

COMMUNITY PROFILES

Ham radio now a hobby for retired electronics whiz

By Patti Jares
Staff Writer

There is a lot to be said for allowing a child to believe in his or her ability to do virtually anything – (within reason, of course). It worked for Kathy Bross.

Raised in the San Francisco area as a “non-traditional kid,” she ended up on the cutting edge of the telephone/computer industry.

“I was told I could do anything,” said the 50-something retiree, “and I didn’t know any better – I believed it.”

As a child, Kathy had an insatiable curiosity for anything electronic.

“When I was really little I took everything apart,” she admitted with a laugh. “Radios, telephones – my Chatty Cathy – I went through several of those.”

But amidst all the electronic gadgets at her fingertips, Kathy’s fascination settled on telephones.

“When I was a little kid I collected telephones,” she explained. “Every time we moved I took it – this was back when we weren’t supposed to keep them. By

the time I hit high school I had a table in my room with 15 working telephones.”

Kathy graduated from high school early, and once in college she became involved in the audio program, directing and producing local cable shows from the college.

The technical supervisor in charge was a college instructor who, according to Kathy, was a regular electronics “guru.” The teacher, Arthur Bross, recognized her natural ability with electronics and encouraged Kathy to enter the electronics program. The two fell in love and eventually married.

Kathy took Arthur’s advice and joined the program, a class of 44 where she became the second of two females. It filled a niche for Kathy and she excelled. On recruiting day, Kathy applied and was hired by Lawrence Livermore Labs.

A national government-sponsored laboratory, Lawrence Livermore Labs was founded by the University of California (Berkeley) in 1952. Involved in national security and

energy research, the lab developed top-secret projects. Kathy earned a top-secret security clearance and worked at the lab until she and Arthur decided to leave California and move to his home state of Idaho.

On a two-week vacation the couple applied for jobs, and before they even settled Arthur was hired as a broadcast engineer at a local television station and Kathy was hired by Mountain Bell. Requesting an outside job, Kathy became an “outside plant technician.”

“I was a lineman,” she grinned. “I thought it would be exciting, but the men tried everything they could to make me quit.”

Kathy persevered and within a year the telephone company recognized her electronic abilities and utilized her skills to eventually help usher in computers – something then quite new to most employers and employees.

Kathy worked for the telephone company for 26 years. During that time she developed computer skills utilized worldwide and worked with develop-

ers and technical writers of programs for U.S. West.

Kathy traveled the country, teaching regional offices how to create databases and eventually how to operate on the Internet.

“I was always on the leading edge,” said Kathy, “although I didn’t realize it at the time.”

While Kathy enjoyed a successful career in the industry, Arthur was gaining recognition. In his television career he earned a total of four Emmys for Christmas specials he developed for local stations.

It was always Kathy’s goal to retire at the age of 50, and that is exactly what she did. Residing in Colorado by that time, the couple took their RV to Quartzsite to spend the winter with longtime friend Brent Haberer and they eventually settled in North Ranch.

Nowadays most of their time is devoted to their involvement with ham radios, a hobby they have enjoyed since the 1970s.

Both licensed operators, Kathy and Arthur belong to the local ham radio club



Kathy Bross at her radio

Photo by Patti Jares

and travel to “hamfests,” (gatherings of ham radio enthusiasts), where they offer for sale more than 500 electronic ham radio accessories. Their products are also available from their Web site, rfstuff.com. The couple stays busy, traveling throughout Arizona, California and Nevada.

Another hobby of Kathy’s is beading. A member of

the North Ranch beading club, she beads beautiful pieces of jewelry that sell at the high-end Denver jewelry shop “Triage.”

The couple enjoys their life at North Ranch – their friends, their hobbies and memories. Kathy is thankful for her success in life – a success that can be traced back to a simple childhood belief.