

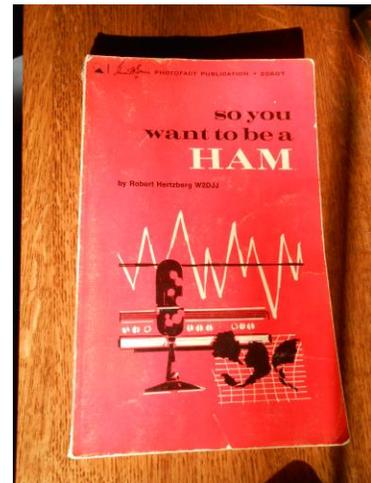
Growing up in the '60s, my world was full of scientific wonders. Space capsules, planets, atomic particles, all set the stage for an almost mystical wonder about our world and the universe. But my first obsession with radio came when my older cousins got "walkie talkies" for Christmas.

What magic! You could be out of sight but still hear each other! I was probably 5, maybe 6, at the time. But, no matter how much I begged, my father would not get me such a thing. Maybe it was more than he could afford, or maybe there were reasons only he could understand.

About the same time, I began to notice my grandparents' standup console radio. The one with multiple dials. One of the dials, according to my Pop Pop, had names of faraway places, like "Java", where the transmissions were coming from! I couldn't understand the languages coming from the speaker, so he must be right!

My interest in radio continued through the years. Coming across a box in another grandfather's attic, I learned it was an old tube car radio. He gave me permission, and I promptly took it home to dissect. My imagination reeled at what magic was going on inside each component. I resolved right then to learn that magic!

Though my curiosity continued through the years "Amateur Radio" didn't come to my attention until I came across an ad in a secondhand copy of an Electronics magazine for a book by Robert Hertzberg, W2DJJ. "So You Want to Be A Ham". This was probably 1971-2.



I don't remember how I acquired the book. Did I get it at a local electronics store? Mail-order? Not sure, but I still have it and will never let it go! It had me hooked! And on the first page, it even repainted the all-familiar console radio scenario!

Well, I had the bug, but wasn't entirely sure how to proceed. One day, I came across an ad in the local newspaper classifieds: Ham Gear For Sale: Heathkit DX-40 and HR-10. \$75 OBO

I didn't know much about them, but I had saved up enough from odd jobs, and they would be mine!

Now I needed a license. I started buying ARRL publications by mail, and ordered my very first brand new Heathkit, the HD-16 Code Practice Oscillator! So, unbeknownst to me, as I was entering my sophomore year in high school, I was already forming my career strategy.



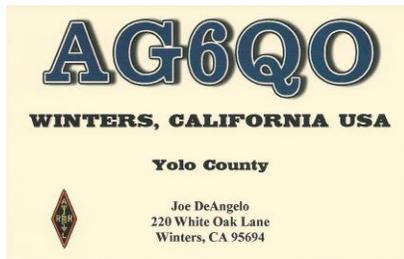
Meanwhile, my dear mother was chatting with a friend about my obsession, and discovered that her friend's son had been bitten by the same bug! That's when Kurt, WN3VWE became my new best friend. He introduced me to his Elmer, Frank, K3TRM, who lived only a three minute walk from my house. I diligently studied the electronics Frank taught, and mastered copying CW from the 33 1/3 rpm LP code lessons that I bought, and I even used the HR-10 to listen to W1AW on-air CW practice. Within a few months, I earned my novice ticket, WN3YKP !



The rest, so they say, is history. Electronics became a bigger and bigger part of my life. WN3VWE and WN3YKP became WA3VWE and WA3YKP with their upgrades. Kurt got his BSEE from Lafayette College, I got my BSEE from Penn State. Kurt became an AC power engineer, and I a computer/controls engineer.

Amateur Radio opened up opportunities for a fabulous multi-decade career in semiconductors and computer controls, and a rewarding life. I hope I can help others to find those kinds of opportunities.

Joe, AG6QO, BSEE, M. Eng.  
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**Post Script:** I've recently been in touch with the progeny of both Robert Hertzberg and Frank Aiello (K3TRM), who's fathers helped shape my life without knowing. Paul, K2DUX, who will soon be 85 years young, and Frank, yes, K3TRM. They both continue the Amateur radio legacy. So, Now I am a Ham...