

# Communications Confidential

YOUR GUIDE TO SHORTWAVE "UTILITY" STATIONS

## Amelia Earhart to Linda Finch

First, I'd ask readers with e-mail access to note my new e-mail address above. Good old 'snail mail' works too, you can send direct to P.O. Box 4222, Youngstown, Ohio 44515-4222 or in care of *Pop'Comm*. The last way is via *Pop'Comm's* FAX number, 516-681-2926. Feel free to send news, logs, information or questions anytime.

Readers may have been lucky enough to log the Linda Finch "Amelia Earhart Commemoration Flight" a while back during her attempt to duplicate the route taken by Earhart. Finch, along with navigator Peter Cousins, used callsign N42GT throughout most of the flight, while the photo plane accompanying her was N44RD. The Finch aircraft was heard throughout the flight on the various HF ATC route frequencies. Back in 1937, Amelia Earhart, with navigator Fred Noonan, used the callsign AKHAQQ. Interestingly enough, in doing some research on Linda Finch and the invariable links to Amelia Earhart, I discovered the frequencies used in Earhart's Lockheed Electra during her ill-fated flight. According to actual radio logs kept by the Coast Guard cutter *Itasca* (callsign NRUI), who had been tasked to provide support to the Earhart flight, only three HF frequencies were available to Earhart. These were: 3105.0 kHz, 6210.0 kHz, and 7500.0 kHz. The cutter's transmitters were arranged so that they were unable to send voice on 7500.0 kHz, so they sent weather messages over that frequency in morse code. However neither Earhart nor Noonan could copy code. It all makes for some interesting historical utility station reading. Those on the net can check these sites for more info: Deepseeker Online <<http://www.deepseeker.com/jo/earhart/aej1.html>>, TIGHAR <<http://www.tighar.org/Projects/AEdescr.html>>, National Air & Space Museum <<http://ceps.nasm.edu/GALLERIES/PHOTO1/VEGA.GIF>>, and the U.S. Navy historical information office at <<http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq3-2.htm>>.

Robert Ward, in Halifax, Canada, sent



Amelia Earhart's HF-equipped Lockheed Electra (photo courtesy Deepseeker On-Line)

information about some changes for the Canadian Coast Guard that recently occurred. Robert reports that Yarmouth Coast Guard Radio, VAU, has been closed, and the operators relocated to the Coast Guard Base in Saint John, New Brunswick. Yarmouth radio and Fundy Traffic have been combined as Fundy MCTS (Marine Communications and Traffic Services). The new "Fundy Radio" uses the callsign VAR, which of old was the callsign of Saint John Coast Guard Radio, who disappeared sometime in the early 1980's. Concurrent with the move, all of Yarmouth's CW services have been taken over by Sydney CG Radio, VCO, which also took over Halifax CG Radio's CW last year. Sydney now does all the 500 kHz CW work for this area of Canada. VAR maritime ship radiotelephone channels will be 2538.0/2142.0 and 2582.0/2206.0 kHz. NAVTEX transmissions with indicators "U" and "V" have also been transferred from Yarmouth to Fundy MCTS. Also of interest during ice season is that Halifax Coast Guard Radio, VCS, now has an HF fax transmit capability on 4416.0 kHz and 6915.1 kHz. They will transmit ice charts on a request basis only, on behalf of Ice Halifax when their office is open for business. Only one of the two frequencies can be used at a time, and there is no broadcast schedule. VCS's MF scheduled voice broadcast of weather and notices to fishermen on 2749 kHz were also changed last month. Here's the station's new schedule:

0010 UTC Weather/Notices to Fishermen (old time as 2310)

0703 UTC Weather (old time was 0603)  
1403 UTC Weather/Notices to Fishermen (old time was 1203)  
1903 UTC Weather. (old time was 1803)

Traffic list and notices to shipping broadcast times remain the same. Also, effective the last week of September of this year, Robert will no longer be answering the listener correspondence for VCS as he has been transferred to Fundy MCTS, in Saint John, NB. Robert has answered QSL requests for VCS for a good many years, going out of his way on his own time to ensure a reply. A tip of the UTE SWL hat to Robert and I'm sure you all share my good luck wishes for him.

### Reader Mail

Albert W. Hussein (FL) reports a big increase in the 81-81 digital mode activity recently, presumably mostly from Cuba, particularly the daytime transmissions. Albert noted the frequencies in use as follows: 5062 81/250 at 1145/2145; 5166 81/200 at 1350; 5306 81/250 at 1205/1245; 5322 81/200 at 0005; 5454 81/200 at 2338; 5929 81/300 at 1354; 5306 81/250 at 1205; 5929 81/300 at 2340; 6291 81/300 at 2340; 6308 81/200 at 0005; and 7633 81/200 at 2340. 81-81 is a two-channel mode favored by the Russian military, but is almost always transmitted encrypted. Few decoders have the mode yet, but it's distinguished by the more common 81 baud rate and a lesser found 73 baud format. There is also a 1-channel version that can be found in 36.5 and 40 baud rates. Albert also reports that another expedition to the Florida Keys revealed that 9830.0 kHz KAWN RTTY is also coming from the 7784.0 kHz U.S. Navy Saddlebunch Key site as first reported in the Sept. 97 column.

Dave Hixon (FL) sent an E-mail in regards to the Sept. column log of the abnormal Mossad VLB2 on 4665.0 kHz. Dave reports he has also logged that format back in 1991 on 20427.0 kHz. at 0445.

Alan Gale in the UK reports on a bub-