## Unraveling the History of Telegraphy at the University of Michigan:

## Another Amateur Radio Station Located on Campus

Some are aware that I have been researching the history of the amateur radio and the development of telegraphy at the University of Michigan. What has been uncovered, thus far, has remained hidden from the local amateur radio community. Events associated with Floyd "Jack" Mattice, Benjamin N. Burglund, President Henry P. Tappan, Fred W. Albertson, Professor James C. Watson, Cleveland Abbe, Amos Dolbear, Elias Gray, Professor Nicholas Steneck, Robert McCormick's Untin Bowler or who really made the first marriage proposal by Morse code may cause one to say "Really?" But this story came about entirely by accident. While the broad topic is about amateur radio, the pertinent story is about events taking place 60-years earlier and their significance to today's COVID-19 Pandemic.




**Background**: This all began at the Bentley Historical Library (BHL) in early 2013. The goal was to research the radio club history and produce a "flyer" for the 100-Year Anniversary of amateur radio on the U-M Campus. Inputting general terms, into the BHL such as "radio", "telegraphy", "W8UM", (identification for the university's amateur radio club) produced many interesting results. The first was a record album with the notation "Code Aptitude Test" with an identification tag (259) secured through the spindle holes. The contents appeared obvious at the time and for that reason I neglected looking any closer at the album. Six-years later, I again requested the record album, this time asking Dan Romanchik (KB6NU), to decode the album contents. Dan welcomed the opportunity and later gave to me a series of random letter combinations that he had decoded. Nothing more was on the record. However, the identification tag (259) and the extra spindle hole is a story I'll save for another day.

The second item was a 1957 movie by Garnett Garrison. The topic heading was "Silent Footage of a Ham Radio Class." Because the contents seemed obvious, I again neglected to review this item. I finally requested the movie and had it transferred into a digital format to view in January of 2020. This movie, sitting untouched for nearly 60-years, was about to be viewed for the first time!

**Mystery:** This is where the mystery begins. Professor Garrison's 1957 movie is about 5 minutes in length and divided into several sections beginning with footage showing the radio call sign W8EHZ,

**Series F** *series*

**Garrison's Class, 1957 1957** *otherlevel*

- ... (Silent footage of a ham radio class conducted by Garnet Garrison, also shots of the Huron Valley Amateur Radio Association's bus with radio equipment ...
- ...Huron Valley Amateur Radio Association's bus with radio equipment for civil defense work. Features: Garnet Garrison, UM-TVC) ...

followed by; about 20 students in a classroom setting, a mid-century design house with a station wagon, a building with a "large" radio tower with a "Yagi-Uda" antenna, students using telegraphy and a microphone to communicate, the street number 727 with the name Cohen on a front door of a house, the Washtenaw County Civil Defense Bus (W8KGG), and an a "middle-aged" male comfortably talking on a radio. What is the link among the various scenes and who are these individuals?

**The Movie Link** with permission from the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan.
https://umich.box.com/s/5p7px3i1osie7sayzyfcdiz7olh1i2xe

**If you have a question ask the local Barber.** In this case, the barber was Bob Dascola (WD8BNA & W8KGG). Bob is a licensed ham radio operator and is the current license trustee for the Huron Valley Amateur Radio Association / Civil Defense Bus (W8KGG). While Bob was unable to provide any connection to the movie, to any individuals or scenes included in the movie, Bob, unknowing, did have a connection. At that time, the Dascola Barbershop was located on South University, directly across from the U-M School of Education. Because of its proximity to the barbershop, faculty members only needed to walk across the street for a haircut.



