

K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

Volume 1, Issue 3, March 2004



*Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL
Editor*

*Mike Dimelli, N9BOR
Layout*



*Robert F. Heytow
Memorial Radio Club*

www.qsl.net/k9ya
k9ya@qsl.net

Is There an SWL in Ham Radio's Future?

Reminiscence and Suggestion

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

As the American Radio Relay League continues to seek the fabled "Philosopher's Stone" that promises to transmogrify the base metal of the uninitiated

into the gold of new Amateur Radio operators, they ignore a traditional and productive path to our service — shortwave listening (SWL).

Ask any gathering of veteran Hams where they got their start in radio and chances are you will find a sizable percentage sprang from the ranks of the SWLs. This, from a time when SWLs were issued identifying numbers by various associations, and when members of this devoted group moved, seamlessly, into Amateur Radio. Already familiar with the art and science of radio, the acquisition of an Amateur Radio license was the next logical step to take; now, not only could the SWL listen, but make themselves heard — move from radio passivity to radio activity.

In the good old days, SWLs started with any radio that had a SW band on the dial, everything from Zenith Transoceanic portables and Grundig-Majestic consoles to the Hallicrafters S-38 and Knight Kit Ocean Hopper. With the receiver before him and a random length of wire for an antenna strung along wall or floor, sat many an embryonic Ham entranced in all his senses by the amber glow and warmth of vacuum tubes; the slightly sinister smell of hot electronic components; the unearthly sounding

whoops, thumps, and whistles issuing from the speaker; and the taste of excitement.

And, what excitement! The expanded tuning scales on the big radios promised Paris, London, Tokyo, Moscow; all the globe's capital cities accessible with a spin of the broad tuning knob or the press of a chunky pushbutton. The first lesson the novice SWL learned was that those cities were not parked on the

delineated frequencies, you would just as likely hear Spanish spoken from Quito, Ecuador as Russian emanating from the dial space allocated to "Moscow." And, more often than not, just the rush of unoccupied ether, so SWLs learned about propagation, the "tropical" shortwave bands, seasonal variations and antenna theory as they were lured back time and again to the

romance of the airwaves. Who knew what adventures they might chance upon the next time they cast their skyhooks baited with curiosity into the Kennelly-Heaviside layer?

Receiver manufacturers' advertisements promised armchair travelers an insider's view of far-distant places, world news, military transmissions, aircraft, ships-at-sea, exotic music and the opportunity to learn foreign languages. When Hallicrafters issued a 45 RPM record, *The Amazing World of Shortwave Listening*, with "Authentic recordings of dramatic events transcribed directly from shortwave radio broadcasts around the world," and narrated by Alex Dreier, "Radio-TV's 'Man on the Go,'" who could resist visiting that "Amazing World?"

*"... all the
globe's capital
cities accessible
with a spin..."*

CONTINUED - SEE SWL ON PAGE 6

Dr. Frankenstein, I Presume?

Paul Hendershott, W9BBR



Paul Hendershott,
W9BBR

It's been almost nine hours since the sun went down and I realized a few important facts.

One, I think I forgot to eat since yesterday's breakfast and secondly, it's almost morning again and I have to leave for work in just three short hours. Yikes! I can't believe I did it again! This is a routine that me

and countless other "kit builders" experience, seemingly over and over again, with apparently with no end in sight. But you know what? We wouldn't have it any other way.

My first experience with ham radio was at the age of 15 just outside of Philadelphia with a borrowed DX-100, AR-88 and a few hundred feet of copper wire. But like many other hams, what got me into the hobby in the first place was the fascination with tubes and other radio components. I just had to know how they worked and how to build a transmitter and receiver. So, when my sixteenth birthday came along my father gave me a Heathkit VTVM and a HW-101 kit. I remember working long into the night for many days. I worked on it every spare moment that I wasn't in school, even ditching a girl I was sweet on just to get a little closer to the moment where I could see all those tubes start to glow. Well, 27 years later — nothing has changed! Only now the balancing act is work, exercise, house maintenance and yeah . . . there's still a girl. All these things need attention but must, of course, yield to a madman's desire to melt solder, and hear that first signal jump out of the receiver as the radio finally comes to life. Every time a radio kit comes to together just right and does what it was designed to do, I can't help but think of Dr.

Frankenstein screaming: "It's Alive . . . It's Alive!" when his creation finally took its first breath. Personally, I like remembering Gene Wilder's version from "Young Frankenstein" (but that's another story . . .).

