



ROYAL SIGNALS AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY

THE N2DAN KEY AWARD

In memoriam

Stefan Stanislaw Nurkiewicz



THE N2DAN KEY AWARD. Donated by E.H.Ross GM3LWS, the No.4 Mercury Key designed and constructed by the late S. Nurkiewicz N2DAN is kept on display at the HQ Station, Cole Block, Blandford. A trophy will be awarded to the Member making the most progress within the RSARS Awards Scheme during each calendar year CW ONLY mode. This will be presented to the winner of this award at the AGM and is for use of the winning Member for the ensuing year along with the use of an affiliated number (new each year) and effective from 30th June. A shield, presented to the Society by B. Rowe, G4WYG, will record the winners.

Stefan Stanislaw NURKIEWICZ - N2DAN - RSARS 1676.

An appreciation by Ursula M. Sadler, W4/GØIHM

“Steve” as all his many friends knew him, or “Dan” as his radio friends speak of him, was born on 16th October 1926 to Zdzislaw and Jozefa Nurkiewicz in Niewiesz in the county of Nowogroder, Poland. He died on 20th May 1997 in Port Charlotte, Florida, USA leaving behind his dear wife Theresa (“Terry”) and his daughter Debbie and son Stephen.

Steve was reared on a military post 10 miles away from the Russian border as his father was the Commander of the 27th Polish Cavalry Regiment. His ancestors, going back to his great grandfather, were all military men and all were fond of music and played some kind of instrument, mainly trumpets. It was no wonder therefore that Steve also took up music, his favourite instrument being a double-bass which he played as a member of some of the well-known British bands, and after he left the Army and prior to emigrating to the States he could be seen playing for the Saturday night dances both in High Wycombe and the Market Hall, Amersham. Later, in the States in 1952, he played with a Polish Polka Band or just entertaining friends in his home.

His life was a happy one, spent amongst horses with few restrictions on what he did, and his summers were spent on his Uncle’s estate where there were three lakes and three water mills, so he was able to fish to his heart’s content - a hobby he enjoyed all his life.

When he was about 7 or 8 years old he was introduced to SP6FZ, a ham radio enthusiast and it was he who gave Steve his first taste of CW. Unfortunately WW2 started just prior to his taking the exam and his father left with his Regiment in September 1939. The Red Army occupied the post so Steve, just under 13 years, his Mother, sister and two younger brothers stayed on his Uncle’s estate, his older brother remaining at the post prior to University. One night, about 0300, they were taken by a Red Army Officer and soldiers in a wagon to the railroad station and there put into a cattle car for a three weeks’ journey to a lonely village in Siberia. His adventure *en route* he related in “*MERCURY*” No. 80 of March 1985 ¹ Life in Siberia was very hard and primitive, food was scarce and unfortunately his younger brothers died of malnutrition.

When Steve was 14 an announcement was made that all Polish males of 17+ had to report to the schoolhouse to be examined by a Russian Lady Doctor the same who had pronounced his brothers dead - Steve gave his age as 17 - she knew it was wrong but she took pity on him and signed his paper to join the army where they gave him a big drum and made him their mascot. He served with the Polish Forces in the USSR until August 1942.

One day he was passing a group of men under instruction and the teacher was blowing Morse with a whistle - Steve, recognising the letter, gave the answer and from then on events moved quickly. He found himself disembarking from a Russian ship in Persia where three members of the Royal Signals were waiting, Steve, still as a member of the Polish Forces, came under British Command in Iran.

Following training in England he went back to the Middle East as an instructor’s instructor with the 2nd Polish Corps, 8th Army. He volunteered for S.O.E. and because of his knowledge of

¹ COPY ANNEXED

Russian and Czech was very useful - that part of his life remains a mystery but I do know he served in many places and took part in Italy with the 3rd Carpathian Signal Battalion and was wounded at the Battle of Monte Cassino in July 1944.

In October 1946 he served with the Polish Resettlement Corps and was finally discharged in August 1948. He received various decorations from both the Polish and British Armies and his conduct was stated as "Very good". He was always going to write a book about where he served and what he did but apart from the odd snippet I never and never asked.

After demob and before emigrating to the USA he worked for about 3 years for a precision machine shop in Amersham making specialist medical instruments and he did similar precision work in the States where he met his wife who lived next door. In March 1955 he became a naturalised American citizen. They started their own machine shop and worked on specialised items for many years but following a stroke he decided to give it up and in 1988 they moved to Port Charlotte, Florida. Here he kept busy making the excellent N2DAN *Mercury* paddles for Morse. He enjoyed fishing in the canal behind his home and talking - CW of course - to his many radio friends.

His sudden death from liver cancer came as a terrible shock to his family and friends for only 2 weeks previously, after an operation to remove a lump on his lung, he was told he was completely free of cancer. Steve was a very definite person, always ready to help anyone, he had a good sense of humour and whatever he did he did to perfection. He will be greatly missed by all but for those fortunate enough to own one of his Morse paddles - he will live on each time the paddle is used.

"P.P.C"

N2DAN/

1676

"PPC" is my own way of dealing with day-to-day life ever since I can remember - **Patience, Perseverance and Common Sense.**

I was born in Poland, near the Russian border which was 10 miles away, and reared on a military post. My dad was the Commander of the 27th Cavalry; my three uncles, grandfather, great grandfather and great, great grandfather were all military men, and all played some kind of musical instrument, mostly trumpets. Life on the post was great - complete freedom to go anywhere and do anything - within reason of course. After all, who in his right mind would chase the Commander's son away! Horses, horses everywhere - I think I knew more about horses than anybody else of my age. The school months were spent at the post, but the summer recess was pure joy for me; we stayed at my uncle's estate next to Prince Radziwill's castle. The property was separated by three lakes, joined together by three water mills, so I took to the water like a duck.

