



Figure 101 - Burlington Ferry to Sauvie Island Dec 24, 1950 on the eve of its retirement (Author's collection).

# **Sauvie Island**

To this day Sauvie Island is a wonderful pastoral agricultural oasis only minutes northwest of urban Portland.

On the westerly side, the island is separated from shore by the Multnomah Channel (formerly the Willamette Slough). The easterly side of the island has a magnificent view of the Willamette River flowing north and joining the Columbia.

The first bridge to Sauvie Island was finished in December 1950, at which time the Burlington Ferry was retired. 171

Regular flooding made the island's land ideal for farming and dairying and a key stopover for migratory birds.

A small dike was built on the northerly end of the island facing the Columbia around 1925. The Army Corps of Engineers built a much larger dike around the southerly end of the island in 1941.

"The Sauvie Island levee, as completed in 1941, was designed to withstand the flood record which was 33 feet in 1894."

However, in the seven years between the levy's completion in 1941 and the 1948 flood, "...settlement of the levee in various sections had lowered the effective height to as low as 31 feet."<sup>173</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>171</sup> Multnomah County replaced the 1950 bridge with a beautiful new structure in 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>172</sup> Pete Patterson Flood of 48 pg. 36

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>173</sup> Pete Patterson Flood of 48 pg. 36

#### **Sauvie Island Stories**

The following vignettes are mostly from stories gathered by Mabel Howell Dudley for her memoire on the *Flood of 48* and represent just a taste.

I feel these first-hand accounts from island residents are the best way to tell the story of the Sauvie Island Flood and create perspective for the work done by Edwin Wiedmaier, W7HDN, and his son.

# **Flooding Reaches The Island**

In 1948, "the big dike was still new and houses were being built on low ground with the hopes of not being flooded twice a year, the boys were coming home from the war, if you had electricity it was still a novelty...and if you had a phone it was a 10 party line..."<sup>174</sup>

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"The flood fight started in mid-April with casual dike walkers and lasted until late June. Many of the island kids with horses rode the dike during the early part of the flood looking for problems. As the water continued to rise, the operation became a small war, complete with:

- ➤ A Command Center The Sauvie Island Soil Conservation Office
- Supply Dumps trucks, bulldozers, sacks, generators, lights made with dishpan reflectors, radios, shovels, and more sacks
- Evacuations families and livestock from the low ground

Special Operations - Omar Spencer's sand quarry and the Little Surgeon Lake willow logging operation"
Pete Patterson<sup>175</sup>

\*

"I was seated in church and heard the Pastor say that volunteer help was needed on the island to help fill and place sandbags on the dike. As soon as church let out, I went home, changed my clothes and headed for the island." "I worked on the dike until after dark and went to my aunt's house to sleep. I was no sooner in bed when there came a knock on the door. Government officials were saying that the dike might break that night and everyone on the Island was to go to the schoolhouse — the highest point on the island."

Bob Hutchinson<sup>176</sup>





Figure 102 - The Hutchinson's Sauvie Island ranch May 30th, 1948. (International News Sound Photos)

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>174</sup> Flood of 48 pg. 9

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>175</sup> Flood of 48 pg. 36

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>176</sup> Flood of 48 pg. 14

"I don't know how many [dike walkers] had walkie-talkies but Leo did, and one day he was standing a little north of where [Sauvie Island Road] comes up on the dike, when the whole dike started moving. A call for help brought quick response and after a few frantic minutes of sandbagging the dike was saved."

Mable Howell Dudley 177

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"On Sunday afternoon May 30<sup>th</sup>, [we] drove down to Burlington with the intention of ferrying across to Sauvie Island. Since we were not residents or worked on the island, they would not allow us to cross because of the high water and emergency conditions. We were on our way home when we heard on our radio that the Vanport dike had broken."

Al Lerch<sup>178</sup>



"The little Columbia County dike had broken...[and] the Sauvie Island Drainage District dike was in danger too, the water being so high that the Army Corps of Engineers had their headquarters at the Sauvie Island School grounds."

Ida Reeder<sup>179</sup>



"At the schoolhouse we find a yard full of tents, as the U.S. Army had sent 50 men from Fort Vancouver to help save the big dike, which was still under the management of the U.S. Corps of Engineers. The Army used the school

for its mess hall and they also had cots set up in the school. My sister went over to the school to borrow a large kettle. She knocked on the front door but was escorted to a rear door as there were men roaming through the hall in their birthday suits."

Tom G Davis<sup>180</sup>



With water flowing past the little dike, most of the homes and farms on the northerly end of the island were underwater or threatened. After evacuating their turkey farm by-barge and finding brooder houses to rent in Sandy, McMinnville, and Salem, Jim Lyon was headed for the St Johns bridge to go home. "...[C]oming west on Lombard, I ended up in the traffic iam at Union Avenue caused by the Vanport Flood. Hearing requests on the radio for trucks to help people get out of Vanport, I unloaded the turkey coops at Dad's home on Washburne Avenue, turned around, and headed for Vanport. However, due to traffic jams, I never did get there."

Jim Lyon<sup>181</sup>



\*

Figure 103 - Farm trucks work to evacuate Sauvie Island. (The Oregonian 5/30/48)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>177</sup> Flood of 48 pg. 44

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>178</sup> Flood of 48 pg. 10

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>179</sup> Flood of 48 pg. 19

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>180</sup> Flood of 48 pg. 30

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>181</sup> Flood of 48 pg. 27

## The Dike Watch Frequency

"At 10:00 A.M. on May 31st the ARRL Emergency Coordinator [Allen Davis, W7DIS] received an urgent request for ham communications from Sauvie Island which suffered from disruption of ferry service and only sporadic services via the one remaining telephone line.

The prospects were for complete inundation on the island with probable heavy loss of life and property. Highest priority was given to the establishment of the required circuit."<sup>182</sup>

Forty-nine year old Edwin Wiedmaier, W7HDN, (Portland) and his twenty-one year old son Gene made their way to the island by a circuitous water route.

