



April 2017

ARALB Web Site: [www.aralb.org](http://www.aralb.org)

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Editor: [Bob NC6Q](#)

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## Editor's Note

Hello, everyone. This is the very first mailing of The ARALB Letter, *The Milliwatt*. Via this email letter, club announcements and articles of interest can be sent to club members and interested subscribers. It can be read on a smartphone, tablet, or computer. It will likely be sent once a month--a week before the General Friday Night Meeting--but it can also be sent at other times with a special announcement for club members.

A Sign Up Form to subscribe to *The Milliwatt* can be found on the [club web site](#). Let your fellow club members know, who are not yet subscribed.

If you would like to post an announcement or an article of interest in *The Milliwatt*, please send your submission to [bobgrubic@gmail.com](mailto:bobgrubic@gmail.com).

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## Meetings

The next **Friday Night General Club meeting**:

Date: Friday, April 7, 2017

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: American Red Cross ([map](#))

3150 E. 29th Street

Long Beach, CA 90806

Speaker: Ken Miller K6CTW

Topic: Morse Code

The next **ARALB Board Meeting**:

(Monday before the Friday Meeting)

Date: Monday, April 3, 2017

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: American Red Cross ([map](#))

3150 E. 29th Street

Long Beach, CA 90806

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Ken Miller K6CTW  
on [The Jay Leno Show](#)

## Guest Speaker

Ken Miller K6CTW

Topic: Morse Code

Ken has been licensed since 1967. He has an Amateur Extra Class license and is a member of the A-1 Operators Club. His primary interests in ham radio are CW, NTS, RACES/ACS, DX and of course Morse Codes. He has been the Net Manager for the Sixth Region Net (RN6) and was a member of the TCC. A current passion is restoration of sentimental favorite boatanchors and then using them to make DXCC etc. He has also written a number of articles that were published in CQ and Electric Radio.

While living in Canada, he was the Assistant Section Manager for British Columbia. Some of you might even remember having seen Ken on Friday, May 13, 2005 as the receiving operator on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" where a

championship text messaging team just wasn't as fast as the almost 170 year old Morse code. [\(YouTube video\)](#)

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David Akins N6HHR, Alex Dowie,  
Kate Dowie, Bob Grubic NC6Q

## **Past Queen Mary Employee Visits the the Wireless Room**

by Bob Grubic, NC6Q

It happened again. A former Queen Mary employee from her sailing days returned to visit the ship. This always causes excitement for Wireless Room Operators.

On November 18, 2016, Alexander Dowie and his wife Kate found themselves in

the Wireless Room W6RO, chatting with Wireless Room operators and reminiscing about the old days. Alex and Kate were staying onboard the Queen Mary for a few days on the final leg of a memorable tour that took them on a cruise ship from Southampton, England to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, then on a flight from Fort Lauderdale to Las Vegas, Nevada. Once in Las Vegas, Kate planned the trip to Long Beach to see the Queen Mary as surprise to Alex for his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Alex's story begins back in 1966 when Great Britain had a large merchant fleet. At the age of 20, Alex joined the Merchant Navy, as they called it, and trained in Liverpool to work in the engine room. After 6 weeks of training, he was assigned to the Queen Mary and his first tour of duty was to sail from Southampton to the Canary Islands and back—all while working in the engine room where it was loud and dirty and dangerous!

He then sailed on a trip to New York City and back and continued with this routine until 1967 when the Queen Mary was sold. He tells of how the ship would take 4 days to cross the North Atlantic, then remain in port for 2 days, then return again on its run between England and New York. After a while, that port stay was reduced to 1 day.

While in port, after a time, he was given secondary duties and sent to the "writer's office." There he worked dealing with the paperwork for the engine room crew. He said there was always paperwork to contend with. In a crew of over 1000 people, you had changes all the time. Personnel would often leave, transfer to other ships or to other lines of work, and, of course, the paperwork had to reflect that. Men would want to go to a different ship or a smaller ship. They would, of course, want to be promoted to a better position than the dirty engine room jobs, like monitoring

gauges, or be promoted to a greaser—oiling and greasing machinery, electrical motors and pumps. He refers to the engine room work area as the “working alleyway,” a ¼ mile long in the middle of the ship which would contain crew accommodations and access to the engine rooms and boiler rooms.

While at sea, on the other hand, he also worked in the electrical shop assisting the electricians with small electrical jobs. In this capacity, however, his duties did not overlap with the communications people, i.e. the radio officers and wireless personnel.

When asked if he came in contact with radio personnel, he said he would see the Radio Officers onboard but had no reason to speak to them. They had different jobs altogether. He knew the radio rooms were up by the bridge, but he really didn't know any of their exact locations. He laughed and said, he and his fellow engine room workers “couldn't go up those stairs.” Social norms were much different in the 1960s than they are today. Looking around the present Wireless Room with all the ham radio gear up on the Sports deck, he commented that he did know that this was NOT the location of any radio rooms in his day! He did know, however, that the communication on the ship was mostly in the form of telegrams using Morse code.

Alex's last voyage on the Queen Mary was to New York and back to Southampton. He fondly remembers that a lady onboard gave every single member of the crew a little statue of liberty as a souvenir.

When the ship returned to Southampton, they started stripping things off in preparation for it being sold. (More things were removed after it arrived in Long

Beach also.) He was not on the trip from Southampton to Long Beach although he was given the opportunity. He chose, instead, to work with a different company on different types of ships such as tankers and cargo ships. All totaled, he worked at sea for 6 ½ years, from 1966 to 1973. He then continued with his life, got married, and worked at various locations on land.

Then he shows up, back on the Queen Mary for his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday! Thanks for stopping by, mate!

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