



# I MARRIED FIVE RADIOS

thing was quite naked, no pretty bakelite cabinet such as I coveted, and with these five pink eyes looked positively malicious.

"I want something I can listen to music with," I explained. "That thing only talks, and then only about r.f. stages and D.C. voltages and duplex diode triodes."

This was perfectly true.

Radio hams go on the air only to talk technicalities, and after listening to the voices of Bill Old Man from Broken Hill, Perce from Perth and Bluey from Brisbane day after day, the first thrill wears off, and one begins to remember other things one used to listen to on the radio.

At least I do. VK2TALK does not.

Anyway, he explained to his fellow-hams that he was going to knock up a BCL receiver for his YF, they gazed pityingly at him, (your true ham gave up listening to anything on BCL, or broadcast band, years ago) and stayed away for a few days.

VK2TALK gathered together various bits of the junk which festooned the walls and overflowed the floor of the shack, arranged them inside a kind of box, stated that he would put a back on it and cover the whole thing with leatherette when he got around to it (he has not yet), and thankfully returned to his transmitter to call CQ.

A ham goes on the air and calls CQ when he wants to talk to a ham, any ham, about anything.

Sometimes he may be answered by an American thousands of miles distant who gives him an eye-witness account of the latest food.

Sometimes it is the ham in the next street who talks back, asking for coil data for a 50 megacycle receiver. (This can take hours.)

Sometimes the hams turn up in person. They never notice me. If they seem the more human type of ham, the kind that gives evidence of knowing that there are other things in the world besides megohm resistors and co-axial cable, I sometimes proffer a cuppa tea.

They drink it, but I am convinced they never notice it. They become absorbed in dusty boxes of valves, gangs and condensers, and they go into trances over the most extraordinary books.

Occasionally we are flattered to receive a visit from CW men. These lordly creatures, a more preoccupied section of the ham community, converse on the air entirely by means of the Morse key.

They view with disdain hams who talk on the air. They cannot bear to hear speech coming from the receiver. If it is, they fiddle morosely with the household bug until

somebody notices that CW men are in their midst, and respectfully picks up some Morse instead.

Dots and dashes to these lofty operators are the *only* means of communication, and "phone ginks" (talking hams) are as low in their estimations as BCL listeners (you and me) are in the phone ginks'.

We have acquired three more radios.

Two live in the shack, and receive odd noises from odd parts of the world (one is there in case the other breaks down), and the third extra radio is what I am assured by the wives of other hams is a standard piece of ham equipment, a battery set with flat batteries.

This, I am told, is always beamingly presented to the little woman, "in case of black-outs. I'll buy some fresh batteries when I get around to it." A true ham never does.

Somehow the pleasant little tea parties with old school friends which I always thought were part of the stock-in-trade of newly-marrieds have not materialised. It is too difficult to make genteel gossip over the best china when the air is rent by short-

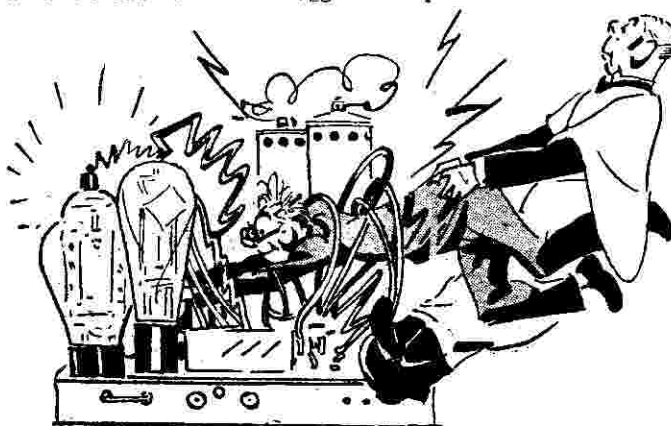
**A**CTUALLY, at the time I married the gentleman now known in *The Radio Shortwave Handbook* as VK2TALK, there was only one radio, one bug (Morse key to the uninitiated), and a lot of preoccupation going on about something called "my test for my ticket."

The test was successful, the licence was acquired, and, amid general upheaval, Amateur Radio Station VK2TALK was born.

Soon afterwards, I extracted my almost brand-new husband from his shack (some men have dens or studies, radio amateurs have shacks. Incidentally, they call themselves hams, I did not believe it at first either) and demanded a wireless set I could listen to.

"What's wrong with the little short-waver?" I was asked in some astonishment.

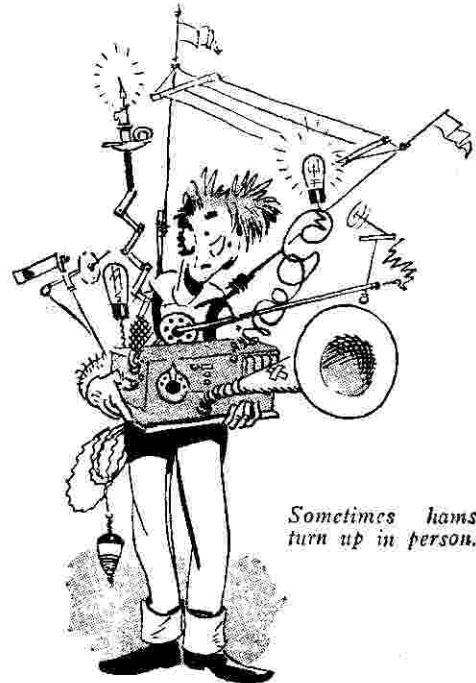
The little short-waver was the set from which he had had to be dragged as a pre-



From which he had to be dragged to be wed.

liminary to being conveyed to the church to wed me, and was one of the worldly goods, the marriage service threatened to endow me with.

It was a concoction of tubes, coils, switches and a great slab of aluminium, amid which five valves glowed wickedly. The



Sometimes hams turn up in person.

wave shrieks from Alaska or Morse code conversations from the Hebrides.

Our more timid acquaintances merely stay away. They never know what (or who) will be draped in all its complications across the table, or in just what (or whom) my husband will be expecting them to take an intelligent interest.

Some hardy specimens, on the other hand, have become so absorbed in What Goes On that they are well on the way to becoming radio amateur stations themselves.

Oh, by the way, in case those old school friends are wondering what ever happened to me. I got married, and lived happily ever afterwards with five radios, a transmitter and a world full of hams. — CORA-LYN. Illustrated by PETER DOODY.