

Bob the link if trouble strikes

AMATEUR seafarers on Tasmania's east Coast sail secure in the knowledge that should trouble strike, their mate ashore, Bob Jackson, will do his best to arrange aid.

Mr Jackson, 77, is a member of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and cares for mariners between Ed-dystone Point and Bicheno.

Mainlanders arriving by boat or yacht and seeking the difficult entrance to St Helens, or a safe anchorage, seek his advice.

When that advice is sought, Mr Jackson phones his friend and retired harbormaster, Larry Haines, at St Helens.

Mr Haines then checks whether fishing boats are leaving or entering the port.

If so the visitor is told to wait and

follow the boat in, or sometimes a visitor is "talked" in via radio.

"The professional fishermen are most helpful," Mr Jackson said, "and if a mariner is in trouble I call the marine police — they're a grand group."

Mr Jackson, a former manager of Hinman, Wright & Manser in of Launceston, was 70 when he studied for and gained an amateur radio operator's licence. Now living at

Falmouth, radio communication is an obsession.

Through a CB radio Mr Jackson talks to friends around Tasmania; his volunteer service with RVCP keeps him in touch with mariners and the short wave radio with friends world-wide.

Mr and Mrs Jackson live in Falmouth House, which is on the site of an old coach inn.

His radio shack is a former guest

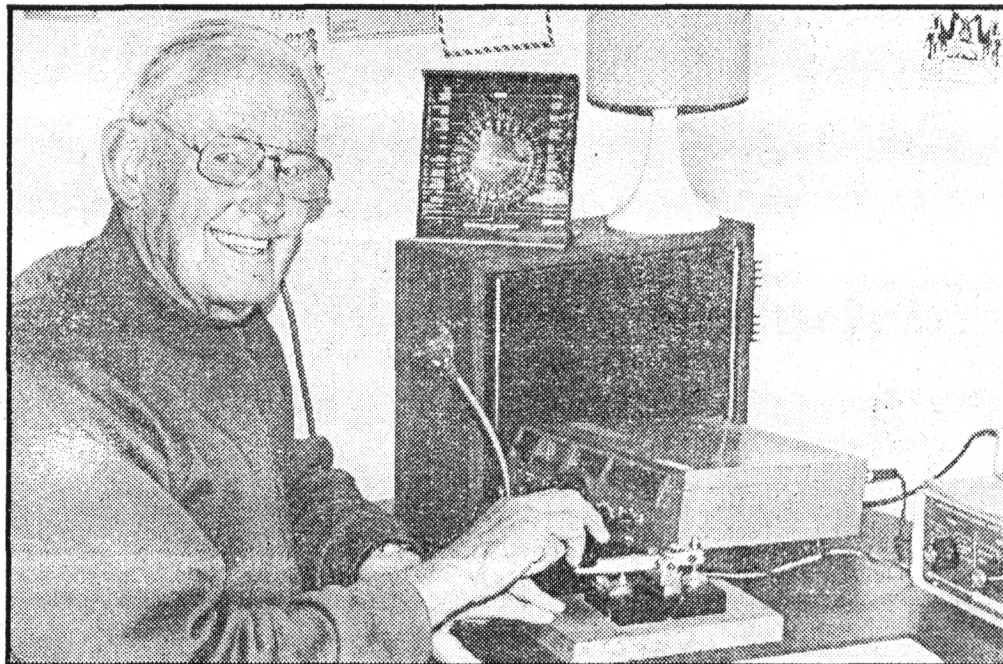
unit which was used to entertain visitors.

With many radio aerials the house resembles a porcupine. The main aerial swings 22m high from a pine tree. When asked how a man of his aged erected the aerial, he replied: "There was nothing to it. I asked on the radio if anyone had a pet monkey which could fix an aerial to a tree."

"The next weekend a band of volunteers arrived from Hobart



They're On The Road Again. Former Examiner chief photographer EDDIE KERFOOT and country roundsman GEOFF WILLSON are back on the road, exclusively for The Sunday Examiner...



● **LEFT:** Bob Jackson, 77, uses a morse key to call a friend on his short wave radio. Bob is surrounded by the other receivers and transmitters he uses for the local volunteer service.

Young
army



Jackson's vigil

Young army man's proud day

Bob and Margaret Jackson were commissioned army officers in World War II.

He served 31 years in the AIF and CMF before retiring with the rank of T/Major.

His proudest army service was in 1954 when he led a parade through Launceston to mark the arrival of Queen Elizabeth II.

Pride of place in his radio shack goes to a picture of T ajor Jackson with Queen Elizabeth II.

The picture was taken in 1954, by On The Road Again team member Eddie Kerfoot.



Jackson's vigil on the airwaves

BOB Jackson is in the radio shack every day and with military precision sends out regular radio calls and maintains a listening watch.

Each radio contact is logged along with the name of the vessel and the number of occupants.

Many amateur fishermen's wives are told by phone to put on the frying pan because their husband is on the way in with fish.

Along with the recognition of the RVCP comes instructions from Canberra.

Part of the instructions is: "You must report whales, whales and calves, strange marine creatures and crocodiles."

"Now a croc on our East Coast would be something to report," Mr Jackson said.

The RVCP is Australia-wide with 10 stations around the Tasmanian coast. Manned by volunteers its main purposes are to aid small boat owners at sea and to provide navigation and information.

A proud Tasmanian, Mr Jackson arranges to send information to interstate and international visitors.

He said: "Falmouth is often the first landfall for visitors from Sydney. They are pleased when their ra-



dio calls are answered and so grateful in times of need or distress.

"Earlier this year a yacht returning to Sydney had a major breakdown off Falmouth. Arrangements were made for the yacht to be towed to safety by a professional fisherman, who to offset his loss of fishing time demanded \$100 an hour. "I don't care if it's \$1000 an hour," the owner of the distressed yacht said, "just tow me in."

Much of the cost of operating the station and the phone calls the volunteer work generates is borne by Mr Jackson.

But he says that the cost is no more than pursuing another hobby or sport.

"It's my life's work, my hobby.

"I need a sponsor to instal a high frequency transmitter so I can talk to Melbourne and Hobart radios and use other emergency channels. With such gear an even better service would be given to mariners," he said.

Organisers of the recent Three Peaks yacht race said that Mr Jackson had given valuable aid during the East Coast section of the race.

Another of his voluntary tasks is, each Tuesday, to supervise the Tasmanian Devil award for the Wireless Institute of Australia.

The award is a test of skill and patience of interstate and international amateur radio operators, who depending on their world-location, are required to contact a prescribed number of Tasmanian operators.

Visitors to Mr Jackson's radio shack claim that he has a sure snake bite cure.

The liquid cure is in a bottle whose label says: "Falmouth Snake-bite Cure (Whisky). Take in regular doses prior to bite." It works too. There is no record of a visitor to Jackson's radio shack dying from snake bite.

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