

K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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Heard Any Good QRM Lately?

The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

Heard any good QRM lately? I have. Not that any QRM at any time is good, but an analysis of its source(s) can be revelatory. Seems ever since the FCC “refarmed” the CW subbands there’s been an abundance of QRM, especially on old reliable 40-meters. That’s

in the preexisting QSO expressing “QRL,” the fervent QSO-seeker persists—without reply. Could it be because others hear the preexisting conversation?

Premature Jubilation

Jubilation’s been expressed on some discussion lists about multitudes of new General class phone operators crowding the bands, whereas the CW subbands will exist as a spacious idyll. That’s not the way it is playing out; during my operating time I experience more jockeying for available spectrum, not less. Even the old, now truncated, 40-meter

Novice subband is enjoying a resurgence of occupation: as in years past there are CW stations nightly dodging the shortwave broadcasters and during daytime hours a great place to meet OOT’s.

One recent weekday evening I experienced, in an hour’s time and during three different QSOs, three stations coming on frequency and emitting lengthy CQs. Not one inquired, “QRL?” Nor did my or the other station’s QRL do any good to halt the CQ’ing onslaught. Perhaps their preliminary transmission of many seconds-long carriers while tuning is the now trendy substitute for proper procedure. It’s not a matter of veteran operators or the newly licensed—going by their callsigns—they fell into both categories.

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“Having a ball”

the band where, no matter the time of day or where in the solar cycle we find ourselves, a QSO is doable.

There’s always been the international broadcasters and SSB stations with band plans other than ours to contend with, and the occasional digital station that wandered down from its traditional watering grounds and was easily skirted, but wait, there’s more.

The Good: There are more CW operators sharing the band. Since the beginning of the year I’ve worked many “retread” amateurs. They’ve been away from ham radio and/or CW for years, some for decades, and now they’re back and to quote them, “Having a ball.” I don’t know if recent FCC actions spawned this regeneration, but one thing for sure, Morse ability once learned is not lost despite hiatus length.

The Bad: SSB stations jumping on frequencies already in use. More and more digital operation moving toward 7.000 MHz and plopping themselves on existing QSOs—contest weekends are especially bad as digital signals blanket the band. Yes, there are the WARC bands, but as more and more contests occupy more and more weekends it squelches 40-meters for those whose operating time is limited to weekends.

The Ugly: Too many CW operators hopping on an occupied frequency, tuning up or not, and commencing an interminable CQ sequence. No matter both parties

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Taps for Morse Code?

One Licensee is Hoping it is Not and is Fighting Back

Anthony R. Gordon, KG6EQM



Aboard the USS HOPPER (DDG 70), Morse code training during Operation SOUTHERN WATCH 2000.

U.S. Department of Defense



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On a recent Saturday morning for coffee and the daily paper, I stopped by the local convenience store and staring me in the face on page one, and even above the fold of the paper, was the following headline, “Loss of Morse Code: Once a dominant part of American culture, the ability to decipher Morse code is drifting away.” The story’s point was that like other technologies passed by time and process, Morse code is now in a similar position

and that the recent FCC rule change concerning the dropping of the Morse code examination requirement for amateur radio, “is seen as a sign that the language is fading into history like smoke signals.” Spelled out and in dots and dashes, “SOS” is depicted above a Morse code key, while the story declares, “It’s taps for Morse code.”

Is it indeed “taps for Morse code,” as the story would have one believe? By all accounts on February 23, 2007, the FCC made a significant impact on amateur radio in the United States by eliminating all Morse code testing requirements and this decision is certain to reverberate for years to come throughout the amateur radio community. The problem is some of this impact on amateur radio in the United States will not be all that positive.

National Security Matters

Alarmed by what I perceived to be happening to the amateur radio service in the United States and the effect of this change in lowering the value of the Amateur Radio Service to emergency communications and to national security, and in light of the fact the FCC failed to consider the national security implications of their decision, I personally filed a Petition for Partial Reconsideration with the FCC in WT Docket No.

