

Wireless

by Estelle Bruno

Since I have moved to this pretty beach town, I sometimes have to take the train to the city. I sit next to the window so I can look out and reminisce about the towns we pass through, places I'm long familiar with.

But on the return home, approaching my station, the view on the south side of the station house is always a disappointment. There is a large area of land that's quite an eyesore. Filled with very long metal poles, lying horizontal on the ground among other debris. I always wonder why this pretty town allows this to remain?

Then one day, at my local library, looking through the stacks, looking for nothing in particular, I came across a book about the history of this seaside town. My curiosity aroused, I took the book home.

And thumbing through I found some astonishing information about that plot of land I dislike and always wonder about.

It seems that back in 1911, Kaiser Wilhelm came to this town. When he saw that particular plot of land, he decided it would be a perfect place to set up a powerful wireless station. He arranged everything then went back to Germany.

The point was to build a similar wireless station in Germany. For some time, the only communication between North America and Germany was from here in my little seaside town.

Messages were sent in code.

In 1914 came World War I and the sinking of many American ships by German submarines. President Wilson came up with a plan to put a stop to it. He found a young man from this town who was interested in the wireless. And being such a brilliant young man, he learned to decipher the secret German codes.

Years later, the station was leased to the Federal Aviation Agency and became one of the most powerful transmitting stations in the world.

So now I know about that empty plot of land, and why it has been left that way to history.

After that, in 1933, a man here built a diner which is still operating today by his extended family. It is known as Seaville's Best Diner. It has that old diner charm. When my daughter comes to visit, she insists we eat breakfast there.

Not long ago we were enjoying our breakfast when she started to sniff (she does have a great sense of smell). Suddenly the manager started yelling, "Everyone out! Gas!"

Quickly we evacuated.

A plumber went down to the basement to try and locate the gas leak. He had to squeeze into a small crawl space, and what a surprise he found. A corroded but live grenade! Just lying there for decades and decades in that dark space under the diner.

They say the owner of the diner was so shaken up he could hardly speak. The bomb squad removed the grenade.

So, Kaiser Wilhelm, you did leave us quite a few things to remember.