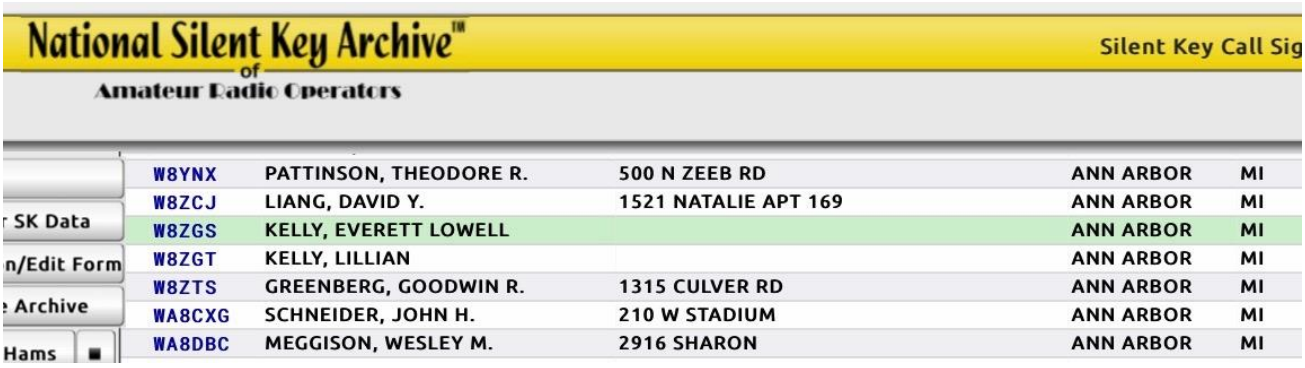
Lowell & Lillian Kelly are pictured standing at the door

**The Civil Defense Bus** and the Huron Valley Amateur Radio Association (W8KGG) were originated by E. "Lowell" Kelly. While at the U-M, Lowell was the Chair of the Psychology Department and served as a past-president of the American Psychological Association. His wife, Lillian, worked in the LS&A Department. Both Lowell (W8ZGS) and Lillian (W8ZGT) were amateur radio operators. A 1957 Ann Arbor News article, about their Mansion, says the following " … but also enters a new era of modern living, for the Kelly's are enthusiastic ham radio operators. Their equipment, which will function from the tower, enables them to reach people all over the world".

A link to the Ann Arbor News October, 4, 1952 article is included here:
https://aadl.org/taxonomy/term/45191

While with the Navy, Lowell was credited in determining that frequent crashes of military planes was due to the pilots inability to judge distances between planes. It was determined these crashes were a result of planes having only one tail light. Lowell suggested that planes should have two lights added

to the wings. Additionally, Lowell wrote the pilot training manuals and used psychological testing a pilots fitness / ability to fly. Several interesting stories that present Lowell's contributions as a psychologist and a radio operator (Detroit Free Press; 10/07/1985 & 11/21/1985) have been written, by columnist Joel Thurtell (K8PSV and a former Peace Corp Volunteer, Togo, West Africa).




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|---|---|---|---|---|
| W8YNX | PATTINSON, THEODORE R. | 500 N ZEEB RD | ANN ARBOR | MI |
| W8ZCJ | LIANG, DAVID Y. | 1521 NATALIE APT 169 | ANN ARBOR | MI |
| W8ZGS | KELLY, EVERETT LOWELL | | ANN ARBOR | MI |
| W8ZGT | KELLY, LILLIAN | | ANN ARBOR | MI |
| W8ZTS | GREENBERG, GOODWIN R. | 1315 CULVER RD | ANN ARBOR | MI |
| WA8CXG | SCHNEIDER, JOHN H. | 210 W STADIUM | ANN ARBOR | MI |
| WA8DBC | MEGGISON, WESLEY M. | 2916 SHARON | ANN ARBOR | MI |

Although Lillian does not appear in this movie, many foreign students, on campus, relied on Lillian to communicate messages back to their families abroad. In the movie, Lowell Kelly is in the foreground talking on the microphone. Lowell coined the term" eyeball" connection. A phrase commonly used among ham radio operators if they should meet after having communicated via the airwaves.

Of interest, Lowell Kelly later served as the Chief of the Division of Selection for the U. S. Peace Corp. Appointed by Sargent Shriver, Lowell was selected because of his expertise in **using science in the** selection analysis of applicants. The reasoning for his "intense" 15 page screening package, adopted by the Peace Corp was to make certain that "volunteers" had the necessary skills to perform their task and to survive in that country's environment.

Ironically, the Peace Corp did not allow their volunteers to use amateur radio equipment. According to the Kelly's daughter, Pat (N8FRS), who served in Dominica from 1980-1988, it was only after Hurricane David (1979) when the lone radio operator on the island, used his radio to contact a passing vessel for help.



**U High:** In a brief scene, an unidentified student, now identified to be John Yeager, is seen wearing a lapel pin with the words "U HIGH". (Circle) University High, located within the U-M School of Education Building, is at the corner of South University and East University. Further searching revealed that University High had an active radio club until around 1964. The electronics classroom was located on the xx floor where many of the schools radios and test equipment can be seen in the movie.