05-235. In my Petition, I asked the FCC to reconsider the part of their Rule and Order in the above proceeding eliminating the Morse code requirement for the Amateur Extra Class license. I made three major arguments in my petition that I am not aware of being made previously by any organization or individual in this matter before the FCC.

By the Numbers

First of all, citing a public U.S. Joint Chief of Staff military publication, I argued in my Petition that the FCC had developed as one of its “core competencies” a pool of talented Morse code telegraphy operators at the Amateur Extra Class level and that the failure of the FCC to continue to require Morse code testing actually lessens the “unity of effort” the FCC is required, as a federal government agency, to bring to the emergency decision making process in the ongoing War Against Terrorism.

Second, citing an uncertain future and U.S. Congressional policy for the FCC to promote the Amateur Radio Service, I argued that the Morse code examination element should be kept as a “hedge” against unanticipated national security events and emergency communication requirements. I pointed out to the FCC that no matter what the technological trend was in amateur

radio, the FCC cannot accurately predict the range of future national security and emergency requirements, and that it is not in the public interest for one of the FCC’s “core competencies” to diminish its value to the nation.

Third, citing ample evidence in the record of past success of Morse code telegraphy as a means of domestic and international amateur radio emergency communications, I argued that the Morse code examination element for the Extra Class license should be kept as a “strategic reserve,” since there is was no way the FCC can have complete assurance that voice or digital modes of communication will be operationally viable in all future emergency communications environments.

*“...why throw
the baby out with
the bathwater?”*

To support my position for continued Morse code testing at the Amateur Extra Class level, I cited examples from both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom that showed satellite communications were sometimes ineffective in war-time and instances where our enemies had the ability to develop technologies to thwart our most modern communications technologies.

Joseph Speroni, AHØA, in the December 2005 issue of the *K9YA Telegraph* did a careful analysis of the 3,444 comments submitted to the FCC and posted by October 31, 2005, the closing date of the comment period for NPRM 05-235. As Mr. Speroni found in his analysis, fifty-five percent (55%) of the total comments received and posted by the FCC clearly preferred Morse code testing remains for at least the Extra Class license. Based on these statistics, I think it is fair to say that for the FCC to ignore these findings and impose what they perceived to be in the “best interest” of the Amateur Radio Service is clearly not the stated desire of the majority of amateur radio operators in the United States.

A Matter of Interpretation?

Furthermore, I believe it would be wrong to interpret the increase of amateur radio license and upgrade applications received by the ARRL since February 23, 2007, as an endorsement of the elimination of Morse code testing. Initial reports indicate the vast majority of these new applications are for brand-new Technician class licenses spurred in large measure by additional operating privileges below 30 MHz. However, I suspect the use of CW by these applicants on frequencies below 30 MHz is going to be close to nil based on their need to acquire HF equipment and the learning curve required for effective use of Morse code on the air, something that is not at all encouraged by the recent FCC rule change.

This is not to say the elimination of Morse code testing for Technician and General class licenses did not necessarily accomplish one of the FCC’s goals in their Morse Code Rule and Order, i.e., attracting people into the Amateur Radio Service who viewed Morse code testing as a barrier to HF operation. The question, however, remains, “Why throw out the baby with the bathwater?” Why diminish the value of Morse code to amateur radio emergency communications and to this nation’s national security when

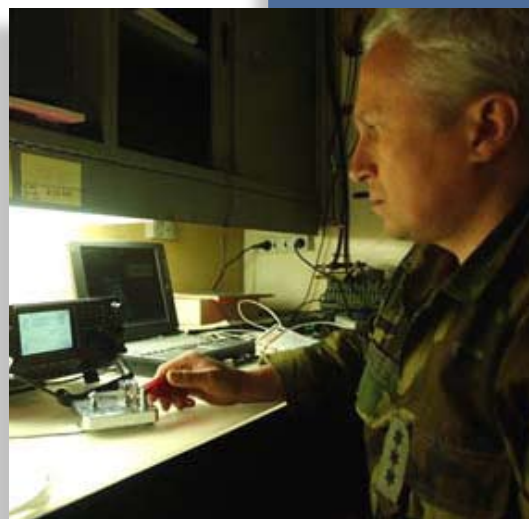
it clearly was not necessary to do so in order for the FCC to accomplish one of its stated purposes—to attract new people into the service? This is the question for the most part raised by my Petition for Partial Reconsideration, and which under the Commission’s procedural rules, allows the FCC to grant if it determines to do so in the public interest.

