

Radio's Romance Rules 'Hams'

Amateurs In Asheville Have Chats Around The World

BY JIMMIE SCHULTZ

MR. Rudolph Gibbs may find it necessary to walk all the way out into the backyard to ask the housewife next door her recipe for "that delicious jam cake you served at your bridge party last week". But she can exchange culinary gossip with a woman down in the Union of South Africa for hours at a stretch without once moving from the easy chair in the livingroom of her home out on Brevard road.

If J. E. (Buck) Joyner calls up a friend out at Weaverville to remind him of a lodge meeting Thursday night, there will be a notation on the fact on his telephone bill the first of the month. But Buck can talk all night, if he feels like it, with fellows in China, South America or the Arctic circle and the expense of it all will be about as negligible as the expense of a midnight bull session at the corner drugstore.

That's because the woman in the Union of South Africa and those fellows in China, South America and the Arctic Circle, like more than three score men and women right here in Asheville, are faithful members of that great world-wide brotherhood of amateur radio operators known in the jargon of the airways as "hams."

Cosmopolitan Conversation

While neighbors are turning their thoughts to nothing more cosmopolitan than washing the dinner dishes or retiring for the evening, Asheville "hams" are turning their dials to numbers that will bring them within speaking distance of all parts of the globe.

You'll find a really enthusiastic "ham" at it every night in the week, and some of the ones here have had the "bug" for a number of years, now. Out of all those tens of thousands of conversations are bound to come a myriad of interesting yarns. "Hams" swap these yarns with the gusto of two fishermen exchanging accounts of their conquests in the water. If you happen to be lounging in an obscure corner of the room when they get started, you may hear enough good stories to restock your repertoire of party tid-bits for a solid month.

The voices usually drop to whispers when this one is told. That's because the incident represents about the nearest approach to real trouble that has ever befallen an Asheville amateur.

Two Naval Reservist

Two of the more active "hams" here—they may as well remain anonymous, for their names would add nothing in particular to the story—are also members of the naval reserve corps. Each year such fellows are given an opportunity to take a train-



THE WORLD'S HIS BACKYARD—China may be half way around the world, just as the globe shows it to be, but it's as close as the person in the next room to John Whisnant, of 12 Hays street. Mr. Whisnant, one of Asheville's 60-odd "hams" and president of the Asheville Amateur Radio club, is pictured above at the controls of his amateur station, W4KI. The apparatus is similar to that of several other sending sets here in Asheville.

ing cruise on one of Uncle Sam's battleships if they like. The "hams" decided that would be a rather nice way to spend a vacation.

The trip down the east coast and through the Caribbean sea was pleasant enough. But a real "ham" is never satisfied if he misses more than two days in a row doing a little "hamming".

It so happened that both of the fellows had been chatting at intervals with one of the cias in Cuba. So when the ship docked for a few hours at the port where this "ham" lived, the two Ashevilleans took time out to look him up.

The Cuban amateur was willing enough to give the boys access to his radio set, and before many minutes had elapsed our two wanderers were talking with brother "ham" back in Asheville. Their minds literally swimming with details of the maneuvers through which they had just been, the two quite naturally built most of their conversation over the air around this subject.

"You're Under Arrest"

Suddenly the heavy sound of tramping feet disturbed the detailed account of their adventures which

the two men were relating. "You're under arrest", those on the Asheville end of the hookup heard a gruff voice growl. Then there was silence—a whole lot of it.

It seems that the captain of the battle ship had been tinkering with his own radio dial and, by the purest chance, had picked up the message the two Asheville amateurs were sending back. Believing they were spies, who had boarded his vessel under false pretenses and who were now relaying important naval secrets back to some foreign government, he had sent out a detachment of men to apprehend them.

Explanations were of no avail, for the captain knew nothing of the psychology of "hams." And as a result the two Asheville men were detained in solitary confinement throughout the remainder of the maneuvers.

Experiences like that, though, are the exception rather than the rule. Most of the conversations have happy enough endings.

Asheville To Knoxville

Not so long ago Paul Sutton, the genial young man who looks at his

barometers and thermometers during working hours and tells you how the weather will behave for the next 24 hours, was doing a little "hamming" late one afternoon. He struck up a conversation with a young high school student over in Knoxville, Tenn.

It developed that the boy had been in an automobile accident a couple of days before and that the doctor had ordered him to stay in bed for a couple of weeks. The hours were already beginning to drag, the young "ham" confided.

Then, without warning, the youth wanted to know: "Do you play checkers, Paul?" Paul does and he told the boy he did.

"Let's have a game," the kid suggested. And that was the beginning of a two-week session of afternoon checker playing between the two. Each numbered his board, and when a button was moved the numbers from and to which it was pushed would be called out. The man at the other end could change his own lineup of checkers to correspond, and

—(Please Turn To Page Six)