



A collage of railroad logos and a train scene. The logos include CSX TRANSPORTATION, KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN Lines, THE SOUTHERN RAILROAD SYSTEM, Amtrak, Welcome Aboard!, RAILROAD NET, Fri. 19:00 Hrs Central, NEW YORK CENTRAL SYSTEM, THE MILWAUKEE ROAD, NS NORFOLK SOUTHERN, Rock Island, ATLANTIC COAST LINE, and RR. The background of the collage is a black and white photograph of a steam locomotive pulling a train through a snowy landscape.

Updated on Dec. 23, 2020. For more information on what ham radio is, go to:

<https://www.theweatherwonder.com/hamradio.htm>

This has information on a page that I created off of my personal homepage website.

NOTE: If you've previously tried to confirm a QSO with me via QRZ's logbook, I had great difficulty working with it to confirm said QSO. Please go to www.eqsl.cc INSTEAD to get your QSO confirmed, and I will do so as soon as possible. Also, for those who do NOT like the way I run ham radio nets, etc., you have the choices to:

- A) Commit to running the net each week...with all of the work involved before, during, and after the net.**
- B) Not listen to (ignore), and to not check into my net.**
- C) “Spin The Dial” (change the frequency, repeater, or reflector).**
- D) Shut down the rig or software.**

I am NOT “holding a gun” to anyone’s head to listen to, or checkin to ANY of my nets. I have far more people who’ve told me they appreciate what I’m doing, than for the “lids” who accuse me of being “egotistical”, etc. There are plenty of other ham radio nets out there. The shorter the net is, the quicker I can get to things in my life outside of ham radio, that demand my attention.

For the photos at the top of this file:

- 1) The grade crossing signal photo is a CSX Railroad Crossing in the snow (the photo is used with permission of Abacus Software, which did add-ons for the original Microsoft Train Simulator, but it may no longer be in business).**
- 2) The photo to its right is a SOO Line Steam Locomotive at Random Lake, Wisconsin, and is used with permission of Mike Yuhas, AB9ON. His website, <https://www.mikeyuhas.org> has a whole slew of railroad related photos.**

3) The photo to the right of the SOO Line Steam Locomotive is yours truly (the Conductor for the Trains Net), taken at the Arkansas Railroad Museum in Pine Bluff, Arkansas (photo by Peter Smykla). On the scrolling name badge on the Conductor's Hat, it notes "Welcome Aboard From The Conductor".

4) The photo below that is the original Superliner consist of the Amtrak Texas Eagle passenger train, and the former SL&SW (St. Louis and Southwestern) Cotton Belt Steam Locomotive 819, at the former Missouri Pacific Railroad Depot in Little Rock, Arkansas, in June, 1986. The photo is courtesy of the late Ken Zeigenbein. Both were at the depot in celebration of Arkansas' sesquicentennial (150th birthday).

5) The photo to the right is the logo for the weekly Trains And Railroads Net that I do on the QuadNet Array. The logo was designed by Paul Frey, K9PTF, with the Rock Island logo provided by Andy Wellman, KF4JQD. The Trains And Railroads Net is done in honor of its predecessor that met on Echolink in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area for over 8 years...and is in loving memory of my late uncle, Frank Rentja, K3VRM (SK)...who gave me my love of ham radio and trains. The net discusses anything and everything on trains and railroading. Also, Paul, K9PTF does a "Railroad Trivia Question" at the start of the net, and acts as "Conductor" when I can't make it, for whatever reason (i.e. weather, internet, health, etc.).

A YouTube Video, done by Gary Wilt, W2GJW, from the story from the Sept. 22, 2017 edition of Amateur Radio Newsline (with my former callsign of WX1DER), is located at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7yTRNcD1uM&feature=youtu.be>

Yours truly can be seen operating 20 meter HF Railroad mobile, on the Arkansas and Missouri Railroad Troop Train, on Memorial Day Weekend, 2011, along the former Frisco line between Springfield, Missouri, and Fort Smith, Arkansas, from a YouTube Video done by Steve Tune, KC5FWE, located at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syErpRb6lFI>

How I pulled some stations out of the weeds on 20 meters, I'll never know (hi hi). At that time, my callsign was AE5WX. I was originally N5VLZ...then AE5WX...then WX1DER...and now WX4QZ...all noted below. Due to various issues, that's the last time I've operated HF...and I'm not sure when I can, or will, operate HF again...unless it's via a Remote Operations setup. However, it'd have to be with small or no operational fee. Having to live off the meager funds from disability each month is quite difficult at times.