Less than 100-yards away from U High is the Physics Laboratory (Randall Hall) and the West Engineering Building (West Hall); locations of the original 8XA Experimental Wireless Station at the University of Michigan.

**W8EHZ** was the Federal Communications Commission designation for the University High Radio and TV Club. (Amateur Radio Club). The call sign designation was first issued In 1933 and was active until around 1964. The license trustee may have been a Weldon S. Tracy of Toledo, Ohio.



YOUNGSTOWN OHIO
W8EHX BERT W. SULLIVAN. 510 OHIO ST. FAIRBORN OHIO
K8EHY STANLEY T. BENTON. 119 E. FULTON ST, CE LINA OHIO
W8EHZ UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL RADIO 6 TV CLUB,

UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL. ANN ARBOR MICH
K8EHZ ROBERT R. DRAYER. 124 E. SOUTH ST. ALLI ANCE OHIO
W8EI W. JAMES J, WALLS ,3884 W.33RD ST, CLEVE LAND 9 OHIO
W8EIB WILLIAM D. CROSBY. 288 KEMPER RD, GLEND ALE OHIO
K8EIB BOB D. ACKERMAN. 2440 ELMDALE RD.

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS OHIO
K8EIC JOHN L. BARKOCY. 3323 MARSH RD. STOW OH

**The Search Begins** with assistance from the Research Librarian at the Ann Arbor District Library. The "727" and "Cohen" matched up to a Wilbur J. Cohen who resided at 727 South Forest in Ann Arbor. The house is no longer is standing. A search, however, did managed to locate a relative residing nearby. A simple knock on their door produced some additional answers ultimately leading to conversations with the siblings who expressed an interest in viewing this previously "unseen" movie and providing additional answers about the movie and their father.

Wilbur had 3 children; one, Bruce, had an amateur radio license, attended University High and participated in the radio class. (Photo) But why was his street address shown? According to Bruce, Professor Garrison was making a movie and wanted to record the wire antenna that Bruce had in his yard. Bruce believes that the antenna was not visible in the movie and thus left out. In the movie, Bruce is identified as sitting near the chalk-board with the white socks and then later sending a message using Morse Code. His



Hammerlund-100 Receiver is shown on his desk. Bruce would later spend 4-years serving in Latin America and Kenya as a Peace Corp volunteer.

**The Mid-Century House with the Station Wagon still searching**

**The "Building" with the Prominent Antenna Tower** has been identified as the Chestnut Road residence of the Yeager family of Ann Arbor. A son, John, attended University High and was an active member of the radio club. John is shown earlier wearing the "U High" lapel pin. While it is unknown why Professor Garrison included the Yeager's house in the movie, it was likely to showcase both the house and the enormous radio tower and antenna. The house was designed by architect Robert Metcalf. An October 1957 Ann Arbor News article, featuring their residence, includes the following description: "a room entered from the play space, with its western atmosphere, contains short-wave transmitting and receiving equipment used by the Yeager's son John, 16." No mention was made in the article of the enormous antenna tower with the Yagi-Uda antenna on top.

A link to the October 19, 1957 Ann Arbor News article can be found here:
https://aadl.org/sites/default/files/aa_news/aa_news_19571019-open_style_living-expressed_in_chestnut_rd_home.jpg

https://aadl.org/taxonomy/term/112267

**The Middle-Aged Man** comfortably speaking into the microphone was identified to be Howard Gerrish. Howard was an "A" student while attending University High. After serving in the military and obtaining his degree from the U-M, Howard returned to teach Electronics and Industrial Arts at University High. While Howard, and his wife Virtue, did not have any children, both welcomed the many students to their farm outside of Ann Arbor and had a great impact on their futures. Later, around 1960, moving to California, Howard taught at San Jose State College and Humboldt State University where the Engineering Building bears his name. His lectures and text books on Electricity and Electronics had a vast following which ultimately led to the evolution of the tech industry. It is reported that Steve Wozniak, among others, were influenced by the many books written by Howard; many remaining in-print today.

