

This Month's Stiff: Guglielmo Marconi

Entered Mortal coil: 25 April 1874

Assumed Room Temperature: 20 July 1937



Maestro Marconi

Now, in my esteemed opinion, if you haven't heard of Guglielmo Marconi, then you should mail forthwith your amateur radio license back to the Friendly Cookie Company (FCC), with a letter of contrite apology addressed to the honorable Mr. Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH, Special Counsel for Amateur Radio Enforcement. At the very best, you may be spared an encounter with the dreaded Wouff Hong (a terrible tool used for dealing out punishment to poor amateur radio operators). To put it simply, Marconi fielded the first practical radio communications system. GM's investigations were spurred on by the news of the success of Heinrich Hertz's experiments proving the existence of radio waves as predicted mathematically by James Clerk Maxwell.

GM began his experiments in Pontecchio, Italy on his rich Daddy's estate in 1895, aided by his brother. Marconi's DX was an astounding 1.5 miles, a feat rarely accomplished by the memorable Radio Shack CB Channel 14 100mW walkie talkies sold to hapless young waifs more than a half century later, powered by the ubiquitous 9V rectangular battery (great for tingling your tongue, by the way -- neat trick to try on little kids ...heh heh! Evil grin!). Heady stuff, this was. Marconi determined that if he grounded his radio apparatus, performance was dramatically improved. Imagine that! Further experiments and improvements extended the range to 12 miles in 1900, under the auspices of the newly formed Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company Limited. Over the course of 5 years, the Maestro increased the range of his gadget a phenomenal **10.5 miles!** How many of you can match this feat of engineering?

In 1901 Marconi finally got his act together and transmitted the letter "S" in Morse code between Poldu, Cornwall England and Newfoundland, a distance of 2100 miles. Note that the transmitter utilized was a spark gap type. If you've ever seen a high power spark transmitter in operation, it is a treat, since the massive static discharges are spectacular. A little known fact is that the letter "S" (di di dit) was used, as the transmitter would have been damaged by the longer arc duty cycle encountered by sending dahs!!!!

GM carried on with further radio commercial ventures that were a financial success. David Sarnoff, who would later become the head of RCA, started out working for Marconi's company. Did you know that in the early days of Sarnoff's career, he delivered flowers to Marconi's many mistresses? Talk about pleasing the boss!!!

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