

Swan Island, its radio history including the CIA and the revenge of United Fruit

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ABSTRACT

Swan Island in the Caribbean, once a pirate lair, can tell many related radio stories. It shows a century of communications technology in the real world of commerce, geo-politics, war and weather. United Fruit Company put Swan Island to work as its long wave spark wireless relay station for its sea-borne commerce in bananas and sugar. Swan Island thereafter provided an ideal site for researching the Caribbean hurricanes. In the Cold War, Latin American insurgencies surrounded Swan Island. In opposing them, the American Central Intelligence Agency, with remarkable connections to United Fruit, once again put Swan Island to work -- for "black ops" and propaganda. The CIA enjoyed Swan Island's advantages for nearly four decades of covert action. Now, Swan Island once again provides a sunny, peaceful lair for its big Iguanas, with an occasional visit from amateur radio operators.

Swan Island, between Honduras and Cuba (Figure 1), amounts to just over three-square miles of very little: coral, palms and big iguanas. But from the standpoint of radio, it does have "location, location, location" and some very interesting radio tales to tell. United Fruit Company used it first as a wireless telegraphy relay station *circa* 1911. In 1960 through 1968, the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) used it as a propaganda and clandestine station against Cuba on short wave and in the broadcast band. As *Radio Swan*, it broadcast anti-Castro programming and operational messages for the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Then as *Radio Americas*, it broadcast propaganda to Cuba, all of which was preceded by a little known CIA pirate radio operation on Swan Island in the previous decade.



Fig. 1. Swan Island on the Horizon, c. 1922, occupied by United Fruit since 1909, named after Pirate Captain Charles Swan of the *Cygnnet* in the 17th Century. (Radio Broadcast, Vol. 1, No. 1, May, 1922 [1])

Real pirates based themselves on Swan Island long before radio pirates. Captain Charles Swan, sailing his smuggling ship (and later outright pirate) *Cygnnet*, visited in the late 17th Century while working for pirate Henry Morgan. Swan Island is about as far from other places as an island in the Caribbean Sea can be. The somewhat grandiosely called Grand Island is the one usable island in a group of three. It is barely big enough for the small airstrip put in for the CIA about 1960. Sea Captain Alonzo Adams originally claimed it for the United States as a guano island, bird guano being a valued fertilizer in the 19th century. The Boston family

Swan Island

of Sumner Smith owned the island, having acquired it from Captain Adams. Its central location made it ideal for a relay radio station and for broadcasting to nearby countries, as well as for the earlier Caribbean pirates. See Figures 2 & 3, for a map of its ocean location and a map of its minimal geography.

Bananas are central to Swan Island's radio history. In the early 20th century, bananas had become the fruit of choice, largely as a result of promotion by the Boston Fruit Company, which evolved into the United Fruit Company and then Chiquita Brands. Only bananas (and oranges) were available year round. A "bunch" consists of many "hands" of individual bananas; each banana is a finger. "*Banan*" means finger in Arabic; early globalization at work. In 1922, United Fruit asserted that it had imported 284,000,000 bunches of bananas in the last ten years, and that it did a \$10,000,000 a year Latin American mercantile business. Adjusted for inflation that is \$130,000,000. [1] Today, the per capita American consumption is about 25 pounds

each. Today, Latin America exports about 17 million metric tons of bananas a year.

United Fruit imported boatloads of bananas and considerable sugar from Central American countries known, in O. Henry's phrase, as "banana republics." As a vertically integrated enterprise, United Fruit planted the producing trees and sugar cane. Then it managed the plantations for export, and then it provided the transportation to American markets. It also opened schools and medical facilities and employed many tens of thousands of people. It operated railroads and provided regional communications and transport. It owned a million and a half acres of land but cultivated only 365,000 acres, as of 1922, and employed 67,000 people in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Cuba, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama and the Canary Islands, and in the United States. [1]

To appreciate the role of Swan Island in intrigue as well as commerce, the United Fruit Company should be understood to have had three subsidiaries at various times:



Fig. 2. The Caribbean Sea, S w a n I s l a n d (arrow) in its midst, South West of the Caymans and Cuba, North east of Guatemala, enjoying only 'Location, Location' (Google Maps)



Fig. 3. Swan Island, as shown on a current navigational map showing the 1961 airstrip, beacon and structures.

1) the company known as Wireless Specialty Apparatus Company, Inc.;

2) the country known as Guatemala; and

3) “the company” known as the CIA, the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

The CIA first landed on Swan Island in 1954, in a little known episode in the ether wars. It set up a “black-ops” radio broadcasting network including a powerful Swan Island transmitter, to effect the CIA-sponsored overthrow of the elected government in Guatemala – and it worked, although largely executed by propaganda radio sta-

tions in nearby countries closer to Guatemala City. The utility and location of Swan Island in the 1954 operation likely made Swan Island the prime candidate for the site of the 1961 operation that became *Radio Swan*.

SWAN ISLAND AS UNITED FRUIT COMPANY'S CENTRAL WIRELESS RELAY STATION

Untoward delay in the distribution of tropical bananas caused great loss. Wireless telegraphy made itself indispensable at sea, *circa* 1909, (see Figures 4 & 5, Marconi state-of-the-art shore and ship stations). United Fruit saw its advantages for coordinating its extensive “Great White Fleet” of banana boats. It could maximize efficiency and provide weather warnings. The range of long-wave spark systems was, however, limited. This necessitated relay stations. United Fruit created a network of wireless stations extending from the interiors of the countries hosting its plantations such as Guatemala, to the gulf coast of the United States,



Fig. 4. A wireless telegraphy shore station of the first decade of the 20th century; a spark gap on an induction coil to the right, Leyden jar condensers to the left, clock center, ink for recording received signals and in front of it, a coherer detector, and to the left of the coherer, the tuner for reception. This is a reconstruction of the Marconi station at Lizard Point, Cornwall, UK; curator David Barlow. (Photo Bart Lee, 2005).



Fig. 5. A Marconi ship station (Empress of Britain, callsign MPB), tuner to the left, as reconstructed at the British Museum. (Photo Bart Lee, 2002)

especially Florida and New Orleans and up to Boston. United Fruit sited one station on Swan Island. It had initially leased some of the island from Sumner Smith's Swan Island Company of Boston to grow coconuts. Figure 6.

United Fruit sought reliable wireless apparatus in the dawn of the radio age. Good gear was hard to find, and often had to be hand-crafted to specifications. Wireless Specialty Apparatus Co., Inc., (WSA) was a then "high-tech" company with an excellent reputation and it was conveniently located in Boston. One of its principals was Greenleaf Whittier Pickard, an outstanding Harvard educated engineer who had worked for American Wireless Telephone and Telegraph Company briefly, *circa* 1902, then American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) until 1906, and who then consulted briefly for Lee de Forest (although he seems to have left that episode

off his biography). He then joined the Boston company in 1907. Pickard invented and developed numerous mineral crystal detectors for reception of wireless signals, and contributed the technology of the point contact junction, known colloquially as the "cat's whisker." Wireless Specialty Apparatus detectors and wireless sets, especially its IP-501 receivers, were known in their day for their reliability, and are known to this day for their quality and collectability.

United Fruit bought WSA in 1912 so it would have a source of reliable and increasingly powerful radio equipment. See Figure 7. United Fruit enjoyed the advantages of this equipment at sea and shoreside. Figure 8. United Fruit also took advantage of the skills and diligence of its corps of competent, innovative and clever wireless operators. [2]



Fig. 6. Swan Island Boundary Marker 1912: "Boundary of Property Leased to the United Fruit Co Dec 10, 1912" (From Tom Kneitel, Dec., 1985 [8])

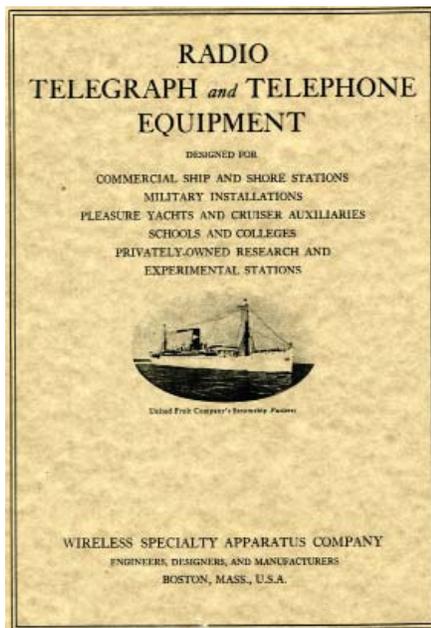


Fig. 7. Cover of a catalog, circa 1922, of Wireless Specialty Apparatus Company, a Subsidiary of United Fruit Company; UFCO Steamship Pastores is on the cover. (Author's collection).