I couldn't possibly tell all that I did - if it could be done on the water, I did it! Once, I remember, I wanted to cross the lake like a Viking, so two of my buddies and I got hold of a wooden barndoor, made a mast, and sails from a bedsheet, and off we went. It started well enough, the wind was right, but we forgot about a rudder and needless to say we wound up in the middle of the lake, going in the wrong direction. We dropped the sails and paddled back to shore, and it was fun - but when I got back to the house my uncle was waiting with a riding crop in his hand - I could not sit for days! Did a lot of fishing of all sorts, but one fish I could never catch was a carp - little did I know that they were bred and fed for market.

When I was seven or eight, my dad bought a radio with a big battery that had a lot of holes in it, to put pins in. He also strung up some wire and for the first time in my life I heard music and voices from thin air. I was fascinated and couldn't wait until the family went to bed, so I could sneak in and listen. I just couldn't understand how those big people could be inside the box. Then I heard another sound, raspy, loud and sounding like a dying cricket - just couldn't understand it. I stayed up until 4a.m. The next day in school the teacher noticed that I was in some kind of daze and was unable to concentrate - I was half-asleep, but since I liked him, I told him what had transpired the night before; he said that he didn't know much about it, but he knew someone who did. Alas, my introduction to CW!

I was introduced to my instructor-to-be, to whom I shall be forever grateful, SP6FZ. Most of you old-timers should know him. Great DX man, and fantastic operator. He put the receiver on and I said "That's it - this is the funny stuff - what is it?" He said "They are talking". I said "Who is talking, and how?" Thereupon he came out with a book and said "Read it, come back and we will talk some more". It took me some time before I could understand parts of it, but I used "PPC". End of September 1939, I had a date with the Polish Communication Ministry - Jan was sure I would make it with flying colours. My speed was about average, the theory okay, copy okay; but it was meant not to be - the war broke out.

My father went West with his 27th Cavalry, armed with lances, sabres and carbines. The last words he said to me were "Tonight you can sleep in my bed" - a funny thing to say to a son - but those words were with me for over forty years. I have not seen or heard from him since September 1939 - I have tried every possible way to find him but my home town was now USSR, and only by chance did we find each other. (See "A Family Again" - "MERCURY" No.69 July 1981).

Two weeks after the start of the war we heard some small arms fire, then Russian planes appeared in the sky, and before we knew it the Red Army was marching in, in columns of three. They had some big guns with them, pulled by horses. One guy up front played an accordion and was all smiles; I saw scouts 300 yards on each side of the column, not sure what to expect - but there was no army here. One thing stands out in my mind - I saw a few Russian soldiers with a rope for a rifle sling. I looked for a radio man, but did not see any. After the column passed, more of them came, but by that time it was no longer a novelty - they just kept coming.

A week or so later, there was a proclamation - all those owning guns must return them to a central place - it could be considered an amnesty. Since Uncle and Dad were great hunters and possessed many guns, my uncle took them to the place, and we never saw him again. When I visited Poland in 1980 I saw my aunt, and to this day she does not know what happened to her husband. Needless to say, they lost their estate, and nothing can be done about it. When my uncle did not return I was scared and buried my father's medals and other military items in a cheese cellar, and they are still there.

At this time we stayed at the estate, everybody knew there would be no school. My elder brother was not with us at this time - two weeks prior to the outbreak of war he went back to the post to prepare himself for the University; here again, I did not see or hear from him again until my father passed away, when he came from the USSR and I from the USA to see the grave, and our Mother. When you visit Poland and you are staying with relatives, you must register with the local police where you are staying and with whom; can you picture this - two men, the same name, the same parents, the same place of birth, but one born in USSR and one in Poland? The man at the desk didn't know what was going on - I told him "Just forget it" ! From the conversation I had with my brother, I knew that he was brainwashed - I have not heard from him since. His daughter - an English graduate at Moscow University - has not written either, so here we are - it is one screwed-up world!

By this time, the Red Army occupied the post, so we couldn't go back. Then it all started - my long, sometimes painful, travel on this globe. One night, at 3a.m., there was a knock on the door - my Mom opened it and there was a Red Army captain with six soldiers, telling us in perfect Polish "You are going to be repatriated and free at last".(They considered this part of Poland to be Byelo-Russia). "You have 15 minutes to get your belongings together, and only 20 kilos". What had happened was that the local Communists pointed out the intelligentsia, and any families with education, or office-holders, were taken, be they teachers, policemen, retired military personnel, or whatever; in other words, any potential leaders were eliminated from Poland, and all that was left were farmers and peasants, easy prey for conversion to Communism. The properties taken from the intelligentsia were divided up, and for these peasants it was great to be landowners - the type of government meant nothing to them.

