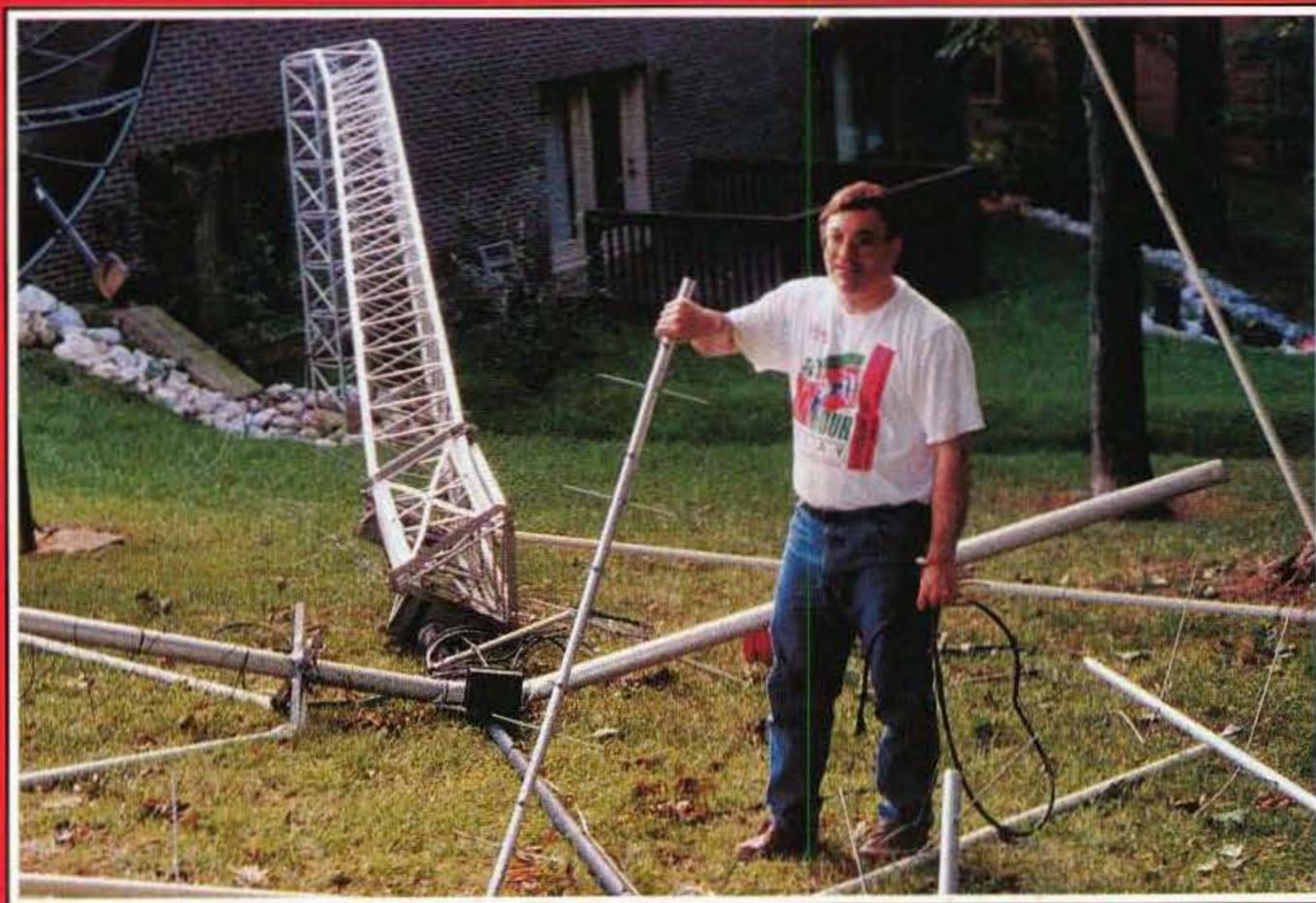


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The equipment I maintained was mostly a lot of receivers, so I usually spent my days SWLing (short-wave listening), tuned to the ham bands, or copying various RTTY signals. The ship's Operations Officer was also a ham and one of the few people on board with a security clearance to be in the "van." We got on the air a few times in the ham bands using one of the ship's URC-32 HF transceivers.

The ship spent most of that summer going from one Mediterranean port to another, showing the U.S. Navy presence. I was having a heck of a good time!

The USS *Wood* was an old destroyer and was always having problems of one kind or another. We were usually on "water hours" in the hot summer since the fresh-water evaporators could barely keep up with the needs of the ship's boilers, never mind supplying daily showers for the crew!