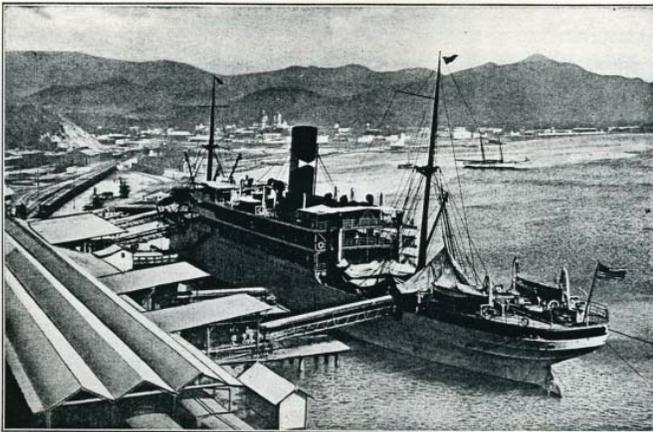
United Fruit soon developed one of the earliest successful radio networks that carried public traffic as well as its own. See Figure 9 for an image of a United Fruit Wireless frank. As of 1913 the network became the Tropical Radio and Telegraph Company, also headquartered in Boston.

United Fruit so dominated Latin American communications with state-of-the-art technology and an integrated radio system that the founders of the Radio Corporation of America monopoly

(RCA, beginning in 1919) including American Marconi, Westinghouse, General Electric and AT&T, in 1921 included United Fruit Company and its subsidiary WSA in an exchange of traffic facilities.

Swan Island had beckoned a decade earlier, *circa* 1909, as an ideally centrally situated relay station site. Swan Island could communicate with the nearby countries of Latin America to the West and with Cuba to the North East, the Canal Zone to the South and New Orleans to the North. It could

also relay traffic and especially hurricane and storm warnings to and from United Fruit ships at sea and to United Fruit operations West of it. By 1911 Wireless Specialty Apparatus spark transmitters sparked away, and very tall antenna masts rose above Grand Swan. United Fruit also had the foresight to employ Edison Cell battery backup power both in its vessels and at its stations. Some of the worst hurricanes on record with winds estimated at 200 knots by reliable observers have battered United Fruit's commercial region centered on Swan Island. The batteries proved



The United Fruit Co.'s Steamship *Turrialba* at Santa Marta, Colombia



WIRELESS SPECIALTY APPARATUS installation on the United Fruit Co.'s Steamship *Turrialba*

[10]

Fig. 8. A United Fruit Company banana boat and its wireless room, circa 1921 (from Radio Broadcast, May, 1922 [1])



Fig. 9. A pre-paid 1912 'stamp' for a UFCO Wireless Service message; in 1913 this was renamed Tropical Radio Company, which with Wireless Specialty Apparatus became part of RCA in 1919 when it absorbed United Fruit Company's radio operations. (Author's collection).

their worth but ultimately the tall masts always fell down. More than once, all that was left on Swan Island were a few stone or concrete buildings, everything else having been flattened or swept out to sea.

The scale of United Fruit's radio undertaking may be judged from the number of stations and the high power WSA equipment that was largely identical in each station. According to a definitive May, 1922 article about United Fruit Company and its Wireless Network in the first issue of *Radio Broadcast* magazine (probably written by United Fruit's already effective public relations department) [1], the land stations were:

Radio Stations UFCO 1922; note that callsigns for Central American stations start with "U" for United plus a second letter, and two of three US station's callsigns end in "U":

Radio Stations: Call Letters:
 New Orleans, Louisiana WNU
 Burrwood, Louisiana WBU
 Fort Morgan, Alabama WIO
 Swan Island, Caribbean Sea
 US [United-Swan]
 Tela, Honduras UC
 Puerto Castilla, Honduras
 UA
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras UG
 Port Limon, Costa Rica UX
 Almirante, Panama UB
 Santa Marta, Colombia UJ

In the days before federal regulation and in the unregulated Caribbean, the first letter of a self-assigned callsign often represented the company, e.g., D for De Forest Wireless, P for Pacific Wireless, and here, U for United Fruit, and a second letter often related to its site. Caribbean stations *circa* 1912 were:

KW at Key West operated by De Forest with a two kilowatt spark rig and an audion detector receiver,

M at Havana, Cuba operated by Marconi with a ten-inch induction coil transmitter and a Fleming Valve receiver,

TD at Trinidad, Cuba with a Telefunken ½ KW spark and crystal detector receiver,

US at Swan Island operated for United Fruit's Tropical Wireless Telegraph Company with a one KW spark transmitter and WSA's Perikon crystal detector but also an electrolytic detector.

Two of the ships of the day were the tug *SS Rescue*, callsign RSQ, with a Massie Wireless Telegraph Company ten-inch induction coil and crystal detectors, and the banana transport *SS Olinda*, callsign OA, with a United Wireless Telegraph Company half KW spark, and crystal detectors. [3] These vessels may have had radio operators aboard from the companies

that supplied the equipment such as Massie, just as Marconi operators went to sea on various companies' vessels.

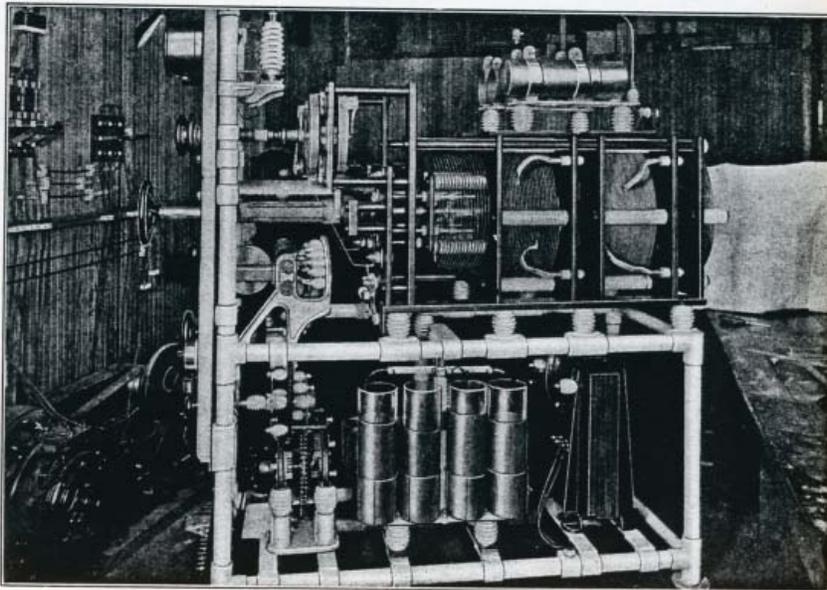
Wireless Specialty Apparatus Company proudly displayed its equipment including that installed on Swan Island in its catalogs. Figures 10 & 11. The *Radio Broadcast* article also shows the equipment at work ashore and at sea. Similarly, Thomas Edison published an illustrated promotional "Letter" [4] about the use of his batteries by United Fruit's wireless stations, on ships and on land. See Figures 12 & 13.

Operations at the inland stations, and island stations such as Swan Island, initiated, relayed and received a great deal of traffic. Some of it was distress traffic with lives at stake at sea. During hurricane season, the lives of the station operators themselves were at stake. One of the old operators,

E. Jay Quinby, (Commander, USN, Ret.) wrote an exciting, if hyperbolic fictionalized reminiscence *Marooned in Paradise* [3] about service by wireless man "Jack Foggerty" on Swan Island *circa* 1912, where the iguanas were said to reach five feet in length:

"... DAMN the tropics and DAMN Fred Muller back there in Boston for talking him into accepting this assignment at Swan Island, which he described as a "veritable tropical Paradise in the Caribbean Sea." Muller hadn't mentioned the inevitable malaria, the poisonous vipers, the loathesome [sic] creatures that crawled by night and the clouds of winged pests that swarmed by day and raised itching welts to torture a man's soul hour by hour, day by day, night by night."