We were loaded on a horse-drawn wagon and started for the railroad station, about 15 miles away. The weather was getting colder, my Mom made me wear a brand-new sheepskin coat with some embroidery on it (it came from the Alps - my Christmas present); I had long boots on, and in one of them my Boy Scout knife. One of the soldiers saw the knife and took it from me, telling me "Don't worry, you can buy anything in the USSR". At the railroad station there were thousands of people - those males over 13 years old went into different trains. I was one month before my thirteenth birthday, so I stayed with my family - mother, sister and two younger brothers. They loaded us into cattle cars, the only toilet facility being two boards put together in a "V" type arrangement, protruding through a door. If one had to relieve himself, it was in front of 50 people. Some women made a circle by standing shoulder to shoulder, and this was repeated every time someone had to go.

The trip took about three weeks - there were many delays due to the military priority. Once a day we would be allowed to send one person from each car to fetch a pail of water and a few loaves of bread, for the whole car. One day it was my turn; about 30 of us, boys and women, went - I saw a chance to jump on a train that was going West, and would have made it back to

Poland if it hadn't been for my sheepskin coat! It was out of place in Russia. I walked around the station for about two hours; the train going West started to move, and just when I was ready to jump on it I heard "Stop"! They took me to a local police station - I played dumb, but to no avail. They must have had a pretty good record, because they knew where my original train was going. I was put on another train, also full of people; I still had the bucket; the place to which they took my family was in the middle of nothing - the nearest settlement was 10 miles away from this God-forsaken village. Not a single tree in sight, just a flat prairie with very rich soil; you could travel for days in any direction and see nothing.

The second train was headed further East, but they took me off it, and the policeman said to me "In a few days you will be with your family". He took me to his house, his wife and two children were very nice to me, and I had a good meal for the first time in two weeks. They kept asking questions about Poland, my family, etc. - it was the very first time that they had ever met a foreigner. The policeman told me something that did not make sense at the time - he said "There will be a war between Russia and Germany".

The next day I was put in a horse-drawn wagon and started for the village - just me and an old driver. We talked for hours - he too was interested in Poland and any news. (I did and still do speak and write Russian). We came to a river and he said "See those huts on the other side? That is where your mother is". From the bank of the river it looked deep, and I thought "How is he going to cross it?". But to my surprise he unhitched the horse and let him loose. The horse went right into the water and started to swim for the other side. Then I saw a rowboat tied to a stake; we crossed the river and started for the village; a 50foot wide corridor as a street, ending at each end of the village, with clay or earth huts on either side, two water wells in the middle of the corridor, a one-room brick schoolhouse, and one larger house where all the workers had their meals, of soup and bread mostly. Once in a while if a horse or a cow died they had meat (I learned later that quite a lot of animals died - one way or another). The driver led me to the sixth house from the south, and a reunion. My Mom looked as though she hadn't slept for days, worrying about me, and I was glad to be with her at last.

The hut was very small, one room and one bed, in which my Mom slept with the two younger boys, while I slept with my sister on top of a bread oven, under which was a bunch of chickens. It was the best place to sleep, always warm and close to the ceiling. For an alarm clock we had the rooster - precisely at 5a.m. he would start! I had some thoughts of doing away with him! The floor was clay, one window that could not be opened. Summer time weather not bad, but the winter was extremely cold. This was Siberia.

I came to the right place - nice river, houses, horses. They are all horsemen, and I thought that I knew horses - how wrong could I have been!

Life, Siberian style. First of all, I had to go to school; the curriculum was quite interesting, and I think they covered more subjects than European or US schools. They knew more about geography, arithmetic, international affairs, than most kids do at the same age. I made a hit - I spoke Russian. Some thoughts on the matter: I know what CCCP stands for, but those Siberian kids had another version: Sachar Stoich Sto Rubley. The letter "C" in Russian is "S", the letter "P" is "R". They were saying "Sugar costs a hundred roubles". Once in a while a wagon would come with supplies to the feeding house, and all merchandise had to be transported by boat. There were 3month-old newspapers (just like "*Mercury*"!!), sugar, tea, tobacco, combs, needles and odds and ends. The tobacco was nothing more than home-grown and chopped up, no cigarette papers - they used newspaper, and it tasted just like the "V" cigarettes. (Les VK2NLE note - your comments about the "V" cigarettes in "Jimmy" and that they came from Indian-grown tobacco - you could be wrong! I remember once in Tunisia I ran out of them and couldn't be relieved from my station - rolled up some camel droppings and it tasted just the same!). The

goods were gone in no time flat, but the system worked, because next time those who couldn't get near them were the first in line.

There was no radio or TV, such as we know it today. All news was very old, and only from the newspapers. I went to school and in the afternoons worked in the fields collecting cow droppings that were dry - this was the only winter fuel that was available, and those who didn't have enough froze. In the wintertime each hut was connected by a rope to the water wells, and if one went outside to collect some more fuel, one had to have a rope around his waist or perish. Many died this way, only twenty or thirty yards away. When it snowed you could not see ten feet ahead of you. There was a bell on the school roof and they rang it every half-hour; if you ventured too far with the wind blowing the other way, there was no way you could hear it.

On one occasion, when it was not snowing, I was asked to go and help with the hay for the animals, who were in the barns for the winter. For reasons not understood by me, the haystacks were about four miles from the village - why they didn't bring the hay in during the summer I will never know. I went - it was 50°C below. Five sleds and twenty men. We loaded the hay and on the way back a pack of wolves appeared and followed the horses. The men had long whips and kept them cracking, scaring the wolves away. On occasion, some teams came back with a dead wolf - that was a real prize, because you would keep the skin.

