

been named manager of the company's Washington, D. C. office. Swetland had previously been manager of the new product line. G. D. Andrews, vice-president, J. W. Swetland, 1484 Fairway, has investigation department.



HARTLAND SMITH TESTS HIS PORTABLE TRANSMITTER Permits him to send messages from his car. (Dick Shirk Photo)

Radio Amateur Contacts 'Hams' in 80 Countries

By RAY DENNIS

A local amateur radio operator, Hartland Smith, 467 Park, has communicated with radiomen from approximately 80 different countries since he started his station in the spring of 1941.

Among countries he has contacted are Ecuador, Denmark, Gunn, Newfoundland, Germany, Honduras, Peru, Iwo Jima, Japan, North and South Rhodesia, Italy and Turkey.

In addition he has talked with "hams" from countries behind the "Iron Curtain." These operators were from Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Smith pointed out that those radiomen would not discuss anything except "radio talk." When asked personal questions, they refuse to answer.

ALTHOUGH HE HAS never talked with anyone in Russia, he has received a card from an operator from that country, stating he had picked up Smith's signal.

The longest distance the local operator has ever communicated with is New Zealand.

He has six transmitters, including one in his car. They range in strength up to 300 watts. Smith pointed out that he has talked with "hams" in Puerto Rico and Mexico City while driving down Woodward avenue in Birmingham.

He has studied Spanish so he can converse with operators in South American countries. Smith stated his Spanish is very rough. However, he added, the operators from the southern continent usually can't speak English much better, so the conversation is quite choppy.

AFTER AMATEUR operators communicate for the first time, they send QSL cards to each other. Each man has a distinctive design for his card. Smith said one of the main purposes of these cards is to prove to others that they reached certain sections.

The local radio operator said weather conditions greatly affect short wave communication. At this particular time, this section is in the bad part of the Solar circle and due to sun spot activity, radio communication is poor. This condition happens about once every 11 years and it is now difficult to contact other countries, Smith stated.

Before an operator can secure a Class B license from the Federal Communications Commission, he must send and receive at least 65 letters a minute of Morse code and pass a comprehensive theoretical examination. An advanced theory test must be passed to get a Class A license.

There is no age limit to secure a license. In fact, the youngest known operator in the country is 10 years old.

SMITH SAID IT would be possible for a beginner to set up a "modest" station for as little as \$50. When he started his station in 1941, his first transmitter cost \$12 and his receiver \$15.

One of the current problems

facing all "ham" operators is the interference caused by television sets. They transmit a signal which at times makes radio reception difficult. There are about 25 licensed amateur operators with stations in Birmingham, and about 80,000 in the entire country. Smith said there were more operators throughout the nation soon after the end of the last war, but the amount has since leveled off. Amateur radio operation in the United States was banned during World War Two. Smith's call letters are WA5YVD, and his station is located at his home.

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