Yearning to recapture those days gone by, I searched for those old radio kits on Ebay and elsewhere. I built the odd, un-built Heath test equipment that still float around, but couldn't find or really afford any of the more substantial un-built Heath radio kits. Come to the rescue, ELECRAFT! Elecraft is a wonderful company in Aptos, California dedicated to providing the Ham Builders of the world a truly impressive line of Amateur Radio transceivers, transverters, auto-tuners and more! All is provided in "kit form" along with the most impressive, intuitive construction manuals to come along since the glory days of Heathkit. Elecraft sports a whole line of transceivers including the contest-class K2/100, 160m-10m, ssb/cw xcvr; the four-band K1 xcvr; and the three-band, ultra-portable KX1 xcvr, perfect for backpackers and others looking for top-mounted controls.

*"It's Alive...
It's Alive!"*

Elecraft also has three transverters available for six-meters, two-meters and 220 MHz that are as "hot" as they get! Elecraft kits have a modular design with almost no point-to-point wires required. They are very easy to build with only moderate experience needed. The manuals are clear and concise and have very easy to follow fool-proof instructions and illustrations. One neat feature I enjoyed with my K2 was that the resistors came all lined up. The parts are easy to identify with many groups of parts packaged individually for easy identification. Also, much of the test equipment needed for the alignment steps are built into the transceiver including a frequency counter. Anyone who has built an Elecraft kit has marveled at the ingenious design and amazing performance figures.

The K2 stacks up head-to-head with some of the best radios from Kenwood, Icom, Yaesu and Ten Tec. The

Dr. Frankenstein, I Presume?



QST reviews paint an impressive picture indeed! And, if you run into trouble, Elecraft has a customer support network second to none. Most problems can be sorted out by builders helping each other on the e-mail reflector. Or, you can send in your rig for repair and alignment if you really get stuck. The vast majority, however, never need such help since there are test and alignment procedures throughout the building process to keep you on track. I've built just about everything Elecraft offers and continue to be dazzled by their performance and the simple elegance of their designs.

Now, you may be wondering if it's worth all those hours to build a high-end transceiver rather than just purchasing a nice "appliance" rig. Well, in this case, the long and short answers are the same — YES! Building a modern, up-to-date, contest-class transceiver with the hottest receiver section on the market will satisfy your need for a full-featured rig with DSP and a super-wide-range auto-tuner, but also will get you back to the roots of Ham Radio. You certainly won't ever be afraid to take off the cover to your rig and make mods and improvements. You'll understand every part of your radio and bask in the satisfaction that only homebrewers and kit builders enjoy! You'll find that your appliance rigs will start gathering dust and that each QSO on your K2/100, K1 or KX1 puts a bigger smile than usual on your face. Go back to past and try to remember the sheer excitement of those first QSOs when you were a Novice. For that's the feeling you'll recapture when you start operating a rig that you carefully pieced together with affection into the wee hours of the night. ■

[Ed. As an active CW operator I work a fair number of commercially produced and homebrew QRP rigs. The majority of these rigs were assembled from kits and all the manufacturers have their share of ardent supporters, but none more so than Elecraft, and I can understand why. The premise of building a sophisticated, multi-band, high-spec rig that can hold its own, and then

some, with the big boys is very appealing; thus the multitude of Elecraft generated signals populating our bands.

From the receiving end, I frequently follow up my signal report to Elecraft ops with, "U SURE SOUND MORE QRO THAN QRP." Because that's the way they sound running three to 12 watts to wire antennas, and me snaring their signals on a low dipole.

“ . . . fascination with tubes and other radio components.”

A few years of this has infected me with “Elecraft envy” as I try to rationalize adding yet another transceiver, or two, to the shack as I download another Elecraft construction manual to vicariously enjoy these fine rigs.}

Check out these URLs and see what I'm talking about.

Elecraft Web site:

<http://www.elecraft.com>

Reviews of Elecraft transceivers at [eHam.net](http://www.eham.net):

K1 — <http://www.eham.net/reviews/detail/1272>

K2 — <http://www.eham.net/reviews/detail/117>

K2/100 - <http://www.eham.net/reviews/detail/2357>

KX1 — <http://www.eham.net/reviews/detail/3674>



W9BBR's K2 & KX1

Restructuring II: ARRL Takes a Stand?

Alan Wormser, N5LF



Alan Wormser,
N5LF

WRC '03: Aside from that, Mrs. Lincoln, how was the play?

In the summer of 2003, the World Radio Conference (WRC '03) made the Amateur Radio Service's telegraphy requirement optional for each country. Because of continued support for a requirement among

several countries, notably Russia, the WRC '03 did not go as far as some of the delegates wanted, which was to remove the telegraphy references entirely.

