

Restorative Medicine

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**News Flash! 3Y0J Bouvet DXpedition Cancelled ...
Details on CQ Newsroom and in August issue**

My hometown has weekly “Cruise Nights” each summer, at which classic car fans get together to show off their vehicles, compare notes, and generally have a good time together. Some of the cars on display have been carefully cared for since they were new; others (perhaps the majority) were saved from junkyards and lovingly restored to working order. It’s a step back into a simpler age, when cars were mechanical marvels rather than computers on wheels.

This issue is the radio version of Cruise Night, with four articles on the topic of vintage gear, along with two more that we couldn’t fit in and will bring you next month. Three of the four deal with Heathkits, K9ARZ’s “Three ‘Gifts’ From Heathkit,” N8RG’s restoration of the very first Heathkit electronic kit, the K-1 AM “All-Wave” receiver, and K3MD’s restoration of a classic Heathkit DX-60 transmitter. (Next month, we’ll have an article by AG4W on converting an SB-220 HF amplifier to 6 meters and a “CQ Classic” look back to 1954 for our first review of a Heathkit radio.) Our fourth article on the same theme is “A Dummy Load for Power Supplies,” in which KBØVKS guides us through the process of making sure that a “pre-owned” power supply you might pick up online or at a flea market doesn’t itself need restoration before use. Plus, KØNEB’s Kit-Building column this month focuses on a one-tube AM broadcast transmitter kit one could build to provide your own signal source to crystal sets or restored antique broadcast receivers.

Of course, restoring and operating vintage gear has long been a popular sub-hobby in amateur radio, but I was struck by the number of restoration-related articles we received in a short period of time. Was there a connection, I wondered, between restoring old radios and what we’ve all gone through in the past year-plus with the Coronavirus pandemic? Does doing this take us back to a simpler and more predictable time — when radios glowed in the dark and were marvels of mechanical as well as electrical engineering rather than computers that generate RF — and give us at least a temporary sense of order and control? Is this “restorative medicine” in a non-physical sense?

I posed these questions to frequent CQ contributor Jim Millner, WB2REM, who practices psychology when he isn’t writing radio articles. His response not only confirmed what I was thinking, but also drew a parallel between the field of restorative medicine and the activity of restoring vintage radios.

“Restorative medicine provides a chemical balance to your body while restoring old rigs takes broken parts and makes the radio whole again.” Jim wrote. “Our lives over the last year or so with Covid have been broken like old-time radios. There have been many pieces in our lives that have been lost forever or are in dire need of repair. By restoring a classic rig, the act of taking something broken and making it whole again can be symbolic of what life will be after the pandemic is in the rear mirror ... The word ‘gestalt’ also comes to

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mind, ‘An organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.’”

Thank you for your perspective, Jim. In our view, ham radio has always been more than the sum of its parts. It is not just a jumbled assemblage of many different interest areas, from contesting and DXing to restoring classic radios, but so much more when the skills and experiences gained in each of those many interest areas are brought together to create something greater, particularly in times of need.

Ham radio helped many of us get through the pandemic with our mental health intact by providing a means of social contact even if we were quarantined in our homes. It might have been working DX or contesting, taking part in nets that went from weekly to daily in order to check in regularly on members, or using ham radio to help schedule vaccine appointments, as WB2REM described in his most recent CQ article, “The Ham Radio Hunger Games,” in this past May’s issue.

Now it’s poised to help us through the return to normalcy, by taking our rigs outdoors to activate “OTA” (on the air) locations such as summits or parks, expanding the limits of our networking technology (as N2IRZ discusses in his Digital Connection column this month), or restoring classic radios. Like bringing old rigs back to life in our shacks, ham radio itself provides us with a good dose of “restorative medicine” when we let it.

One final note on restorations: Restoring an old radio doesn’t necessarily mean using old parts and old tools to complete the job. When N8RG was fixing up his K-1 receiver, he realized that the front panel was too badly damaged to be repaired. So he used two decidedly 21st-century tools — a high-resolution digital camera and a personal computer — to help him along. He took a very hi-res photo of the damaged front panel, opened that photo in his drawing program, and reconstructed an image of the original panel, pixel by pixel. He then sent that image to a company that prints photos directly onto a sheet of aluminum. When the finished product arrived a few days later, Ray drilled new holes for various switches and dials, trimmed the edges and, voilà, brand new front panel!

Also in this issue, we have the results of last February’s CQ WPX RTTY Contest, our CQ Hall of Fame inductees for this year and finally, *gonculators!* Ya gotta read KH6WZ’s Ham Notebook column to find out what that’s all about.

Enjoy this issue, and your summer, and we hope that both will provide you with a good dose of restorative medicine.

– 73, Rich, W2VU