

Frank and the FMLA



The Adventures of Frank and the Five Meter Liberation Army

as documented by Michael N. Hopkins, AB5L (sk)

A Rearward by AB5L

A man of the '30s awakens one night in the '90s (episode 13) with a new mission: recapture 56-60 mc. He forms a Five Meter Liberation Army from his mobile home in a Barrio trailer park run by Tom Joad of Steinback's Grapes of Wrath (episode 9), and soon draws a decidedly uncolorful bodyguard (episode 7). A six foot tall half Mexican stockbroker named for Ayn Rand makes him rich and a demonic white ferret and a half-siamese cat become his familiars. (episodes 10 and 9). The leader of all this, called only "Frank," settles down in the narrator's basement to be joined by Maj. Armstrong (episode 8), Hiram Maxim (episode 23) and one-time pals Carl and Jerry from the 1950s Popular Electronics (episode 25). His huge 1940s sedan, with contemporary plates, is immune from police (episode 13 et seq) and his breadboarded electronic creations recall those distant days when a ham built his own rig and could "fix a radio." Of course all this is crazy. No one builds anything anymore and the other things Frank stands for, like self-reliance, tolerance and a generally Boy Scout viewpoint are simply out of step. Frank knows that too (episode 20), but he does not care. If you're standing in the middle of the road and see a big brown Frazer coming at you, you better jump - one way or the other.

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FMLA I -- A FMLA?

We don't do this because we need a lot of company, but some of us meet down below 50.100 in every big opening. The rules are different there. The pack of Six Meter types don't come down there because they don't know the code, which is fine with us. I once spent an hour ragchewing with a fellow about a rig he just put on the air.

Tonite I was down listening to my beacon at 50.065 and when I passed 50.090, where I have a rock for my '58 International Crystal STP-50, I stopped for some reason. I have added an outboard regulator and use an old Navy RX supply for the TX while listening thru a pre-1957 Tecraft converter to the 20M section of my kid's Heath HR-10B. There is still some AM on Six Meters, too, and the Heath hears it well .

I dipped the 2E26 and, almost as a joke, sent a "C ?."

GUD EV OT - UR DOIN FB, someone sent. The code was faster than my licensed 20WPM so it could not be a regular.

I sent my call and QTH, which was answered by:

QSL DALLAS ES HR K?????NAME FRANK ??Q?

He was too fast for me, as I sent back, and he went to double words:

K5VAI -- K5VAI -- VICTORY AGAINST IGNORNACE -- VICTORY AGAINST IGNORANCE - FRANK -- QRQ?

I acknowledged Frank's call, thinking his phonetic somewhat offbeat, and told him I missed his QTH. But on the turnaround he just told me he was running a pair of 210s driving another pair in Push-Push, or Push-Pull. I was able to copy most of his clean, 30WPM code but not all of it. I simply ignored the QRQ?

he used like other ops use BK.

I threw the switch on my AEA keyer and sent the station description while I deciphered my notes. When the keyer signed, Frank said:

QSL THE COMMERCIAL GEAR - EVER THINK OF TAKING UP AMATEUR RADIO? QRQ?

I copied that, found it cheeky and just sent a "?"

Well, Frank launched a long monologue about how the FCC stole the old 5 Meter band and, with TV moving up, it would be possible for a few folks who knew their stuff to take it back.

But, he sent at about 25 now, off-the-shelf operators would not be much help in this Five Meter Liberation army. So, he concluded, if I ever decided to take up radio, to give him a call. With that he signed, sending no shaves or haircuts or six bit nonsense, either.

So I don't know. It seems like a pretty elaborate hoax but the call he used has not been active for years. If anyone else has heard this guy, I hope they will let me know. He made me mad at first, but the next day I added a second IF to the kid's Heathkit. Even a rude, probably crazy guy can raise a good point sometimes.

FMLA II - A Conspiracy?

Date: Wed, 17 Nov 1999

You never know when you'll hear from him.

I met him on the air doing 30+ WPM I could barely copy. You don't get much high speed practice on 6M.

Frank is interested only in the area between 56 and 60 mc, the old Five Meter band he says was stolen. He and his pals are getting ready to take it back when the FCC moves broadcast TV up, and they are preparing by building homebrew stations. Until then they stay on 50mc. He says it gets them ready for "when the balloon goes up," whatever that means.

They call themselves the FLMA or "Five Meter Liberation Army." But this time he just sent a note; a yellowed envelop with a Palo Alto address crossed out. There was no return addresses added, of course, and the several stamps had pictures of biplanes on them -- all right side up.

Inside there was just a torn out page from TechAmerica's July 1998 catalog. It is page 3 and he has written, in fountain pen, just "we have one more friend...when will you join us?"

I thought about it mindfully for a while, as they would say in a Tom Swift book, and finally figured it out. There are an antenna tuner and an SWR meter pictured and both say "good to 60Mhz."

FMLA III -- Good Buddy Frank

I did not mean to get on CB, I did not mean to meet anyone I know, and I sure did not want to meet Frank again.

It was just a \$5 CB from a hamfest pile. It said Comstat 19 on it and had lots of tubes. I remembered from years before that someone put one of these on Six and, after an hour with my daughters' black and white cat in the attic, I found the article in 73 Magazine for March, 1973. She found something that said "Squeek!" once, but I never saw it.

By then everyone had gone to bed, anticipating Sunday

school, so I snuck down to the the shack and hooked the thing up to my 10M Squarelo. A vintage Johnson tuner brought it right up and I let off the key expecting to hear the usual chatter. I didn't.

I thought the relay hung because the meter moved to the left for a second and shot right back -- panned, but no Spanish chatter and I was tuning up on the local low rider's CH 4. I was about to pull the plug when I heard his voice: "Hello Mike, good buddy, this is Frank, KA5VAI."

He could have skipped everything after "Mike." That is not my name and I don't call him "Fran." The call is a fake (Victory Against Ignorance) and, besides, I recognized his voice from a face-to-face at a hamsale. But I consoled myself this was not like the first time when we met on 50.090 -- Frank sends between 25 and 30 with a straight key and uses "QRQ" like other people use "BK."

"Quite a signal, Frank," I said, "Where are you?" I hoped he would not ask to come over.

"In Houston, " he said.

Houston is 250 mi from Dallas and not in the skip zone.

"What are you running to make it here on groundwave?" I asked.

"Why just a couple l'il 'ole 8877 with a couple old kilovolts," he said with his mild California Yankee accent getting thru. I am from East Texas and could best him at that trucker talk, but did not want to make it any worse.

"Aren't you afraid of getting caught using that much power," I inquired.

"Of course not," he replied normally, "there are mobiles here running more power and besides the whole FCC could not find a Radio Free Europe transmitter on the way to their three Martini lunch."

I knew not to take the bait. Frank and his friends in the Five Meter Liberation Army are angry about the FCC taking 56-60 mc after the war and giving us Six Meters, which they call Low Band. They are planning to take back Five Meters as soon as the TV stations are moved up, and they don't plan to wait for a proposed rule -- they will be there on day one with rigs they are now running and ready to pull up at a moment's notice.

"Well tell me Frank," I ventured, "how are you going to use an 11M rig when the balloon goes up?" (That balloon talk is a phrase of his.)

"Simple," he said. "I just switch in a little inductance to get her down to 23 mc..."

My mind reeled! Was he really going to double in the final of a 6KW rig? The harmonics would be strong enough to start fires throughout the spectrum...

"...and then turn the on the heaters on the other pair."

"You mean you have FOUR 8877s and right now you are running two of them single ended but later you are going to go to push-pull and double up to 56 mc?"

"That's a big old 10-4, good buddy," he said.

I sank back in the plastic chair (basement dampness got the wood one and an old black Collins we use for a footstool now. I spun its round medal absentmindedly)

"But Frank," I said, "I thought you were trying to get hams to follow you up?"

"I was," he said, "but if they won't come to the party we will just open it up -- after all, many are called and few are cho....."

He began to fade fast, but I got his drift. I looked at my watch and it was Sunday. I had not studied my lesson, so I went upstairs to get out the books.

FMLA IV -- Meeting Frank

I met him at Hardin's.

That is the electronics place that hosts Fort Worth's 2d Saturday tailgatefest. I don't always make it because it has a lot of resentful old men standing around complaining, and I can tune that on 75M, but sometime I find something and this time I was looking in a box of meters when I got a tap on the shoulder:

"Hello, Bro." someone said.

I don't talk like that and I try to avoid employees who do, so I knew (feared?) it was one of the drifter types that show up with such weird looking loads of stuff at most hamfests. I turned and initially thought I was right.

He was a tall guy with a almost comically small Vietnam field beret in camouflage that is commonly called a "boonie hat." He had a beard and overalls and an unkempt appearance that advertised "biker," but there was something wrong.

I am a bearded gentleman myself and I saw his was fake -- a very good fake like the Santa Clauses at Lord and Taylor's, but a fake. His mustache was real but too thin and natty for the beard and it was poorly dyed too.

"Do I know you?" I asked?

"Sometimes we know a thing in our heart that we do not admit," he said and my stomach lurched:

"A Baptist!" I thought. Texas is full of them but he did not have that inerrant gaze.

"I'm Frank," he said simply.

So this was Frank. I need not ask if it was the same Frank I met on 50.09 at 30WPM and later worked above 50.7. I knew it was the one who talked about a Five Meter Liberation Army and getting ready to move back into 56-60MC as soon as Channel 2 moves up. I half thought 'till that moment that his spiel about going all homebrew on 6M to develop the skills to take 5M back was a joke but, funny as he looked to some, I could see he was not joking.

"So you're the FLMA Frank" I got out before he took me aside and motioned for silence.

He led me to a Volkswagen, one of the modernish ones, and said, "I've got something for you over here."

He opened the back and showed me a water stained box of 815s.

"Know what these are?" he asked.

"Pair of 2E26s or 6L6s, I forget which, in the same envelope with two external plate caps," said I.

"That's close enough," he said, "They were 25 cents each!

Cheaper than 210s!" he said with his voice raising so I did not ask about the thing in the back that said "Utah" on it and had lots of knobs. He put 5 of the tubes in the sack I carry to hamfests and said, "Keep the FMLA stuff quiet 'till you are a little further along."

Then he wandered down the line to look at some TV antenna wire and, when I went back to ask him, the VW was gone.

I had noticed when I went back to the car to unload that in addition to the tubes there was a 3X5 card inscribed in a studied script saying "73 Feb 74 p 34." I take that to be a reference to a 73 Magazine article, but my ex-wife, another Baptist, threw out all of those because of the pictures of women on the covers. I could go to the library, but I'm not sure I want to get involved in all this.

Besides, I found the output capacitance of an 815 in an old handbook.

FMLA V -- Another Frank?

"What is THIS?," he demanded.

I am never ready for these visits. He broke me once on 6M CW, while I was sending at 20, and asked QRQ. Another time he showed up at a Fort Worth ham sale in a disguise, and one night he broke me on CB groundwave as I tested a Comsat 19.

That time he was in Houston, 250mi away, and got to 11M by killing one of his push-push 8877s. This time I am peacefully digging thru a box of "as is" at a broadcast radio club outdoor event. He can always find me and I am never ready.

"Hello, Frank," I said hollowly. I turned to see that he was not in his "good buddy" disguise, but I have no way to know if this is the real Frank. Today he is of medium to tall stature with roundish black-rimmed glasses, starched shirt, fore-in-hand loose at the collar, and wide lapel brown jacket, which matched his pleated trousers, over one arm. Natty, I thought.

"Going to Church?" I asked, knowing it a mistake as I said it as anything I say seems to give him an opening.

"You need to go to Confession," he said. "Get rid of the Sin of Appliance Operating and take up the narrow path of home radio construction so you will be ready when the time of wailing and grinding teeth arrives."

He needed not to elaborate as I know his pitch: He and his friends are mad about 5 Meters and plan to take it back when the FCC moves TV up. They will not visit the spectrum auction -- just move in with rigs and techniques perfected on Six Meters.

They call themselves, mellow-dramatically to my ear, The Five Meter Liberation Army (FLMA).

"QSL, Frank," said I, "I was just looking in here for a ceramic octal socket."

"I'll get you one out of the car," he answered, motioning to a Frazer that was gathering a crowd of admirers. It matched his jacket.

"But what is this?" he again demanded.

"Four little ducks and some sheep?" I asked, looking at the proffered device, "I think it is a baby monitor."

"How does it work?" he demanded, moving closer. "Triples from a 16 mc rock, Super-regenerative receive, 100mW max.," I said.

"Forty nine megacycles?" he demanded? "Forty-nine?" (If Frank fell into his final, broke the envelope and soaked his spats in blood, he would still not say Hertz.) I was going to say more but Frank muttered, "thanks" and headed off to the Frazer, ignoring the Atwater-Kent types momentarily turned car buffs and hiding the baby monitor under his jacket on the upholstered seat beside him.

As he drove away I wondered how he got away with plates that old...and where to find the ceramic octal socket Frank forgot to give me.

FMLA VI -- More Franks?

Date: 20 Oct 1998

Nortex Electronics is a mausoleum of military and civilian castaways.

There are stacks of Bud chassis in browning paper wrappers and enough mercury in octal plug relays to contaminate everything from the west of Fort Worth location to the Will Rogers Coliseum downtown. He even has ART-13s, but his price is close to what the government paid, so they stay up on a high, and thankfully sturdy shelf.

My pal is a Nortex habitude who hunts for microwave plumbing fixtures. When he asks me to go along, I do, because the place puts him in such a good mood he buys lunch. Today he was talking to Lewis, the jefe as we are learning to say in Texas, and I wandered off down the aisles, mesmerized perhaps by Wagner on Lewis' gold-colored Heath FM-2 tuner locked to Dallas' classical station, WRR FM. I would not have been surprised to find Sigmund or Seglinda, but of course I found Frank.

He was going at a SCR-522, the receiver section that has a different number I cannot remember, with a wood-handled screwdriver that just fit the slots. Arrayed around him were other tools that approximated the transceiver in time, and he was

so intent I thought to slip away, but he must have seen me.

"Hate to fix one of these under fire," he said without looking up, "You know what it is?"

"Sure," I recited, "Aircraft tactical set for 100 to 156 mc." They formed the backbone of 2M after the war.

"Six Meters too," he said. "Just jumper the last 832 and you are on Six and ready to QSY when the balloon goes up."

(Frank and his friends are mad about the loss of 5 Meters and plan to take it back when the FCC moves TV up. Meanwhile they build 6M equipment with wide tuning capabilities. He calls the movement the Five Meter Liberation Army. It all sounds like something out of "For Whom the Bell Tolls," but then again, Frank often does too.)

"I like the 12mc IF," he continued, "No trouble with images and you can introduce regeneration at this 12SG7 for selectivity and beat note. There are the makings of a pretty good rig here," he said as he began to put the tools in a roll-up pouch so understatedly elegant no biker would be seen with it. "What is the IF of your receiver?"

"First one at about 45 and second at 455, I said," assuming a Drake SSR-1 follows the modern pattern.

"Really?," he said, "Where did you get the 45 mc IF cans?"

"I didn't, I said, It's a ..."

"Wait a minute," he snapped. "You have a STORE BOUGHT receiver?"

"Yea, It's a..."

"Don't even tell me," he ordered as he tucked the leather roll under his arm and the Valkaries began to ride. He looked me in the eye and said: "Would you hire someone else to lay with your wife?"

I would have taken offense but, in truth, the first one entertained volunteers and, besides, he continued to develop his thesis:

"The receiver is the most important part of the station. If you have to choose, run a store bought transmitter, but Never, I mean Never depend on anyone else to design and build your receiver...not even McMurdo Silver"

I didn't know McMurdo Silver from Hi Ho Silver. "

Here," he continued, "Buy this thing, take it home and get to work." With that he turned and walked toward the exit by the stacked up Speed and Crown Graphics. Lewis does cameras too. He never looked back as the Valkaries whisked up the bravest warriors and took them to Valhalla.

I took the BC-624-A to Dallas after paying only half the government price because of my pal's special relationship. Part of it is on the bench now and I have found the 12SG7 will go into regeneration at about 65 volts on the screen.

FMLA VII -- Frank @ War

I got enough of Interstate 30 in my 15 1/2 hour Dayton-to- Dallas drive, so I took one of Texas' farm-to-market roads back from Greenville and my relatives. It was then I saw Frank, or more particularly his brown Frazer parked with some Toyota SUVs in a pasture.

I stopped. Sure, Frank is a nutso who thinks he leads a Five Meter Liberation Army that is going to take back 56-60 mc when the FCC moves TV up, but at least he is interested in radio. My relatives are only interested in indictments, and avoiding them.

I did not believe there really was a FMLA, anyway; or if there was, that there were any soldiers in it, so I was surprised when, at the cattle guard, I was greeted by one.

He was a pale, thin guy with short hair, fatigue trousers and a camo muscle shirt. He also wore bloused black boots and red suspenders. I would have laughed out loud had it not been for the rifle slung under him arm so I could see the curved magazine.

I know the old stuff because my dad once had a sporting goods store, but the new ones confuse me with their Polish names.

Anyway, it was the kind Arab terrorists always have. "State your business," he said as I noted a button saying "WAR" on his suspenders. Maybe some sort of reenactment? I told him I was a friend of Frank's and he confirmed it on a walkie talkie and waved me on. Again I suppressed a laugh. The handheld said "Archer Space Patrol" on it.

"Doing a double load of laundry?" I asked Frank after negotiating two more Space Patrols and a Minnie Mouse Fun Mic. "Leecher wires," Frank said of the parallel clotheslines he was adjusting between the bed of a Federal truck and a tree. A 10-foot folded dipole of welding rod fed with matching twinlead was screwed to a 4X4 above the Federal's cab. He greeted me warmly to their "Field Day" operation, saying he fell out with the CBers over plate modulation but that these young patriots, while they had some strange ideas, were really interested in emergency communication.

"But Field Day is in June," I objected.

"That one is for dipsomaniacs and appliance operators," he retorted, as one of the WAR persons pulled the cord of ancient engine that said "Lincoln" on it and a big surplus generator whined. Frank began adjusting the rig, the rest of his remarks obliterated by the noise. I had seen an 8877 before, but never on a breadboard. There was some sort of blower below the plywood I would have asked about, but Frank drew a spark from a coil of half-inch tubing with a pencil. It was about another half inch that the fire leaped to the appropriately named "Big Mo."

"Looks good," he shouted as he slipped a loop of red TV picture tube wire into the coil. The other end was attached to a plastic box adorned with lambs and ducklings and saying "Sleepy time Sentinel." A baby monitor transmitter, I thought as Frank, with his other hand, withdrew a watch, opened it, and counted off the seconds. He then told the ducklings "Able leader, this is Final Hour." I could see he was reading from a card held by one of the WAR guys, but before I could read the inscription he pulled out the 'monitor and every walkie talkie in the meadow answered:

"Final Hour, you are loud and clear. The Eagle is gathering its wings." A cheer broke out and one of the W.A.R.s shorted the plug on the motor with a banana-shaped clip. There was much congratulating but finally they settled down to Mountain Dew soft drinks. Being tea total I wondered if they were somehow attached to the Texas Baptists.

"Where is Able Leader?" I asked.

"Sonoma," Frank said, and I gasped. "How in the world did you reach California from Texas on a self-excited oscillator modulated by a baby monitor and using Super-Regenerative receivers?"

"Well," grinned Frank, "Some of these young persons are in the military and one of them outside Santa Fe just happened to turn on the over-the-horizon radar for a moment or two. "It really heated up the E layer--just like '58."

The WAR bunch was cordial throughout, but made it clear that the rest of the evening would be devoted to "marksmanship," so I took my leave. Walking past Frank's Frazer my eye caught the telltale side loading port of a Krag-Jorgenson rifle.

The U.S. quit using those in 1906 and I have no idea where Frank acquired one.

FMLA VIII -- The Boy Over There

I won't say Frank has moved in. It is not that formal, but he can get in my yard past the dog and duck at will and I often find him puttering in my basement workshop at all hours. He never asked, but is a better housekeeper than my wife, please, so I tolerate it. I am used to seeing him. But yesterday morning, at about 4 a.m., there were two of them.

I don't mean two Franks. Two delusional if dapper dudes planning to retake 56-60 mc when the FCC moves TV up with a "Five Meter Liberation Army" would overload any circuit. But Frank had a military advisor, and not one of the WAR weirdos I have seen him with. This one was a major in the regular army, signal corps by the insignia I memorized from a childhood fascination with WWII, but the uniform looked more like a Scoutmaster.

They saw me coming down the stairs and Frank made a hasty, somewhat distracted introduction to "The Major," before they went back to a box of stuff which I learned, from the colloquy of it all, they picked up around the neighborhood. "My theory," Frank was saying, "is that any pasteboard box of well chosen refuse should produce a usable communications device." He then showed The Major a 2N2222 gleaned from a broken cassette recorder, saying it was "like a triode." The Major became somewhat animated. In no time they had some TO-220 horizontal outputs in push-push for a TX and a handful of the 2N222s arrayed as a regenerative superhet with a 3.579 mc IF using a 4.5 IF can from the same remnant of a dead "home entertainment center" Their chassis was a tire-marked sign for DART (Dallas Area Rapid Transit), and they used octal sockets and plugs for every discrete device.

I was impressed. In about an hour they were making contact after contact on 40 using seemingly random calls issued prior to the W series. The stations kept asking them if they were DX.

All this was accomplished loading my 30M full wave loop against ground with the twinlead feeders shorted together. They were using a piezo buzzer for a speaker and congratulating one another on its restricted range as I started picking up the unused trash, enumerating each item so as to encourage future fastidiousness.

It was then the Major disappeared in a puff of smoke.

It could not be the B+ as they were using a burglar alarm Yusa that would not charge past 11.8.

"What happened?" I asked.

"It was the vodka," answered Frank.

"Did the Major drink?" I asked?

"No, No, nothing like that," Frank explained, "When you read the label, "Smirnoff" he thought you said "Sarnoff" and off he went.

"Gosh," said I, picking up another 1930ism, " I'm sorry."

"No matter," said Frank as he turned back to the sideswiper key made from a broken hacksaw blade, "The Major always comes back to us." "I scared him off once, too, with a hackneyed expression: "I said: 'You cannot see the forest for the trees,' and he thought I said 'DeForest.' "

FMLA IX -- Following Frank

I followed Frank, feeling justified in the fact that he slipped in and out of my basement workshop uninvited and unnoticed by my would-be watchcreatures.

He led me to the Barrio where his pre-Eisenhower plates drew no comment on streets named for heroes of 1911. Down Obregon Avenue, past Caranza Circle and Emil's Shoe Repair we drove 'till we reached Joad's RV Rest and Frank turned in with a nod to a fellow sitting in a surplus toll booth. "Morning Tom," I heard Frank say thru the Frazer's open window. I turned in too but was surrounded by Mormons.

At least they looked like Mormons. Clean cut young men in white shirts on bicycles were as out of place here amid hombres of ambiguous ancestry as I in my foreign sedan among the zero-ground-clearance land yachts. But instead of tracts these youths brandished tommy guns, pistols really: an Uzi and what formalists call an Ingram but what the world knows as a Mac 10 when, as now, it has a credit card inserted in the top to defeat the sear.

"Frank invites his guests," said the one, but his voice trailed off at the last and he added: "Hey, Sir, weren't you you at Operation Overleap?" I then recognized one of Frank's friends from a "field day" operation I once attended. He was one of the "WAR" group that helps Frank in his quest to take back 56-60 mc when the FCC moves TV up. But today he lacked his jackboots and was, happily, putting the machine pistol back in a suitcase on his Schwinn. "I'll take him in," he told the other, and I followed him down several rows to a vintage Airflow where Frank greeted me as if I were expected.

As he stroked a peculiar-looking Siamese-like cat, I speculated that the ever-present Archer Space Patrol handy talkies had heralded my arrival. "Shoo, Zack," said Frank as he dropped the feline to shake hands and I reflected that only Frank would name a pet after Gen. Zachary Taylor, hero of the Mexican War, in a neighborhood undistinguishable from Matamores.

The cat jumped to the lap of the WARmon who took metal lawnchair as Frank conducted me inside. It began a low purr that approximated Frank's top-condenser refrigerator, and started pseudo-nursing the WARmon's white shirt as Frank introduced me to a departing woman of striking appearance.

"This is Ayn Tagert-Tamez." said Frank of the tallish but mildly Mexican looking woman who was folding up a leather set of computer tools. "She is a member of Progressives Organizing to Combat Hispano-Orthodoxy," he explained, and said that they want to start an all-English Spanish TV network on one of the lower frequencies. Having common goals with Frank, they keep up his website.

"Thirty -six hits since we moved it," she said. "Same password," she added as she nodded to me and stepped out of the trailer where the WARmon stood, sending Zack reeling, and said "Miss" as she passed.

"Puto," she answered curtly as she slipped into a vintage 'Vette the side of which was tastefully lettered "Chicana Power" below the factory badge reading "427." It took the four of us a minute to get over her, but Zack soon hopped back in the WARmon's lap and Frank showed me his shack, not wanting to discuss the rack of computer equipment next to it.

Frank is all homebrew. His receiver is unshielded outside, but built around a central square of aluminum that houses a Velvet Vernier dial thru the front panel and some tubes I did not recognize jutting horizontally on both sides of the box where coils also plug in.

The transmitter is a multi-stage affair on a piece of particle board. The tubes are vertical here, and the bench was littered with brown Hammarlund coils labeled 5, 10, 20, and 80.

The 40M coils were in place and Frank worked a few stations at dizzying speed with a J-38. He never used the same call twice, and when he offered me a turn, I declined.

The only transformer in the place was on a small screen modulator attached to a pair of TH-100s labeled "PA" in the rack below the new-as-tomorrow computer. He seemed to be taking all his DC off the three-wire service line that entered thru a large piece of plastic DWV pipe and where, in turn, a run of fiberoptic snaked out and disappeared along a railroad right of way.

I eased toward the back of the trailer, but Frank ignored the hint and suggested lunch. As we took our leave the WARmon resumed his post at the gate and Zack began burrowing a small hole in a sack of Vital Varmit Dog Food. I never saw a canine.