The recent newspaper article I quoted above mentioned the “need for ham operators is great, especially during disasters” and that “Ham radio played a key role in early communications during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina.” Most of the public accepts this fact as sound, but the FCC is clearly acting in a misguided fashion when it essentially is blowing “taps for Morse code” by its elimination of all Morse testing requirements for any amateur radio license, in light of the fact that there is still a very clear national security and emergency need for Morse, that only some type of FCC examination requirement can adequately guarantee its long term survival.

Public notice of my Petition for Reconsideration has recently been published in the FEDERAL REGISTER in mid-April, with any opposition to my Petition required to be filed by April 24, 2007. After that date, replies to the oppositions to my Petition will have ten

days to file their response with the FCC through the Commission’s Electronic Comment Filing System at http://gullfoss2.fcc.gov/prod/ecfs/upload_v2.cgi. My full Petition for Partial Reconsideration in WT Docket No. 05-235 may also be viewed at the FCC website as well. ■

The author works for the federal government in a civilian capacity and is a military reservist currently serving in the Army Reserve. He previously worked for the state of Nevada as a deputy public defender, deputy district attorney and deputy attorney general. The author’s opinions are his own and not the position of his employers. He has been a licensed amateur radio operator since December of 2000, but has followed amateur radio and has been involved in electronics and computers as a hobby since the mid-1970s.



A Lithuanian Army Captain communicates with East Timor, during Exercise COMBINED ENDEAVOR 2003. Communications interoperability testing and documentation.

U.S. Department of Defense



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Ocean Hopper

Major Armstrong Would be Proud

Bob Ballantine, W8SU



Not long ago I obtained a very popular entry-class receiver of the 1940's and 50's, Allied Radio's Ocean Hopper.

Phalanx Dale, W8SHR, found the Ocean Hopper at a hamfest flea market and took my Allied Radio Knight Kit Space Spanner in a good old swap. In 1990 I bought the Space Spanner at a yard sale for five bucks. W8SHR wanted the Space Spanner because it was the

receiver he started with in ham radio.

Dale and I are quite sentimental when it comes to vintage gear. I was holding on to the Space Spanner for trade or sale because I wanted to find, in good condition, the Knight Kit Ocean Hopper of my long ago catalog dreams. The Hopper is a regen receiver I viewed many times in the Allied Radio catalogs of the 1950's. I didn't purchase one as a boy because of the pocketbook, after all, it was around ten bucks and the coils

