

My Shack

Highlighting the shack (ham equipment and room) of a member, to give others an idea of the possibilities that might work for them



Keith McQueen, KB7M

When I was a teenager, growing up in the Denver, Colorado area, I bought an old tube-type shortwave receiver and strung up a wire antenna under the eaves of the house. I spent many hours listening to hams and shortwave broadcast stations. Later, when I returned from working as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I got interested in CB radio and was fascinated by the emergency communications capabilities.

While moving to Utah, the engine of my ancient Ford pickup truck blew up and stranded us in the middle of Wyoming. Luckily I had a CB radio in the truck, and was able to flag a call for help. We were saved that day by a kind trucker monitoring channel 19.

After moving to Utah I got involved in the local [REACT](#) group. It was at this time that a friend introduced me to ham VHF radio and showed me his 2-meter handy-talkie (HT) and how it could talk long distances via a repeater.

One day, I noticed a posting on the company bulletin board for a free class to obtain an Amateur Radio "Ham" license. I had always wanted to do this since I was a child. Dad had taken me with him to visit a ward member who was a Ham. I signed up for and attended the class, learned Morse code and passed my Novice and Technician license tests in the summer of 1985, later upgrading to an Extra class license.

My first ham radio was a Kenwood TR-2500 HT that I bought used from a local ham. This radio covered the 2-meter band only with no extended receive and had 10 memories for storing frequencies. The offset had to be manually set via a small switch on the back of the unit. It could encode a single tone that had to be manually tuned via a trim-pot on the unit. At least I didn't have to buy crystals for each channel like many hams at the time did.

I later purchased a Yaesu FT-470 handheld that covered 2 meters and 70 cm. That radio cost me \$470 on sale. I still have it and it still works just fine, although the NiCd battery has long since died. My first mobile radio was an Icom IC-28H 2-meter mobile.



I currently own countless mobile and handheld radios. (How does the saying go? Whoever dies with the most radios wins? I may not be winning, but I'm definitely in the running.)

At any rate, I've tackled the hobby with enthusiasm and soon became involved with the Utah County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (UCARES) group, whose mission is to provide emergency communications to the community. Later, this progressed to the next level and I was invited to join the Sheriff's Communications Auxiliary Team (SCATeam). The SCATeam has since been renamed to the Emergency Communications and

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continued



Support Team (ECSTeam). This group of individuals works specifically with the Sheriff's Office emergency management bureau. Through this involvement, I have had experiences such as helping with forest fires, escaped convicts, surveillance, downed aircraft, and many other emergency and public safety situations. ARES and ECSTeam use public service events such as marathons, parades, bicycle races, etc., as training events.

While serving on the ECSTeam, I've become involved with the group that builds and maintains mountain top repeater equipment for the team. One of the team's founding members, David Martin WA7FFM, the team's repeater guru, took me under his wing and taught me how to configure and tune up repeaters. I truly enjoy this work and enjoy spending time 4-wheeling to the



various mountaintop sites and working on the equipment there. Initially, we only had one 2-meter repeater at one site. This has grown to over seven sites and upwards of ten repeaters. In recent years we have been able to link all of these sites and repeaters with a digital microwave backbone allowing us to link combinations of repeaters at will to create custom repeater system coverage areas in county as needed for whatever event may be occurring at the time.

When UVARC was created I was asked to be involved with the configuring, installing and maintenance of

the UVARC repeaters. This has added another enjoyable aspect to my repeater building career. I find that there is great synergy between the UCARES and UVARC groups and I support both in any way I can.

— 73, Keith

Keith currently serves as a resident expert on the club's repeater committee, as well as the same with the UCARES folks.

