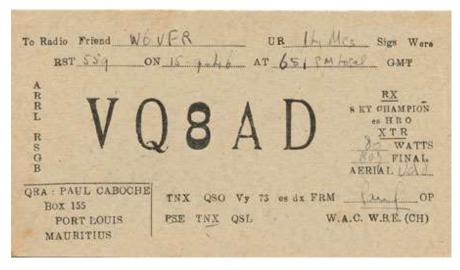
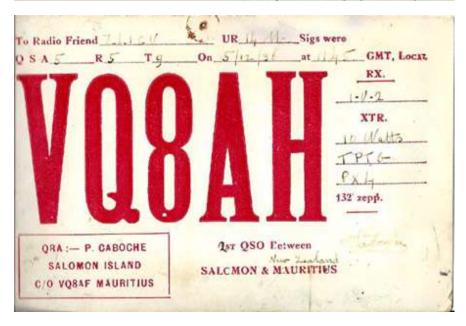
Biography of Paul Caboche 3B8AD, VQ8AS, VQ8AD, 3B1AD 1918 - July 24, 2012







Paul Caboche

Route Cotiere – St Malo – Baie du Tombeau Mauritius – Tel: 247 25 20

a, very sportif, riding horses in races, driving racing cars, was a noxel, a femeer and

about 25/30 years and used to come to Mr Lacouture's place on Saterdays nights to it. make his ucquintance During my school days Radio Reunion

I have decided to write my story as a radio Ham in my broken mauritian english, you will turn it into american english or oxford english Hi!!

I shall type it as a letter to you relating the facts, it will be easear. First of all I must tell how I came to radio.

I was born in a place call "Grande Rosalie" a Sugar Estate, where my father was Manager, in a house called "Chateau de la Ville Bague" once, property of Mahe de Labourdonnais the first French Governor of Ile De France, now Mauritius it was year 1918.

Few years latter, my father resigned and bought two small sugar estates, Riche Bois and Joli Bois in the southern part of the island. In 1922 there was a crack in world sugar price market and as he was still owing money he had to sell everything and was ruined. In the mean time an uncle of mine ,brother of my mother, was studing medicine in France and had all his studies paid by my father. My uncle, was at the end of his studies and my father managed to pay the few months left, and had a bit more debts. Having been gratuated, my uncle come back to Mauritius, but having studying in France he settle in Reunion Island (a French possession)not far from Mauritius. As to testified his gratitude, towards my father, he took me with him and send me to the ,then famous french college Lycee Leconte de L'isle where I was put in boarder. Reunion, in those days like Mauritius, was not very well developped, very bad road, difficulties in transport etc etc... Nearly all the pupils were in boarding. In Sundays, they were not allowed to stay at school so they had to find a responsible party to look after them from 7 in the morning to 18.00 hrs in the evening. Some, like me, had the possibility to leave the school on saterday evening and stay at the responsible party house for the night. This concession was mainly due to the fact that my responsible party was a teaching member at the school, being thre professor of music. I pay my gratitude to him for all he has done for me during my school days in Reunion Island. Mr LACOUTURE, his wife son, and his two girls could plays all types of instruments. Mr Lacouture had also at his place a radio receiver, an very early type all in an ebony box with lots of brass nuts and radio valves

aligned on top of it, he used to seat in front of it and by mean of a long glass tube turn the knobs of the facinating instrument, I did not know at that time this was to prevent hand capacity effect. The louldspeaker looks like a swan neck, a loud howling was coming out of it rather than musicMr Lacouture, says he was trying to receive Durban station. (Sth Africa)

Very often on saterdays nights , he had the visit of Prince Vinh San, Ex King of Annam who was in exile at Reunion , His father was dethroned by the french and Vinh Sam became King he was only five to six years old, Then came a revolution and the whole family was sent in exile to Reunion. Vinh San went to school at Lycee Leconte De L"Isle, he was a very cleaver man speaking english, spanish and was a real jack of all trade, very sportif, riding horses in races, driving racing cars, was a boxer , a fencer and at the end of my schooldays Vinh San was the only Radio technician in the island. He was about 25/30 years and used to come to Mr Lacouture's place on Saterdays nights to play violon, this is where I make his acquintance. During my school days Radio Reunion Started his emission and my mentors became the two above gentlemen . After the usual musical repetition, they used to discus radio , Vinh San had A transmitter at his place and went there to transmit while we listen at the other end and report to him. Music never attract me; up to now I cant make any difference between an do (ut) and si. even I banged the drum some time Hi...