Frank drove to a place called Pancho's Villa where he was well known and greeted with cries of "Vato!" I agonized with the menu's contorted Tex Mex, but Frank ordered menudo, rice and beans like a native. Indeed, in this environment his double-breasted suit did not seem so out of place, and when he parked, the Frazer drew a cadre of youths saying "Looks Charp" and "How High will it jump?"

"These are good people," said Frank, "and they recognize the value of improvisation." "They are not like modern hams who cannot homebrew a CPO without a PC board," he continued and, once again, he warned that when, as he says, "the balloon goes up" a lot of "KA this(s) and Vanity thats" won't be in those chosen to retake 5 Meters. On a more personal note he said my efforts at converting an old SCR-522 receiver were a good start and, when we left and said goodby at the Airflow, he procured from a plastic storage case under the napping Zack a Standard Coil tuner from a TV set long departed.

"The old VHF Handbooks show how to make these into a converter," he said, "See what you can do with it." I reflected on the way home that while Frank is truly a nut, he is also like the hams I knew when I was a kid. Those were guys who could "fix a radio" as the neighbors said, and we are something else.

Toying with the tuner, I found a note from Frank inside.

"Don't change the Channel 2 part," It read.

FMLA X -- A 'Fest Fight

Gravity urged velocity down the inclines as my Hundai hurtled toward the Belton HamExpo in the predawn.

Six hundred pounds of now-labeled chokes and TV set transformers were back in the trailer with the other offerings.

My second son snoozed with the mascot ferrets in the back and I was musing, pointlessly, that I have never seen a Jew in Temple, Texas, when a woman's bored voice broke in: "Texas Department of Public Safety; Zero two hundred hours fifty-three minutes," she said as I checked the speedometer (58mph) and looked in the rearview where only the unshakable Toyota lit the darkness.

"Got it" said Frank beside me almost at the same time, and I realized the ever-experimenting nutso who plans to take back 56-60 mc when the FCC moves TV up had raised the Highway Patrol repeater with his portable...

Well, it is a portable by Frank's standards, anyway. On a piece of pine he assembled a 1S4 and a TI-34 Mosfet in a super-regenerative setup that blanked my highway-monitoring CB with its radiation and put me to silent musings in the night. Some rewired Millen absorption meters served as the front end(s). He reached to the floorboard for his laptop and made some entries. The open 720 drive whirred under the full-sized keyboard where he tucked a much modified Timex-Sinclair that sits on the heatsink from a defunct 2M amp.

Not long ago Frank came home with a handheld touchtone generator he bought from a "nice young Hispanic gentleman" at a park near my house. I wasn't worried about his safety in scoring the thing from a dope dealer as Frank is always shadowed by "companions" like the two in the Land Cruiser behind us, but I did ask him if he used "real money."

Frank has a seemingly inexhaustible supply of pre-1964 silver coins and currency that says "silver certificate" on it.

From time to time I take a coffee can full of it to my lawyer who changes it into modern money at a remarkable rate of exchange, but sometimes Frank forgets. Frank probably had more cash than the dealer that day, and today his bankroll topped \$5700, but he lives frugally and spends mostly on his "Five Meter Liberation Army" project.

Frank usually uses headphones, 2K, but has an interface he can plug in the Motorola socket in my car radio for volume, and that is how I heard the woman's voice. He uses the same hybrid rig as a transmitter by throwing a ceramic knife switch which controls a relay. The whole thing is fed by some D cells and a daisy chain of 9 volts, which once convinced a curious ferret to steer clear of Frank's stuff. As a result, only Frank's touch-tone pad is free of Bob Ferret's tooth marks. The female weasel, Charlie, adores Frank and tonight was nesting in his starched shirt, Frank having left his double-breasted coat at home and rolled up his sleeves in a gesture to hamfest informality.

After the touchtone device, Frank read a green Radio Shack "Introduction to Computers" paperback off my "free to good home" stack, and was soon using my library card to get 3-inch books on theory and, especially, on telephones. From that, over the last two weeks, evolved his equipment and his zeal for the hamfest.

He usually avoids them as "havens of appliance operation."

We arrived at Belton at 0325 and were number 7 in line. I was deluged by flashlight-toting opportunists and lost sight of Frank 'till about 10 when a disturbance drew me. When I got there, Frank was dusting off his rumpled sleeve and a fat fellow's eyes were glazing over as one of Frank's bodyguards, a pale kid I call the WARmon, applied a Carotid Choke Hold. The fat fellow's raised arm, fruitlessly resisting the pressure of the "Snot Block" as policemen call it, showed blood dripping from two previous attempts, but Charlie had finally found a good place on some upper arm flab and her red, albino eye's glowed as she held on. She looked rather like a furry, blood-stained water snake on a trot line.

The only good things about the scene were that the MFJ package the WARmon was carrying today was on the ground with its concealed Uzi, and Christie, a WAR officer from the Toyota, had not unlimbered her under-the-arm package of "Mini" blinds that in fact concealed a small Ruger rifle.

With some small help from me, the efficient yellow-shirted attendants got everyone untangled and only Charlie was banished.

I assured the concerned she "had her shots" and Christie, who is also long, skinny and very white, took her to the Toyota.

It seems the fat fellow observed Frank's bankroll and began extolling the virtues of a rack full of vintage black box Collins equipment to a gathering crowd. He dwelled, I am told, on the virtues of Class B Plate modulation, which was also a mistake.

At the end he told Frank "you ought to take these home," and Frank, uncharacteristically, answered off handedly.

"If I had those," he said, "I'd scrap the rigs and use the rack for a backhouse."

The fat man raised his hand and things developed to where I came in.

At lunch afterward there was no talk about the incident as I ate one of Denny's Veggie Omelets, my kid had the cheese sandwich and Frank, of course, the California Dreamin' Special. The WAR folk stayed outside and ate takeout chicken, all white, where they could watch the trailer with Frank's purchases and the cage with the other ferrets. Charlie would not leave Christie and snapped on her crisp khaki trouser leg after a growling lunch of chicken skin.

We rearranged for the trip back because the WARmon had to take the Toyota for "a pilgrimage near Waco" as Christie said.

She sat in the back with the miniblinds, Frank and the ferrets while my son slept in the front. He was exhausted by Frank's extended remarks at lunch on the evils of "appliance idolotry," and "inefficiency modulation."

It was a quiet drive, but when we passed the highway patrol substation, all the garage doors opened.

FMLA XI -- The Conversion

Women's undergarments are not unusual at my house, but the set draped over the banister to the basement was remarkable for two reasons.

First, I did not know they still made a panty without high cut sides, and second, the top part was too big for my 9-year-old daughter and inadequate for my wife, who is something of a Colleen.

The mystery was cleared up by Christie who scampered by, grabbed the garments and said "Sorry, just washing out a few

things," as she went behind the curtain to the part of the basement that has a boy scout cot and a chair. She would have looked like the picture of domesticity in her terrycloth robe had I not noticed the small frame Ruger revolver in the small of her back, held by the robe's tie.

Christie is an officer in the WAR organization and on temporary assignment bodyguarding my friend Frank. Her group depends on Frank for communications in whatever it is they do.

It did not occur to me until I wrote this that there might be something extraprofessional between the dapper if dated Frank and the Back East looking Christie, who is about half his age. If there is, it will just stay one of the many things I don't know about Frank, who heads an outfit calling itself the Five Meter Liberation Army and plans to take back 56-60 mc when the FCC moves TV up.

As usual, I found Frank at work on a project in my basement, but this time it was MY project. He had pulled the SCR-522 receiver from the rack and was peering inside. "How did you do it?" he asked on noting my presence, skipping formalities as he is wont to do when perplexed.

"Do what?" I asked, wondering what I could ever tell HIM about electronics.

"How did you get that tuner to feed this receiver?" He was motioning first to a Standard Coil tuner I had modified, at his urging, into a converter for 10, 6, 5 and 2M plus 220.

"Oh," I said, "First I built it like the old VHF Handbook said." "They recommended pulling the output down from 21mc (the tuner had 1947 stamped on it) to 16 mc for a BC-348, but I didn't have one, and after the SCR-522 did not want to tackle any more ironclad surplus. So I fed it to the 20 mc IF of my Hallicrafters SR-46. That worked, but since you insist on all homebrew, I made a converter for 20 mc to 12 mc using an old 2M crystal." "I feed the '522's 12 mc IF and cover about 600 kc of 6M with the fine tune. If I need more, I just rewind another of the TV channel sections, since there are 12."

Christie looked in on us for a moment as I finished reciting, and I heard a hair dryer start up before Frank spoke again. "All that is sound." "No problems with images and I see you have added regeneration both to the 12 mc IF and to the detector;"

"But what is that little silver thing beside the FT-243?"

I braced myself. I knew Frank toyed with transistors, but these old timers sometime resist other advances. "It is a Mini Circuits SBL-1," I said. "A complete double balanced mixer." I drew the pinout and a rough, memory-based approximation of the circuit on one of Frank's notebooks."

"You must have those diodes backward," he said as he considered the drawing, but he did not explode. "Got anymore?" he asked. I produced three from a plastic drawer. He took them and asked for 700 more.

I recall all this as I sit here monitoring the WAR/FMLA frequency (classified but one can occasionally here colorburst trash) on my Archer Space Patrol handy talkie. It was a gift from Frank and over the next weeks he sent and received lots of them. When they left my basement shack they had grown a SBL-1 (TUF-1 after the first 700) and a FET RF stage plus a second crystal in some sort of weird VXO scheme that is accompanied by a bunch of diodes and coils. Frank never writes much down, but my Space Patrol will outdo most anyone's 2M HT on simplex and, as a bonus of sorts, jam it with the super-regen slop.

So you can teach an old dog new tricks and if you see Frank in his Frazer (with Christie following in a Toyota Land Cruiser) and note his smile you can bet he is reading the mail. His mobile is a pair of 35s that have marginal audio gain. That explains the Brandes 'phones.

FMLA XII -- Frank Noir

The introduction went OK, altho it turned out not to be an introduction.

I took Frank, my flaky pal who plans to take back 56-60 mc when the FCC moves TV up, to see another friend: Adolphus Charles.

Never trust a man with two first names, said The Thin Man, but anyone would trust Adolphus at first meeting. A retired schoolteacher, he is also a QRQ 40M CW man and that is how Frank knew him.

As we walked up to the poorly kept house Frank heard the clack of a Vibroplex and said immediately, "It must be A.C."

Never having had an eyeball QSO, the two talked for over an hour about old times and mutual acquaintances. There was not

a word about Frank's Five Meter Liberation Army and I remember thinking that Frank spoke in this same knowledgeable way with a 90-year-old ex-telgrapher, so Frank must be a lot older than his apparent 40 or so years -- even older than his double breasted suits and spats.

A.C. has one of the last Kenwood v. tube transceivers in his ill-lit cavern of a house and Frank took a turn at the Vibroplex, making it sound like a keyer. I had never seen Frank use a store-bought rig before.

I invited A.C., who does not get out much in his huge Buick, to stop by any time he was in the neighborhood, since Frank is spending most of his time in my basement with his retinue which lately included two. His regular bodyguard is a thin young fellow I call the WARmon. I name him thus for his tendency to masquerade as a LDS missionary and the fact that he and his boss, a young woman named Christie, are in an organization called WAR. Unfortunately, the next time I saw the failing A.C. he was roughly conveyed down the stairs to my basement by the WARmon who announced, "Look what I found sneaking around."

In those next few seconds I learned a lot -- too much.

First, I did not know any black guys were with the 82nd Airborne, but A.C. was and he showed it in breaking the WARmon's hold and two of his fingers with a sudden ruse. Next, I did not, and do not, know where Christie conceals her Ruger revolver on her boy-like frame, but she had it half way out when lesson three occurred.

The only ones I had even seen were in books, usually about Sacco and Vanzetti, but Frank not only had a nickel plated Colt 38ACP, but he produced it in record time and pointed it between Christie's slate blue eyes. I could not see his face, but she could when he said, calmly, "leave my friends ALONE."

"But Frank," plead the WARmon, he' a..." he did not finish because Christie carefully laid down the .357 and made a head gesture to him just after Frank rolled off the Colt's safety.

"We have discussed this before," continued Frank in a tautological tone as he pocketed the Colt. "You are to keep that sort of thing out of my world." "If you chose to do otherwise, you can go back to pawnshop C.B.s."

Christie stood, with a lot of dignity I thought, but ruined it by saying, "come on Mr. W., let's go where the air is cleaner."

They moved widely past A.C. who was next to a rusting R-388 case/transcan in a corner where leans a rusty old SKS. One of Frank's visitors left it, I guess. The WAR folk spent the rest of A.C.'s visit in the yard, after splinting the kid's fingers and giving him a pull of Southern Comfort from a metal bottle Frank keeps in his Frazer for emergencies. They were nowhere to be seen when we saw A.C. off in his Electra 225 just before dusk.

As soon as he was gone, Christie reappeared with a bottle of Mountain Dew soft drink for Frank. She kissed him on the cheek and, after that, would call him, "boss."

Well, who can figure a dame?

Anyway, Frank went back to his projects without further comment and, as the urban darkness descended, I added things up:

For a few weeks the WAR folk will put Frank in their "race traitor" category, but it will pass. A.C., a religious fellow, seemed not so moved by it all and Frank is working up some project with an 815.

It all fits, I guess, but there is still one question: Am I the only person in Dallas, TX, other than A.C., who does not carry a gun?

FMLA XIII -- Going To Texas

He was up when the first birds chirped, needing little sleep through most of his life and certainly less now. He heard Zack's return and put a bowl, actually the plastic shield from the back of a TV set, out the door of the Airflow where the Siamese-looking co-conspirator rubbed against the metal steps.

His mind wandered back to other cats: a long line of felines starting back before the Great War. It was cool, even cold now but he was indifferent to it and he fixed no breakfast, eating only when others did -- never with Zack.

The trailer was completely empty of life. Just machines of every type like his Supergainer receiver and breadboarded MOPA on the table in a forest of plug in coils, and the cool, distant computer above the pair of TH-100s in the rack next to it. He pulled out the drawer and answered some FMLA traffic.

The Five Meter Liberation Army. In his mid 30s when the rule change came, and just entering middle age when they closed the band, he only registered the normal complaints. But now, since he had the time, the redress had become his obsession. It was as if some beloved childhood place had been taken by the faceless bureaucracy. People moved west to avoid that sort of thing and Frank's folks had gone as far west as possible, and still it followed them.

His mind ever sharp, it moved thru the Second War and the ones to follow. He tracked radio now, not cats, but not storebought radios or even home-built ones. The ideas and understandings were his markers. First Armstrong and his running dogs, then the paper in school, and then the real lessons: the experiments. So much time spent in the shop his family complained and he had to readjust. He was glad. The picnics, recitals and graduations suddenly became his markers. Then the weddings and grandchildren and, about then, he began to lose track.

His last president was Nixon, but it seemed like there were others. It was hazy to him for a long while until one day it all come into focus on I-40, late at night. He was pulling the Airflow with his old Frazer, the one he took the first kids around in, when a policeman, a woman actually, stopped him for going too slow. She was indifferent to the Frazer's out-of-date plates, for the tax collection problems of California are not the concern of New Mexico troopers. She addressed him both in English and in her native Spanish as she approached the car, but the message was the same -- was he drunk?

Of course he was not drunk, not since before the 18th

Amendment, but she was troubled by his hesitation when asked where he was going. She started to search the Airflow, but he finally said what most of them do: He was going to Texas; part of a huge reverse migration of folks who did not find what they wanted out there and decided they missed a step.

"Gone to Texas." It once meant freedom from debt, then a lust for war, and now a generalized yearning, but one thing it always meant here outside Socorro was that this one would not be her's,

or New Mexico's problem in about two hours.

She let him go.

(For Alixandria Bryant Hopkins, 9, who wanted "a ghost story.")

FMLA XIV -- The Best Laid..

Frank is not fond of band plans and such. I learned this when my somewhat paranoid pal, who plans to recapture 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army, asked to borrow my Parks Converter.

These Nuvistor numbers are still prized and lauded by some VHFers but Frank, as a rule, won't use anything not homebrewed, which I pointed out to him and he just said he had a sked to keep. The Parks, with its 2M input and 6M output, would feed the FM radio in his car. Frank's FM band is 40 to 54 mc.

I was glad to loan it to him if for no other reason than it does not work and Frank can fix anything as he proved by making up a 6CW4 to 6AB4 adapter plug and putting the now functional Parks in his Frazer with a 2M TX he built up from a pair of 12AT7s and an 832 on a piece of 1X6. I was gone when he took this thing on the road, but my kid, the oldest, who is a ham, went along with Frank and his bodyguard, a Ms. Christie, so he could get some Mexican sweetbreads from a "Fiesta" grocery store that looks like a tornado picked it up in Jalisco and dropped it on Jefferson Blvd.

The kid tells me Frank made a test transmission and triggered several repeaters as he was in a hurry and just hooked the mic. across the crystal. Several band plan policemen told him he was "QRMining the frequency" and Frank asked my kid, a Morse Code Tech, why they were using prosigns in plain speech. The kid didn't know so Frank assumed they wanted him to switch over to A2. He pulled a J-38 out of the glove box, wrapped a wire around the vibrator under the dash for tone, and sent a string at about 30 WPM, slow for Frank, calling his pal on 146.94 +/-750 kc . The guy came back, the kid said, and it was some old timer named Harvey Wells who used a CB type handle calling himself "The Bandmaster." At least my kid thought that was the way it went but he was somewhat confused by a signal report of "8-0-7."

Anyway, by now Frank has some React types following him and Ms Christie has opened her baby bag and put her hand on what she calls "what the doctor ordered" because Doc Holliday had one at the OK Corral. Also, the shadow vehicle from Frank's bodyguards, who are all in a social club called WAR, has closed the gap with their Toyota Land Cruiser which is now two meters behind the React SUV and looking like the Merrimac.

As this entourage passes a Dallas police car, the officer falls in line too, but she does not want to stop anyone because, in

our neighborhood, the officers don't stop cars with more than one person in them because they know, actuarially, someone will have an outstanding warrant and they will spend the rest of the shift taking someone to jail and not meet their quota of ticket writing on harmless looking Anglo business women by themselves in late model cars. Those don't have time to go to court and will pay the fine.

So the Frazer and the React SUV and the prowl car pass an intersection and the Dallas Amateur Radio club metro van joins in with all the antennae on the top that will move doing just that but Frank does not see any of it because he is logging the contact in an ARRL mini log. While he does that, he rolls a stop sign and the police car pulls up ready to hit the lights when she sees Frank's California plates and my kid in the front who has hair longer than Ms Christie and pushing Repunzel. The policewoman figures they must be some rock group from the Coast and that she'll get into hot water if she tickets a visiting dignitary. So instead she takes a chance and pulls over the React Jeep which has a bunch of ex-11M types in it. She spends the rest of the shift at the jail and they spend the night there.

About that time Frank is having some trouble hearing his pal so he switches over to his pair of 35s in a super-regenerative detector and, when he turns that on, the Dallas Amateur Radio Club's mobile comm. van is blanked all the way up to 1296 so they pull over to check the antennas and Frank makes it into the Fiesta parking lot where all the rest, including the police, are afraid to go anyway.

Well my kid, who usually does not have much sense to tell the truth, pulls out an old Radio Shack HT and hands it to Frank saying, "for some reason, this thing transmits about a half a meg from where it hears, Frank, can you take a look at it?" That problem so intrigues Frank that he lets my kid drive home. The kid does not have a license, but Frank has lost faith in them and extended his philosophy of "learn by doing" to most aspects of life including the Frazer's manual transmission.

Hearing about all this I went down to the basement expecting to see Frank working on the HT, but instead he had his 2M mobile TX on the bench and was adding wire. He said there was too much interference on 2M and that he and his pal had decided to "QSY," he sneered, down to Six.

It seems his pal has a couple of crystals for 50.110.

FMLA XV -- The Frank Show

On his last visit the Major, a friend of my friend Frank, left a camera. That is how it all started.

I thought it was some old filmless curio, but Frank, who plans to retake 56-60 mc when TV moves up, wanted to use it in his Five Meter Liberation Army, so he began driving around town in his Frazer asking questions about it. Pretty soon my kids were showing friends 2 1/4 X 3 1/4 contact prints of themselves from Frank's improvised darkroom in the back of his Airflow trailer and I asked to see it again the next time he loaded it.

It was a Kodak Brownie 1D box but the insides had been painted and fiddled with by Frank. The red window was sealed with electricians tape -- he simply made up a table of number of revolutions to each new frame. Of course, as the film gets larger on the takeup roll, the film moves faster, but Frank just wrote an equation for that and taped it to the bottom of the case. About this time one of his bodyguards from the WAR outfit brought him a broken nightvision scope. "No need to fix it as we have plenty that work," she said of the gift, and Frank used the parts to fit an interchangeable lens system to the cardboard box with one shutter speed and three f-stops.

Next, he asked me to drive him "on an errand" where his Frazer would draw "too much attention." We went first to a pro photographer's shop where the clerk, recognizing Frank by his brown double-breasted suit and spats, met him at the door. "Need anything else for your Hasselbald?" he inquired, and seemed disappointed that Frank took only five rolls of architectural black and white from the refrigerator. He paid with his ever-present horse-choking wad of cash and the clerk wanted to show him a new motor drive, but Frank declined. Instead we drove to Channel 2.

Frank had me park the Hundai at various points around the local PBS affiliate while he shot up a roll. Then he walked up to the front door, announced himself as "Mr. Frank" of the German Marshall Fund, and demanded a tour. I was his assistant, both in truth and in this ruse. He shot up two more rolls, handing me the exposures. Finally, he demanded stationary to leave the station manager a note "to be read the very minute he returns" and we left.

Sitting in the Hundai, he plugged his Archer Space Patrol handy talkie into a wooden based 815 amp which, in turn, he plugged into the cigarette lighter socket. There was a high pitched whine and Frank took an arc off the open coil with a pencil before locking the thing on with a rubber band and setting it on the dash. He used the Hundai's antenna with a

motorola patch cord. Finally he waved to a telephone lineman and leaned back, smiling.

Three minutes later people began to stream out of the building and, almost at the same time, five Black and White Toyota Land Crosiers personed by clean-cut youths in uniforms saying "FCC" arrived. The two-person teams entered the building carrying aluminum suitcases and, very quickly, came back out, assuring the waiting folks about something. Just as quickly they left and Frank said "let's go too."

(United Press International) Dallas,

Federal, state and local authorities continue to search for the identify of a team of apparent pranksters who disrupted the local PBS TV station yesterday.

"We don't even have a motive yet," said Israel Washington, an FBI special Agent assigned to coordinate efforts to learn who jammed cell phones, cut regular telephone and TV programming lines, and entered the building for as-yet-underdetermined reasons yesterday after one of the insurgents posed briefly as a philanthropist. Particularly troublesome, he said, is the fact that 20 "commandos" in at least 5 identical vehicles

disappeared without a trace before police arrived. Special bomb squad dogs could find nothing save an angry O'Possum with a pouch full of Cayenne pepper, he said.

Officials, who first treated the incident as a bomb threat, are reassessing possible meanings for the cryptic warning left the station manager. "We just don't know what "a vast wasteland" might mean, he said. --30--

I showed the story to Frank whose only comment was, "They should have checked the smoke detectors."

FMLA XVI -- Hygenic Radio

(This episode was written for all Frank's fora save the QRP-L mailing list.)

"What's this?" demanded my agitated friend, tossing me a gleaned component from some side-of-the road TV set.

"One Watt, I think," I said, as I examined the resistor which was still soldered on one end to a tie strip.

"It's a two," he snapped, "but what is the VALUE?"

I noticed his white cotton collar, Marine starched shirt was moist, although it was well into Fall. I doubted he was speaking of cosmic value, so I glanced at it, turned it around to be sure and, seeing it was a yellow, violet, red, answered:

"Forty seven hundred Ohms." His eyes were hawklike on me so I continued, "That is a 20% plus or minus and, since it is a pull too, I'd want to test it before..."

"That's right!" he shouted, "One of you funny-sounding short call extras can read the damn resister code!" He literally threw up his hands and stomped off up the stairway from my basement.

I looked questioningly at his bodyguard, a woman named Christie, who was sitting at the end of the bench, as usual.

"They'll pick him up up there," she assured, "We're triple teaming him today"

I was lost, but that often happens in dealings with Frank, my friend who plans to take back the 56-60 mc segment when TV moves up with a Five Meter Liberation Army. To tell the truth, they are already there.

"What happened?" I asked her. I was just back from a weekend trip.

"Something at the QRS meeting," she said, picking up a book she draped about airplane phobia.

Frank sends at an easy 35 and cannot get below 20 without agitation, but this was much worse and, besides, I did not imagine he would go to a slow code meeting.

"QRP?" I ventured.

"That's it." "He saw on the Internet they were having something called a builder's workshop down in Austin so he gathered up two pasteboard boxes of these old TV parts to take down there as a hostess gift but, when we got there, it must have been the wrong kind of radios because so no one wanted any of it and Mr. W. (another bodyguard) had to take it out to the Toyota (bodyguard car, Frank drives a Frazer).

"So I sat with him. "There weren't many ZLs (YLs surely, I thought, but they could have been mistakenly in a DXers meeting) and instead of doing whatever Frank expected, a bunch of guys, mostly from California but he didn't know any of them, talked about little packages of parts they had for sale. At the end Frank went up to the organizer and asked him what

his 'call' was.

The guy gave him a number and Frank showed him the thing he showed you from his pocket, asking the same question, but they guy said he did not know and he always used something from Radio Shack."

"So, like, Frank then shouts, 'So why do they call you a Technocrat --I'd call you a...'" Well, it was a good thing Mr. W. was back and we got Frank outside, but there was a church next door and Frank stops this poor guy going in for a wedding and holds him for 20 minutes. "Finally we got him in the car, and there was no real trouble (Christie and her crew are armed to the capped tooth and won't let anyone touch Frank).

"I rode with him, in the front even, and he talked all two hundred miles back. Some of it was about electric stuff I 'don't understand, but part of it was about bedrock American virtues and we agree with him about that 100%."

Christie's WAR bunch has some positions on which Frank agrees, and they just don't mention the places where he gets mad at them. I could see, of course, that the poor guy was a Technician, probably codeless and, after that clueless too.

"He been all right since except for when I came in?"

She looked around, at nothing I thought, and said, "I don't think so." "You'd better go see what he's doing upstairs."

