

## Kayhart

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family won't possibly be able to top the stories that the guest of honor himself can tell about his life with amazing clarity, humor and style.

### THE EARLY YEARS

Kayhart, who had two brothers and two sisters, was the next-to-youngest of the five siblings growing up in New Jersey, not far across the Hudson River from New York City.

He graduated from high school in 1929.

At the time, his father was vice president and sales manager of Corn Products Refining Co., with one of the company's best-selling products being Mazola.

The company's office was in the Battery area of New York City, "right near where the World Trade Towers used to be," Kayhart recalled in an interview with *The Greenville Sun* this week.

The proximity of his father's company to the Battery area of the city led to one of Kayhart's first jobs, at age 18, as what was known as a "runner" on Wall Street.

He was working on Oct. 29, 1929 when the Great Crash occurred, signaling the start of the Great Depression.

"We were young, and the brokers were looking for runners. It was before computers, you know, and it was up to us to carry stock papers after sales from one brokerage house to the next," he recalled.

"They ran me ragged. Then the stock market had crashed, and I'd had enough of that, and wanted to do something else," Kayhart said.

A natural-born tinkerer, Kayhart left Wall Street when he came across a newspaper ad for a job at the local telephone company.

During the job interview, "They gave me some wire, a battery, and a buzzer, and told me to make it work," he said with a twinkle in his eye. "I had it working within two minutes!"

The telephone company job put the young Kayhart on the cutting edge of technology at that time.

With new-fangled dial-up telephones being all the rage, he was kept busy going in and out of offices connecting and installing the new devices.

"One of the places I went into turned out to be some gangster's office in New



SUN PHOTO BY JIM FELTMAN

Charles "Cliff" Kayhart is no stranger to the push-type power lawn mower he's standing with here. Even though he wasn't in action when this photo was made earlier this week, he's very much up to the task when his lawn needs mowing.



1940S PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE SUN  
U.S. ARMY LT. CLIFF KAYHART  
SERVED IN SIGNAL CORPS DURING WWII

York," Kayhart recalled, pausing for effect. "I was real worried until some guy said, 'That's OK, he's the phone man.'"

His weekends during this time would be occupied by "monkeying around" with his 1917 Ford Model T.

"I used to take it apart and put it back together, grind the valves, put in new rings, that sort of thing," he said. "Those Model T's were easy to work on."

The price of gas for that Model T? "I paid \$1 for 10 gallons," Kayhart recalled immediately.

### 'HAM' RADIO OPERATOR

He stayed with the phone company work for awhile before his hankering for more challenges led him into what would become his lifelong interest in amateur radio, also known as "ham radio."

Kayhart received his ham operator's card in 1937 and is still active on the airwaves. His call sign is W4KKP.

In his garage workshop, he proudly displays a collection of more than 300 QSL cards, essentially



1940S PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE SUN  
ANN KAYHART  
HIS WIFE DIED IN 2006 AT 92

postcards received from fellow ham radio operators from around the world that he has communicated with over his 70-plus years as a ham operator.

Amateur radio operators exchange QSL cards to confirm two-way radio contact between stations.

Each card contains details about one or more contacts, the station and its operator. At a minimum, this includes the call sign of both stations participating in the contact, and the time and date when it occurred.

Each card has a story attached to it, he said proudly.

### THE WAR YEARS

As World War II approached, Kayhart found himself working the night shift at Bendix Aviation.

"They were looking for guys to join the (U.S. Army) Signal Corps, and I went over and talked with them," Kayhart said.

That conversation, and his work experience, quickly led to his commissioning as Lt. Kayhart, followed by orders to



SUN PHOTO BY JIM FELTMAN

Charles "Cliff" Kayhart shows off some of the more than 300 QSL cards he has received over the decades after contacting other ham radio operators around the world. Amateur radio operators exchange QSL cards to confirm two-way radio contact between stations. Each card contains details about one or more contacts, the station, and its operator. At a minimum, the information includes the call sign of both stations participating in the contact, and the time and date when the contact occurred.

report to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to study the new and still secretive radar.