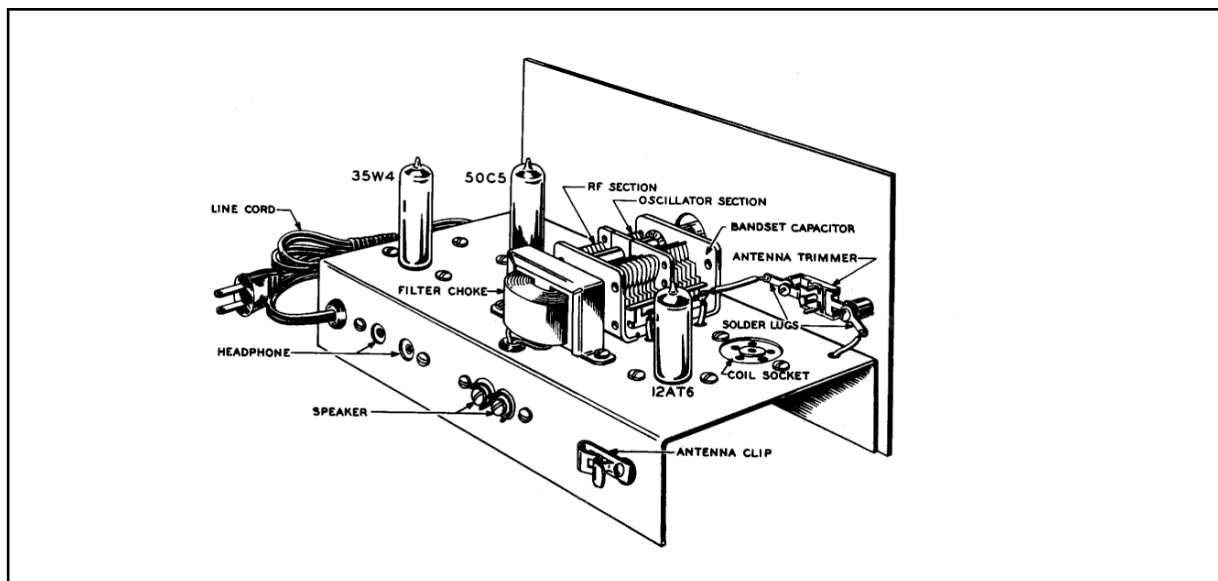
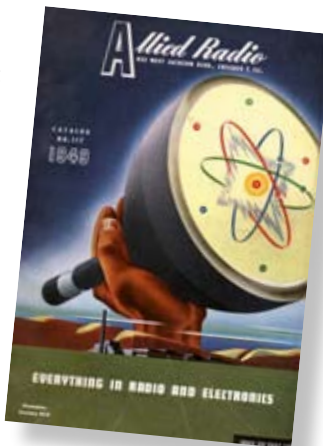
needed for the shortwave bands were around 65 cents apiece! I would have to use the old RCA console in the living room at 308 Clark Street for a while longer. My quarter a week allowance didn't go very far.

Dale, my neighbor, was right, the Ocean Hopper was in good condition, but the only coil supplied was for the broadcast band. I wound an 80-meter coil from partial instructions I found on the Internet and Pat, my XYL, KK8W, printed a copy of the manual found on the Internet. Sometimes I wonder if the Internet isn't a good thing after all!

Staying up late one evening in June 2003 I picked up west coast stations on 80-meter CW—that old thrill was still in my heart to hear those long distance

stations. September 2003, during the Classic Exchange QSO Party, would bring my first QSO with the Hopper and trusty WRL Globe King 500C transmitter in combo with station K2TOP on 80-meter CW.

The regenerative system worked like Major Armstrong intended when he invented it in the early 1900's. What kid wouldn't be interested in an Ocean Hopper! They had great talent marketing gear in those old catalogs. ■



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Cameradio

Radio Row Landmarks Lost and Found

Page 5

Bob Ballantine, W8SU

Who was Cameradio? Who was Tydings? What became of them?

As a young shortwave listener in Cambridge, Ohio my neighborhood pal, Mike Lorenzo, was a first class SWL. He loved to listen to distant countries on shortwave radio in the red-hot 50's. Mike had a very competitive listening station and antenna. I enjoyed watching Mike and his dad install their shortwave antenna a few months after they arrived in the neighborhood. I was in the seventh or eighth grade at the time and found radio fascinating. I read everything I could on the subject, purchasing *Whites Radio Log*, *CQ* magazine, *Radio and Television News*, *Popular Electronics*—electronics catalogs were fair game too!

Mike had some interesting books about the shack. The catalog that regularly caught my eye was Cameradio of Pittsburgh, Pa. Wow, the Hallicrafters and Hammarlund sets and antenna parts section were nearly worn out in that catalog. Then there was World Radio Lab: "The House Leo Built!" I still have some cherished catalogs and you guessed it, several from Cameradio grace the shelves.

