

Hamdom's Traditions

A Bedtime Story for Young Squirts

By Rufus P. Turner, WIAY—W3CVT—W9FZN*

A WEIRD woebegone implement hangs above Warner's desk at Hartford. You'd never guess what it is if you didn't already have an inkling. It appears to be equal any day to beating the brains out of King Kong. You'd swear it at first sight to be the stock of some antediluvian blunderbuss. A half-dozen acres of Manhattan rock-bed might be plowed up with it without injury to its gross lines.

If you inquired as to its name, use, and evolution, your informant would cast a stealthy glance about the chamber, even as Rasputin might on the verge of imparting a sinister secret; and being assured of privacy, would hiss in hushed monotone, "'Tis the one and only Wouff-Hong, sacred symbol of law and order in amateur radio." And you might reasonably expect to hear the crashing sound of a Chinese death gong at the next minute. Lo, the poor Indian had a word for your next question—"wo," which means whence comest and whither goest!

The Wouff-Hong came from the hands of The Old Man, the supreme sage of amateur radio. But, take it or leave it, in the beginning the bewhiskered one himself wondered what a Wouff-Hong was!

It chanced that a vehement article, denouncing interference on ham wavelengths and dripping with wrath, slipped into the January, 1917, issue of *QST*. Many a youthful ham—"young squirt," as the bellicose writer called them—shivered as he read "Rotten QRM" by The Old Man. Too, there has been much shuddering and chattering of teeth in the years that have followed; The Old Man's articles have appeared on these pages again and again, but in sixteen years of watching over ham radio and incensed writing he has not disclosed his identity.

In his first article, the Wise One called attention to word-butchered abbreviations concocted by code men which were just slipping into use.

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The Old Man had lost out on sleep because of this and interference. The words "Wouff-Hong" and "Rettysnitch" had come through his 'phones with a mess of other semi-intelligible yield—this was food for his grouch. He—The Old Man did—asked what in the name of common sense a Wouff-Hong was!—insinuated that it sounded like something with which monkeys are beaten in the southern states.

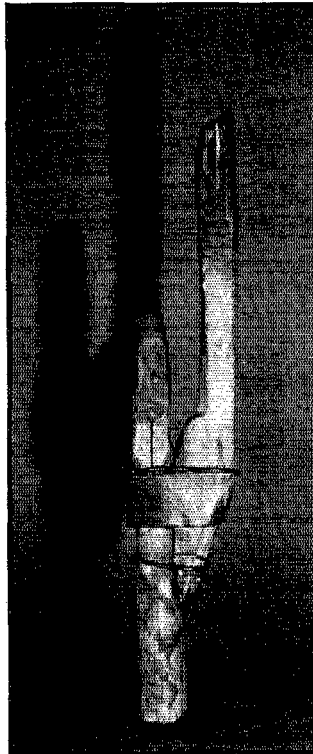
The effect of his interrogation was magic. There was much speculation as to the meaning of the word throughout the Land, yea, in all nine districts. One letter writer, signing himself "A Loyal League Member," declared in the August, 1917, *QST*, that he knew what a Wouff-Hong was and had chained the animal to his receiver to gobble up static and broad signals. His recommendation was enthusiastic. Immediately, Tuska, *QST*'s editor, was besieged with orders for Wouff-Hongs that could not be filled.

Came the Great War, and all hams who could not disport flat feet or floating kidneys forgot all about Wouff-Hongs and the like and joined up with the armed signal forces. Your Uncle Samuel down at Washington closed down all ham stations, and *QST* suspended publication.

When hostilities ceased and the League Directors met to lay plans for reconstruction, Warner, unmoustachioed Army lieutenant, came over from Illinois to fill the editorial chair left vacant by Tuska. At the meeting a package addressed to the

editor was presented. Out of the wrapping bounced the gruesome instrument of torture that to this day has hung in the sanctum of the Secretary-Editor's office occupied to this day by the same Warner. The terrible thing was sent in by The Old Man, who described it in a letter as "an absolutely authoritative and well-preserved specimen of Wouff-Hong." The Board charged that it be kept forever in the editor's office within easy

(Continued on page 122)



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(Continued from page 32)

reach. Its first official photo appeared in the first post-war number of *QST*, July, 1919—and, says that issue, when the Wouff-Hong was displayed at the Director's meeting, "each face noticeably blanched."

* * *

The second instrument of torture, the Retty-snitch, which stands for decency in operating and shares the editorial chamber with its mate, the Wouff-Hong, was presented to Traffic Manager Fred Schnell by the Washington (D. C.) Radio Club at the 3d District Convention in 1921. It was already minus two of its teeth, giving evidence of earlier use.

The name of the sacred Wouff-Hong has been otherwise perpetuated by the Modesto (Calif.) Radio Club, whose annual trophy is a replica of the original Wouff-Hong, moulded from the melted-down elements of tubes from five hundred record-breaking transmitters; and by the Royal Order of the Wouff-Hong, a mystic society conceived by a ham group in Flint, Michigan, some years ago.

All good hams, and otherwise, stand in dread of the Wouff-Hong and Retty-snitch and The Old Man. The three have become traditions in amateur radio. There have been many reports of coming upon The Old Man, but somehow or other they always blow up—but that is another story.

DX Contest

(Continued from page 58)

station should not compete on the same basis. Others say that the working man has a tremendous handicap, too great to allow him to win. Should the station with a single-signal receiver be further handicapped? We think the present contest "free for and open to all" with no handicapping is a sound solution. High power most certainly isn't the answer. We cite the case of another station that entered the contest of last year as well as this year. The antenna and location were identical both years. A staff of 3 operators kept the station on the air 15 hours a day with an input of 1 kw. last year. This station in the present contest, with one operator, operated an average of 9 hours a day; three before breakfast, one at noon, three at night—with the weekends bringing up the average. The power in the present contest was limited to 500 watts for seven of the nine days, and final results showed that last year's combined 3-operator score had been more than tripled! Perhaps the use of ten different frequencies in the 7- and 14-mc. bands plus a single-signal receiver accounted for the difference in score—certainly the power which had been halved had nothing to do with it.

Just as we go to press we receive word from W3ZJ, Tom Hall, Harrisburg, Pa., advising that his score totalled slightly over thirty-three thousand points! That, gentlemen, is just 120% higher