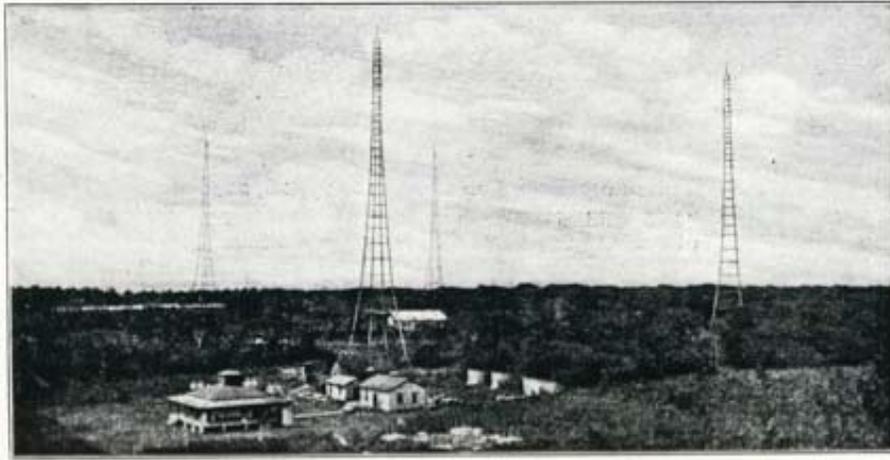
Then, the CQD of the storm-distressed *SS Olinda* rouses malaria-fevered operator Foggerty (sine JF)



5 K.W. Transmitter designed and built by the WIRELESS SPECIALTY APPARATUS COMPANY and installed in the United Fruit Company's station at Swan Island, Caribbean Sea

[70]

Fig. 10. From the WSA catalog, a 5 KW quenched gap spark transmitter working on Swan Island circa 1920.



Swan Island Station of the United Fruit Co., equipped with 5 K.W. WIRELESS SPECIALTY transmitter and receiver.

Fig. 11. The WSA catalog's picture of the Swan Island station and four towers, circa 1920.

to action. But then the stormwind takes down an antenna guywire and Jack and a native helper have to reconnect it in the near hurricane gales. Then the relay of the distress call meets weather challenges before getting to Cuba but finally reaches the rescue tug *SS Rescue* out of Key West. *SS Rescue* saves the *Olinda* from the rocks just in time, with everybody talking

to everybody by wireless throughout the rescue. In the process JF manages to talk the operator of the *Olinda*, and old acquaintance, into replacing him on Swan Island, telling him that the Swan Island girls are beautiful: "... ask Fred Muller, he will tell you about them." It's quite a story; it rings true.

Later operators at Swan Island may have, at least occasionally, en-

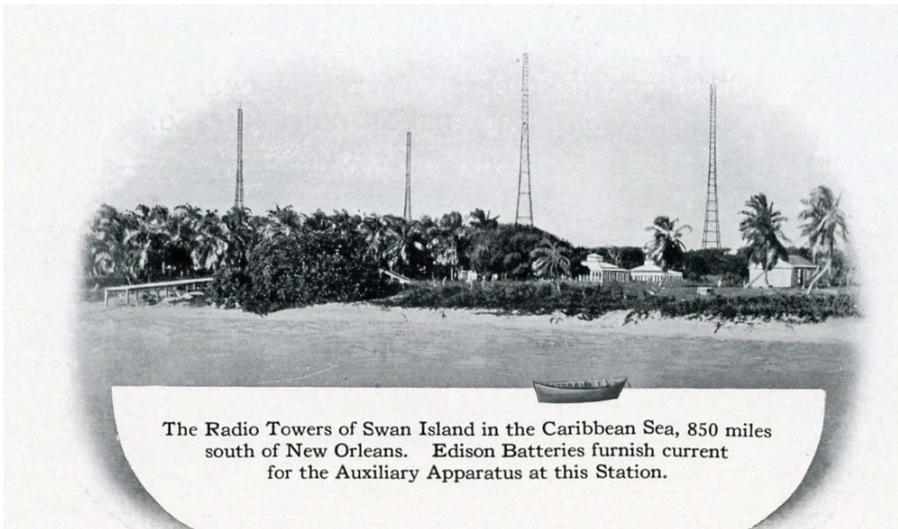
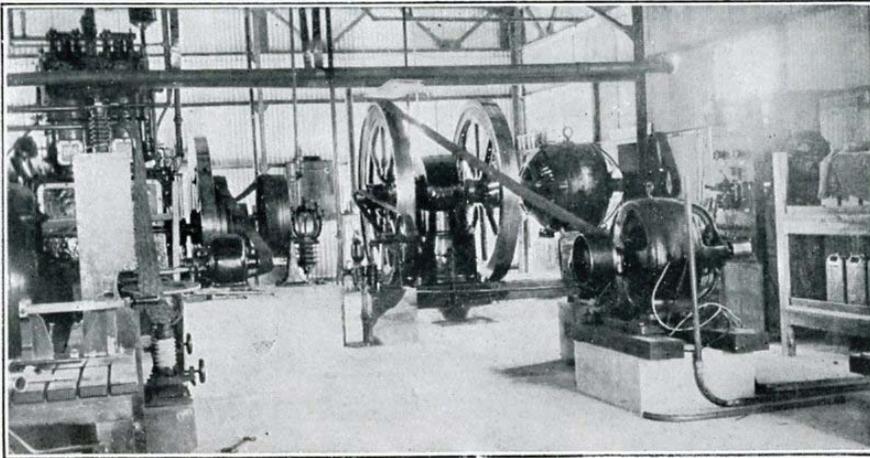


Fig. 12. The Edison Company's 1915 picture of the UFCO Swan Island station, looking from the North. (Edison promotional "Letter" [4])



View No. 1. Edison Batteries Operating Auxiliary Apparatus at Swan Island Station

Fig. 13. UFCO's Swan Island station's motor-generators working on emergency battery power; from the Edison Company 1915 promotional "Letter" about such battery operation. (Edison promotional "Letter" [4])

joyed the place more ... or at least United Fruit seems to have wanted it to seem that way. See Figure 14.

SWAN ISLAND AS WEATHER CENTRAL

The United Fruit Company wireless operation on Swan Island became an official weather

Below. View of the Radio Station at Swan Island, once the haunt of buccannery in the days of the Spanish Main



Above. In spite of its loneliness and perils, the Swan Island radio men are not always depressed



Fig. 14. Happy Swan Island wireless operators enjoying island duty at the radio station on Swan Island, or so United Fruit would have one believe, above right: "In spite of loneliness and perils, the Swan Island radio men are not always depressed." Left caption reads; "View of the Radio Station, once the haunt of Buccannery in the days of the Spanish Main." (Radio Broadcast, May, 1922 [1])

station in 1914. With the coming of vacuum tube CW technology after 1920 as well as short wave point-to-point radio circuits, relay stations had little role to play in the Caribbean. Swan Island receded to the background as a hurricane-observing weather station between 1928 and 1932. The Weather Bureau placed observers on Swan Island during the hurricane season in 1938, and more permanently in 1940. [5]

Weather observations became increasingly precise, and the hope of accurately predicting hurricane paths and strengths provided ample justification for research. The weather stations operated on Swan Island employed radio links of their own. But many of the weathermen were also amateur radio operators. The FCC at first issued KD4 callsigns, then KS4 callsigns; Swan Island became a very rare DX (distant) entity for amateur radio operators collecting countries and jurisdictions contacted over the air. A series of QSL verification cards collected by Thomas Roscoe,

K8CX, (used here by permission) tells the story of the Swan Island amateur radio stations and that of the weather station. [6] One of the more interesting cards, a club station [8], plays on the pirate theme. See Figure 15.

In 1946, the FAA had installed a non-directional navigation beacon radio station for guidance of Caribbean air traffic, callsign SWA. [5] In 1953 KS4AU's Swan Island QSL card (Figure 16) shows affiliation with PAA, Pan American Airlines, "on the route of the Flying Clippers." Pan Am started out as a Caribbean air carrier in 1927 and became the American national airline flying world-wide. Pan Am may have maintained a communications installation or, inasmuch as it was a primary user, it may have maintained the air navigational beacon on Swan Island.