Together, they set up a ham radio station in the Sauvie Island Soil Conservation Office (the headquarters for flood operations on the island) and successfully made contact with Willis "Lee" Campbell, W7ADH, in NE Portland.

The 75-meter phone circuit on 3900 kc "was kept open continuously for several days, and the channel was often referred to as the 'dike-watch frequency." 183

Eugene "Gene" Wiedmaier got his ticket, W7OGI, shortly after the Vanport emergency. He went on to work at Portland Radio Supply until his death in the 1967.

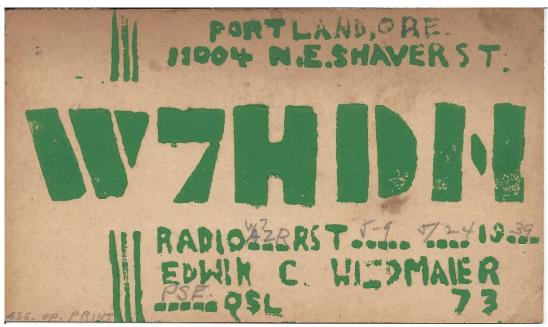


Figure 104 - W7HDN QSL from 1939 (tempura on cardstock) printed by "assistant operator."

<sup>183</sup> QST 9/48 pg. 106

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>182</sup> QST 9/48 pg. 106

#### The Dike Held

"The Omar Spencer Farm near the dike was sand and this area was used for sandbags. I had a dragline operating on ditch work and I moved it to the sand area. A loading chute was constructed, and sand was put in the hopper by dragline and the sandbags filled. The Army Corps of Engineers took over direction and did a fine job." *Tom G Davis*<sup>184</sup>

"Three one-half yard dragline shovels, two bulldozers, 35 trucks, 800 truckloads of willows and approximately 345,000 sacks of sand were used...."185

Hundreds of workers including soldiers, resident volunteers, and workers hired by the Corps, placed sandbags and woven willow mats to secure the dike.

"The dike leaked in many places but held." <sup>186</sup>

Though there was substantial property loss on Sauvie Island, efforts to support the dikes and evacuate the residents prevented losses from being much worse.



Figure 105 - Water spills over the Sauvie Island dike along the Multnomah Channel. (Author's collection)

<sup>186</sup> Flood of 48 pg. 29

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>184</sup> Flood of 48 pg. 29

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>185</sup> Flood of 48 pg. 33

# Longview

Longview, Washington was built on a low floodplain at the confluence of the Cowlitz River and the Columbia. Drainage districts were formed and dikes were erected to protect the town of about 22,000 from flooding.

## **Lower Columbia ARC**

During the 1948 flood, local ham radio operators volunteered to stand watch on the dikes with radios to report any issues. Among these were:

- Dr. John Nelson (W7AOB)
- Rolly Mietzke (W7BVO)
- Henry Hale (W7FON)

Following the flood, these three, and three others whose names have been lost to time, joined to form the Lower Columbia Amateur Radio Association.

Out of appreciation for their efforts, the Weyerhaeuser company donated a "line shack" to the club and provided a hilltop location to site it.

"The original call of the club was W7NCW. But, on the death of Ray Sechler, we obtained his call. Ray (W7DG) had been the CW instructor to so many of us over the years that we decided to honor him in this way." 187

## **Honored by the Governor**

The club's seventy-year legacy and ongoing efforts to serve the community were recognized on May 30, 2018, in a letter from Washington Governor Jay Inslee.

"Born out of the Vanport Flood of May 30, 1948, LCARA has a long history of providing critical communications assistance and other emergency services, such as emergency transport and drone operations, to a broad range of organizations, including local law enforcement and fire departments, the Civil Air Patrol, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, hospitals and the Red Cross." 188



Figure 106 - Lower Columbia ARA Club Facility and Tower (w7dg.org)

<sup>188</sup> Jay Inslee Letter

<sup>187</sup> W7DG.org



Figure 107 - K7NRV Astoria QSL 1949

# **United States Naval Reserve Stations**

Following World War II, the United States Navy activated the Naval Reserve program. People interested in electronics could apply to join an "Electronics Warfare" group in their community.

Depending upon the size of the local group, they might be issued surplus communications equipment such as a complete radio station, radio teletype equipment, radars, and direction-finding receivers. Testing equipment, tools, and television kits were supplied to help with training (and maintain interest).

Naval Reserve stations were given operating privileges in the military bands for drilling and official business. Reservists who were also licensed amateurs could get special Naval Reserve callsigns to use for amateur purposes on the ham bands. Electronics Warfare stations in the northwest were in the Navy's 13<sup>th</sup> district.

## **The Flood Response**

During the 1948 flood, several Naval Reserve stations played key roles in rendering aid.

# K7NRO Roosevelt School Centralia, Washington (Electronics Warfare Co. 13-2)

Reservists from EWC 13-2 in Centralia, Washington, delivered and set up a power generator at Kelso to provide lighting for dike work.

The group also provided and set up radio gear so that the Kelso flood headquarters could communicate with dike patrols.

The commanding officer of EWC 13-2 oversaw area communications and coordinated with area hams during the emergency.

|   | States Naval Reserve                     |      |
|---|--|------|
| RADIOW 9 DGA                                | TWELFTH NAVAL DISTRICT PREQ. 7 MC        |      |
| THE FOR CONAY                               | RST 579                                  |      |
| REMARKS:                                    | AT 0/26                                  | GCT  |
| SX 28 H ROOR                                | DATE 24 Oct                              | 1998 |
| Meissner sig strefter<br>PP 4-750 A<br>1/as | WIVE, B. HOLLIS  REX W5FDR  OKS- RM- REG | 4    |
| A services are serviced                     | 1801 109TH AVE HIP WACE W                | as.  |

Figure 108 - W6FDR QSL Oakland, CA 1948

# W6FDR Oakland, California (USNR – 12<sup>th</sup> Naval District)

W6FDR (Oakland) handled the bulk of East-West emergency communications and messages to California. 189

## **K7NRA**

Veterans Administration Hospital, Walla Walla, Washington (EWC 13-14)

K7NRA (Walla Walla) stood by ready to assist as needed.

