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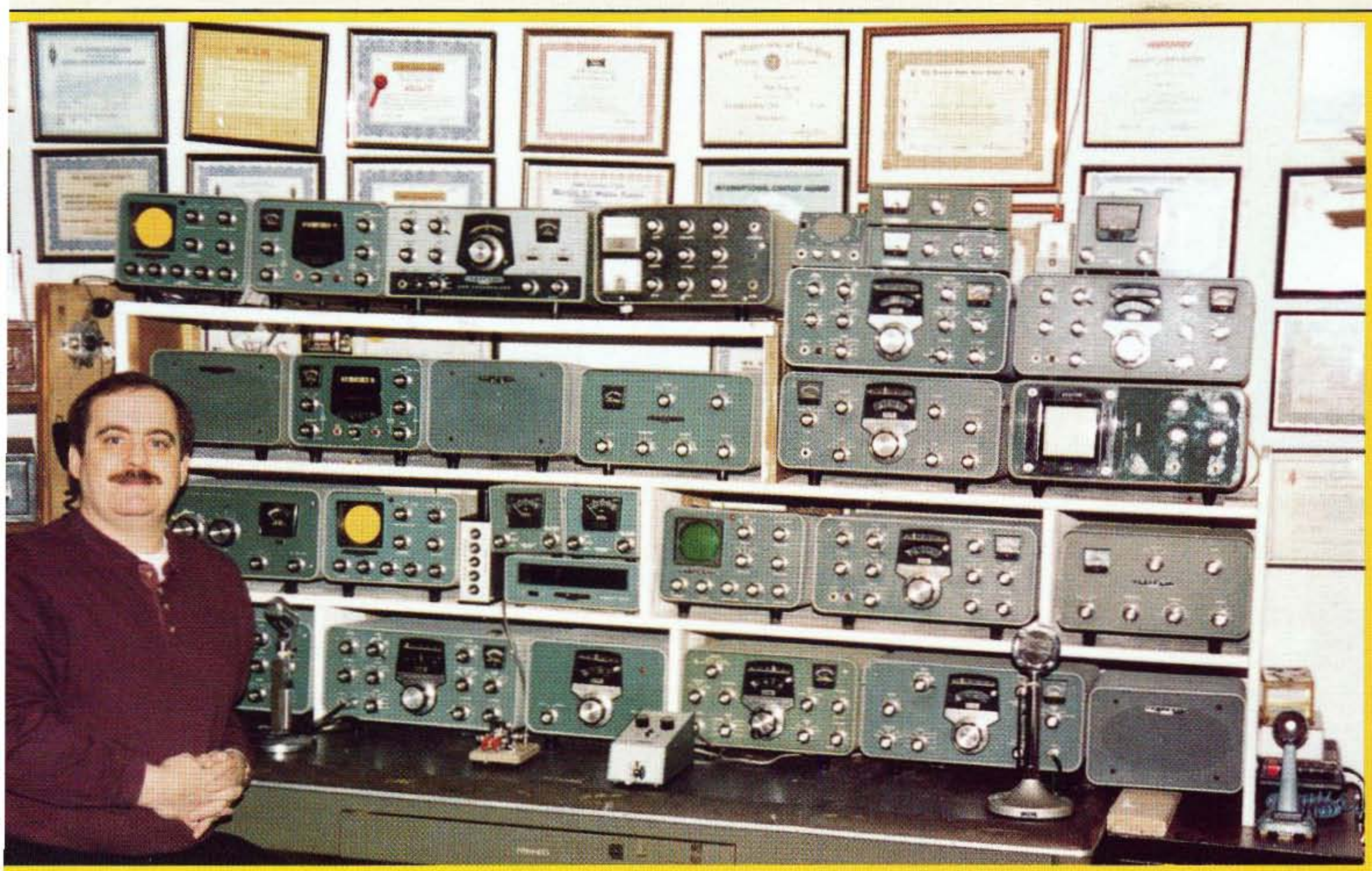
Amateur Radio Today

International Edition

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Shane Brady WB2WPM and Heathkit radios

More Stealth Antennas
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Heathkit Mania

And all bought at bargain prices!

Shane P. Brady WB2WPM
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I earned my Novice license 22 years ago, after seeing a ham radio demonstration as a Boy Scout some 10 years earlier. Recently married and unable to afford new equipment, when I heard that a local ham was selling a Heathkit SB-102, I went for it. That SB-102 and a 40 meter dipole were my introduction to actual QSOs.

I remember looking through the Heathkit catalogs, trying to imagine a station with all the matching accessories for my SB-102. The XYL got me started by giving me the matching SB-630 station console for Christmas. This had a 24-hour digital clock, a phone patch, an SWR meter, and a 10-minute timer, all in one. I then added the matching SB-600 station speaker. Not a shabby-looking station for a Novice in 1974. The SB-102 is a 13-tube HF SSB/CW transceiver, rated at 180 watts input—80 watts more than most of today's radios—running a pair of 6146Bs as finals.

