

Amateur Number One

By Irving Vermilya

Amateur Number One is a snappy, up-to-the-minute, humorous story of the original father of the American amateurs. Generations have come since, but still Mr. Vermilya is an amateur at heart. The story of his



early trials and tribulations when there were no brother amateurs starts in this issue. It will be continued in the next and you will enjoy reading this history with a laugh to every spark.—Editor.

NOW Boys, I don't want to make too much noise, and I want you to holler if I go too far—I am going to start off with a claim that's going to be a big one, but I'm pretty sure I can back every very word of it.

Here it is: I was the first amateur in this country to get an aerial up and investigate into the mysteries of wireless. No doubt, were I at a meeting, there would be an awful wail about now to "sit down". But fellows, listen, I am only sorry I have no record of the date when I first got the Wireless Bug, but I am going to look it up. I believe I know at least one gentleman who can throw some light on it, if I can only find his present whereabouts.

Along about the time when Marconi was first doing a little experimenting—long before there was any United Wireless Company, or any DeForest Company, or in fact, any amateurs, or manufacturers of wireless goods—I became interested in reading about what Marconi was doing with a kite and string some where along this Coast. Of course I became interested, but could not imagine how he was doing it. I can remember seeing the big head lines about Marconi, and I said right then and there, "Me for this wireless. That's the stuff".

Now it so happened that I was quite a good boy, so I asked the minister of our church to help me get acquainted with

Marconi. Of course, he smiled at me and tried to calm my wild desires much as a kind mother would do for her little boy who cried for the moon. But I was not to be downed so easily. I had an awful bulldog grip on this wireless stuff, and I would not let go. Probably six months or so elapsed. I could not seem to get any nearer to Marconi, until one day, Dr. Tyndal, the kind-hearted minister, brought me the glad news that he had succeeded in seeing the wonderful wizard Marconi, and that he had given the minister a Marconi cohera and tapper. Well! when I got my hands on these—fellows—you can believe me, the world wasn't large enough to hold me. I wish you could have seen me paw over the old blue prints and dope on the "how and why," which Marconi had also sent. I went to my father and said "Dad, I've got to have some money. I'm going to build a wireless." Well, Dad laughed of course, but he handed me out the first batch rather easily, and I made for New York City.

After a ride on "air" for fourteen miles from Mt. Vernon to New York City I arrived at the Grand Central. I finally landed up at J. H. Bunnell & Co, who had plenty of telegraphs, but—no wireless. I told the clerk I wanted a polarized relay, and some wire for use in "Wireless Telegraphy". The clerk just stood as though he had become suddenly petrified—mouth open—

eyes wild. Of course it was too early to have asked "What der yer mean, wireless telegraphy", as that expression "What der yer mean" wasn't born then. He finally



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did get up steam enough to get the relay and some insulated wire. Just imagine. I bought 150 feet of insulated bell wire, which was to be my complete aerial lead, and all. Say fellows, can you imagine going into Bunnell's at this time and have no one know what a transformer was, nor aerial wires, helixes—Just think, never been heard of. It does seem so queer now to look back.

The next day saw me up and out of bed bright and early. It was a great day, and I was eager to get the aerial up.—Bet there'll be an uproar when this is read.—My aerial was only twelve feet long—light wires. I made an arrangement out of furring strips in the shape of a cross. The main pole was twelve feet long, with a cross piece nailed to the top and bottom. Between the top cross piece, which was about four feet across, and the bottom one, I stretched light wires, and with double pointed tacks, and no insulators, nailed them to the cross.

That night I studied late over Marconi's old blue prints, and the dope. By the way, he didn't say anything about insulators or length of aerial, so how should I know? In the course of a few days, I had it all hooked up, and was waiting for it to work, although who I expected was going to hear me, I'll be hanged if I know. A few days

passed, and no signals. Then I saw a piece in the paper that Marconi was going to send some dots—the letter "s" to be exact—across the "pond," at least he intended to try it. I thought, "I'll get in on this, and have a great time." Here I made the biggest mistake of my life. I invited all the neighborhood in to witness my reception of Marconi's signals, as they were to be flashed across the ocean. Everybody came. Oh, yes—all the ladies, mothers, fathers, boys and girls in the town for miles around. We all hung around until the time stated in the newspaper article. Up to this time, I was being talked of as "that smart little Vermilya boy," and such phrases as "I think its wonderful what a bright boy Irving is" and "where did he learn it", but after it got to be 8:30 and 9:15, and no signals, I was beginning to sweat. Several times I wanted to give it a push myself, but I knew if I did, that it would only get stuck, and give me only a long ring on the bell, so I waited—oh, so patiently. I really believed I was going to hear Marconi—even though he was way up in Newfoundland, and probably with a wave length of a few thousand meters while I had a wave of about 10 meters more or less. Mind you,