# K7NRV Recreation Building Naval Station Astoria, Oregon (EWC 13-36)

"LT Carl Russell's Astoria EWC earned a 'well done' from the Commandant, Thirteenth Naval District, by handling without interruption all communications for the lower Columbia River valley for 14 consecutive days. These included Army, Navy, and Coast Guard dispatches, which added up to a considerable number.

This important mission was accomplished by these volunteers without pay. The men of the Astoria Volunteer Composite Unit assisted throughout the stricken area in building dikes, ferrying stranded inhabitants, and aiding in every way possible."<sup>190</sup> This included setting up a portable radio station at Clatskanie, OR.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>189</sup> QRR...The Dike is Broken pg. 39



Figure 109 - K7USN QSL USNR training Center, Swan Island (courtesy of K8CX)

K7USN Swan Island Portland, Oregon Naval Reserve Training Center

Reservists at the Swan Island training center maintained a continuous watch at its ham radio station, K7USN.



Figure 110 – Kaiser Oregon Shipyard, north of St. Johns. This was one of the three Portland-area Kaiser yards that employed residents of Vanport during the war. Ironically, this view shows the idled plant under water on May 31, 1948, the day after the Vanport tragedy. The Vanport Extension Center (Vanport College) held classes here for three years after being displaced from Vanport. (AP Wirephoto)

# **Acknowledgements**

We greatly appreciate the special assistance provided by:

Craig Adams Ron Kramer

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AmericanRadioHistory.com Don Retzlaff,

Lynn Burlingame, N7CFO W5RG.donretzlaff.com Bob Green W8JYZ, Mark Richardson, WA7ZK

oldqslcards.com Portland State University Library
Don Hanson Special Collections & University

Dick Howard, K7DVK Archives

Doris Howard, W7DVK Tom Roscoe, K8CX, Lisa Howard HamGallery.com

Lisa Howard Dick Karman

# **Other Photo Credits**

Page 5 – Bonneville Dam during the flood (author's collection)

Page 15 – Grand Coulee Dam sees record flows ( J Boyd Ellis, Arlington WA)

Page 35 – Fleeing Vanport (author's collection)

Page 64 – EKKO reception verification stamps (various sources)

Page 90 – Water moves east from Vanport (author's collection)

Page 106 – Fruit Valley community under water (author's collection)

# **Errata**

If errors appear in this story caused by gaps in my research or by repeating errors from source documents, I sincerely apologize and assure you that we did our best. And we certainly did not mean to leave anyone out or otherwise diminish anyone's contributions.

We would like nothing more than to hear your Vanport radio stories. If you have clippings, QSL cards, images, etc. to share, please contact me at nvrsdan@gmail.com.

# Appendix 1 - Hams Involved with the 1948 Flood

Names and Locations from the Radio Amateur Call Book (Vanport residents indicated by red text)

#### **W5COE**

Richard K Brown El Paso TX **W6CXO** 

San Francisco Naval Shipyard ARC

National Red Cross Headquarters San Francisco CA



W6DDE ca 1932 courtesy Kapiti Coast Museum

#### **W6DDE**

John E Wilcox North Hollywood CA



#### W6FDR

William B Holli Oakland CA Naval Reserve

#### **W6GHS**

Delbert E Luck Manteca CA

#### **W6IOX**

Vincent J Haggerty Santa Barbara CA

**W6NPH** unknown

## W6OT

Oakland Radio Club

Oakland CA

## **W6QAF**

Daniel M Thompson Signal Office, Presidio San Francisco CA

## **W6QXN**

Siguard W "Sig" Lassen Lafayette CA

## **W6REB**

Christian R Jensen Yreka CA



333 Tapadero St. VY73's Art McDole.op (OSL courtesy K8CX)

## W6WJM

Arthur E "Art" McDole Salinas CA

## **W7AAH**

Eddie B Pacot Ellensburg WA WARTS member

## **W7ACZ**

Edward I Jewett Portland

#### **W7ADH**

Willis L "Lee" Campbell Portland Sauvie Island Dike Watch

#### **W7ADW**

John S Smith Portland



#### **W7AEF**

Calo B "Bill" Lucas Portland 28 mc mobile net control

#### **W7AFL**

Robert W Glaze 1902 N Victory Blvd Vanport



W7AGR ca. 1951 Electric Radio Sept 1992 used by permission

#### **W7AGR**

Lyle Simpson Portland

#### **W7AIA**

Vancouver ARC (now Clark County ARC) Vancouver WA

#### **W7AIE**

Retlaw W Haynes Portland



#### **W7AJN**

Everett "Ev" France Portland **W7AKC** 

Lloyd Taylor The Dalles OR

# W7AKQ

LaVerne A Bamber Portland



# W7AMQ

Gale Sells Portland

## **W7AOB**

Dr John A Nelson Jr Longview WA Lower Columbia ARC NVRS member

#### **W7APD**

Joseph G McKay Rainier OR



## **W7APF**

Donald McPherson Cutler City OR



## **W7APG**

Grant Lane Portland



## **W7AQJ**

Eldred W Start Vancouver WA WARTS member

#### **W7ARY**

Byron R Paul Portland



W7ASF (Popular Science 8/1935)

#### **W7ASF**

Stanley R "Stan" Rand Portland

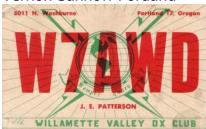
#### **W7ASR**

Robert L Colosky Portland



#### **W7AVV**

Vernon Sahnow Portland



(QSL courtesy K8CX)

#### **W7AWD**

Joseph E Patterson Portland

#### **W7AXA**

Ohlen R Higgens Portland

#### W7BIM

Jack N Binnicker Lake Oswego OR Date PR 100 NO TO MA NAME OF THE PARTY OF TH

(QSL courtesy W8JYZ)

## W7BIW

Sam A Davenport Pasco WA WARTS member

#### W7BKC

Byron J Peffly Portland

# W7BQD

Herbert Mohr Portland



(W7BUW courtesy OCWA)