With everything, you were allowed one per family - one cow or one pig - but no horses. When the animal was killed the skin had to be given to the Russian government. There was all sorts of strange goings-on, animals dying for one reason or another - broken legs and the like - and nobody cared about the skin. I became a great skinner, and could have used my Boy Scout knife - we did have meat.

In this village there were just five Polish families - I guess they spread us out all over Siberia so that eventually the Poles would become assimilated into the Russian population. In springtime everyone was at the river bank trying to collect some wood that floated down. Sometimes, after the snow had melted, whole houses would be floating in the swollen waters. There was a bend in the river and calm water near the village, so it was always full of debris. I worked in the fields, ploughing, cutting hay, etc. Each sundown an official would come and measure how much each one had ploughed - that went into the record book and at the end of the season, after the government took its share of wheat, the rest was divided accordingly.

When they found out that I was good with horses, they made me a horse-breaker. What it meant was not to ride them, but to break them for work - I was a Polish cowboy! The way they did it was to take an unriden young horse, put a harness on it with a long rope and a log or telephone pole on the other end, and let the horse go. Since there was no danger of the horse getting caught on anything, they would run for a day or so and always return to the herd, pulling the heavy object. The next time the harness was put on, the horse would run a little slower - repeating the procedure a few times would turn him into a working horse.

There was a young lad named Oleg - we became good friends. He taught me a lot, and I showed him a few tricks too. We did the normal things boys do. I was introduced to chewing tobacco, and how to make an extremely strong alcoholic drink from horse's milk - for me, one, drink and I was out!. How to make a whip, some things about the girls in the village, and those sort of things. One day Oleg said "Tomorrow morning we are going to see if we can get schuka" (I must explain - "schuka" in Russian is a pike, and "suka" is a bitch - written differently, but sounds very similar). I said "Why in the morning?"-, he told me that it was the best time to get "suka". It so happened that there was in the village a lady about 30 or 40 years old, rather loose with her favours. I had seen her a few times, making goo—goo eyes at the men and boys. Well, needless to say, that night was pure horror for me - anticipation! I don't think I slept at all. At 5-30 in the morning,

waiting by the water well, I saw Oleg coming; he was carrying a long stick, and my thoughts went crazy. "Is he going to beat her up first, so she would, or is he some sort of nut and must have the long stick with him?". Anyway, we started for the river, and again I thought "Why the river - there are no bushes or any place to hide". We sat down - the sun was not up yet. I asked him "Where is the suka?" - he said "Who cares". I said "Didn't you say yesterday that you were going to get a suka?". He looked at me and said "Schuka, you stupid Polack, schuka!" - I must say I felt much better!

What happened next was something I will never forget. He took a guitar string from his pocket, made a loop in one end and tied the other end to the end of his stick. He said "We must wait for the sun to come up a little more". Then we walked to the edge of the water very slowly, towards the sun. He stopped and adjusted the loop until it was about six inches in diameter, then very slowly lowered the loop into the water. With one big motion, he pulled straight up and over his shoulder - I saw something come out of the water, fast. When I looked back I saw the biggest pike of my life! Oleg explained - the pike likes to stay close to the shore in the morning, waiting for his prey. You judge the size, adjust the loop accordingly, and very slowly get the loop over his head, just beyond the gills, and pull up - you'll get a fish dinner! I have learned this very well, and we often had schuka, if not suka! PPC.

An announcement was made - all Polish males seventeen years and older were to report to the schoolhouse. I went. There were three of us. The Russian woman doctor examined the first two and they were accepted. When it came to me, she took one look and said "Shouldn't you be with your mother?". I said "No, I'm seventeen and I want to be a soldier".(I lied - I was fourteen). This was the same doctor who pronounced my two younger brothers dead, and I suppose she took pity on me, and after some unladylike remarks about my anatomy signed the paper. I was in.

We went to a big camp. Men from all over Siberia kept coming, and each was interrogated and assigned to a proper place. When it came to me, they asked if I would like to ride on a big gun - I said "No". They asked me if I would like to beat a drum, since I had taken music in school. I said "Yes", so they made me a mascot, gave me a drum, and I was very happy. One day, after practice, on my way to my quarters I saw a group of men, a blackboard, and a guy with a whistle. He was whistling CW, and asked "Does anyone know this letter?". As I was now near them, I said "I do, that is Q". After a few words with the whistler, and in less than two hours I was in front of the bandmaster, who told me "Get your stuff together, you are going on a trip". By Russian boat to Persia, and at the port as I was disembarking there were three British soldiers waiting, and this was the first time I had met His Majesty's Royal Signals. (If Sgt. Barnes, Royal Signals, is still with us, and remembers the pukey-looking chap getting off the boat - I would like to get in touch with you. You should remember what you said - "Come on, lad, smartly now - you're in good hands". I think all sergeants are born with discipline in their blood).

From Persia to England, various posts, crash programmes - structure of Royal Signals, equipment and structure of British military. Then back to the Middle East to become "Instructors' instructor". This was 2nd Polish Corps, 8th Army. Ironic - when I got off the boat, I never dreamed I would be back in USSR, in British battledress, instructing Russian signallers on Western equipment.

I will skip most of the Service details for now; perhaps when I retire and have more time to spare to compose my thoughts and recollections, I will write about them.

Leaving the 2nd Polish Corps to become W/T, SLU, SOE, SO, kept me on the move to so many places, sometimes I cannot remember them all. Demobbed in 1948, Hodgemore Camp, Bucks, lived in Amersham, worked in Chesham and played bass at Saturday dances. I came to the USA on a British passport in 1951.