I found Frank at my son's desk, which used to be my workbench and still has a lighted magnifier. On some paper towels he was manipulating some surface mount components with a tweezer. He had other things, too, which I recognized, but had to ask about one of them.

"What you building Frank," I asked, and what are those white tubes?"

"That is the delivery device of a feminine hygiene product," he said, still at work, "I did not know such things existed but learned of them in one of your daughter's magazines." "Miss Christie was kind enough to procure me a box of them." "She sent the young man you call the WARmon after them after a short discussion."

My daughter is nine, but Frank reads everything. It would have been pointless to tell him they have such things on TV too because we don't have one and Frank just listens to the FM of Channel 2 with his supergenny.

"My goal is to produce a kit version of a complete Morse code transceiver to fit where the original payload sat," he said.

Frank has a pocket full of money so I asked, "Why?"

"So they can take it along with them," he answered.

FMLA XVI -- Frank's (direct) Conversion

(this a special for the QRP-L mailer)

With Frank it's always two steps forward and one step back.

A case in point would be when he caught me listening to a CW pileup around 50.2 mc. He was all set to chew me out about using commercial equipment when he noticed where I was listening. Since I was also using a homebrew MOPA with 6AG7 driving 2E26, he decided to skip the lecture and fire up his 5M rig. It seems Frank is intent on taking back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army and they are doing development work there now.

Well, he turned on 5M and did not hear anything so he switched sides on the LO and tuned around 50.2, using his regenerative preselector, regenerative detector and regenerative audio all at once and not hearing anything at all. He killed the B+, leaving the heaters on and came down to my end of the bench, asking to listen. After maybe 20 seconds he said "That's 40 Meters!" And it surely was because I have an old MXM 40M NE602 superhet built into the case of a Lafayette HE-61 VFO and a conversion table on a 3X5 card. On transmit I load the 2E26 to 10W because I never took to the output power deal. I just assume 50% efficiency.

To my surprise, Frank was impressed with the setup and insisted on taking it apart and showing it to his bodyguard, a Ms. Christie, who said it was "cute" and went back to reading The Sadian Woman. Since that was such a good omen, I gave Frank a board for the Herring Aid Five redux from the April 1998 QRP Quarterly and challenged him to build one up.

It took maybe two hours and that includes his own touches which included refusing to buy any parts. For the transformers, he calculated the turns ratios from the impedances and tested a bunch of TV set pulls 'till he found something close. But he made the output 1:1 because his Brandes phones are close to 1000K Ohms as it is.

He was willing to use toroids, but not to buy one, so I gave him an Amidon circular and he calculated the values of the

specified units. Then he wound them on unidentified cores from my junk box after learning the permeability of each with his homebrew dip meter. A store bought Zener was out of the question so he mixed and matched regular diodes with transistors hooked up as diodes until he got close enough to 10 volts. The mosfets came out of a TV tuner and Frank will use any plastic bipolar that says "C" or "D" on it for a 2N2222.

Of course it worked the first time. He rigged up a patch to a pair of Class A push-pull 6L6s so Christie could hear it and she said it was "Also cute but bigger than the other one."

Now a real QRPer would cry at that, but not Frank who sees no advantage in miniaturization at all. In fact, he mounted the whole thing in an old case from a Collins 6 and 2M transceiving attachment he junked out for the parts and no two knobs matched as Frank thinks matching knobs slow you down in a pileup. He wanted to take it back to his own shack and try it out with his breadboard MOPA and pair of 100THs because he does not run QRP, saying it "transfers the burden to the other guy."

So he went off with Christie in his Frazer and the Toyota Land Cruiser behind them with more bodyguards and an NRA sticker, but in about an hour I heard the jackboots of one of the bodyguards, a kid I call the WARmon, coming down my back stairs so I went down to see what was up. He gave me a note from Frank. It seems the Herring Aid 5 was "wide as a barn door," but Frank was going to fix that with a preselector and did I have a 6J5? He went on to say he was not impressed with solid state but that his friends and bodyguards had need of a rig that did not glow in the dark, so he wanted to use a metal Octal.

FMLA XVII -- The Art of Radio

Frank upgraded the mobile mobile setup in his Frazer, but he did not go out and wreck the balance of payments in the bargain.

We took him with us for Chinese food. My wife thinks he's "courtly," and the kids like him because he sometimes gives them pocket change, which with Frank can be substantial as he never pays using anything but money clip bills. At the end of the day he just puts all the change he got back in an Admiration Coffee can.

There is lots of room for Frank in my wife's "mini" van that is as big as a duce and a half and will swap tires with a Humvee.-- even with the unopened mail and stuff on the floor. She gets behind on that so I taped a ruler to a sidepost and, when it gets to six or eight inches, I make subtle hints, but today it was not up to the captain's chairs so we loaded in Frank, our three kids, mom and dad plus whatever ferrets were not already hiding in there and, after lunch, we also went to the Civic Virtue Thrift Store.

A pal of mine pointed out that women have to buy something every day. Like other addicts, he says. So we go by this place every so often because everything is cheap. But Frank had not been in one and wandered around for quite a while, finally settling on an Art Linkletter "CB-23" mobile receive converter for 95 cents and we stood in line with the Spanish ladies 'till it was Frank's time to pay from the 3/4 inch wad of these new 20s everyone holds up to the light to see a picture of Monica Lewinsky, or whoever it is.

Frank turns his money clip around because it has a skull with an eyepatch on it. It was a gift from one of his bodyguards, a kid I call the WARmon, and Frank feels obligated to use it but doesn't want to attract attention. When the clerk, a 35 or so year old woman with a lot of makeup and some other signs of high mileage, saw all the money, she asked if Frank "lived around there," but I was able to usher him out to the car to wait for mom. We found the oldest kid, 14, already there listening to the Satanic Rock Countdown and made him quit, so he joined the bodyguard, who is not in Franks's Five Meter Liberation Army but instead in an outfit called, WAR, and who was sitting with my second kid in a Toyota Land Cruiser listening to the same program on an A.M. simulcast from local station KTAC. That outfit has signs all over town saying "Radio 666 -- Your Beast Bet for Hot Rock," and the kid sat down with them after Frank borrowed the WARmon's knife.

The knife is about a foot long and has attractive brass fingerholes plus the blade says "Over the Top" on it and Frank used it to pry the converter apart after he checked it on the van's radio for just a second as he is offended by the language on CB. He asked me, "Why do these transistors have four leads," and I told him they were dual gate MOSfets. As luck would have it, I found an unopened QST the XYL had not brought with an article on these new devices by Doug DeMaw. Frank read the piece and concluded "they look like pentodes with glass jaws to me."

He said he had some changes in mind but was going to use 6AK5s because they only draw 175mA on the heaters. That

seemed like a good time so I asked him how he planned to use the thing on his Frazer which has a 6V, positive ground system.

Frank began to write on the backs of envelopes and by the time the XYL came back he had drawn a to scale set of elevations of the Frazer's trunk with keys to each of the things in there and a full schematic showing that he had available a.c. or d.c. at 2.5, 5, 6.3, 7.5, 9, 13.4, 24 or 115 plus up to 1750 VDC at an Amp. He did not remember how far he got on the 400 cycle stuff, but he could get "just enough 220 60 cycle" to run his mobile generator which says "Lincoln" on it and led me to believe Frank must be a Republican. He said he had to give up on 3-phase 'cause he could not get miniature components.

About that time the XYL, who is a YL too, came back and was mad that she could see the van's carpets because she "knew exactly where everything was," and Frank apologized. We went home and Frank made his mods. He came up with the converter remounted in the case of a wind up telephone. He put in the 6AK5s but was not happy with the front end so he built up a homebrew socket for a 416 from some diet drink cans and, at the end of it, was able to listen to most of the 56-60 mc band, which he plans to take back when TV moves, plus, by switching sides on the LO, parts of the Six Meter band. When I asked if he was not worried about tuning to a part of Six "where there was not much activity," he just laughed.

So Frank put the box in next to his homebrew super-regen FM converter, which does not get the regular FM band but something around 40-50 mc.

He says he's happy with his receive side now, even though the letter he sent Art Linkletter suggesting some changes never got answered.

FMLA XVIII -- Take Her Down

Worried Impeachment has threatened the vigilance of our nation's defenders? Consider this:

"What you listening to, Frank?" I asked as I descended the stairs to my basement workshop and found, as I often do, my nutso friend at work on some project.

"The ships at sea," he answered and, foolishly, I asked if maritime CW had not been abandoned.

"I noticed that," said the natty fellow who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a "Five Meter Liberation Army" when the FCC moves TV up. He turned toward me and away from a Kaypro computer he bought at the Civic Virtue thrift store, removing his Brandes 'phones. It seems he was cleaning up the tuning of a RTTY system he put together on some 1X8 pine.

He showed me a filter made with a cap and a transformer from my hamfest offerings and another in series with my vertical outside.

He took some of the tuned signal off a heater winding, using the primary as part of the filter inductance. The loading also included a nearly full spool of house wiring. He rigged a 19 tube in cascade as a preamp where the wire enters the basement thru a piece of PVC pipe.

Another run of PVC feeds a Cray computer in the next room.

Frank bought that from a scrap dealer for less than the aluminum price after complaining of "all the plumbing pipe." That pipe is now connected to the mains three feet on the city side of the meter, and another run of PVC houses a three-phase line Frank brought in through a storm sewer. All the trenches and holes were cut with a particle beam leftover from Star Wars Frank bought at another junkyard and fixed up for his bodyguard's social club. The Cray is connected to the Kaypro with a run of cable TV coax gleaned from a trash pile.

"What kind of ship is the George Washington II?" he asked, and when I told him it was an atomic submarine, he allowed that it had several new petty officers. I looked closer at the Kaypro's tiny screen and saw he was monitoring, indeed, a promotions list.

"Where are you?" I asked, and he answered "somewhere below 20," but before I could even phrase an appropriate question, he told me the encryption was "Pretty tricky."

"The phase stuff was easy once you knew what you were after," he said, and showed me a delay line worked up on the top of a cigar box, Lovera of course. "But the scrambling itself had me treed 'till I figured it had to be linked to something and I found the signal in one of those geosync satellites we've been looking at for our use." Christie, his bodyguard, read Cosmopolitan at the end of the bench as we spoke.

I assumed he was referring to either the FLMA or Christie's WAR. group he does communications consultations for and who, in turn, supply the bodyguards whose Toyota Land Cruiser parked in my driveway is no longer noticed by my neighbors. In any case, I did not want to know more as Frank is amazingly offhand about legalities, even to having out-of-date plates on his Frazer sedan.

(Frank tells me he was once stopped by the police but the officer, seeing a booklet with the skull-with-eyepatch emblem of W.A.R. on the seat, not only did not write a ticket, but advised Frank to tell anyone else who stopped him that the plates were registered as the same year the car was made. That is not true, but Frank did not object as the officer said "we have to stick together after Ruby {someone}." Frank could not recall the woman's name but said the WAR bunch often speak of her too so she must be pretty important.)

"Anyway," he said, "It was a simple matter to build up a converter to your store-bought receiver there." He motioned disdainfully to my Hallicrafters S-41G "Skyrider Junior," the only original pieces being the case and the converter. Frank is homebrew of the first water, I thought, as the Kaypro's screen said something about some indian's hatchet. Frank put his spat- clad, Navy last shoes up on a rusty Collins case he drug in to use as a trash can and continued, or would have but three Navy guys came down the stairway about that time, two with ancient M-1921 Thompsons and the guy in charge said "freeze."

Had I not been told to freeze, I would have covered my ears because I knew the WAR bunch were practicing field stripping the Remington 870 in another basement room and it could have been a mess because, although the five guys in the room had the shotguns taken down, they came out anyway --behind the Navy.

"Forget the Russo Japanese War, Lieutenant?"

The freeze man looked around and saw five H&K MP5s as Christie continued:

"Before the SEALS cross your T, Mister, why don't you look at this?" She tossed him a small wallet and I noticed she had a new, silver ring on her hand.

"I didn't know, Commander Christenson," the guy said, and he would have continued except for Christie saying:

"Well tell us what you do know, cowboy, and speak slowly as it's all going to Newport News by satellite up link."

"I seem to have made a mistake, sir." he said.

She waited for him to take more line and, when he didn't, said:

"Your first correct assessment of the day." "Because of our shared experience," she continued, spinning her ring, "I'm willing to Nixon this part of the tape if you just ease out of here and log this as another baby monitor mistake."

"Yes Sir." "Thank you sir," he said and he had the SPs out faster than they arrived.

With that the WARs went back to their inservice and Frank was tweaking the lashup as Christie sat down again.

"Should I call you Commander now?" I asked.

"Or colonel or major or whatever," she said as she emptied out a plastic sack from her purse full of IDs and badges. "I have one for every branch and a lot of others too but I like the KGB one best."

"Don't you think I look like a Tanya?" she asked as she tossed the Annapolis ring into the purse where it hit something metallic -- West Point I'll bet.

FMLA XIX -- Copying Frank

"Dad, Can you get this lid's call?" asked the younger one as his father, who was holding a cup of coffee far too late in the day, looked in.

Dad listened for just a moment and said, "K5VAI."

"Wow," said his son, "You're faster than ever."

"Thanks, but he just sent it phonetically to that W6 -- 'Victory Against Ignorance' -- kinda' funny abbreviation."

"Not for someone who has the Gaul to mess up Straight Key Night with a keyer and a big amp," the younger accused as his dad listened to the transceiver. It was a gift five years ago, but despite sufficient features to necessitate a VHS tape instruction book, it lacked something, and the older one used it only for a RX now. He built up a 6V6 Hartley, now hidden

in a whiskey box in the desk, and had 33 states confirmed at 3W.

"Don't think he's using a keyer," he said after a moment.

"Listen to the dashes in the BKs." "Keyer can't do that."

"Maybe so," said the son, turning back thru a notebook on which he was trying to copy the 40 WPM code, "but he's been on that frequency for an hour, clicking them off like a contester, and says he running a Hyajamojo 1000 and pushing it." "Must be one of those new solid state amps."

The older man laughed, but not as hard as he wanted to. "He just told that W4 he has a home brew MOPA to a pair of TH-100s in push-pull." "He's just an old timer." "You ought to give him a call."

"I've had enough," said Sonny, pushing away the J-38 key, "It's break time for me and I'll leave the QRQ QSOs to you OTs," He smiled as he stood and moved back to the den.

His dad, formally dressed with vest and tie to commemorate the last night of the kid's and grand kids' visit, sat at the desk for a while, listening to the other old timer, The name, Frank, was even old fashioned, but the copy was not about aches and pains.

Finally, he used the transmit function for the first time in 4 and a half years. He needed a fill. The old 10M phone rig in a crate in the garage would convert to push-push easily and hit the frequency: 58 mc plus or minus 500 kc If the mode was truly "whatever" he could make the schedule and listen on the ricebox, which would hear anything.

Maybe tomorrow afternoon would not be so lonely with everyone gone after all.

FMLA XX -- Frank at XX

It has been about a year now since Frank drove into Dallas in his '47 Frazer four door pulling a home brew house trailer cobbled by some long-forgotton, out-of-work California aircraft worker from a vintage DeSoto. He backed this "Airflow" into the rear line at Joad's RV Rest, near the railroad track and the rotting hulk of a '26 Hudson Super Six chassis with a retrofitted truck bed.

I have never known if he brought his cat, Zack, from California or just found him here in Dallas, but the beast's name, commemorating a hero of the Mexican War in the middle of the Barrio, would have been a harbinger of Frank's regard for convention.

Of course, you don't need a Siamese-looking cat to tell you that a guy who wears a Zoot Suit, spats, and plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army is a bit out of the ordinary. Soon he attracted a cadre of folks, including me I guess, but as we sat in my basement I wanted to ask him about some of the more, well, colorful. The opportunity presented when Christie, his chief bodyguard, put down her knitting and said, "'scuse me." She inched past the long bench where Frank was working on a 1.65 mc IF regenerative superhet, putting down her baby bag with a "clump" that mocked the legend "Nite, Nite Baby" and announced the 13-inch double barrel shotgun within.

"Why do you let those people stay around?" I asked him.

"What the Five Meter revolution stands for is breaking out all around," he said, "and it stands to reason that violent folks will want to break it in violently," "I want them where I can watch them."

That made as much sense as most of Frank's nontechnical explanations and tended to explain why he consented to become the technical advisor for a hate group called WAR. In turn they supply a dedicated pair of bodyguards who follow him in a Toyota Land Cruiser. Chirstie, who looks like a youngish suburban housewife, is assisted by a tall, tattooed fellow who sports suspenders over a muscle shirt, jack boots, and a skull and cross bones ring.

I call the young man The WARmon as I once encountered him masquerading as a Mormon missionary, but he later confided that he thought those bicycling evangelists "part-timers," and "lacking true revolutionary mind set." He was reading some book by Ted Turner that day, as I recall.

Just then, and before I could get Frank to say any more, Christie came back, somewhat agitated and threw the knitting in an old Collins case Frank drug in to hold trash. "I didn't miss the second one," Christie bubbled, kissing a surprised Frank on the cheek and then rushing off up the stairs "to make a phone call." She ignored the extra legal cellular telephone Frank crafted with 12AT7s on an old Dr. Pepper sign. One just taps in #-10-2-4 for a free line anywhere, but you have to get used to the Telephonics RS 38A mic and the big speaker whose coil is also the choke in the power supply.

"Funny," mused Frank, "but I've done target practice with them and they always do rapid fire - sometimes amazingly so." "I guess they must have some slow fire too and there must have been a dispute about one of the targets."

I did not think that was what she meant, but did not want to pursue it. Instead, I asked him if his emphasis, indeed his demand, for home brew radio stations in anticipation of the move to above 6 Meters was not an atavism in today's high-tech, surface mounted world.

"Of course not," he sighed, "Ham radio was never about technology alone." "It was about self-improvement and self-reliance." "That has never changed and the technical part is easier now." "You can't go eight blocks without finding enough electrical throwaway to build a station."

"But today's kids are not interested in that," I protested.

"Yesterday's weren't either," he said, going back to rewinding an ancient Alladin iron core transformer to 1.65 mc.

"They cared more about the Charleston than the Smith Chart and that's the way it will always be." "But a few, for whatever reason, wanted to know more - and to do more." "Those are the ones who find the Five Meter Liberation Army." "We don't recruit. "We don't have to." "We're the only game in town."

Frank went off to a room in the upper part of the house, leaving me at the bench. I put his regen superhet in a milk crate and pulled another from below the work surface. My tunable IF is in there and I thought he might be on the right track, rewinding the coils for a higher IF to hex the images.

FMLA XXI - Correcting Frank

Date: Mon, 18 Jan 1999

It's a familiar drill.

My obsessive pal who plans to take back Five Meters, who always has over \$2,500 cash on him, and who wears dapper double-breasted suits and spats, won't pass up a junk TV on the street.

This time he curbed the Frazer and rolled out as usual, leaving his bodyguard, Christie, in the car. If anyone stops, she just says "MI Esposo," which means "My Husband," and everyone seems happy with that. If not, there is a 13-inch 12 gauge double in her baby bag.

But as he pulled out the plastic CRT shield from the back of

the TV to catch parts, some Spanish kids came up, apparently from a masquerade party as they are dressed like Rap singers. The one in front asked how much money Frank was going to give for "grandma's TV" and Frank handed him a card saying, "send an invoice to that address."

The kid read the card, I could see his lips moving, and all of a sudden he says, under his breath, "Oh Chit," and takes off toward the Gooch Brothers "Mexico Lindo" grocery with the rest of the pack behind him. He dropped the card which read "Frank Norris" (not our Frank's real name) and proclaimed him to be with the "INS Special Drug Evidence Section." The real Frank says his WAR friends have all sorts of things like that. He took out the little 5-pin 45 mc SAW filter the Five Meter Liberation Army uses for its secret sign and lapel pin.

That seemed like as good a time as any to me, so I asked him why he said "megacycles" instead of the modern thing. Well, that set him off and he said "you don't trade a descriptive name for a non- descriptive one," and while he thought Hertz was OK (although all those Krauts (were) at your feet or at your throat) he thought it best to leave things alone, name wise.

"And another thing," he said before I could comment on Hertz, "I think you have let the street name thing get completely out of hand." He told me he had no problem about the importance of the Protestant Reformation and some of his best friends were Methodists, Baptists and just about everything, but he thought naming public streets for Martin Luther was not a good idea --

especially calling him "King" which raised troublesome church/state questions, to his mind.

I don't give thanks often enough, but I did then for the fact that none of his WAR bodyguards were close by. That got into an area where Frank's and their differing viewpoints once almost led to gunplay. So as Frank clipped the wires to the grounds and pried out the big red wire that goes to the CRT, I explained about the streets.

Frank was especially careful not to leave any of the fasteners on the grass by the street, and I thought he might have been

thinking carefully about what I told him. He finally said he saw the streets in a different light, but that it still seemed to him they should have waited longer on the holiday since there was not one for Thomas Jefferson, even.

I refused to touch that, but I took the big ferrite core transformer he always saves to use as an RFI filter. As we started back to the car, we saw three Dallas Police cruisers blinking, the Spanish kids up against one of them, and a sergeant talking to Ms Christie. When it was finally all cleaned up and we were back in the Frazer with the TV junk, Christie told us what happened.

She was sitting in the car when these kids came running and, assuming they stole something, she stopped them with the shotgun.

She made them assume the position. They did, but hit her with a flood of Spanish which she just answered by saying "Mi Esposo,"

and making the safety go 'click.'

In a few minutes the Dallas Police car came by and an officer, after getting the story, told her she can't stop people just for running. But about that time his partner got the report back. The three kids had seven outstanding warrants, and two for felonies.

Well, that changed everything and nothing happened to Christie. But the officer told Frank, who he takes as the "Esposo," to check the shotgun the "little lady" carries as it might be a "little short."

He also wanted to be remembered to my brother, he said. He got the idea Christie was Ross Perot's niece.

So everything worked out and Frank bought us lunch at Raul's, which used to be a Hillbilly dance club. It's easy to find: Just go over by Fair Park to MLK, which used to be Second Ave., and turn on Malcom X, which used to be Oakland. There is a big sign out front about the buffet. It says "Eat 'till it Hertz'."

FMLA 22 -- Getting High

Frank won't go out on Field Day. He says it is an exercise for "Inebriates and Appliance Operators," but when I explained being a rover in a VHF/UHF contest, he wanted to try it.

Of course Frank won't run anything commercial, so we pooled our gear for the outing. I contributed a homebrew 6M TX from Solid State Design and Frank whipped up a companion amp for it using one of his 815 tubes. We took both my direct conversion receiver with the LW-61 converter changed over to solid state and Frank's favorite allwave Super Genny with the 6SN7 and the Mosfet.

He had no interest in working anything other than Six and, in truth, had to add a few inches to his Yagis to hit there. Frank builds everything for the old 5 Meter Band at 56-60 mc because he is planning to take it back when the FCC moves TV up. Until then, he pulls his gear down to Six or, I fear, sometimes just operates in the shadow of Chanel 2.

He calls his followers the Five Meter Liberation Army, but the people who usually follow him around are from an outfit called WAR which depends on him for its communications. They watch Frank and, since they would be bringing along their Land Cruiser anyway, Frank tied his pair of 5 element Yagis on top. You can always tell Frank's antennas: Not just because he puts the extra inches on with hose clamps and scrap metal, but because they don't have any reflectors. "They don't reflect anything," he told me once.

He is also an open feeder man, but today he was trying coax, having found 60 or so feet of cable TV stuff on a walk in a park near my house. He soldered on RCA plugs and converted his stuff, and mine, to RCA by prying the sockets out of old TV tuners and soldering them in new holes on his projects. For a man who always has a couple of thousand in his pocket, Frank is unusually cheap.

Leaving before dawn we reached a popular hill south of town in good light and grabbed a picnic area, but Frank wanted more height so the WARmon, as I call a skinny kid who works as one of his bodyguards, carried the antennas up. We brought everything else.

The WARmon tuned out to be quite a woodsman and I guessed he had been a Boy Scout. I reflected that his boss, a thin, severe, city-looking young woman named Christie, would not have been much help.

Each of us carried up a 12V gell cell, we put them in parallel, and Frank plugged up his power supply. It started life as some sort of multi-tap test equipment transformer, but Frank added a pair of PNPs sinked with Mountain Dew cans and a lot

of filtering. It was built on a piece of number ten siding like the PA, and he had it making a faint whine before the WARmon returned with an old home movie projection screen to which Frank had painstakingly series/paralleled a bunch of mismatched solar cells. Frank's field voltmeter, which works on a neon bulb, showed about 800 volts to the PA and my pocket DVM, at which Frank frowns, said 14 to the cells.

We swung the Yagis at the metroplex and Frank made the first call -- at about 35 WPM with a J-38. I told him most VHFers could not copy that fast and to remember we were in Echo Mike One. He slowed to about 20 and worked one of the off duty moonbouncers I had alerted. With blood drawn, he plugged in the modulator, which fed the screens thru a rewind filament transformer, and held the bias with a bunch of D cells. Frank is not much on Class B, big Iron modulation.

His first contact sounded fine on my DC RX so he stuck with it, but the other op said Frank some "opposite sideband." He looked puzzled and I explained that the other guy was running SSB. "Why?" was Frank's only response.

Later we moved the modulator back to the VXO and tried a little FM at 50.300. We got lucky as the California bunch came in for a long opening. Frank had a fine time telling about his 815 and the Super-Regenerative receiver which also blocked the WARmon's FM headset and kept him from hearing a Satanic Rock station in Dallas.

Life does not get much better than this, I thought just before Christie showed up with a Japanese climbing stick in one hand and a picnic basket in the other. Her penny loafers were not even scuffed by the climb and, once again, I guessed wrong about one of Frank's friends. With the W6s and the sun fading, we supped on cheese and bread and two large bottles of Mountain Dew, all of which beat the WARmon's trail mix and MREs from lunch. My only worry was how we would get back down in the dark but, of course, Frank thought of that too.

A carbon arc lamp hastily constructed from the used dry cells led us noisily but safely down the mountain. Frank drove his Frazer back, the WARmon took the Toyota, and I rode with Christie in her Mark VIII.

FMLA 23 -- Maximizing

Frank's bodyguards found another prowler. I knew that when I saw a man who could have been right out of a Damon Runyon story being conducted down my basement stairway by a young mother carrying a baby bag.