"I think its wonderful what a bright boy Irving is."

we had no such thing as a tune in those days. You merely hooked one end of the cohera to the aerial and the other to the ground. No tune about it. By this time, I began to hear in low tones—"It's a fake" and "I don't believe there is any such thing as wireless telegraphy"—"Let's go home, ma," etc.

But lo and behold—it worked. Yes it worked twice. Two good full sized dots or possibly long enough to be called dashes—and then stopped. Suddenly the door



"It's a take" and "Let's go home ma."

bell rang, and off it went again, right along with the door bell. I went to the door, and there was the minister who had called to see how it was working. I told him of its peculiar actions, and how it had made two dashes just before he came in. But my hopes were dashed when I discovered that he had caused those dashes by ringing the neighbor's door bell mistaking it for ours. You see, the wave length of my aerial was just about right for house wiring, and I had picked up the spark from the vibrator of the bell.

For about a year I plugged away at the Morse code—determined that I was going to be an operator any way. I got another fellow, Fred Skinner, interested in the regular telegraph line, and April 3, 1903, we stretched our first line between our houses. Progress was slow, until one day, the nurse girl who took care of my younger brother, came home with a new fellow—a telegraph operator. Well, I thought "Three cheers, I'm going to get this fellow to stick around." I sang his praises to our nurse, told her what a good scout he was, etc. etc. Finally he brought two new telegraph instruments,—a brand new 150 ohms resistance main line sounders and keys. We immediately threw our small four ohm learners set in the discard.

In the course of time, this line grew con-

siderably, as my many friends can vouch for. Fellows, it was some line. After three or four years, it had grown to be six miles long, and had forty-two different fellows and girls on it. It stretched from one end of the city to the other. It even ran under ground for a distance of two and a half miles. But such a wire! I'm almost ashamed to relate it. It was made out of copper, iron, brass, and aluminum. Some parts of it were insulated, and other parts were not. And not a soldered joint.

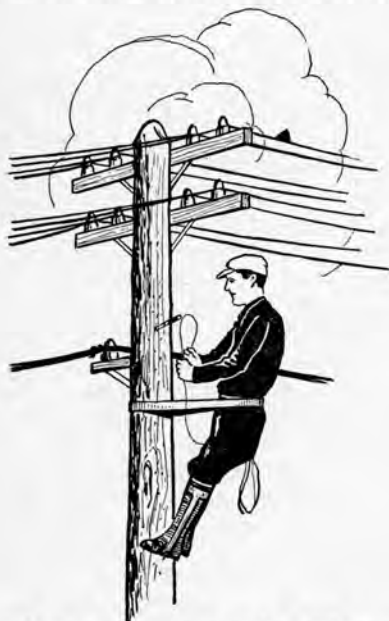
We stretched this wire —(I say we, but it should be I, as I was elected wire chief, and for fear of getting pinched, I had full care of it) on trees, telephone poles, over trolley wires, and on back fences. Needless to say, the line was working day and night. Some one of the bunch always used it. It was the custom for every one to say "good morning" and then sign off his or her call letters, when we got out of bed, and "good night" before retiring. Some of the operators kept scandalous hours. In fact, some said "GN" after our early risers had said "GM" for the next day. So you see, some of the night hawks



"The nurse girl we had came home with a new fellow—a telegraph operator."

were constantly a day behind themselves. New Year's night was always great on this. We would hear some fellow going to bed at 8:00 a.m. next morning, after we had heard our other early risers say "GM" at 5:00 a.m. I always kept my instrument cut in, and thought nothing of hearing my pal, Milo White, say "GN" three o'clock in the morning. We always knew when any of

the fellows had been out with any of the girls on our line, as we would hear them chewing the visit over after he got home and while she was getting ready to retire.



"I took some fine magnet wire and wrapped it around the feed wire."

Then the final "Well, good night, dear."