At the end of my studies, (1934) I came back to Mauritius and some time after, left to join my father who was then the manager of Salomon Islands one of the Chagos Group located in the nortern part of the Chagos Archipelago. There, one night, My father said to me: Cant you believe, : there, in the atmosphere, there is lots of musics passing by and we are two lonely people watching but cant hear them; Why don't you study radio?????? that was the declic......

I came back to Mauritius and started to learn Radio. I first learn morse which was the more difficult part as there was no known poeple knowing morse, when, I met a friend of mine whose brother was working at the government wireless station situated at a place called Rose Belle. I went to see him at his place of work. In reaching the building I heard a Whirr noise and though the window a blue light flickering; when the noise cease he came to me and say: excuse me ,I was sending a message to Madagascar I asked him about the noise and the blue light he explain to me that was from the Pulsen Arc transmitter. I explain my visit to him and he agreed to teach me the morse; he lent me a book on radio published by His Majesty's Stationary Office in England. The title was: Admiralty Handbook for Wireless Telegraphy. I also ordered from France a book written by A. PLANES, F8EI in 1933 on Radio Amateurs entitle: "L'Emission d'Amateur Pratique "containing lots of circuits and informations. Few weeks later he introduced me to a cousin of him Leny Mazery . Lany introduce me to three others chaps Jean Regnaud , Gaston Koenig and Volcy de Robillard. there were no regulations at that time concerning the radio amateurs in Mauritius. Then started our collaboration, .every one took a callsign awaiting the day where one of us could get intouch with a foreign station...

Knowing that the official radio callsign of the government was VRS and according to books and magazines received from abroad ,Leny had assigned the callV8AA to Regnaud V8AB to hinself V8AC to Koenig V8AE, to Henri d'Agnel and V8AF to Robillard.

I cant remember who was the first of the lot who establish the first overseas contact, I was not, at that time well trained to follow them. on their steps, but when we met, they relates the contact they had with Sth Africa and Australia, these informations gave me the push to learn as quickly as possible to join them. The book lent to me became my bedside book and few weeks later as was at their level, I was able to read code at 25 words I started

rewinding transformer and coils by hand but could not make many experiments as we were provided by electricity at night only, the supply was from 1800 hrs to 0600in the morning with a fluctuation of 80/100 volts, I blew fuses at night and the landlord threaten to throw me out of the house.

One day, Leny came with a great news, he finds, I don't know where, the information that a new type of antenna was doing wonderfully; a "zepplin" and was going to build one, we help a little bit, but don't know exactly the dimension; does not the matter he says and started. He bought some Hoops and the work took the shape of a real zepplin with hoops in the middle to keep the shape of the flying saucer, it was a real masterpiece we were all anxious to try it. the results were disappointig. Later on we got the information on the real Zepp and findout we were far from what Leny thought.

Spares were very scarce and unobtainable locally, we had to order from France as there was a monthly call by a French liner which took a month to reach the island from Marseille; that is to say; nearly three months between the order and arrival of the spares. We were also ordering from an American firm called LAFAYETTE but the delay was longer. From them, I bought in1938 the latest model you can find on the market ,an Hallicrafter "SKY CHAMPION, cost: USD 8.00!!!!!!

Leny was well ahead of us on the technical side, he was following courses by correspondance from an American School N.R.I. (National Radio Institute) which was sending, with his papers, all the necessary parts for experiments by the pupils. We, we had, more or less to make our own parts, transformer,Rf chocks even resistances and had to wait radio tube orders before going ahead. I still have, hand made, RF chocks, Coils made out of copper tubes, even an compulsory absorption wave meter and a crystal—Galena—receiver kept as souvenir.