"Frank," said the 20-something woman, "We caught this guy crawling around under your car."

"I was checking the muffler," the old man said. It made sense to me, but maybe I'd better explain. Frank is a fellow who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a "Five Meter Liberation Army" when TV moves up. But the woman, a tallish, really rather boyish looking mouse blonde who is not a mom isn't in that army. She is in another called WAR, and she and her pals guard Frank because he does their communications. The baby bag, aside from having Christie's (that's the woman's name) latest reading material and other girl stuff, contains a foot-long double barrel 12 gauge.

Some time ago she, Frank and I were in my basement shop when, on National Public Radio, she heard an account of the Gunfight at OK Corral, which that particular October 26 celebrated its 100 and something anniversary. Ms Christie was much impressed with the expeditious way Doc Holliday dealt with some folks with a double, so she traded her revolver to another bodyguard, who I call the WARmon, for this clearly illegal piece. It seems the WARmon had several left from some project. I mentioned to Christie I was beginning to hear complaints of "too many guns" from higher up, so she began carrying it in a baby bag from Toys Are Us. The nylon notation "Nite, "Nite, Baby," may have appealed to her. At least that's what I think is in there. I made a bad joke asking why she did not use a Browning "Sweet 16" and she wrote that down, so you never know.

You never know, that's what to remember when dealing with Frank who steps up and says, "Hello H.P., glad you could come by."

That would have ended the problem, you would think, but just then the other bodyguard, the WARmon, came down the stairway with a big black machine gun on his shoulder. "He had this in his car," the WARmon said.

So the old man says he kept that "to remind him of his daddy," and that's good enough for Frank so the WARmon had to take it back to the car and I wish I had gone with him as I learned later from a neighbor that the car was a Maxwell, which is rare even sitting next to Frank's Frazer.

Anyway, Frank and H.P., who I guess was retired from the instrument company, talked about old times for a while, telling me as an aside that they got along better if they "agreed to disagree" about a number of things, and finally got down to

business, which was one of Frank's projects. The older guy was a quick study because he was soon up to speed on a pulse encryption system Frank was building up for 58 mc.

Frank had taken a piece of plywood about two feet by four and a bunch of 6J6s and gone to work the night before. Frank is not a miniature tube man, except for mobile where he cannot resist the 6AK5's low appetite for heater, but he must have needed 6J6s because he adopted a pasteboard box full of them to Octal plugs and was well on his way to a prototype. As usual he used whatever he could scrounge which included a piece of an old VCR for the twin lead inputs and he used the old "UHF" and "VHF" connector holes to mount a pot and a variable cap for which he scribbled some labels and taped them on.

H.P.'s part of it seemed to be cosmetic. He followed Frank around and cleaned up the freestyle technique. He borrowed a file and radi used all the sharp edges from the pieces of TV set hardware Frank used to hold things, and with an ice pick I keep down there he illuminated the aluminum brackets. Then he hand painted all the metal that was not aluminum with my kid's airplane paint and worked three coats of shellac into the board after sanding and filling around the already mounted components.

They fought over taking out the wires that went thru the board to install grommets, but Frank finally agreed. It seems one of Frank's reasons for using a wood chassis is that it protects "fools" as he terms them, who do not check every wall outlet every time with a neon tester. Frank thinks "the polepig is a good enough transformer," and gets his B plus by multiplying up. This rig had a bunch of caps, all in Octal plug mountings, and showed a bit over 1600 VDC on Frank's neon lamp voltmeter. That seemed high for a 6J6, but Frank just mumbled something about "duty cycle" when I asked.

By the time they were through the thing was working to Frank's satisfaction, although Ch. 2 wasn't working at all, and the whole thing looked pretty good to me. But H.P. stayed at it for another hour before he left and, by then, the piece of scrap looked like a restored Atwater Kent or MacIntosh.

Frank and Christie saw H.P. off, and when Frank came back I taunted him with his own words: "Since how it looks does not matter to the Either, why worry about it?" He said he still believed that but invited H.P., who he called the "high priest of form over function," to help because Frank was trying to catch the eye of the new generation and "win them over to the joy of home-constructed and understood radio equipment." To that end he planned to enter this thing "in the next big hamfest homebrew contest," and win, thus giving him a forum.

I didn't know how to tell him, so I haven't.

FMLA XXIV - The Old Ones

Date: Mon, 22 Feb 1999

"Their ardor for abomination has catalyzed their crestfallen countenances!"

Frank shouted that as he threw a magazine on the bench in front of me.

But when I looked down I saw my maternal grandmother's high button black shoes, primly placed together, and the lines of folding chairs. The place smelled different. There was her faint Lilac but, since the tent sides were up, I could also smell the night air, the perspiration and the inspiration. The preacher must have said something right, because my grandmother muttered "Amen," just as I caught the 45-year flight back.

My pal Frank, who wants to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army, had thrown a copy of QST for March, 1999. He is not usually like this, I thought, not normal, but not like this. I thought Frank a casual Catholic, but today he sounded like a barn burning Baptist. Grandmother was a Baptist but she died in '64 at 84 ("Ready to go when He calls me."). Now I am 50 something years

old and in my basement. I don't notice the night air anymore, I guess. I don't go to revivals anymore, either, although I am sure the invitation is still open ("He is always waiting - It is never too late.").

The magazine explained it all. There was an article on collectors of Collins equipment. Frank is all home brew and, as he mentioned again while I looked at the article, thinks "appliance idolatry" ruined ham radio. I was able to finish the article only because his bodyguards, a thin woman named Christie and a thinner youth I call the WARmon, came in just then. They were worried about the shouting in our workshop and abandoned the Toyota Land Cruiser where they were taking lunch. It was fried chicken and they did not want to be seen eating "ethnic food."

The bodyguards are from a social club called WAR and Frank does their radio work for them. They know little about radio and I rescued them from Frank's elaborations:

"They do look a dab dour," I interjected.

"Dour!" he reacted. "They bear the mark of Cain!" "I have to show this to A.C." "Maybe then he'll give up his Jap Crap."

None of us had ever heard Frank make even a jocular derisive comment. Christie smiled knowingly and the twitch in the bald kid's right arm reminded me of Dr. Strangelove. Frank rolled up the magazine and was off up the stairs, like a field marshal with his baton, to dissuade his friend of a Kenwood TS-820, the first model with the single IF. His cover followed him with a grim resolve, knowing that A.C. is, to use Frank's term, "a Negro."

Frank left his soldering iron on and I did not want to pay to for all 200W while he was gone, so I turned it off and studied the latest project. It was confusing, really. The local oscillator is a clock chip from a computer but it drives a single ended Class C Octal which in turn drives two serial, push-push twin triode doublers to a push-pull PA made of some tubes I did not recognize. They just say "Taylor" on them and he had discarded the base of one already. He removes the bases and puts them in holes in a wood panel to cut down on inter electrode capacity. The second tube was in a jig for removal of its base and the holes were already cut.

This must be a presentation model, I guessed, because he had not used his usual shielding between the tubes. He often picks up a bean can from our trash, cuts it, and hammers it flat. If the rig is a mobile he uses a beer can from the street for the aluminum, but this was some alloy and had clean cut edges. Later he would operate on another computer carcass for the power supply. Frank uses the 5V for the chip and wires the tubes for the 12. He then pulls some trick with the switching supply and coaxes it up to around 400 volts. For his own work Frank just multiplies off the line, but for things going to the field he uses the PC/AT class boxes. He modulates the oscillator, of course.

I turned the iron back on and, while waiting for it to make rays of heat reminiscent of Sunday rides in Grandmother's '39 Olds, I went for another scrap of wood to hold the swinging link. Frank avoids coax. If I got the other base off, maybe he would show me again how he measures the inter electrode capacity with a dip meter and cancels it with a run of shorted twin lead.

I found part of a weathered broomstick in one of the black boxes in the back, and that gave me a hunch. Back at the bench I removed the carpet tacks and, sure enough, the interstage shield read "Radio Receiver, Model R-390." The center part, about Collins Radio, had been taken by his brace and bit. Well, I thought, at least he practices what he preaches. (So did Mrs. Wilbanks, as my dad called her. He died in '64 too.) Frank says that he knows, in his heart (Grandmother talked that way, too), that there are many among us who will someday awaken and see the error of our ways. Then, he says, we will be back on the right path.

I hope he's right, and I hope Grandmother was too.

FMLA XXV -- A Reunion

Date: Sat, 27 Feb 1999

For John T. Frye

"Tennis-Hut!" someone yelled from upstairs and Christie hopped to her penny-loafed feet. Frank followed her, so I did too, leaving only the new guy, who Frank met at a Boy Scout eagle court of honor, seated in our basement workshop.

Frank is my friend who wants to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army, and Christie is a bodyguard. She and a skinny kid I call the WARmon stay with Frank to see no one keeps him from his sideline of doing their communications work. They seldom entertain in, or even allow visitors to enter my basement, but this was a special occasion - to them at least.

The guy the WARmon ushered down the stairs looked like any other overweight guy in his late 50s to me. He was wearing a one piece jump suit and filling it up to about 260 to my eye, but Christie, who carries maybe 110 in her 5' 10' frame called him "general" and Frank greeted him warmly. I was introduced to one "General" Gerald Bishop, who nodded to me as he clasped Frank's outstretched hand.

"Frank, its been a long time since you visited Parvoo back before Kennedy decided to give the country to the Nig.....What IN HELL is HE doing here?"

General Jerry Bishop of the White Aryan Resistance was regarding one Carl Anderson, a lanky, bifocaled fellow in a three piece suit who was sitting on an old Collins case at the end of the workbench. "What's the matter, Carl?" he demanded of the calmly seated onlooker, "Run out of minorities to suck up to in Pennsylvania?"

At this Frank stepped between them and called in some favors, many of which they both seemed to acknowledge they owed my dapper pal. Frank apologized for the staged meeting and said it was for a greater cause.

He hoped they would let him explain. They deferred to Frank, as most everyone does, and he led them to another basement room where he uncovered an object so peculiar that I laughed out loud. I was alone in that.

The two former chums, now regional directors of WAR and the ACLU respectively, were captivated by a plywood insect. It was about a meter long and sat on a three-wheel carriage. The two smiled, although not at one another, as Frank told how he came on the device when he bought the contents of Parvoo College's EE Lab at the school's closing.

Frank planned to use the mechanized insect to lead a midnight parade for children at the next Dia De Los Muertos celebration at nearby Our Lady of Conspicuous Contrition. He reconstructed the motor of the mobile toy and found a latter day replacement for its burned out Delco LDR-25 photocell, but he was stumped, he admitted, by the fiber optic antennae. Since Carl and Jerry's names were inside, he asked them here to help the children.

The former friends were enchanted. They quickly took the insect apart and Carl's phenomenal ability to remember details complemented General Bishop's command of technique. Jerry was one of the early retirees in Texas Instrument's first wave of down sizing. In about an hour with Frank they had the Lightning Bug device following a child's pumpkin flashlight obediently, and they even consented to take a ritual sip of

Mountain Dew soft drink when the work was done.

"What ever happened to that Jodi?" the general asked. "You know, the honeysuckle talking one we met in the heating pipe when she was sending Morse to her old man?"

"She's in Philadelphia playing with grand kids number two and three, but she's meeting me at our place in Florida Monday," Carl said. "You ever get down there?"

Frank and I and Christie and the WARmon saw them off in the general's 45-foot RV. He took the rebel flags off the front bumpers, signed them, and gave one to each of the bodyguards. Frank was staring at the back of the van as they drove away and I ventured, "I guess you've known them for a long time, huh?"

"Everybody use to know them," he said, "but I don't recall either of them having the call W9EGV."

FMLA XXVI - Ducking It

Date: Sat, 6 Mar 1999

"Mr. Hitler man," Grace said, "Can you help me with this big package?"

The young man would have bristled at that had he not shaved his head. I call him the WARmon and some days before, recalling a joke about an African who tried to convince a racist bartender he was Hispanic, the jackbooted bodyguard addressed our dark skinned letter carrier as "Carnala."

The response was a string of Spanish most missed but my daughter's friend, Isabella, turned away and covered her face. Later she told us the letter carrier characterized the WARmon's ancestry as a product of the meeting of a canine and a goat. But today the WARmon's officer, a thin woman named Christie, nodded, and he helped Grace move a large package to the porch. Christie stayed in their Toyota Land Cruiser with Charlie the ferret who glared at the interrupting humans with her demonic red eyes before regressing into a contorted nap on Christie's lap. Charlie is all white, which is just what the two bodyguards prefer, but they dutifully stay in my inner city neighborhood to protect my pal Frank, who does communications for their organization.

I learned of this exchange from my 9-year-old daughter who sought me out saying "Daddy, Daddy, Frank ordered something for Mr. Duckie." I doubted that, but who can rule out any activity from a man who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army?

Mr. Duckie is a waterfowl with a parentage more mixed than Grace's. He wandered up one day and my wife took him in. We learned he would not go near water, so I suggested we name him for some of my wife's too-Irish relatives, but the name "Mr. Duckie" stuck. It seemed unlikely Frank would get the beast a present but, that said, W5FRS's XYL Sandy sends gifts for it. You never know.

My daughter led me down the stairs to the basement workshop and before I talked to Frank I cleared up the mystery. On a table was the large package, addressed to Frank who the sender characterized as "Master," and bearing the return address of the William Duck company of Toledo. I was fascinated by an empty wooden box in the mass of packaging. It looked as if it once held some sort of chemical beaker and another, unopened, container of inlaid corner hardwood was still in the box. "Just more radio stuff," my daughter pronounced. She bounced up the stairs.

In the next room I found Frank, but I thought of Science Fiction Theater, a 1950s TV show. In the beginning credits they panned through a fanciful laboratory and the Cunningham 304 tube Frank held would have fit right in with the pie pan/ice pick combo they presented as an antenna.

The large glass envelope bulged at the center and it had a big plate cap.

Frank was putting it into the cabinet of a Collins transmitter he gutted for the project. He even removed the Collins emblem, this one a meatball, and tossed it into an old Collins PTO can he keeps for such trinkets. He has three full ones already against the annual Dia De Los Muertos celebration at a nearby church. Frank goes all out for that event every year, including giving the logos to children in a "go fish" booth at the fair that accompanies the so-called "Mexican Halloween."

I commented on the tube's appearance, and Frank looked at it for a moment, then at me questioningly. It seemed perfectly normal to him, as I guess it might to a guy who runs a pair of 100THs at home. He was tired of my QRP stuff and wanted to build a QRO final in our shared shop. "A Cunningham 304 is a good choice here," he said, as we had plenty of 12 volt. Each tube takes 15 amps. He called the 2KV plate equipment "modest" and already had a bank of caps worked up to get the B+ from the line. Frank does not like to use a transformer when "the power company keeps a nice one right outside on a pole."

Sockets are never a problem for Frank. He drills a hole in a wood panel for the base and solders or clips the elements to minimize stray inductance. The bays for the Cunninghams were already cut and he had a set of 5 or 6 inch coils made up to hit 40M. Frank uses only open line and the push-push (or push-pull if he changes the alligators) PA would feed my 30M dipole against ground. Frank always uses a separate receive antenna. At my question, he said the tubes cost \$110 each, which I thought not too bad for 250mA tubes, especially for a man who always has over \$2K in his pocket.

Big triodes need a lot of drive, so Frank had built up a one tube crystal cracker using an 813 fed from the same B+ thru a shoebox-sized choke marked only "USN." He checked the lashup by drawing an arc with an Eagle Mirado and got down to business using a saw blade sideswiper that threw little sparks on break after a long dash. Tuning his Supergainer with his left hand, and wearing his Brandes 'phones, he looked like some woodcut from Shortwave Craft in the light of the C 304's heaters.

Satisfied with CW, he changed the bias and modulated the 813's screen for a long QSO with some OT in Colorado who was running a QRP AM rig with Class B push-pull, or what Frank usually calls "inefficiency modulation." He did not pick a fight with the 80-some-year-old guy, though. He just chit chatted for an hour about broadcasting in the late '20s. When he signed and cut the carrier he said I could have the wooden boxes to make hope chests for my kid's Barbies.

Gathering the crates, I looked again at the label. I was a stamp collector as a kid and the ornate reproductions, I thought they were reproductions, caught my eye. But the package traveled for 48 cents so I looked closer and found a postmark of 20 April, 1921.

I meant to ask Grace about that, but decided she might take it personally.

FMLA XXVII - Dauntless Douglas

Date: Sat, 13 Mar 1999

Frank has lots of schedules to keep, like a lot of hams, but he keeps them on 58 mc +/-.

His plan to take back the old 56-60 mc band with a Five Meter Liberation Army is facilitated both by a cadre of home brew Zealots and, lately, a National Guard of folks who buy old 6M AM gear and convert it up. But some cannot even afford those hamfest junk box "make offers." Douglas is one of them.

The kid is nine years old but, somehow, he came up with a digital voltmeter. He lives way up in Canada where bad actors are few and distances great, so he stays by himself for two hours every day after the bus brings him home from school. He does his homework on the roll and plays with radio at home.

In his march to self enlightenment he fitted his old baby monitor transmitter, inductively, to his mom's clothes line array and Frank picked him up one day as he was saying "Hello" at around 49 mc. Frank got his post office box and sent him a 58 mc area crystal and a copy of Marcus and Levy's "Essentials of Radio." In a month or so they were coordinating calls against CHU and, maybe one of five or six times, they make it.

Frank thinks AM is fine, and that FM is too, so his modulated oscillator pair of 450TLs from the July 1959 QST does both. He builds so many copper clad finals he has an open account at Crown Plumbing where they call him "Mr. Zoot Suit" for his double-breasted togs.

The VHF big gun complement to his pair of C-304s on HF is easily copied by a "Sleepy Time Sentinel" super-regenerative RX here in the Barrio or even up in British Columbia if the E layer cooperates.

One day Douglas was saying he had a breadboard amp in the works with a 6DQ6 PA. To get screen voltage he coiled up an old "curtain burner" filament dropping AC cord from his grandad's attic and added a few Christmas lights. High value components are hard to find, he said. About that time Frank lost him, but worried about the kid using the ancient cord for a screen resistor so he made a call on 58 mc, explaining the situation to a guy with a Johnson Challenger on 58 mc in Melena, Kansas.

The message might have hung there, but the op raised one of the Nation Of Islam nets out of Chicago. Frank alters CB radios for them and they were glad to relay into Canada where a pair of inched up Green Eye Gonsets reached a Mountie with a Morrow converter. The RCMP called on the kid and, in about two hours, Frank heard that the cord did indeed start a fire.

But Douglas quickly fixed it with an extinguisher he mounted near his Big Bird Playschool Desk workbench that has an add on work surface and a big copper ground strap. The Mountie just left a CPR booklet as Douglas learned the old style from Marcus and Levy.

But Frank was still worried so he sent the kid a Knight T-60, reasoning the double-in-the-final setup would keep the kid from having to neutralize it. He also sent the parts and article for the Kitchin super-regen RX from the November 1997 QST including one of the 10-turn 20K Ohm pots he got when he bought the railroad car of junk from Collins, Dallas. Most of that went into the WAR bunch's berm at their shooting range in East Texas, but he kept some of the stuff in my basement.

Douglas got both of them on line and the link worked a lot better after that. But since the Kitchin will also operate as a straight regenerative, the kid could begin to listen to SSB down on 6M and he has started building up a TX.

Frank says that is another example of the corrupting influence of the solid state.

FMLA XXVIII - Press v. Christie

Date: Wed, 17 Nov 1999

"Remarkable," said Preston Anderson as he regarded the vintage equipment on the workbench before him. "A rugged final circuit able to cover both 6 and 2 Meters, without cavities, in 1957."

"Closer to '55," said Frank of the Johnson 6N2, "The circuit first appeared in GE Ham News as The Bonus 100 Transmitter."

Frank, who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army was speaking to the youngest son of his friend Carl Anderson. The younger Anderson, just back from the Army, was spending some time with Frank prior to reporting to an 11th hour Annapolis appointment in the Summer. His ham call was a vanity commemorating his grandfather, but the youth was quite knowledgeable and, as Frank earlier verified, not a "codeless Extra."

"But I am still troubled, sir, by your altering it to operate on 58 MHz." Although a blond 6 footer of 185 or so, Frank still regarded the youth as "green." The chief of Frank's bodyguards, Christie, was regarding the soon-to-be midshipman more elementally.

"Your dad is an ACLU lawyer," said Frank, "What does he say about Plessy v. Ferguson?"

"A great tragedy, really," the young man said. "Separate is inherently unequal as the Court finally ruled in Brown in 1954." Frank grinned as the youth took the bait, but Christie looked as if she just took medicine.

"For the period 1891 to 1954, then, was Plessy right or even the law in any meaningful sense?"

The young man mused and finally said, "My father makes that same sort of argument -- have you been in close contact with him over the years?"

"I had not seen him in over 25 years when Carl and Jerry came by to help with a difficulty I had getting some children a proper parade." Frank assured. "But we both read Thomas Jefferson in school." "There are some things the government may not do."

Press looked confused and Christie brightened slightly as Frank continued: "We radio amateurs, licensed or not, had 5M from the first." "We made the great propagation discoveries." "We also established our rights by adverse possession but the central government took it from us." "It lacked that authority."

Christie was smiling now, but Press was perplexed. "I must think that over carefully," he promised.

The Johnson 6N2, worthless to collectors for lack of a case, came from an Internet garage sale. Frank, who prefers home brew, still buys up all the old Six Meter AM gear he can find to use as "stepping stones" as he phrases it. The same afternoon a previously modified Heath AT-1 got a new final and Press easily converted a DX-60 from a 5X8 card of mods Frank keeps in a file.

He would not, however, test it on 58 mc.

With the work done, he invited Christie to walk in a nearby park. She happily accepted, leaving her relief, a jackbooted Zealot I call the WARmon, to watch Frank.

As the couple walked aimlessly beside the small lake, Press spoke:

"In these few days, I have carefully watched Frank for any sign of Fascist leanings," he said. "My father made some allusions about "not falling off the right edge" during this visit, but Frank seems a reasoned fellow to me." "His opinions would seem to be within the area of acceptable dissent, so I conclude that the warning must have been about someone else." "It could not be your companion, because my mother says it "goes a long way back."

He skipped a rock across the surface and continued:

"That said, I fear I am again at a somewhat hidden period of my parent's life." "I can only conclude I am being warned of a chum of my father's who took a tragically wrong turn after their graduation from Parvoo College." "When my parents speak of it at all, it is in guarded tones and my older siblings are mute on the subject."

"Might you know anything of such a person?" he asked Christie, or would have asked her had she not been gone when he turned. She was walking back to the house and, on catching up with her, he saw she was crying.

"What did I say?" he asked as he offered her his handkerchief.

She took it and, peering over it so only her moist eyes showed, said, "General Gerald Bishop of the WAR, your mystery man and the "Jerry" of Carl and Jerry, is my daddy."

FMLA XXIX - Images

Date: Sat, 27 Mar 1999

"Neither of you gave any sign of it when Jerry was here," Frank told Christie, who was standing beside him as he peered into a National NC-240.

"We don't advertise the relationship," the 20ish young woman said, "because a quality person would never want to trade on family influence."

Frank set aside the converter board he was sizing for the National as she continued.

"It was a second marriage for both of them, and Carl never knew my mom at Parvoo." "Dad was at Cutter, Maine with Continental until I was 15." "When they went to Texas for TI, I stayed in boarding school." "I finished at, well, you would call it Radcliffe, in three years and by then Dad was affirmatively actioned out of a job." "I've been in the field for WAR for 19 months."

"It must have been very difficult for you," Frank reflected.

"Humankind has prospered in constant troubles and will only perish in constant peace," she answered, and before I could

place that quote she said: "Anyway, Sammy can watch you until my replacement comes."

My pal Frank, who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army, assured her he was happy with the protection, however unsought, her organization gave him for helping with their communications chores. He again said he wanted nothing to do with the group's inner workings, but that he was satisfied with Christie and the situation as it existed. She plainly was not, but she hugged him and left up the stairway from our basement workshop.

It was Spring, and with it came one Preston Anderson,

20-year-old son of Frank's pal Carl Anderson and Carl's college sweetheart Jodi Preston. He was back from the Army and waiting with Frank until he reported to Annapolis. Press and Christie had a budding romance complicated by his learning she was the daughter of Jerry Bishop, a general in the WAR group and former friend of Carl's. The elders had not spoken for decades when Frank tricked them into a meeting.

"Images are everything," Frank said.

How true, I thought, as he continued: "With a 455 kc IF, you get into trouble as low as 7 mc unless you have two tuned RF stages, and by 10M it's hopeless." "The old Hallicrafters and Lafayette 6M AM rigs went to 1650 kc, but that meant you had trouble getting below 10 kc selectivity," he continued, as I readjusted my thoughts. "We need another stage here (to make the old National hear 5M) and the general rule is that the first conversion should be in the range of 10-20% of the frequency covered," he concluded.

"That thou wouldn't be a Capulet?" I asked.

"My thoughts exactly," Frank admitted as he put down the board with the 6BS8 and 6U8. "Who would think that a chance meeting of old friends turned enemies would bring such anguish to another generation?" He settled on a 36 mc crystal for the converter as it allowed the National's 14 to 29 mc band to hear both 5 and 6 Meters. We got the '46 model peaked up for its new duty while the WARmon sat in Christie's usual place at the end of the bench. He was listening to a Satanic rock station on headphones. Frank and I missed Christie already.

"This needs fixing," Frank said, which I thought was the reason all three of us were hoisting a SP-600 to the bench, but as soon as the mastodon was secured he sent the WARmon to "round them up."

"Ghost Images," Frank told the lined up Press and Christie when the WARmon had retrieved them, "from the past are disrupting my mission here." "We will succeed in recapturing 5 Meters," he continued, "only if we rise above personal discomfort." He had donned his double breasted jacket for this speech.

"I did not want any bodyguards at all," he said. "I have acclimated to the ones WAR sent, but I'll take no replacements."

"Similarly," he said as he stepped around a 388 case we use for a trash bin to stand in front of the attentive pair, "camaraderie with a son of an old friend cannot be allowed to divert me either."

"So I want, no I demand, your personal assurances that your parents' quarrels from the past, and any differences you might have in the present, will not be allowed to affect this operation." "If you cannot right now make those assurances, it would be better for you to leave."