In later years I attempted to learn a bit of Cameradio's operations, but fell short of gaining the whole picture. Cameradio had a wonderful and far ranging mail order service. Pittsburgh people bought high-end ticket equipment there. I came across this Cameradio reminiscence on the Internet:

As a kid in Pittsburgh in the early 50's I remember visiting Cameradio, it wasn't a surplus shop, but a real large store selling

new cameras and radios. (The name came from their businesses: photography and radio.) They had the latest ham gear in the front windows. I remember going there to buy a pair of headphones for a crystal set I was tinkering with. Wow, gazing into Cameradio's windows with my mom and dad dragging me away because they were in a hurry—after Mom had given us sore feet

while staring for what seemed like hours into the dress shops along the way.

NYC is not the only town that eliminated its radio row! Cleveland and Philadelphia had their own versions. Cleveland's was on Euclid Avenue between 12th and 15th Streets. Philadelphia's was located on Arch Street between 8th and 11th Streets. All quiet now.

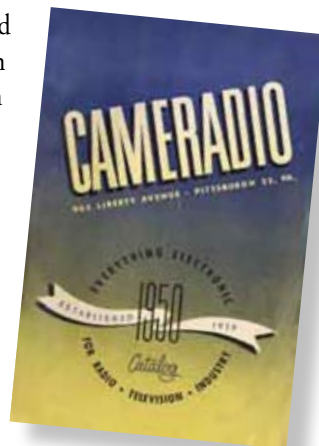
Pittsburgh lost its radio district a few years before NYC. Penn Avenue south of Negley, east of the Pitt Campus, was our radio row, the biggies—Tyding's on Liberty Avenue and

Cameradio on Penn Avenue.

The whole place was badly renewed in the late 60's. Cameradio shut down their retail business in the late 70's, or so I thought. Many of us fondly remember those mail order days!

But all is not lost! I discovered Cameradio is still in business, now on Alpha Drive in Pittsburgh. They are D.B.A. (Doing Business As) Cam RPC—"Founded in 1932 as a Pittsburgh-based regional electronics distributor."

Tyding's Electronics Co. in the mid-1980's became South Hill Electronics and then morphed into AB&T. Its roots extend to the birth of commercial radio. Ed Lips, W3BWU, was one of the old-time and well-respected salesmen at Tydings. ■



Exterior and Interior Views of The Tydings Co. Circa 1939



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Morse Code Magic...

Romance Over the Airwaves

Betty Broome Newkirk, VE3ZBB



Rod and Betty Newkirk
Celebrating their 7th
Anniversary

My favourite and only mode of communication on HF has become Morse code. Now I'm beginning to wonder if there is a little bit of magic mixed into amateur radiotelegraphy.

It's difficult to believe that what happened in my life could be possible. Cynics will frown, but seasoned amateur radio operators and dreamers will smile knowingly.

In March of 1988, I became an amateur radio operator, the first and only one in the family. I spent as much time as I could on the bands and enjoyed 30 and 40 metres very much.

I was fortunate to meet so many fine CW operators, many who have become very good friends. They helped and encouraged me, spending time and sharing many parts of their lives with me when I was just starting out on CW. I was still on a straight key then and they helped me to send code using paddles.

I first met Rod, W9BRD, from Chicago, Illinois on August 28, 1991 at 2:58 p.m. on 30 metres, 10.107 kHz. For some reason, I knew at that moment that this radio operator was special.

We exchanged signal reports and the usual information and then entered into a lively CW conversation, despite poor band conditions. Rod jokingly told me that since retiring four years before, he was "reliving his teen years with no responsibilities at all, so you better watch out, lady."

He continued by saying he had been widowed for 17 years and "no longer signed any contracts." He also said that we had the best retirement hobby of all.

We continued our contact and his way with words really impressed me. The band kept fading and finally

we had to say goodbye after struggling to continue our CW conversation.

I hoped I would meet him again but knew it might be the only conversation we would have. It had been over half-an-hour of fun.