The 1963 QSL card of W3ZQ/KS4 (Figure 17) says "site of the U.S. Weather Bureau Hurricane Upper Air Sounding Station (supported by FAA communications)." The FAA radio station used the

callsign WSG and communicated with Miami by radioteletype. [8]

Although weather can be exciting enough in that part of the world, clandestine radio is what really put Swan Island on the historical map.



Fig. 15. Swan Island Amateur Radio Club (according to Tom Kneitel [8]), operator James Takaki, KH6BCB/KS4 in 1968, remembering Captain Swan. Takaki had a Hawaiian call, and had also operated as F7BY, probably also on government service. These QSL card images were collected by Thomas Roscoe, K8CX, <http://hamgallery.com>; this one KS4CC via K8CX from OE1HGW.

**(NOT SO)
COLD WAR
RADIO ON
SWAN IS-
LAND**

Radio Swan's role as a CIA anti-Castro station in 1960 before, during and after the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion, has long been of interest to historians of geo-politics and historians of radio. [7] Radio

historian and journalist Tom Kneitel, K2AES, wrote extensively about Swan Island radio [8] as early as 1968, the year he visited its later *Radio Americas* incarnation.

But *Radio Swan* had its origin in the astonishingly successful 1954 CIA clandestine radio stations beaming propaganda and more into Guatemala. The station on Swan Island was set up by CIA officers E. Howard Hunt, later of Watergate fame, [10] and propaganda specialist David Atlee

Phillips. [11] The CIA called its campaign *PBSUCCESS* and the propaganda broadcasters called themselves, in Spanish, *The Voice of Liberation, La Voz de Liberacion*.

In Guatemala at the time, United Fruit "... functioned as a state within a state, owning Guatemala's telephone and telegraph facilities, administering its only Atlantic harbor, and monopolizing its banana export" as well as all the railroad track (887 miles), and it controlled 40,000 employees. [12] United

Fruit grew a lot of bananas in Guatemala then. It owned a lot of land that it kept in reserve, paid little in taxes, and opposed what many considered appropriate reforms. And therein hangs a tale.

The Boston roots of United Fruit ran deep. It operated from Boston and ran its Revere Sugar

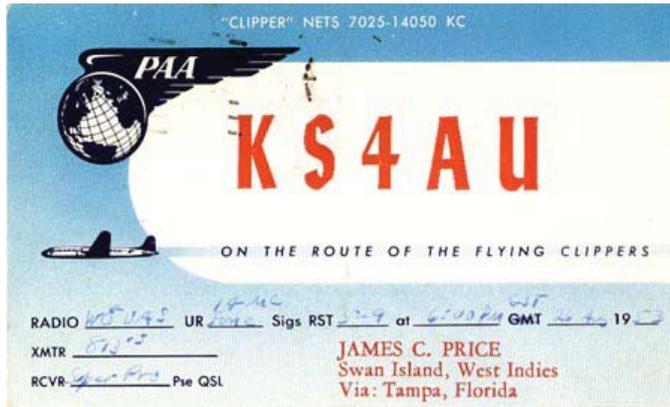


Fig. 16. "On the Route of the Flying Clippers" "PAA" (Pan American Airways) says KS4AU's 1953 QSL card. Via K8CX from W8UAS.



Fig. 17. W3ZQ/KS4 QSL card from 1963: "Site of the U.S. Weather Bureau Hurricane Upper Air Sounding Station (Supported by FAA Communications)"; Via K8CX From W2GGE.

Refinery at Boston. [1] Boston is also that place where “[in] the land of the bean and the cod, the Lodges talk only to Cabots, and Cabots talk only to God.” In fact at the time of the CIA’s Guatemalan operation, the American Ambassador to the United Nations was Henry Cabot Lodge (who presumably could talk to himself if need be). He was later Richard Nixon’s 1960 running-mate [13] and a stockholder in United Fruit. [14] United Fruit connected to the U.S. Government at the highest level:

“The American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was an avowed opponent of Communism whose law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell had represented United Fruit. His brother Allen Dulles was the director of the CIA, and was a board member of United Fruit. The brother of the Assistant Secretary of State for InterAmerican Affairs John Moors Cabot had once been president of United Fruit. Ed Whitman who was United Fruit’s principal lobbyist was married to President Eisenhower’s personal secretary [...]” [15]

Both Dulles brothers owned stock in United Fruit. [16]

One summary explains the CIA’s Guatemalan operation, code-named PBSUCCESS, thus:

“The 1954 Guatemalan coup d’état was a covert operation organized by the United States Central Intelligence Agency to overthrow Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, the democratically-elected President of Guatemala. Arbenz’s government put forth a number of new policies, such as seizing and expropriating unused, unfarmed land that private corporations set aside long ago and giving the land to peasants, that the U.S. intelligence community deemed Communist in nature and, suspecting Soviet influence, fueled a feared of Gua-

temala becoming what Allen Dulles described as a ‘Soviet beachhead in the western hemisphere.’ Dulles’ concern reverberated within the CIA and the Eisenhower administration, in the context of the anti-Communist fears of the McCarthyist era. Arbenz instigated sweeping land reform acts that antagonized the U.S.-based multinational company United Fruit Company, which had large stakes in the old order of Guatemala, and lobbied various levels of U.S. to take action against Arbenz. [...] The operation, which lasted from late 1953 to 1954, planned to arm and train an ad-hoc ‘Liberation Army’ of about 400 fighters under the command of a then-exiled Guatemalan army officer, Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, and to use them in conjunction with a complex and largely experimental diplomatic, economic, and propaganda campaign. The operation effectively ended the experimental period of representative democracy in Guatemala known as the ‘Ten Years of Spring,’ which ended with Arbenz’s official resignation.” [16]

Radio propaganda and radio “black ops” brought success to the CIA’s operation PBSUCCESS. Radio historian Don Moore has called the CIA’s Guatemalan radio operation, *La Voz de Liberacion*, “The Clandestine Granddaddy of Central America.” [17]

The CIA landed E. Howard Hunt and David Atlee Phillips (Figure 18) and their equipment on Swan Island in 1953. According to Hunt this was done to implement the propaganda campaign by means of radio. [18] Hunt also reported that shortly after landing, a boatload of Guatemalan “students” tried to come ashore to stop them, but Hunt persuaded them otherwise. He did not say exactly how they were persuaded,



Fig. 18. According to E. Howard Hunt, above left, the CIA landed him and David Atlee Phillips, right, on Swan Island in 1953 to set up a high power propaganda shortwave radio station to be used against Guatemala. He reported that they had to repulse “Guatemalan students” who objected. [18]

but Phillips provided propaganda expertise throughout the exercise while Hunt was the presumably fully-armed initial operations man. There also must have been at least some of a Navy Construction Battalion (SeaBees) on site given the size of the radio station and its towers and the transmitter’s ten kilowatts output on shortwave in the 49 meter band.

