



Second Century

My Friend Bob

When I wrote my December 2024 column reflecting on how rough the year had been on us as a community, I had no idea how horribly prophetic it would turn out to be. On February 10, 2025, the ARRL family suffered a loss that sent shockwaves through Headquarters and the field. Lifelong ham radio enthusiast, husband, father, grandfather, brother, mentor, contesteer, supporter, and friend Robert “Bob” Naumann, W5OV, became a Silent Key. How could someone who retired less than a year before leave us so soon?

Bob was without a doubt the most important person to me in amateur radio. We met when I was in high school. I had been given a Heathkit HD-1410 that didn't work, and despite our best efforts, my father and I could not repair it — so we took it to Heathkit! It turned out that the circuit board had a manufacturing error, so Bob, who was employed there, replaced it with a new kit that he built as a replacement unit. When we went to pick it up, Bob introduced himself to me, and what followed was a lifetime of friendship and adventure together through this hobby that we loved so much.

Bob was a little older than me and was first licensed as WN2OVE, subsequently becoming WA2OVE. The nickname “Over” followed him the rest of his life. Because he worked at Heathkit, you can only imagine what Bob's station looked like in the bedroom of his parents' house in North Haledon, New Jersey — wall-to-wall Heathkit green with the rigs, accessories, and amps that, back then, looked like a dream station! His station was also recognizable from the street, with the Mosley TA-33 mounted just above the roof line.

Bob was very active in clubs, from the Frankford Radio Club, to the North Jersey DX Association. He was involved in local clubs as well, including the Ramapo Mountain Amateur Radio Club and the Fair Lawn Amateur Radio Club. He was a card sorter for the W2 Incoming QSL Bureau, and also served on the CQWW Contest Committee.

Bob was my guide into the best of contesting. As a new ham chasing WAS, I was amazed at the activity one weekend on the bands, to be told by Bob on the phone, “It's ARRL Sweepstakes!” to which he slammed the phone down and went back to his paddles. Bob introduced me to another mentor, Doug Zwiebel, KR2Q. Between the two of them I made many rides up to Tuxedo Park and the massive multi-multi contest station of Buzz Reeves, K2GL (SK), where I met yet another mentor — and the inspiration for my vanity call sign — Gene Walsh, N2AA (SK). In the late '90s Bob connected me with Robert Moore, N2RM, invited me to operate

with him at V26B, and reconnected me with Noah, K2NG, who built and owns PJ4G on Bonaire, where I frequently contest from. Bob, Noah, and I went to PJ4 in winter 2013 for ARRL DX SSB and decided last minute to do a multi-2! It was a grind, with constant pileups, but so much fun — and Bob and I ultimately hung our plaques from that world-winning effort on the walls of our offices here at ARRL Headquarters.

Bob was wildly passionate about amateur radio. He loved being a ham, he loved working with hams — including in his retail years working at Array Solutions and DX Engineering — and he loved supporting hams, spending countless hours on the phone both at work and on his own time helping members navigate another love of his life: Logbook of The World. Bob's passion left little room for those who used their positions in amateur radio, or their accounts on social media, to attack others or try to make the hobby something less with their rants and venting. Occasionally Bob would bring his own fire to the conversation, only to be frustrated at the hopeless effort it turned out to be. In his last months, Bob became interested in the GMRS community around Dallas and began making friends who were hams and GMRS users, which led to some interesting emails between us.

Bob epitomized the elements of how I end nearly every column. I ask you to consider being radio active. And Bob always was. I ask you to be a connector. Bob was known around the world, and standing with him in both Dayton and Friedrichshafen convinced me: he was a ham radio celebrity. And if he were here, other than being shocked by becoming the topic of one of my columns, I think Bob would ask you to put away your keyboards, get on the air, and be kind to each other. And that, my friends and fellow members, was my friend Bob.

David A. Minster, NA2AA
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