

ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE FEATURE—
The Back Story

The IMS MTT 60th Anniversary Logo

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When I was a boy growing up on a remote farm in the 1960s in the southern tier of New York State, the winters were cold, the nights were long, and the snow was deep. Beyond the necessities of life, we had no spare cash, but I traveled the world anyway. Sometimes, it was by means of a hobby I picked up from my father, ham radio, using “homebrew” radios. For those of you who remember tubes, a 6AG7 oscillator driving a 6L6, feeding a pair of 807s in push pull will put a warm glow in your hearts, as well as 70 W of radio frequency on a crystal controlled 3.726 MHz.

On other occasions, I would travel the world with my mother’s hobby: stamp collecting. I became a good friend of Queen Elizabeth II, thanks to a series of stamps with her portrait collectively called “Machins,” named after the sculptor who had crafted the original bust. We mounted so many stamps that were all similar but, when we looked carefully, had so much variety. Or that stamp from Jamaica, a beautiful ocean blue lagoon gently surrounded by a rose-

colored frame. My favorite stamp was from Canada, a picture of Canadian geese taking off from a lake.

There was an even more beautiful Canadian stamp, but I had only seen pictures of it. It was far too expensive to purchase. In fact, it is so rare that I have yet to see the actual stamp itself. Many consider it the most beautiful stamp ever issued by Canada, perhaps even the most beautiful stamp ever issued in the entire world. It shows a Canadian fishing schooner, the Bluenose (Figure 1). You can also find the Bluenose on the back of any Canadian dime.

Fast forward to the beginning of a new millennium. A good friend, Prof. Ke Wu, had asked me for advice. He had twice proposed that Montreal be the location for the IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society (MTT-S) International Microwave Symposium (IMS). And twice he had been rejected. He would propose one more time, and whatever the result, he would propose no more. His proposal was breaking new ground. The IMS had only once before (1978) been held outside of the United States.

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The IMS was much larger now. Would anyone attend? Would exhibitors exhibit? All unknown, all uncertain. I suggested he contact each member of the MTT-S Administrative Committee (AdCom) one by one and personally present his case. I don't know if my advice actually helped, but the third time was the charm. His proposal was accepted.

I have been helping Ke in his efforts wherever and in whatever way I can. Several years ago, Ke mentioned it would be nice to have a logo to represent the 60th anniversary of the 1952 formation of the MTT-S in New York City. My son, Brian, while an electrical engineer, also has considerable artistic ability, and he had taken several college art courses including one on logo design and creation. So, we sat down to run off a few proposals for Ke.

Casting about for ideas, we wanted something that represented Canada as well as MTT-S and the IMS. An important aspect of logo design is that it must be clearly seen and understood no matter what size it is. It must work 100%, whether it is 1 cm tall, or 10 m tall. How about drawing inspiration from postage stamps? They already work at several centimeters tall. If we can simplify it a bit to make it work at 1 cm, and if it still works at billboard size, we have it!

Of course, my childhood encounter with the Bluenose stamp immediately came to mind. But a logo must be, if anything, evocative. What was the Bluenose? Why is it on the stamp? What is its story?

The fishermen of Nova Scotia struggled through a harsh life in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Their wooden sailing ships would spend six weeks to two months fishing cod and scallops on the Grand Banks. They faced hidden reefs and incredible gales to bring home the salted catch and support their families. Their ships were strong and their crews, fearless.

Now we travel to the offices of the *Halifax Herald*. It is 1919. The editor is reading an article in a New York paper: "The New York Yacht Club has announced postponement of the race scheduled for today because of a 23 mi/h gale." Absolutely hilarious! Only 23 mi/h and they shut the entire America's Cup yacht race down! That would be nothing more than a gentle breeze for the rough and tough Nova Scotia fishermen.

As the story goes, they decide to issue a challenge. They would race the fastest Canadian fishing schooner against the fastest American fishing schooner. The challenge is met and in October 1920 the Canadian *Delawana* faces the Yankee *Esperanto* in the best of three races for the first International Fisherman's Trophy.

The Americans won.

This was a Sputnik moment for the Canadians. For the second year's competition, the Canadians spared no effort in building the Bluenose specifically for the race. After spend-

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ing a fishing season on the Grand Banks (required to compete for the trophy), the Bluenose won the second competition decisively. In fact, the Bluenose remained undefeated for all five of the International Fisherman's Trophy competitions from 1921 to 1938, even though on the last race, she was showing her age after all those hard years fishing the Grand Banks.

For our logo, we wanted to show a journey, this one from New York City in 1952 to Montreal in 2012. What better medium than a stamp? And what better subject than a sailing ship? We are engineers. Who has not imagined being at the helm of a great sailing ship slicing through the waves and surviving ferocious storms? For both us and the Bluenose, the journey has not always been easy; it has been punctuated with moments of great challenge and rewarded with occasional glory. And to represent Canada, what better ship than the Bluenose?

Our first few attempts are shown in Figure 2. It is absolutely critical that a logo be simple. Walk around a store and look at the logos. They are all simple. So, we removed much of the complexity present in the original stamp design. We simplified the ship as much as possible. To keep it recognizable, we had to leave in a bit more detail than is usually good for a logo, but we decided to make that tradeoff.

To emphasize Canada, we tried including the iconic Canadian maple leaf. Beautiful simplicity. (Note, this is a sugar maple leaf. The common red maple leaf is not nearly



Figure 1. The Canadian Bluenose stamp, arguably the most beautiful stamp in the world. Both ships are different views of the Bluenose. Image courtesy of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada.



Figure 2. Our first attempts at an anniversary logo.



Figure 3. The final logo.

as nice and too complicated.) We went back and forth with Ke. He suggested that the maple leaf was perhaps a bit too overt. We do not want to evoke any kind of nationalistic feelings. Since this is an international conference, we want to be more subtle. Subtle patriotic pride is good. Overt nationalism is not. So we took the leaf out.

Also, keep in mind that this is the 60th anniversary of the founding of the MTT-S. That same year, the MTT-S ran a conference, a foreshadowing of the present IMS. So, if you like, we can also count this year as the 60th anniversary of the IMS. However, it was not yet an annual event. It was not until 1957 that MTT-S's conference was referred to as an annual event. I personally prefer to count both anniversaries, so we can celebrate decadal anniversaries every five years. It's more fun that way! With these things in mind, we ran more iterations, and then handed it off to a professional artist. The final result is Figure 3.

The most significant change is in the color scheme, which grades from blue to green. This is Ke's special touch, which symbolizes the blue water of the St. Lawrence River (Montreal is an island), and the green of Mount Royal, which overlooks Montreal. Normally gradients should not be used in a logo because gradients can be difficult to embroider on shirts and can be a problem with some printing methods. (Be sure to check out the unique solution to this problem that the committee developed.) However, it is required if we are to include this symbolism, making it a necessary tradeoff.

So that is the back story of the IMS2012 60th anniversary logo. I can't wait to see where we will sail with future generations of the Bluenose.

Postscript: The year 2012 also marks the Diamond Jubilee, or 60th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne. Since Canada is a member of the British Commonwealth, she is also the (mostly ceremonial) Canadian head of state. We can celebrate two 60th anniversaries in 2012!

