

K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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A Place of One's Own

Ham Radio and the Search for Self-Identity

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

It would be shortsighted to ignore the personal cultural value of amateur radio ...Amateur radio gives to ordinary men, leading the circumscribed lives of ninety out of a hundred people, a release from humdrum existence and routine existence; it makes them freer men.

Ham Radio and its accompaniment, the shack, are viewed as agents of change; creating social and spatial distance from family. The "...allocation of household space, time and money to the hobby set in motion a chain of events that further demarcated hams as individuals." Mid-century Hams, participants in an overwhelmingly male pastime, created a "marked off masculine space," a place apart in the homes they returned to find now had "...an overall feminine feeling..."

That statement from an October 1941 article in *Harper's* magazine by Carl Dreher and Zeh Bouck (see: *K9YA Telegraph*, "Zeh Bouck," November 2005) introduces "The 'Freer Men' of Ham Radio, How a Technical Hobby Provided Social and Spatial Distance" by Kristen Haring in the journal, *Technology and Culture* (Volume 44, Number 4, October 2003, pp. 734-761, The Johns Hopkins University Press).

A non-Ham, Dr. Haring follows Amateur Radio's trajectory in the years following WWII and arrives at some fascinating conclusions about the events, the people and the form Ham Radio took in the years following the conflict.

Rosie the Riveter

As WWII military service stripped men from the workforce and the domestic scene, women stepped forward to take their places on the assembly line and the home front. Veterans returned to find a changed social order and as part of their return to civilian life in post-war America, they sought to reestablish their place within that order. In this study, radio was the means, for some, to that end; Dr. Haring analyzes the role Amateur Radio played in that new milieu.

"...it makes them freer men..."

In the abstract, to attain physical and psychological distance (like that available through fraternal organizations, hunting lodges and fishing cabins) and achieve group status while maintaining a sense of self-identity, Hams (re)defined themselves by setting aside a separate space, creating a shack, mastering complex radio equipment, using jargon, employing esoteric techniques

and associating with like-minded males. This is the period when the Ham Radio boys of the 1920s and 1930s returned from war and morphed into the Ham Radio family men of the 1940s and 1950s, an era with rather strictly defined male and female roles.

CONTINUED - A PLACE ON PAGE 8

Inside This Issue...

<i>A Place of One's Own</i>	Page 1
<i>SATERN Shines Brightly</i>	Page 2
<i>High Seas Rescue</i>	Page 4
<i>QRP From Scratch</i>	Page 5
<i>A Christmas "Eye" to the Future</i>	Page 6
<i>The NPRM 05-235 Issue</i>	Page 7

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SATERN Shines Brightly

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(L) and Mark Griggs,
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The SOS came by e-mail from a coastal city in south China: “They are still stranded! They still stay in house... Please send rescuer there to save them.”

The Chinese sender’s plea, on behalf of relatives trapped in New Orleans, reached The Salvation Army on Monday, September 5.

Overnight, it was forwarded to a Navy MARS coordinator in Massachusetts, Joseph Fratto, NNN0JUN/N1RLO. Joe relayed it onward to the Army MARS Gateway Station AAA9USA at Ft. Huachuca, Arizona. From there, Grant Hays, AAR9OI/WB6OTS, passed it to the initial MARS contact in New Orleans, a Special Forces unit from the Utah National Guard.

As Hams who are experienced in traffic handling know, this is literally the way it goes. Messages travel circuitous routes and even take various modes, but eventually they arrive at the proper place, ending up in the hands of the right person. But what’s unusual about this story is how the message passed seamlessly from one organization to another. “Interoperability” is the byword these days, and it isn’t limited just to quasi-military Amateur Radio services.

SATERN (Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Service) came into being about 20 years ago. Its original purpose was to support the disaster services efforts of The Salvation Army. The Salvation Army is an international organization, and maintaining a 20-meter net was a natural fit. SATERN members tuned-up five days a week on 14.265 MHz and exchanged information about local conditions and chewed any available rag.

