

K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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A Scholar's View...

Book Review: Ham Radio's Technical Culture

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

Expanding on her monograph, *The Freer Men of Amateur Radio* (See: December 2005 *K9YA Telegraph*, "A Place of One's Own," page 1), author Kristin Haring extends her analysis of the amateur radio experience, circa 1930-1970, in *Ham Radio's Technical Culture*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007 (ISBN-13: 978-0-262-08355-3).

Like many a thesis written by an author who apparently does not possess a thorough grounding in the lore, traditions and vocabulary of the subject surveyed, *Ham Radio's Technical Culture* frequently frustrates the knowledgeable reader with its factual and semantic stumbles. In her research, Dr. Haring relied overwhelmingly on period amateur radio publications rather than firsthand accounts. There are, thankfully, plenty of old timers still around to bear witness and Dr. Haring would have done well to enlist these OT's (in addition to her acknowledged assistance from the ARRL) to guide her over the more hermetic bumps in the road.

Oops!

The text includes errors of various magnitudes that the prepublication counsel of experienced amateur radio operators could have avoided. Let's get some of the more egregious out of the way.

Page xvi: *QST* referring to the ARRL publication's title (as used here) or as a Q-signal, does not mean, "calling all members."

Page 21: The FCC did not administer the Morse code sending and receiving tests with "wireless apparatus." Readers would take that to mean, at minimum: a transmitter, key and receiver; not the key and code practice device actually used.

Page 22: The acquisition of a Technician class license while conferring "additional operating privileges and bragging rights," (compared to the Novice class license) was not earned upon passing an "advanced theory test" and "faster Morse code sending and receiving skills."

Page 23: A basic misunderstanding of Q-signals, telegraphic abbreviations and procedural signs that contribute to CW's ability to deliver clear, correct and concise messages.

Page 25: Again, unfamiliarity with the continuous wave mode leads to the assessment that the "complexity of the mode" and "fist" inflected Morse" does nothing to enhance clarity at the receiving end.

Page 31: Not sure how many hams receiving family photo(s) enclosed with a QSL card were reassured

"...hermetic
bumps in
the road."

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The Race with Obstacles

Francisc Grünberg, YO4PX



Fery, YO4PX

I started to read with great excitement the article written by YO2**, dedicated to the 40-year anniversary of the radio club of Timișoara, Romania, my beloved place of birth, abandoned by me 37 years ago, but on whose streets I still often walk in my dreams. There I was brought up and attended school, there I traveled in frosty winter mornings, when the mercury of the thermometer descended under -20 degrees C, sometimes on the footboard

of crowded streetcar 6, on its circular way, through the Maria Plaza and on the bridge over the river Bega, trying to arrive in time to the Musical High School situated downtown. But I hadn't imagined in my nastiest dreams that reading this article I would again come across "comrade" Alexandru, albeit only under the spectre of a name printed on paper. Nightmarishly, comrade Alexandru reappeared in my life despite my fervent desire to erase him forever from my memory. The author of the article is arrogating him his good organizational ability. Who knows, maybe he was really a good organizer, but for me he was the one who for two lengthy years prevented the fulfillment of a dream.

The Birth of a Dream

I was 16 when a classmate, a violoncellist, gave me a few issues of *The Radio Amateur* magazine, thus infecting me with the amateur radio bug. He also revealed the "secret" that on the shortwave bands, amidst the broadcasting stations one can hear radio amateurs ragchewing freely, something inconceivable to viewers of the propaganda films of those years, in which the only ones operating radio stations were either brave Soviet soldiers, or spies, disgusting traitors in the service of Western intelligence agencies, who ended always by being caught, thanks to the patriotism of a Pioneer or a Comsomolist (member of the Soviet Young Communists' organization),

who discovered their activity and informed the authorities.