Time has come to packup to join my father as four months elapsed since my arrival in Mauritius and the ship plying between Mauritius and Chagos was scheduled to leave in few days. In the mean time, the owners of the Salomon group have sold the Company to another one who was the owner of Diego Garcia group and their ship "DIEGO" vas a sailing Vessel. The new Company newing that I have studied Radio, ask me to look after

a set they had on board, the purpose of it was to receive time signal from Rugby in England on 20.000 metres to check their chronometers, the installation never works. The travel took about fifteen days and reaching Salomon. I Took the set ashore and get the batteries charged and was surprised to find the set working on the first go. I kept the set as nobody on board could man it. We had the opportunity to listen to radio Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) on MW. At Salomon we were about 300 peoples living on the islands,7 europeens and others natives, we used to make them listen Radio Ceylon, it was difficult to explain radio to them, they thought there was a gramophone in the box!!!!

While the ship was loading and unloading ,I had a talk with my father ,I suggest,he may write to the Company asking them to contact Leny and see if he could build a transmitter or send some spares so I can build one and we will be able then, to get in touch with Mauritius.

On her way back to Mauritius, the S.V. Diego went aground on EAGLE Island, one of the islands forming part of the Three Brothers Group of the Chagos, during a gale. We were not informed of the wreck, till, one day, a steamer call on us on his way from Mauritius to India and informed the Manager she was searching for the S.V. Diego, she was well over due on schedule, they find all the crew and passengers at Eagle Island, all safe. The captain took them to Peros Banhos and by radio, informed Mauritius. We had the news by the Manager of Peros Banhos. The captain of the ship told the crew and passengers that another ship, from India to Mauritius, is going to pick them in about ten days. Useless to say that I was furious having not be possible to help being short of materials.

Another ship with supply on board was sent urgently as some of the groups were short of foods, I was surprised to see Leny on board as well as the Bishop of Mauritius, the Company Manager and few guest. Leny has brought all the materials. The idea to the Company to ask Leny to build up a station for Salomon paid. up. We immediately start erecting the masts and the station was installed under the Manager House verandah. On the 31st of October 1936, at 1610 GMT, VQ8AS was on the air, first contact VK3HV then VK3MR, ZS2X andVK2YC. I wake up my fatrer to tell him that every thing vas working well it was 21.10 hrs local time.

(During one of my visit to Australia, I was surprised to find on a board, at the Adelaide Post Office Museum one of my QSL Card VQ8AS confirming a QSO with VK5AC in Dec1937)

The TX Leny built was a TPTG with an Osram tube PX4 giving a ten watts input when fed with 300 volts supply. We had only 110 volt coming from the bank of accumulators suppling the set we got from the SV Diego, we did managed to get more power in putting the local 110 DC supply in series with the batteries but the interferences from the dynamo prevent us to go any further. We had to rely with what we got. With the 110 volts we had 4 watts input and this was doing well and we kept that set-up for months. The big brother

of the PX4 was PX25 and was unable to use it. These tubes are of great value to day. (While in visit to England, I sold them for US dollars 110 and 260 respectively). Later on, I build a Xtal control TX as the TPTG was unsteady and chirpy. The RX was a Philips 1.v.2.more or less similar to the National SW3.

The call VQ8A "S" was choosen as S for Salomon. We were still without regulation concerning the radio amateurs in Mauritius. Leny gave me the call V8AD when I started learning Radio but without spares I was unable to build a Tx as I explain earlier due to the long delay between order and delivery at home. Between the time I left Mauritius and the arrival of Leny at Salomon, he find out that the Callsign VQ8 was allocated to Amateurs in Mauritius, so they all change their call from V8 to VQ8.

The ship had load and unload in two days and left for another group "Peros Banhos which is located about thirty miles South West of Salomon we had not finish our works and decided to finish it and then to go to Peros Banhos to meet the Ship. We had to took the Manager's boat, a nice well built little cutter man by 9 oarsmen and a coxwain. We

left at 0400 in the morning and before sunrise we had to navigate by compas, we had two spares oarsmen, I brought a demijohn of wine and cigarettes, we change men two by two, every fifteen minutes and by 0800 we were at mid way of our target and drop anchor at noon near the ship. Leny was not at ease at all during that crossing. He relate this odyssey in an article written by Marv W6FR in DX Magazine.

