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8 Penguin Parade,
Burleigh Waters, Qld. 4220

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Ric VK7RO,

Dear OM,

Thanks yrs 30th September. Very informative. Yes, I can imagine the consternation and fury of the broadcast listeners when the old 1942 Balsillie spark transmitter came up. Its replacement with a valve CW job at the various stations didn't help much when the working frequencies were right on top of the I.F. allocations. At Thursday Island it was 464 kHz which played havoc with the 465 kHz IFs; one ship working frequency was 454 and we were under orders to keep them from using it, especially near large cities. At Darwin it was 440 kHz (still is) and there were many BC transistor receivers up there; well known name brands but made in the Far East and used 445 or 440 as the I.F. My good friend Deane VK4ALN ex OTC/Marine was with the PNG Administration for many years at Kavieng and Rabaul; told me that one of their engineers bought some Eddystone state-of-the-art receivers for the receiving stations; you've gotta believe it; the I.F. was 500 kHz.....

I read a funny tale a long time ago in QST abt the plight of an operator at one of the small coast stations operated by private companies, fishing etc. in Alaska in the early days. The Condenser on his spark set blew up. Winter only a few weeks away, Head Office 3000 miles away; also, no hope of getting a replacement until springtime. So he made one. He used a galvanised iron tub filled with brine; in this he put beer bottles also filled with brine. Into each he put a wire and then joined them all in parallel to form one pole of the capacitor, the tub being the other. He added or subtracted bottles to bring the circuit on frequency and was back in business. The note was awful but readable. Every now and then the wavelength would change as a bottle burst but there were plenty of spares...HI. That guy would have made a great ham.

The Condenser...it blocked the high voltage from shorting via the inductor. Guess that back in them thar days the insulating materials were nowhere as good as today's; I know that the old timers always feared a breakdown of it. Interesting to read the old radio books. The word "jigger" had me foxed for a while; an old spark man put me wise; an A.T.U. seem to recall reading that even in modern times some scientific gear uses a spark gap to generate a signal; cannot remember what for, though. Either scientific or industrial.

I cannot recall Bill Davey; the name just doesn't ring a bell. Was he with the Dept. of Native Affairs Radio station? It ran a network of island and mission stations from a base station at T.I. In my time Joe McKenna (now VK4DJM) was the engineer/operator. I went there in 1951 for three years with VII.

I met Harry Banks when I visited VIH in early 1967; he was, of course, well known in the CRS. Barry Mottram who was at VID was OIC there for a few years. Sandy Sandilands (now VK2BS) was also an OIC, now retired as Manager VIS and living at Nelligen near Bateman's Bay. He has had a long run of illness since retiring and is still being treated.

It is a pleasure to know that your club acquired the station but a great pity that the antennas were removed. At VIA everything was left and the new owner, a ham, runs the place as a ham station and welcomes visitors.

Again, thanks for yr letter. I hear the tail end of yr Sunday broadcasts, unfortunately another sked prevents me hearing the whole thing. I work a group of old timer OTC chaps at 0015G (EST) on 14130 if the frequency is clear, otherwise we go to 14135. Recently I've been in contact with a friend George VK2DJR who is caravanning around Australia, presently at 80 Mile Beach north of Port Hedland. We held him on 7060 at 0730G for quite a while, especially after he made a 40 meter dipole; on the homebrew helical vy poor and even worse on 20m. Now he has attached a couple of $\frac{1}{4}$ wave radials for 20m and is very good copy at 2330G on 14140; evidently they have lowered the take-off angle: something that long distance travellers might keep in mind; make a base plate for the whip adding some terminals for quick connecting $\frac{1}{4}$ wave radials. The improvement is remarkable. As long as he doesn't d rive off without disconnecting them...HI

P.S. the "other" sked is 40M CW and runs close
to 0015G

73,

