

Irving Al Gross - W8PAL - *1918-2000* It didn't take long until we knew there was someone special here. So much so that our subjects papers and archives are housed in collections exhibit Torgerson Hall, Virginia Tech Univ Blacksburg Va. Inventor, engineer businessman, Mr. Gross born in Toronto and was raised in Cleveland Ohio. He discovered his lifelong enthusiasm for radio on a steamboat trip on Lake Erie at age 9. The ships radio operator let him listen to the wireless and the crackling noises of the telegraph signals. Inventor Al Gross was forever hooked!



By age 12, Gross had turned his parents basement into a radio laboratory, with equipment patched together from junkyards. At age 16, he obtained his amateur radio license 8PAL. Gross entered the BSEE program at Cleveland's Case School of Applied Sciences in 1936. Determined to exploit the unexplored frequencies above 100 MHZ, Mr Gross set about

inventing a mobile, lightweight, hand-held two-way radio - Then in just two years, Gross had accomplished the invention and patented the Walkie-Talkie in 1938. Al's top secret system for the OSS (CIA) was not declassified until 1976, the U.S. Joints of Chiefs have called the talkie, one of the most successful wireless intelligence gathering methods ever employed.

After the war, the FCC became aware of Gross' work. They allocated the first channels for personal radio service in the Citizens Radio Service. We need not mention where that went, by 1948 Gross sold about 100K Citizens Band Units. Mainly to farmers and the Coast Guard.



By 1949 Al made another breakthrough, he adapted his two way radios for cordless remote telephonic signaling, invented and patented the telephone pager. By the 50's Al tried in vain to interest US Telephone companies in his inventions and ideas for mobile telephone. He continued to invent, earning a total of 12 patents, through the 50s - 60s. Eventually he began to work for large corporations and since 1990 his own Orbital Sciences Corp. His greatest enthusiasm is for the presentations he frequently gave to local elementary and high school students, thus Mr. Gross likes to put it, "People

learn from the old guy who did it the hard way." Al has been rich in honors and awards with a most impressive list. Favorites are Commendations from the Defense Department and President Reagan.

Do you remember Chester Gould the origin of cartoon character Dick Tracy? - Gould came across Al's wrist watch transceiver concept. Gould asked for permission to use the concept in his cartoons, which was granted. - Al and wife Ethel had been residing in Sun City when he expired at age 82. Our subject always smiled about his patent expirations, "If I still had the patents on my inventions, Bill Gates would have to stand aside for me." May it be so, thanks W8PAL - Partially scripted mit.edu inventor of the week. KK8W art work. W8SU 2007