#### W7BUW

John R "Dick" Borton Yakima WA WARTS member

#### W7BVO

Rolland "Rollie" Mietzke Longview WA Lower Columbia ARA

## W7BWC

William Burris Pinehurst WA WARTS member

#### W7BX

Floyd Taylor Richland WA WARTS member

#### **W7CEJ**

Roland G Buri Portland **W7CFC** Unknown

#### W7CIH

Axel B Tyle Portland

Vanport Pg. 124

## W7CKT

Lewis F Rylie Port Blakely WA WARTS member



# W7CQB

Stan Grimes Portland



#### W7CSC

Elmer J Anderson Portland **W7CUD** 

Bryant E Page Richland WA WARTS member

## W7CUJ

Garnet H Downing Portland



(QSL courtesy W5RG Collection)

## **W7CVI**

Leslie C Huff



(QSL courtesy W5RG Collection)

#### W7CYT

Fred Claussen Portland

#### **W7DCJ**

William H Young 2708 N Broadacre St #3655 Vanport

## **W7DDG**

John D McLennan Portland

## W7DHX

Don A Smith Portland Red Cross radio team



## W7DIS (K7DIS)

Allen N "Al" Davis Portland ARRL Emergency Coordinator

## **W7DNB**

Clark A Sterett Portland



W7DNP QSL (author's collection)

#### W7DNP

John Fitzgibbon Portland

## **W7DZY**

Everett J Gottschalk 11206 N Lake Ave Vanport



W7DZL (NVRS Archives)



#### W7DZL

Leland J "Jim" Larsen Portland

In charge of Red Cross radio team. Founder of Larsen Antennas.

#### **W7ECI**

Ermund Zochert Jr Portland

#### W7EDK

Wilfred E Stacey Vancouver WA Clark County ARC

## **W7EDU**

Kenneth House Dayton WA WARTS member

## **W7EEA**

Robert M "Sparky" Sherman Portland

## W7EFP

Glenn L Briedwell Jr Portland

#### W7EFT

David D Meeker Vancouver WA

#### W7EGR

Stanley L "Stan" Archer Coulee Dam WA WARTS member

#### W7ENR

Bryon A Ashenbrenner Hoquiam WA WARTS member

# W7ENU (K7ENU)

Mary B Davis Portland Red Cross radio team

#### **W7EPS**

Virgil W "Virg" Treadwell Yakima WA WARTS member



(QSL courtesy W5RG Collection)

## W7ERA

Walter J Manning Milwaukie OR



## **W7ESJ**

Edward "Connie" Conyngham Portland



## **W7ETO**

Albert E "Al" Freeman Wenatchee WA



#### W7EVR

Robert W Edlund Portland

## **W7EXQ**

Bruce L Stokes Portland Red Cross headquarters team

**NVRS** member

## **W7EYW**

Robert C Apperson Portland

## **W7FAW**

Paul J Sawin Longview WA

## W7FE

Walter Baumgartner Portland



#### W7FFE

Stan Merrifield St Helens OR **W7FHJ** 

Paul N Young Portland



#### **W7FJZ**

Zelmer A Sax Portland



W7FKZ Popular Mechanics April 1950

#### **W7FKZ**

Leroy "Ed" Parsons Astoria OR



#### W7FLE

Clarence Hall North Bend WA WARTS member



(QSL courtesy K8CX)

## W7FNK (KP6AL)

Jack N Wheeler Portland QSL from Jack's DXpedition to Palmyra Atoll.

## **W7FNS**

Virgil V Cowen Portland



(QSL courtesy W8JYZ)

#### W7FNX

Earl O Johnson Astoria OR



(QSL courtesy W8JYZ)

#### **W7FNZ**

Milton "Tiny" Marsh Eugene OR

## **W7FON**

Harry A Hale Longview WA Lower Columbia ARA

#### W7FRU

George M Marchand Woodinville WA



## W7FU

**Douglas Bates Portland** 



## W7FWD

Orpheus U Tatro Olympia WA



W7FXE Radio Jan 1940

## **W7FXE**

Lucile Allingham Portland XYL W7KY



#### **W7FZA**

Richard N "Dick" Schoepflin Portland



#### W7GAN

Herbert E Struck Portland



(QSL courtesy W5RG Collection)

## W7GBW (W7MB)

George A Wise 2602 N Broadacre St Vanport



W7GCT Corp, AAC QST Nov 1943

#### W7GCT

Robt "Bob" Greer Portland **W7GCZ** 

Dean Elder Green River WY



#### W7GJD

Dell Peacock Albany OR

#### W7GJY

John S "Stan" Crawford Portland



W7GM Radio August, 1935

## W7GM

Walter E "Eddie" Swartout Portland

## **W7GNR**

Maurice L "Morrie" Monson Bellingham WA WARTS member

#### **W7G00**

George E Fisher Astoria OR **W7GPZ** 

Clarence D "Clare" Newman Klamath Falls OR



(QSL courtesy W5RG Collection)

#### W7GSH

Alfred J Dawson Portland



## **W7GTU**

Richard M "Dick" Nelson Portland



#### W7GUR

James B "Jim" Boland Portland

#### W7GWA

Robert M "Bob" Ryan Seattle WA



## W7GXA (W7CG)

Joe Naemura 10316 N Force Ave Vanport NVRS member

## W7GX0

Arthur G White Portland

#### W7HA

James H "Jim" Platz Hood River OR

#### **W7HAE**

William E Holmes Portland



(QSL courtesy W8JYZ)

## W7HBO

Don Stewart La Grande OR

## W7HCQ

Richard M "Dick" Rogers Portland

#### **W7HCV**

Stuart C Edmonds Portland



#### W7HDN

Edwin C "Ed" Wiedmaier Portland Sauvie Island "Dike Watch" station



W7HIA YASME News Nov 1959

#### **W7HIA**

Herbert "Herb" Gilbaugh Portland

## W7HIK

William Weiss Jr Portland **W7HJI** 

Frank P McKay Portland



## W7HJU

Edwin S "Ed" Lamb Astoria OR



(QSL courtesy W5RG Collection)