As a volunteer auxiliary to The Salvation Army’s Emergency Disaster Services program, SATERN members typically have accompanied “canteens” to sites of local emergencies. In Chicago, for example, these mobile kitchens are deployed whenever there’s a multi-alarm fire, providing nourishment to firefighters and other emergency personnel. Before the days of cell phones, SATERN members would go along to provide communications between the canteens and headquarters, and often would “shadow” the incident commander and other key personnel. These functions are still needed, as understanding grows that cell circuits quickly become overloaded or fail altogether in such situations.

Local meetings and national training seminars in the early years emphasized all manner of technical and practical skills. Sessions on antenna-building went beyond the typical do-it-yourself copper cactus J-pole. Sessions on net protocol assumed everyone present knew not to say “over and out” and emphasized keeping cool under chaotic conditions. Canteen communicators were taught basic principles of sanitation and food handling so they could help feed the people when the radios weren’t crackling.

And this, perhaps, has been one of the biggest differences between SATERN volunteers and other groups providing emergency communications. SATERN volunteers expect to go beyond simply passing messages between Point A and Point B; they expect to become actively involved. And whether it’s actually on the disaster scene or at a remote location handling communications, SATERN members do get involved.

By October 1998, SATERN’s expertise was widely recognized. As Hurricane Mitch bore down on Central America, the SATERN health-and-welfare net mobilized as usual on 14.265 MHz. But something unprecedented happened, for the first time ever, the FCC declared the frequency “protected” for the duration of the emergency. The frequency was to be used only for hurricane-related traffic, under the control of SATERN.

*“...SATERN
members do
get involved.”*



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The training and preparation paid off. SATERN was no longer a parochial radio club. Its members were respected for their skills and their dedication in the face of disaster.

With Hurricane Katrina, SATERN's involvement reached new heights. For the first time, SATERN had an active role deploying individuals to the field. In fact, the communication needs were so great in the early days of the Katrina response that the net did not even handle health-and-welfare transmissions, formerly the mainstay of such nets. Using a system established years ago by Quent Nelson, WA4BZY, inquiries were shunted from HF to the Internet; replies were made via the Internet and telephones. Katrina pushed this system to the limit.

SATERN has long cooperated with other organizations such as ARES, RACES, VOAD and REACT. Now, SATERN is also part of the SHARES (Shared Resources) radio network, a collection of government, military and Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS) radio stations. Explaining the importance of this affiliation, Major Patrick McPherson, WW9E, National Director for SATERN, remarked, "SATERN continues to help with emergency communications to and from the impact area devastated by Katrina and has received more than 60,000 requests for assistance. The addition of the SHARES Network will bring an opportunity for The Salvation Army to talk on federal frequencies to agencies about the task of helping in the disaster and bring additional support to the task before us."

*"The training
and preparation
paid off."*



Indeed, as it unfolded, the Katrina disaster provided an outstanding example of spontaneous interoperability among the three MARS organizations and SATERN. The dramatic query from China typifies this new relationship.

SATERN's McPherson designated Fratto, in the Boston suburb of Waltham, to coordinate the interface between MARS and SATERN. The Salvation Army had already teamed up with global IT firm Computer Sciences Corp. to develop a massive database for handling the tens of thousands of requests for survivor information that were flooding into the on-going health-and-welfare list. The SHARES link further expanded the capability.

Significantly, it was the communications know-how of Hams rather than their radio equipment that provided much of the immediate help to the disaster zone. Simply put, Amateurs know how to keep the traffic moving under adverse conditions. And SATERN Amateurs are among the best prepared and the most experienced.

SATERN membership is open to any licensed Ham with a desire to assist

The Salvation Army in emergency disaster services. Check around your local area—there's a good chance you can locate SATERN members. Or tune into the daily 20-meter net on 14.265 MHz, 1500Z. But don't expect to join into a lively discussion on local conditions or the joys of helping others. With more than 50 check-ins on a typical day, this is no longer a ragchew net! Or, e-mail Director McPherson at ww9e@aol.com for a membership application. Whatever method you choose, please be patient. More than a thousand requests for membership information have rained in since the response was initiated in late August. But this doesn't mean your help isn't needed. It is, because no one knows when or where the next calamity might occur. And you just might be in a unique position to help! ■