I must publicly thank Jack Cooper for the very small advert in "73" Magazine about the RSARS. For if it wasn't for that, there would be no N2DAN/1676. My old pals like G3UAA, G3UDU, G3XSN and so many, many more that I have worked with for years, never told me about the RSARS. I could have been a member back in the 50's. I am not surprised at Alf, G3UAA - he had a reason not to tell! I guess everybody likes to be #1, but I'll tell him this - if I ever get to the UK again, he will become an instant #2 ! Since becoming a member, I have enjoyed this elite group, and met so many interesting people.

Back in Amersham, I was a medical-instrument maker; when I came to the USA I became a machinist and later established my own factory in the X-ray equipment field - that is what I still do for a living.

I met XYL Terry a month after coming to the USA. She lived next door and was going out with some funny character. At that time I was playing bass for extra money, but had no car. Her boyfriend had one. I asked this young lady if she would like to come with me to hear the Eddie Condon band. We loaded into his car, and away we went. She kept looking at the stage! They took me home - at the front door, with the motor running, I got out and thanked them both. Terry started to get out too, when the guy said "Stay, stay - I'll take you home" (20 feet to go!). I knew this was it - 33 years now.

In those days I wanted to go fishing so badly. I had done no such thing since leaving the USSR. I saw a lake in Fresh Meadow Park, World's Fair grounds in New York City. I got myself a fishing pole and went. I caught some nice fish, large goldfish and a few eels and I was very happy, because the other fishermen had nothing. Then, this man comes along, taps me on the shoulder and says "May I see your licence?" and I said "What licence?". He said "The fresh water one". I played dumb, but this was no USSR - he took me to a police station, they finger-printed me and asked a million questions. Only after the Captain showed up and I promised to get the licence the next day and show it to them, would they consider forgetting the matter. I did - and have not fished fresh water fish since! Salt water fish and my Polish boat, Terry III - I shall write about it in the summer.

After the war my father was considered a bandit because he dared to turn his 27th Cavalry, what was left of it and now underground, against the Red Army. He changed his name and got away with it for quite some time, before someone betrayed him. From what he told me, he had one too many vodkas and the lady friend who was with him, gave him away. He was sentenced to death, but it was commuted to 15 years, due to his age.

I have been talking to SP hams for many years, in Polish of course. So I had quite a net going, sometimes as many as ten at a time. When we knew that we were going to visit Poland, there was no way I could tell my parents. The only telephone they could use is in the general store/post office, and it takes a week to get the call set up. I went on the air with a CQ SP9 and someone about 80km away answered me. I asked him if he would write to the address and tell my parents that we would be there on Sunday. After giving him my parents address, I heard BK - it turned out to be Mr."K". He said "Forget the letter, I will go and tell them". (I took a chance, I thought the FCC would understand, after all it had been 41 years). At the airport, I met Mr."K", his brother (also a ham), their wives and children. A few days later we went to Mr."K"'s house for an evening of vodka, three houses away from my parents! In his shack, on the wall, was my old WA2YBR QSL card, with my name and address on the back, and he never knew, nor did my Mom - and my Mom had tea with his wife many times.

If my Dad had not changed his name, I would have had the chance to know him. In reality I know he was my father, but at the same time a stranger. I am glad I brought them to the USA for a summer, and was beginning to know him; upon his return to Poland, he passed on within two

weeks.

Our second visit to Poland, in 1981, was a sad one, but also enjoyable. I met so many hams, answered a million questions - saw rigs and set-ups you wouldn't believe! Hence T6 notes! This trip, stayed in Warsaw for three days at the Victoria Hotel. Our window was facing the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. On the day of our departure I asked the reception desk to wake me at 7a.m. (By nature, I can be funny or serious, prefer the former on the air or off the air). precisely at 7a.m. the phone rang and a military band struck up a regimental tune at precisely the same moment. I went to the window - what a sight - a big band playing - formations of all sorts of units, all dressed differently; one unit had funny hats with feathers. Commands were given, change of the honour guard took place, more commands, saluting and all that military stuff. Then the whistle and the band struck up again and the units on the parade started to march past the Tomb and the Victoria, giving me a perfect view - how they didn't kick each other in the rear end with their goose-stepping I'll never know. I paid my bill and the clerk gave me a little form to fill out, if we wished. You know the sort of thing - how did you like your room, the service, etc.

Well, I just couldn't resist - I wrote "The service was fine, the room fine, and you didn't have to go to all the trouble of staging a military parade in my honour" !!

Now that you know a little more about me, I would like to express my views from the other side of the Atlantic. The opinions are my own, and any incidents or call-letters are backed up by a well-kept log.

The Society in general is in good shape, and can only be as effective as we, the members, can make it. Personally I would like to see more members from serving personnel - that task lies with the members presently serving, and others who might have access to potential members. From here, I can do very little other than give moral support and to give members the chance to work DX. I read "*MERCURY*" from cover to cover, and welcome new members on the air, more than once. To me, this part is a wealth of information about each member, and comes in handy. As a full member of this Society I take pride in being one of the elite we all are; let us not forget that whether you were clerk, mechanic or radio operator it doesn't matter - we are representative, as a Society, of Royal Signals, and let us behave as such on the air. The best-equipped and trained army in the world without communications is ineffective. Can you imagine the chaos and confusion that would be created were Royal Signals to use the present amateur radio format? Of course, it will never happen - those of us who were W/T operators know full well what circuit discipline means.

