



# Extracts from.... **THE VMARS NEWS SHEET**

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## *A Fascinating Letter*



*The VMARS Chairman wrote- I had been prompted by RSGB to write to John Tuke GM3BST explaining about VMARS. In return, I received a most fascinating letter as follows (with illustration added by the News Sheet Editor):*

I first got interested in radio when I was about 12 years old (1932) and, when I left school some three years later, I went to "Wireless College" in London and trained to be a ships radio operator. I passed the 18 month course in seven months and, shortly before my 17th birthday, I was third operator on the Alcantara to Buenos Aires.

We had a large rotary spark transmitter on 600 m with 705 m and 800 m as alternative channels. I was on several other Royal Mail liners for the next six months, and they all had similar equipment. I loved it. Then, it was on the 'tramp' ships with the tiny little  $\frac{1}{4}$  kW quenched gap transmitter which had a maximum range of about 100 miles under good conditions! Many a time I longed for the big rotary. Shortly before the War, I left the sea and, in 1940, joined what eventually became Civil Aviation Authority, staying with them first of all as a radio operator on M/F and communicating with aircraft by CW

and, later, as that died out over the fifties and sixties, as a telecommunications officer until I retired in 1980. I took out my amateur licence in 1947 and spent all the years on CW, also remaining largely on 7 MHz. My involvement with commercial radio made me always want to use maximum power; I like to see Amps up the aerial! Until the middle eighties I built my own transmitters and receivers, using a much modified BC348 for the latter. Finally, the transceiver took over but the transmitter always drove a home-made power amplifier with some sort of high powered valve or, more often, two in push pull working into the aerial. So I am definitely not a QRP man.

There is something about a big spark set which I find fascinating and I will never forget it. It is just the fact that there is no difference between me on the Alcantara and the first experimenters who found they could send a signal across from one room to another just by making a spark. It sort of makes you part of history.

My other hobby has been meteorology. You may know that, in 1967/68, I built receiving equipment and mechanical picture display equipment to copy the first weather satellites launched by NASA. I was the first in UK, and probably in EU as well, to do this, and there was quite a bit of publicity at that time, most of it misinformed, as usual! I still do what I can with the weather; I am shortly having a 'weather station' put up here which will help me keep various records.

You will see from the above that I would not be able to contribute anything useful to VMARS as I am somewhat physically disabled and unable to travel any distance. My eyesight is poor and my hands shake so I don't think I could do a lot with integrated circuits with 32 leads on it separated by a millimetre. A couple of Leyden Jars and a pair of brass balls for a spark gap are more in my line.