

Dr. Thomas A. Benham W3DD *1914-2006* An assistive technology innovator, Professor Benham was a blind (Blind since the age of two) teacher of physics with a keen interest in electronics during the early Sputnik era. He spent most of his life making technology available to the visually impaired. He founded Science Products in 1954, which was an adaptive products company. One of his first products was a multi-meter for use by blind hams and electronic technicians. Science Products later adapted hundreds of Simpson multi-meters for this use.

Benham was also a writer who directed his literary work to the handicapped. His series on the history of Science Products and his adventures in a long ham radio career ran several years ago in the Handi Ham Weekly News Letter. Partially scripted thru material from HandiHams and OOTC.



Dr Benham at his Hammarlund HQ-120X

He has his own recording company through which he published science recordings, TABEN -Recordings. One of these recordings has survived to this day. The record "Voices of the Satellites" from 1958 contains recordings of Sputnik-1 and two Explorer 1-2 & 3as well as Vanguard-1. The recordings are narrated by Dr. Benham and are quite fascinating to listen to.

Dr. Benham at Haverford College in Pennsylvania was an early radio tracker in the U.S. He graduated from Haverford in 1938. Then to RCA Development Labs working on Quartz crystal experiments.

Tom appears in transcripts of the U.S. House of Representatives hearing on Lunik-1 in May, 1959, where he described how he used radio equipment in his home to track the Sputniks and early U.S. satellites. He used his Hammarlund HQ-120X communications receiver and a half wave dipole antenna orientated north-south for 20 MHZ and a frequency converter and az-el steerable antenna for 108 MHZ., which was used for early U.S. Satellites. He also described how he failed to pick up Luna-1 on short-waves despite being able to receive Sputnik-3 at 0430 a.m. local time on 3 January 1958 at the same time.

Dr. Tom was a OOTC member 4124L - had written many papers including the 2001 paper 70 years of Ham radio for the ARRL. An ardent Handi-Ham member and contributor. His notes about working the Thor Hyerdahl Kontiki balsa raft are very memorable. - Tom chose his career in science with no concession to his lack of sight.

117 SIMPSON ROAD	
Ardmore	U.S.A. Pennsylvania
Radio	W.I.B.K.E. Acknowledging QSO 11-6 1958 P.M. EST.
UR SIGS	OSA 4 R 7 ORI DC QRM Jim ORN 10 ORG MC.
W3DD	
Transmitter:	P.P-TNT with 250 volts on plate 210 tube.
Receiver:	DEC 2 Audio Antenna: Zep-
Remarks	Trk for QSO.
PSE QSL OM. TNX.	GUD LUCK ES 73. T. A. BENHAM, op