I have read the letter from GW4KEV and the comments from net controllers G4KEM, G3DVL, G4MUC, G3WRY - Ken GW4KEV said that he was happy to see no paramilitary type of net. Sure, that's fine, we all feel the same way, but look at where it got you. Do you feel depressed, angry perhaps? This is a normal feeling amongst hams. (They wouldn't let me in!). As far as what other countries think of us, don't let that worry you. Every country has operators without PPC. I cannot comment on the net controllers, as I do not hear the nets. Ken, let me tell you my experience. In March of 1982 I heard the RSARS net on 21170kHz, G4RS, VE3QE, G3XSN, G4HLC and a few others, including VK2NLE, who I could just barely copy. G4RS was 59 - all SSB, of course. At the right moment, I gave my call on CW - nothing. Tried again - nothing. At the third try (at that time, it was mandatory to work G4RS for an award) Bert, G3XSN, told G4RS that I was on CW, whereupon the operator at G4RS said he preferred to stay on SSB; I am sure that if you had been in my shoes, you would have written another letter, or quit, but not me - I used PPC. First of all - what am I doing on an SSB frequency with my CW? Second, perhaps the operator is not comfortable on CW and doesn't want to make a fool of himself with all those on the net listening? I thought of him as a big, fat whale - sooner or later he has to come up for air, and when he does I shall harpoon him! Bert, G3XSN, took me down 2kHz - we had a nice chat, and then I departed to the salt mine. Some weeks later, the whale came up; G3IBB, Roy, my

old friend who also never told me about RSARS, gave me my first of many, many contacts with HQ - PPC works.

On another occasion - March 1984 - I heard V3TV, Tom - he was telling the net he was going to work soon, but he was so strong, I just couldn't resist a call. He came back and said he would give me a QSO on CW tomorrow. Here again you would say - what's with this guy; but not me - he must have his reason. I don't waste his, or my time - tomorrow is soon enough - PPC works. We had our QSO and he was 599X - the whale came up, as I knew it would.

I don't profess by any means to be an expert, nor do I want to criticise anybody, but self-criticism is a good sign of a strong mature society. I will address this to CW members and those who are about to try their spells on the key, and in particular to Overseas nets. Bert's article in "*MERCURY*" about CW operating (No.77 March 1984) didn't go far enough, so I will pick up where he left off. There are 344 members that I've had the pleasure of chatting with on CW, and none of you has heard me say "QTH is Freeport" - I say "QTH Freeport". The word "is" does not belong after QTH - QTH means "location is .. ." Listen around, if you a CW operator say "QTH London" for example, you can rest assured he is a good operator. I judge an operator not by what he is saying, but how is saying it. In the short period that I have been a member of RSARS I have been requested to QRS, and often by a QRQ operator such as G3HKR or G4IHS, according to the conditions. The Q signals were designed to help communication and eliminate language difficulties - a pity they were not used when the "*Titanic*" went down; they could have saved some lives. The Q signal by itself is a fact or a statement - with a question-mark after it, it becomes a question - it's that simple. Even the German Enigma traffic used them during World War II. Just think, those machines were capable of 200 quintillion or 200 million million million possible keys, and if six steckered letters were used the possibility was around 150 trillion!

I am blessed with a fantastic location for radio reception, salt water on three sides of my house. I do hear rather well and I am aware of my own signal output. When you give a 599 report, make sure it is what you say, it is - that is the key for me to proceed. I find that many will give me 589 or 599 rather than tell me, sorry - missed that - QRM you know. Baloney - I work QSK and there was no QRM. Do not be embarrassed - use Q signals - it works - also use PPC! Your CW is your signature - whether you use a straight key or a keyer, after a while you'll get to know who's who without call signs.

Our intercept unit at Bletchley Park was manned by WRNS. They were fantastic at their jobs. They even had their own "landship" named Pembroke V. This installation was better known as Station "X" or BP. Another unit at Chicksands was manned by the RAF and later moved to Beaumanor. It did not have room for rhombic or Beveridge aerials. This unit was manned by WAAF, who like their counterparts did a super job. Their cyclometers were in great demand and later the BTM (British Tabulating Machine Co.) at Letchworth started to manufacture them, and they were used at other installations. The operators of these and other stations relied on German operators' fists, and this fact alone provided a most reliable method of keeping in touch with a station of a net and avoiding confusion. I didn't intend to go into my service years in this article, but I want to stress the point of how important it is to LISTEN and to be AWARE of what goes on, on a net frequency,

Lately on 14065, while having my morning coffee, I hear G4RS, and from the keying I know that it is being operated by Danny, G4KIC. No callsign - just GM Danny? K - then while I'm talking to him I hear G3BGM -I say GM Don .-... - that is CW at its best. Weekends, the same thing - no matter to whom I speak, there are breakers, and each gets .—... no calls, just XSN or CWW or UPS, etc. It might not be legal from the FCC point of view, but it works. One guy cracks me up - he just sends GOAT, and that is G4IHS. (What a call for CW!)

Overseas nets, well, we have no controllers - but let us assume that I copy G4MUC 569, DAIFR 579, G4JIO 599, VE3AX 339, W9RRT 229. Since I was the first one to call CQ RSARS I assume the post. I will stop right here and ask each member how do they copy me and the others. If VE3AX is in the best position - he becomes net control, and all stations on frequency must do exactly as he says or we will have mass confusion. If you are asked RST? please give just that and nothing else - save whatever else you have to say for later - the net must be established first. Never, never call the controller if you are not sure that he turned it over to you; if you do, and he has turned it over to someone else, you will double and nobody can copy. A waste of time and lack of PPC. The net controller will call you again, and if the controller cannot copy you, he will ask the one who can to QSP. After all, he did ask for RST from everybody, and he is in a position to know.