#### **W7HKI**

A H "Jay" Gould Portland



#### **W7HKT**

Ed E Squier Portland **W7HKU** 

Charles A "Art" Cameron Portland Portland Police radio shop

## W7HOQ

John R Ehr Portland

## **W7HPS**

Frederick "Fred" A Riebe Eugene OR



(QSL courtesy W8JYZ)

# W7HQL

Bruce Rodgers Astoria OR **W7HRR** 

Archie F Brusch Vancouver WA



#### W7HRV

Carl Braun West Linn OR **W7HSZ** 

Rodgers W Jenkins Lake Oswego OR KGW transmitter tech



#### **W7HTS**

Paul R Sloan Portland Multnomah County radio tech

#### W7HVX

Wendel R "Robert" Williams Portland

#### **W7HWC**

William O Eden 10508 N Island Ave Vanport

## **W7IAC**

William L Boos Lake Oswego OR

## **W7ICA**

Clifford N Olson Portland Portland Red Cross headquarters team

## **W7IDG**

Lockett S White Portland



## W7IE

Robert A Wright Portland

#### **W7IES**

Leland Ready Troutdale OR **W7IEY** 

Louis W Dspain Rupert ID



(QSL courtesy NC State ARC)

#### **W7IFN**

Fred A Stocking Portland



(QSL courtesy W5RG Collection)

## **W7IFV**

Paul Walker Longview WA



(QSL courtesy W5RG Collection)

#### **W7IHA**

A H Jay Gould Ocean Park WA

#### **W7IHI**

Kenneth A Caplan Portland

#### **W7TTA**

Edwin Marvin Portland

#### W7IIJ

Donald "Don" Johnston Portland

## W7IIV

Marvin S Worthley Portland



#### W7IIX

William E "Bill" Cowling Jr Portland

Vanport Pg. 129

## **W7IQ0**

Patrick A Price Burton WA WARTS member

#### W7IRJ

Harold D Hanson Roseburg OR

## **W7IYK**

Walter P Greenwood Coulee Dam WA WARTS member



W7JAS QST Feb 1943

#### W7JAS

Henry Wastradowski Vancouver WA Clark County ARC

#### **W7JAZ**

William H Gleason Portland

#### W7JBE

Bruce F Brown Clackamas OR

#### W7JCT

Jack W Stanyar Yakima WA **W7JGY** 

Frank D Matteson Portland

#### **W7JIG**

Russell G Brant Portland

#### W7JJX

Robert G Starr Portland

## **W7JMY**

Don R Laird Portland



(QSL courtesy W8JYZ)

## **W7JMZ**

Robert T Murphy Portland



(QSL courtesy W5RG Collection)

## W7JN

Clarence L Bischoff Portland

## W7JNG

Warren B Carlton Portland

## W7JPQ

Theophoulus G Williams Portland



## W7JQ

Carl B Davis Portland

#### W7JRT

Warren E Luse Portland

#### W7JRZ

Herbert J Haag Portland

## W7JSK

Clinton B Rhoades Jr

Portland

## W7JSM

Robert L Warnock Portland

#### **W7JSO**

Gerald S Kraxberger 11007 N Lake Ave Vanport

## **W7JTK**

John McArdle Portland

## W7JWD

Leslie Hay Bellingham WA



(QSL courtesy W8JYZ)

## W7JWJ

Harry Lewis Richland WA WARTS member

## W7JWL

Vincent M Sullivan Portland



(QSL courtesy W8JYZ)

## **W7JXN**

George E Wann 3606 N Victory Blvd Vanport



(QSL courtesy cardcow.com)

## W7KAW

Marie C Clark Portland

#### W7KBX

Norman E Kirkham Portland

#### W7KCA

John C Briggs Goldendale WA



Vanport Pg. 130

#### W7KCF

Joe Demke Portland

## W7KCL

Verne S Criswell Portland

## W7KDC

Wandalee Dspain

Rupert ID



(QSL courtesy cardcow.com)

#### W7KER

Clarence P "Woody" Wood Portland

Red Cross radio team



W7KIX courtesy engadget.com

#### W7KIX

Marvin M McCartney Richland WA WARTS member



W7KJC courtesy gsoc.org

#### W7KJC

Frederick E "Fred" Miller Portland

#### W7KJG

Earle Ashe Portland

#### W7KJV

Gerald Van Kol Milwaukie OR

## W7KKI

Sylvester F Williams Bremerton WA WARTS member

#### W7KL

Wallace N "Wink" Wintler Eugene OR

## W7KM

Frank Bloss Portland

#### **W7KNE**

Theodore G Suomela Ilwaco WA



## W7KOF

**Dave Barr Portland** 

## **W7KOM**

James L Hay Portland

## **W7KOV**

Edwin W Johnson Portland



(QSL courtesy cardcow.com)

