

Radio Reminisces - Terry VK5TM

My introduction to electronics and radio was a bit strange in that I never saw my parents or grandparents do anything connected with building radio's or anything similar when I was young and yet, in the cupboard under the staircase of my grandparents place was a bewildering array of all sorts of electronic bits and pieces (we're talking late 1950's and in the UK).

How did I know this stuff was here? Well, when staying with my grandparents, when it was time for the 'Archers' to come on the radio, I was shuffled off to said cupboard to keep me quiet (no, I wasn't locked in) and allowed to play with all these bits and pieces.

I must have picked something up somewhere, as I remember at one stage fitting the mains plug on to the transformer of my train set as I wanted to play with it after yet another house move (I was 8 at the time).

For those wondering why I was fitting the mains plug, in the UK, way back when, there wasn't a lot of standardisation between what mains sockets were fitted in a house, so when you moved, you removed all the plugs from electrical appliances and left them for the next person moving in to the house (at least that's what my father told me).

Shuffle on to 1965 and we emigrated to New Zealand and it was here that things really started to happen.

I finally saw my father working on electronic stuff, in this case building a stereo system (Mullard 3-3 and matching pre-amp) and for birthdays and Christmas for the next couple of years I was given things like the parts to build crystal sets and everyone's favourite, the Phillips EE20 (blew up the transistors in that one quite regularly in the beginning).

My father would bring home Practical Electronics and Electronics Australia magazines every month and things just carried on from there, with my main interest being radio of any sort.

By the age of 12 I was already building valve amplifiers and various other things and by 14 had built my first 2m AM transmitter (also valve), yes I had a license, see below.

By 1969, I had studied for, sat and received my NZ 'Operators Certificate of Proficiency', which allowed me on the VHF and up bands, but wasn't very happy with the callsign I got issued - ZL2TOY, not that it mattered in the end - cars, girls and a job saw Amateur Radio sidelined for some time.

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Then in the early 70's I moved to Australia and CB radio was just becoming a 'thing', so got a little bit into that and thoughts about Amateur Radio started again with the odd short lived dabble (I moved back and forward between Australia and NZ several times during the period up until the late 70's which didn't help).

I finally settled in Adelaide in the mid 80's (I say settled, but I was actually on the way to Canada with my first partner. We stopped in Sydney so she could see her parents and my mother lived in Adelaide, we never got any further) and again got back in to Amateur Radio in a small way, again on VHF.

Through the various ups and downs of life through the remainder of the 80's and the 90's, I lost touch with the hobby again and then met the wonderful lady (now my wife) who encouraged me to get back into the hobby.

Now retired and finally living in a place where there is no landlord to contend with, I do occasionally get the gear fired up, although it gets damned cold out in the shed during winter and quite the opposite during summer. As a result, I tend to do more on the homebrew/experimenting side, which I enjoy, but there are plans afoot to convert one of the spare bedrooms into the shack cum workshop, complete with air-conditioning. I just need to find somewhere to put all the junk that is currently in there.

Throughout my life though, apart from a stint in a car assembly plant, my working life has involved electronics in one form or another, be it TV/Radio repair, working in the television industry both on the production side and technical side, to running several electronics related businesses.