On our rudimentary radio set I soon found the 40- and 20-meter bands and, amazed, heard local amateurs' QSOs and foreign broadcasters, among them many Italian stations, with extremely strong signals. Then, with the help of an old scout guide I taught myself to copy CW contacts too; obviously, the signals didn't have a musical sound, they were only "buzzing". I remember the thrill felt when I heard on a very early morning the trembling signal of a W6 station sending QTH CA, and then a Chilean station from Antofagasta. I even made log sheets, recording what I heard, and dreamt that one day I would send QSL cards bearing my SWL callsign!

In the winter of 1959 I entered my name for the telegraphy courses organized by the Voluntary Association for the Defense of the Homeland held in the radio club's main room. I graduated in the summer of 1960. I also became the happy

owner of a fabulous booklet with gray covers, *Radio Amateur Traffic*, from which I learned a lot of new things. *Radio Amateur Traffic* comprised the DXCC countries list, prefixes and CQ zones. After a few months I knew most of them by heart, many of the prefixes already in my logs, so when a member of the examinations commission for

the amateur radio certificates asked me about some European prefixes I had no trouble at all giving him the right answers.

Successes and Sorrows

In November 1960 I became the proud bearer of Amateur Radio Shortwave Listener Certificate No. 184 and with my telegraphy course colleagues filed the application for a SWL license. Everything seemed all right, no foreboding — then entered comrade Alexandru, new radio club chief — whose presence soon darkened the joy of my young years.

I hadn't seen much of comrade Alexandru, rather, those afternoons when the telegraphy courses were held, I was drawn to the skills of a few amateurs constructing an enormous station on the room's right

"...the spectre
of a name..."



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side, while on the room's left side sat the legendary Mir, YO2CD, immersed in exotic CW QSOs.

It was said that comrade Alexandru, coming from the army, had no idea about amateur radio whatsoever. Well, this didn't prevent him from rejecting my license application, while other applicants, among them Hungarians and Germans besides Romanians, but none of them Jewish, received their licenses and quickly went off to the workshop to order stamps with their brand new SWL call signs. Alexandru was supported in his categorical refusal, as in all his actions, by a well-known ham from Timișoara, today an old-timer, who, parroting his leader's negativity, could only shake his head and enigmatically shrug his shoulders.

The Red Brick Wall

This was the beginning of my torment, marked by perpetually renewed and afterwards unfulfilled expectations. Alexandru hoodwinked me, appointing time and again new dates when I had to present myself to the club. I remember the winding staircase mounted with pang and hope and soon descended full of sorrow, having in mind a new date when – who knows, maybe, possibly, nevertheless – a mysterious and unseen guardian of the Law, arisen from Kafka's stories, would finally take pity and agree with the supplication of a poor unlicensed short-wave listener, who desired so much to be within the Law.

I kept records of these visits to the radio club—as much as 35 of them. On the thirty-fifth visit Alexandru, probably bored with the monotony of this repeated scenario, opened with soldierly courage a new battlefield: “One has to be member of the Union of the Communist Youth (UTC) to become a licensed shortwave listener. The homeland has confidence only in UTC members.” I objected: among my course colleagues who obtained the license I knew a few who were not UTC members, some hadn't even reached the necessary age to become UTC members. Alexandru, sunk in thought for a while, at last settled upon a saviour solution: a letter of reference from the school, that's it, I need to obtain a letter of reference from the school, but for this we'll go together, comrade Alexandru and me, to request the letter of reference from the headmaster.

As a disciplined military man, he was waiting for me at the entrance of the high school on the appointed day and time, wearing his greenish uniform; in front

of the headmaster's office he told me to stand by and he alone stepped in. The headmaster was very fond of me, I was always included in his “troupe” of student-artists, able to perform a complete musical program, sent by him to take part in all the artistic festivals held in the county, and with my xylophone, accompanied by a colleague on the accordion, I scored great successes.

I'll never did find out what exactly they discussed inside the office, the fact is that after a time Alexandru came out and pointed in the door's direction: the headmaster was waiting for me. This entire suspicious theatre seemed a very ill omen. With burning face and throbbing emotion I presented my grievance to the headmaster requesting a letter of reference. As long I live I'll never forget the poor man's profound embarrassment, constrained as he was to deny my request, not able to offer any explanation at all. I left his office astounded. Alexandru disappeared.