"It (radar) was just coming in," he said, "and I couldn't even tell my wife about what I was doing."

When war broke out, Kayhart found himself serving in Hawaii and working with radio and radar technology and equipment.

He was called into a meeting with an Army general present and advised that he would soon lead and supervise a mission to install radio transmitters on the Japanese-held island of Iwo Jima once U.S. forces were able to capture it.

"They told me to choose my own men," Kayhart remembers.

"I got one good sergeant from Texas. They [the Texans he selected] were power line guys, which is just what I needed. They would do the construction, and I would install transmitters," he explained.

### MOUNT SURIBACHI

Kayhart and his team of Signal Corpsmen were waiting offshore at Iwo Jima as the early battle raged between the Japanese defenders and the U.S. Marines.

"Then we got word that they [six U.S. Marines and a Navy corpsman] had raised the [American] flag on Mount Suribachi, and that's when they sent us in," Kayhart said.

"We came in at night on a landing craft. There weren't any docks. We had all our heavy equipment and gear. We saw the flames and explosions," Kayhart said.

"We dug our foxholes and settled in for the night. At about 3 a.m. we heard pattering feet.

"All of a sudden a carbine went off with just one loud shot right next to me. It was from my Texas sergeant. He had just shot a Japanese soldier, and saved my life."

That Japanese soldier had one grenade in his hand and another in his pocket, Kayhart said.

Working their way to high ground on the embattled island, Kayhart's team moved quickly to install the crucial radio transmitters.

Three transmitters were constructed by Kayhart and his men, he said.

One antenna was dedicated for the Pentagon; one went to San Francisco, for supplies; the other was to China, the second front in the war against Japan.

### THE 'ENOLA GAY'

While being interviewed for an article in *The Greenville Sun* in 2008, Kayhart told then-Sun Staff Writer Bill Jones the following:

While on Iwo Jima in 1945 an air raid warning was issued one day when a lone aircraft that was not equipped with IFF (identification friend or foe) radio equipment approached.

That aircraft turned out to be a U.S. B-29 bomber, Kayhart said.

Later we learned that it was the *Enola Gay* [the U.S. B-29 that dropped the first atomic bomb on Japan], heading for Japan, Kayhart said.

### THE MAGNAVOX YEARS

When the war ended, Kayhart took some time off and then spotted an ad in the newspaper placed by The Magnavox Company.

Television was coming in, and Kayhart was soon hired as the first field engineer for Magnavox, with his territory being the entire eastern United States, "from the Indiana-Ohio line to the East Coast and from Maine to Florida," Kayhart remembers.

In 1957, he transferred to the Magnavox television manufacturing operation in Greenville and served as Manager of Customer Acceptance.

Brumley Greene, a middle-management executive with Magnavox during the 1950s and 1960s, recalls that Kayhart arrived in Greenville at a time when black-and-white televisions were still being manufactured with needle-nose pliers and soldering irons.

"It was Customer Acceptance's job to pull the chassis from the line and inspect to make sure they were quality products," Greene said.

"Because Magnavox marketed directly from the plant to the retail dealers, it was Customer Acceptance's job to make sure customers were receiving a product ready to plug in, turn on, and play," Greene added.

"Kayhart worked ... to assure everyone that Magnavox led the field in quality," he said.

In 1976, Kayhart retired from Magnavox at age 65, but remained in Greenville.

### THE RETIREE YEARS

Kayhart still lives in the same home on Haynes Boulevard that he and his family occupied after moving to Greenville.

One bedroom is taken up with his ham radio gear. His tidy workshop in the garage remains frequently in use.

He drives a Toyota Avalon. The car's license plate number is W4KKP, the same as his ham radio call sign.

Asked about his remarkably good health, Kayhart said, "I eat anything. My heart is good."

He does not drink alcoholic beverages, but did smoke until he was 55 years old.

"One day I came back from playing [golf] at Link Hills [Country Club] and just decided to quit," he said.

He was asked what local doctor has kept him in such good condition for so long.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I didn't have a regular local doctor until about four months ago," he said.