#### W7KPK

Delbert L Shampine 2204 N Victory Blvd

## Vanport

# W7KQY

Howard F Wright 3510 N Cottonwood St #713 Vanport



#### W7KR

Harold R Brock Pendleton OR

#### W7KRO

**Huston Eckert Portland** 



W7KSA courtesy seapac.org



## W7KSA

Clyde A Sylvester Portland

# W7KTD (W6MBN)

Harry J Henke Portland

## W7KTL

Earl M Ringle Vancouver WA Clark County ARC

## **W7KTS**

William K Ward Vancouver WA

#### W7KUF

Laurence A Morin Portland

#### **W7KUT**

John O Norback Portland

#### W7KVB

Edward M Davis Portland

#### **W7KWE**

Harold J Sterne Portland

#### W7KWH

Alfred F Benz Portland

## W7KXD

Donald D Kerlee Portland

Vanport Pg. 131



#### W7KY

William D

"Broadcast Bill" Allingham Tigard OR

Station Manager & Engineer for KBPS Benson High School **W7KZA** 

# Thomas I Potter Portland



W7LAH courtesy oregonlive.com

## W7LAH

Alvin D "Al" Schwartz Portland

#### W7LA0

William Siebert Portland

## W7LAX

Jack N Wheeler Portland

#### **W7LAZ**

Wm Politz Portland



#### **W7LBV**

Charles E "Chuck" Austin Salem OR

#### W7LCL

James R Tompkins Vancouver WA

#### W7LDB

James Ray Portland

## **W7LDF**

Robert W Evenson 10707 N Force Ave Vanport

## W7LFJ

Russell S Kelsey Portland

## **W7LGV**

Albert L Smith 9901 N Denver Ct Vanport

## W7LHB

Merlin H MacKenzie Portland

## W7LHP

Eugene A Wiseman Portland



## **W7LHT**

Stuart R Boline Portland



## W7LI

Thurlow Wauchope Portland

#### **W7LIN**

Nelson A Maxwell Portland

#### **W7LIV**

Richard O Burnham Portland



#### W7LJJ

Neil Baldwin Portland

## W7LJR

Walter J Ernst Portland

## W7LLI

Eldin W Guthrie Portland

#### W7LMC

George N Baldwin Portland

#### W7LMF

John A Harrison Portland



W7LOU courtesy ieee.org

#### W7LOU

Dr Robert D "Bob" Hunsucker Portland

#### W7LPV

Edgar A Smith Portland

## W7LQJ

Hugh Leacock Portland **W7LOS** 

Glen M Freeman Portland



#### W7LT

John A Peel Portland

#### W7LTW

Alan E Hodgson Portland

#### **W7LTY**

Ronald A McNeil Vancouver WA Clark County ARC



## W7LVO

Lewis H "Lew" Coe JR Portland

## W7LWD

Chris J Nizic Portland



W7LXR courtesy legacy.com

#### W7LXR

Russell V "Russ" Fillinger Portland Also provided communications during Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

#### W7LY

Robert E Thomlinson Portland

#### **W7LYE**

David E Wright Portland

#### W7MBI

William R Brownell Portland

## **W7MEY**

Frank P McKay Long Beach WA

#### **W7MFS**

Dan C Trusty Vancouver WA



#### W7MHK

Mark L Nelson Jr Portland

## W7NCW

Lower Columbia ARC Longview WA

## **K7NRA**

Electronic Warfare Co 13-14 Walla Walla WA

## **K7NRO**

Electronic Warfare Co 13-2 Centralia WA



## **K7NRV**

Electronic Warfare Co 13-36 Astoria OR

#### W70ZC

**Howard Douglass Portland** 

## **W7RAO**

Charles F Pierce Seattle WA

## W7SSQ

Stanton Cleary **Bremerton WA** 



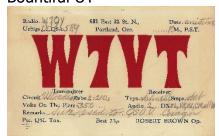
(QSL courtesy K8CX)

#### **K7USN**

Naval Reserve Training Ctr **Portland** 

#### W7UTM

Floyd L Hinshaw **Bountiful UT** 



## W7VT

Robert "Bob" Brown Portland



## **W7WJ (7DZ, 7GK, 7KK)**

Hal C McCracken Portland Red Cross headquarters station

## W7WQ

Marion H Morris Lake Grove OR WARTS member



SS Spokane in Alaska

# **W7ZK (7FH, 7ZK)**

Dr. Vernon J "Doc" Bird Vancouver WA Wireless officer on:

- SS Admiral Dewey
- SS Senator
- SS Spokane



(QSL courtesy W5RG Collection)

## W7ZU (W8ZU)

Donald W "Don" Exner Seattle WA

## **W8QGZ**

Byron D "By" Richards Detroit MI

#### **WOYOS**

Kenneth G McKee Seneca KS

#### KG6AC

Oakley L Stockton Guam HQ 20th Air Force

#### KL7ME

**Richard Williams** Shemya AK 120th AACS Squadron

# Where noted, images in Appendix 1 were provided courtesy of:

CardCow (cardcow.com)
Electric Radio magazine (ermag.com)
Engadget (engadget.com)
Geological Society of the Oregon
Country (gsoc.org)
Bob Green, W8JYZ, QSL Cards From the
Past (oldqslcards.com)
Institute of Electrical and Electronics
Engineers (ieee.org)
Kapiti Coast Museum
(kapiticoastmuseum.org.nz)
North Carolina State University Libraries

(d.lib.ncsu.edu)

The Oregonian (oregonlive.com)
Quarter Century Wireless Association
(QCWA)
QST magazine (ARRL.org)
Don Retzlaff, curator of W5RG Thomas
Russell Gentry website
(W5RG.donretzlaff.com)
Thomas Roscoe, K8CX, Ham Gallery
(hamgallery.com)
SEA-PAC (seapac.org)
The YASME News (yasme.org)

Other QSL images are from Dick Howard, K7DVK, and the author's collection

Sources used to compile this list acknowledge that the names of other hams involved with the emergency have been lost to history. We appreciate everyone's contributions and regret any omissions. If you have names, stories, photos or QSLs to add, please contact the author at nvrsdan@gmail.com.



Al Davis QSL confirming a QSO he made from Guam while operating W7GXR/KB6 in August 1946. The head-on view of the B-29 Superfortress on the club's QSL card makes a striking image.

# Allen N Davis (W7DIS, W7DJK, K7DIS) and Mary Bailey Davis (W7ENU, K7ENU)

During the Vanport emergency, Allen N "Al" Davis, W7DIS, was front and center as the ARRL's Emergency Coordinator. As such he had roles in planning, volunteer coordination, liaison work, and actively participated in day-to-day radio operations. Likewise, Mary Davis (ne Bailey), W7ENU, was busy helping with emergency communications and handled traffic.

Al Davis was raised in Portland and attended Grant High School. Mary E Bailey attended Grant at the same time, though she was a couple of grades ahead of Al. Shortly after getting his ham license, W7DIS, Al helped Mary get her ticket, W7ENU. At the time Grant had an active ham club, "De Forest Club of Grant High School," W7FI.