After doing weather traffic on ham radio for 28 years, I got BURNED OUT in early 2019. Since "weather is no longer my priority traffic" on nets, etc., and since I am no longer a Voice Net Control for, or checkin to, ANY weather related nets, my vanity callsign has changed to WX4QZ.

The alternate phonetics stand for "Whistled Crossings For Quiet Zones" – emphasizing safety at highway railroad crossings. In a Quiet Zone (QZ), the engineer does not sound the train horn, unless there are people or vehicles on the track ahead of him...or if they're meeting a train on the parallel track(s). With some railroads, they use W for Whistle, and others use X for Crossing. For more information on railroad crossing safety, go to:

<https://www.theweatherwonder.com/rxr.htm>

Another alternate phonetic for the callsign, is for The Food Net, is "Wild eXciting 4 QuiZines"). After all...H.A.M. stands for "Have Another Meal", you don't call us "Late For Dinner" ...and if we eat ham, we're "cannibalistic" (hi hi). I know "QuiZine" isn't how "cuisine" is spelled...but, in Louisiana, they spell the term "Fido" (for a dog) as "Phideaux"...so there you are (hi hi).

I do 4 nets on the QuadNet Array -- the QCWA Digital Net on Sunday...the Hotspots, Raspberry Pi, Single Board Computer (SBC) and Zum Net on Monday...the Trains Net on Friday...and The Food Net on the 3rd Saturday; full details on these nets are below. For more details on the QuadNet Array (with connections via D-Star, DMR, WIRES-X, or System Fusion), go to:

<https://www.openquad.net>

If I can't be there to run the net, due to health, weather, internet, or other issues, I'll try to get an alternate net control. A spreadsheet selected nets for D-Star, D-Rats, and Echolink (set up in US Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Pacific Time)...along with other files, is available by going to:

<https://www.theweatherwonder.com/elk.htm>

and clicking on the desired link(s). You'll need Microsoft Office, LibreOffice, OpenOffice, or the equivalent, to view the spreadsheets...and an appropriate PDF reader to view the PDF files. I started the net lists, as the net data located at dstarinfo.com is woefully out of date on the nets.

Thanks to Gary, VA3GDZ, for help with the template for the net spreadsheet list.

For those whose local systems...or their rigs...can't access the QuadNet Array...they can checkin via:

1) Facebook to the various groups (QCWA, Hotspot, Pi, SBC and Zoom Net, the D-Star Trains And Railroads Net, Digital D-Star Food Net, and the Arklatex D-Star Net).

2) D-Rats via the St. Tammany Ratreflector – at sttammany.ratreflector.com

3) Email (you must be logged into QRZ to view it).

4) Netlogger (look for the respective net title).

I apologize for any inconvenience to those who won't be able to check in anymore...but, I've learned that "if you try to please everyone, you'll find that you have pleased no one".

However, I've appreciated those who were able to check in while the nets noted were on Reflector 26A...and thanks to the British Columbia Frequency Modulation Communications Association for when those were on REF 26A (I'm still an Associate Member with them).

With the nets on the QuadNet Array, it allows far more to access the net (D-Star, DMR, WIRES, or System Fusion), than was the case when those nets

were only on REF 26A. The BlueDV program for Windows, done by David, PA7LIM, allows access to D-Star, DMR, WIRES, or System Fusion...with no rig required -- the latest version is 1.0.0.9595 -- although I mainly use it for D-Star.

I'm usually on D-Star, and D-Rats, for selected nets each week. With a ThumbDV, I can connect to the US Trust Reflectors, plus DCS, XLS, and XRF Reflectors, as well as DMR, WIRES, and Fusion...although I've used DMR very sparingly, and have NOT yet used WIRES-X or Fusion. I access Packet Via Telnet and Winlink 2000 weekly, but also use Echolink sparingly, since a monthly net I had checked into, has since shut down.

For the nets I run on CQ100, D-Star, or the QuadNet Array, early checkins begin 30 minutes before net time, although early checkins can begin from 45 minutes to an hour ahead of the net start time. But with having degenerative disk disease in my spinal column, it can be very difficult to sit at the computer for long periods of time.

The net times noted below are in US Central Time. D-Rats checkins are on the AE5HE Ratreflector for when I do the New Mexico D-Star Net, with the other QuadNet Array Nets, and the Arklatex D-Star Net, having D-rats checkins on the St. Tammany Ratreflector. Also, I use Netlogger for each of my nets...there is a PDF file at <https://www.theweatherwonder.com/elk.htm> on setting up and using Netlogger for nets.

Sunday: QCWA Digital Net, The QuadNet Array, 4pm.