The CIA officers who have written about Guatemala have always been subject to agency censorship. So, suppression of Swan Island’s exact role in the overthrow of Guatemala’s government is possible, perhaps by reason of the diplomatically sensitive and long pending Honduran claim to the island. Hunt in his 2007 book says that the main CIA “channel” was “stationed across the Honduran border...” [10] According to Moore, the broadcasts came primarily, if not entirely, from Nicaragua: “CIA technicians set up a complete radio base camp on a remote Nicaraguan farm. Additional transmitters were located in Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and even in the US embassy in Guatemala City.” Moore is relying heavily on Phillips’ account, but Phillips never

reveals the site or sites of origin of the broadcasts. Moore goes on to say: “Although it was never used, a reserve transmitter was set up on Swan Island (which seven years later would be the site of the CIA’s famous anti-Castro clandestine, *Radio Swan*).” [17]

E. Howard Hunt, who had landed on Swan Island with Phillips, wrote: “From neighboring Honduras, our powerful transmitter overrode the Guatemalan national radio, broadcasting messages to confuse and divide the population from its military overlords.” [10] “[O]ur powerful transmitter” may suggest the high-powered Swan Island installation with multiple directional antennas mounted on high towers. Phillips says that the transmitter was “Too distant from Guatemala City for conventional medium wave signals, [so] it [had] to be on the short-wave band.” [11] Moreover, according to Phillips, short-wave radio was popular in Guatemala for a variety of reasons. (AM broadcast stations typically enjoy a daytime range of 50 to 150 miles although at night this range extends considerably farther. [19] Swan Island is about 200 miles East of Guatemala.) Most of Nicaragua is more than 200 miles from Guatemala, and Honduras borders Guatemala, about 100 miles from Guatemala City to the West. Looking at the relative distances, Swan Island cannot be ruled out as an operational site. [11]

The broadcasts sowed confusion and despair among the Arbenz government and the Guatemalan Army. It was classic psychological warfare. According to Hunt, it was all recorded in Miami and then transmitted in proximity to Guatemala. [10]

The broadcasts featured “radio-games,” the kind of *funkspiel* so effective for the NAZIs against the

British Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Holland. *La Voz de Liberacion* told The Big Lie, little lies, shams, disinformation, and claimed fake battles won, fake desertions and the like. The *funkspiel* convinced Col. Arbenz that the invading Guatemalans (who were ragtag U.S. sponsored insurgents, and see Appendix for some of their radio equipment) would defeat his regime. His duly-elected government capitulated and many of its members fled. The *coup d'etat*, enabled by black ops radio, succeeded so well that it surprised even its originators in the CIA. According to Phillips, a British diplomat concluded that: "The soldiers had nothing to do with it. The war was won by that radio station." [11]

United Fruit avoided expropriation, "U.S. interests," co-incident with those of United Fruit, were served, and Guatemala suffered from decades of bloody unrest, as did much of Central America. Arbenz and his circle may well have been communists, and he did import a shipload consisting of a thousand tons of East Block arms. Later CIA analysis, however, suggests that the Soviet Union played little if any role in these events. Nonetheless, "black ops" radio had proved its worth. [20] United Fruit got what it wanted. The new ruler, Col. Armas, ruled by "kow-towing to United Fruit" according to Phillips. [11]

From a present day perspective, it can look as though United Fruit manipulated the CIA into doing its dirty work for it in Guatemala, albeit most of it was done bloodlessly by radio. A *realpolitik* point of view, however, may make more sense. The deeply interconnected post World War Two American institutions, such as big business companies using new techniques of public relations, big labor, and the

government agencies of the day, thrived as a successful sovereign in a challenging world. America had competed throughout the world with other sovereignties such as the NAZIs, and in the new Cold War, faced the Soviet Union. In the case of Guatemala, the CIA was merely the high-technology tactical operator that emphasized propaganda radio more than regiments of infantry. The CIA did not work for United Fruit; the CIA worked for "America, Inc."

Irrespective of the success of PBSUCCESS, in this period, Swan Island remained as vulnerable to hurricanes as earlier. In particular, a Navy man wrote this report about Hurricane *Janet* in 1955 (see Figure 19 for her track):

"... on September 15 ... [a]t 1100 hours, from our closed retreat, we heard the giant twin radio towers crash to the ground after being knocked from their foundations by the 100-knot wind ..." [21]

A P2V Neptune hurricane research aircraft with eleven aboard flew into *Janet* east of Swan Island. It radioed in its position, and then was lost and "never heard from again" after its report of "Velocity estimated 200 knots. Beginning penetration." [21] The following recollection by a crew member in the Navy's 1955 search and rescue operation for that P2V shows what a hurricane can do:

"As we approached Swan Island we could not contact them by radio until we got close, as the only power and radio they had was an emergency transceiver that was operated by hand cranking a small generator in the unit that was called a Gibson Girl. Because the sea state was too great to land, and there was no way to get near the island with beaching gear, as we did not have wheels, and even if we did have wheels there was



Fig. 19. The CIA overthrew the Guatemalan government, Swan Island's radio stood down, and then Hurricane Janet came by in 1955 with 200 knot winds, blowing down all antenna towers.

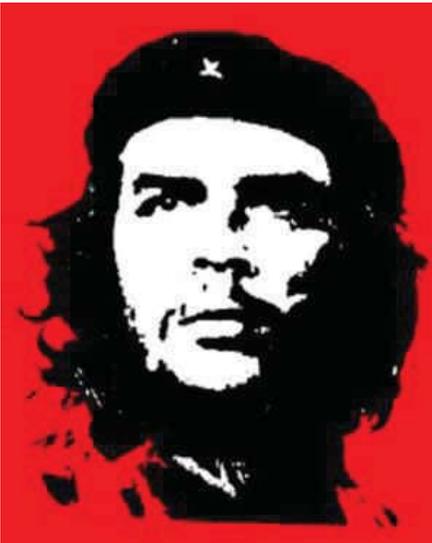


Fig. 20. Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. In the Cuban Revolution - 1959 - declared communists took over Cuba. Cuba expropriated United Fruit's and other U.S. interests on the island, and imprisoned and executed many thousands of Cubans. Some 9,389 Cubans have been listed by name as murdered by Che and Fidel and "the Revolution." ("The Revolution is not a dinner party" said Mao Tse Tung.)

no runway on the island at the time. What we did see when we got there was the islands covered with downed coconut trees that were laid out like match sticks and clearly lined-up indicating how the wind blew them down. There were also five (5) huge radio transmitters, flat on the ground and parallel to each other, and also indicating the direction of how the hurricane winds blew over the island." [22]

RADIO SWAN TAKES ON CASTRO, AND FAILS

Within five years after Guatemala's *coup* ousted the communist sympathizers of Guatemala, Cuba played host to the related communist insurgency of Fidel Castro. Che Guevara, who had been in Guatemala and who had seen what black ops radio propaganda could do, played a major role in Cuba – Hunt later regretted letting him escape Guatemala. Figure 20. This time, the Soviets enthusiastically embraced the Cuban Revolution, Monroe Doctrine or not. Needless to say, the Cuban Revolution also expropriated properties of United Fruit. But the 1961 American attempt to oust Castro failed as spectacularly as the Guatemalan effort had succeeded, and the Cuban Missile Crisis followed 18 months later.

La Voz de Liberacion provided a model for a propaganda and black ops campaign against Cuba, and Swan Island played a central role. There has been a great deal

of discussion in the radio hobby, as well as among historians, about *Radio Swan*, whose short wave and medium wave broadcasts could be heard throughout the United States. Once again the CIA, courtesy of the U.S. Navy, landed CIA officers including David Atlee Phillips. The CIA, courtesy of the SeaBees, installed transmitter for the medium wave broadcast band at 1160 kHz at 50,000 watts power (50 KW), and another for short wave at 6 MHz at 3,000 to 10,000 watts (10 KW). Once again large antenna towers arose. The CIA took the big transmitter out of a technically ineffective propaganda operation in West Germany. Philips is likely to have suggested Swan Island as a result of his 1954 operations there.

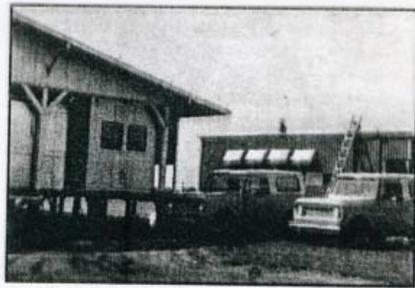
Philco Corporation had a division that could put a turnkey radio station wherever the government wanted it and they did so. [7, 11] Operated by 15 Philco engineers of its "Tech Rep Flying Squad" [23] in wheeled trailers, (Figure 21) *Radio Swan* took to the air.

A CIA internal memorandum tells the story:

"Brief History of Radio Swan.

"1. On 17 March 1960, President Eisenhower approved a covert action to bring about the replacement of the Castro regime. Within the propaganda framework of that program, an important objective was to create and utilize a high-powered medium and short wave radio station. CIA was asked to provide such a station, outside the continental limits of the United States, and have it ready for operation within sixty (60) days.