Going back to Salomon, on the 9th of November, I was on the Air nearly Daily, I made a twice weekly sked vith VQ8AF to pass and receive messages for the Company. The antenna I used was a full wave Zepp on 40 metres and two waves on 20. To tune it on 20, we had to disconnect the feeder going at the back of the isolator connected to the antenna and bind it at the active terminal side on the TX. On the binding post left bare we connect a piece of wire about 6 to 8 feet long put it at right angle to the feeder and trim it inch by inch until we get the maximum current in the antenna. We call it VQ8's antenna. We had very good contact with America and the world. That remind me an article Written in QST by a Wireless operator of an american ship anchored in a port in the Philippines who sait: he got the shock of his life when I said, that my power was 4 watts, for him ,that power will just reach the bow of his ship

I had hundred contacts around the world during my stay at Salomon. One day,I was called by a station signing FR8VX, I knew,FR8 was RENION Island having no callbook I could not check the address. I asked him if he knew Prince Vinh San?? I am Prince Vinh Sam was the answer. Needless to say how I was excited, we talk quite a bit and meet very often, On one of my visit to Mauritius,I had to relieve a sick wireless operator on board a Mauritian Ship,where I had the opportunity to use a spark transmitter,as,the ship was so equiped and at the end of the transmission the shack was full of ozone smell HI!!!!!We called at Reunion Island and I Pav a visit to Vinh San.we had dinner togerher

and talk of the good old days. I also paid a visit to Mr Lacouture the professor of Music.

Living with my father at Salomon was a cousin of mine who was under his wing as he was an orphan boy and my father was always willing to help people, I taught him radio and the code, he was doing well. His name Pierre CHAROUX

At the end of 1937 I went back to Mauritius and Pierre took over with the Call VQ8AT. We were still not recognized as radio amateur. During my stay I sat for my First Class Merchant Navy Wireless Radio Operator ticket. As there was nobody in Mauritius to supervise the examinations I had to take it on board a Warship visiting the Island..We were still a Colony at that time. Some time after, we made a petition to the Postmaster

General who was the authority in the matter and hand it at his office. He says to us: I have enough trouble with the radio amateurs, I gave the Call VQ8AA and VQ8AB to two Lighthouses and I have been blamed by Geneva. Do what you like but don't put me in trouble again as we have protested when we heard that amateur calls have been given to lighthouses

In the mean time we had a new recruit; Raoul Thomas VQ8 AI. 8AG was an Englishman who was a radio ham in G land and was working for the CABLE and WIRELESS. He allocate himself the letter G. The only radio Ham officially reconnised by the Postmaster General was Henri ADAM he had the call VQ8 A H, he was in his 80ties

and was an electrical engineer and was the owner, with his sons of a well known business locally, they were the agent for Philips, Nederlands. I pay his a visit and during the talk, he told me that he applied for licence to broadcast music and had ordered a 50 watt TX. The PMG reply was: I cant give you a Broadcast Licence But, as an engeneer, if you ask for a radio amateur licence that will be OK. Those who have asked for radio amateur licences are not qualified peoples. Mr Adam added, with a smile, wen I got my engeneer ticket, I think the Dynamo has not been yet invented as I have been questioned on batteries. Hi!!!!

On or about mid July 1937, we had the visit of the supply ship. As usual, some of the inhabitants came back from leave and few recruits as well, amongst the new commer was a man who was going to give us a lot of trouble. Few days after the departure of the ship, he started a propaganda, telling the workers that they did not get enough money for the works they are doing, they should claim, this and that, and if they don't get it, put on strike. In few days the situation became worse and worse. We tried to explain to the natives that we did not get the power to change the contract basis, this have to be referred to the Headquarters. Nothing doing. That man, put inself at the head of a gang and start putting fire here and there, the news came to us that they were going to sabotage the electrical powerplant. My father took the decision to advise the Headquarters of the situation. As we were having a contact with Mauritius twice weekly and as the next sked was in two or three days, we decided to ask for help by any means. The radio hams in Madagascar FB8AD Pierre WIL SON and FB8AB Paul BOLIR, were find very often on

the air, we listen for them. On 25th of July at 11.55 Z I got FB8AD on the key I explain the situation, and asked him to standby and be prepared to contact the Malagasy authorities if needed and to ask them to get in touch with the authorities in Mauritius and in the meantime to try to get VQ8 AF on the key. FB8AB who was listning, came to rescue and keep watch, FB8AD got in touch with VQ8AE and passed part of the informations but a power cut at 8AE prevent any further contact. Wilson resume communication with 8AS and FB8AB thought it was safer to keep the FB8 authorities informed of the situation. FB8AD remain in contact with 8AS up to 15.00hrs. At 8AS side the batteries are running down as they were only of 5 amp/hrs capacity. Sked was arranged for the day after, the situation remain critical.

