

## “HARVEY’S MAGICAL BASEMENT”

Where do you start with a guy like Michigander W8FYX Harvey Ball? Life beyond the Mackinaw. He was a life long bachelor, his parents were very conservative people from Pickford, Mich. His brother was a missionary and they built the house at the Soo, in the 50's, there were some very extensive arguments on where this door should be and that entrance etc., so some tempers flew and sabre saws flying. Harvey had a group that hung with each other, Tom & Dick LaBlough, John Flood, Roy Flowers & Clair Smith. They all enjoyed motor head stuff, rebuilding transmissions and



motors. George Roher was a physics teacher at Lake Superior State, later teaching at Houghton at Mich Tech and was in a business venture with Harvey. They were attempting an alternate way to build transistors and it is not known if they sold the business to the Japanese or not. Harvey utilized a Central Electronics 100V and a National NC-300 receiver with all of the extras.

George Ewing came along in the early 60's as a freshman in H.S. with a Heath regen receiver that needed repaired, Harvey located the problem in short order and said you need one of these, showing the inductor style, they went over to a 6 ft square bin full of chokes and inductors and found the exact replacement. The amount of spare parts Harvey had was phenomenal. The kids at the highschool had a direct teletype system hookup from the school to Harvey's QTH on Superior St. They were using the older Teletype Corporation Model 15's. School calls were W8JXA & NTD.

At one point there were around 40 folks who hung around Harvey's on a regular basis with many being licensed and all not hams, some of them were aircraft types, Harvey had parts of two planes and he actually got one going from his labors. One plane was a Taylor Craft and the other was a Stinson. Harvey actually got the Taylor Craft flying and certified, he wanted to make less travel time of the call out for emergency electronic repairs, quickly via air instead of driving by car. But the main problem was (Fog) at a few occasions he had to fly into alternate airports and get lodging so he really didn't do too much flying after that. So, bad weather and no instrument certification was the nail placed into that coffin. His prompt repair to shipping radar and two way FM was known state wide.

Harvey's military career in WW2 was interesting but short lived. By the time Harvey joined and went thru basic, the war was practically over but he did get into some heavy tech stuff. The V-2 rockets were being scrutinized out west and he was fortunate enough to be one of several crews learning how they were constructed. He met some very interesting scientists out there.

In 1967 until approximately 1969 the school kids were into chemicals and rockets at the high school and it is a wonder that the police and juvenile authorities were not at Harvey's house daily. With the pipe consoles to place the rockets into flight, it was a rather precarious situation in town.

George Ewing wrote a short story for 73 Magazine in Feb of 1976, "Glitch Gate" in that story he chatted about Harvey's Magical basement. The story was rerun as "Pyros" In Asimov's Science Fiction magazine January 1996.

Harvey was a main player in repeaters and helped establish VE3SSM while at the Soo. Continued

Prior to that the locals and the AM leftover players utilized 145.08 simplex as a local chat channel. They were using horizontal antennas at the time. Something in the memory bank about heat causing the repeater system to key down in very warm weather. The VE3SSM rig was temperature sensitive, the metal sides of the building enclosure got very hot during the summer.

Harvey didn't have much respect for the medical treatment at the Twin Soo's in those days and mentioned many times about the butchers in that region. He had some severe health problems (Kidney) and eventually moved to Lorain Ohio with the company and was very pleased with the medical help there. Harvey's wreck down state was in a VW-Bus which he utilized on service calls, hitting the rear of a Cadillac with those big tail fins. His legs were broken up quite badly.

In later times Harvey at the Sault was very much interested in Aviation Electronics and had a hand in a lot of those types of installation and repairs. He did not limit himself in any sector. He actually repaired AM and FM broadcast stations but had an understanding he could not sign any logs because he did not have the certification.

John Flood knew Harvey better than most. John was in the Navy and in civilian life joined Lorain Electronics and was closely linked with Harvey on many details, at Toledo and Lorain shipyards.

Writer advised George Ewing that he had been looking for a W8FYX QSL for many years and could not come up with one and inquired if George had one. "Sorry could not, however may have an old school card laying around W8JXA." Ewing stated, W8JU Ray at St. Ignace was a very close friend and that the LaBlough brothers had worked closely on many jobs with Ball.

That ping pong table and the pop machine rounded off the treat to be at Harvey's. It sure was a Mecca for the younger kids and the technically inclined. Ewing said, "Ball's mind was extra special and if he had come along a little earlier or possibly attended MIT or some other upscale university, there is no telling what he might have become!" That home was a veritable treasure trove of airplane

and electronic parts. Myself a Coast Guard Radio type, spent many hours at Harvey's magical basement and in my mind's view was better than a USO Facility.



Harvey's sister advised me that he put her through Bible School for which she is forever indebted with his generosity.

I was personally fortunate to have met W8FYX and my wife and I had the pleasure to have him as a guest for a meal at our home in the Soo. Only a private in the U.S. Army but a General in our eyes! Not many like him come through in this life time. Bye Harvey!