I had looked into getting back working with the Cabot Nightflyers Net, a one time Sunday night net in central Arkansas (I'm still their webmaster)...but I can't find a node to host the net. So, the net may have to change its format or mode...otherwise, it's QRT until further notice.

Monday: PCL Packet Net, NS2B BBS, Penfield, New York -- click on the link for the PCL Net at <https://www.theweatherwonder.com/elk.htm> for more info. (I alternate Net Controls with Bob, NS2B). The PCL Net does NOT meet during weeks where there is observance of a U.S. Holiday.

Monday: HotSpot, Pi, SBC, and Zoom Net, The QuadNet Array, 9pm (I alternate Net Controls with Steve, KC9SIO).

Tuesday: Arklatex D-Star Net, REF 48B, 7:30pm.

2nd Thursday: New Mexico D-Star Net, REF 55A, 9pm (the net meets weekly; I'm Net Control on the 2nd Thursday; and backup Net Control on the 4th Thursday). However, I log via Netlogger each week.

Friday: QCWA CQ100 Net, 10am (14.347) -- then the Trains/Railroads Net, The QuadNet Array, 7pm

3rd Saturday: Food Net, The QuadNet Array, 8pm

As for my ham radio "career", I was first licensed as N5VLZ in 1991 as a No-Code Technician. I had to take the Novice and Technician written exams, but didn't have to take a Morse Code test at the time. I tried, but failed, a 5 WPM shortly before the CW Morse Code Requirement was abolished in 2007.

Shortly after first being licensed, I began running various traffic nets and hamfest talk-ins around the central Arkansas area. I started using packet radio in 2000, and Echolink in 2006. I began using D-Star (via the DV Dongle) and D-Rats in 2012. With changing to a ThumbDV (noted above), I can now access the DCS, XLX, and XRF D-Star Reflectors. I usually am on the air only in the evenings for selected nets.

The ThumbDV from Northwest Digital Radio, and the BlueDV program from PA7LIM, are far more versatile than the blue DV Dongle and the DV Tool program from AA4RC (plus less expensive). However, my main modes are Packet Via Telnet, D-Star, D-Rats, Winlink 2000 (via Winlink Express), and Echolink. Other contact methods are noted at the end of my bio.

Now, while the idea of operating "internet only" makes the "purists" cringe; the bottom line is, "if you can't get on the air, why get licensed in the first place...let alone bother to upgrade??" . Plus, it's hard enough to get hams to serve as "Net Control", whether on RF, VoIP, etc.

So, I can't see why we should penalize hams who are in situations (through no fault of their own), where RF gear and antennas are restricted or prohibited

(be it assisted living centers, nursing homes, or retirement communities)...so, they have to operate "internet radio" instead, or give up their lifelong hobby entirely....which can be very depressing.

Having someone to talk to via ham radio takes the loneliness out of ones day; and with my elderly Mom having spent time in a nursing home prior to her death in August, 2019...I can vouch for the loneliness factor for her, and the other residents in similar facilities. And, COVID-19 has made it far worse, prohibiting families from visiting their loved ones.

I realize that I'm QRT if the Xfinity internet is down (I do have a Verizon Mi-Fi), but I have too many health issues to worry about, to be involved in any emergency communications. Plus, one's health can change in the blink of an eye.

There is a file at <https://www.theweatherwonder.com/elk.htm> on "Operating Via Internet Radio" with more details.

In July, 2007, 5 months after the FCC dropped the Morse Code requirement for amateur radio licenses, I used HamTestOnline™ to upgrade from Technician to General in 14 days, and from General to Amateur Extra 13 days later; making it the BEST MONEY I EVER SPENT in amateur radio. I studied 2 hours a day for 2 weeks on each element...although you may not have that much time to devote to studying.

However, the 6 month subscription (prices vary, depending which license(s) you are going for) lets you study in the privacy of your own residence, at your own pace. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND them to anyone wishing to obtain, or upgrade their amateur radio license. They do offer a Money Back Guarantee. For details, go to:

<https://www.hamradiolicenseexam.com>

I upgraded not so much to operate on HF, but mainly to become a Volunteer Examiner (VE); because at a central Arkansas Hamfest several years ago, they were literally "begging and pleading for VE's" to help with the license exam session. I realized then that this would be a great way to give back to the hobby, and it has been the most rewarding of all of the things that I have ever done with amateur radio, from October, 2007 to the present. I've participated

in over 200 license exam sessions, either as an administering VE, or as a VE Team Liaison. As of November, 2020...according to the VE Session Counts for Arkansas...only 2 other VE's have more than 200 sessions to their credit.