Why not, he was asked. "Well, I didn't need one," he replied.

What happened four months ago to change that? he was asked.

"I had some swelling on my leg, and it turned out to be a blood clot. Now I've been seeing Dr. [Brad] Strange, and I really like him," he said with a big smile.

Even so, that swelling has not prevented Kayhart from continuing to mow his own lawn with his Honda push mower.

Asked about his interests, Kayhart proudly noted his involvement with ham radio since the 1930s.

He is also an avid reader. "I like detective stories, and I like history," he said.

"I get movies from Netflix," he added.

Relaxing on a comfortable sofa in his living room, Kayhart was asked what has changed the most about the United States during his long lifetime.

Without hesitation, he said, "the low grade to which our politicians have sunk, and that's why we're in trouble today."

Charles "Cliff" Kayhart will not be in trouble today.

He'll be among family and friends and having a grand time swapping stories and enjoying the moment.

Happy birthday, W4KKP!

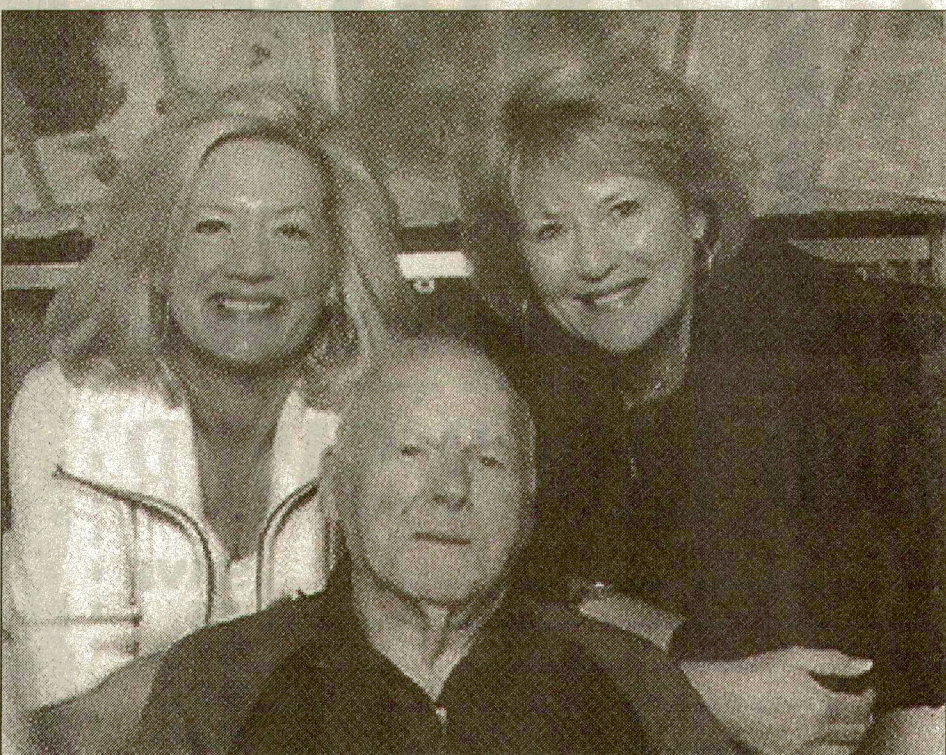
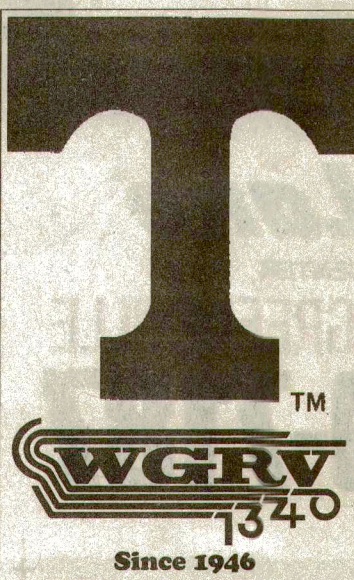


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Birthday boy Charles "Cliff" Kayhart poses in a recent photo with daughters Susan Mallini, at left, and Pam Fyffe.



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