The secret to net controlling is not to start sending as soon as you hear "K" - wait two or three seconds before pressing the key. This is the time for breakers to come in. If I hear you, you will get .—... and that is what you must do! WAIT, and I will get to you shortly. After the net has been established, there is less need for call signs; nicknames or first names, or simply "BK". Once every so often I must comply with the regulations and say who is on the frequency, and the first callsign you hear is the one that should come in - and NOBODY ELSE! You have all heard me say repeatedly - zero beat my frequency. This is vitally important, with the narrow filters so often used, especially with transceivers fitted with RIT. Always tell the other station the shortest possible way what it is you have to say.

Example: Don G3BGM and I were in QSO on 14065 - I was telling him I'm going to the salt-mine a little later this morning than usual because I must drop my car at the garage for an inspection, and they don't open until 8—30a.m. Now, that is rather a long message - I heard BK G3CWW. He said "You are 579, have been on QRG a while". That one short sentence saved a lot of time and repetition - he had told me that he knew I would be around a little longer than usual, so that there would be time for me to have a chat with him today, too. When Walter VE3AX told me he works VK in the evening (our time) on 21MHz, I thought perhaps I would get lucky. I heard a CQ on 21130 - he was 589; the call was ZL2GH - my membership list is old, so he is not on it. A W7 and myself called him - he went back to the W7 - I cannot copy the W7. When he turned it over to W7 I gave BK and N2DAN - nothing - waited until he signed off and this time called ZL2GH de N2DAN. He came back and said "GE - you are 559 ? K". Note - no names, QTH - just a signal report and GE - I know now that he knew about my presence on the frequency and left it up to me - he knew that I had been copying him and probably already knew his name and QTH - had I asked him, he would have responded, but this way he saved a lot of time, and also gave me a good idea of what kind of operator he is.

When you hear "KN" - stay clear. That is one sign I do not like to use, but sometime must. For instance, in last May's Anniversary contest, under all those strong "G" stations I heard GI4WCW, who is QRP, and every time I called him someone else would come on and there was no way I could give him a QSO. Even "KN" doesn't help. Again a waste of time for everyone, and a lack of PPC. Some operators do not seem to understand the meaning of "KN", and like to use it no matter what! I have heard an RSARS QSO - when it was over, one of them said QRZ? KN !! It should have been QRZ? RSARS de XXXX - no KN at all. The question was "who is calling me from RSARS". A good operator will stay clear without KN. I have even heard "CQ DX de XXXX KN" - it shows the operator's lack of PPC. Can you imagine G3XSN/MN in the middle of the Pond, calling CQ DX de G3XSN/MM KN ?? Would you call him back? NO - the KN is for use only when a QSO is in progress, telling others that you don't want any breakers or interference - respect that instruction! If a guy sends "QRL?" on your frequency during your QSO - answer him, and tell him "QRL pse QSY" - or he will proceed to call CQ and then someone else will answer him, and bang goes your QSO on your frequency! Similarly, do check that the frequency is really clear before you call CQ - send "QRL?" and listen slightly off zero beat each side. I know that in certain countries "QRL?" seems to mean "I am going to use this

frequency whether I hear you or not, so you might as well clear off now" !!

Lately I find activity for all practical purposes non-existent, and it will get worse. Just the usual handful of regulars, and this is not good enough - the people will lose interest in overseas nets and start to stay away altogether. I would like to propose that next May we SPREAD OUT - 14060/14070 at least, even more if there is good activity; this way everybody gets a chance at overseas members - G4RS can stay on 14065. May I tell you an old story pertaining to a contest; there were two bulls, one young and one old. They saw a herd of cows grazing down below. The young one said "look, look - let's run down and get us a few"— but the old one said "let's walk down and get them all".

I would like to emphasise something - when you are using "RSARS" after your call sign, remember that you are representing Royal Signals - your operating procedures and manners should live up to our motto "Certa Cito". Above all, one should use PPC.
73 de N2DAN/1676.

A FAMILY AGAIN

by Jack Mitchell

From "MERCURY" No. 59 July 1981

(A short while ago an application to join the R.S.A.R.S. was received from WA2YBR. The letter which requested membership made interesting reading and gave details of service in the Soviet Union, the Middle East, Italy, etc., and even included a letter from the M.O.D. confirming the applicants Service details, and a photograph of a very young Steve in British battledress. How young?, well at the age of 15 Steve was already a soldier and in charge of a radio station. We hope to give more Service details in an eventual "Welcome" entry, but a recent article in the American magazine "parade" showed that there was an equally interesting "civvy" story around WA2YBR. We are indebted to the Editor of "Parade" for permission to reprint in "Mercury" - Ed.).

If prizes were awarded for family reunions, Stefan Nurkiewicz of Freeport, N.Y., would surely win a blue ribbon. His reunion with his parents was 40 years in the making and took the unlikely combination of Polish-American friendship, luck and a father's singular determination to see his son again.

The dramatic meeting between Nurkiewicz, a 54-year-old machinist, and his 80-year-old father marked the end of a tragic separation that began in war-torn Poland of 1939.