As a result of the new treaty language, we have witnessed one country after another removing the telegraphy requirement. In many of these countries, rapid change is possible because they allow little or no public comment in amending their regulations. Some countries delegate governmental functions to private corporations or organizations. The trend in the U.S. is also toward privatizing its licensing functions, and since the 2000 restructuring the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has abrogated all oversight over the content and nature of license exams to a handful of private Volunteer Exam Coordinators (VEC). In 2003, administration of club station licenses was handed over to the American Radio Relay League (ARRL).

The First 14 Petitions: Deja Vu Over and Over

In the U.S., the FCC must seek public comment on substantive regulatory changes. Rather than join the

bandwagon, the FCC solicited comments on 14 Petitions for Rulemaking (RM) from an array of individuals and organizations. Most focused on dropping or keeping CW exams and a few mentioned a new Novice class license.

Calls to FCC for Reform and Accountability

In 2003, the FISTS CW Club submitted a petition, RM-10811, proposing comprehensive licensing reform. The petition emphasizes narrowband digital modes for beginners (including, but not limited to CW), it continues to reserve HF voice privileges as an incentive to upgrade, it reinstates technical standards for the written exams and it ends the practice of immediate re-examination of failed candidates at the same test session.

“... WRC '03 did not go as far as some of the delegates wanted.”

In the fall of 2003, Joe Speroni (AHØA) asked the FCC to lift the moratorium on the creation of new VECs, accept new VEC applicants and require each VEC to make its financial statements public. Lack of accountability in setting exam difficulty and the scope of exam questions is a great concern for many

U.S. amateurs. While the National Council of VECs (NCVEC) four-person Question Pool Committee solicits comments as they update exams every three years, the final decision is theirs. How does John Q. Ham get a seat on this committee? They can't. How can a new organization certify itself as a VEC and join NCVEC? They can't because of the FCC moratorium on new VECs. How can a U.S. amateur find out what happened at NCVEC meetings or those of their various committees? They can't. The minutes are not made public, although FCC staff are routinely present at the meetings in an advisory capacity and the 2003 meeting took place in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania — an address many Amateur Radio licensees will recognize.

The 15th Shoe Drops: The ARRL Proposal

At their January 2004 ARRL meeting, and with few Division-level polls of the ARRL membership under their collective belt, the Board of Directors accepted a report from its Executive Committee making recommendations for a new Rulemaking Petition. A draft had been prepared by the Committee as early as November, but Coy Day (West Gulf Director) told some ARRL members in e-mails that the Board only saw the report a day or two before the January meeting. Following discussion, they voted in favor of the Committee's proposal. The proposal became the ARRL's Petition for Rulemaking - which is the 15th to be received at the FCC, so far.

ARRL members who want to know how their elected Division Director voted are out of luck: The vote was not recorded in the minutes. That fact has stirred up a hornet's nest among some long-standing ARRL members, and time will tell what the impact will be on ARRL membership statistics as some members vow to quit, while others vow to stay and fight from within for a more responsive Board.

At this time, the ARRL's petition is available for viewing at their Web site, but is not ready for comments. In the near future, probably by the time you read this, the FCC will have assigned an RM number and will be soliciting comments.

The proposal goes beyond the telegraphy issue: it realigns the three license classes left in the aftermath of the first restructuring. It deletes the 5-wpm code requirement for the General so that only the Extra Class would have a 5-wpm telegraphy exam. Perhaps of more concern is how the ARRL proposes introducing a new Novice license: Unlike the Novice of old, the new Novice would have substantial voice privileges on a number of HF bands. Statements by the NCVEC in their petition to the FCC, as well as by individuals associated with NCVEC and the W5YI VEC, Inc., No Code International, Jim Haynie (ARRL President), Dennis Bodson (ARRL Roanoke Director) and others suggest the new Novice license would shift the Novice exam from its former balance of technical and operating questions to one that is largely non-technical, and emphasizes

rules and operating.

Furthermore, the ARRL proposal would immediately upgrade all Technicians and Tech Plus to General without taking and passing the missing exam element.

Technicians licensed before 1987 (now a minority) took the same written exam as the General Class, but those licensees can already get immediate upgrade to General. What the ARRL proposal does is to immediately upgrade those who have never passed a General written.

What Happens Next?

