

## COMMUNICATION

By Oliver Cameron  
with Ole Wik

### Mail

I have a mailbox that's usually in one of the three barrels set down on the edge of the lake. When I want to send mail, I set the mailbox on top of the barrel so that George can see it when he flies over, and it's convenient for him. He has a place on a lake in our area, and lives in Fairbanks.



Oliver's "mailbox". Photo: Dyre Dammann

He doesn't always have time to come up to the house, so he puts whatever he's brought to me into the box, and takes the outgoing mail. Then he circles the house to let me know he's there. When I hear that plane I come outside, especially if he makes an extra buzz around.

Sometimes he does air drops. One time I ran out of medicine or whatnot. As soon as he saw me out there, he swung around, flew over, and threw it out his window. It had a long streamer on it, so I saw where it landed.

## **Ham Radio<sup>1,2</sup>**

I had a small amateur radio, and eventually got a license, but I set it up over at Dennis and Jill's place. That answered two things; one, it gave her more light, and it also gave her a way to at least be somewhat in contact with the outside world. She could hear what other people were doing as they communicated back and forth.

She knew that if she ever needed to, she could cut in and make contact with them. In fact we did that a couple of times, and explained the situation to the people we got in touch with.

There was one SOB who right away wanted to know if she had a license, what her call sign was, and so forth. There he was, sitting with all of his equipment in his expensive office, and never been out of town. I talked to him, pretty rough too, explaining what it was like to be out in the Bush, and how this was a vitally important thing out there.

I finally gave the set to Dennis and Jill.

## **Emergency Locator Transmitter**

I also had an emergency locator transmitter (ELT). That was another little boost of security.

## **CB Radio**

I also told them about CB radios. I think I gave or loaned them one of mine. That way she could also talk to Duane and Rena.

### **What do you use for an antenna?**

I use a short, half-wave sloper. The end of it is quite high, and the bottom is fastened to the roof of the house. It slopes at maybe 30 degrees from the vertical. Since most of the people I talk to are to the north or a little bit northeast, I aimed the antenna so that it radiates mainly in that direction.

### **Do you have a regular schedule?**

More or less. Usually everybody turns their CB on at about 8 p.m., when people are inside, and you hear everybody talking that's in your range.

I don't talk much, but some long-winded people can talk for an hour. When they run out of wind and there's a pause, I'll jump in and make contact with Rena, just so she'll know I'm still alive and won't worry about me. Sometimes I just have to break in on them so that I can check in and go to bed or whatever.

### **What channel do you use?**

Mostly channel 5. If I want to talk with somebody and that channel is busy, I'll break in, give them a call, and tell them to go to one of the lower channels, like 7 or 8.

### **Do you run off big battery?**

No. Sometimes I have to switch over to the big batteries, but ordinarily I run it off the small batteries. I try to cycle those small batteries between 10 volts and 11 volts, something like that. That seems to work the CB OK.

Are they deep cycle batteries?

No, I don't think so.

Does it damage them to run way down?

I don't drain them out. I figure they're about dead when they're at 10 volts.

Did you ever really, really need the CB?

There have been a few times. One time Rena was worried about Duane. She called us and told us she was thinking of going looking for him. I told her to wait. I didn't want her going off by herself. You'd have had two of them out there. Dennis went up there with his dog team, and by that time Duane was home.

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This excerpt is from a tribute that Duane Ose wrote for the website [www.olivercameron.org](http://www.olivercameron.org):

It is a long ways from his place to here—a one day's journey on foot through the jungles of Alaska. Oliver came up to us several times, and would stay a day or two before he and whatever dog he had at the time would trudge on back, the dog toting the gear in the rear. One time our dog had pups and Oliver spent time picking the right one for his dog-to-be.

Then at some time Rena & I got fancy and got a cell phone. I had to build a tower for the antenna to get a signal from the tower, some 80 miles away. Those were the days of analog, when signals reached far. Now 30 miles is the limited range for a digital cell phone, so we had to get a satellite dish and Internet to keep in touch with the world.

It was during the time when a working cell phone cost us \$145.00 per month on average, to use only two or three times on a weekend. During those times, we worked out a strange system of relaying calls from Dorene to her Dad Oliver at the lake via cell-phone-to-CB radio relay. This is how we did it:

At a set time, Oliver would be standing by at his end, Rena at the dugout on her CB. I would be up on top of our high hill and tower, with the cell phone and a CB too. I would call Rena to see that Oliver was ready. Then I would call Dorene, if she had not already been on the line with me.

Dorene and I would talk first, and again just after Oliver's talk.

“Okay. Ready? Hello, Dad! Hello, Dorene.”

Mind you, during this time I was listening in. I had to, in order to know who was talking and when I had to hold the CB earpiece to the cell, or the speaker to the cell. It got downright interesting, keeping track of the positioning of the speaker to mic, or vice versa.

After the phone-to-CB was over, Rena would be talking with Oliver on the CB, and Dorene always wanted to rubberneck to hear what they were saying.

Oliver and Dorene both so enjoyed those calls, and we were happy to be the middle of the calling. So you should know that Dorene was a long-distance rubbernecker of the strangest calling service ever on this Earth.

I sure miss the Analog system, but if we still had it we would not now have the Internet and the world at our fingertips. Oliver could be conversing yet to Dorene, on relay through Skype.

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- 1) This essay stems from a series of telephone conversations that Ole Wik had with Oliver between December 2007 and February 2008. Highlighted text indicates remarks made by Ole.
  - 2) Oliver was trained as a radioman during World War II.