**Senator John F. Kennedy** stood on the steps of the Michigan Union in 1960 promoting student volunteering. After winning the presidential election, President Kennedy offered the position of "Assistant Secretary of Health, Education & Welfare for Legislation" to his brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver. In a fortunate turn of events, Shriver declined the position only to accept the position as Peace Corps Director. As a result of Shriver's decision, President Kennedy then nominated Wilbur J. Cohen to the position.

**Wilbur J. Cohen,** the father of Bruce, Christopher and Stuart, and referred to as "Mr. Social Security" by President Kennedy.

Having worked in the administrations of Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy and Johnson. During his career in Washington, Wilbur was instrumental in creating the Social Security Act of 1935. Considered an "expert", in public welfare policy, Wilbur was instrumental in the enactment of Medicare (1965).

While at the University of Michigan, he first served as a tenured Professor of Public Welfare (1956-1961). His interests were in instructing graduate students in the research and the administration of public welfare programs.



**Wilbur Cohen being sworn in as Secretary of HEW. Looking on are President Johnson (r), Vice-President Hubert Humphrey (l) and Cohen's wife and three sons.**
Photo: Social Security Administration

Returning to Washington, Wilbur eventually became the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (1968). Following the Johnson administration, Wilbur again returned to Ann Arbor to become the Dean of the U-M School of Education (1970-1977).

As the first employee of the Social Security Board, a local barbershop patron and a leading figure behind Unemployment Compensation, Disability Insurance, Medicare. This was totally unexpected; a silent movie about amateur radio that cumulates with an individual whose knowledge and commitment to developing social welfare programs that have assisted so many Americans especially given today's COVID-19 Pandemic. As of this date, unemployment insurance claims are nearing 17 million individuals, the greatest 1982, with 5o million Americans about to receive their first stimulus check. Trying times. But also imagine the difficulties Cohen experienced, back in 1935, writing clear and concise information explaining this "welfare" program, and then convincing and finally registering nearly 26 million people for Social Security through the United States Postal Service.

Public Law 100-54
100th Congress

# Joint Resolution

Recognizing the service and contributions of the Honorable Wilbur J. Cohen.

June 18, 1987
[H.J. Res. 283]

Whereas the Congress mourns the loss of the Honorable Wilbur J. Cohen, a great humanitarian who was a compassionate spokesman, advocate, and champion of the poor and the common people;
Whereas Wilbur J. Cohen was a participant and author in the creation of all social legislation in this country over the past five decades;
Whereas Wilbur J. Cohen had a distinguished career in the Federal Government from 1935–1956, including being the 1st employee of the Social Security Board and the director of the office of research and statistics;
Whereas Wilbur J. Cohen held the posts of the Assistant Secretary, Under Secretary, and Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare under the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations;
Whereas Wilbur J. Cohen had an additional distinguished career as a professor, while only holding a Bachelor's degree, at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and at the University of Texas at Austin;
Whereas Wilbur J. Cohen was the principal architect of the Medicare/Medicaid amendments of 1965;
Whereas, in the last weeks of his life, Wilbur J. Cohen saw pending catastrophic legislation as a vehicle for expanding all aspects of health care, including prevention, home care, and nursing home coverage, in addition to long-term hospitalization coverage; and
Whereas, in the last 52 years as a public and private citizen, Wilbur J. Cohen effectively advocated for expansion of social insurance: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That the Honorable Wilbur J. Cohen, champion of social insurance, architect of Social Security, disability insurance, Medicare and Medicaid, mental

101 STAT. 370 PUBLIC LAW 100-54—JUNE 18, 1987

health legislation, children's programs, and civil rights legislation, is recognized for outstanding service and contributions for the development of a social insurance system that provides vital health and social services to all Americans regardless of their age, sex, race, creed, or national origin.

Approved June 18, 1987.

**The Voice of America Station** in Washington, D.C., is coincidently located in the Wilbur J. Cohen Federal Office Building. This was only by accident. Originally, only Health, Education & Welfare was to be located in this building but due to the buildings size, structural reinforcement need for computers and air conditioning occupies a portion of the building.

Of note, the Magnolia Trees, in front of the building, were planted by each of Cohen's 3 boys.



Wilbur J. Cohen Federal Office Building, Washington, DC

**John Palmisano, KB8OIS**

**To Become a Peace Corp Volunteer, please** visit https://www.Peacecorp.gov

Photos courtesy of the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. 2020