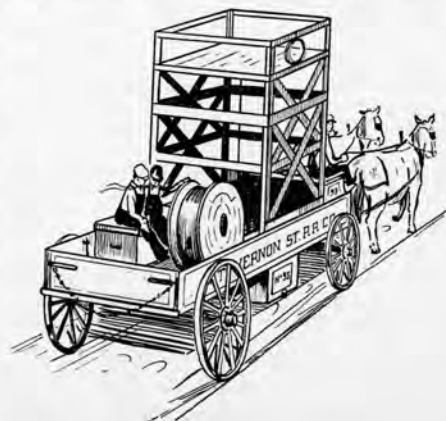
We formed a company of all the members on this line, to help bear the expense, and held regular monthly meetings at each other's homes.

Up to the time when we had about thirty-six stations on the line, we had gotten along fine as far as juice was concerned. I had all the batteries in my cellar—eighty-three gravity cells. But, the question of juice was fast becoming a serious problem, as we needed more power to overcome the great resistance of our poor line, and instruments. We had a meeting one night, and after long deliberation, decided we would have to get a dynamo, or something.

After the meeting disbanded, I called three or four of the fellows into conference—Conspiracy is what one girl called it—and told them that I intended to borrow some juice from a certain wire down on the corner. At first, they thought I was talking nonsense, but I finally impressed them that I was in earnest.

Bright and early one morning, I got up and ran the wire down to the corner. I ran in a twisted telephone line, and put it up on real insulators, so that it looked exactly like a real telephone line. Of course when I came to our point where the tap was to be made, I continued the wire on up the street, so that it would not look as though it had stopped, and would throw any pursuer off the track. The line was run on telephone poles about ten feet above the wire we were going to tap, which also ran along the same line of poles. Being a good pole climber, I put on my belt and spikes, and started up the pole on which I had previously strung our line. When I got to the "feed wire", I took out some fine magnet wire, and wrapped it around the feed wire, then I carefully cut a slit in the wooden pole ten feet up to where our line was, and made fast to our line. I laid the magnet wire in the slit I had cut, and covered it all over with putty. It would have taken a greater detective than Sherlock Holmes to ever dig that tap up, or discover it. The fact is proven by the knowledge that we had the juice coming from this source for two years.

While I was up the pole however, I had two great scares. First one was a cop, who came down the street and saw me up the pole. I thought surely he was after me, but he evidently believed I was a line-man, as he passed right on under me. The next and greatest scare, was when the trolley repair wagon came along, and I thought surely the jig was up. I had visions that I had blown out all the fuses on the trolley line, and they were after me. But they



too, passed me by without even looking up.

When I got home, sure enough, there was 550 direct current volts waiting to be used. I then hooked up ten sixteen candle power lamps in series, and put them from the tapped juice to the ground. This just made them glow, so there would of course be no amperage pulled off the tapped wire. At the fourth lamp up from the ground, I made fast our telegraph line, and then Hurrah, we had plenty of juice day and night. After this, we had no further trouble no matter how many instruments we put on, and no matter what kind of wire we put up. It always went through.

One day, we had a particularly hard run of wire to put up, and had to pass by a certain piece of property where the owner was noted for being a crank. I went to him, and said "Mr. Taylor, may I run a telegraph wire through your trees?" "You cannot. No sir" was my answer. I thanked



"Mr. Taylor, may I run a telegraph wire through your trees?"

him, for I knew I was going to run it through his joint somehow or other, even if I had to hang it on the clouds. We couldn't have any one ordinary man stand in the way of this line now. I thought it all over, and finally got out one dark night,

and tacked it all along his back fence. When we came to the end of his fence, we ran it under ground in a pipe, and then up the outside of the first tree, the other side of his yard. That wire is still there I'll bet, if his fence is.

The fun began, when we had our next meeting after acquiring the "loan" of the "Tralla Lue" juice, as we called it. Only five or six besides myself were in on it. The rest still believed our batteries were giving the power. The city electrician, who by the way, was my cousin, was by this time a full fledged member of the line. His official job in real life was to have control of every wire in the city. He still holds the job. Now, of course, it would not do to let him in on it, and you can imagine what an uneasy feeling I had when he came to the door to attend the meeting. We got away with it all right, but had several narrow escapes. One fellow said "Say VN, you must have an awful bunch of batteries down in your cellar, that line is working great these days". Another fellow (the nurse's husband now) said, "Where did you get that dynamo VN?" Ye Gods, I was ready to explode. One fellow, Al Jenks, who was in on the thing grabbed up a 45 calibre pistol, that I always had hanging around loaded with blanks for amateurs, and yelled "order". After plenty of storm and stress, and a tax for more blue vitrol for our batteries, the meeting broke up. I certainly was happy.

