

CLANDESTINE CORNERRADIO FREE HARLEM RETURNS

Last February, newspaper stories told of a clandestine shortwave broadcaster, announcing as Radio Free Harlem, operating in the middle of the 80 meter ham band. The FCC made attempts to locate this station and silence it. It cropped up on the air a few times in February, then was silent. It seemed that Radio Free Harlem was dead.

However, on November 26, NASWA's Bruce Ted Goldman, Bronx, N.Y., heard the mysterious station again.

According to Bruce, he thought he'd try his hand at the ham band. At 0535 GMT while tuning 80 meters, he heard a station playing the song, "Mellow Yellow." This was followed by other pop tunes, "The Teaberry Shuffle," "The Woody Woodpecker Song," "The Lone Ranger." Later in the program Bruce heard a parody song about "the bomb," and a fake interview with "two distinguished guests."

The announcer, Bruce noted, sounded like he was using an echo chamber when he spoke. Obviously the station was not far from his home, for it put in a 40 db. over S9 signal. This would tend to confirm earlier FCC views that the illegal broadcaster was transmitting from the immediate New York City area.

At 0613, came the announcement, "Radio Free Harlem, broadcasting here and there, for your entertainment, suing what other stations wouldn't dare bring; listen to Radio Free Harlem for all kinds of wonderful entertainment. Radio Free Harlem operates on a frequency of 3,868 kilocycles and is unauthorized by the FCC, that's the Federal Communications Commission. We operate with an input power of 15,000 watts. We appreciate your contributions, sent in care of WRFH, to Grand Central Station, New York City. We now conclude our broadcast with our anthem."

Bruce notes, "It wasn't the Star Spangled Banner -- That's for sure."

He adds that the band was apparently well monitored, with station K3GKB, in Pennsylvania remarking on the air that he'd taped the broadcast (as did Bruce, incidentally). K3GKB noted the identifications of other stations who heard the transmission.

Some random comments expressed by the hams included, "I'm fed up," "Why don't those idiots shut up," "Trash like that gives hams a black eye," etc.

Bruce comments that the Radio Free Harlem broadcast, however, did not contain any vulgarities or swearing. The announcements, for the most part, were made by one person, though on one occasion there may have been two voices speaking. He feels the program was tape recorded.

Bruce concludes, the address must be a phony because it didn't include a post office box number.

Several questions arise in connection with Bruce's report of Radio Free Harlem's renewed activities: Will it appear again? Just what is the station up to? Is the present operation the same as that heard last February, or did the news accounts at that time just plant the idea for a repeat performance in the minds of other illegal broadcasters? All these remain to be answered.

However, east coast DXers would be wise to keep an ear peeled on 3,868 kc/s. this winter. Maybe Radio Free Harlem will make still another comeback.