

A Baptism by Water

De W7JWJ & W7QGP

The spring of year 1948 was especially warm and the snow began to melt in the high Cascades. The Army Corp of Engineers predicted that the Columbia River would crest at the mouth of the Yakima River near Richland, Washington by over two feet. The Corp was wrong, dead wrong.

There lived in Richland at that time a gentleman by the name of Harry Kramer. His hobby was rivers and he became interested in the ever-rising Columbia. Drive through Richland and you will see the Harry Kramer High School. The following from the HANFORD WORKS NEWS.

"The Columbia River has its ups and downs and Harry Kramer is one man who is interested in every one of them. Figuring out how high the river will be as it flows past Richland is the interesting hobby of this man who also performs a valuable service to the community with his vocation."

Kramer contacted Tom Nelson, W7QGN and Harry Lewis, W7JWJ with a request to obtain river heights from hams that lived along the Columbia. They got approval from the Oregon Emergency Net to convene a net just half an hour before the OEN and on that net's frequency. They called this emergency net [The Columbia River Net](#).

"With the beginning of Mr. Kramer's rush season a rush season also begins for Tom Nelson (W7QGN) and Harry Lewis (W7JWJ), two "ham" radio operators who lend the flood predicting a helping hand. Nelson, employed by G.E. in the Instrument Division and Lewis, a radioman for the Atomic Energy Commission, contact various other ham operators up and down the river over the COLUMBIA RIVER NET. (A special function of THE OREGON EMERGENCY NET) every evening for readings in their own areas." From the Hanford Works News.

For his accurate predictions for the flood of 1948, the General Electric Company presented Kramer the Coffin award. In April of 1948 Kramer gave the Atomic Energy

Commission and G.E. his prediction of the crest for 1948 at 352 feet. In June the river rose to its full crest of 351.7 feet. Kramer's prediction was for a river crest 24.3 feet above normal. Kramer was right, dead right.

During June of 1948 Mary Lewis, W7QGP was expecting her first child. It was expected that the Kadlec Hospital in Richland would be flooded so she was transported to Kennewick in an Army truck with water running over the floorboards. At three A.M. during the morning of June 11, 1948 the future K7ETY, Diana was born. A new infant emerged as the Columbia Basin Net was born and the WARTS Net reached maturity.