My ease of mind was never perfect though, and I finally went to the Mayor of the town and asked him if he couldn't fix it up for me to get a little juice from the trolley. Much to my surprise, he did. He wrote a very strong letter to the Receiver of the line (it was in the Receiver's hands) and he in turn granted the permission. I was then quite happy, and that old line lasted until I finally moved away from the city. We made some great operators out of that old line just the same, and fellows, if you are ever near the Hotel Manhattan in New York City, call on Mr. Fred Coleman, who is now manager of the Western Union office there. You will never met a pleasanter man. He is a small man in size, but he certainly had a great big heart.

(To be Continued in our next issue.)

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By Irving Vermilya

This concludes Part One of Amateur Number One which appeared in February. The very fact that part of Mr. Vermilya's article has been read means that all this description is unnecessary. It's a rip-roaring article with sparks all over. The decrement of this second part is far less than two-tenths.—Editor.

BUT fellow "Knights of the Air", to get back to the wireless. Of course the telegraph line experience ran all through my career as a wireless amateur. But nevertheless, I emerged back to wireless a full fledged fairly good Morse operator, after a year or so on the old line.

Things began to happen pretty quickly now, and in the Fall of 1904, I reconstructed my old "nailed to the cross" aerial, and put one up that was four hundred feet long and about seventy feet high. It had twelve wires in it, and a great spreader at both ends. The minister again came to my aid, and showed me a new detector that had just been invented, consisting of two carbons and an oxidized needle. I quickly made up one of these and got a telephone receiver from Bunnell's. Well boys, the air was not full of signals, you can take my word for it, but at least there was more doing than when I had tried it two years before. I listened in, and frequently heard signals, but could not read them. You see, I was hearing Marconi tests, and one or two ships he had fitted up, and they were using the Continental code. Of course there were no amateurs in those days, and I was very lonesome. If I had had a couple of kilowatts and an audion, I believe I could have worked to the Pacific, for there was absolutely no jamming.

I came across an article in a New York newspaper one day, that said a certain Mr. William Smith had gotten pinched for causing an electrical disturbance in an apartment house. I thought this fellow would be a good sort of a chap to get acquainted with, as he was a man after my own heart, his chief desire being evidently to cause any kind of a disturbance, electrical or otherwise. I wrote him

a letter, and invited him to call on me. He did so, after spending his five days in jail. I asked him just what he had done, and—well, you'll laugh when I tell you—He had constructed an enormous magnet out of an old cannon. (Later I saw it, and can vouch for all this.) On this cannon, he had wound at least five miles of No. 18 bell wire. Then he made up a storage battery of over



"Tin pans, steel knives and forks left their places only to come up against the wall with an awful crash."

seven hundred cells, constructing them from old lead and small jars. This battery gave nearly fourteen hundred volts pressure. He had pushed the old cannon close up to the wall, and turned on the juice. What happened in the next apartment as well as his own, can well be imagined. Tin pans, and all manner of tin and steel knives, forks and what not, left their places, only to come up against the wall with an awful resounding crash. He said he almost caused the death of an old woman who lived in the next rooms, and they knew darn well it was some of his work.

After he had related his story and I had

called on him, I decided he was just the right kind of a fellow with whom to start something. He was an engineer in the Hudson tunnels, I believe, and had all manner of lathes and tools to work with. I explained the mysteries of wireless to him, and asked him how about setting up a station. In the course of a short time, this was done, and I was the proud possessor of an eight inch spark coil, and he had a twelve. We had the whole earth and air to ourselves, and had a great time, until one fine day I heard a strange spark come in. I listened and this fellow didn't seem to know just what he was doing. The letter "V" had not yet been thought of as a test letter, and he was making an awful roar. Finally I heard him sign off "PT", I immediately called him up and started off by asking "Who the H—are you?" He shot back, "Brooklyn Navy Yard". Well fellows, I must laugh now when I think of it. I told that guy that I wanted it understood that he was NOT to use that infernal spark of his while Smith and I were working, to which he very obediently said he would be very careful not to interfere with us in the future.

