

# Suddenly a Crisis

*Joseph Calzaretta, K4LL (ex K2VI, K2ZCU)*

For thirty years I was an elementary school teacher in Spencerport, N.Y. (a suburb of Rochester, N.Y.). During many of those years I taught math, science, remedial reading and other subjects. I also had a Novice amateur radio station set up in my classroom. Quite a few of the 11-12 year olds earned their Novice license and got on the air.

After school I would go home, have dinner and work/play with my own kids. About 6 p.m. most evenings I would go to my radio room to correct and grade the mountain of paperwork generated by my students that day and prepare special lesson plans that would relate amateur radio to the material I taught. This usually occupied about two or three hours. While doing the paperwork I listened to stations on 20-meter SSB.

In late 1976, one Friday evening about 6:15 p.m. I was marking papers while listening to a ham radio station in Yugoslavia talking to a ham aboard a U.S. Navy ship in the north Atlantic. There was lots of QRN and fading in and out of the signal from the ship. I had difficulty hearing the ship, but not the YU station. The YU was also having trouble hearing the ship.

The YU was asking the Navy operator to help him get some urgent medication. The Yugoslavian lost contact with the ship and began frantically calling, "CQ Stateside," "CQ Stateside." I immediately broke in and asked if I could help. I listened intently as he told me he was in a small village in Yugoslavia and the hospital there had a very sick child with a brain tumor. The doctors did everything they could for the child, but nothing had worked. They told him a new experimental cancer drug serum called BCNU was being tested in the United States and requested he contact a U.S. ham/doctor/hospital immediately to obtain the serum, as the child would not last very much longer. He said his government did not like him to ask for help from the West but this was an emergency. He would deal with any repercussions later!

I found out the drug was produced in a laboratory in Bedford, Ohio and tried telephoning them. However, it being after 6 p.m., they were closed. Having no luck, I telephoned my friend Joe, WA2IMO. He lived about five houses down the street from me. He also taught in the same school district I did and also had a ham radio station in his classroom (high school shop class). I asked Joe to maintain contact with the YU station while I tried to find some other place to get the drug. Having no luck finding a source, I got back on 20 SSB and told the YU ham. There

was silence for about 20 seconds until the YU came back and said, "Please, please try again." WA2IMO jumped back in and said he would try to contact someone to help us. He had better luck! I continued to talk to the YU on SSB. I noted where he lived, the name of the hospital and the doctor's name and telephone number. This information was passed to Joe, as he was able to

contact Dr. Paul Divignon of the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Md. Dr. Divignon authorized the serum's release. The doctor also contacted the U.S. Department of State.

The next morning the drug was in a diplomatic pouch on a flight from Washington, D.C. to London. From London it was flown to Rome, Italy. From there it was driven to the Yugoslavian border where it was picked up by a doctor to be delivered to the sick child.

Several weeks later I received a QSL card from the YU ham thanking me for my help in procuring the serum. He never said if it helped the child. I only hope it did. ■



Joe, K4LL

*"CQ Stateside."*



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