

A short history by Herb Johnson W6QKI on the relaunch of Atlas in 1993.

The History of Atlas Radio Company:

Since Atlas is again entering the HF Transceiver market, the following is a brief recap of the company's history.

Herb Johnson, W6QKI, was the founder of Swan Electronics in 1961, manufacturing the first generation of highly successful SSB/CW Transceivers for the amateur radio market. In 1967 he merged Swan with Cubic Corp. of San Diego, and continued managing the Swan subsidiary until 1973. The Swan line of equipment was mostly tube type design, and through the years more than 80,000 Swan Transceivers were sold. A high percentage of them are still on the air, putting out strong, good quality signals. (The name "Swan" was chosen in memory of Herb's dad, whose name in the old country, Sweden, was Sven, but was Americanized to Swan when he came to the U.S.A.)

In 1974, Herb started his second company and named it Atlas Radio (after the 1924 vintage diesel engine in the 1924 motor vessel, "Westward", owned and skippered by his friend, Don Gumpertz, K6OF). Atlas introduced the first really successful all solid state transceiver.

In this design he had valuable assistance of Les Earnshaw, founder of Southcom International. The original model 180 covered the 160, 80, 40, and 20 meters. In 1975, the 210 and 215 models evolved, followed by the 210X and 215X improvements in 1976. (The 210 series covered the bands from 80 through 10 meters, while the 215 covered 160 through 15.) There were over 19,000 of these models sold. They were developed under the "KISS" principle ("Keep-It-Simple-Stupid"), and the design set new standards for high performance and reliability, as well as being practically bullet proof. The big majority of these early Atlas radios are still in service, and are not easy to find on the used market.

"The Swan transceivers were what I like to think of as my first generation of SSB HF Transceivers," says Herb. "They were then followed by my second generation, the Atlas transceivers of the 70's."

"And, so here we are, back again, this time with the third generation, the brand new Atlas 310. I'm sure you'll find the 310 to be as innovative and exciting as the 210 was 18 years ago, with many additional features to make it the radio of the 90's. The general design philosophy is the same 'KISS' principle, but without compromise in any area. In state-of-the-art technology, performance, and reliability, the 310 takes a back seat to no one."

73

Herb Johnson W6QKI

HISTOIRE DE ATLAS RADIO – Une longue et riche histoire



THE ATLAS RADIO TRADITION
A HISTORY OF EXCELLENCE

RUGGED/RELIABLE/AFFORDABLE

Greek mythology represents Atlas as a Giant supporting the world on his shoulders. This story inspired Herb Johnson to name his company Atlas Radio, the "Little Giant" that can carry a radio wave around the world.

Atlas radios are built to withstand the most difficult conditions nature can dish out. This is why Atlas radios have been selected by ham operators the world over to be their primary communication equipment on the most dangerous and trying of expeditions. The equipment is known for its reliability and ruggedness. Here are just a few examples of the adventures Atlas radios have experienced:

*Thor Heyerdahl selected the Atlas 215X for the voyage of the reed ship Tigris. The voyage lasted 144 days with some 4200 miles logged from the Tigris river to the coast of Africa. The radio was used daily to communicate with the BBC in the most difficult of marine and salt water conditions, however, the crew found they could depend upon this radio to do the job, day in and day out.

*The very same Atlas 215X that accompanied Heyerdahl on the Tigris was then selected by a French mountain climbing team to be used at their highest base camp, by a newscaster, to report directly to Paris daily on the progress of the teams assault on Mt. Everest. The camp was located at over 20,000 feet and weather conditions were terrible, with sub zero temperatures and gale force wind, but the radio performed admirably. No other radio can claim to have been put to such extreme tests in different weather conditions and still perform daily as expected.

*The Atlas 210X was selected by the crew of Double Eagle II for backup communications during their record breaking balloon crossing of the Atlantic. When all the other sophisticated communications equipment failed because of extreme temperatures at high altitudes the Atlas 210X became their primary communication center for radio contacts made day and night. That radio is on permanent display in the Smithsonian Institute with the gondola used in the flight.

(over)

ATLAS 350XL sur Clipperton

*During the Falkland War between Great Britain and Argentina the Lighthouse keeper in Stanley communicated daily with England with his 100 watt, transmit output, Atlas 210X on 15 meters. After Stanley was taken by the Argentinians all radio equipment was confiscated except for an unregistered Atlas 210X which the lighthouse keeper carried in a shopping bag to different houses daily to radio information to England about Argentinean troop and ship movements. This intelligence proved invaluable to the British in planning their counterinvasion. The distance to England from the Falkland Islands is approximately 7000 miles yet the Atlas 210X was heard loud and clear everyday for three weeks by the defense department in England.

*The ultimate test of Atlas equipment took place at Clipperton Island in what was billed as "The Greatest DXpedition of Them All". A bank of Atlas 350XL's were operated for 7 days, 24 hours a day, by 16 different ham operators. Over 29,000 contacts were made all over the world without equipment failure. The operators, from three different countries, all concurred, "under the most trying conditions of operation the gear came through with flying colors".

These examples demonstrate that Atlas radios have been put to the test by ham operators the world over and have continued to perform under the most adverse of conditions.

The reason Atlas radios continue to give high levels of performance is due to Herb Johnson's design philosophy. Herb believes his radios should be rugged, reliable and affordable. This is managed by incorporating the KISS principal and keeping his radios user friendly. Herb has a good feel for what hams require because he has been a ham operator for close to sixty years and he has manufactured over 150,000 radios for hams worldwide. A large percentage of these radios are still operating.

Herb Johnson introduces the "Little Giant", Atlas 400X, as the third generation Atlas radio. The Atlas 400X incorporates all the reliable qualities of his previous radios with state-of-the-industry components to give ham operators what they want; a rugged, reliable ham radio at an affordable price. The radio was named the "Little Giant" because it puts out a big signal, has big ears for receiving and comes in a small package.

A notre ami Herb JOHNSON W6QKI President de ATLAS RADIO
Support technique et Opérateur de l'expédition Clipperton 1978

San Diego 1978 – matériel ATLAS
F9JS et F6AQO



F9JS Jean-Charles et N6IC Don



F5II Jack (papa Doc) et HB9AHL Willy



F6AOI André et F6AQO François



F6BBJ Jacky et F6ARC Olivier



F6BFH Alain et HB9AHL Willy



F9IE Bernard