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High Seas Rescue

My First Extra Class Contact

Bob Dulle, WA5GBD



M/V Dubrovnik
(Capacity 1,300 passengers)

November 7, 1987 at 03:59 CST I was listening around the low end of the 40-meter band, when, on 7000.6 KHz, I heard the following:

“SOS SOS SOS PSE SOS DE YU2RO/MM YU2RO/MM PSE SOS K”

I could hardly believe my ears so I waited a minute. Again:

“SOS SOS SOS PSE SOS DE YU2RO/MM YU2RO/MM PSE SOS”

I responded with: “YU2RO/MM DE WA5GBD WA5GBD K”

He immediately came back saying: “Please call Miami Coast Guard. We are dead in the water and have fire aboard. Our position is 25 miles east of Key Largo.”

Not knowing the number for Miami Search & Rescue I dialed “0” and told the operator who I was and what I needed. She gave me the number but would not connect me. I dialed U.S. Coast Guard and told them I was amateur radio operator, WA5GBD, and was in contact with a ship calling SOS on 7000.6 KHz off the Florida coast. He wanted the name of the vessel, the location, the length and how many people aboard.

I went back to YU2RO/MM requesting the information letting him know I had the USCG on the phone.

He replied that the vessel was the M/V Dubrovnik, gave the length and position in latitude/longitude, and told how many aboard.

I passed the information to the USCG and they said they would try to find the ship.

I really felt good. This was my first Extra Class contact!

Then I was called by AA6DX on the same frequency I answered and he said he heard the same SOS earlier on the 80-meter band. I was then called by W2LT and he said he copied the whole thing also.

Later, I looked on the map and noted the latitude/longitude position did NOT match the earlier position given as 25 miles east of Key Largo, which got me to wondering, “How better to pull off some funny business in Miami than to have someone from across the country scramble the USCG on a wild goose chase?” This really bothered me.

So I called the USCG in Houston and got the address of Search & Rescue in Miami. I wrote a letter giving the time, date and all the details of the event and asked if this was “a legitimate distress call or a hoax?”

“SOS
SOS
SOS”

About a month later, while I was at work, my wife received a phone call from Miami Search & Rescue. The officer told her this was indeed a legitimate call and that they found the ship. By that time the fire was out and they needed no further help.

As an ARRL member at the time I thought it would be of interest to let them know also, so I sent a letter with all the details to ARRL. I never got any response from them.

About eight months later it was time for me to renew my membership, but I was curious about the “incident,” so I called the ARRL.

I spoke with one of the executive officers telling him my story and asking whatever happened to it. He said, “Oh, we don’t keep any correspondence that long.”

That was my last dealing with the ARRL.

I never heard from YU2RO again. ■



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QRP From Scratch

Grant McDuling, VK4JAZ

Being able to communicate with someone far away with a rig cobbled together from commonly available components has always fascinated me. And, being able to do so without much experience when it comes to homebrewing is an added attraction.

A few months ago I took the decision to stop dreaming and actually do something about making this particular dream come true. In keeping with the times, I jumped onto the Internet and began searching for a project that would fit the bill.

It wasn't long before I came across the site of QRP International and was delighted to find they had just what I was looking for. Called the Pixie 2, this mighty little rig consists of no more than 24 components. So I printed out the schematic and I was in business. I quickly made a list of the parts needed and after forking out the princely sum of \$14.02; I heated up my soldering iron and began building.

Being a rank beginner, I settled for ugly construction, which basically means I would follow the schematic literally—soldering the components together as they appear in the schematic. I cut out a suitable piece of PCB material to fit onto the bottom of a tuna tin. Then I cut pieces of leftover PCB material into little squares to super glue onto the main PCB—ungrounded connections are soldered to these little “islands.” The PCB proper would all be at ground potential.

This I found to be the easiest construction method, with no drilling of holes or etching needed—the end result looks pretty good, too. Where does the name “ugly” come from?

Once that was done, I bought the few connectors and switch needed and proceeded to mount them into the tuna tin. Drilling small pilot holes into the tin first, then enlarging them with a hand-operated reamer proved the go. Again, the end result I found more than pleasing.