"2. Swan Island, in the Caribbean, was chosen as an appropriate site. The United States Navy furnished CIA with splendid support: within sixty days, equipment had been brought from Europe, a



RS transmitters were portable jobs mounted in vans parked under a roof. The small announcers studio building is at the right, though most of the programming was on tape and flown in from Miami. (Photo by Tom Kneitel)

Fig. 21. CIA officer David Phillips got another radio station up on Swan Island in 30 days, with help from the Navy. (Illustration from Tom Kneitel, *Popular Communications*, Dec. 1985. p. 20 [8]); see also *Clandestine Confidential* [7].

landing strip was cleared on the island, and the station was able to go on air on 17 May of the same year, precisely on schedule.

“3. Originally it was planned that Radio Swan would be a clandestine station utilizing a “classified missile and space project” as cover. Just prior to inauguration, however, it was decided the station should be a commercial one. This was at the request of the Navy, which reasonably argued that should their participation in construction of a black facility be known, explanations would be difficult.

“4. Using a ‘commercial’ station for the tactical and strategic tasks envisaged for Radio Swan is not, of course, the most desirable way to support a covert operation. The only practical method of operation is to “sell space.” Thus, program time on Radio Swan was sold to various Cuban groups. These included organizations of workers, students, women, two publications in exile, two radio stations in exile, and several political groups. There were also programs created and controlled by CIA. Programs (on tape) were produced in New York, Miami, and later, on Swan Island.” [24; (page 1 of 5)]

Boston, the land of the bean, cod and United Fruit, provided the CIA with the initial programming and broadcasting for its Cuban propaganda operation from short wave station WRUL. [25] The principal of WRUL in Boston was Walter S. Lemmon. WRUL had played a role in World War Two American shortwave broadcasting, and Lemmon was well connected in Washington. In April, 1960 WRUL began broadcasting anti -Castro programming. It then linked up with Radio Swan, providing programming for that station. A company of Lemmon’s also sold

air-time on Radio Swan. [26]

One summary provides interesting detail, with Boston and United Fruit once again involved:

“In 1960, Radio Swan commenced unlicensed transmissions in May as a commercial radio station ... operating with a power of 50,000 watts on AM 1160 [kHz] and on shortwave with a power of 7,500 watts on 6000 kHz. The importance of this island was in its location and proximity to the island of Cuba, because on March 17, 1960, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower had approved covert action to topple the regime of Fidel Castro in Cuba. As early as October 30, 1960, the Castro government sent reconnaissance flights over Swan Island and the Caribbean Coast of Guatemala ... Swan Island was claimed by the governments of both the United States and Honduras, although the island was in the de facto hands of personnel acting on behalf of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The person who claimed ownership in the press was Sumner Smith of Boston. He was both the president of Abington Textile and Manufacturing Works and a stockholder in Gibraltar Steamship Company of New York City.

“While the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) claimed that it had no jurisdiction over the station, the address of Radio Swan was in care of the Gibraltar Steamship Company in New York, which was a CIA proprietary company. The station later claimed to be owned by Vanguard Service Corporation. Its president was Thomas D. Cabot, a former president of the United Fruit Company and a US State Department executive in the Truman Administration. The station also used a post office box in Miami, Florida.

“The AM transmitter in use by

Radio Swan had been used by Radio Free Europe and it was taken to Swan Island by U.S. Navy personnel. At first all broadcasts of this pseudo-commercial radio station were in the Spanish language and it was announced on air as *Radio Swan, la Voz Internacional del Caribe*, with its initial commercial programming coming on tape recordings from anti-Castro political groups in exile.

“Cuba responded to the broadcasts by setting up a jamming station to block the transmissions of Radio Swan and initiated *La Voz de INRA*, or *The Voice of INRA* which represented the National Institute of Agrarian Reform with an anti-American message. This action was followed on January 3, 1961, by a break in diplomatic relations between both countries that had been initiated by the USA. Following this action, Cuba commenced broadcasting to the USA and to the world, with a new international

service called Radio Havana Cuba.

“In March 1961 Radio Swan announced that it would no longer sell its airtime for political programming and the station changed to an all-news format while infusing its broadcasts with coded messages. The station described itself as *assisting those who are fighting Castro within Cuba* and it began transmitting on fourteen frequencies. The CIA issued a press release claiming its anti-Castro broadcasts were now being beamed by seven radio stations as well as Radio Swan. During the Bay of Pigs Invasion of Cuba, which took place between April 15 - April 19, 1961, it became obvious to all concerned that the purpose of the station was to assist in the landings. But following the abortive invasion, Radio Swan suddenly changed format again. While its tone remained anti-Castro its programming did not promote an uprising against the Cuban government. Then, the station

changed its format and name. Radio Swan became Radio Americas and it remained on the air until May 1968 when the station closed down and its AM transmitter was transported to South Vietnam to assist in the wars of South-East Asia.” [27]

Radio Americas freely disclosed on its QSL card (Figure 22) that it operated at 50 KW AM on



Fig. 22. A 1966 QSL card from Radio Americas. Radio Swan first broadcast to Cuba along the same lines as the radio propaganda against Guatemala. Before and during the 1961 CIA Bay of Pigs invasion, Radio Swan provided both operational and disinformation transmissions. President Kennedy denied air support to the insurgents and Castro’s forces repulsed them. Radio Swan continued as a propaganda station, as Radio Americas (“purposelessly” said CIA officer David Phillips [11]). Courtesy Hank Tester and Harry Helms via Thomas Roscoe, K8CX.

1160 kHz from two vertical towers, presumably phased to beam to Cuba. For shortwave, with a nominal 7.5 KW RCA transmitter, it employed a full wave dipole antenna, again with directionality to Cuba.

Phillips says the operator was a CIA proprietary company called "Gulf [sic; Gibraltar] Steamship Company," which he says was "... the only corporation available in the CIA's secret portfolio...." and which he knew owned no boats. Sumner Smith, who asserted that he owned Swan Island, was a stockholder of Gibraltar Steamship Company according to several



Fig. 23. Cuban exiles continued (and continue) anti-Castro agitation. This courier label dates from the 1960s in Miami. It may reflect a shipping circuit among CIA radio-related installations.

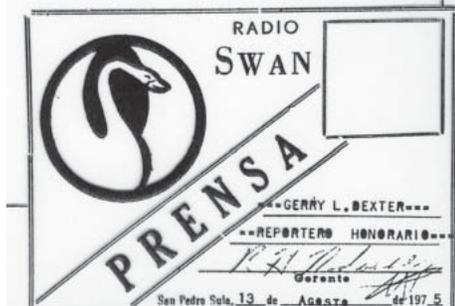


Fig. 24. An honorary press card for a noted SWL DXer and writer, Gerry Dexter. This Radio Swan in Honduras claimed to be a successor operated by Cuban exiles, but went off the air when communists took its antenna down in 1976 with explosives. From [7] Gerry Dexter, *CLANDESTINE CONFIDENTIAL* at p. 29.

sources [see, e.g., 27]. Phillips goes on to say: "A team of civilian contract technicians and a single CIA security officer manned Swan Island." That transmitter took its programming primarily from CIA studios in Miami under the aegis of the "steamship company." The CIA security officer on Swan Island, with only a side-arm, once had to play host to invading Honduran "students" asserting sovereignty. Happily they were more interested in partying than conquest. [11] After the failure of the Bay of Pigs operation (and the subsequent Missile Crisis), *Radio Swan* as *Radio Americas* nonetheless continued on the air for seven years. According to CIA officer Phillips: "Radio Swan continued to broadcast purposelessly." [11] Cuban exiles continued agitation (see Figure 23); nothing more happened except lots of mutual spying, short wave numbers stations sending coded messages (or pretending to), and exile harassment of Cuba (Figure 24) and Cuban harassment of exiles.

To this day, *Radio Havana* may be heard nightly in the 49 meter band, on 6000 kHz, the old frequency of *Radio Swan*, in sort of a short wave radio time warp. Fidel and Raul Castro remain dictators devoted to communism, while the Soviet Union, as Karl Marx himself predicted for the State after the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, just faded away.