At first glance, the ruddy-faced bespectacled Nurkiewicz is the "average American". He married the girl next door, has two handsome children, an attractive waterfront home, and a successful precision machine shop he and his wife built together "by working to 2 or 3 in the morning". But "Steve" Nurkiewicz is no ordinary American. He was born near the Polish border with the Soviet Union in 1926. Thirteen years later, his father Zdzislaw, a dashing cavalry commander, would lead his men - armed only with sabres and lances - into battle against invading Nazi troops. Stefan parted with his heroic father on that day, Sept. 2nd 1939.

Just two weeks later, Russian soldiers crossed the border 10 miles away to claim a huge expanse of eastern Poland. Thousands of frightened Poles, including Mrs. Nurkiewicz and her children, were rounded up and herded into railroad cars for a torturous three-week trip to a hellish Siberian exile.

Within the next two years, two of Stefan's younger brothers died of malnutrition and illness. Then a sympathetic doctor, pitying the family's misery, allowed him to join an army of Polish exiles fighting for the Allies.

He was sent to Tehran for training, then fought in Allied campaigns in the Middle East, North Africa and Monte Cassino, Italy, where he was wounded.

After the war, not knowing if his parents were still alive and unable to return to his Soviet-

occupied homeland, Stefan emigrated to Brooklyn.

The story might have ended there if it hadn't been for a war-time photograph (taken for a Polish magazine called "parade") of the teenaged soldier Stefan and a 47-year-old veteran who had become his unofficial guardian. It was published in Polish newspapers and later in a book in which the repatriated Zdzislaw Nurkiewicz and his wife Jozefa excitedly recognized their son and began the long search to locate him.

The elderly cavalry soldier had miraculously survived the German destruction of the Polish military. But he had become an enemy of the Soviet controlled government for having dared to fight the invading Russians. He evaded the authorities for a while, but eventually the secret police caught up with him. He was tried as a "bandit" and sentenced to death. But the sentence was commuted to 15 years in prison. Meanwhile, Stefan's mother scrubbed floors in Poland to feed herself.

And in Brooklyn, Stefan Nurkiewicz was raising a family and establishing his successful business. "I really thought they were all dead", he recalls. "I gave up hope and gradually it helped me to forget. The Germans had destroyed the Polish Army, and getting my mother out of the Soviet Union would have been like squeezing water from a stone".

Then, a chance encounter in New York City in 1977, set off a bizarre chain of events. Stefan had read that a touring Polish orchestra was in town, and being a musician himself (he plays bass), he decided to drop by for a drink with his countrymen.

"I gave them my business card and told them to give me a call if they were ever in New York".

His acquaintance did better than that. Months later, when the troupe returned to Poland, the card was passed along to Kazik Nurkiewicz, a violinist friend of the symphony musicians who was also the keeper of the Nurkiewicz family tree and who happened to be Stefan's cousin.

A letter was sent immediately to the American's business address! "I'm writing in the name of your father. If you're the man we're seeking, this would make your father extremely happy", declared Kazik.

But bad luck cropped up again. The machinist had moved his home and business. The undelivered letter was returned to Poland.

Undaunted, the elder Nurkiewicz, now released from prison and full of hope for the first time in 15 years, wrote to the same address. That note, too, was sent back.

But the stubborn old cavalry commander wasn't going to give up. His next letter was given by the postman to a former business associate of Stefan's, who offered to deliver it by hand. So on Dec. 6th 1979, a trembling Steve Nurkiewicz opened the following letter and read the neat Polish script: "Dear Sir, I'm seeking one named Stefan Nurkiewicz, born in 1926 in Nieswicz. If you are the person I'm seeking, please answer... I would like to close my eyes in peace...".

Shouting to his wife Terry, Steve ran to phone the man at the return address. But 40 years of separation wasn't going to be breached so easily. The only 'phone in Zdzislaw Nurkiewicz's town was at the Post Office, and it took a week to set up the call.

The night before, neither Steve nor Terry Nurkiewicz could sleep. At precisely 6 a.m., the 'phone rang. "Stefan?"... "Father?"... "How are you?".

There was still a trace of doubt in Steve's mind. Quickly, he thought of a reassuring question.

"Father, what was the name your horse?" "Ogien (Fire)" came the immediate reply. Then an old woman's voice came on the crackling transatlantic line.

"My knees buckled, and I almost fell to the floor". Says Steve. "I never expected my mother to be alive too". But he recovered long enough to shout. "Mother, save the Christmas tree, we're coming to Poland".

Two weeks later, after some visa trouble had been cleared up by some friendly Polish Embassy officials in Washington, a joyous Nurkiewicz family flew to Krakow.

Finally at the airport, says Steve, I walked down the long path and saw a stout grey-haired man with a cane, I had mixed emotions. I didn't know this man. But I ran to him and said. "At last, Dad!". We all cried".

The Nurkiewicz's two week stay in Poland produced other surprises. Stefan had a 30 year-old brother, born after the war, he'd never heard of; and his older brother Zdzislaw was alive and well

in Russia. The 14 days and nights were filled with endless talking and Polish vodka. Last June, Stefan Nurkiewicz brought his parents to America for a 10-week visit. "The first thing my father wanted to see was the Statue of Liberty", recalls Nurkiewicz, with a trace of pride in his voice. Two weeks after his return to Poland last September, Zdzislaw Nurkiewicz, died, finally knowing what became of the 13 year-old boy he left behind when he went to war.