Press seemed embarrassed, although I don't know what about, and Chrisite was a little teary, but both made the requisite promises and Frank went back to the Super Pro, waving away Christie's attempt to expand the meeting.

We worked on the Hammarlund's highest band to see if it would go above the marked 54 mc and the WARmon re tuned KTAC.

The promising couple went off to the Sonic, a 1950s style drive in, for a Coke.

FMLA XXX - Defiance

Date: Sat, 3 Apr 1999

"How does this look?" Christie asks as she hands me three pages of a recent QST copied in longhand..

I tell her it looks solid to me and that she is almost certain to get a 25 wpm code proficiency certificate for Artesia Bello.

That makes her happy, almost, and she carefully addresses an envelope to Newington, with an SASE, before returning to the Jap auxiliary rig to search for YLs.

Everyone in the WAR social club has embraced International Morse Code since they learned the government abandoned it.

Christie, the chief bodyguard for my pal Frank who plans to take back the 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army, is showing the traditional YL talent for the medium, but even he Satanic Rock obsessed WARmon, her relief, has a 15 WPM certificate. He uses the Signal Corps letters Frank advocates, but Christie calls them "mannish," and copies in script with circles for the dots on lower case letters.

Generally against all things governmental, none of the WAR plan to get licenses, but they choose calls that appeal to them, check to see if they are issued on the University of Arkansas URL, and jump in on the ham bands anyway. Most of them use the name "Art" because it is easy to copy and serves as a secret ID among them. The WARmon uses various prefixes and the suffix INC ("I'm Not a Crook") on a modified CB he calls a President Nixon, but Christie usually just reads the mail on a JP-600 Frank is wrestling with in our basement workshop.

Frank was deep into the SuperPro's greenish carcass when I asked him about the implications of the WAR invasion, but he said he was not worried. Five Meters, he said, was populated with bootleggers, and it was "Ham Radio's Greatest Hour." "Moreover," he said as he tweaked the dual conversion section. "Hams have traded their great unifying talent, the code, for "foreign equipment and pointless pontificating."

I am thus alone in my crowded basement. Christie is copying meaningless Floridora chatter; Frank is lost in the Hammarlund, and the WARmon has raised Chicago near 27.9 to run FM tone modulated telegraphy with "The Morse Voice of Mohammed." The Cooke County chapter of FMLA modifies CB radios to FM for the Nation of Islam.

Yesterday Frank's visitor Preston Anderson went with Frank's broker, Ayn Tagert-Tamez, to a computer show. In a couple of hours they came back with Ayn's daughter, Dagny, in the crowded Corvette.

Dagny stayed with my daughter and we have not seen the other two since. We are not discussing that around Christie.

These are rare opportunities, as I can now work on commercial equipment that has nothing to do with converting old 6M gear to 5.

I sneak out my project and finally find an open IF transformer in the SX-25. A modern one will fit underneath the old shield and the mod is made in the basement's eerie silence. There is but an occasional snicker from the WARmon as he exchanges Polish jokes with the Fruit of Islam; an occasional dropped screw as Frank spelunks the Super Pro, and a sniffle or two from Christie as she listens to the Yaesu FT-400 RX Frank bought for the 6 and 2M converters.

My project is a garden variety single conversion superhet but the crystal filter, freed of sixty years of dirt, helps on CW and I have hidden a TV horizontal sweep transistor, connected as a Zener, under the chassis to regulate the LO and mixer. The 80 is burned out, but two silicon diodes stand in for it and the audio is now the push pull from a "World Monitor" GE with a bad band switch.

I paid \$25 for the old soldier at a Fort Worth hamfest to a guy who thought all old tube rigs lacked transformers and were "too dangerous to work on." I guess he thought this little black box with the "h" on it was for snuff. I don't have a manual, but Hallicrafters made 25 years worth of rigs without a nickle's worth of difference. I just use an SX-99 diagram and improvise.

The WAR folks, who I am building it for, won't be offended by the modernizations and they will love the name on the panel -- Super Defiant.

FMLA XXXI -- Returns

Date: Sat, 10 Apr 1999

Car noise does not usually wake me. The Lowriders circling the park have 1500 Watt stereos that move the 9-inch plaster lath walls of my old house, but this was a 1950's sound. Turned out, however, to be made by a late model Lincoln.

In the first light I found Frank, my pal who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army, and a kid I call the WARmon inspecting a trail of still smoldering blackness in the street. They told me Christie, another of Frank's friends and bodyguards, laid down the rubber with her Lincoln coupe. When she saw the rosy fingers of dawn, and did not see the return of her new friend Preston and Frank's broker Ayn Tagert-Tamez, Christie drove away with all 32 valves gasping for fuel injected air and \$250 each tires aflame. Ah love, I thought as I began the daily chore of waking the kids for school.

Frank's many projects made him pull an all nighter. He is fixing various devices for a sale at Our Lady of Conspicuous Contrition, but he was distracted by an old QST I left out. Frank had never seen a Mosley CM-1 receiver and, in fact, I've

only seen one.

The idea of a rig that uses only one tube type seemed sound to Frank, but he does not like miniatures. So he set out to design and build one around the 6SN7, an Octal that is easy to wire. His just finished version has an IF amp, unusual for Frank, and uses the band imager front end of many old Novice projects: A VFO in the 5.2 range either adds or subtracts a 1.7 kc If to hit both 80 and 40 with the same tunable front end. Frank also tweaked it to use the third harmonic of the VFO to get 14 mc.

Of course the IF is regenerative, but he also installed a 1.7 mc crystal and, not having a tapped coil to resonate it, created a reference with a pair of 100 "mili-milli" caps, to use his phrase. The result was pretty narrow when he set the phasing condenser just right, so he bent over the edge of the last rotor with a needle nose plier. Now he can short out the filter to hear the wide AM+FM signals some of his stuff puts out on 5M.

Frank is unfond of switching RF, so he used a back porch of Octal sockets to hold plug in converters he made by gutting Collins VFOs.

When not in use, the converters stay in their slots, ready to tune 10M or 5. He won't work the WARC bands or 15M because they are not harmonically related, which is too bad as he speaks fine Spanish.

I wanted to play with the Mosley clone, but things got busy with the kids and the return of Ayn Tagert-Tamez to pick up her daughter, Dagny, and drop off Preston Anderson. Press helped me, the WARmon and Frank drag my second son out of bed and by the time that was done, Ayn and Dagny were gone. So I did not ask where Ayn and Press spent the night, not wanting to pry.

Frank went right back to his pile of stuff. He has half a pallet of repaired boom boxes, TVs and such in the side yard under a tarp. He is one of the old style hams who can, and occasionally does, "fix a radio."

When the pallet is full, one of his pals will pick it up with a forklift and take it to the church. I guess I am the only one that thinks it funny the items go the Catholic church via a device that says "Buddha" on it. I laugh at some fairly obscure things, but not at what I saw next.

Returning from taking the kids, I noticed my wife's van still there, and the WARmon's Toyota Land Cruiser next to Frank's '47 Frazer. We have a long driveway Frank can even use to stretch out his Leecher wires for 5M. There was room for several more cars but, as I drove up I was cut off by a white Mark VIII that passed me on two wheels and careened into the driveway.

I decided to go for donuts and then test out the Black Widow 6M AM transceiver Frank just reworked for 5. He put it in my Hundai and, thinking about it, I wished he had put Preston Anderson in too.

FMLA XXXII - W8FIX

Date: Fri, 16 Apr 1999

"Amazing," said Frank. "Note how he placed the resistors so all the color bands read left to right."

My pal who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army was mesmerized by a home brew 6M transmitter. I told him it was just the one of a long line of QST projects loosely called "Tiltons," but he accused me of thinking of a Stradivarius as a "fiddle."

This particular one is a very faithful copy from the August, 1961 QST. That is the same issue in which Harry Blomquist, K6JSS's letter started the QRP ARCI. The 6M TX uses a 6CX8 to drive a 6360 in push-pull, which is Frank's favorite way of doing things. This one was built by W8FIX, now a SK, and I got it in Dayton last year from a friend of his who thought I'd appreciate it. I do, in the sense it is by far the best of the long line, but Frank almost adored it.

He was about to construct a power supply worthy of it when I went to the attic and found the companion PS/modulator 'FIX used.

Frank put them together reverently and I went up to supper.

Frank only eats with us on occasions, but he is in my basement most of the time.

"Whatever that thing is, he sure loves it," Christie reported when she left for the night. She is one of Frank's bodyguards but she was leaving the task to a kid I call the WARmon so she could go out with Frank's guest Preston Anderson.

The couple almost had a spat when Press stayed out all night with Frank's broker, Ayn Tagert-Tamez, but it turned out they

shared an interest in the theater. That particular night Ayn was doing the title role for a charity affair called "Mildly Mexican Millie."

She took Press along and he was drafted as a substitute stage hand when someone got sick. Ayn had two show stopping numbers and everyone went to the cast party. Press was to be the designated driver, but he drank from the wrong punch bowl and, since Ayn's Corvette draws so much attention, they just stayed over at the seemingly endless party 'till dawn.

With my kids finally off the computer and in bed, I went downstairs to find the WARmon napping with the white ferret, Charlie, on his lap. Charlie hates most things and will sound the alarm at the drop of a rat, but she knows me so I got to look in on Frank.

Frank had the transmitter running and an ancient red, white and blue Eico signal generator hooked up to give an audio tone for A2 or modulated telegraphy. He was loading his reflector less Yagi on the chimney and the old CDR TV rotator was pointed at the Ohio Valley 6M Net, but it was far too late for them. Of course it did not matter as he was calling W8FIX and listening on a Hallicrafters S-106 he is converting for 5M. I had not thought of Frank as sentimental and, since I was eavesdropping, I just eased back up the stairs under Charlie's distrustful, red eyed stare.

Someone broke Frank as I reached the landing. It was late and I misread the call, of course, so I just went to bed.

FMLA XXXIII - Going to Dayton

Date: Fri, 23 Apr 1999

Nothing sounds like a flathead Harley.

I find the asthmatic asynchrony of the Knuckleheads, Panheads and Shovelheads inferior to a 8 hp Cushman Eagle, but a 45 cubic inch Harley Davidson vee twin is a treat. I knew what it was before it passed.

This one was a three wheeler that retained much of its original police trim although it's springer fork was a lot longer than stock and the rider, if any sort of officer at all, would be Waffen SS. But the seemingly original Motorola Dispatcher caught my eye so, on a lark, I picked up the Hallicrafters SR-46's mic., turned the selector past the marked crystals and said, "check fifty-eight."

The biker, who had a headset, turned the other way and I saw the lightening bar runes on one side of his coal scuttle helmet were replaced with a representation of a 5-pin SAW filter from a junk TV.

"You're 40 over," I heard him say, "Where are you?"

He must have missed the Squalo antenna, so I said "silver Hundai."

His head jerked around and his initial stare was accusatory but he must have credited my beard because he waved then, probably at my 9-year-old daughter, and said on the radio, "where you headed?"

I told him Dayton and that, two posts or so farther on, Number One was in his Frazer. At that he waved, dropped a gear and sped on toward Memphis to overtake Frank.

This is a big step for Frank, or Number One of the Five Meter Liberation Army that plans to take back 56-60 mc. He had not been to Dayton in decades, thinking it "another coven of commercial equipment worshippers," but several things changed his mind.

A home brew 6M TX from last year's sun-drenched sale so impressed him that he longed to see if any other messages from the past might be posted there. He also has a 20-year old guest who, although being from Pennsylvania and holding an ARRL scholarship, has never seen the Hara Auditorium. Boy Scout functions and later the Army always kept him away, and the next four of Preston Anderson's years are promised to Annapolis.

Press is in the lead car, a white Lincoln coupe belonging to Frank's bodyguard Christie. A Clegg 99er minus a few turns of wire just fit both the space and the decor, but she had to remove her bumper sticker for the trip. Press thought, "It Takes a Tank to Raise a Village," was too argumentative.

Next, in the '47 Frazer, the other bodyguard I call the WARmon is riding with Frank in air conditioned comfort. Frank resisted the upgrade for years, but installing a Polycom 6&2 brought so much heat he had to search the abandoned autos behind his trailer park for parts. The cooling unit from a '54 Cad seemed to fit the trunk and I have to admit the plastic cool air conduits on the package tray look right on the Frazer.

My ham plates, actually my wife's, and the Squalo were recognized by a closing Winnebago and, as our car shivered in the blast, the occupants remembered themselves to us via a Clegg 66er they had set up on 58.00. There was no need to identify themselves as FMLA because everyone else on the road was using a 2M Simplex to exchange greetings.

"Daddy," my daughter said then, "Isn't 58 megacycles too high for Six Meters?"

She wants to take the test at Dayton and is reviewing the allotments. She is the last of my kids and so my last excuse for a father-child trip to the Mecca of merchandise old and new. She laid the study guide on a spare WRL TC-6 "Techceiver" and asked again, "Well? Isn't it Illegal?"

"Yes and no," I answered, echoing the legion of lawyers since Solon. "We once had 56-60 mc and back then ham radio was a rich man's hobby." "But a guy named Jones, back in the 1930s, wrote a little book called '5 Meter Radiotelephony.'" That little book showed common people how to make real talking radios out of junk and put thousands of young fellows on the air." "It was a city thing and a lot of them did not have licenses." "I have talked to Old Timers who did not even know you needed one, and, in one sense, you didn't."

I paused, to see if she was actually listening and a passing Lexis, with a Hallicrafters SR-34 between the seats, wished us well with our trailer full of junk. My kid really seemed interested in this so I continued.

"The radio rules didn't ever contemplate rigs that were mostly limited to a couple of miles." "Moreover, if the airways were really public property, it was just like walking across a posted stretch of park."

"Anyway, the experience got a lot of guys started in electronics and helped us win the war, that's World War II from 1941 to 1945 for us, so it was a good thing all-in-all." I am careful to recite dates as most modern kids cannot hit the Civil War within 50 years.

She was unconvinced, a common posture.

"But there are always anal retentive types who have to have a bunch of rules to suit their preferences," I continued. "The QRP or low power people did the same thing in 1980 when they went to output power as a standard and knocked out the person without a Wattmeter." "But back in 1938 it was the ARRL that faked a survey and got the government to outlaw the kind of rigs these guys were using." "Right after the war, the government took the band too, but some of the diehards, like Uncle Frank, won't give up."

"Are you a diehard?"

"I fear so," I said, "Although I did not realize it until I met Frank."

"Aren't we a little high up here?" asked a voice I soon connected to a SUV with an ICOM 706 MK II.

"Probably so, but in the long run we'll all be dead," I answered, via the economist John Maynard Keynes.

The equipment operator, with his scanning rig was almost over the hill now but he did ask, "what are you looking for at Dayton?"

I could not adequately answer that in a PhD dissertation so I just told him, "A 25 cent, 60-page booklet from 1935."

He didn't understand, but they never do.

FMLA XXXIV - At Dayton

Date: Sat, 1 May 1999

In pre-school, my kids take a ride on a bus as a field trip.

Many won't enter another until high school, so my 9-year-old daughter was unprepared when we parked at Salem Mall and caught the shuttle to the Hara Auditorium. Last night we parked the trailer in our spot, covered it with a Navy tarp and went to a Mexican restaurant whose name, Chi Chi's, would never be seen in Texas.

She found the bus cramped but her perspective on Dayton was different. She thought the basketball ring, or whatever it is inside the HARA, the only really crowded place. She was happy at Dayton, not the least because she had the ferrets, hidden by a pasteboard box around their travel cage, to mother. After we sought out George Dobbs of the G-QRP club so she could meet a real Englishman, we retired to the tailgate area and the ferrets came out of hiding. They were bleary eyed, but so were a lot of the hams.

At our space the WARmon and Press, both former Boy Scouts, had already erected a canopy and arrayed our junk on the

Collins cases we use for transport and display. Of 35 or so 6M AM transceivers made, we had seven samples. Those and a mayonnaise jar full of 5-pin 45 mc SAW filters from defunct TV sets identified us as FMLA as surely as the "Bill W." note on the AA table.

The Five Meter Liberation Army's chief, Frank, who thought up taking back 56-60 mc, was no where in sight, and I assumed he was poking through the pasteboard "make offer" offerings with the ever present Christie at his side. She is a 20ish woman who would rather tag along with Preston, who is about her age, but duty calls in such a crowded area. She and the other thin young man now sitting under the canopy are members of WAR and serve as Frank's bodyguards as thanks for his technical help.

Preston told me we had two nibbles on a lamentably rusty Lafayette and "dozens" of offers on the Collins cases. Of course Press, knowing Frank's feelings, politely refused. No one told the black box fanciers Frank bought a railroad car full of Collins Radio, Dallas surplus and used it as filler for the berm at the WAR social club's target range in East Texas. If you hit a meatball, everyone has to buy you a Mountain Dew.

We found Frank fondling a Utah transmitter and arguing to its owner that "Five Meters is illegal now." I chuckled. No money was likely to change hands this first day but Christie did write down the space number and, using Preston's GPS, the coordinates of the "I'll think about it" offering. Charlie, the white ferret, struggled to reach Christie's baby bag and we were glad to oblige as Charlie is the only ferret that bites.

"So what do you think?" I asked Frank as he mulled a box of Ameco CN series converters at \$20 asked.

"I think these people would starve in the pantry," he answered. "On every aisle there is enough raw material to equip two more armies, but most of the owners are gone inside to ogle foreign made equipment they could not fix." He bought a 50 cent Millen absorption meter to use as a front end for some future lash up and passed up an Eico grid dip meter. His is home brew.

We separated then and I quit at noon for my daughter to get in a swim and for me to nap after the trip. My Archer Space Patrol HT never went off so I knew Frank had avoided his arch foe, the Fat Collins Collector, at least for the first day. We hid the channel selector remote and our toothbrushes from the ferrets that afternoon and visited the QRP suite, meeting Frank there about dark.

The QRP fraternity fancies itself a home brew haven, but Frank discounts anything that uses a prepared circuit board. He left early. I stayed for a while as Friday night tends to the technical when the DXers banquet draws away the real problems. But my daughter was soon restless and we went home to watch a movie on the motel TV. We don't have a TV at home, so it is always a big deal to the kids, if not the ferrets who regard it as an uninvited intrusion on their nightly wanderings.

Elsewhere, the WARmon took over watching Frank as he hobnobbed with the "QCWA kids." We never knew where Press and Christie went, but they were at the space with their quota of orange crates the next morning.

We knew the Collins cases would be gone, but the rest of the stuff was OK as we started another day. We did not know what the day would bring, and that is probably a good thing.

FMLA XXXV - The FCC

Date: Sat, 8 May 1999

Charlie spotted him first.

Christie went into Dayton's HARA Auditorium for the bathroom, leaving the WARmon to watch Frank. When she returned, with the white ferret's head protruding from her baby bag, the beast's red eyes narrowed and it made a noise usually reserved for tussles with her cagemates over pork scraps from my red beans and rice at a restaurant back in Dallas. I am a vegetarian, but Charlie was ready to taste the Fat Collins Collector -- again.

The first blood was spilled last year when this guy, who today was delivering a talk on "Knob Nuance in the KWM-1," raised his hand to Frank, founder of the Five Meter Liberation Army. Frank dared to suggest Collins Radios might not be the apogee of Western experience. Of course the other bodyguard, the WARmon, quickly choked the fellow to his knees, but the ferret took three chunks from a forearm fallen fleshy by years of microphone manipulation.

When Christie reported "Fat man seen at HARA," on her Minnie Mouse HT, no one thought she was speaking of Sydney Greenstreet in The Maltese Falcon.

This was the first cloud, at least metaphorically, of the second day at Dayton. So far, everything was going well. My daughter, 9, enjoyed the "adult situations" movie in the motel (and did not need any clarification, thank you). And we actually sold something: a spare parts WRL Globe Hi Bander moved by Frank's young friend Preston on the argument, "It has the makings of a 2M Linear." We also had 63 confirmed check ins of members of FMLA, Frank's group that plans to take back 56-60 mc. Two of those worked for the ARRL, of all things, but the list is secret. The rusty Lafayette HE-45 6M transceiver and the other 6M AM stuff was still there.

Plan FM was immediately put into effect. Another shaved head youth with red suspenders, muscle shirt, jack boots and tattoos like the WARmon's met Christie for a positive ID on "FCC" as they called him. He then ducked into a restroom and emerged disguised as a Hari Krishna to begin his watch. Any sort of Eastern looking person will go unnoticed around a Collins gathering as the Japanese own most of the rigs. Christie joined the WARmon as backup for Frank and the ferret, unaccustomed to the weather, receded into the baby bag to loll against Christie's 13-inch Ithica double.

It almost worked. But the Krishna was too much into The Method and his beating on the tambourine with his Archer Space Patrol HT inside disabled the device. The Fat Man got too close to Frank. I would analogize the scene to High Noon, but I guess High Plains Drifter is more apt. Their eyes met in a prolonged stare that said nothing but Sergio Leone. As a precaution, Christie unzipped the baby bag. She did not notice the ferret's stealthful departure.

Frank's pleated trousers and razor creased white dress shirt open at the neck, with sleeves rolled up at the wrists, reminded me of a Marine in mufti. The fat one had a gimme cap with a meatball on it.

Perhaps instinctively, Frank's fingers nearest the Lafayette flayed a little and, on a table across the way, some PCB laced transformer oil dripped intermittently from a metal condenser marked "JAN." Finally Frank spoke:

"It was Belton, wasn't it?"

"Yeah," said the other, "I was there with ham radio operators." "I never knew what brought you."

That did it.

Frank grabbed for the HE-45 but the WARmon stepped in front of him and yelled, "Der Tag." Seven more WAR guys, wearing khaki against the weather, ran up to shield Frank as the obese one thought to hurl a gold plated Presentation D-104 from the folds of his arm. But he telegraphed it and Charlie hit his Achilles tendon, snapping her head back and forth once before springing away to avoid the falling fat man. She darted through a hole at the missing meter of a Letine 240, leaving only the legend of the Giant Rat of Dayton.

The brownshirts moved Frank to a waiting Humvee as Christie tore open her bodice, not showing much, and faked an Asthma attack to further confuse the situation. The Humvee rolled down the aisles with a European siren warbling and the bodyguards on top.

They went out the "in" lane out front as the guy with the red stickers wisely stepped aside.

Only Preston was left. He stood watching the Humvee thread it's way toward the Flight Museum.

"Frank, come back!" he called.

FMLA XXXVI - Spring

Date: Sat, 15 May 1999

Frank was restless after Dayton.

We did not sell any of the old 6M AM stuff and even brought back a near dead Lincoln Six, but Frank fixed the bring-backs, put them on 57 mc, and turned to the basket case.

Frank leads a shadow Five Meter Liberation Army that plans to take back 56-60 mc. In that he helps various groups as diverse as the Nation of Islam and WAR, which gratuitously supplies bodyguards to protect both the double breasted suit wearing Frank and WAR's interest in him.

One of the bodyguards, a woman named Christie, bought the Lincoln Six for the \$2 asked because she drives a Mark VIII. Frank thought that a good joke, but it set him to thinking. He shooed Charlie the ferret, who will not leave Christie now, out of the carcass and rewired the little transceiver for 12v plate tubes with numbers like 12EK6 and 12AD6.

Cleaned up, it looks pretty good in the Mark as its brown case matches some of the dash wood. The ferret is just as happy

sleeping in the removed Clegg 99er.

So by Tuesday Frank was ready for the weekly trip to the Civic Virtue Thrift Store where he has convinced the cashier, who's finger tattoos spell "RITA," that my AARP card entitles us to the promised senior citizen's discount. But his heart was not in it. I found the Knight T-50 for \$4.97 less 30% while he talked to the woman who he later told me was really named Elaine. It seems she once had a boyfriend named "RICO," and "RITA" was the best she could do with the old remembrance.

Back home in our shared basement shop Frank attacked the 1950's transmitter and soon had it grid block keying, reading it's PA on a Simpson panel meter, and doubling to 57 mc where it puts out a respectable Heising modulated signal with aid of an audio subchassis from a Harvey Wells TBS-50D and a choke from some old 1930s Collins transmitter Frank scrapped. He uses the rest of the "Bandmaster" on FM for its rich harmonic content and, "because they had the grit to take an 807 up to 2M."

He set the Knight next to a matching VFO to which he added varactor FM. Then he wandered around the lot, shadowed by a kid I call the WARmon.

They teased my wife's duck by threatening to throw it in the kid's wading pond, but I could see Frank's heart was not in it. When I returned with the school kids, Frank's '47 Frazer Manhattan and the WARmon's Toyota Land Cruiser were missing, but the other bodyguard, Christie, was sitting in her Lincoln under a tree and petting the ferret. I asked her where Frank might have gone.

"I'm not sure," she answered. "He just said someone named Elaine had not been to Confession in 17 years and that there might be a line on Saturday."

FMLA XXXVII - Multiplexing

Date: Sat, 22 May 1999

"Whaaaaa!" the kid cried and I knew, again, I am too old for this.

I started down the hallway making a mental list of all the women who should be doing it: my wife, the nurse; our daughter, 9; Christie, the 20-something bodyguard: the kid's mom who was on maneuvers with the WAR social club, and Elaine, Frank's 35ish girlfriend who, if a used car, would need a mileage statement.

I made my way to the kitchen for breast milk, but when I got there a huge black man with a bow tie and crisp white shirt was already running warm water over the packet with one hand and holding the pale, crying kid with the other.

"Thanks, Ali," I told him as I took the proffered 6-month-old, "Frank still here, I gather."

"Still running traffic," the man affirmed as I sat in a folding chair we brought in for the ritual.

Frank, my pal who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army was in the basement workshop where Ali heard our little guest cry first. Frank's usual bodyguard, the WAR social group, was in a field exercise; my wife and daughter were at a weekend soccer tournament, and the kid, one of the WAR folks progeny, somehow fell to us to watch.

One of WAR's Archer Space Patrol handy talkies was clipped to Ali's belt near the pocket watch, and the small of his back, none too small on his 245 pound, 6 foot 5 inch frame, hosted an 8 3/8 inch barrel Smith and Wesson. It was an "Outdoorsman," on the large N frame, I thought. My dad had a sporting goods store and even once met Elmer Keith who convinced the manufacturer to offer the first .357.