Again things moved very rapidly, and one dark night I heard some one calling "VN" and signing "NY". I answered and it was Duffy at 42 Broadway. He wanted to know what ship I was. I told him the "Good Ship Hardship". He didn't even say as much as thanks.

With the coming of "WA", "DF", and a raft of ship stations, I finally decided that I was not making enough noise and a larger set would have to be installed. I scraped around, and finally got hold of a quarter kw. type transformer from Clapp-Eastham. This worked great, and the stations were getting thicker and thicker. I cannot definitely recall who was the next amateur I heard, but I do recall that Dr. Hudson was one of the pioneers. He made an awful slash in the air one night and I gave him a shout and asked "Who is it?" He managed to tick out very slowly—"This is Dr. Hudson; I am at Dr. Besse's house on Broadway and 144th Street. Who are you?" I told him who I was, and extended him a hearty welcome to the atmosphere. He asked me if I would come down to help him put up an aerial, as he too,

wanted to get in the game. I told him I would, but sorry I am to this day, I never got around to it.

It so turned out that Dr. Besse was "a regular guy", when it came to building transformers. He would turn out a couple of kilowatts transformer over night, so I got him to make me one. Poor Dr. Besse. I have always felt sorry for him. He used to sign "HB", and although he said "A bear can learn to telegraph," his speed never exceeded five words per minute. McClarney, who used to be night operator at the Waldorf, nicknamed him "Queen of the Glue Factory," and it always stuck to him. How well I can hear old Mac now calling up "HB" and proceeding at the five word per minute speed, saying "PLEASE KEEP OUT," only to have the "Queen of the Glue Factory" come back with "What? please send slower". Mac had a most terrible temper, and a most beautiful way of swearing. He would tell old "HB" one or two things at about forty words per minute, and then finally go to the telephone and tell him what he had so vainly attempted to say by wireless.

I worked Besse's transformer for a few weeks, and then decided it was a misfit, and not designed right, so I called on Dad again, and acquired the money necessary to get a one kilowatt Type E. I turned the old transformer in to Clapp-Eastham,—and I must say here a word of praise for them—they allowed me the full price on it toward the one kilowatt. Fellows, here is one of the whitest firms in the business.

Amateurs began to come in galore now, and among some of these I can recall: Weiss "PN," Runyon "WA," King "FK," Hudson "DR," Besse "HB," Skinner "SK," Meyers "DX," Boeder "FH," Goldhorn "GH," Barrett "DB", Macoy "DM", Cannon "CC", Ruppert, Minners Bros., Donahue "GD", Birchard "B", Pacent, Pfeifer, Sharrnbeck, Sharp, Shaughnessy, and there are possibly fifty others who are real old timers. One in particular, I can remember his call "SY" from Yonkers, but I cannot think of his name.

Now I am going to expose a very bashful friend of mine, who very much dislikes notoriety, but he is going to get some just the same, if the editor only keeps up courage with me. This fellow is no less than

Arthur Boeder, who is right among the thickest of you, and who is doing some of the best work among you today. Do you know where he learned a great part of his Morse, fellows? Well, it was sitting out under my aerial at night, with an old lantern,



"Hats off to his keen wits and not my bum sending: he turned out to be a dandy little operator."

a pad and pencil, and listening to some of the spare juice running off the tip of my bum aerial. He was too bashful to even come in and call on me. I never knew he was there at all, until he told me of it years later. Mr. Editor, why don't you go down and "mug" him for our QST? I am just writing this paragraph to get his goat.

Hats off to his keen wits and not my bum sending, as he turned out to be a dandy little operator, and long before he was out of short pants, he left lots of others in the dust who had plugged and plugged at it. I might just as well admit it, before he tells you to get back at me, that he has one of the finest sisters a brother ever wanted to have, and she can send, too. At least she used to, for after I knew her, my electric light meter registered at least ten dollars a month more for juice consumed in talking to her. Call her up fellows, and ask for Julia. She signs "JB." I'll let you go now Arthur, although I'd like to tell 'em how you went and asked Mr. Hughes of the United Wireless for a job, and your head hardly came up to his knee, and he said

"Yes I'll give you a job, my boy, but you will have to have on long pants first".

