

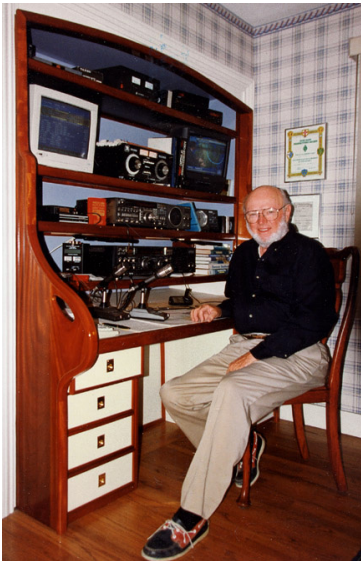
# Of Ships and Dreams

## Creating K6LX's Hamshack

By Sheila MacAvoy

How can the second bedroom in a 1950s tract house be transformed into the interior of a combined salon, library and radio room for a classic yacht?

After a career as a patent attorney came to a close, the creator of this unique room for a lover of all things nautical and electronic, had some interesting problems. How to make a small room inviting and interesting, how to accommodate the habits of a reformed pack rat, how to be aboard a yacht in the privacy of one's own study? A virtual ship's radio room, if you will.



“If you are into dreaming than you might as well dream big.”

Robert Block, K6LX, the creator and inventor of this charming and delightful man's study, is anything but impulsive when it comes to the purchase of any service or commodity, from computer soft ware to garbage disposals. He is a believer in Consumer Reports, internet research on software, QST for radios, and the compiled experience of others. He is not a man to go into a store and buy the first suit that fits. Probably stemming from his background as a physicist and patent lawyer, Robert doesn't accept initial impressions.

When confronted with the decoration of his 11 x 12 foot room, he tried his customary approach. He tried to hire a decorator to analyze the situation and offer a plan.

“I was willing to pay, handsomely if need be. But I couldn't find anyone who would take on a small project. Especially when they heard I wanted a radio station as the centerpiece of the room. All I heard in brief phone conversations was ideas concerning ways to hide the equipment.” Robert looked briefly sad. “I love the equipment” he said. “It reminds me of my youth.”

Years went by and the boxes of old patent files and weather reports got higher and dustier. Then Robert got lucky.

At a reception in the exquisite courtyard of the Santa Barbara Historical Museum, Robert made the acquaintance of David Dentzel, a master cabinet maker with a small operation on the East side of town. Santa Barbara has a number of artisans like David who live and work in this lovely city providing high quality craftsmanship in furniture making and restoring, framing, silver and iron smithing, and a host of other crafts. But David had another aspect to his background. His family is known throughout the United States to cognicenti as the creators of the finest American carousel animals ever. In fact, David was attending the reception at the Santa Barbara Historical Museum as a run up to the exhibition of carousel animals created by the Dentzel family and, in particular, to the unveiling of his carousel reindeer. This fabulous beast had been commissioned by the founder of Normark (fishing tackle) but would have its send off from the Museum.

David became very excited about a creative collaboration with Robert Block to design and build furniture that would resemble the inside of a classic yacht while still accommodating the computer, printer, telephone, FAX machine and radio equipment that Robert uses every day.

Feeling like explorers of uncharted seas, Robert and David plunged in. The first problem was the selection of materials.

“I wanted mahogany, but I didn’t want it depressing at all,” said Robert, as the two men mused recently over their project.” I wanted a light but rich feeling, easy to care for but distinguished.”

“No Captain Ahab,” said David.

Dentzel came up with mahogany wood accents, spar varnished in the traditional fashion, with work surfaces in sail white Formica and upright surfaces enameled in matching sail white. The wood was to be solid mahogany, no laminates. The fixtures were found in a traditional nautical catalogue and were advertised as solid brass. Block agreed.

Now for the design.

While Dentzel made scrupulously accurate measurements, developed the detailed plans, ordered materials, and set to work in his shop down by the waterfront, Robert arranged for painting the room. A paper border of rope design in a nautical theme functioned like a crown molding, accenting the blue and burgundy plaid wallpaper. Before the furniture was installed, the floors were polished and the antique oriental rug was cleaned.

After a few weeks had passed and the beautiful room was prepared, but empty, Robert received a call from David.

“Come on down. I have a mock-up of the radio shack I want you to test before I cut the wood.”

Robert went to the workshop and found that Dentzel had constructed a life-sized replica of the shack. It was made of cardboard and a few sheets of plywood. After few tweaks and an argument about the slant of the shelves overhead, Robert gave Dentzel the thumbs up. In a month a truck pulled up to the house. Furniture was muscled up the drive, in the rear door, and slipped into place. It fit so perfectly, you’d think it was built when the house went up in 1950.

Each solid brass pull was masterfully fitted, flush with the drawer face. All the electronic gear got in the right shelves and drawers without protest. All the grommets were in the right locations. And the solid mahogany gleamed warmly against a sail-white background.

In short, these days Robert feels “piped aboard” every time he enters his ham shack/study. A dream come true...

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Yaesu FT-1000D HF; Yaesu FT-736R VHF; Mandeson XP computers; KT-34A