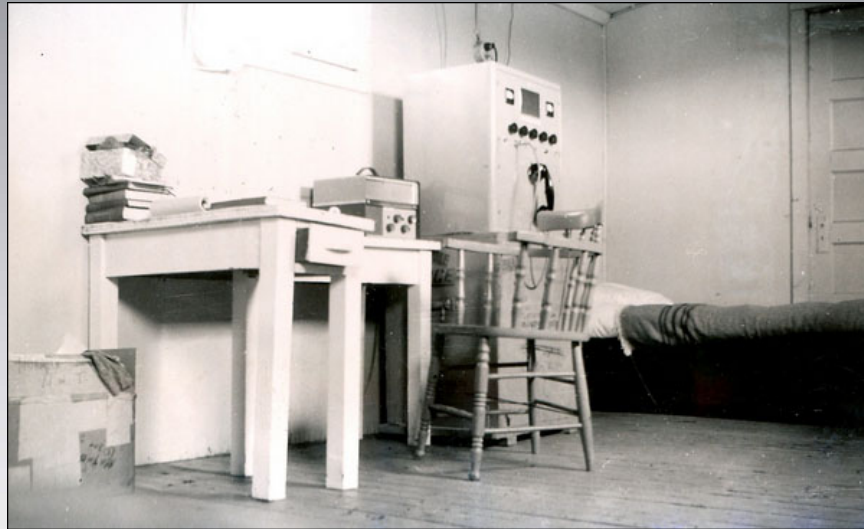


# DAVID STOCK- RECOLLECTIONS OF AN AMATEUR RADIO OPERATOR



**Trevor McTavish**



**David Stock -  
Recollections of an Amateur Radio Operator**

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Flying in the North presented numerous challenges, not the least of which was poor communications and an almost non-existent weather reporting network. Both were of extreme importance with aerial photography, especially the weather - too many clouds would obscure the ground and make photos useless. To counter the communication problem and provide their crews with weather information, several of the survey companies established their own stations, usually manned by summer students. David Stock was one such radio operator.

Growing up in Kingston, Ontario in the 1950s he, and a group of friends, became ham radio operators in the radio club at KCVI high school. After spending the summers of 1955 and 1956 working in the local aluminium plant, David discovered that an economic slowdown would affect the plant, and remove any chance for a job next summer. Following the springtime ritual of students everywhere, David visited the bulletin board outside Queens University's Student Union building where he discovered an advertisement needing amateur radio operators to work in the north. Four applicants were accepted; David Stock, Dave Allen, Peter Allen and Tom Flood.

The quartet reported to Spartan's office on Sparks Street in late April 1957. The first thing David noticed was a large staff of well endowed female clerks. "I knew immediately this company would be different." The next two weeks were spent in the company's hangar, where they helped with some wiring repairs to the Ansons and DC-3s.

The radio operators were expected to obtain weather information rather than actually report what they observed. Thus, none of the group received meteorological training.

As the photo season neared, the quartet was sent north. "We flew



David Allen operates one of Spartan's radios in August of 1958. With populated centres and weather reporting facilities few and far between in the North, the young men, usually University students played an important part keeping the aircrews safe. (David Allen)

to Toronto and then Edmonton. From there Dave Allen went to Fort McMurray, Peter Allen went to Pelly Lake, Tom Frood went to Whitehorse and I went to Yellowknife with my boss, Clem White."

Once in Yellowknife, Clem and David went shopping for camping supplies, then Clem made arrangements with a local gravel company to setup a tent in their worksite near the airport. "I was allowed to eat in their mess hall. The food was very ample and meant for the student workers there who were doing hard labor. Clem left and I set up a radio in the tent and made contact with Dave and Peter." By this time, the planes were working out of Fort McMurray, but it became apparent they'd be on the move when big oxygen bottles began piling up outside David's tent.

"Early in May CF-HMM arrived and our work began. I moved on to Norman Wells and Dave Allen moved up to the tent at Yellowknife. Before heading to Norman Wells I was told to set up radio

contact with the stations at Whitehorse and Yellowknife." Having a person in Norman Wells provided radio communications for Jack and Ken Tustin, who were flying CF-HMP out of Whitehorse. No matter where the plane was, the crew would be able to speak with David, Tom Frood in Whitehorse or Dave Allen in Yellowknife.

On route to his new base, David began talking with the stewardess who explained that a fire had destroyed the only hotel in Norman Wells the previous year. She invited him to stay with the Canadian Pacific crew overnight, until he could get settled. "The town was operated by Imperial Oil and I was a little surprised that they were not expecting me. I met their executive in a large company board room." They agreed to have a shack towed to a site near their mess hall, which he could rent for \$40 a month. They also explained that all unmarried people had to eat in the mess hall and had to have daily maid service. "I wired Spartan in Ottawa to get this okayed."

"The radio equipment (a crystal controlled set with about 100 watts



When CF-HMM arrived in Yellowknife, David Stock moved on to Norman Wells, where he was eventually tasked with supporting another Mosquito, CF-HMP. (David Stock)

Calgary Mosquito Society



Accommodations in the Arctic were anything but luxurious. In August of 1957, Imperial Oil agreed to rent Spartan Air Service a small shack, where David Stock could keep both his radio and his bed. All for the princely sum of \$40 per month. (David Stock)

output) was shipped to the airport and I was able to get it moved to my building. I strung up an antenna to a pole I attached to a pile of lumber and I was soon in contact with the other stations." Life in





Like the rest of Norman Wells, David's improvised antenna was simple, but effective.  
(David Stock)

Norman Wells quickly became routine. "I always listened when 'HMP was flying. I was told my station was necessary in case the plane was out of contact with the other stations. Each morning I walked to the department of transport office (about a mile) for weather information. This was not very convenient but the best that Imperial Oil would do for me."

Once again, David discovered that camp food was palatable and began to gradually meet other people. There were the town nurses who wanted him to eat liver, and the local RCMP officer who worked in plain clothes as the postal clerk.

In late August, David received instructions to pack up and return to Ottawa. The season was over. "Clem asked me to return for Arctic island work next summer. I now returned to Queens University for my second year of math and physics. I was saddened to hear that Jack Tustin and his brother were killed in 'HMP as it crashed on its return flight to Ottawa."