

***The Creation of QMN***  
***By Don Devendorf (W8EGI) - SK***

Although my ancestral roots are in New York State (born Albany, New York in 1914), I grew up in Jackson, Michigan and my original W8EGI station license is dated February, 1931.

First transmitter TNT: Plate tuned, grid not tuned; 201-A receiving tube probably less than one watt since it was powered by three 45-volt B-batteries in series. I soon upgraded to a 210 Power triode and AC plate supply, now maybe 20-watts on 80-meter CW and began exchanging message traffic on informal hit-and-miss skeds with other like-minded high school kids in Detroit, Toledo, Cleveland, Fort Wayne, even Leamington and Toronto, Canada.

About then crystals began replacing our wobbly self-excited single tube oscillators and a number on the crystal holder now said where we supposedly were, like —3545. We never worked any station near our own frequency if we could avoid it – far too noisy because we all used full break-in and separate receiving antennas. Our primitive 2 or 3-tube regenerative receivers had little sensitivity and no selectivity whatsoever. In those days, a VFO consisted of say, three crystals; one near the low band end, one near the middle and another close to the high end of 80.

The Detroit Amateur Radio Association was Michigan's largest and most prestigious radio club; only the most highly qualified CW operators were eligible for membership. In early 1935 they voted to sponsor or establish a statewide CW traffic system to be centered in Detroit and outstate ARRL Route Managers were invited to their first organizational meeting held during the DARA Spring Hamfest at the old Naval Armory on East Jefferson. As I recall, three RMs from southern counties were Jim Robinson, W8DVC, Monroe, Harry Hartung, W8BMG, Battle Creek and myself from Jackson.

A few minutes into the meeting W8DVC (to paraphrase Emerson) fired the shot heard 'round the ham world. Contrary to present message traffic practice, Jim suggested we all operate as a controlled net on precisely the SAME frequency. Dead silence. I remember we all just stared at each other, but the logic was inescapable. Jim went on to add he'd already located a dependable source of good X-cut 1-inch square crystals – a ham up at Dollar Bay would grind any number to an exact frequency for, naturally, one dollar plus another dollar for the holder if needed.

Thus was born the first one-spot traffic net, Michigan QMN. After due deliberation the frequency was set at 3650 kilocycles, crystals were ordered and we operated happily ever after until a DARA QMN member, FCC Inspector Ernie Peterkin, became suspicious and measured not 3560, but 3663.

### *The Origin of the QN-Signals.*

It has always been said that nothing good ever came out of a committee, but there have been notable exceptions. One was the King James Bible in 1611. Another, the QN Signals devised for net use together with the original concept of a National Traffic System, by the Detroit Amateur Radio Association QMN Net Committee in 1939. The QN signals were published that fall in the DARA/QMN Bulletin and immediately spread far and wide on the new area nets that were following QMN's pioneering example.

Ralph Thetreau, W8FX, AKA "Tate," chaired the Net Committee and personally saw to it that the QN-list, together with an excellent outline of the QMN operation and national system implications were given the widest possible dissemination. In recognition of these efforts, W8FX was appointed Secretary/Treasurer of the QMN Net and held that office for over 40 years.

Tate was always somewhat bitter, though, about the ARRL refusing to even acknowledge the existence of the QN-signals until years after they were in common use nation-wide. — The League was chicken, he told us, just because a couple of old aeronautical QNs were still being used on some obscure Pan American CW circuit. In a final touch of irony, they were published at last, verbatim 1939, in February 1947 QST, but without any credit to either DARA or QMN.

Nevertheless, like QST, Tate was devoted to amateur radio and left a very substantial legacy to the ARRL, specifically for a decent and adequate W1AW antenna system. Their startlingly improved signal since has been a fitting memorial to W8FX.