A time came when we were to participate in a big NATO exercise in the eastern Mediterranean and the USS *Wood* was designated as a "bad guy." Our mission was to shadow the NATO task force, hiding and pretending to be a ship from an enemy navy. When the exercise started, all the other U.S. ships sailed off into the sunset and left us behind.

As luck would have it, at that very moment something went wrong down in the engine room and they "salted the boilers," contaminating the fresh water with sea water. We were dead in the water in a major shipping lane and it was late afternoon. Restoring normal power to the ship was now eight or ten hours away.

This class of destroyers had two emergency generators on board, so we should have had electrical power for navigation lights and communications. However, one generator was down for critical parts (I heard it was a bearing), and the other one wouldn't start! There we were, a U.S. Navy destroyer adrift in a shipping lane with no power, lights, or radios, and no one expecting us to be anywhere soon.

Things started getting a little strange on board. With no ventilation in below-deck spaces and no jobs to do, everyone came up and started hanging around on the weather decks. The reefers were warming up, so cases and cases of ice cream in Dixie cups were being passed up for the crew to eat. It was a race to eat them before everything melted! The empties were tossed over the side, and pretty soon the ship was surrounded by a ten-foot wide belt of floating Dixie cups, paper lids, and little wooden spoons. It was quite a sight.

Well, there was one other vessel in the area that day. It was the ever present Soviet ship that shadowed our fleet for real. The Russian destroyer had initially sailed off with the task force, but they must have been curious about the lone tin can staying behind, because they came back to check us out. At about the same time, someone using the 20-power big-eyes on the flying bridge spotted a big, *big* freighter on the horizon heading our way, directly at us.

Our signalmen had some battery-powered flashing lanterns and started "talking" in Morse

to the Russians. It was a good thing that we had that language in common! The destroyer circled us a few times, saw the impending doom, and went charging off directly toward the freighter, zigzagging back and forth across her path until someone on the bridge finally changed course to go past us instead of through us! The Russian tin can stayed with us that night until we got our boilers back up.

During the cold-war years a lot of unpleasant things happened between our two navies, but I always think of that Russian destroyer crew guarding us when we were in trouble, regardless of the flags we sailed under.

By Glenn W. Pladsen. Thnx to the *Balanced Modulator*, newsletter of the North Florida Amateur Radio Society, February 1999, from the U.S. Naval Cryptological Veterans Assn., via WB2FGL. Originally printed in the *World Wireless Beacon*.

Anyone else out there have any hamming "war stories"? — ed.

DNA Conducts Electricity

A pair of Swiss scientists say that it may be possible to grow parts for future high speed computers because of their discovery that DNA is actually an efficient semiconductor. As a result, Hans-Werner Fink and Christian Schoenenberger of the University of Basel say that DNA might someday be used to replace wires in computers, chips, and transistors.

The two scientists have been working on this research for several years. The results of their study suggest that DNA conducts electricity as well as any other known semiconductor. They say that if DNA strands could be genetically engineered with a switch to turn the current flowing through them on and off, they could be used to build extremely tiny electrical devices that are the basic building blocks of computers and other electronic devices.

Thnx to Mir Sholom Science News, via *Newsline*, Bill Pasternak WA6ITF, editor.

War of the Worlds

Call it life imitating art last year. When a Portuguese radio station decided to repeat Orson Welles' famous *War of the Worlds* broadcast, the results were predictable. Graham Kemp VK4BB of *Q-News* reported on the Martians taking on Lisbon:

... On Friday, October 30th, radio station Antena 3, in Lisbon, celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Orson Welles radio drama *War of the Worlds* by rebroadcasting it during the morning show.

The original Welles script was used and translated into Portuguese. The station issued a warning at 7 a.m., announcing their intention to broadcast the radio play. But when the play began an hour later at 8 a.m., panic erupted.

The station broadcast the landing of a UFO at Palmela, and the bulletins said that the Martians had set off in the direction of the capital (Lisbon)

and that military forces sent to stop them had proved powerless.

The program's producer said the radio station was inundated with calls from hundreds of panicking people demanding to know what was going on.

The 7 a.m. warning proved worthless because not everyone is listening to the radio that early. Some callers said they had fled their workplaces. Others with health problems complained that their health had deteriorated on news of the Martian invasion.

One of the organizers of the broadcast said, "One hundred years after the invention of the radio, there are still people who will believe anything." ...

All this goes to prove that even sixty years later, some people in radio just never seem to learn.

Tnx and a "run for your life!" to *Q-News*, courtesy of *Newsline*, Bill Pasternak WA6ITF, editor.

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