On the 26th at 12.00 hrs 8AS report that the situation seems to be the same but did not show any signs of deterioration. and was able to work VQ8AF but lost contact due to QSB, it was the same between VQ8AF and FB8AD, but the later was able to copy part of the message from VQ8AF informing that a ship with Police forces and judge on board is leaving for Salomon. On the 27 th at 12.00hrs confirmation was received from FB8AD about yesterday's massage and this was also confirmed by VQ8AF on a QSO later On the 28th persintent rumours was received that at night the electrical power plant shall be saboted. A relyable gang of men was formed and posted near the engine room for the night.

VQ8AF asked us to listen to the ship on 500 kc/s at 12.00 GMT (all the above times are in GMT) they will call blind as they could not listen on 7 nor 14 Mhz. We got his message.

The 29th, the message copied from the ship says they will be on the 30th at the entrance of the lagoon by 05.30 local time and will wait for us. My father called six men on whom he can rely and tell them to be ready at 04.00hrs and get the Manager cutter boat ready as we are going on inspection. We boarded the boat at a quarter past four and up we go. The meeting point was about 4 to 5 miles from where we were. The ship was not yet in sight, then my father told them we are going to meet a ship ... A ship ??? yes a ship. The surprise was lisible on their faces.

Their faces changed when they saw Police on board. Without loosing time, Police and Judge came ashore put a table and some chairs, the Tribunal started. The leader was arrested as well as those who follow him 5 or 6 all together and sentenced to emprisonnement. We find out later on, that the leader was an habitual criminal and was sentenced, before, for murder. This event was bublished and related in full in the French bulletin "REF (the French equivalent to ARRL") in their March issue 1938

The 12th of May 1938. I was back to Salomon, few months after, my father was transferred to Diego Garcia where VQ8AF had equiped the place with a complrte station. Leny hving left for South Africa. An operator was sent there but resigned one or two months after. My father ask the company to transfer me at the same time as at Salomon

they had Charoux, so I went to Diego Garcia where I stayed up to 20th of Febuary1939. As my father was going on leave to Mauritius, I resigned and definitely came back to Mauritius I throught !!!!!!!! I work as serviceman, for some times and once more I was sollicited to replace a wireless operator on a Ship for a month or so; destination CHAGOS!!!!The war was already declared and I was forbidden to use the Radio except in case of attack by the ennemy, on our way we meet a british submarine the OTUS, the commander was a great grandson of an ex Governor of Mauritius; Governor NICOLAY.

.When I came back, I learned that the police was looking after me as I been found in possession of Radio transmitter in war time. This was confirmed by my friends, as they were also accused of the same offence. As I was living at my uncle's place, he told the process server that I left the country without mentioning I was at sea and be back in few days, the charge against me was dropped, but maintained for the others. In fact, on the first of September I received the visit of an government officer from the electrical department, who was a friend of us, as he was then the man in charge of VRS, the government radio transmitting station, he says to me: due to the world situation, he has received order to collect all the radio transmitters on the island so, he will come the day after to collect my TX. Knowing, we were at the eve of a war, I agree. So on September the 2nd, he collected all the transmitters he knews, from me and the others. We were facing a serious charge. Meanwhile my friends contacted a lawyer who was just been back from England; after studing the case ,he seems confident to win it but refused to discuss about it. On the day the case was called I was anxious with the others what will come out. Amongst the witnesses was the Postmaster General and the official who have collected our transmitters. The usher call the case, the lawyer stands ;and say: Sir, my clients are accused to have been found in possession of radio transmitters in war time; the war have been declared on the 3rd September, as all the equipments have been collected on the 2nd of September, and the declaration of war the 3rd of September then, they were not in possession of any transmitters on the 3rd. I plead: no case to answer.... That throw

the audience into confusion. the prosecutor ask for postponement: The PMG accused the police to have wrongly enter the case; it was a real mess. The case was then postponed. When recalled, the police asked us if we have no objection if the charge is based on a law which was in force in 1937 instead of 1939 and the fine will be a few cents and the government will not lose the face.... We agreed

We learned afterwards, when the officer who collected the transmitters made a report to higher level, the PMG was queried as he was the responsible party he denies he was aware that there was radio amateurs in Mauritius, unfortunately for him we gave to the authorities the carbon copy of the petition we handed over to him few months earlier. This was why the authorities made a deal with us.