We exchanged QSL cards and pictures. Rod sent a letter to explain the reason his card had been delayed. My husband, son, and daughter-in-law enjoyed his entertaining and interesting letter as much as I did. I kept listening on the amateur radio bands for him but never heard W9BRD.

I placed his photograph on the bulletin board above my transceiver with many other amateur radio operators' pictures that had been sent to me.

In March 1992, I was widowed after 42 years of marriage. The following months were very busy with regular routines and adjusting to a different life. Spare

time was scarce, but amateur radio was a place where there was always a friendly person to spend a few moments with, plus the bonus of continuing to meet old and new friends.

In some ways it was an escape into another world, and an extremely pleasant one.

"...this radio operator was special."

On July 30, 1992 at 2:25 p.m., again on 30 metres and the same frequency, I had my second meeting with W9BRD and it was a wonderful and exciting surprise to realize it was Rod's excellent fist that I was hearing.

Here again was the person I'd had such an enjoyable CW conversation with 11 months ago. He told me he had heard me every now and then, but that I was always busy with someone. I shared my recent news with him about my late husband and because he had been through the loss of his wife years before, he was very sympathetic. We spent 45 minutes on air before we signed and Rod asked if I would like to have a

CONTINUED - MORSE CODE MAGIC ON PAGE 7



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weekly Thursday meeting with him. Just before band conditions changed, I agreed it would be fun.

I looked forward to our Thursday conversations and later Rod suggested that perhaps we could meet on Mondays too because Thursdays only “weren’t enough.”

Letters were exchanged and I mentioned to Rod in my first letter that he should have become a writer because I enjoyed his letters so much.

Can you imagine how shocked I was when he told me in his next letter that he had been a writer for *QST* magazine, doing the “How’s DX” column for more than 30 years. At that time, this was a complete surprise because I was not a *QST* reader.

I also discovered that Rod had been a ham since July 1937—61 years this summer.

With the CW schedules, telephone calls and letters, we became good friends and, in time, we both realized we were in love.

My son, John and his wife, Cathy, and Rod’s family, encouraged us to meet each other, and when we finally met in person it was a wonderful moment and a further confirmation of what we knew to be true.

We became engaged in November 1994 and on June 27, 1997 we were married in All Saints Anglican Church, Westboro, in the west end of Ottawa—Rod was 75 and I was 67.

In many ways, I think Morse code telegraphy is a unique form of communication between two people.

To me, it is a “soul-to-soul” mode because you really have a meeting of the minds, gathering words to express your thoughts and feelings and passing them on to another person.

My special way of expressing it would be an invisible thread that ties two people together.

I have repeated some of this story to friends on and off the air. The change in our lives is still an unexpected surprise.

And so, we believe that on CW, anything can happen and for us, it did! ■

Betty’s article was originally published February 1998 in The Canadian Amateur.

Read the Book(let)

I know this has been discussed to death over amateur radio’s century-long existence, but every ham in every generation needs be sensitive to the problem and how to happily coexist on undoubtedly ever more crowded bands.

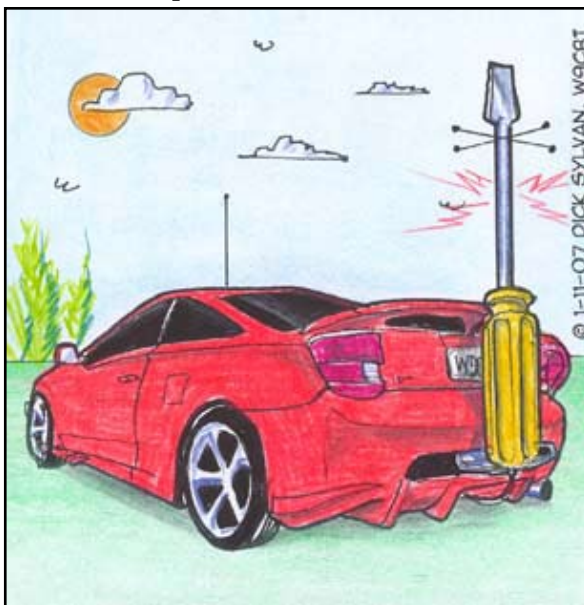
There’s not much we can do about the phone and digital operators sharing the band—they have every right to be there—except wish they’d employ more discretion in their operating practices. But in “preaching to the choir,” we know that CW is such an organic, simple and adaptable mode unimpeded by gear, that not QRM’ing is a very simple matter.