MORE WEATHER, MORE INTRIGUE; SWAN ISLAND'S COLD WAR CODA

Swan Island remains. The United States turned it over to Honduras in 1972, after a lawsuit with Sumner Smith's family, reserving the right to operate (at least) the weather station, run by NOAA, the National Oceanographic and

Atmospheric Administration. Amateur radio operators on Swan Island go on the air as Honduran stations. Figure 25. They now use the HQ8 identifier. Figures 26 & 27

Swan Island's central position has enabled it to assist in rescues. These include the one reported for 1912 and the *SS Olinda*. In 1975 NOAA awarded its Gold Medal for lifesaving to two of its weathermen who responded to an SOS:

"1975 Gold Medal -- Spencer Bennett and Randolph Moore, Islas del Cisne Meteorological Station, Honduras -- Messrs. Bennett and Moore are recognized for heroic action during a storm, December 10, 1974, on Islas del Cisne (Swan Island), a tiny weather observing outpost in the Caribbean. During this storm they rescued 19 shipwrecked fishermen at a great risk to their own lives. The Honduran fishing vessel *Lucky Girl* encountered heavy seas about 20 miles northwest of Islas del Cisne. The hull ruptured and the ship began to sink rapidly. The Captain sent an SOS and then ordered all hands to abandon ship. The SOS was picked up by the Swan Island Meteorological Station, and personnel there responded immediately. The Swan Islanders launched two small motorboats into the rough seas to seek survivors of the *Lucky Girl*. Demonstrating superb seamanship in heavy seas in outboard motorboats, they successfully searched out and towed to Swan Island eight dugout canoes, containing nineteen men. Because of their courage, not a single life was lost." [28]

Radio Swan, however, had a short-lived ghost or two. In 1975, another anti -communist *Radio Swan* took to the air, [Figure 23] on 6186 kHz and medium wave. It claimed a relation to Swan Island's *Radio Swan*, although it broadcast from Honduras. Its principal had been an anti -Castro insurgent at the Bay of Pigs. Explosives took out

the station's antennas in 1976, and it went dark. [29]

In the 1980s the CIA, despite Honduran sovereignty, used Swan Island for a base for supplying *Contras* dedicated to the overthrow of the elected Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Private supporters of the *Contras* also used Swan Island, presumably with the blessing of the CIA. Headlines of the day reported events such as: PLANE SUPPLYING CONTRAS CRASHES; 11 BELIEVED KILLED IN NICARAGUA; PLANE STRUCK BY MISSILES. [30] The Reagan administration's CIA attempt to continue to fund *Contras* through dealings with Iran caused the great Iran-Contra scandal in 1986.

The *Contras* also used clandestine radio stations in Honduras. As a Nicaraguan military intelligence official reported in June of 1989:

"... add the military role played by the *contra* radio stations. *15th of September Radio, Radio Liberation* and the *Radio System of the Resistance* continue functioning in Honduras. What is even more important is the system of command through the radios, the military circuit between Tegucigalpa and the Strategic Command and between the latter and the units along the border. That whole network has remained intact..." [31]

Swan Island remained in the center of Central American intrigue even in the late 1980s:

"[A] small station ... was established on Swan Island in support of a variety of operations which were being conducted as part of our support for the CIA's efforts in Nicaragua. This facility was centered on an airstrip, which was used as a base of operations for pilots who were dropping supplies to the rebels, which the CIA was supporting. The communications setup for this facility was something that we called a flyaway

package. Basically it consisted of a HF [high frequency] transmitter/receiver[,] a PC-based communications terminal and a KG-84 encryption device.” [32]

A similar but satellite-enabled “flyaway package” saw service in Haiti in 1994 and in Bosnia. [33]

After a while, with the demise of the Soviet Union, most of Central America sorted itself out, communists to the left. In Venezuela, Hugo Chavez is everything Col. Arbenz ever wanted to be, but he has oil instead of bananas. The Castro

brothers still rule the Cuban Socialist Paradise, although they have discontinued the daily “free lunch.” Poor people remain abysmally poor, and very unhappy. One can still listen to *Radio Havana Cuba* on 6 MHz, with *Radio Marti* from Florida in counterpoint. But the glory days of Swan Island have given way to satellite communication and internet propaganda. Maybe now the iguanas of Swan Island, as well as visiting amateur radio operators, will be able to flourish in peace. “Have a banana.”



Fig. 25. HR6SWA, Swan Island, Honduras, 1975. Note the suffix SWA is the same as the FAA Beacon callsign. On Sept. 1, 1972, the United States yielded Swan Island to Honduras, keeping the right to operate on the island. Via K8CX from K8CX .



Fig. 26. This is the DXpedition HQ8R logo for 2008 IOTA (Islands on the Air) operation from Swan Island. www.hondurasdx.com .

Fig. 27. The most recent (2008) QSL card from Swan Island, HQ8R; Peace at Last.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. *United Fruit Company and its Wireless Network*, in RADIO BROADCAST magazine ([first issue] Vol. 1, No. 1) May 1922, at p. 377. This article reads as if written by United Fruit, one of the first companies to see the advantages of “public relations”: land stations and callsigns of UFCO, p. 398.
2. UFCO wireless operators circa 1911 had effected a crude but very sensitive regeneration circuit invented by Paul E. Wallace in New York using a de Forest Audion in the “Wallace Valve Detector” configuration that de Forest would himself soon adopt as his RJ-4. The young Edwin Howard Armstrong heard the Wallace regenerative circuit in operation in the summer of 1911 and the next year invented regeneration as we know it. The Wallace device sailed on UFCO ships *SS Santa Marta*, *SS Almirante* and *SS Carillo*, installed by wireless pioneer Robert H. Marriott, and also served at the UFCO wireless station in Colon in the Panama Canal Zone. Gerald F. Tyne, *The RJ-4 Mystery*, Antique Wireless Association Monograph (New Series) No. 1 (1978).
3. Society of Wireless Pioneers, SPARKS BOOK OF THE WIRELESS PIONEERS, Vol. III ([‘Tales’] ed. William A. ‘Bill’ Breniman), 1974 at p. 45; E. Jay Quinby, (Commander, USN, Ret.) *Marooned in Paradise*, p.36.
4. Edison Company “Letter” of 1915, an illustrated advertising pamphlet, now in the California Historical Radio Society Radioana collection of the Maxwell Memorial Library at the radio station KRE building in Berkeley, California.
5. D. E. Keith, “Swan Islands, Honduras” <http://www.tarleton.edu/~dekeith/swanislands.html>
A very interesting overview.
6. Thomas Roscoe, K8CX has collected and put on the web the QSL card images, <http://hamgallery.com>. The image of KS4CC comes via K8CX originally from OE1HGW, <http://hamgallery.com/qls/deleted/SwanIsland/>. KS4CC was the 1968 Swan Island club station, according to Tom Kneitel, note 8 below.
7. See Gerry Dexter, CLANDESTINE CONFIDENTIAL, Universal Electronics, Columbus, Ohio, 1984, Chapter: “Swan Island” at p. 22ff; “Alice Brannigan” (pseudonym), *Radio Swan: At Last, (Most of) the Story*, Popular Communications, June, 1999, p. 8; and also “Alice Brannigan” (pseudonym), *WRUL, The Forgotten ‘Voice of Freedom,’* Popular Communications, June, 1996, p.12; and also Doran Platt, *Swan Island*, Electric Radio, February 2000 [see note 23 below]; see also, e.g., Swan Island DX Association, <http://www.qsl.net/sidxa/history.html>
8. Tom Kneitel [K2AES], *EI Visits Radio Americas*, Electronics Illustrated, July 1968; Tom Kneitel, *Inside the CIA’s Secret Radio Paradise*, Popular Communications, November (Part One), 1985, <http://pl703.pairlitesite.com/Stations/Swan.pdf>
KS4CC as the club station, p. 19
FAA station WSG, p. 19
Philco Tech Rep flying squad engineers, p. 18, and December (Part Two), 1985, <http://pl703.pairlitesite.com/Stations/Swan-II.pdf>
—navigational beacon callsign SWA, p. 20
9. Gerry Dexter, CLANDESTINE CONFIDENTIAL, note 7 above.
10. E. Howard Hunt, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E.Howard_Hunt. Hunt was of an admirable old-school view, that of CIA Director Richard Helms, in effect: “when the President told you to do something, you did it and it was legal.” Hunt never understood how he could do what he was trained to do, for the government who trained him to do it, and end up in prison. He was the right guy in the wrong

place at the wrong time. It was little consolation to him as late as 2007 that now nothing is legal.