But a better question would be "Who convinced the WAR, a WASP outfit if one ever existed, to turn Frank over to the Black Muslims while all the white knights were off jousting? The answer to that was down in the basement clicking off contacts on 57 mc using A2, or AM modulated telegraphy.

Frank refuses to have anything to do with the strategy or political sessions of his bodyguards, but his passing comment, "How about the folks you work on 27 mc FM?" started it all.

One of Frank's FMLA chapters alters CB radios to FM for a "Voice of Allah" network, and when the government dropped CW the Muslims, like WAR, immediately embraced it. When F2, or FM modulated telegraphy, was added to the Chicago sets, it allowed a contact frequency to develop just below 10M as the WAR bunch had many CBs left over from the pre-Frank days. For about six months the extremists have been exchanging Polish jokes and rumors about Janet Reno in dits and dahs, so, after an agonizing assessment, WAR concluded the Nation of Islam was the only other group it really trusted to

protect Frank in its absence.

Dits and Dahs were flying from the basement now. Ali offered the bottle saying, "Here you go Little Adolph, Seig Heil it up" as we joined Frank in the basement where tonight it looked like a snap from Frank Harris's old VHF column in CQ Magazine.

The traffic load from the maneuvers made Frank bend his all home brew preference, and he was sitting at a Clegg Zeus / Interceptor pair. The MCW was emanating from the speaker in the companion All Bander attachment, but Frank had a pair of Brandeis headphones he handed me so I could take over his Supergainer receiver which was tonight a tunable IF for a Tapetone CN-50 converter. (It should be called a CN-57 as it was recrystaled to 5M). Frank goes first class as is also evidenced by the finally fixed JP-600 Super Pro Ali tuned while bouncing Little Adolph on his knee.

The kid cried if anyone else held him more than a few minutes, but Ali, who claims "Five strong sons and four wise daughters" despite his apparent young age, is able to tune the Hammarlund, write traffic in Signal Corps lettering, and sing "The Prophet Loves Me," to Adolph simultaneously.

With two spotters, Frank caught up and we held it down until about daybreak with just one more packet of breast milk, two diapers, and another shirt for Ali who observed, "You guys get started early, don't you?" to the offending Adolph.

Dawn brought the moms, with Ali's wife arriving first and taking Adolph as we closed the station. Ali's XYL met Little Adolph's mother at the landing and Frank went up to brave the fusillage of baby talk as we cleaned up. It was then I could observe that Ali's wife, despite her modest garb, looked pretty young to be the mother of nine. I suggested that, in a tentative way, as Ali and I walked up the stairs.

"You are right, my friend," Ali said. "My wife is young indeed - but I have two more."

***So, the Chinese ideograph for trouble is two women under the same roof, but Mohammeded would go up to four and still name the movement, "Peace." You never know, which will become painfully clear next time when we find Frank under the same roof with a Ten Tec Power Mite 2 and the inscrutable "Mr. Borger."

FMLA XXXVIII - The Forgotten

Date: Sat, 29 May 1999

I met Frank in 1936 when he got me on 5 Meters.

Of course that was this Frank's daddy, but when this one came to the door I knew, as they say in Indiana, "nothing got in under the fence."

I was just about out of radio. I can't lift much and the only family here is a granddaughter who is always pregnant or taking care of a little one, so I hated to ask her to move the RCA for me to work on it and, besides, her mom stole my soldering gun.

But the granddaughter bought a Ten-Tec PM thing at a garage sale for \$3, thinking it "some kind of ham radio" and gave it to me saying "mom won't care about something that just uses batteries."

It would work, a little, on receive, but the transmitter was dead. There was a date, 1972 on one of the boards and I found a review of it in an old QST. Using a hide out soldering gun I got free from TechAmerica when I bought some flashlights for the kid's Christmas and a voltmeter with big numbers on the display to help my 1908 eyes, I got it working with a transistor from an old TV set. I don't remember if it was the one that did Red, Green or Blue.

The receiver was still a joke - wider than a BC-455, but in the early afternoon I could get on 40M with my 66 foot dipole and work a few stations. It was there I met Frank, or this Frank, who kept asking "QRO?" I explained why I couldn't and, since I was a local, he came over.

I almost fell down when I went to the door as he looked just like his daddy who I met in '36 in San Francisco when I had given up starving as a telegrapher and taking to making calls for Motorola. Frank had a company that had something to do with

making the big bridge out there and he was trying to get a contract with Oakland for their police, as I was. GE got it, but Frank introduced me to 5 Meters and this Frank even knew a little about those days -- from talking with his daddy, I guess.

Frank changed a lot of things around here. He brought a pretty young woman with a mean looking skinny husband along with him. The woman ran my washing machine all day and washed all the curtains while the husband cut a door in the back for my cat, Mr. Borger, to go in and out during my naps and not have to mark the place up so bad.

They turned the AR-88 on its side, cleaned out a nest left by a rat Mr. Borger probably got, and had it running in no time. I asked him to look at the rig, too, but he said he was worried about my changing coils so close to the ground. Instead he took the chassis out of the old record player, used two of the 6L6 sockets to hold coils, and built an little amp in the bread box. It has a key lock that kills the B+ when I open it and he brought coils for all the bands that the Ten-Tec covers. We just use the Ten-Tec for a VFO now

The next Saturday he brought some kids, who he said were "like the Demolay" to scrape the house and put on a coat of primer so the city could take down the sign. They mowed the yard and got the last of Mr. Borger's smell out of the carpets, too, while Frank worked with the other two 6L6s.

They ended up upside down in a push-push doubler driven by a 12AX7 from the pre amp in a crystal cracker affair that hits 5M or 10 if I kill one heater. Frank returned my RME 152 so it brings 5M out to 7mc and I don't have to squint to see the switch on the AR-88. But I can see a lot better since he had the skinny guy put up three drop lights at the operating desk. When I throw the power switch, they light up that whole end of the room.

So I can get on 40 fine now and work just about anything I hear. There is an old carbon mic for the 5 Meter rig, too, and the TV antenna is fine for that band.

There is a lot of activity up there again and I'm glad we got it back.

FMLA XXXIX - The Visit

Date: Sat, 5 Jun 1999

Hiding from the heat on the side porch, I saw him coming up the steps. He was well dressed and Hispanic, but without a matching woman I knew he did not have Watchtower magazines in his attache case. I wondered who he was, but did not have to ask:

"Hi, I'm Jesus," he said, "And Frank knows I'm coming."

Well, this was not The Rapture, I was sure, because he pronounced it "Hey-Zeus." In fact, he said he was Jesus Cordoba de Alvarez, so I answered, "Glad to meet you Mr. Cordoba." "Frank is in the basement."

Frank is my pal who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army, and Spanish guys with two last names go by the first one - the second is their mom's family name.

It turned out Frank had not met Jesus, formally, so I did the introductions and included Frank's bodyguard, a woman named Christie, who said, "El gusto es mio," just like any proper Latin lady despite being from Maine. But she followed me back up the stairs and asked, "Can you check the Spic?"

I just shook my head and typed the guy's name onto the Internet. Sometimes I think Christie and the rest of the volunteer bodyguards from WAR say things like that just to irritate Frank and me, but they don't do it around the kids so we ignore it. Anyway, as a 1000 cycle tone sounded from below, I learned Sr. Cordoba holds the Harkey Chair in Electrical Engineering at Southern Methodist across town. He had 4 screens of publications.

I wanted to know more about him and went back to the basement, but Christie was satisfied and went to feed the ferrets.

Downstairs, J.C. (he said everyone called him that) had produced an impedance bridge so old it was beige like a Heathkit AT-1 transmitter, only with red lettering. Since 1954 or so it had grown red LEDs and a bunch of 10-turn pots. He was in a contest with Frank to measure various things from packages marked, "National Bureau of Standards."

They split the first two, with Frank not admitting his was from the June, 1950 edition of QST magazine, but when they got to Hay and Maxwell bridge technique to measure Q, J.C. took the last three in a sweep. Still, Frank was a good sport and, over Mountain Dew soft drink, they reminisced about how they met through Herbert A. Filbrik.

You see, Frank puts up low power TV stations - "outposts in the Vast Wasteland," he calls them. Some of J.C.'s grad students found one between lower channels while they were doing some HDTV work. But they could not find the source because the transmitter, at Luna's Tortilla Factory, bounces the signal all around Big D's big buildings.

All they could do was monitor Frank's digitally enhanced Kinescopes of "I Led Three Lives" episodes 24 hours a day. They called the FCC, but only to learn the compliance officer watches one every day at lunch while he rests from cleaning up 11 Meters.

So J.C. drove up to Texas Instruments to borrow their big Log Periodic antenna. He swung it around toward Reunion Tower, hooked up an ancient Precision 400 sweeper and, just as the Commies were about to figure out Richard Carlson, J.C. began to send Morse.

As it happened, the episode in which Herb's wife burns his library was a favorite of Frank's. He read the herringbone code, wrote down the URL and sent an e-mail that appeared to be translated from Chinese and sent from Los Alamos. Not to be out hacked, J.P. responded in French from Quebec, but in time a trust developed which led to the face-to-face meeting.

When we saw J.C. off he accepted one of the little 45 mc SAW filter pins from a junk TV set. He was FMLA all the way now, but as he drove out of sight I commented, "Took something of a chance there, didn't you Frank?"

"Maybe so," he answered, "But I asked myself:

"What would Herb Filbrik do?"

FMLA XL -- A New Twist

Date: Sat, 21 Aug 1999

Frank took a table at the Dallas HamCom. In fact, he took two, but he did not want to sell anything.

He had the WARmon, as I call one of his self-appointed bodyguards, carpenter up a framework for the two tables that held a sign saying, "The joys of home constructed radio equipment."

And that is where the trouble started.

I thought it might be the National SW-3 he cannibalized to make a signal generator, or, maybe, the Collins 6 and 2M transverter he gutted for a power supply case, but I was wrong.

Frank was showing some kids how to alter a 49 mc HT to get a longer range and make it frequency agile. Some OTs were watching this and, at the same time, talking on a cigarette pack sized portable. Everytime Frank said something, they would relay it and, of course, one of his bodyguards noticed.

It was Christie, the boss of the detachment, who noticed. She bought a cap with a KC5 callsign and offered to help another YL sell some stuffed animals at a table next to the spies. While she sold Beanie Babies, she read the mail and satisfied herself they were not cops - which is a good thing. She left the baby bag with the biting ferret and whatever else she keeps in there under the table.

But she used her Minnie Mouse handy talkie to call some of her folks in the parking lot. She relayed the callsigns the spies kept repeating on every turnaround and the parking lot folks drove around until they found plates that matched one of them. A screaming alarm summonsed one of the spies, and in the confusion she slipped a piece of merchandise into the second guy's plastic sack that said "Yaesu" on it. When the second guy went to see about his camper, she called a security officer and reported him for theft. The self-appointed spectrum manager was unsuccessful in arguing that putting out a signal over 100 mW was an offense to offset taking a "Kuddly Koala."

By now Frank was a hit and every bored, distracted teen in the building was looking into boxes of "make offer" for old toy HTs.

The kids that brought back the older 11M ones were able to trade with the WARmon for 49 mc Archer Space Patrols new in box, and Frank was at stride changing crystals over to ECOs. He'd do one, look at his 10 minute timer, and if it was close to time he would give another Morse character. If you stayed long enough to identify two, Christie gave you a copy of a seditious little pamphlet called "49 mc Radio Talking," which Frank wrote for the occasion.

Frank kept up a banter like any pitch man but once, when he took a breath, someone asked "what kind of 2M handheld" he used.

When he said, "None," and, "I never go above 60 mc," an old guy came over and whispered that Frank was drawing all the kids from the League sponsored "Codeless Radio" seminar. Frank nodded and I thought that was like telling Fagan the style

next year was to bigger pockets.

"Now why?" he asked the kids, "would you pay big bucks to some Asian outfit for a radio so your granddad could listen to your every thought?" "Do you leave your diary out or give them your password?"

"But one kid's toy and about as much skill as it takes to program a VCR can give you your own private line to your friends," he counseled. The timer tinged and he added, "dit dah dah dit," is the letter 'P,' like in Privacy."

Pretty soon he was blocking the aisles with strange looking kids with funny punctures, so he would get five or six to tune up on a tone from the SW-3 and send them off to find out how far they could talk. Later he organized a foxhunt on 57.110 and the YL who found the transmitter in a parked Toyota Land Cruiser got a crisp \$20 bill.

When the guards cleared the hall that night, several delegations of OTs surrounded Frank and told him he could not leave. They said the police were on the way to talk about how he was leading kids into unlawful acts. That made the WARmon slip out his Archer Space Patrol and he was about to call in the three Toyotas with six skinheads and about the same firepower as a destroyer escort when Christie bounced up with a big box wrapped in brown tape.

"I'm glad you got him," she said. "Those things he tore up to make his machines belonged to my grandfather and I have the parts he took out right here." "Ya'll can have whatever you want of it," she offered in a surprisingly good drawl for a woman from Maine. We escaped in the feeding frenzy.

Running back East on I-30 in the Frazer, Frank monitored the new bootleggers around 49 mc for a time, but finally gave up.

"I'll have to study it for a while," he said, but I think they say 'Like' for break." He allowed, however, that 5M had its own jargon in the 1930s, too.

I told Christie, who was petting the ferret, that I thought the box a truly artful dodge, but what, I asked, was really inside?

"Couldn't tell you, she said, "I just wrapped up one of the trash sacks from the women's room."

FMLA XLI - Frank and Alix

Date: Sat, 19 Jun 1999

My kid and I built a radio, but it caused a lot of trouble.

It was a father-daughter deal and we chose a Ten-Tec regen, the 4-band cheapie made even more so by a bulk buy. It sat around for a year and was finally finished over two weeks when the notion struck her. It did not work, but the light showed a cold joint and I found the cap she read wrong on the second night.

After that, she became an SWL and after that Frank, my pal who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army, got

involved - twice.

The first time was when my daughter, Alix, ran the thing thru the amplifier on the stereo and left it plugged in while she chased the ice cream truck. Then she asked to go off with a friend. I was out back, and Catholic Family Radio came on with their prayer marker. Pretty soon, every illegal alien who walked by was kneeling in the side yard and Frank, summoned from the basement by his self appointed bodyguards, had to come up and cut the audio.

He told illegals the way to Our Lady of Conspicuous Contrition, but then he began to play with the rig.

When Alix came back with a Neapolitan he was monitoring

IOWIR at 40 wpm, but he asked Alix to show him how the thing worked.

She tuned around for a while and then said, "I hate ducks!"

"The one in the back yard chases me and now they're even on my radio."

Frank explained about SSB and showed her how, by moving her hand closer or farther away from the chassis, she could make out the words. She thought that "neat" and they went to the basement to do some upgrades. That lasted about as long as the Neapolitan for her, but Frank stayed at it.

He junked the 1K pot attenuator for a linear variable cap and added another as a throttle to control regeneration. The kit had a series of four switches the company did not send and we had been using jumpers with alligators to change bands. But Frank ran the leads to an Octal socket and made four jumpers in old tube bases which he labeled 49M, 30M, 20M and 19M.

He fitted a Velvet Vernier and replaced the cheapo 10K pots with mil spec wirewounds. The he tailored the LM-386 audio with caps and inductors while he watched a 1000 Hz square wave on a 'scope.

He had it sounding better than the stereo and his voltage regulating scheme and shielding had it reading 20M CW thru a rap on the table.

Not satisfied, he went back to the Octal, ran some more leads and arranged bandsread plug ins for all the ham and SWL bands up thru 18 mc. He was still working when Alix went to night vacation Bible school, but she showed it to her when she came home at 8:30.

She screamed, "You messed up my Radio!" She slammed her door and, on being told what was up, her mom went out for groceries, "Now that the crowd has thinned out."

"No daughters at home?" I asked.

"Well, yes," he admitted, "And they were just like that." "I thought since the 9-year-olds were wearing lipstick that something might have changed."

Frank took the thing back to the basement and the next day, when I came back from the post office, I found Alix and Frank listening to Family Radio and chatting about the Gospel of Luke.

Frank went to miniature parts and got the rig into an old black lacquer box my dad left. That suited Alix just fine.

I was telling the story later, in the basement, to the body guards but I overplayed my hand when I ended by saying, "Well, I guess little girls never change."

"Maybe so," said the skinhead I call the WARmon, "But she did ask me how much it would cost to have a professional hit on a duck."

FMLA XLII - Talking Trash

Date: Sat, 26 Jun 1999

All the QRPers don't drive SUVs and go backpacking on weekends.

I learned that when I went down to Austin to a dinner for QRP Guru George Dobbs, G3RJV, and sat across from an OT. Frank, my pal who wants to take back 56-60mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army refused to go, saying QRPers were "transferring the receiving problem to the other guy." But I wanted to get him a memento and the OT needed part of a Command Set TX for something.

I had one in the car and traded it for a little solid state TX.

"Is that a snuff can?" Frank asked as he examined the offhanded style of the builder.

I explained it was a cat food tin standing in as the chassis for a "Tuna Tin Two." An entire series of Doug DeMaw revivals from the '70s is underway, I told him, and mentioned the Herring Aid Five RX and the CB (chipped beef can) Slider VFO.

I was able to trade for this piece only because the builder succumbed to the widespread QRP obsession for circuit board clone projects -- the fellow tossed his homebrew for a ".38 ACP," or some such will-of-the-whisp West Coast board kit.

Frank sneered at that, but he was engaged by the "ugly" style of building evidenced on the Tuna Tin TX. I soon forgot about the trinket, but not Frank.

Three days later I happened down to the basement to find Frank resplendent in rubbish. He explained his new VFO would never settle down on a solid tin base so he ended up putting a 12A6 Tri- Tet on the metal end of a paper Magnesium Citrate carton he termed his "Epsom Salts ECO."

Then he saluted Native Americans with the visage of a warrior on the base of his interstage "Calumet Coupler" which used a baking powder can to hold a 6AQ5 set up as a buffer.

Next came a mildly pear shaped platform with tapped coils and a dual variable. He called it a "Deviled Ham Doubler," and he must have rushed it into service as Charlie, the demonic white ferret, was clawing at its lower edge despite the considerable potential danger from the microwave oven chassis Frank was using to power all this stuff.

The output was single ended, which is strange for Frank, but he said he was working out the kinks on 10M before he took it up to 5.

His receiver, termed a String Bean Super-Gainer, used 303 cans for shields over the coils he wound on paper product tubes and someone's old cabinet door supplied the base. Frank always prefers to build on wood, and it is a good thing since he won't use a transformer unless he needs big voltage.

He rigged two mayonnaise jar tops on threaded shafts for a neutralizing cap. He had a Hellmann's and a Kraft and said he was careful to put the Kraft on the low side because, he felt, Hellmann's caps took HV better. I just ignored that. These old timers have all kinds of superstitions.

He fired up the rig and dipped the 813, which he mounted on a big can that once contained "Polish" sausage, altho that is not what it said. Frank won't say "German." It is something left over from the war, I guess, but when he sees a Rin-Tin-Tin looking dog he calls it an "Alsatian."

In short order he was working some of his pals at a CW clip I cannot follow, but on tune up the final plate cap, cut from tuna cans, arched over. The ferret took off and Frank said, "must have been some dolphin in that one." I could not see if he was joking and was afraid to ask.

The whole set up was impressive, like some adult's electric train, and it took up about as much space, but Frank is not into miniaturization. It covered our 6-foot bench and at the end he stacked up some milk cartons to hold the final, which was partially obscured by a grocery sack to keep the ferret out of the high tension leads.

"What kind of output are you using on your Polish Sausage PA?" I asked. (I decided to go along with the WWII convention.)

"Link, of course," he said.

I still could not see his face.

FMLA XLIII - Echoes

Date: Wed, 17 Nov 1999

"And now to Mr. Kent of Gotham's Daily Planet:" "Tell me, Clark, what's your take on that?"

"Well, since a conventional wisdom has not developed, yet, for me to parrot, I'll just fall back on Professor Pangloss and say that the Administration must know what it is doing by invading the Vatican." "Human rights are foremost in the New World Order, and time will tell."

"What a fool!" Frank snapped as he pulled the plug on the chassis of an ancient Admiral and shorted the filters with a clip lead and a screwdriver. "I remember when he was a promising young reporter, but now he's banished to Sunday morning talk shows."

"It's like he wanted to be overlooked."

As Frank began to pull the 21 mc IF parts from the old black and white, I settled back in repose on a rusting 388 case. I pulled a Ralph W. Emerson that morning by skipping church to avoid Communion, and Frank tossed his off Saturday at Our Lady. Frank, an ex choirboy in addition to being leader of a Five Meter Liberation Army to take back 56-60 mc, skips when out-of-town troupes bring a non Latin Mass.

My kids were being ecumenically shuffled on cross-faith visits and Christie, Frank's chief bodyguard, attended All Apologies Unitarian with her boyfriend, Press, so she could join the gun control debate. Only Frank and I were in the basement as the other bodyguard, who I call the WARmon, was upstairs teaching Christies' pet ferret to attack Texas' 10-gallon water bugs.

Frank's interest in TV is sporadic. We don't have one and his trailer, where he spends less time than in our basement workshop, lacks even a broadcast band radio save the special coils for his Super-Gainer RX. But he pulls a lot of junkers down for parts and especially likes the pre mid-1950s sets for their 21 mc intermediate frequency. He once had me build a VHF front end from a Standard turret tuner, but now he re tunes the cans for 12 Meter transmitters.

When TV moves up from the bottom six channels, Frank reasons, he can pull the TXs up to 28 mc and push-push to 5 meters with any big twin triode. Until then he operates them on 25 mc and jumps up to 6M. You'd think someone would notice his 80-100 Kc wide modulated oscillations on the Magic Band, but he stays above 50.125 and no one catches him. If he inches up into Channel 2 and puts a herringbone on Sesame Street, the Feds drive down the street in a Crown Victoria with an antenna. "Barney's Brigade," the WARmon calls them, and they have yet to find Frank's unshielded pair of 250 THs.

"So Frank," I asked searchingly (just talking to my 1930esque pal seems to bring out Tom Swifties), "How is today, at the end of the century," different from the Depression Era?" I expected the usual recitation about character and adversity but, to my surprise, he said: "Not at all." I must have looked puzzled because he motioned to a breadboard on the bench and said, "just listen."

This was another of his regens, I could see. He names them and this one says "Bobbi" on its panel, which has silver foil on the back to shield the 34 and pair of 19s from hand capacity. It was a 0-V-2 in the parlance of its day as it had no RF amp, a detector and two stages of audio to a pair of Baldwin 'phones. I cranked down the bench supply to 2 volts and fed it 135 more from a Lambda in a nearby rack. I walked up the pointed black regen control and searched with a Type B dial for signals. An old voltmeter read 32 when the feedback went critical, without a 'pop,' and I could hear signals.

I was looking for another pair of 'phones when Frank said, "just listen" again.

What a mess. I could hear AC on most of the signals when I could keep them in the Blooper's passband. With some difficulty I was able to copy one of the errant ECOs at least enough to learn it emanated from a Hartley. There was no mention of the TX's tube type and his RX was said to be a 1-V-2. He wandered out of range and a chirpy Colpits, or something, came by with the OT signing, I think, "8GZ." No one was giving a name but everyone reported QTH.

I did not listen long. The funny keying was troublesome, like when Frank uses his hacksaw blade sideswiper, and I have never mastered the trick of copying one sig out of five without a direct conversion RX to let me zero beat the worst offender. Since it was broad daylight, I assumed the coils were for 40M, but I suspected a trick. I cut the voltages and looked under the wooden base for a tape recorder input, but found only some wing nuts and mismatched fasteners of all sorts. Frank calls Electric Radio magazine "a pitiful pit of form-over-function priggism," and they would not want to picture his home brew style, thank you.

One does not ask an obvious question of Frank, so I continued to consider the cacophony carefully after replacing the probably perilous potentials prudently. In seven monitored QSOs I heard one commercial allusion. Someone had a "Super Wasp." I heard Frank's favorite 210 tubes, literally, all over the band and I was glad when the WARmon broke my concentration by setting down the red eyed weasel.

"She ate three and bloodied a Malamute in four attempts," he said. I wondered what Sgt. Preston was doing in Dallas.

Then the tattooed skinhead turned to Frank and let the ferret, as it were, out of the bag.

"How is that ADA contest, Frank?", he asked revealingly.

Of course he meant Antique Wireless Association, but maybe ADA fit too.

All the OT sigs seemed to have marked disabilities.

FMLA XLIV -- Snuffy

Date: Fri, 9 Jul 1999

We tend to think the younger guys don't know any history before Jennifer Flowers, but the WARmon read Snuffy Smith somewhere.

Old Snuffy, the comic hillbilly of "Barney Google and Snuffy Smith" back when newspapers just had one color ink, liked to grab the poker 'stakes after shooting out the light. And his caplock was but a short step from the WARmon's Tech 9 that darkened a room as he backed out the door thru which his boss Christie pushed Frank. The skinhead sprayed the ceiling again and the last fluros fell among the 9mm cases in a Wagnerian darkness. The only pieces of unbroken glass were on Frank's breadboard.

Frank, my pal who wants to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army, meant well. He really just wanted to encourage the home construction and understanding of radio devices like he did before 1938 on 5 Meters. But the unrequested bodyguards who attached themselves to him are, well, humorless when it looks like anyone is going to harm their pal. Frank does communications for their WAR social club, for the Nation of Islam, and for anyone who has an anti-government slant. He never forgave the Feds for outlawing modulated oscillators on 5M.

But this time we were just taking in a suburban ham club meeting. Frank sets his browser to call him to his KayPro when the term "homebrew," or "home brew" + "contest" appears on any amateur radio mailer or website. He saw a posting for a QRP transmitter contest and thought he had a chance, even though his pair of 45s on pine lost to a Pack Ratt board kit

mounted in a wood box at the HamCom regenerative RX contest.

So Frank went all out and we drove to Irving, Texas, which is the home of the Dallas Cowboys who are not in jail at any given time.

The ham club over there has a nice meeting room in a cafeteria, but we never really got to try the cuisine. Truth is we did not get past the registration table and it was not just because of the bodyguards. In fact, Christie is quite presentable. She is 20 something and carries a baby bag that says "Nite, Nite, Baby."

