

VRCM: Tell me a little bit about your background; schooling, profession, and so on.

PK: I was born at Manchester hospital when my family lived in a part of Windsor called Wapping. When I was four, we moved to Manchester and then to Glastonbury about a year later. I attended Glastonbury High School and then moved after my dad got transferred to Florida and I attended high school there. I received my associate's degree at University of South Florida and then accepted a position as an Engineering technician, writing computer codes at Pratt & Whitney in West Palm Beach. A couple of years later I accepted a position at Pratt & Whitney in East Hartford. From there I went to University of Hartford and received a BS in Computer Science and a minor in Mathematics. The program concentrated more on theory, logic, and math than it did on hardware. My job at that time became software developer in a variety of different computer languages and platforms. At that time, Pratt & Whitney had a great scholar program that allowed me to get my master's degree at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

VRCM: So how did you get involved with amateur radio?

PK: I had walkie talkies when I was in grade school. I always was interested in communication by wireless. My lifelong friend—and he's a museum volunteer—Bob Allison and I would experiment with low powered CB walkie talkies trying to make them communicate as far as possible with different antenna configurations that I attached to the house—much to the dismay of my parents! When I was about 14, I attended a few meetings of a ham club in Glastonbury. When I was in Florida, my friends from Connecticut arranged for me to buy a Heathkit HR 1680 HF receiver from a ham. His name was John Drury, WB1DUK. He's dead now; a silent key. I had a blast listening to hams and foreign broadcast stations all over the world. I'd listen to hams I knew from Connecticut. A few times, I called them up on the phone and they transmitted my voice through the radio microphone. It was a riot talking through the phone from Florida and hearing myself on the radio on the 20 meter band. So, within a year after I returned to Connecticut, I studied for my novice

license with Bob's wife Kathy—her call is KA1RWY— and we got our licenses and upgraded shortly after that. My original call sign was KA1RXY and I eventually changed it to KN1GHT. The solar cycle was very good at the time and I did a lot of mobile work early on. It was fun working DX all over the world while driving around.

VRCM: Great story! O.K. I assume Bob Allison got you get involved with the radio museum?

PK: Yes, but before that, in the late 1980's, I was on ham radio with an old HA460 6 Meter AM transceiver on 50.4 MHz and ran into Randy Zaremba, NH6LF – a call he retained from when he lived in Hawaii. Randy set up a business in the old Bezzini Brothers building in Manchester selling radio tubes and parts. A number of hams and radio enthusiasts would go to Randy's shop and hang out on Friday nights and aptly named it "The RF Hole". The RF Hole also had antique radios on consignment. I had already started collecting cylinder phonographs and that 'was all she wrote!' I starting my collecting of primarily 1920's battery sets. Someone there mentioned the radio museum and eventually in the early 1990's a small group of us went for a tour of the museum when it was located in East Hartford, near Pitkin Street. I also visited when the museum was in Windsor near the train station when they had a huge record sale. That is when I met museum president John Ellsworth and we talked for quite a while. Around 2011 or 2012, I spoke with Bob Allison and he had been volunteering. He suggested that I come by and just hang out and I would find something I could help out with. I came over on a Saturday and everyone at the museum was very friendly and liked the idea of having another volunteer. It didn't take long before I found a niche occasionally fixing a radio in the back room and working on writing up and photographing E-Bay items and training others on the E-Bay listing computer.

VRCM: What do find most rewarding about being a museum volunteer?

PK: I come to the museum on Saturdays – that is when a lot of the volunteers are around. Part of the fun here is that I never know exactly what I'll be doing and I can choose what to work on – it's informal. Sometimes someone will bring a donation and we can test it or fix it for our inventory. Other times, someone will walk through the door and want a volunteer to discuss something. Occasionally, a docent will ask me to give the pitch on the mechanical phonographs or the 1920's battery radio section. Those are areas in which I have a lot of knowledge. I always feel great when I can help someone out with a radio problem or discuss the history of something.

The volunteers are great to work with and have similar interests. Everyone works together to keep the museum in good running order. They come from many backgrounds and have different political views. I've learned a ton of things that I didn't know about old technology and the history behind it. Each volunteer has overlapping knowledge and also about different subjects so between everyone it's a vast encyclopedia of old technology.

VRCM: Great, Peter. Anything else you'd like to add?

PK: I love the time I spend here working with the other volunteers... and the time goes by fast. I've been volunteering for 4 or 5 years and every week I learn something new. Like many of the volunteers, I'm a collector of old technology items – primarily radios and cylinder phonographs. In a lot of ways, coming to the museum has quenched my thirst for collecting and that's a great thing! Instead of going out to antique shops and tag sales I can come to the museum and operate a radio or phonograph and learn about many different things I've never seen before.

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