Once that was done, it was time for the smoke test. The crystal I used is fixed on 3.579 MHz—and is freely available—so that was the frequency I would be operating on. I soon discovered not many CW operators lurk there, so I had to arrange a sked. I arranged one with John, VK4TJ, whose QTH in Toowoomba is 130 kilometres from my shack in Brisbane. I hooked up the power, tuned my main rig (TS-520SE), because the Pixie 2 doesn't have a sidetone of its own, thus making it difficult to operate because I can't hear myself key, and plugged in my Windom antenna feed line. I then tentatively pounded out CQ on my old trusty straight key.

Almost immediately I heard VK4TJ reply loud and clear. I could hardly believe my ears! The little rig was working. We had a great QSO that lasted all of half an hour, but perhaps the greatest thrill for me came the next day when John informed me that I was causing some QRM to a SSB net that was operating on 3.580. I couldn't help laughing because I could imagine what they would think if they knew they were being worried by a flea of a station that was putting out a mere 125 milliwatts!

With newfound enthusiasm, I arranged another quick sked with CW ops from the Australian Naval Amateur Radio Society and had a good QSO with Craig, VK4CWC. He earned his living as a CW operator and now lives on the Gold Coast. Norm, VK4FON, and Capt. Peter, VK4DPL, monitored this QSO. We have since had much fruitful discussion about the joys of QRP on this naval net and Norm is now gearing up to join in on the fun.

Are there any other takers? ■



Grant, VK4JAZ, with Scratch-Built Pixie II

*“...worried
by a flea of a
station...”*

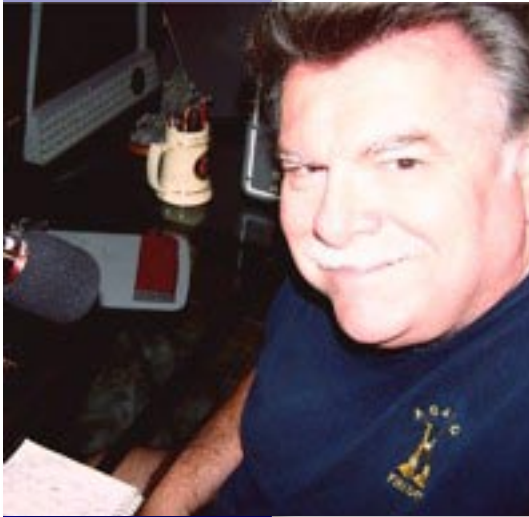


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A Christmas "Eye" to the Future

Charlie Young, AG4YO



Charlie, AG4YO

I grew up in the bayous of Louisiana, no snow, no chestnuts roasting by the open fire, no sleigh rides. My favorite Christmas food was my Aunt Gloria Ayo's Cajun rice dressing. Ayo was my mother's maiden name and the name itself was the product of a Spanish census spelling of the French name Alliot. Christmas dinner was always at my Uncle Ishmael's house in

Chalmette, Louisiana. Uncle Ishmael was a Ham for as long as I could remember. One of my earliest memories of Christmas was an old shortwave receiver he had with the big green tuning "eye" on the front, and being dragged away kicking and screaming from it so we could all say the Christmas blessing before eating.

Uncle Ishmael also had an old spark gap transmitter he was always willing to demonstrate, but I believe his main love was CW and occasional voice on 6 meters AM. His shack was a concrete block addition to his garage, and to me it was wonderland. Finally, I got around to asking him about becoming an Amateur when I was 15-years-old. I made a half-hearted attempt to learn Morse code, but found I didn't really like it.

Throughout the years I nursed within me the hatred for CW. I tried CB radio, and eventually went on to work on commercial gear for most of my adult life with a First Class FCC Radiotelephone license. Why would Amateur radio not accept me? Why did I need to learn the stupid code? It was outdated, useless.

Just before Christmas three years ago, I had a shoulder operation. Probably due more to the side effects of pain medication, I began to reminisce about the old family Christmases, and how I was getting older. Uncle Ishmael had been SK for 30 years, but the memory of Christmas at his shack seemed to stir something in me. I decided I would finally become an Amateur with the No Code Technician ticket.