On my return from the Chagos, I resume my radio serviceman job. Some times after, I

was offered a job as Manager of a Mechanical workshop till till the end of April 1940, when I got a call from the chap who was in charge of the Government Wireless Station asking me to report to the Royal Navy Station at a place called VACOAS. There they asked me if I would like to join them. They were looking for people who can read Morse and having a good technical back ground. .. I accepted and after a stage at their cipher Department, I was sent to DIEGO GARCIA to erect and take charge of a Radio Station, that station became a secret base under the code name "Port 2 Y ".I stayed there for two and a half years, and then transferred to Mauritius where. I spent few months at VACOAS, and then,transferred to the Intelligence Service. But this is another story...... At the outbrake of the war, there were very few people who could read morse apart the radio amateurs. The government requested the help of mauritiens radio amateurs for forming new morse readers and give them responsibily in different departments. Like this ,VQ8AB became in charge of nearly 150 radio listners whose jobs were, watching Far East stations (,part of the Japonise code was broken here.) VQ8AI was copying Reuters and DLN (germany) VQ8AA TMB2 (French) VQ8AC China VQ8AD was sent to the Chagos and VQ8AF had at his place a station and maintained communications with the Chagos during the whole war and nobody never noticed there was a clandestine- officialradio station next door. The received the visit of an government officer from the entropy and traditional received the visit of an government officer from the entropy and the received the

At the start of the conflit, Great Britain was taken by surprise. Mauritius had only one xtal controlled Transmitter;a 500 watter tuned on500 kc/s for ship contact, this set had replaced the Pulsen Arc TX at Rose Belle. The Royal Navy transferred it to VACOAS where they were building a Short Wave station... When I was posted to the Chagos, the first thing I asked was: The equipment ???? there was none. I then told them: if you give me back my radio amateur station I guaranty I shall be able to maintain contact with Mauritius. They agreed. But with whom shall I be in touch ?????No answer. Then I suggested VQ8AF They gave him back his station, and during the whole war VQ8AF had a , daily, contact with Diego Garcia just out of Amateur Frequencies bands7350 kc/sand 14450. He had a private telephone line, though a police station, with the Royal Navy at Vacoas, even that we received , at Diego Garcia, six or seven months after my arrival, equipments from MARCONI which allowed me to get in touch with all Royal Navy

stations in the Indian Ocean and Asia. Nevertheless the two radio amateur stations equipments, maintained a daily contact with Mauritius up to the end of the hostilities. .

The radio amateurs of Mauritius are proud of the vote of confidence granted to them by the then Government, Just to mention two of them VQ8AB and VQ8AD, who had access to some highly secret informations and to VQ8AF who had to be up at six in the morning, daily, to contact Diego Garcia for weather reports and early messages. The Admiralty having decided to kept this communication as a back-up in case of emergencies, well they did, as some time after I left the Chagos, the main station broke down and that link, was the only mean of communication left, they had to send a cruiser from Australia for repairs.

Before closing the History on radio amateurs in Mauritius, I would like to to pay a tribute to those, who had no opportunity, like, their counter parts in Europe or America, to go to an university or school to learn a newly invention, they had to learn by themselves, by trials and errors, they had only books available within the reach of their hands. It was the same when Television was introduced to Mauritius. To those fellows... HATS OFF !!!!!!

October 2000

Jim,

This, is what I have written, you can arrenge it as you like, correct, transposed, remove some parts. If you are going to do so, I shall be pleased to get a copy for my archives. My memory is leaving me, at 83 you cant ask more. As I have done before, I dedicate it to my wife and to my sons
73 and good luck

Paul 3B8AD

Excure the bad TYPING

Biography courtesy of W6YA
1st VQ8AD QSL from the estate of W6VFR, W6FR
2nd VQ8AD QSL courtesy of W5KNE, from the estate of W5KC
VQ8AH QSL from Patrick Rigg Collection

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