For the testing I do in central Arkansas, pre-registration is required, and if no one signs up 48 hours in advance of the session, the session is canceled. But, I won't test up against a hamfest, public service event, or holiday weekend in Arkansas...and the session will be canceled if hazardous weather or damage from a storm, is a concern, in the interest of safety for both examinees and examiners.

Due to COVID-19 concerns and other issues, I am NOT doing license exams as of late 2020, and may not test again until sometime in 2021. I will note that the Arkansas River Valley Amateur Radio Foundation (ARVARF), located in Russellville, Arkansas, is offering "remote testing" – for more details, go to <https://www.arvarf.com>

In June, 2009, I changed to the AE5WX vanity callsign, AE for Amateur Extra, 5 for the 5th Call District, and WX for Weather...mainly Skywarn severe weather operations, which got me interested in ham radio in the first place. I've been indirectly struck by lightning twice (I carry no electrical charge, and can be handled safely (hi hi)), been under 2 tornadic funnel clouds, been within a mile of an F-1 and an F-4 rain wrapped tornado, and been in swirling floodwaters.

While I respect the weather, I admit I get very nervous when severe weather or winter weather threatens the area. It'd be nice if severe weather was out in the middle of nowhere, not bothering anyone (i.e. in an open field)...but, the bottom line is, that someone's property is being damaged or destroyed...and tragically, many are injured, and lose property, or their lives, during severe weather. I am offline during thunderstorms, and can't even try to work via Wi-Fi, due to intense lightning that usually accompanies the thunderstorms moving through the area. The first things that usually go down during winter weather or thunderstorms, are the internet and the cellphones.

In December, 2012, I changed to the WX1DER vanity callsign, which stands for "Weather Wonder"; the name of a series of weather features that I did while I was in college nearly 40 years ago at the University Of Arkansas At Little Rock (UALR), majoring in Radio/TV/Film. They have an amateur

radio club, and an amateur radio callsign server that mirrors the FCC ULS. Little did I know that my "radio" would become "amateur radio". The feature itself ("A Weather Wonder") was patterned after "A Meteorological Minute", a series of features that The Weather Channel was doing shortly after it began operations. I am the VE Team Liaison for the UALR Ham Radio Club. And, the name came from a phrase that I coined, which tells the truth about forecasting... "We analyze data, forecasts, and text...but, wonder what weather will happen next".

I'm NOT a meteorologist, but an amateur weather enthusiast (or weather geek, if you prefer). I know enough to be dangerous, but "I did stay at a Holiday Inn Express last night" (hi hi).

As noted above, since "weather is no longer my priority traffic" on nets, etc., I have changed my callsign one last time to WX4QZ. While I changed callsigns, I kept the same email address, plus the domain of my homepage, The Thunderbolt -- A Weather Wonder (<https://www.theweatherwonder.com>), my weather group on Facebook (The Thunderbolt -- A Weather Wonder), and my ham radio and weather oriented computer bulletin board system.

It is The Thunderbolt BBS -- Telnet or Website login to tbolt.synchro.net – note that the BBS is offline whenever thunderstorms threaten the central Arkansas area to protect from lightning damage; so if you can't access the BBS, please try again later.

The BBS is running Synchronet BBS software, done by Rob Swindell, who is also an amateur radio operator, but his callsign escapes me offhand. The BBS itself is run in memory of the late Janice Elaine Harvey Stout. For a page I have in her memory, go to:

<https://www.theweatherwonder.com/jan.htm>

For Arkansas weather data, go to:

<https://www.weather.gov/lzk>

Postings in the weather group on Facebook are RESTRICTED to WEATHER RELATED ONLY. Any other postings will be deleted, and the poster will be removed from the group.

Shortly before my Mom's death in August, 2019...I got BURNED OUT on Facebook, and UNFRIENDED all my friends...mainly for the abundance of posts on the timeline and in Messenger that "demanded" that "I view, like, share this" ...some links had malware, and I got tired of it. While I'm also on Twitter and Skype, these are used VERY SPARINGLY.

I am a Life Member of the ARRL (<http://www.arrl.org>), Courage Kenny Handi-Hams (<http://www.handiham.org>), the Portage County Amateur Radio Service (PCARS) Club in Ohio (<http://www.portcars.org>), and the Quarter Century Wireless Association (QCWA) (<http://www.qcwa.org>).

Then, I'm a regular member of QCWA Chapter 85 in the Shreveport/Bossier City, Louisiana area), the Philadelphia Digital Radio Association (PDRA) (<https://www.k3pdr.org>), and the Memphis Digital Amateur Radio Club (MDARC)(<https://sites.google.com/site/memphisdstar/>) – the latter known as “the DARC side of digital” (hi hi).