I sent off for the study guide, and after two nights I was passing practice tests with 98% or better. On a whim, I got a Morse code practice program and after two days of practice was amazed at how much FUN I was having. Why had this defeated me for so long? To make a long story short, I studied both the General and Extra material and after New Year, I took all four elements of the Amateur test in one evening and passed them

all. I must admit I had said a quiet prayer to my Uncle Ishmael Ayo for help. Five days later I saw my new callsign on the FCC Web site: AG4YO. I had to laugh as a fourth generation (in America) member of the AYO family at the AG4YO call.

*"Merry
Christmas
Uncle Ish and
'dit dit.'"*

So, here I am Uncle Ishmael, after 30-plus years wasted, finally an Amateur and enjoying CW. You'd be proud that I am up to over 25-wpm now, and having a real blast. Thanks for the Christmas inspiration and the cool callsign. Sorry for the time I wasted making excuses about having to learn the code. Maybe someone else will see this and stop making excuses as well. Merry Christmas Uncle Ish and "dit dit." Watch out for those alligators! ■

Charlie is currently the network director for a major cellular company for three states. He is also one of the founding members of SPAR, The Society for the Preservation of Amateur Radio. Charlie has been an Amateur for three years and lives in Pensacola, Florida.



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The NPRM 05-235 Issue

U.S. Radio Amateurs Speak—Will the FCC Listen?

Joseph Speroni, AH0A

When the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) was first released, several Web sites were reporting that comments were running 2:1 in favor of dropping all Morse testing. That didn't seem to match local opinions and a quick look at the Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) Web site didn't seem to match that either. That started a project to see what the Amateur community was really saying to the FCC about Morse testing.

A few downloads and a couple of Visual Basic programs simplified the work to get all the information. A name comparison algorithm even automated looking for duplicate comments—and there were some. Guys on both sides of the Morse issue were doing it. Comments were divided into three opinions:

- Drop all Morse testing,
- Keep Extra Class testing at 5-wpm or higher,
- Keep the current testing at 5-wpm or even raise the standards.

Duplicates were deleted from the counts. Some comments discussed other issues, and a few were even clearly about other NPRMs. Here are the statistics for the 3,444 comments posted as of October 31, 2005, the closing date of the comment period.

Category	Number	Percent
Drop All Morse Testing	1,556	45%
Retain All Morse Testing	1,077	31%
Retain Extra Class Morse	811	24%

The complete record of comments, sorted alphabetically by last name, is posted on the Internet, along with a link to each original ECFS comment:

<http://www.ah0a.org/FCC/05-235/Nom.html>

The 196 duplicate comments were excluded from the data. A few of these were just input errors. Forty-

seven comments were not related to the Morse issue (or really not too clear on this one issue). There were clearly attempts to stuff the ballot box with identical comments from two to eight members of the same family—these had to be counted—every citizen has a right to comment. At least one person commented from the grave. Apologies to Sen. Barry Goldwater—your comment wasn't counted.

The bottom line is that fifty-five percent (55%) of those commenting on the Morse issue prefer that Morse testing remain at least for the Extra Class license. Many would like to see higher speeds be required, but data wasn't kept for that sub-category. Even for the forty-five percent (45%) who agreed to drop all Morse testing, a large number did so with the proviso that written test technical content be "improved." How would they have voted if it were made clear that was not going to happen?

It is doubtful these facts will have much effect on the final Report and Order (R&O). The national trend to reduce educational standards is spilling over to Amateur Radio too! This change is being mandated "in the interest of the general public." ■

Joe was originally licensed as WN8NMK. During a long stint in Japan, as 7J1AAA, he wrote the free-ware program Morse Academy and frequently operated from Saipan with his current call, AH0A. Retirement led him to Hawaii where Amateur Radio is a family affair—his wife, Kippi, is licensed as K1PPI and his daughter as KRISTA. An interest in Amateur Radio statistics began when he saw the effects of liberal licensing requirements in Japan. He maintains Amateur Radio statistics for the U.S., Japan, UK and Australia on his Web site: www.ah0a.org



*"At least
one person
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the grave."*