Every amateur radio primer offers the same good advice, typically, it appears right up front. A 1960’s version of the ARRL’s *An Introduction to: Operating an Amateur Radio Station*, states: *One thing that is considered the height of ill manners and ‘liddy’ procedure in amateur radio is to tune up or make any transmission on a frequency which is already occupied.* On CW, ...the Morse letter C (didit dit) should bring a response if you are interfering with a station you cannot hear. “Didit dit” has fallen out of favor, but too often so has its replacement: “QRL?” It is a simple matter; use “QRL?” and listen for a bit, it will improve everyone’s operating experience.

One last thing, that little 34-page ARRL booklet is chockfull of thoughtful advice and useful information, its cover price was fifty cents—free to League members. What price peace on the bands today? ■

Ham Quips

DICK SYLVAN, W4CBT



SCREWDRIVER ANTENNA

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Treating Hams Like SPAM

New Petition Requests FCC Comment Filing System Changes

Russ Ward, W4NI



Save for my initial year of Novice CW and passing the 20-wpm Extra at the ten-year mark, my first two decades as an amateur were spent with contests and DX on 20-15-10 SSB. When I became a VE and started giving Morse exams, I kept working at Morse and listening to W1AW's CW transmissions every night. Later, my Tennessee Contest Group started demanding entries on both

phone and CW, so I tried to become a CW op.

As an active Volunteer Examiner for twenty years, I have closely witnessed the FCC's de-emphasis of Morse. The no-code Technician and 5-wpm General and Extra were very popular. When NPRM 05-235 proposed total no-code, I wrote a reasoned comment asking the FCC to retain 5-wpm for Extra. I sent this comment to the Commission via e-mail. Later, during the reply period, I learned my comment was missing from the FCC's site. I quickly called Eric Hanson, the FCC's Webmaster.

Failure to Communicate

After a series of e-mails and phone calls, Hanson agreed to post my original comment if I e-mailed it to him. Meanwhile, I tried to send a reply comment from a second e-mail account detailing the error, it also disappeared. Tellingly, the reply comment I sent from the FCC Web application worked well. Having worked in computer technical support for 25 years, I had questioned Hanson carefully. I

learned the Commission sent an e-mail "QSL" for properly formatted e-mail comments and a "QSL" for improperly formatted e-mail comments, but no "QSL" for spam.

It appeared the FCC was treating W4NI@email.isp and WA4ZZU@email.isp as spam. When Hanson finally posted my comment on the NPRM, I resolved to file for reconsideration. It was apparent the FCC e-mail server was broken and, worse, treated hams like spam. In addition, I really wanted to file pertinent reply comments.

Timely Filing

It was over a year before the FCC acted on the NPRM. I quickly wrote the Petition for Reconsideration. I added as much detail as I could about the broken e-mail comment process, especially the lack of e-mail audit capability.



The FCC carefully timestamps any paper received, but does not log any e-mails. After submitting the copies, I received the return postal confirmation. About a month later, I decided the FCC had trashed the petition on some technicality such as margins, page numbers, or font size.

I still want a chance at the NPRM reply comments and still think that Extra should retain a Morse exam. I am also positive the FCC's e-mail server is broken and needs fixing. My petition asks the FCC to fix their process.

To comment on the Petition for Reconsideration, visit the FCC's ECFS "Submit a Filing" page at: http://gullfoss2.fcc.gov/prod/ecfs/upload_v2.cgi and type "05-235" (without the quotation marks) in the "Proceeding" field, being sure to include the hyphen. ■



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