



Why I Changed Callsign Again – By Daryl Stout, NK5LA

First, if women can change their minds, then men should be able to do likewise; and that is especially if he's the Train Conductor (hi hi).

Second, I never thought that I would do it, but after chatting with Dan Alder, N7UVI, on train horns on a recent Trains Net that I do on the QuadNet Array on Friday evenings (see promo card above), the discussion turned to the Nathan K5LA horns that Amtrak uses. I thought "that would be a neat call", and it's a bit smoother on CW. He was the inspiration for it, so he does not need to "feel guilty" (hi hi).

So, I applied for it on May 16, 2026...but the FCC didn't receive it until May 18, 2026...then start the 18-21 day waiting period for this never before issued vanity callsign on May 19, 2026. However, the FCC CORES time before they asked for the \$35 vanity callsign fee was more like 18 to 21 seconds (hi hi). It was granted on June 5, 2026.

It pays homage to my late uncle, K3VRM (a Silent Key since September, 1993), who was the only other amateur radio operator in my family, and the youngest engineer ever hired on by the Penn Central Railroad. In short, he gave me my love of ham radio and trains.

From Dan, N7UVI, here's some of the technical details of the Nathan Air Chime K5LA.

The K5LA was developed by Robert Swanson at the behest of Deane Ellsworth, who was in charge of locomotive appliances for Amtrak, in 1975...to give Amtrak horns a more "cheery sound" as they passed by.

Despite being developed for Amtrak, the very first K5LA horns were installed and delivered in 1977 on Chessie System's new SD40-2 locomotives!

Here's a breakdown of the horn's designation:

K - Double-diaphragm kettle drum power chamber design

5 - Five bells (all facing forward)

L - Low-profile manifold

A - American Tuning (No.3 & No.4 bells are replaced with No.3A & No.4A bells. This changes the K5H D# minor 6th chord to the more pleasant B major 6th chord of the K5LA).

Here's a breakdown of the horn's musical chord:

The Nathan AirChime K5LA plays a B major 6th chord:

No. 1 bell, D#4, 311 Hz

No. 2 bell, F#4, 370 Hz

No. 3A bell, G#4, 415 Hz

No. 4A bell, B4, 490 Hz

No. 5 bell, D#5, 622 Hz

For a nice assortment of what these horns sound like, Mike Washington, who is known as CoasterFan2105 on YouTube, has a 15 minute video, available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcgHFTdwKts>

QSL Works out of South Dakota is preparing 500 QSL cards for \$115, which includes shipping (continental US Customers Only), although I will mainly give these out at hamfests and local ham radio license exam sessions. When you consider that US First Class Postage will increase to 82 cents in July, 2026; and is likely to approach \$1 before long, I won't be mailing many of these out, except to selected hams by prior arrangement, and upon request. The photo is at the end of this document.

I have received permission from Mike Yuhas, AB9ON, to use one of his copyrighted photos for my new QSL card, and eQSL card. This photo is at the end of this document. On the eQSL version, I've added the "Authenticity Guaranteed" logo. This is to ensure folks who make contact with me (although my main mode is on D-Star), that the contact is legitimate and authentic...and not someone else that is masquerading with my callsign. Once it has been applied for, then granted, no one else can use it...until it is released after cancellation, or 2 years and 1 day after the licensee becomes a Silent Key.

The photo is Amtrak's Train 98, the northbound Silver Meteor, blasting past the Gator A crossover just south of the Mangonia Park station, just north of the West Palm Beach, Florida, Amtrak station. The former Atlantic Coast Line, between Mangonia Park and the Miami Airport Station, is now owned by the South Florida Rail Corridor, and is used by Tri-Rail, a commuter rail service. The original Miami Amtrak Station was razed in 1978, with the current station and Tri-Rail Maintenance Facility in the Hialeah section of town.

Mangonia Park is the northbound "end of the line" for Tri-Rail", while the Miami Airport Station is the southbound "end of the line". A monorail connects passengers to the terminal at Miami International Airport...or they can also board the Metrorail, which runs from Palmetto (on the west side of State Road 826), through downtown, and down to Dadeland South in the Kendall area. This area was along the original Florida East Coast Railroad right of way to Key West. The route southwest of Dadeland South is now a commuter bus route toward Homestead.

In the downtown Miami area, they can connect to Metromover, to go to the various county government buildings of Miami-Dade County, or the courthouse. Or, they can go the Brightline Station, and ride it north to stations at Aventura (near the mall, the second biggest shopping mall in America, outside of the Mall Of America), Fort Lauderdale, Boca Raton, West Palm Beach, and then nonstop to Orlando International Airport. There are future plans to add Brightline stations between West Palm Beach and Cocoa, as well as eventual service to Tampa.

From the <https://openrailwaymap.org> website, you can see the proposed route, mainly along the center of Interstate 4, one of the busiest traveled roads in central Florida.

You will notice on the photo that I have my new callsign (NK5LA), along with the C)opyright 2023 notice by Mike Yuhas, AB9ON (in the lower left), but it also notes “Used With Permission”...and I’ve used his banner logo.

On the left side of the photo, to the left of the triple red signal (because that’s the track the Amtrak train is approaching on), is the ARRL (American Radio Relay League) Logo. Then, on the right of the Green over Red over Red Signal, is the QCWA (Quarter Century Wireless Association) logo.

This placement with the signals signifies that I’m more involved with QCWA (as their monthly Journal audio transcriber for the visually impaired...plus their VHF+ Net Manager, and Net Control for their bi-weekly CQ200 and Arkansas 158 Nets, plus the weekly QCWA Digital Net...as well as Secretary for Arkansas Chapter 158), than I am with ARRL; the only thing I do with them anymore, is the VE Team Leader for the University Of Arkansas At Little Rock Ham Radio Club.

I am a Life Member of ARRL, QCWA, PCARS (a club in Ohio), and Courage Kenny Handi-Hams...who helps those having disabilities earn, and upgrade their ham radio license, among other things. I’m also a member of PDRA in Pennsylvania, MDARC in Tennessee, and CAREN in Arkansas.

You will also note in the lower left, the W with a red circle slash through it. This signifies a QZ (Quiet Zone). Normally, in a “Quiet Zone”, the locomotive horn is not sounded, unless meeting another train on a parallel track...to warn MOW (Maintenance Of Way) Railroad Workers of their approach...to

warn those who are trying to beat the train to the railroad crossing...or to warn trespassers along the right of way (which is private property) of the train's approach.

Below the W (Whistle Post), there is an X, signifying Multiple Crossings ahead, so the engineer and conductor can be extra alert for pedestrians or vehicles trying to beat the train across.

On the top two signal masts, the 3 signals are normally green at the top (in reference to the original meaning of a clear track, high ball, where a bell was lifted high in the air on a mast), yellow in the middle, and red at the bottom. On the bottom signal mast, between the yellow and red signal, there's another signal, and it's either white (for Restricting, no faster than 15 mph) or Blue (signifying MOW crews ahead)...but I'm not sure which one.

Below the signals is a D, signifying a "Derail" on a side track, which is kept there unless cars are being moved on to, or off of this siding. It prevents main line trains from going on to the siding (especially if there are parked cars there), and these parked cars from rolling out on to the main line...either way, causing a disastrous collision.

The fence between the tracks is for passenger safety, so that they cross the tracks ONLY at roadside railroad crossings, or via a sky-walk that goes over the tracks from the boarding platforms on either side of the tracks.



eQSL card that's on eqsl.cc

QSL Card to be given out at hamfests

73 from Daryl Stout, NK5LA, Little Rock, Arkansas