Once again the air reverberated with a terrible crash, and after I had jumped a yard or so, I looked up to see if my aerial was still up. I had visions of it laying in a melted heap, as I didn't see how anything less than a ten thousand volt current could make such an uproar. I got up courage, and took another listen—all quiet—so—I came out with my famous question, "Who the h—". For an answer this time, I got—"This is George Curtis Cannon, ten blocks away with a two kilowatt. How do I come in?" "It's fine", I answered. "Thought I was shot." Well, needless to say, it didn't take us long to get together, and when we did, a most interesting race began. I looked at his two kilowatt, and then went home and looked at mine. It looked like a toy. Once more I touched up the generous Dad I then had, and told him I had to have a two kilowatt in order to make myself heard. I got it, and then invited Cannon down to look it over. He immediately ordered up a three kilowatt. Good night! My brain nearly busted trying to figure up some way of beating this out. I had an old motorcycle, and together with some old junk, and an approaching birthday, I managed to scrape together enough to order up a five kilowatt Type E transformer and condenser from my old friend Clapp-Eastham. I went to Cannon, and again invited him in to see something. There was nothing to it, fellows. He just said "By G— I've got to get one of them things, too," and out went his order by telegram, —he couldn't wait for a letter,— "Please ship by express, freight too slow". I then got Mr. Cannon down one day and said "Now lets call this thing off. I guess we can both make quite a dent in the air any time we feel so inclined". He agreed,—and there we were, each with a great five kilowatt and only ten blocks apart. Well, we turned to look the situation over, and see if we could reach Japan or so. (We had read—"Get a mile for every watt consumed.") Oh yes,—maybe we do now, but not in those days.

At that time there were lots of electrolytic detectors in use which contained wire worth thirty-five cents an inch. Every time Cannon or I started up, I guess we burned

up about ten inches of some poor struggling hams' detectors who happened to be listening in. Cannon finally bought the wire by the yard and sold it to the kids that came to tell us we had put their detector on the bum.

While Cannon and I were working one day, we suddenly stopped to listen in to see what was doing. There was Pickereel "PK" at the Waldorf, and he was cussing us out for further orders. Among other things he said "Those? X!!!X blankety blank pirates up in Mount Vernon have bent the diaphragms of my phones. How the—(more



"Had a little argument with 42 Broadway—On,—and left a book on my key."

blanks)—Sam Hill can I get what you're trying to say". He was trying to get some messages from "DU", old Bellevue Hotel in Philadelphia.

While I am on the subject of "WA", I want to again assert that Mr. Jacob Weiss DID hear the static discharge from the Waldorf aerial, as I had heard it many times myself, and upon investigation, found that during certain times, a spark would jump his anchor gap with a loud click every time he threw his aerial switch to the sending position.

A few days after this most beautiful call down that we had received, I was surprised to hear a continuous roar in my phones from Cannon's spark. I sat there fully ten minutes listening to it, and never a let up. Pretty soon, in walked Cannon, and said

he had had a little argument with 42 Broadway, so he left a book on his key when he came out. He didn't seem to worry about it, and before he got back and took the book off, one hour and twenty minutes had elapsed. I am sure no one got much through, as when we listened in, it was as quiet as a graveyard. The navy yard did manage to get up courage then and asked him "what he meant by such actions", to which I seem to recall a reply telling him "to mind his own business and shut up". Can you imagine such talk these days to a Navy Yard? Yes, I guess we were pirates all right; but the other side was just as much to blame, for they always swore unmercifully at us every time we opened up, and we of course did not have to take such abuse from them. As we often said "Get out, you don't own the air". I can remember offering to pay Mr. Payne's carfare up to Mt. Vernon to show him how to tune, when he threatened to come up and chop my aerial down. Mr. Payne was then operator at 42 Broadway, and is now cashier of the Marconi Company.

I heard "NY" call me one day after some very strenuous work on the part of my 5 k. w., and when I answered up, he sent me the following—"Do you want a job on a boat as operator—signed Hughes". Did I? Well, I should say I did. I said something like, "Yea Bo, I'll be down tomorrow". Remember fellows, this was long before oscillation transformers, Government licenses, and so forth were ever thought of. In other words, it was the day when the fellow with the most kilowatts won. I went down, and Mr. Hughes told me if I would guarantee to shut up that d— blunderbuss of a spark of mine while I was away, he would be only too glad to give me a job on a ship to South America, (and I heard him say to Duffy, "I hope it sinks".)