Don't ask what's in it. You cannot see her tattoo, but her backup is covered with them. He has a shaved head, red muscle shirt, suspenders and jackboots plus a ring with a skull on it and it does not help a bit that he carries a huge dictionary sized book with a craft paper cover that says, "Therman, last ed."

Still, we usually get in places as I look like any other worn out 50-something guy with a white beard and Frank is positively natty in double breasted brown suit with shoulder pads, Navy last shoes and spats. But the woman with the little sticky name tags that say "Hello, my name is," took one look at Frank's offering and called a KA5-something who asked, "What are those?" He was pointing at a 50L6 and 25-something. It was not a good sign.

Frank explained he had built up a MOPA with a full set of plug in coils from 160 thru 5M. Frank ignores non-harmonically related bands and did not have time for a 12M/6M rig too. He showed them the coils in an Admiration Coffee can as an Old Timer wandered up and pushed thru the crowd to get a better look. Seeing the non polarity line plug, he said, "No transformer," and the KA5-something asked how it could work without one.

When Frank said there was a fine transformer right outside on a the pole, the OT laughed and explained that Frank had the filaments in series with a dropping resistor and was using a voltage tripler for about 400 volts of B+, no load, direct from the line. A couple of Neon bulbs operated as voltage regulators and a 25W bulb so old it actually said "Mazda" on it took the initial surge. The OT cautioned about plugging in the cord the right way and Frank showed him a pocket line tester.

But after an animated side discussion, the folks decided Frank could not enter because of insurance fears. That led to a spirited conversation in which, I fear, some things were said that many might now regret. And the menacing WARmon, as I call the skinhead, made the registration woman nervous. She said "Officer?" to a passing security guy so obese he could not throw Christie out, or even the red-eyed white ferret who was peeping out of the baby bag now.

But Christie did not even look around. She does not like police of any type so she shouted "Time's a'waistin'" and the WARmon opened the book.

The thing inside looked mildly like my Tom Corbet Space Cadet raygun and flashlight, but it made a lot more noise. I covered my ears as he hosed down the ceiling. We headed for the door but were met by a pair of policemen. One of them said, "Everybody back inside." "Were they're shots fired?"

"Yes there were," said Christie, stepping up to the big cop.

She showed him a picture ID saying she was a field rep for Handgun Control Inc. "We were illustrating the devastating effect of these immoral firearms and now I've got to go to the car for more copies of a Congressional Record speech by Senator Kennedy."

"Would you like one, too?" she asked as the cops pushed past us. "Commie," I heard one say.

The Irving Police are pretty good and might have caught us had not Christie simply driven down the block in Frank's Frazer and parked behind a Denny's. We went in for Frank's favorite "California Dreamin" sandwich and the WARmon joined us after parking his Toyota Land Cruiser in a closed car lot next door and affixing a pair of signs that said "One Owner" and "Nosotros Financiamos."

As the ferret growled over the skin from the "all white" chicken order the WARmon insisted on, Christie called her boyfriend to bring her Lincoln, just in case. We rode home with him after they finally took the barricades off US 183.

I opined, as we turned onto Loop 12, that I hoped this experience at least taught us something. There was a silence, but finally Frank said, "Yes, I think you're right."

"There are some situations in which a transformerless power supply might not be the best route."

FMLA XLV - The Moment

Date: Fri, 16 Jul 1999

I had not known Frank to use tobacco.

Oh, he would take a tributary toke on a cheap cigar to commemorate a new baby, but he never took up smoking despite being from an age when it was considered a badge of manliness. I saw the end of that age and succumbed for a while. But my pal who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army knew a simple truth. The differential diagnosis between males and men was made in bar ditches like this one, with the sun making little apparitions on the macadam, the bugs regrouping, and time moving more slowly, but more more completely, than it ever does indoors where they sell Camels.

He took some of it for himself and handed me the package of Bull of the Woods. It was an ancient but still moist sample. I could tell because the bull was still just that, not a steer like he, or it, is now. Frank has a lot of old fashioned things.

I took some tobacco and put it in my cheek. We men, if we, or I, qualify, have silent rituals and this was one of them. It was one of the easier ones, too. You could tell what it asked and know what to do about it. The real tests come on you so fast you don't have time to prepare --except for all of your life up to that moment.

Frank was well prepared. I could see the stock was plain hardwood without any fancy spacers or little porches for a fellow to lay his cheek while he squints thru some little telescope.

Frank told me once he enjoyed bullfights. I thought that strange then, but today, at the entrance of a ramp off I-20 in the afternoon, I understood why. No one would applaud if the Matador took out the bull from the stands -- he has to face it.

It was a Drilling, the way Europeans say it, but we, in our feigned Proletarian parlance call it an "over and under." The bottom, the bigger one, had to be from the '60s because no one makes them that way anymore. It was for the 2.4 S Band and it was adorned in the old way with an animal, a totem I suppose, along with the legend "Bear Buster."

Above it sat the modern one. It did X at 10.5; K at 24 and, in the bargain, the Ku at 33 Gc. It said, "Sharpshooter," and another animal, a Cobra, coiled on it. Those devices were like Frank's old super-regenerative receivers in that they put out as much signal as they "detected." They were wired together to a single trigger and a line ran from there to a chest crossing bandoleer of D cells that made Frank, in his bush jacket, look like a comically miscast Pancho Villa. The D cells said simply "Ray-O-Vac," but I noticed Frank's shoe sole had a cat on it and the handy talkie he answered now bore ducks -- several yellow ones and the legend "Sleepy Time Sentinel."

"I need at least 5 points," he told the WARmon, which is what I call his assistant, on the recrystaled baby monitor. We looked over the trench edge and a three pointer roared by. It started up the long, banked incline past us with it's Bug Catcher leaning back in the wind. I could not make out the other two antennas, and Frank just spat some of the 'Bull and said, "an appliance operator, yeah, but not an old one."

It seemed we had been there forever, but then it all happened quickly. The WARmon called out a 6 pointer and, to Frank's question, replied, "no tailgaters." We waited. I could not have done it alone. I thought he decided, for some reason, not to do it but, at the last minute, he sprung up and, always the follower, I did too.

It was a Land Rover, and he told me later he was glad as they are one of the simple, useful things that are now "so feminized as to be perfect fits in a woman's world, but useless in a man's."

He watched it. I guessed he might be counting the antennas and calculating the store-bought appliance each represented. He did not say. Not then. Not later. He had the weapon at his side and in the near-frozen time I noticed it said "Law Enforcement Wideband Impulse Simulator" in Duco letters on its butt plate.

He never raised it. He fired from the hip and stood his ground.

You never know what they will do when you hit them. It might have come right at us when the hash from 8 thru 30-something Ghz radiation hit its bank of detectors. Frank had eye contact, of course, but he lost it as the guy, a fat guy who looked somehow familiar, turned to look over his shoulder and, at the same time, sat on the brakes. The Rover passed us so close I could smell the stench of the tires. But it did not really make the bridge. It sideswiped the left side, then the right, and finally righted itself. But a huge, center-loaded whip sheered off and fell to the old, dry creek bed below. I looked at Frank to see if we should go after it.

"I'm not a trophy hunter," he said, "Let's go."

We moved quickly then, or as fast as we could go with my various infirmities, but Fate missed me that day and took Frank.

His Navy last Brogan slipped into a hole, spat and all. He fell and by the time I helped him get it out of the indentation, he was already swelling. He regarded it coolly, like it was something, or someone, else despite what must have been significant and growing pain.

"I can't go on," he said, "Leave me the LEWIS gun and go on without me."

As the WARmon, (who is an ex-Boy Scout if that is possible), and I lifted Frank onto a stretcher made from sheer-away road sign posts and the seat cover from the Frazer, I said, "The Spanish Civil War was over 60 years ago, Frank."

"Maybe so," he answered. I saw he was not looking at me, or his ankle, but at the setting sun.

"But tomorrow," he counseled, "when you wake at first light and hear the birds, remember that every day is a new war." Ernest Hemingway, a friend of Frank's, was born in 1899.

FMLA XLVI - Signs

Date: Fri, 23 Jul 1999

"An evil and immoral generation seeks a sign."

(Matt. 16:4, 12:38; Mark 8:12; Luke 11:29.)

I don't know if it was just Bob the Biker who started the trouble.

It could have been, as the 6' 5" bearded fellow draws a lot of attention in his overalls and chrome chain belt. Bob is a friend of my pal Frank. Frank plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army, Bob's many enterprises include fixing 300 plus Watt "microphone preamps" for truck drivers at various "Guts of America" truck stop locations. Somehow Bob found out about the FMLA and, later, met Frank on the road to Dayton.

But today Bob rode over in the Frazer with us to carry the 205 pound sample case while I took the handouts and a circuit Frank built up from the Feb., 1948 CQ. This W6QIR "Amateur Newcomer," project has an octal socket wired to use, without rewiring, a 6C5, 6J5, 6P5, 6F6, 6V6 or a 6L6. It allows quick configuration as TPTG, ECO, Hartley or classic crystal oscillator using plug in coils on input and output. It is a great teaching tool and a fair QRP transmitter. Frank uses it for everything around our basement workshop.

Frank wrote a handbill called "Adopting maximum modulation for minimum monitorability index," but what his bodyguard, Christie, actually sent out read "Offing the Man on Your Favorite Band." I expected a big turnout.

Frank has learned the FCC and other government agency tracing devices quit at a 5 Kc wide setting, so he is leading the way back to deviations greater than 15 kc (for the FM component) on transmit. His radiating super-regen receivers already take up 80-100 kc but he thinks prudent placement of a 1N4001 should eventually increase that by half.

But there were real problems before we even got in the lobby.

The valet parking guys had given up on the three outlaw bikers who were lounging around a fountain while one of their women bathed there. It could not be obscene, I thought, as most of her body was covered with a tattoo mural titled "The Life of Foster," who I took to be one of the bikers. The valets and a woman in a longish business suit were now speaking to a troupe of fellows in very short shorts on more conventional motorcycles, but again to no avail. Frank's other bodyguard kept the '47 Frazer idling at the curb.

There is never supposed to be a sign like that, but we were greeted by big one with an arrow saying "FMLA." Frank wanted to go right in and see who put it up, but he was intercepted by a large woman in a full length black shift.

Bob shifted the box of microwave oven transformers and such to his other arm and stopped her, but it was apparent she found the touch offensive. She hissed, "He's not going another step until he says what FMLA is going to do about partner parents of women who, while retaining alternate sex preferences, choose to be mothers."

I had not thought of Bob as a literary figure, but his answer, using alliteration and the terms, "mother," "other" and "further" was worthy of an Irish poet. I wish I could repeat it here -- or anywhere.

A crowd was gathering. It was mostly same sex couples but I was keeping my eyes on Christie, the 20-something bodyguard with the baby bag. If she unzips it, there is always trouble -- and not just from the ferret that sleeps inside. Christie did not look stressed until an huge woman, the female equivalent of Bob, moved up beside her, touched her waist a little low and said, "Honey, have we met?"

Christie's blue eyes glowed brighter than the ferret's red ones.

"It will be in Hell," she promised as she reached for the zipper.

It would have been a mess had not Frank raised his arms just then, like a Richard Nixon without jowls, and shouted, "Is anyone here LDS?"

"Right here congressman," a fellow in a suit answered. He made his way thru the crowd with a sign saying "FMLA -- Time for a Change?"

Happily, it didn't take long to explain that my well dressed pal was not Rep. Martin "Red" Frost, and that we knew nothing about the Family Medical Leave Act. I did not even know the Mormons, who call themselves "Latter Day Saints," owned the Marriott, but Frank, an avaricious reader, learned it one night when he reached for the Gideon and found another book in the bed stand too. And everyone was unaware the chain had another place called "The Courtyard" down from this Ballpark Way place near where the HamCom meets. A call confirmed we had the wrong hall.

The outlaw bikers were our honor guard and the Foster woman dried out on the way. The lobby of the other place had the right sign, "56 to 60 Club," but I could tell we were in the right place, anyway, as two big black men with suits and bow ties stood at each side of a seated guy who looked like an older, dejected Robert Preston from "The Music Man." The Fruit of Islam meant Frank's pal Ali made it down from Chicago, but the other fellow was a mystery to me.

Frank pressed on inside but the white guy blocked me. "Thank God you came," he said. "You're the first eligible person all morning despite the sign."

"Please don't tell me you're already in the AARP," he pleaded.

FMLA XLVII - Ashai

Date: Fri, 30 Jul 1999

I could imagine him showing me a Lexis...or banking his Mitsubishi for another run at the Arizona.

That was my first impression of Frank's visitor. Frank, who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army, shares my basement workshop. But when I went down there this particular day the self appointed bodyguards were missing and Frank was chatting with a dapper Nipponese.

Now Frank is quite a dresser. He sports wide lapel suits, crisp white shirts and even spats over his always shined shoes. But this fellow was a late model internationalized Frank with a \$1000 plus suit whose coat was tossed over part of an understated alligator briefcase. They both stood up, a little unsteadily I thought, and Frank introduced the visitor by a surname I could not even write in phonetics But the fellow, who bowed slightly before extending his hand, said "call me Ashai."

They invited me to sit on one of the folding chairs the basement dampness is consuming, and bid me to join them in a bottle of Mouton Rothschild '57. I declined their offer of a third "Muppet Babies" plastic cup and noted my 10-year-old daughter needed more work on hostess duties. But I did not want to give offense so I took one of Ashai's Cuban Panatelas "for later," as neither Frank or my Irish wife will allow smoking in the house. The cigar was marked as a "Che Guevarra Cheroot," but I knew that was just another pathetic ploy from Castro.

The ritual done, the pair showed me Ashai's Sinar electronic camera, a 5X7 inch model, set to display its digital capture and, to my amazement, a Collins 32G transmitter with twinlead feed was bit mapped there.

"Oh, forgive me," Ashai said. He gave me a business card with his name as proprietor of "Collins of Kyoto."

"Show him the next one," Frank admonished with a somewhat thick tongue, and the device displayed a near mint 202-A full rack transmitter. Ashai actually said "Ah So," before saying "This Velly Chelly piece obtained in Jefferson from guy named Bill for \$100 and Samurai sword."

They burst into riotous laughter at that and it was several seconds before they settled down enough for Frank to confide that the swords were made in the former East Germany in one's choice of Shogunate periods. "Makes it easy to cut deal," Ashai said and the pair roared again.

"So you are buying on this trip," I commented, and Ashai moved his coat to reveal the case full of pay to bearer Deutsche Bank bonds. I was not surprised Ashai had not embraced the Euro.

Just then the white ferret ran across the bench and startled Ashai. Frank explained it was a pet weasel. Ashai replied, "Good -- not year of Rat over in China." They roared again in mutual levity and I offered to make coffee. They composed themselves after that and Ashai explained the Collins business was the only one of his enterprises doing anything in the

recent downturn. They ignored the rest of the wine but became giddy again when Ashai said he must "visit Mr. W5EU to make him an offer he cannot refuse," as he closed the briefcase.

Upstairs, the bodyguard I call the WARmon and a twentyish, I suppose, Japanese woman had occupied themselves setting up plywood squares around the yard and throwing a 7-inch Kabar knife at them.

Neither had missed, the WARmon said, and Ashai introduced his "personal security assistant." This Miss Amy Lin was clad in tallish heels, a short, dark skirt and maroon blazer over silk blouse. She smiled shyly as she took my hand after replacing the knife in a sewn in blazer pocket. I also noted an H&K P-5 in a shoulder holster. That must have been the source of the self consciousness as there was little else about which to blush inside the blazer. But her grip was robust.

Amy piloted the Lexis after securing the briefcase and camera in the trunk. The back seat was filled with somewhat shopworn, but seal intact, boxes marked "SC-101."

"Quite a woman," I observed to the WARmon as they drove away.

His reply could be taken as a compliment, I guess. I saved the best of my remarks for my pal Frank.

"Why is it," I asked as we reached the porch, "that after repeated tirades against commercial equipment, especially Collins commercial equipment, undermining amateur radio's Volksgeist, I now find you in the basement toasting KW-whatevers with Peter Lori?"

Frank seemed quite composed now and, we learned soon enough, the ferret spilled the wine anyway in what was probably a misguided search for a worm.

"I'm Ashai's silent partner."

I was dumfounded as he continued.

"I reason the Collins stuff hurts us a lot less over in Japan and, besides, I make enough return to buy an occasional bottle of vino."

FMLA XLVIII -- Notes

(Thanks to John/KU4AF for furnishing this previously missing episode.)

Date: Wed, 17 Nov 1999

If you knew them, you wouldn't have.

Except Frank, of course. My natty pal who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army trades his double breasted suit for Black Tie easily and the formal wear just accents his forty-something gray at the temples. But the rest of the crew was transformed.

The WARmon, which is what I call the tall, lanky bodyguard, doesn't have any tattoos that show under a dinner jacket and his painfully short hair just makes him look like a Midshipman at the Opera. In fact, when we went to Das Rheingold, people kept asking him to help them find their seats. His boss, the chief of the self-appointed bodyguards supplied by the WAR social club, is a skinny 20-something who dresses like a very young soccer mom. But in heels and a black dress she looked like she actually belonged at the Garland Civic Center on Community Culture Night.

It is quite an upscale affair, with a series of tryouts to make sure the charity supporting audience won't be embarrassed, but Christie, complete with little clutch purse that would never hold either her sawed off or her bloodthirsty ferret, looked like one of the players--as she was.

On the way over, we kept in touch by 2M, which shows what a good mood Frank was really in. He won't normally go above 60 mc save for some 70 mc stuff he is doing in case he can reach the Brits this cycle. But as a rule he stays on 6M ready to QSY up 6 mc when the TV stations move and, "the balloon goes up," as he says. Still, he let my kid bring the HT that lost its buttons to a ferret on the way to Dayton in '95. My kid rode with Frank so he could play chauffeur later. Frank's '47 Frazer, which says "Manhattan" on it, looks like a limo to most cops and if the kid stays with the car we can park it up close. The kid even donned a dinner jacket, but refused to go in. He preferred to sneak sips of surreptitious half pints with the other chauffeurs, I supposed.

My wife's "mini" van, lighter by 250 pounds of clutter and 40 more of dirt for the outing, is equipped with a Polycom 6&2 rig that runs so hot it needs its own air conditioner vent, but it did fine for the trip across town. We had to park in the lot and

Preston Anderson escorted Frank's girlfriend, Elaine, as Frank is part of the show. Elaine looked pretty good in togs gleaned from the Civic Virtue Thrift Store where she works. She was glad to see my wife was right that many women would be wearing or carrying gloves, since it was after 5. Elaine's left knuckles say "Rita" on them. It used to be "Rico," but she did some brand altering back when.

We were successful in convincing Frank not to try out with his Ukulele. Instead he is the technical backup for Christie. That was not hard for my son to understand, but finding out the WARmon played Flute, and pretty well too, was a shock. When you are 15 all sorts of things surprise you. Ditto when you're 53.

The first act, just 16 minutes late, was a pianist. Then a singer did stand up while our bunch set up behind the curtain. I did not think to check on them as they had it down to 4 minutes from the cases. And sure enough, everyone was ready when the curtain parted -- but there were still gasps as the program just said "a duet." Frank stood off to one side and the WARmon had a music stand, but Christie was out there in the middle by the thing. She looked like a Valkyrie, and would have looked even more so had we not made her replace the Prussian Eagle with a Treble Clef. When the effect was taken, she nodded at the WARmon and they did Pacabell's Cannon in D like most of the folks had never heard it played.

It is called a Theremin, and this one was made years ago by Christie's dad, Gen. Jerry Bishop, from a Popular Electronics article for his first wife in 1954. It went with him at the divorce and ended up with a metal Donald Duck when he refitted and put in new 6L6s on Christie's fifth birthday, in 1975. She stayed with it, and it showed.

It is an audio amp and generator with inputs controlled by capacitive coupling from the musician's hands as they move about the two poles of a metal object on a stand. She could control loudness, tone, and a lot of musician sounding stuff only my orchestra alumnae wife can remember. But the effect was impressive and the audience loved it. Christie had to motion for them to quit clapping, finally, so they could play "Fools Fall in Love." That got the crowd too, and the M.C. finally had to come out and OK an encore which, happily, the pair had prepared. They finished with "When the Saints Go Marching In," took a formal bow, and the managers closed the curtain so the show could go on.

Of course they won the little cup. They had to set up again and do the overture to "Die Valkyrie," which they have been practicing because the WARmon wants to try out for a standby spot on next year's DMA presentation. And after that they got mobbed and it took over an hour to get out and down to a place more trendy than Frank's usual stop at Denny's.

On the way home Frank rode with the rest of my family and Elaine while the WARmon and I, my kid the chauffeur stand in, and Christie and Press, followed in the Frazer.

I could smell marijuana, faintly, but you pick your fights.

So, reliable old Frank is an Odysseus for our day, but what if he disappeared? What would the WAR do? The Feds? Majordomo? Starting next week, FMLA episodes #49 and 50 will contemplate just such a problem.

FMLA XLIX - Finding Frank, Part 1

Date: Fri, 13 Aug 1999

We lost Frank.

My pal who plans to take back 56-56 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army just disappeared on I-20 going West, according to one of his bodyguards, a kid I call The WARmon, who was following him in a Toyota Land Cruiser. There was some sort of a slow down and when it cleared Frank swung around a Hunt Brothers semi and the WARmon never saw him again.

The bodyguard made calls on his modified Archer Space Patrol handy talkie and on the Toyota's Polycom 5 which lost a few turns of wire to tune 57.27 mc, but Frank never came back.

Since it was the '90s, I called his broker first. Ayn Tagert- Tamez had been to St. Thomas with Allan Greenspan for an Objectivist workshop and had not heard from Frank, but she gave us a clue. She asked how he liked the old car parts.

It seems Ayn drives a '72 427 Corvette but, since they are rare, she used a '70 for a parts car. But she recently bought another '72 so she gave Frank the old parts car which had a rat motor along with the independent suspension and such. Another check of Frank's trailer, and another feeding of Zack the half-Siamese cat, led us to a refuse pile that contained not only a '26 Hudson but the undercarriage and flathead from Frank's '47 Frazer Manhattan.

Since Frank can get aviation fuel from the same pal who found him the B-36 landing lights he uses to teach folks who won't dim, it seemed likely he slipped the WARmon with a burst of 10.25:1 compression from the big Chevrolet motor thru the four speed box Ayn did not care for. We knew Frank had not been home as someone had parked a junk Pinto in front of his trailer. We called the police on it.

Worried now, I started calling Frank's friends and, when I reached a professor at Southern Methodist he said, "I'll call you right back." He was good to his word and ten minutes later he gave me a GPS reading he said was "somewhere South of the Zoo." I asked how he knew that, but he just said that if I saw any cruise missiles coming down the street I should duck.

Everyone wanted to go and, as the WARmon drove, Frank's guest Preston Anderson spoke to his sweetheart, Christie, of the metal object at our feet in the Toyota:

"We had those in Advanced Infantry Training," said the recent soldier with a MOS of Combat Infantryman, "But I don't recall them being released for civilian use."

Before she could answer, the WARmon snapped, "What did they tell you about using a tank on a Christian community?"

I reminded them finding Frank was our goal, Christie affirmed that, and then spoke to the four more Toyota Land Cruisers that had joined us on the road.

"Running Dogs," she said as she removed her usual blue

longsleeve shirt to reveal an exercise tee and, to my surprise, a little skull tattoo at her modest cleavage, "This is Sara Conner."

(It was the jaw less "Totenkoff" from the old Hussar regiments that was also used by the early SS, I recognized from a childhood study of WW II regalia.)

She told them to institute "Plan Baker, repeat Baker as in Bastille," and the Toyotas moved around us in a whine of overhead cams. I could recall each rig Frank modified and Christie labeled in her careful hand. A tiny WACOM 5 transmitter teamed with a Gonset Super 7 converter graced the first Toyota and a huge Johnson 5N2 joined a Tunaverter for the second SUV. The third all white Toyota's radio said simply, "the Fiver," and another, larger Heath 6M AM Transceiver, cousin to the 2M "Pawnee," was re christened "The True Aryan," on its green faceplate.

When we reached a neighborhood I would strain to call modest, the WAR had the street and alley blocked with signs reading "Under Construction." By now the white ferret had slipped out of the Christie's baby bag, that says "Nite, Nite, Baby" and also houses a 13-inch Ithaca 12 gauge double. The beast was pacing back and forth and leaving ferret prints on a metal box that said "Cal. 7.62 NATO."

We passed the checkpoint with Charlie still agitated and the WARmon stopped in front of a fallen down duplex with asbestos siding. "The Frazer is behind it," he said, and Christie told me, "I'll go with you."

As I approached the residence I heard a series of metallic clicks behind me and wanted to believe it was just the WARmon setting the brake. I looked over my shoulder and saw only Preston, who had picked up one of Frank's rosaries and was counting beads. I thought that strange as the whole Anderson family is Unitarian.

One side of the duplex was vacant and had an orange city sign I did not read, but the other door was open and we were met by a kid of about 6 or 7. Inside there was a TV set and a very pregnant young woman was watching "I Love Lucy." I was about to speak when the squelch on the WARmon's Polycom in the Toyota broke and the kid spoke first:

"You got a warrant?" he asked.

"Want to see it, child?" asked Christie as she unzipped the baby bag, but I put my hand out and said, "Please." The ferret jumped out and started around the porch, but this was no time to chase it.

Against the TV I could see an ancient single barrel shotgun.

That said these were East Texans, the mean ones that did not go to California. Those from West Texas always have Winchester repeaters. These folks are not to be fooled with so I motioned Christie to follow me.

We went back to the broken, weed infested sidewalk as the WAR brought up a '46 Federal truck, removed its bumper and began fitting a tool steel ram that looked like a prop from "The Untouchables," which by the theme music must follow "I Love Lucy."

"I've got an Idea," I told Christie.

"And ten minutes to make it work," she answered. Then she told her Minnie Mouse Fun Mic, "This is Sara Conner." "Begin Operation NATO in ten, that is One Zero minutes from my mark NOW."

"This place is almost Kosovo," she said.

I motioned for Preston to follow me and Christie told him, "After nine or so minutes, honey, move away -- this is woman's

work."

NEXT WEEK:

How did the SMU Professor Find Frank's Frazer?

Will the plan commission approve of the Urban Renewal Christie is about to undertake?

Who will pick up sticks?

