

Blind Radio Amateur Chats Daily With Son in Caribbean

“King Peter 4 Charlie Dog! (KP4CD); this is W3KBE. This is W3KBE, calling King Peter 4 Charlie Dog in Fort Brooke, San Juan, Puerto Rico! Calling and standing by. Come in Temple and take it away.”

In the basement of a comfortable, old-fashioned home at 1705 Lamont Street, N.W., a spry gentleman with a white goatee fingers the dials on an array of complicated apparatus before him, talking crisply into a microphone. Suddenly his face lights up as a voice comes out of the ether.

“W3KBE...this is KP4CD. Hello Dad. I’m getting you fine. How do I sound to you?”

From the smile lighting up the old man’s face, you get an impression that to Wayne M. Eller, the voice of M/Sgt. Temple Eller, way down in the Caribbean, sounds pretty good.



Amateur Radio Leader

At 65, Wayne Eller is one of Washington’s most eminent hams – which in the stodgy language of those who are not hams, means that he is a leader in local amateur radio circles.

These circles are pretty extensive these days: There are at least 500 non-professional enthusiasts now in the capital who would understand perfectly the remarkable things Mr. Eller says and does when he talks to his son each afternoon at 4:30.

Holding the microphone in one hand and casually lighting a cigarette with the other, Mr. Eller exchanges views with Temple on rhombic antennas, lead in cables and the like.

His wife also chats with her boy, but she is more likely to descend to a nonscientific plane.

The son, in reply, talks from his barracks in historic Morro Castle, which is part of Fort Brooke, in Puerto Rico.

Long Interested in Radio The Eller family's interest in radio began in 1937. Mr. Eller passed his examination for an operator's license in April 1942, but was unable to use it during the war. His station license was granted last February, when W3KBE went into operation.

During the four years of waiting, Mr. Eller took no chances on losing his radio touch. Having just retired from a long business and civic career in Virginia and here, he worked as hard as he ever had in supervising 10 local stations of the War Emergency Radio Service.

These were in constant readiness throughout hostilities, to help the city cope with devastation that never struck.

As Mr. Eller operates his delicate equipment it is difficult to bear in mind he works under a handicap that would defeat many. His touch is sure and swift. His hand does not tremble as he threads a delicate wire through the eye of a tiny clamp or gently tightens a screw the exact half-turn necessary.

It comes as something of a shock when he pauses before one of the many snapshots before him and says: "Somebody told me one of these pictures is upside down. I haven't gotten around to fixing it yet."

It is easy to forget Mr. Eller has been blind since 1942.

Editors Note: This article was printed in the "Sunday Star" in Washington, D.C. on November 24, 1946. Wayne Eller was my grandfather. I recall spending many hours with him in his „ham radio room“ both in Washington and later in Petersburg, Virginia. I ended up with a career in radio (and later in television) and I'm sure that was due, in part, to his influence. Wayne Eller was born September 28, 1881, in Fairmont, Nebraska, the son of James William Eller (1846-1923) and Frances Hager Eller (1848-1898). He grew up in Omaha and moved "back East" in the early 1900's, after the death of his mother. Wayne Eller was married to the former Mary Temple (1878-1969). He lived in several cities, including Philadelphia, Washington and Petersburg. They had three children: Helen Eller Powers (1904-1979), Donald Temple Eller (1906-1994) and Temple Lawrence Eller (1912- 1996). Wayne Eller was employed by the National Biscuit Company and was an officer with State Planters Bank in Petersburg. In the early 1940's until shortly after the war, Wayne and Mary Eller operated a rooming house at 1705 Lamont Street, N.W. in Washington. About this time, Wayne Eller became interested in Amateur radio (ham radio) primarily to contact his son Temple. Wayne Eller was an avid camper and outdoorsman. He frequently took his family on camping and canoe trips along the James and Appomattox Rivers and into the Great Dismal Swamp. - --- Harvey Wayne Powers, April 2009