

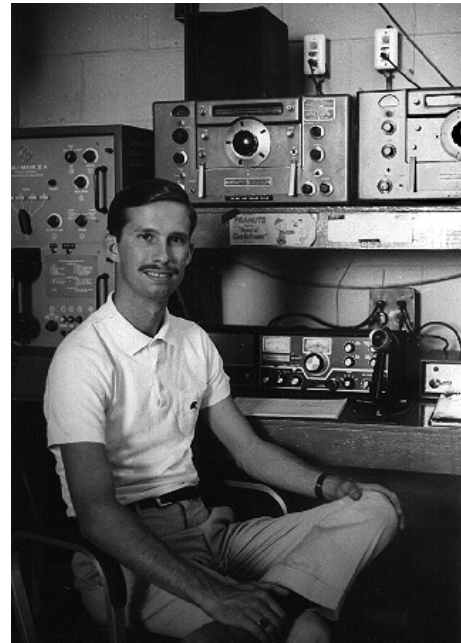
**PURCHASING HAM RADIO SET FOR SOUTH CAICOS ISLAND, B.W.I.
Draft 1—October 26, 2013**

Erie Electronic SUPPLY CO.
801 WEST 21st ST.
ERIE, PENNA. PHONE 455-0896
OPEN DAILY 10:00 TO 9:00 SATURDAY 9:00 TO 5:30

DISTRIBUTORS
AMATEUR AND C. B. RADIO EQUIPMENT

TUBES: **SWET** Date: **2/15/68**
M: **Chuck Bliley** 370138
Address: **Governor's Island NY**
Pay: Cash C. O. D. Order Bill P.O.

Quan.	DESCRIPTION	Price	Amount
1	Swan 350	4200	
1	5Y4 901389	950	
1	5B1 34	513.00	
	Trade in	285.00	
		339.00	
		100.00	
		125.00	
Rec'd by: Chuck Bliley		Tax:	
FORM 118 12464		Total:	2250



Original Invoice for Ham Radio Equipment Chuck Bliley, VP5CB station, March 1968.

When I graduated from the United States Coast Guard basic electronics school on Governor's Island, N.Y.C., New YORK, I chose as my next assignment a LORAN station in the British West Indies. It was an "isolated duty" assignment with 15 other men on an island measuring 3.5 miles by 5 miles. Being a very active ham radio operator, I did not want to be isolated for a year both physically and radio-wise. I blindly purchased a ham radio station and had it shipped to the islands. It arrived several weeks after I arrived there at the end of February 1968.

The invoice above is for ham radio shortwave transceiver. It was a Swan 350, the same unit that my mother, Isabelle Bliley Kaiser, W3KPE, had at home for the last four years. My intention was use this "new" and identical radio for the following year's assignment to communicate with my mother and friends at home.

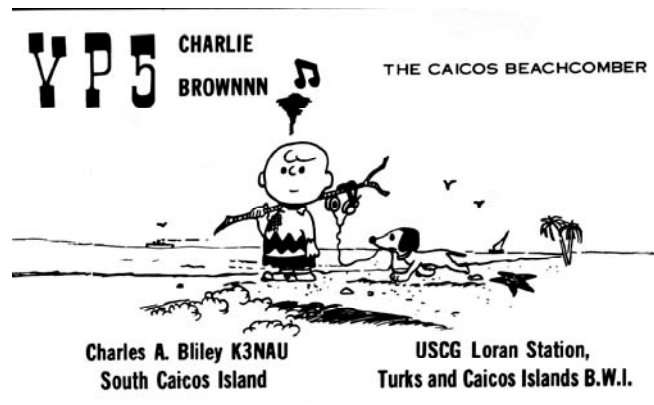
I was fortunate to find it easy to acquire a local ham radio license based on my American license of K3NAU. My call sign on South Caicos became VP5CB. I was also fortunate the Coast Guard station commander looked favorably on my activities with my offer of performing "phone patches" fro the crew through ham radio operators in the States. While technically illegal, I offered this service, as there was no regular telephone service from the entire island to the States. The closest telephone was on Grand Turk Island, about 25 miles away via commercial aircraft.

The station was set-up in March 1968 at the stations radio communications desk. A wire antenna system was built and suspended from a 45-foot telephone pole that served to support one end of the Coast Guard HF radio station antenna. Several months later, a new operating position was constructed immediately to the right of the one in the photo, and used until February 1969.

My ham radio call sign, VP5CB, was what is now considered a “vanity” call sign, as it included my initials “C.B.” following the country designator, “VP5”. (As of 2013, it is no longer possible to receive such a call sign without being a resident of T. & C. Islands.) I paid nothing for the privileged call sign as it was there were only five licensed hams in the entire country at the time, and I would be one of two active ones. When I was licensed, I was the 40th person ever assigned a call sign in this country. It was quite an exclusive group.

The rarity of licensed amateur radio operators in the islands, made my operation very interesting to other hams around the world as I virtually represented the only regular operation in the country. Many hams have a passion for collecting acknowledgment cards, also known at “QSL cards” from a many countries in the world as is possible.

I took on the nickname of “Charlie Brown” as used it as phonetics for my call sign on the air—“V. P. Five Charlie Brown”. This was carried over to the QSL card design. The card was designed by a radio ham in Skaneateles, New York with assistance by his daughter—an artist. While technically a copyright infringement on the Charlie Brown character, no one ever complained.



QSL (Contact Acknowledgment) Card
Designed by a ham in the states.

During the eleven months I was on the air, I made over 5,000 contacts. That is about five times the number of logged contacts the typical ham has in the same amount of time. Nearly 2,000 of these cards were exchanged with other hams around the world as an acknowledgment of our communication.

My last radio contact was on February 16, 1969 just a few days before my departure for my home in Erie, Pennsylvania and my next duty station at the U.S.C.G. Engineering Center in Wildwood, New Jersey.

Charles A. Bliley
October, 26, 2013