See generally E. Howard Hunt, *UNDERCOVER*, Berkeley Pub. Corp. & G.P. Putnam & Sons (1974). overrode the Guatemalan national radio from Honduras, p. 100;

E. Howard Hunt, *AMERICAN SPY*, Wiley (2007) (adopting a great deal of text from *UNDERCOVER*)

radio "channel" (transmitter) in Honduras, p. 75,

confusion and despair, p. 77

E. Howard Hunt said in an interview:

"Interviewer: Going back to the Guatemalan army, did it surprise you that they didn't fight the invasion...?"

"Howard Hunt: Yes. Nobody had anticipated that. Did it surprise me that they did not fight? Very much. We all anticipated an armed struggle - not of great proportions or of long duration, but we did anticipate that, we anticipated some bloodshed. ***when I started seeing the cables coming in, describing what was happening in Guatemala, I was just overjoyed, and I found it hard to believe that there had been no bloodshed, no armed confrontation. Castillo Armas only had about 140 people working for him, a ragtag group if there ever was one, but then we had done the same thing in another part of the world a few years earlier. People don't have to be in spiffy uniforms: they can ... just so long as they can form a military presence and impress the population."

(Source George Washington University National Security Archive, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-18/hunt3.html>) Hunt is referring to the CIA's Iran operations a couple of years earlier.

11. David Atlee Phillips, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Atlee_Phillips. See generally David Atlee Phillips, *THE NIGHT WATCH* (New York,

Atheneum, 1977); this book is almost a CIA -approved "charm offensive" and Atlee founded the Association of Former Intelligence Officers (AFIO) to explain the work they do.

short wave radio popular in Guatemala, p. 41

war won by that radio station, p. 52

kowtowing to United Fruit, p. 53

turnkey radio operation, p. 90

too distant, p. 42

Honduran students, p. 98ff

Radio Americas broadcasting purposelessly, p. 112

12. Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *BITTER FRUIT – The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Harvard, 1981; 1999) at p. 12. Estimates of the Guatemalan dead in the following decades range as high as 100,000, mostly Mayans.
13. Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Cabot_Lodge,_Jr. In retrospect, Lodge was a man of integrity and valor.
14. John Simpson, "Guatemala, Cuba and the Assassination," Education Forum (UK), <http://educationforum.ipbhost.com/index.php?showtopic=5945>). Like the writing of books in the Book of Ecclesiastes (12:12), there is no end to the conspiracy theories of the Kennedy assassination, most involving CIA personnel including E. Howard Hunt.
15. United Fruit Company, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Fruit_Company
16. Operation PBSUCCESS, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_PBSUCCESS
17. Don Moore, *The Clandestine Granddaddy of Central America*, Monitoring Times, April, 1989, and <http://www.pateplumaradio.com/central/guatemala/vozlib.html>; this page of Moore's PateplumaRadio website presents much of David Atlee Phillips' chapter on the Guatemalan CIA operations without attribution but also a great deal of other information. Moore later suggested to the author that his

- information that the Swan Island CIA transmitter was a back-up only comes from BITTER FRUIT (above, note 12).
18. Personal communication to the author.
 19. DX Communication website <http://dxcommunication.net/ambroadcastband.htm>
 20. Operation PBHISTORY, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_PBHISTORY
 21. "Swan Song" by William L. Magnuson, who had served in the Navy on Swan Island in 1955 (from a collection of student essays from the 1950s), http://libsysdigi.library.illinois.edu/oca/Books2008-09/greencaldron/greencaldron2730univ/greencaldron2730univ_djvu.txt
 22. George T. Damoff in WeatherMatrix: <http://www.weathermatrix.net/education/swanisland/>
 23. Doron Platt and Michael D. Stanley in WeatherMatrix: <http://www.weathermatrix.net/education/swanisland/> and Gerry Dexter, CLANDESTINE CONFIDENTIAL [note 7 above] and Tom Kneitel [note 8 above].
 24. This document can be found on the CIA website. <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp>; search for "Brief History of Radio Swan" which produces a Table of Contents of an analytical history of the Cuban operations and planning of 1961. That table says "History of Radio Swan" at p. 21, but there is multiple pagination within the document. The History is found at page 131 ff.
 25. The larger document at note 24 above discloses CIA use of WRUL as well as Radio Swan for anti-Castro broadcasting and programming.
 26. "Alice Brannigan" (pseudonym), WRUL, The Forgotten 'Voice of Freedom,' [note 7 above].
 27. Pirate Radio in Central America..., Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pirate_radio_in_Central_America_and_Caribbean_Sea)
 28. U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), History, Hall of Honor, [1975], http://www.history.noaa.gov/hallofhonor/lifesaving_1955-2000nws.html)
 29. Gerry Dexter, CLANDESTINE CONFIDENTIAL, [note 7 above, Chapter: "Swan Island" at p. 28ff].
 30. See, e.g., PLANE SUPPLYING CONTRAS CRASHES; 11 BELIEVED KILLED IN NICARAGUA; PLANE STRUCK BY MISSILES, by Bernard E. Trainor, Special to the New York Times; Published: Monday, January 25, 1988, and <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/01/25/world/plane-supplying-contras-crashes-11-believed-killed-nicaragua-plane-struck.html>
 31. The Honduran officer is quoted in the Sandinista publication and digital archive, *Envio Magazine*: <http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/2707>
 32. Former CIA officer Kenneth C. Stahl, letter to Senator Lauch Faircloth, February 26, 1998 in <http://cryptome.org/cia-gripe.htm>)
 33. GACIAC [Guidance and Control Information Analysis Center] Bulletin Volume 19 No. 3, <http://wstiac.alionscience.com/pdf/GACV19N3.pdf>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to the late E Howard Hunt for telling me about otherwise unpublished aspects of the CIA operations on Swan Island.

APPENDIX

The CIA provided to its 1954 Guatemalan "insurgents" tactical radios such as the RS-1 High Frequency Transceiver, with its interconnected transmitter, receiver and power modules.

"The RS-1 could be considered the 'flagship' of cold-war U.S. clandestine radios. It's development started in 1948; and it was used by the Agency for 12-15

Monticelli, AE6C, CHRS, of a radio in his collection. All photos used by permission.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bartholomew (Bart) Lee, K6VK, xKV6LEE, WPE2DLT, is a long time member of AWA and the California Historical Radio Society, for whom he serves as General Counsel Emeritus. He has enjoyed radio and radio-related activities in many parts of the world, in the last year in Greece and the UK. Radio technology and history have fascinated him since he made his first crystal set with a razor blade and pencil lead more than 50 years ago. He is especially fond of those sets of which it is said: 'Real Radios Glow in the Dark.' Bart is a widely published author on legal subjects and most recently on the history of radio. He has, in many forums, including most recently the annual meeting of the American Vacuum Society, written about and lectured on early radio technology, radio intelligence activities ('episodes in the ether wars') from 1901 into the latter 20th Century, wireless telegraphy especially Marconi's early work, wireless developments in California and the West Coast since 1899, short wave radio, radio ephemera including radio stamps, and radio in emergency and disaster response. Since 1989 he has made some 20 presentations to the AWA conferences on his research interests including the development of television in San Francisco in the 1920s. The AWA presented its Houck Award for documentation to him in 2003 and the California Historical Radio Society made its 1991 'Doc' Herrold Award to him in connection with his work for the Perham Foundation Electronics Museum. In 2001,

during disaster recovery operations in New York after the '9/11' terrorist enormity, he served as the Red Cross deputy communications lead from September 12 to September 21, (the 'night shift trick chief'). He has served as the Liaison Officer for the San Francisco Auxiliary Communications System (ACS – RACES) and as an ARES Emergency Coordinator. He presently serves as an ARRL Government Liaison and Volunteer Counsel. Bart is a litigator by trade, having prosecuted and defended cases in both state and federal court. He also taught Law & Economics for 20 years, including the economic history of telecommunications. He is a graduate of St. John's College (the 'Great Books School') and the University of Chicago Law School. Bart's son Christoffer Lee is also a licensed amateur radio operator and is now finishing law school. Bart invites correspondence at: KV6LEE@gmail.com



Bart Lee. Photo by Paula Carmody, taken in Indonesia; copyright Bart Lee 2009.