When I upgraded to Advanced, the SB-102 got me contacts with UA, ZS, VK, and XX. I added the optional 400 Hz filter for CW, and what a difference that filter made!

Sure, I sold the SB-102 and went on to a solid-state synthesized radio with 100 memories and computer-controlled microprocessors, but I couldn't forget my vision: to have a complete line of Heathkit radios and accessories.

Building the dream

Several years ago I heard about a retired ham with some old gear to sell. That visit changed my shopping habits at hamfests. There was an SB-102 and an SB-200 1 kW amplifier. The SB-200 is still an extremely popular 1 kW amplifier. It uses a pair of 572B tubes in parallel for finals. Together, the SB-102 and the SB-200 were a popular combination in the late '60s and early '70s. We worked out a great deal; he just wanted them to go to a good home and was not interested in the dollars.

Finding the pieces

At a local ham auction, I ran across an SB-610 monitor scope which also matched the famous Heathkit "SB green line" of equipment. Now I had five matching pieces from the SB line. The station was starting to look like the Heathkit catalogs of 20 years ago. I was hooked. I had to have *all* the pieces to the Heathkit SB line!

Packet radio is a nice way to find "wanted" equipment, and I've had great success finding bargains for older equipment. A couple of messages out on

"So what do I do with all of this outdated equipment? I have fun with it!"

Clearing a spot on a side table, I made a new home for my old friends. I had kept my SB-600 speaker and SB-630 console; these too joined the new family.

As a Novice in the early '70s, it seemed to me that four out of five QSOs were with hams who had Heathkit equipment. Now, in the 1990s, I was trying to make contacts like I did 20 years ago, with so-called obsolete equipment.

Does that Heathkit combination still work? You bet it does! No, it doesn't have the 100 memories, and I do have to

wait a couple of minutes for the tubes to heat up. But what it does very well is make contacts. You're not going to hear signals coming in at less than 0.1 μ V on a crowded band, but how often are you really under those conditions? Remember, a clean signal from 20 years ago still sounds the same as a clean signal from a state-of-the-art transmitter today.

packet and soon I had added the SB-650 digital (nixie-tubes) frequency display and the SB-620 spectrum analyzer, for under \$25 each. Yes, they both worked when I plugged them in. Another packet request and I had two SB-500 2 meter transverters added to my collection (at next-to-nothing prices). The SB-500 also uses 6146 finals for 50 watts output for SSB and CW.

The next piece took some ads in the ham classifieds. I had only seen one SB-640 in my life, and that was years ago at Dayton. The SB-640 is a remote VFO that interfaces with the SB line of transceivers for working split frequency.

The hardest piece to locate was the SB-110 6 meter transceiver. Most people hang on to these '60s vintage rigs, which use 6146 tubes for finals for 180 watts PEP on SSB and 150 watts CW.

Hamfests will yield a bumper crop of old tube-type Heath equipment. I've purchased complete working HF rigs for \$20!

I've since added the SB-300 and SB-303 receivers, along with their



Photo A. WB2WPM's Heathkit collection.



Photo B. WB2WPM at his station.

Photos by WB2JFP.

matching SB-400 and SB-401 transmitters, to the collection. These twins were known as the "poor-man's Collins." HW-100s and HW-101s have joined the family as well, along with many green accessories such as wattmeters, phone patches, keyers, and SWR bridges.

No, not everything works when I get it, but in most cases all that is required is replacing a tube or two and a quick tune-up. At hamfests there are always boxes of tubes for sale. The average price for a tube is \$2, but many times they can be found for only \$1.

Manuals are worth their weight in gold when working on this older equipment. I make copies of all manuals and store them away. I'm even collecting

matching SB-644A remote VFO. All working, and all obtained at bargain prices.

So what do I do with all of this outdated equipment? I have fun with it! When visitors come to the shack, most are in awe of all those dials and gleaming knobs. It's almost a shame to tell them that, averaged out, I have less than \$35 per piece invested in this sub-hobby. That's less than a used state-of-the-art rig!

Am I finished with my collecting? No way. There is still an SB-313 shortwave receiver out there waiting for me, the last piece I'm missing for my collection! Besides, I still need more basket cases to combine with other basket cases, to come up with working units. Why do I

"When visitors come to the shack, most are in awe of all those dials and gleaming knobs."

manuals for equipment I don't have yet, just in case I come across it someday. With the manuals, tune-ups are a cinch, as in most cases all you need is a known frequency source and a VOM. Heathkit's famous step-by-step instructions will lead you through complete tune-ups, if need be.

Naturally, I've added Heath's last line of SB equipment to my collection. At another operating position, sits the all-solid-state SB-104A transceiver and its matching SB-604 speaker and power supply, the SB-614 monitor scope, and the SB-634 station console and its

need more and what am I going to do with all of these Heathkit radios? Funny, that's what N2INY, my XYL, asks. **73**

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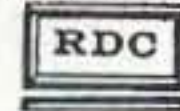
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