Among the petitions from 2003, I recommend readers examine those by FISTS and NCVEC. Read and comment to the FCC on the ARRL petition. Eventually, maybe this year or early in 2005, the FCC will consider all the petitions and the public comments, and will fashion a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). The NPRM will be made available for comments and comment replies for 30 days or more. Then, the FCC will issue a Report and Order (RO) summarizing comments received and explaining their decision. A notice then appears in the Federal Register within a few weeks, and specifies the changes to be made to the regulations. After 30 days, the changes take effect. Petitions for Reconsideration can be filed after the Federal Register notice, but that does not usually stop the implementation of the new regulations, although the FCC may put it out for comment if it meets certain requirements for relevancy. ■

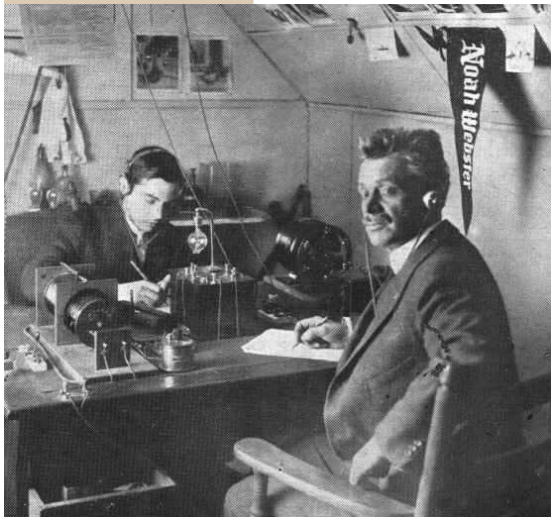
“ARRL members who want to know how their elected Division Director voted are out of luck . . .”



*ARRL Headquarters
(W9RMB photo)*

The Reason Why

Hiram Percy Maxim, W1AW
President ARRL
From September 1927 QST



*Hiram Percy Maxim,
W1AW (right)*

Sitting back in the old armchair, with the last issue of *QST* read from cover to cover and with everybody else in the house asleep hours ago, I fell to thinking of amateur radio today and amateur radio of other days. As the blue smoke curls slowly upward from the old pipe, visions of early ARRL Directors Meetings floated before me. I see those old

timers grappling with problems of organization, with QRM, with trunk line traffic and rival amateur leagues. I see sinister commercial and government interests at work seeking to exterminate amateur radio. They were dark days, those early ones.

Today I see amateur radio an institution, recognized by our American government and on the road to recognition by the other governments of the world. I see a fine, loyal ARRL membership of 20,000 standing shoulder to shoulder and believing in each other and still blazing the way in radio communication. I see a rapidly developing world wide amateur radio brotherhood taking shape in the form of our I.A.R.U.

And as the last embers of the old pipe turn to gray ash, I ask how it all came about: that the ARRL should have succeeded and all its opponents failed. The answer is clear. It is because with our opponents there was always some kind of a selfish motive to be served for someone, whereas in our ARRL we insisted from the beginning that no selfish motive for anybody or anything should ever prevail. Everything that ARRL undertakes must be 100% for the general good. That policy bred loyalty and confidence. With those two things an organization can prosper forever.

*Hiram Percy Maxim —
September 2, 1869 - February 17, 1936*

ARRL Discontinues Awards

Three ARRL awards discontinued (Feb 12, 2004) — Effective immediately, the ARRL Awards Branch has discontinued the Rag Chewer's Club, the Old Timer's Club and the Friendship Award. ARRL Membership Services Manager Wayne Mills, N7NG, says that the number of amateurs applying for awards in general has declined significantly over the years, and interest in these three awards had slowed to a trickle. DXCC and WAS remain among the most popular ARRL Awards, he said, but the eliminated awards "had outlived their interest level."

SWL - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

New SWLs would soon find mysterious, rhythmic thumping noises arrayed at discrete points on the dial, "Donald Ducks" chattering away a couple of spins up the dial and friendly discussions on AM that could be resolved with some fine tuning. The Ham Radio bands were definitely worth investigating.

In fact, some countries placed so much credence on the skills acquired by listening that it became part of their stringent Amateur Radio licensing procedures. The Soviet Union, for one, required its Ham Radio aspirants to collect a number of QSL cards before continuing on to the next level of their licensing structure. Other countries, whether shortwave listening was part of their licensing scheme, or not, had active populations of shortwave listeners. As a result, SWL QSL cards were included in most envelopes from the DX bureau.

Times have changed; the Internet offers 24/7 access to all the world with no QRM or QRN, "atomic clocks" set themselves to WWV, and many shortwave broadcasters have cut services, but there's much to hear: news, music, clandestine "numbers stations," military, Amateur Radio — a quick jaunt to the 'Net reveals there's still plenty of SWLs and lots of SWLing judging by the number of sites devoted to the hobby.

So, is it time for the League to tap into this resource? Is there any reason not? ■

"What hath God wrought"

Numbers 23:23

The famous words chosen by Samuel F.B. Morse as the first telegraphic message, sent on May 24, 1844.



*Robert F. Heytow
Memorial Radio Club*

www.qsl.net/k9ya
k9ya@qsl.net

K9YA Telegraph