The summer after his 1935 graduation, Al was employed as a fire lookout, working at Lookout Mountain in the Columbia (Gifford Pinchot) National Forest. Typical of hams that worked as lookouts, Al helped pass the time by working other amateurs. Though he

was only operating with a couple of watts, the 5,000' elevation at the lookout tower helped get his signal out.

That fall, both Al and Mary moved down to Corvallis and attended Oregon State College. During February, 1937, severe rain, snow, and windstorms cut off all wire service between Eugene and the Coos Bay area. For about a week, the towns near Coos Bay relied on amateur radio as their only means of communication with the Willamette Valley. W7EZL, in Corvallis, was a key station in the 3.5 mc traffic network, and both Al and Mary served as relief operators.

Al and Mary were married in 1937 while still at OSC. In the summer of 1940, they announced plans to move to Nome, Alaska where Al took a Signal Corps job.

The Davis's Oregon call signs were changed from W7DIS and W7ENU to K7DIS and K7ENU during the move to the Territory of Alaska. (Alaska used "K" call signs until after World War II

when the now-familiar KL calls began being issued). The Arctic Amateur Radio Club was formed in September, 1940, and Al partnered with them as State Net Control, handling traffic until amateur privileges were suspended.

Al and Mary were stationed at Marks Army Airfield in Nome where he worked for the Alaska Communication System (ACS) as an operator and technician. Mary handled amateur traffic, operating K7ENU. As part of the Army Amateur Radio Service in Alaska, her station also served as an aircraft early warning station. After amateur privileges were suspended at the start of the war, Mary handled traffic for the Civil Aviation Administration.

After three and a half years in Nome, Al was sent to the Aleutian Islands. After the armistice, he was one of the first twenty men discharged, returning to Oregon in late 1945.<sup>192</sup> Al ultimately

achieved the rank of Technician Grade 3 (equivalent to Staff Sergeant). Interestingly, though Al was discharged in 1945, the QSL shown above documents a QSO he made from the 11<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Headquarters on Guam in August 1946. If anyone can explain this or share additional details, please contact the author.<sup>193</sup>

Al and Mary's volunteer work during the 1948 Vanport emergency (despite looking after a young family) is recounted in the main story. Their report to the ARRL "QRR...the Dike is Broken" was a key resource in our efforts to document the role of hams during the emergency. Needless to say, the Davis's continued assisting the community with emergency communications in the years following, as well. They are buried at Willamette National Cemetery; Mary having passed in 1989 and Al in 2001.



De Forest Club of Grant High School, W7FI. Note several proudly licensed members have their QSL cards pinned to their shirts. We believe that the club's sponsor, Thomas G. Schuele, W7DXL, is pictured in the front row. (U.S. Grant High School (Portland, OR) Yearbook "Memoirs" January, 1934, courtesy Genealogical Forum of Oregon).

193 nvrsdan@gmailcom

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>191</sup> CQ-YL pg. 82

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>192</sup> QST January 1946 pg. 78

# **Appendix 2 – Telephone Trivia**

This Vanport telephone directory was published shortly after the TYler manual exchange began operating. At the time some facilities retained their prior numbers. Note the extensive list of services available in the city. The "Hospital" is the Vanport Permanente hospital, built for Kaiser shipyard workers.

| dministration Bldg           | .TY  | 0180   | Warehouse-E. VanportTR 222 |
|------------------------------|------|--|----------------------------|
| Beauty Shop #1               |      |  | WelfareTY 057              |
| Beauty Shop #5               |      |  | Western UnionTY 083        |
| ollege                       |      |  | Shopping Center #1:        |
| oal Pit                      |      |  | CafeTY 075                 |
| TRE DEPART ENT               |      |  | DrugTY 073                 |
| as Stations:                 | 4031 |  | GroceryTY 079              |
| Gen. Petroleum               | .UN  | 9814   | Meat MarketTY 010          |
| Standard Service             |      |  | Shopping Center #3         |
| OSPITAL                      |      |  | Grocery                    |
| ucas, Barney Washing Machine |      |  | Shopping Center #4         |
| ost Office                   |      |  | CaféTY 046                 |
| ed Cross - Madora Nichols    |      |  | DrugTY 014                 |
| ed Cross - Mrs. Robertson    | 1    | The state of the s | Dry CleanersTY 023         |
| heriff - Day                 |      | CONTRACTOR SCHOOL STATE  | GroceryTY 025              |
| Night                        |      |  | Meat MarketTY 014          |
| chool or Nursery             |      |  | Shopping Center #5         |
| heatre                       |      |  | Drugs                      |
| nited Church Ministry        |      |  | GroceryTY 045              |

Vanport Telephone Numbers from "The Voice of Vanport" March 28, 1947 pg. 4.

Prior to the TYler exchange, lines in Vanport were served by several Portland telephone exchanges.

Dick Howard shared how some of the North Portland exchanges evolved into the modern form.

- MUrdock → ATlantic4 → 284
- TRinity →ATlantic7 → 287
- TYler → TWinoaks → Butler9 → 289
- UNiversity → AVenue6 → 286

In the 1940's, the number of the payphone at Howard's Associated Service station at Union Avenue and Lombard was MUrdock-9282. (At the time 9's were business lines).



Howard's Associated Service reminder

# **Appendix 3 - Full Text of President Truman's Speech**

Delivered at: Portland's Civic Auditorium, temporary Regional Red Cross Disaster Headquarters.

June 11, 1948 1:00 p.m.

Broadcast by KGW and KXL.

Courtesy of quod.lib.umich.edu/

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Mayor, Acting Governor Scott, ladies and gentlemen: I tried very hard this morning to get a chance to see from the air just what this flood looks like here, but one of your western mists prevented me from seeing it. It certainly wasn't a rain, although I got wet. I wanted to have a first-hand look at the situation and I am still hoping that I can take a look after this meeting is over.

I had with me, however, the Chief of Engineers of this District of the U.S. Army, and the Federal Works Administrator, General Fleming, and we had about 40 or 50 pictures taken within the last 2 or 3 days, which showed me the effects of the river from the Canadian border to its mouth. It is a terrible disaster. And I am in sympathy with trying to get that disaster met.

