

steel ship gets in the North Carolina sun.

Jack told me about the time they thought they would get some air by forcing air through the ducts. He said they turned on the fans and the dust that came out of there was so bad they had to abandon the room. He said it took two weeks to just clean the room.

Allan, Jack and Norm are ex-AT&T employees so they also undertook to repair the paging system on the ship. It took them two years to rewire the hundreds of speakers on the ship. However, now people can be paged and period radio programs are played over the system. They also used their knowledge to repair the ship's telephone system. You can now call around the ship using the original phones. I could have spent days talking to these three gentlemen, hearing their tales of the work on the ship. Allan has a vast knowledge of radio history as well.

QSO Party Operations

The NC QSO Party team consisted of Jay Barton N3QH, Allan Pellnat KX2H, Ron Walsh VE3GO, Bill Morine N2COP, Bob Kiehmeier WA3IRG, Bob Froelich KK4KSY, Jack Jacobs WD4OIN, Norman Clemmons KI4YSY, Jim Kapetski K3DEP, Jeff Wingfield KI4JDE, and Dean Webb KK4DRQ.



The tube supply room which was untouched from 1947.

My day began with an invitation to join the Azalea Club at the K&W Cafeteria in Wilmington for breakfast. I enjoyed meeting Allan and others with whom I had corresponded. I passed the promised Morse key to Allan. We then proceeded to the ship.

The battleship is impressive as you make the turn off Highway 17. Her size and camouflage paint scheme captures your attention immediately. I was pleased to have a guide as we wove our way through doors and decks. I was shown Radio 1 and 2 as well as the generator room.

When it was time for the contest to begin we returned to Radio 1, where the 20 meter SSB station was set up and the cryptographic room where the 40 and 15 meter operations took place. Some test calls were made on 20 meters and then the contest began. The ship uses the call N14BK, its original call sign, on the ham bands.

As I was watching the operation, the sec-

ond 20 meter contact was VE3BRK. This was my late father's call now held by my brother Bert. He asked if I was there and they turned the mic over to me. It was a thrill to work Bert from the ship. He would be coming to Myrtle Beach in March and we got to show him the station. I am sure he enjoyed seeing the equipment as much as I did. About an hour later, I was operating and VE3GHK called me. George and I have been radio enthusiasts since we were in high school.

I took a break and had lunch. I then went with Allan to Radio 2 where the CW station was set up. It was great to connect my key to the transceiver and operate CW from the ship. I made about 20 contacts including some DX in Europe. I returned to the SSB set up and did some more contesting. I was happy to work many stations including Bill VE3CLQ, Tim VA3TIC and Dave VE3DZE from Kingston.

The old verticals work very well and it was great to be in a pileup where stations were trying to work me for a change. Once the ship signs on there are always plenty of stations who want the contact. The team made 592 contacts on the Saturday, 72 of which were on CW. While taking a break from operating I had fun showing some of the people touring the ship the radio rooms and explaining what the club was doing.

I was also pleased to meet Bill Morine N2COP, the North Carolina Section Manager for ARRL. He is a very active section manager and it was great to see him operating in the contest. I was also pleased to see the president of the Grand Strand Amateur Radio Club, Bob Froelich KK4KSY there. I have enjoyed working with this Myrtle Beach Club and volunteer for their marathon communications. He was enjoying operating and I am sure more of their members will be operating from the ship in the future.

You can be a guest operator on board. The only thing is they ask is that you pay admission to the ship to help out. In fact, if your club wants to operate onboard, it can be arranged.

As luck would have it, Jeff Wingfield KI4JDE, was also part of the group. He just happens to be the Rear Commander of the Waterway Radio and Cruising Club. They operate the Waterway Net on 7.268 kHz at 0745 ET every day. This is their 50th anniversary and I got a lot of information for my July column. You never know who you will meet at an amateur radio gathering.

The contest ended near suppertime and I reluctantly took leave of the group and the ship. Believe me, I could have spent a long time there and will certainly be back. I have been invited for next year and plan to do more operating; I want to make more CW contacts in particular. Allan has already mounted the key I donated on a piece of wood from an old radio cabinet. Hopefully, it will be used for many contacts.

Help

If you have any radio artifacts from the WWII era, be sure to contact the Azalea Coast Amateur Radio Club to see if they can be used



Norm showing the generators.

on the ship. The club is in particular need of 861 transmitting tubes. Their supply is running low and any help obtaining some would be appreciated. I have already contacted the Communications and Electronics Museum here at the Canadian Forces Base in Kingston to see what we can find. You can find out more about the ship at their website www.battleshipnc.com. The Azalea Coast Amateur Radio Club is at www.ac4rc.org. Using Google you can search Radio Restoration USS North Carolina for many sites giving info and photos.



Ship's verticals still in use.

Amateur radio operators are known as a friendly group and the Azalea Coast Amateur Radio Club certainly exemplify that. I applaud their efforts to keep the battleship *USS North Carolina* on the air and maintain the original equipment of the ship. Do not pass up a chance to tour the ship and also take the opportunity to operate from aboard, you will surely enjoy the experience. Look for the ship on Museum Ships Day in July. I will be trying to add VE3GO to their list of contacts. And, I also will be trying for an SWL report using my old Hallicrafters S38 and a long wire.

The author would like to dedicate this article to Bill Usher AG4PA, who spent many hours in restoration of the radio equipment aboard the USS North Carolina.