

# What Amateur Radio means to real Hams

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*The following article originally appeared in French in the Swiss USKA (their ARRL equivalent) journal Oldman for October 1994 on page 22. It was translated to English by John Jaminet, W3HMS, because he felt that it expresses the true essence of our great hobby and wanted to share it with other Hams. The article is reprinted here in Worldradio by permission of the author and was found in QRP Quarterly.*

Serge Perret, HB9PS, died on 09 August 1994 in Spain. He had two daughters, Sophie and Mireille, and three boys: Jean-Yves, Edouard and me — but there was no infidelity there by my mother. No, Serge was my radio amateur dad. First of all, it was he who taught me the Morse Code. Each week I returned to his shack in the basement of his home at Pully. I would sit in his shack trying very hard to understand what he was sending with his automatic key, which was one of the first for that epoch. He had an old RCA AR-88 receiver and a transmitter that he rescued from an old ship and restored to a perfect state of repair (200 watts from two parallel 813s).

I passed my first license exam in CW and theory at Lausanne in 1964

when I was 19 years old; thank you, Serge. Then it was with him that I made my first QSO on 144 MHz. A little bit before the exam, I had built an AM transmitter typical of the era with a QQE32-12 in the final and crystal controlled with an 8 MHz crystal of the famous FT-243 series surplus from WWII I was surprised by how fast the license arrived thus I did not have the time to get an 8 MHz crystal. So, it was Serge who loaned me one and with him I made my first QSO — after arranging it by telephone just to make sure. Again thank you, Serge.

Later on, it was thanks to him that I worked my first American station on 40M CW using one of the famous WWII Command Sets, which used a VFO with less than perfect stability and two 807s in parallel in the

final. A dynamotor encapsulated in insulating material and a box to reduce the noise furnished the high voltage. To avoid being seriously disturbed by the noise, I put the dynamotor, which resembled a motor, on the balcony. Now it was the neighbors who were bothered by the change in the motor's whine each time I hit the key. This made it possible for the neighbors to follow the QSO by the medium of the keyed whine! Again, I had Serge to thank for the loan of the transmitter. For reception, I had modified a standard broadcast receiver by adding a tuning capacitor to the IF stage to cause it to oscillate and produce a CW beat note identical to a normal BFO beat note.

Some years later, Serge was the Vice President of the Radio Amateurs of Vaudois (a Swiss canton/state), called at that time "The USKA Section of Lausanne." It was Serge who proposed me for the President and then pushed me into office at the time of the annual meeting of the group. There were present some young Hams full of energy, project ideas, and enthusiasm that disturbed just a little the traditional calmness and austere environment of this assembly; sorry Jean-Claude (HB9UG) and thank you again, Serge.

Later, it was Serge who propelled me without transition into another world. In the space of three days, I made the decision, got the necessary vacation time, bought clothes for a

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hot climate and rode on an airplane for the first time. The destination was Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where I arrived at midnight with a winter coat under my arm in a torrid heat wave. The Customs Officer wrote something on it in chalk (probably his expression of satisfaction that I arrived)! I departed with the CCIR to reinstall their radio communications network in the north of Yemen, a country then at war. I was 23 years old. Thanks to Simone for encouraging me to go (the date of our wedding was set for just three months later) and thanks again to Serge for this unforgettable experience. Life separated us then, for me marriage, children, the job, building projects and for him the marriage, children, the job, and that terrible sickness, cancer.

We liked to see each other at Bussigny or at Ampuria-Brava where he lived for some years. He lived a life and a half in his home and with his twin 80 foot towers, a magnificent vestige of the time when boats were made of wood and not plastic purchased after much scrimping and savings.

We made a pilgrimage in his boat to Cadaques, the extraordinary village of Salvador Dali. We repaired

his Drake TR7 transceiver with which we ragchewed in CW, we went to see Boris parachute jump at Ampuria, and we made plans for skin-diving and Maritime Mobile expeditions. Yet, four years ago, the doctors gave him just a few months to live. Thanks to a great poker hand, in which he had the secret, the only doctor in the world capable of doing the operation successfully did it.

There was a sort of irony in all his bravery: he didn't die of cancer but from a series of falls on his boat. On the day of his death, by chance I found myself 50 km from Serge's house trying to telephone him to tell him that I would help him defend himself from pirates on the high seas!

Serge was important in my life and the lives of radio amateurs in general since he was a member of the central committee of the USKA and also the officer responsible for relations with the IARU; he was active for a very long-time and he was a most honorable member. Life is made such that some chaps, for which we sometimes ignore the other aspects of their life, are always there at the most pivotal moments of the other person's life. Serge I

found several times in this situation for me. His determination and his force in life remain always an example. When he maliciously tapped the knot of the rope hanging from the ceiling on his boat, he wanted to say: "It is me; I am the captain of this boat!" And he remained the captain until his death, with all his qualities and all his faults. I salute my friend, I liked him so well... and Serge, if you meet Him, try to intervene to see that we are left with some open frequencies for peaceful ATV.



## Oldest Australian ham turns 106

Australia's oldest radio amateur, Harry Angel, VK4HA, turned 106 on 14 December. A UK native, Angel arrived in VK-land from California after a trip around the Horn as a very young sailor. A WWI veteran and radio repairman, Angel has been a ham since 1935. — *QNews*; *ARRL Letter*

## Metroplex @ 20 years

The Metroplex Amateur Communications Association is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The club operates repeaters in the Greater New York City area. According to club president Alex Magocsi, W2OV, the club recently signed up its 803<sup>rd</sup> member, making it the second largest amateur repeater club in the country. — *Alex Magocsi, W2OV*; *ARRL Letter*

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Year 27, Issue 9

March 1998 • \$1.50



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*See page 43*