I ordered out every agency of the Federal Government to cooperate with the Red Cross and the State of Oregon, and the city of Portland, too, to meet the situation as best we can. I am told by General Fleming that there is complete harmony between all the agencies, both State and national, and the Red Cross, and that every effort is being made to meet the situation as far as we can.

Ordinarily the President of the United States has an emergency fund for such things as this, but last year that fund was eliminated, and it was not renewed again this year. There was only \$25,000 left in that fund, and I gave that to General Fleming so that some immediate emergencies could be met as far as possible. There is on the way to me now a joint resolution of the Congress authorizing the expenditure of \$10 million from the housing fund, which has already been appropriated. As soon as that arrives and that resolution is signed, which I hope will be before I leave Portland today, that much money will be available for immediate emergency relief. We are trying to get a resolution to authorize the Department of Agriculture to make grants to those farmers who have had their livestock washed away and whose stock had to be moved from farms to other places. I hope that can be arranged immediately.

Now that is so much for the present immediate situation. I have always been interested in the development and the control of the great rivers of this country. I live on the Missouri River at Independence, Mo., where a great many people started when this town was first organized over the Oregon Trail.

Independence, Mo., is by the Missouri River, and about 1 year in 3 the damage from that river basin has been all the way from \$100 million to \$500 million. This same situation has been true in the valley of the Ohio, and true in the lower valley of the Mississippi until the lower valley of the Mississippi has been controlled so that these floods that came in the last few years have not affected the lower Mississippi.

I want to see a regular flood control program in all these river valleys. As I said yesterday at Seattle, I want to see the river developed for the benefit of the people, for power, for navigation, for reclamation, and for flood control, and that can be done, and should be done. I was informed by the Chief of Engineers before I left Washington that the Missouri plan is completed, so far as the plan is concerned, but it will take 6 more years to get that flood control into effect.

There is a plan for the Columbia River Basin, not only for flood control but for power and for irrigation and for navigation. And I am hoping to see that Columbia River plan outlined completely. Had it not been for the immense power dams on the Columbia River, it would have been much harder to win World War Two. These immense dams at Bonneville and Grand Coulee-I went to see the Grand Coulee just the other day, and there are a million acre-feet of water pouring over that dam every 24 hours. That is the cause of some of your trouble down here. But if those dams had not been built over the opposition of people who wanted to look backward, it would have taken longer, and many more lives, to win World War Two.

There is not any reason in the world why these plans should not be carried out, and if we can get the cooperation of every branch of the Federal Government, we can get that done. There are some people, you know, who do not like public power, and there are some people who do not like to expend money for the reclamation of the land in the West. You know, Daniel Webster said the West wasn't any good, and the further away they could keep it from the East the better he would be pleased. That was along in 1835.

There are a lot of people who still believe like Daniel Webster. But I am trying to convert those people, and if I succeed in that, we will get the proper developments of those rivers. I am extremely sorry that you are faced with this disaster, but every disaster has some good at the conclusion of it. This will give you more sympathetic hearts when you hear that the Connecticut or the Missouri or the Ohio or some other great river in this country has gone on a rampage. You will understand just exactly what other people are faced with. They understand exactly what you are faced with, and they are sympathetic, and they are going to help you. And I am glad they are. I have had a most appreciative welcome in this part of the world.

I have been out here time and again before, but I didn't attract so much attention as I do now. I was here during World War Two, in the capacity of chairman of an investigating committee of the United States Senate. I have been here in Portland on two occasions, and I have been in Bremerton, Wash., and San Francisco, and Los

Angeles, Salt Lake City, and Sacramento-in nearly every town in the West. I have been out here before that, so I know something about what your problems are. I know something about what this country is in this part of the United States, and I know what a contribution it made to the war effort, not only in its power program which I have just talked about, but in the food production, in manpower, in ship production, and everything else that went to win that war.

Now I want to use those same facilities to win the peace, and I know we can do that. Everybody thought that, when the war suddenly ended, that everything was going to pot, there wouldn't be any jobs, there wouldn't be any work, there wouldn't be anything to do. Well, you know what a surprise it has been to everybody during the last 3 years, since the war ended. There is more work, and more jobs, and more things to be done than has ever been the case in the history of the world.

We finally have come to the conclusion that we must assume our position as leader in the world. In 1920 Almighty God, I think, intended for this country to assume that position, but we turned our backs on it-and see what happened? We can't do that anymore. We must accept our responsibility, and when we accept our responsibility-that leadership which God Almighty intended us to assume-there will be peace in the world. There will be enough for everybody to have the good things in life, not only in this country but in the rest of the world. We now have more than 61 million people at work; more jobs than ever before in the history of the country. And the income of the United States is \$200 billion or over. Now that can be continued, if we use our heads and our judgment.

That is what I am out here to explain to you. And I know how to do that. I know what to tell you to do. I told the Congress time and time again what they should do to continue that situation, and I hope eventually we will get action on it. I sincerely hope that when this severe flood subsides out here, we can immediately go to work and begin to put in a plan of construction along this river so that it will never happen again; and by the next time I come out here you won't be afraid of floods, and you won't be afraid of not having power, not having a lot of other things that will be good for you when they happen. That will take several years, but I would like to come out and see it, when it is finished.

Thank you very much.

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# **About the Author**

**Dan Howard** lives fifteen miles from the historic site of Vanport.

My Interests in ham radio and vintage radio collecting date from the 1970's. Through these interests we became acquainted with Dr. Joe Naemura and his family and it's our privilege to count the Naemuras among our friends.

Though basic story of Vanport is well-known, Joe's story of loss inspired me to dig deeper to discover and preserve the "radio side" of the story.

When the Northwest Vintage Radio Society was founded in 1974, we joined as a family and I've been involved with the NVRS on various levels ever since.

Though I'm not active on the air currently, I've been a licensed amateur radio operator since 1974, holding a (code required) General class license.

I especially enjoy researching and writing about radio history and my stories have been published in numerous publications.