And, I'm also an Associate Member with the BCMFCA (British Columbia Frequency Modulation Communications Association), in Vancouver, Canada.

I'm a proud member of "the Royal Order Of the Wouff Hong" -- having gone through it at the 2007 ARRL Great Lakes Division in Cleveland, Ohio, and the 2013 ARRL Delta Division Convention in Bentonville, Arkansas. A good time is definitely had by all during the initiation ceremony to this "secret society".

Except for one being a paid up ARRL member to participate, I can't go into details as to what goes on, as you have to experience it for yourself. There is nothing degrading or vulgar...but, you will do a lot of laughing...and participants get a very nice certificate afterwards.

So, all of my "on the air" activity is done OUTSIDE of Arkansas., where I feel more welcome. The only Arkansas ham radio activities I'm involved with are: VE Team Liaison for the University Of Arkansas At Little Rock:

<http://callsign.ualr.edu/ve-exams.php>

Webmaster for the Cabot Nightflyers Net:

<https://www.thecabotnightflyers.net>

Hamming In The Park -- <https://www.theweatherwonder.com/hamnpark.htm>

I've made ham radio "a family affair"; even though I'm only the second (and probably, the last) ham radio operator in my family to be licensed. With Credit and Glory to The Good Lord for the inspiration, I have created 3 skits in "The Creative Juices Department", as follows:

A) The Ham Radio Wedding -- where ham and radio are united in "Holy Telephony"

B) The Honeymoon And More -- their first night together, and the harmonics early years.

C) Ham For The Holidays -- a Christmas In July theme, based on the melody of "The Twelve Days Of Christmas". It's now "The Twelve Days Of Hamming".

D) Sound effects for ham radio digital modes and selected Third Party Traffic, for item A above.

Combined, these are known as "The Triple Play". The first 2 skits have quite a bit of ham radio pun humor (especially the second one), and the third skit picks 12 items from the ham radio hobby. Go to the website of the Cabot Nightflyers Net (URL noted above), click on "The Nightflyers Net" Navigation Tab, and scroll down the page. You will need an appropriate MP3 player to listen to the MP3 files, and the Adobe Acrobat Reader to view the PDF file. You can also find "The Triple Play" in the Ham Radio Humor file, located at <https://www.theweatherwonder.com/elk.htm>

To contact me, you can use one of the following methods:

1) Email (the best way to contact me). You must be logged onto the QRZ website to view it.

2) Go to <https://www.theweatherwonder.com/fbk.htm> -- and follow the instructions.

3) Leave a message to WX4QZ on D-Rats.

4) Send a Packet Mail Message to WX4QZ@NS2B.#WNY.NY.USA.NOAM -- if this is sent from any other application besides the Outpost Packet Manager, or from a packet radio BBS, it will BOUNCE as UNDELIVERABLE.

5) Logon to my BBS at <http://tbolt.synchro.net> -- click on "Logon Via Telnet". Once you've entered the CAPTCHA string, at the logon Matrix, choose FEEDBACK. Please leave your name and email if you want a reply. If you can't connect to the BBS, please try again later.

6) HamShack Hotline -- a "private party line" for ham radio operators. My number is 4848.

7) Winlink 2000 -- send it to wx4qz@winlink.org -- however, this MUST be sent from Winlink Express, Airmail, or a related ham radio application. Otherwise, without the appropriate password/security info, the email will bounce back as undeliverable. Winlink 2000 is for licensed amateur radio operators only.

8) Eyeball QSO's at selected central Arkansas Hamming In The Park events, or license exam sessions. At this time, due to COVID-19 issues, most all of the Arkansas hamfests, club meetings, license exams, etc. are CANCELED until further notice...check with the event organizers to be sure they are being held.

I will reply via email as soon as possible, so please include your email address if you want a reply. As noted at the top, I confirm QSO's via eqsl.cc -- I had great difficulty working with QRZ's logbook. Because of cost, and poor delivery by the U.S. Postal Service, as noted at the top, I do eQSL ONLY.

Lastly, I'm planning to do an Amtrak Train Trip from Little Rock, Arkansas, to Jackson, Mississippi, in June, 2021, for the National Square Dance Convention...and operate Amtrak Railroad Mobile. A story will be on a future edition of Amateur Radio Newslines, sometime in the spring of 2021...as well as in the Journal of the Quarter Century Wireless Association (QCWA).

73 (Best Wishes), and 75 (May God Bless You And Yours) DE WX4QZ