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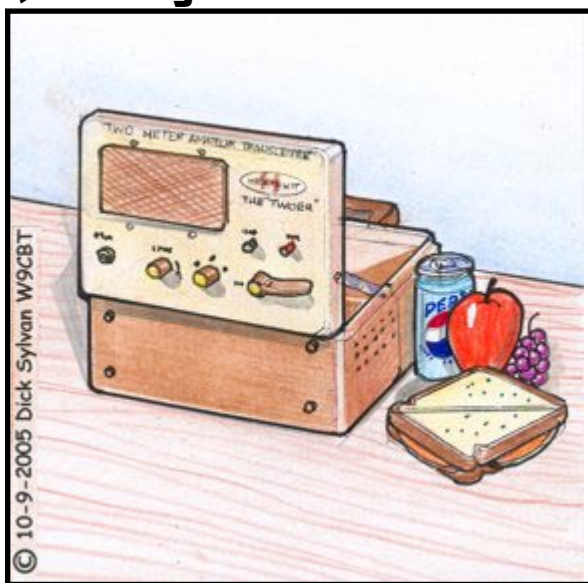
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The Amateur Radio of that time, and to a lesser degree today, resembles the highly structured, and frequently secret, male fraternal organizations that demand a prescribed and rigidly enforced route to membership, engage in ritual, are hierarchical, provide a series of quests to achieve in-group status, use a specialized language, has recognized paraphernalia and regalia, hold regularly scheduled meetings, and exclude non-members. For Hams, the Royal Order of the Wouff Hong, membership in which requires an initiation ceremony and contains a body of lore, is the familiar, light-hearted, version of these and reinforces the view that this version of Ham Radio embodies the trappings of a fraternal organization.

Wives' and Other's Concerns

In radio's early years, aside from rudimentary crystal sets, receivers were complex and expensive devices requiring skill and knowledge to set up, use and maintain. To broaden their market and to meet the demand for cheaper and simpler sets, manufacturers strove mightily to turn them into inexpensive appliances anyone could purchase, plug in and use. At its inception all radio fans were "amateurs," eventually, however, most casual listeners were pleased to drop the complexity in favor of simplicity and ease. Ham gear at that point—some time in the late 1920s to the early 1930s—diverges from the "set-and-forget" radios and maintains its complicated, high-tech appearance; intricate operation; and many-knobbed front panels.

Ham Lingo "Lunchbox"



Did You Ever Wonder What Was
Really Inside the Old Heathkit HW-30
"Twoer" "Benton Harbor Lunchbox?"

Not all this transpired without reaction: some wives complained, and these objections became integral to mid-century Ham Radio dialogue. Discussions of spouses' electronic proclivities in print, on the street and on the air contained both ill-humored and humorous elements. One distressed wife was "annoyed and bewildered" that her husband referred to himself and "that disreputable conglomeration of tubes, wires, cans, and noise" as "we." Mostly, Hams' wives were frustrated by the lack of togetherness engendered by their husbands' Amateur Radio activities.

CONELRAD Days

Adding to the confrontation on the domestic front, Dr. Haring describes the opposition Hams faced in the Cold War as they freely communicated on the interface between two political and ideological blocs. Some politicians, including Senator Alexander Wiley, chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, viewed Hams as a potential security risk and in 1953 "called for restrictions on radio amateurs for security reasons." Senator Joseph McCarthy suggested Hams had a "tremendous potential for passing out improper information for espionage." Hams for their part dealt with the turmoil through cautionary editorials in the Amateur Radio press and self-policing behaviors.

YL Slims?

There is curious reference to "female impersonation" on CW. Some men "...pretended to be a female in order to play a prank on another male hobbyist or simply to attract attention on airwaves overrun with male communicators." This begs the question: How did the "male communicator" know it was a male masquerading as a "female" communicator? Surely not by any "feminine" CW characteristic, as would be obvious in one of the voice modes. Before establishing the QSO how could the eventual victim of the impersonation know it was a "female" calling CQ? Did the prankster send, "CQ I AM A YL"? Or, perhaps the perpetrator let on to his prank during the QSO. Curious indeed.

Finally, some might take exception with Dr. Haring's conclusions or with her understanding of Amateur Radio traditions and practice, but her article certainly provokes thought on its recent history and some of its enduring fundamentals. ■