The ship was to sail in three or four days so I started in to get ready. But before leaving, I went up to see the wireless station, which was on the top floor of 42 Broadway. Here I found Mr. Bucher the man who now has the wireless school for Marconi Company, and has written such good wireless books. Well, boys, if you could have seen him the day I met him, you would certainly roar. His face was as black as a coal heaver's, and his shirt torn. He car-

ried a little piece of wire and a pair of pliers in his hand. He asked me where I was going, and I told him I was going to give the station the once over. I asked him what had hit him, and he said that a little experiment he was trying had not



"Where are you going."

come out just right. I heard later, that it was all caused by a rotary spark gap made of celluloid, which had exploded. Some months later, he started his first school, and has had one ever since. I shall never forget the first one. It was about twenty ft. by twenty, and had a few old boxes in it for seats. One buzzer outfit completed the apparatus and two pupils were all I could find about three days after it started. What a contrast to the same Mr. Bucher of today, and his schools!

I dropped in at the Waldorf on my way home, and as I walked into the little station away up on the roof, there was the man who loved me so—Pickerel. Of course, never having seen me before, he did not know me. I very innocently said "I've got a little amateur station and wonder if you have ever heard it?" "Maybe, what do you sign?" came back the answer. Well, now fellows, I didn't like the looks in that fellow's eye, so I told him I was "WA" from Yonkers, who in reality was my friend Runyon from that city. He told me very nicely, "Oh yes, I have heard you

talking to that guy "VN" in Mt. Vernon. If I ever see that lad, believe me, he is going to hear from me. I'd like to have him and that fellow Cannon out to sea somewhere on a nice dark night". There wasn't much doing in the air, so he let me listen in. Much to my sorrow, I heard no other than the other "WA" Runyan working away for all he was worth with Cannon. They were saying how "VN" had a job, and had gone to New York. I told Pickerel there was not much doing in the air, and that I'd tell him if anyone called. Gee! Say I was glad when those two guys got through. I laid the phones down and said "Well, good morning, Mr. Pickerel, I must be going". I thought I'd better get a good head start.

Cannon suddenly felt the need of a large lead-in insulator, and one day he went down to buy it from Mr. Hughes, Superintendent of the United Wireless. The minute he said "I'm Cannon from Mt. Vernon", Hughes had an awful strong desire to call



"I've got a little amateur station—I wonder if you have ever heard it?"

a cop. He told Cannon he could not buy anything from the United Wireless with

all the cash he had. Now it so happened that Cannon's father was more than an ordinary man. Among hundreds of jobs, one of his pet ones was President of the Pacific Coast Company, which was entirely equipped with United Wireless. George, for that is Cannon's first name, went immediately and notified his Dad what Mr. Hughes had said, whereupon Dad called up Mr. Hughes and had a nice little friendly chat with him. When George returned to the office, Mr. Hughes not only wanted to give him the insulator free of charge, but he offered to send a repair man up to install it. Cannon went home with his lead-in all safe and sound.

I made my trip to South America, which was full of thrills as well as the many hundreds of other trips I made. I will not

attempt to describe them here, as I guess I have already taken up enough of everybody's time, and the Editor must have a headache by now. If I have pleased any of you, and I hear from you that you would like to have more, I will at a later date, write again.

I stayed with the United Wireless, until the Marconi Company took it over. They took me with it, and I sometimes think they made a bad bargain, but by that old "stick to it, bulldog grip," I'm still holding on, and here I am today, Manager of one of their largest stations, "WCC", South Wellfleet, Cape Cod, Mass. I have grown very fond of "QST", and I think the Relay League is great. My only advice to you all is "Good luck, and STICK TO IT".



AMATEURS OF PORTLAND, OREGON.

At a meeting held in 325 Morgan Building, on December 15, 1916, the amateurs of Portland organized an association to be known as the Northwest Audion Association. A constitution which had been drawn up previously by a committee was read and accepted. The purpose of the association is to advance and develop the art of radio. To give those who wish it an opportunity to go deeper into the subject. Dues were fixed at twenty-five cents

per month. Any person holding a Government license or who is interested in the art is eligible for membership. Officers were elected for one year. President, Mr. C. L. Austin; 1st Vice-Pres., E. W. Berk; 2nd Vice-Pres., J. M. Hurtt; Sec., P. W. Dann; Treas., Mr. Galyean; Sgt.-at-Arms, B. W. Montgomery; Chief Insp., C. L. Austin. Any persons or clubs wishing to correspond with the Association, may do so through the Secretary, P. W. Dann, 6315—63rd Ave., S. E., Portland, Ore.