FMLA L -- Finding Frank, Part 2

Date: Sat, 21 Aug 1999

Five Toyota Land Cruisers with M-60 machine guns and a '46 Federal flatbed with a tool steel ram were pointed at the falling down duplex behind which an SMU professor, somehow, found the missing Frank's Frazer, and I had just 6 minutes left when I whistled the bars of "Ride of The Valkyries," to open the Manhattan's doors.

I quickly got in and felt under the seat for Frank's back up rig. His regular rig, a Clegg "55er" altered by Frank and relabeled by Christie, would not get us out of this jam.

His pair of breadboarded 35s were there and I plugged them into the cigarette lighter and to the Heath Sixer supply Frank keeps in the glove box. Not waiting for them to heat up, I clicked the PTT rhythmically until, finally at Zero minus 17 seconds, Frank's voice came over my Archer Space Patrol HT. Preston tailed him saying, 'Christie, We have him and he's OK."

Christie's response doubled with another from Frank, but she was able, finally, to give the stand down and the Federal truck, already in motion, veered away from the shanty, rolled through three yards, over a toilet planter, and finally flattened a Dallas Area Rapid Transit sign saying something about Ozone.

My manipulating the two-tuber blanked home entertainment for blocks. The 100 kc wide modulated oscillator tore into cheap TVs with rabbit ears from places like "Immediate Gratification Rental Center" and the receiver's quench frequency slipped by the unlawfully installed cable boxes of the more daring neighbors. All the out-of-style 49 mc portable phones were useless and no one dared come outside with the WAR on the street. But the residents at ground zero consulted Frank as I hoped they would, and he read the primitive Morse as it beat against the 45 mc IF of the set.

"Why didn't you just knock on the door instead of sending Morse on the TV set?" Frank asked. I did not tell him about the kid who wanted a warrant when he heard the radios, and, when Frank told us we could come in the back way, "because something scared the Rotweillers under the house," I didn't reply. As we stepped over the rotting back stairs, Christie joined us and put the blood stained ferret in her baby bag after a cursory exam. "Not a scratch," she said.

Inside we found Elanie, 36, Frank's girlfriend from the Civic Virtue Thrift Store. Today she was wearing a runner's tee shirt against the heat. I noticed she had a tattoo, but I could see only a large bird's wing and the top of a wheel of some sort. The rest was where a gentleman would not seek it.

Elanie and Frank were building a frame and storage shelves around an exposed water heater in the kitchen ("These things put out too much heat for Summer"), but they seemed happy for the diversion. We were joined by Elaine's daughter, 22, and her grandson, 8. They were the pregnant woman and suspicious child from our attempt at the front door.

Frank apologized for being out of touch, saying he got a call from Elaine about car trouble and one thing led to another. He wondered how we found him and I said all I knew was his SMU professor friend did it in 10 minutes. That was enough to convince Frank that his pal must have searched for the signature of his keyless remote on the Frazer. The good doctor had helped him set up a solid state super regen circuit to save battery, but Frank vowed to go back to a regular lock.

It was clear to Christie that Frank intended to spend some time there, so she sent Preston and one of the WAR wagons back to my house for electronics. Press brought back a Mosely CM-1 receiver and a sack full of 6EA8s plus a Globe Chief 680 TX that really will work 80M thru 6M, and 5M as well, since Frank and Press spent an afternoon on it. A Gemtronics converter for 5 and 6M to the Mosely, a Turner Mic. and a Blue something key finished the station inside.

Outside the old TV antenna went on the Federal and Press installed an FMLA stealth number with reconditioned CDR rotor

for all channels and more. For low band they set new posts for Elaine's clothesline and added five parallel wires at 12 feet. At that stage the tail-between-the-legs Rotweillers finally appeared to christen the new construction.

With all the hardware stowed, Christie reformed the WAR group into a work party. They piled the flatbed with junk from the yard and the remnants of a dangerous storage building. Careful to take no written material with addresses or names, they deposited the load on a green of Dallas's posh Bent Tree golf course after dark.

A call to a FMLA judge stayed the residence demolition order long enough for Frank's broker to call a lawyer pal who bought the thing for taxes and delivered the deed to Frank. Then Frank wrote out a management/rental deal with Elaine for free rent in exchange for seeing to the other side of the duplex.

Frank also told the judge that Elaine's car, which he had towed to this trailer, was being looked at by police according to Tom over at Joad's RV Rest. (Tom does not speak directly to police because of some trouble in California a few years back). The judge promised to look into it, and I said nothing at all.

The WAR group made calls on all the neighbors telling them about a "George Lincoln Rockwell Foundation" grant that promised them three crisp new \$20 bills if they had their yards cleaned up by Monday and that, "they did not even want to ask" what happened if they did not.

It has been a week or so now, and the neighborhood looks a lot better. In fact, most everything would have worked out had it not been for me. I forgot to unplug the rig and the Heath vibrator supply, plus the 5 Ohm, 50W resister in series with the pair of 2.5V Type 35 tubes drained Frank's battery.

He had to stay over with Elaine.

FMLA LI -- The Long View

Date: Sat, 28 Aug 1999

"Are we making any progress?" he asked.

I laughed at my friend who plans to take back 56-60 mc with a Five Meter Liberation Army. The little hamfest, covering in the corner of an armory, had but three lines of tables and not all of them were sold. Of the occupied, some had arts and crafts. Others featured rusty garage leavings. You could survey the place from the middle aisle.

"I think we've made a lot of progress," I told him, "We've seen a \$150 Eico 753 and a Galaxy III for \$225."

He frowned. The Eico was said to have been "Put on the shelf and never used," which is believable of that model, but the dented corner suggested it might have met a Swan drifting the other way.

The Galaxy said "firm." on it, in the dust.

"I mean are we doing the right things to accomplish FMLA's goals?" he said.

"Without doubt," I answered. "We can convert a 6M or 2M ham rig in record time and you have three TV transmitters running 24-hour "I Led Three Lives" episodes right under the noses of the license holders." "I'm seeing little 45mc SAW filter pins everywhere I go, and the joint WAR/Nation of Islam website your bodyguards run is going to win a prize," I reminded him.

(The Website, nicknamed "Jiving Janet," features a nude Attorney General Reno in a shoot 'em up arrangement. At advanced settings she does a mildly lewd interpretive dance with an incendiary projectile. The player can elect his favorite cross hair.)

"But all those are simply technical things," Frank mused, "The fellow with the tube caddy over there could do as well." "I wonder if we are changing men's hearts?"

I didn't answer. I couldn't.

"We must convince people of the virtues that accompany home built and home understood electronic equipment," he continued, but I was not sure he was talking to me.

We walked over to the tube caddy guy, who turned out to be the son of a diseased TV repairman. Frank dug thru the box marked, "Your choice, \$5," and bought an 815 and two 832s for 75 cents total.

The merchant lamented that the metal 6L6s and the the EL-34s went quickly to other table holders, but that only an occasional 12AX7 sold since the public was allowed in.

It was Frank's only purchase and, since the Beanie Baby woman didn't have a ferret-looking offering to send to the East Coast, Frank's bodyguard, Christie, left empty handed save for the real ferret and whatever else she had in her baby bag. She drove us home in her Lincoln but Frank was strangely quiet.

Back in our basement workshop, she finally decided to break the silence:

"How old are you, Frank?" she asked.

"Old as you feel," my pal said, predictably.

The object of her question looks about twice the age of the 20- something Christie. Frank is just to the tall side, trim, and has a touch of white at the temples of his "standard men's haircut" one can only get in \$50 shops downtown or from rounding Hispanic women in "Unisex" places near where Frank parks his trailer in the Barrio.

Where he gets his hair cut over there, his '47 Frazer, brown like most of his built up shoulder, double breasted suits, always draws attention from loitering youth. But it just looks like another old car on it's way to concrete blocks where his girlfriend, Elaine, lives. On my street, where he parks it for the hours he uses our shared workshop, no one comments on it.

The police have given up ticketing the Frazer for its outlandishly out-of-date California plates, and the Urban Standards people don't leave little notes about fix-ups for me anymore since it got out that anyone with a 45mc SAW filter from a junk TV set, worn as a button, is part of an "enterprise zone." All those really mean is that one is in the FMLA, but that's enough, it seems.

Christie toyed distractedly with the SAW button on her blue, longsleeved shirt's collar. She was morose about her boyfriend, Preston Anderson, leaving for Annapolis the day before.

"Really, Frank, Do you Remember WW II?"

"Too well," he said, not looking up from his project. "Bunch of British aircraft stuff came back so cheap I even bought one."

He put down his wood handle, square shaft screwdriver and looked up through the ground level casement window where a small, spotted lizard scurried across the screen.

"But I soon put it up on a shelf so I could see the enemy," he said after a moment.

He went back at the chassis with a nickel plated pair of wire cutters he still calls "dykes," despite our warnings. We just got him to stop saying "gay" for exuberant.

"That ought to hit 57 megacycles," he said as he trimmed the other coil in the push-pull tank. He began looking in his hamfest sack for a tube, but stopped when Christie asked,

"Do you remember WW I?"

"Who can forget a betrayal?" he snapped.

She sat back nervously.

"We were all betrayed," he told her.

He turned around to me and said: "The German boys in the trenches, the French, the Tommies and the ones we sent Over There - - They tricked us all." "The Lusitania lie." "Kaiser Bill and Kaiser Woodrow."

I was uncomfortable at his tone.

"I talked to the Major later, a lot later," he continued, "Around the time the League pulled its trick in '38 or '39, I forget."

"He said he wished he never went -- that he never even saw Flanders and never even thought of a superhetrodyne."

Frank was looking out the window again, but no lizards cast shadows on the weathered wood of the workbench. Frank won't work over metal because he uses a lot of transformerless supplies.

He was quiet for a long time -- a very long time and I began to fear some sort of little stroke, called a "transient ischemic attack" in the hospitals. I reached out and touched him tentatively,

"Frank...Frank...you OK?"

He looked down then, at the wood chassis where he was just trying to place a funny looking 815 tube with its two plate caps.

"You all right?" I urged again.

He smiled his usual dapper grin, but it may have been a bit less bright than before.

"Oh, sure, ...I'm OK," he assured us, "...I just had an episode of The Thousand Yard Stare."

"They happen less and less since I got into this," he added.

I guessed he meant his version of Bill Hosington's 6M amp article from the November, 1964, 73 Magazine, but with Frank you never know for sure.

FMLA LII -- Frank's Goodbye

Date: Fri, 3 Sep 1999

The Airflow trailer, made from a vintage DeSoto, was so settled into the muck of Joad's RV Rest that the WAR folks had to bring their '46 Federal flatbed up to pull it out.

They threw Frank's faded metal lawn furniture on a trash heap around the rusting remains of a '26 Hudson Super Six and hooked the trailer to Frank's '47 Frazer for the trip to my place. Zack the half Siamese cat peered out a window as my dapper pal pulled up to the curb and the WARmon's dog Skipper, lame from an old injury, frolicked in freedom from a cramped Toyota Land Cruiser when they stopped. Four more bald youths climbed from Christie's white Mark VIII to help the kid I call the WARmon carry the boxes and such from my basement to trailer while their slim officer stood guard with her baby bag close at hand.

Christie does not have a baby, unless you count my friend Frank who plans to take back 56 to 60 mc with his Five Meter Liberation Army. The bag holds an abbreviated Ithaca double that would be as at home in "The Road Warrior" as Frank would be in "It's a Wonderful Life." While the fascist five moved boxes of wood-based electronics, a statuesque, Italo-German looking woman named Ayn Tagert-Tamez arrived in a 1972 427 Corvette. She brought mementoes for each of the imirgees and gave Frank a kiss that would have curled my spats if I, like Frank, wore them.

When the last was loaded Frank turned to me and said simply, "I hope you won't forget us."

I could never do that, I told him as I turned away slightly.

It was true, of course. I met Frank on the air one night and thought his scheme to take back 5 Meters was foolish. When he began to use my basement shop, I judged his old-fashioned ways and views as merely eccentric, but, over time, I began to see things his way. Frank was all we wanted to be back when we thought about how we might become and not how we ended up. He could fix anything and the talent transcended the electronic. Fiery half-Mexican community activists brought going away presents to hatemongering homophiles when Frank was about, and a young woman who said "Nigger," and "Spic" fluently was now greeting our letter carrier, Grace, by her first name. Grace would qualify under either of those epithets.

Frank always used feedback. A circuit would take a little positive push and go into oscillation at a higher level. People did the same thing, and after knowing him for these months I no longer think the pronouncements at my kid's Boy Scout meetings are corny. Seen through Frank's eyes the world no longer seems settled. Things can change. I never wanted to forget that, either.

When they were gone, up to Interstate 30 some blocks from my house, I resisted the temptation to monitor them on my much altered Archer Space Patrol handy talkie. I locked that in the box with the few things my daddy left, but I kept the little pin made from a 45 mc SAW filter out of a scavenged TV set. Frank says it just proves you have been inside a castaway chassis for parts, but I don't think that is all it means.

In the English Civil War, at the Battle of Marston Moor, Royalists in a 5 to 1 numeric superiority attacked the boxed in, starving Roundheads. The King's troops got trounced, but when I think about that I don't see Oliver Cromwell. I see Frank, his double breasted suit exchanged for a chain mail of SAW filters, turning the troops and saying, "follow me."

I'll try, Frank. This time I'll really try.

FMLA - Rumors of Frank

Date: Sat, 30 Oct 1999

On Tue, 19 Oct 1999 BobR writes:

>Michael,

>Sure has been a long dry spell since the last Frank episode.....

>Bob/WB0AUQ

Frank is happy in Florida. It took some work to get him there. There were 13 more episodes I had to write to make my family happy with the move.

He settled down with a Maoist Communist woman from Honduras and started a family. He took a Ph.D. in Math and a discovery in his dissertation put he and Christie and Press in business together, but he teaches at a Junior College anyway. A two week visit from the Major to Florida helped Frank sort out some things he had been thinking about and served as a reunion. Did you know Frank joined the California National Guard at 16 by lying about his age? He was sorry he missed the Spanish American War.

He was called up for the Mexican Incursion when they found out he knew something about radio, and, when WWI came, he was assigned as a Buck Sergeant aide to The Major -- they go way back.

Frank has two kids now and has settled down as much as you could imagine him ever doing. But he resurfaces here occasionally, as this note my oldest kid, the 15-year-old KC5FDL, got the other day. It has overtones of Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.

They took Frank's truck with the back full of containers and tools.

When they got there they didn't turn to the lake house built around an old trailer in the Roman style, but went up the hill to the radio buildings where an armed guard checked both their IDs, saying, "Sorry, sir, but you said everyone."

They didn't go into the transmitter building, but into an old metal skin thing with a door that answered Frank's whistling a few bars of Die Mastersinger of Munich by opening and letting them into a concrete floored area that lit up with the flickering of old fashioned AC Fluro lights when they drove in.

Only a few crates were inside on the right, and the left had a tarp over something large that had to be the car. Before they could get out of the truck, however, an employee bought a small electric fork lift and Frank chatted with her for a few moments. When she walked away, Frank closed the doors with a button on the wall and asked Sonny to help him remove the cover. They lifted it as high as Sonny could and folded the cover before regarding the big brown car underneath. His dad never hurried, Sonny learned early in his 10 years.

"A Fletcher?" he asked.

"Frazer," Frank said. "This one is a '47 and they quit making them in 1952."

"Sixty six years," amazed Sonny.

"Seventy two for this one," Frank said, "But it has the motor and some other parts from a sports car General Motors used to make and the second set of lights are from a Korean War B-36 bomber."

Sonny did not remember when the Korean War occurred or who was in it, so Frank reviewed it as he placed the fork lift and pulled the front of the old car up nearly a meter. By the time he had it draining old oil into a pan, Sonny could pronounce Pan-Moon-Jon every time. Mao Tse-Tung was easy as his mom often spoke of him.

They changed lubricants in parts cars didn't have anymore and vacuumed out the sparse interior where Sonny found something he never expected under a fabric fold across the front seat.

"It's a World War I shotgun called a "trench broom," but technically a Winchester Model 1897 with a fitted heat shield," Frank said. "I promised some friends I'd always keep it there." "I'll show you how it works now, and if we can find a lot of open space somewhere you can fire it." "It makes a lot of noise and a lot of recoil, but you can absorb it if you set it against your shoulder." "Your mom can hit flying birds with it."

Sonny could not imagine his mom, who Frank always called 'Caba, shooting a bird of any sort, but he had never caught his dad in a lie or even an exaggeration, so he just assumed the bird shooting was part of her mysterious past in McAllen, Texas. Now the only birds she talked about were the humming birds she lured to the house and recorded with a modified satellite camera.

The shotgun was simple enough to operate, but it smelled of oil and wood and had all sorts of sharp edges no modern weapon would tolerate. The shells were huge and said "#4 B" on them. Frank explained the numbering size before they put the old soldier back in its billet and pumped a little less than 700 liters of aviation fuel into the Frazer. They put 1000 more in the back compartment and the two modern batteries they brought took far less space than the two they replaced in the front compartment. The last thing Frank did was remove the antique plate from the back, putting it next to one of the spare tires, and affixing a new one that said, "Florida, Federal Judge." That was from his friend Jodi's mom. His mom sent a vacuum bottle with beans, a mountain climber's carton full of rice and a tin of auto-heat-on-opening tortillas, corn.

Inside, the seatbelts were manual like an airplane and Frank pulled out a button with a "C" on it before starting the engine.

"What does "C" mean?"

"It means I'm getting old, Frank said, "It also stood for "choke" which restricted the air input on old engines to make the fuel mix rich enough to start, but this one has a regular fuel injected mill except for displacing seven liters."

"SEVEN Liters?" gasped Sonny. That was bigger than the engine in Press and Christie's 21 Meter yacht.

"Listen," Frank said

The motor roared when he turned the key and settled into an uneven idle that echoed around the building.

"How did you stand the noise?" Sonny shouted.

Frank smiled and pushed the "C" button back into the dashboard, which was a deathtrap of chrome and rough edges. The motor quieted.

"I forgot that I wired the choke to bypass the catalytic converters and mufflers and go directly to fiberglass batting filled tubes once called "Smittys," his father explained.

The now quiet Frazer moved to the door where Sonny got out and pushed the button. Back in the car, they drove around the compound's seven kilometers of roads and, finally, out onto the four lane entry ramp to I-97 a half hour away. When Frank got a green to enter, the Frazer leaped forward like a jet, passing all the other entry ramp traffic and blending easily into the 8 northbound lanes. There was no auto sensing, but Frank kept letter perfect separations and the vehicle was quiet when not accelerating after they put up the hand controlled windows on the sides and operated the climate control.

"So, Dad, where are we going?"

"Texas," he said, "We need to find some things and that's a good place to start looking."

FMLA LIV - Book Review -- Understanding Radio

Date: Wed, 17 Nov 1999

"It's an epistemological choice, of course, but I think these guys, like Marcus and Levy, were on the right track by starting with a radio receiver and progressing from that known ground."

He handed back my copy of Watson, H. et al. "Understanding Radio, A Guide to Practical Operation and Theory, 2d Ed., McGraw-Hill. Frank reads like Superman types.

"I had seen this book back at the start of the second war," he continued, "but this second edition added several things including phase inversion, AC/DC power supplies, vibrators and a lot of material on public address amplifiers I found welcome in a textbook.

"At 1951, it was contemporary with the Johnson Viking I," I noted, and Frank made a face.

"That's like remembering your children's births in terms of Bill Clinton's floozies," he ejaculated, "But you do allude to the extensive, detailed home brew project collection -- I like it better than Marcus and Levy for that."

"The 6J7, 6J5 regenerative receiver?" I asked, hoping he'd get my drift.

"That one was so vanilla it had little spots," Frank said as he sat up from adjusting a spat, "But at least they showed how to make those, and all the other coils, instead of sending youths out for proprietary parts that weren't common even when the book was written. You could make one of those today, but I'd add the optional 6K7 RF amp and think a long time before I'd agree that putting a power supply on a chassis with a regen is an improvement."

"Most of the projects are portrayed on pine," I pronounced. Frank's speech patterns are catching.

"Would that it always be so," he said stiffly, "When a newcomer compares one of these parts placed drawings with the circuit diagram, he gets a feel for schematics that's hard to acquire these days."

"He can also get a big shock fooling with a pair of 807s on a breadboard," I said directly.

"And swiftly," he agreed, "But that push-pull project and the Gnostic hint about combining it with another 807 doubler and a 6C5 Hartley would lead to a serviceable set up in any age. Those were welcome alternatives to the typical single ended QRPs usually offered for beginners."

Frank says deliberate QRP simply puts the burden of the contact on the other guy. He runs a pair of 100THs in push-pull, and the book's including a T-20 tube project didn't even rate a comment. He was fond of the 2M TX using a pair of 7A4s and he thought the Lecher wire section the best he'd seen.

"So, any other especially remarkable sections sighted?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "I like the tuned dummy load and the home brew absorption wavemeter. Both were breadboarded -- too often we show neophytes how to build something but don't give them a clue on how to test it."

"So you think I ought to keep the book?"

"Of course," Frank said. "Don't even think of transferring it to someone who might build something. Put it in your Garage Gulag or your Attic Alcatraz! Or seal it in silver solder like Lucy's coffin in Dracula -- put a bunch of Garlic in the pages first and make sure to enclose it in the embrace of an Eldico or the clutch of a Collins! But for Armstrong's sake don't let it get out!"

He turned back to his brace and bit and I slipped quietly up the stairs. I decided to let him cool off. He's mounting 6J6s without sockets for some scheme in our basement workshop.

I left him the book.

FMLA LV - Last Episode?

Ignacia, friend of Frank



Date: Fri, 29 Nov 2002

All this F-layer means not much E-skip, so I'd not talked with Frank on 57.27 for a while.

I thought about that coming home from the convenience store as my Lafayette HE-45 drifted over to the audio carrier on Channel 2 and I heard something about domestic terrorism. That made me think of Frank too. Back in '95 to '98 Frank frequented my basement and I became, unwittingly, part of his scheme to take back 56 to 60 mc. Always erstwhile, he formed a Five Meter Liberation Army (FMLA) to ready his cohort for the day HDTV pushed everything up. His theory was if enough of us were ready - if we perfected the home construction of radio equipment - then "not even Janet Reno and her tank," could dislodge us.

I was wondering how many FBI files that association put me on when I rounded the last corner: and decided I needed a cop. A huge crowd of neighborhood youth blocked the street. But they were unable to stand still so, in the ebb and flow of it, I caught the unmistakable grille of a '47 Frazer Manhattan. Frank was back.

Not only was he back, he was standing on the bumper, holding the Titanium pole of his homebrew Squalo, and haranguing the massed Mexican-Americans in Spanish. This has happened before. The kids thought his Fraser a Lowrider while his double breasted brown suit and Navy Last Brogans were close enough to Stacy Adams to make them think he was someone worth hearing. I eased through the crowd, straining to follow the Spanish, and recognized a familiar refrain.

Frank was telling them about the evils of big government, the virtues of home construction of radio equipment, and the fellowship opportunities at Our Lady of Conspicuous Contrition up the street. But he was near the end of his tirade since a

Hispanic looking woman without piercing and was passing out plastic bags with Radio Shack Handie Talkies, Dollar Store soldering kits, and a 14.318 crystal from a discarded IBM. The bilingual instructions would tell how to trick the toy up to 57.27, where Frank said, "the government can't hear you there." There was much interest in the kits, but I was interested in the woman.

It had to be K4SDS, Frank's wife who he called "La Caba," or "The Corporal" for two knife marks on her left forearms. Frank picks calls to suit his mood too. And it seems Ignacia spent some time down in Peru, in a protest movement called Sindero Luminoso, before wandering North to a Mississippi roadside park where she encountered Frank moving to Florida, "where all the hams seem to be going." One thing led to another but I'd only worked her in A2, which for them was also F2, since Frank liked to modulate the oscillator and save a transformer. He also thought the power company's was enough winding on the P/S, so he walked up his high voltage from the line to about 600. After that, he ran another twisted pair to the input side of the Pole Pig and went to half wave, or full, as necessary. He always checked to see that he had the right side "Earthed," as he says, but it doesn't matter as much if you only build on wood.

As the crowd thinned, I greeted the lady with "Mucho gusto in conoerte," She replied, "and I'm happy to meet you too, sir," in letter perfect English. She even recited her call as "Sierra, Delta Sierra," with no leading "E" sounds. Native Spanish speakers tend to drink their "Esprites" while listening to their "Esterios." But Frank has a positive influence on almost everyone, save perhaps the Homeland Security Bureau.

He was in good spirits. He wanted to take his new wife down to the old basement shop, but first he set his car alarm. It covered most of the package tray since he liked a circuit he saw but distrusted the NE-555 chip. Instead, he built one up from Mil Spec 6J6s. It was a big concession from Frank, to use miniatures. He thinks the Octal was as small as we needed to go.

It was a short visit. My family was off at some sequel for which I missed the first feature and Frank and his bride wanted to visit the church down the street before driving on to McAllen, Texas. He explained that, somehow, the Feds came to believe his better half was born there, as one Ignacia Suarez, instead of her real name, which she didn't reveal. She just said she was "Mrs. Frank" and signed her QSL card that way too. The card is a favorite of mine. It shows a wall poster of Che Guevarra, Jesus of Nazareth, and Fidel Castro dressed in fatigues, The Redeemer is holding an AK-47, and all of them are laughing about something or the other. It's not the kind of sentiment I'd expect Frank to approve, but he seems able to stay on message, which for Frank is always the self-reliance virtue. And Ignacia clearly had that. She was knitting some garment as Frank and I looked over the latest additions to his mobile setup. It was going to be too small, even for a daring Spanish lady, but it's like Frank says: "The sooner you start, the sooner you get the mistakes out of the way."

And then they were gone, but not forgotten. I heard the next day that flights in and out of San Antonio were delayed for a "communications blackout," about the time my friends would be passing there. I thought of the pair of 8877s he had in Push-push in the trunk, with the carbon mic looped across the free running oscillator. I imagine he saw a friend and gave him a call. And that made me go out for a try at 57.27. No one was on the frequency at that moment, but that's OK too. Frank is eclectic. He says old Lao Tzu was right about a journey of a thousand leagues beginning with just one step. I went down to plug in the soldering iron.

73 de ab5L, student of Tecraft and 6M's Golden Age, 1956-58

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