

## Member Spotlight

In 2023, this page will highlight amateurs who have achieved recognition in areas outside of, or related to, amateur radio.



# Dr. Ulrich Rohde, N1UL

In the back of the smoky, short-lived Playboy Club in Columbus, Ohio during an early '80s Hamvention, Dr. Ulrich Rohde, N1UL, conversed with the founder of Collins Radio Company, Arthur Collins, W9CXX. They spoke at length that evening "about ham radio and technology." You can almost see them: two slender gentlemen, one older and one middle-aged, curled toward each other over the table, seemingly oblivious to the club's bustle. According to Dr. Rohde, Arthur Collins "was an excellent individual — forward looking."



During our conversation, Dr. Rohde brimmed with stories of his connections to ham radio luminaries like Jim Fisk, W1DTY (SK), editor of *73* and *Ham Radio* magazines, and Wes Hayward, W7ZOI, longtime RF circuit designer at Tektronix and TriQuint Semiconductor, and author of several seminal ham radio books, including *Solid-State Design for the Radio Amateur*, which spurred amateur interest in solid-state electronics. Dr. Rohde thought Hayward "was totally underrated for years. Extraordinarily knowledgeable, but people didn't really comprehend how good he was."

### Career

Dr. Rohde's prolific career straddles both the corporate and academic worlds. On the corporate side, he served as president of Rohde & Schwarz USA, ran the military communications division at RCA, bought Compact Software (which he moved from California to New Jersey), and founded, and still chairs the supervisory board of, the Synergy Microwave

Corporation. As an academic, he earned professorships at the University of Florida and Oradea University in Romania. A Fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), he holds multiple honorary doctorates and numerous patents. He has published hundreds of journal articles and conference papers, and more than 20 books, the first of which came out in 1965 while he was still a graduate student at the Technical University of Darmstadt. "I wrote a book about semiconductor physics. The professors were teaching vacuum tubes. So, I was 12 steps ahead of them," he recalled.

### Ham Radio and QST

Ham radio was always a part of Dr. Rohde's life because his father, Lothar Rohde (one of the founders of Rohde & Schwarz), was an enthusiast. In 1945, while Dr. Rohde was a child in

Germany, the company "ended up repairing the radios for the US Army, and I remember looking at these radios — this was fascinating, how you can, with so little antenna and so much hardware, cover such a wide distance."

In 1956, the head of the American division of Rohde & Schwarz gave 16-year-old Ulrich his first copy of *QST*. "It was one of the high points of my life. I really fell in love with *QST*." It provided such value and brought out so many scientific contributions that Dr. Rohde still has old copies today, though he feels that on the technical front, "the British are a little ahead of you now."

Passing the 20 WPM code test to earn his Extra-class license in the US proved strangely harrowing. "Three times I flunked it, and then one day before Christmas, after [my] fourth or fifth try, the table collapsed! Next door they had Christmas-carol singing. I was lying on the table, but I had nine out of 10 correct, so I got the Extra-class license." Dr. Rohde remembers being "so disoriented from the effort" that instead of driving back to his house, he drove "to the airport to go back to Germany. I lost control. I was so exhausted after this test."

Remonstrances of seasoned CW ops aside, Dr. Rohde enjoys "the resonance in the voice, the hesitation in the voice" that SSB provides — something you just can't get from Morse code. Indeed, he's always seeking "insight into who you are," whether you're Arthur Collins, Wes Hayward, or the latest contact in his log.