With this, all my hopes collapsed. I decided to irrevocably give up this hobby, which for me seemed to be forbidden. But I was not yet to surrender: for the first time in my life I exercised my right of petition, granted by the Constitution, in my capacity of young citizen of the Romanian People's Republic. I wrote a long letter to YO3**.

I heard him Sundays transmitting on 40-meter band the official messages of the Romanian Amateur Radio Federation and I thought that somebody must learn of the mockery inflicted upon me, there must remain a record.

An Appeal to Reason

In the letter, I recounted to him, day-by-day, the 35+1 summons to the club and requested his help, simply unable to understand why I had been refused something obtained by others without difficulty. I sent one copy of the letter to the Central Radio Club and another to his personal address — I found both addresses in the telephone directory.

Months passed as I awaited the postman's arrival with a reply. In vain. The Romanian citizens' right



River Bega
Timișoara, Romania

*“...I was not yet
to surrender...”*



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Lincolnwood Pack 74's First JOTA

Joel Byron, WD9ICL



Arny, W9FO, sends a scout's name in Morse code.

Each year, during the third weekend in October, nearly a half million scouts and guides worldwide communicate via amateur radio. The event is known as “Jamboree On The Air” or JOTA. This year, 2007, JOTA celebrated its Golden Jubilee.

Last year, my Cub Scout son and I participated from my home station. A chance meeting during this year's Field Day led to an opportunity to serve both my interest in

Scouting and in ham radio.

While jogging Saturday morning during Field Day '07 I met a group of fellows assembling antennas in front of the Lincolnwood, Illinois fire station. Chatting with them I quickly learned they were members of the Metro Amateur Radio Club (MAC) and they were getting ready to operate their Field Day station from Lincolnwood's Emergency Operations Center (EOC). I arranged to return later that day with my son.

Contact

At the EOC I met Don Burman, KB9WBM, their Field Day chairman for this year. I asked if MAC might be interested in working with my son's Cub Scout pack for this year's JOTA. The MAC members were enthusiastic in their response—they would be happy to serve. MAC had been seeking ideas and opportunities to spark young people's interest in amateur radio. This would be a win-win for both organizations.

Flash forward—JOTA weekend neared, while we pack leaders planned venue logistics, Don mustered support from MAC's membership. Our joint plans called for operation of an HF station; a 2-meter

station for Echolink contacts, or repeater QSO's if conditions were really bad; and a table set up for hands-on instruction in Morse code. We had the site, hams and leaders all lined up, now we just had to interest the scouts.

21st Century Morse Code

Don joined me at our monthly pack meeting the Monday evening before the JOTA weekend. During the portion of the meeting normally set aside for skits and games, I operated a practice code oscillator and “sent” each scout's name to Don across the room. Don then called the scout by name and handed them an index card souvenir with their name transcribed. The scouts were hooked and so were many of the parents present.

Saturday, October 20, was a picture perfect day—far nicer than usual for fall in Chicago. The generation gap was quickly closed as the older hams became kids again and shared their passion for radio with the much younger scouts. The scouts met the hams' enthusiasm with authentic interest in learning something cool. After the Morse demonstration at the pack meeting, many of them were eager to learn more about Morse code and radio.

For three hours, approximately 20 Cub Scouts participated in the JOTA at Lincolnwood's

“The scouts were hooked...”



Don, KB9WBM, quizzing scouts in Morse code, while Marilyn, W9LUO, soaks it in.



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Proesel Park. While we heard other scouts on the bands, making contact proved difficult, as the bands were very crowded.



Ron, WB9PTA, Supervises the Scout-Propelled Bicycle Generator

But, we did make a few 20-meter contacts including N8OIL/4, Georgia; W2VIN, Florida; and W5OLI, Oklahoma. Via Scott's, W8UFO, Internet Echo-link station, the scouts spoke to stations in Germany, Canada and England.

For Morse instruction, scouts were taught to recognize E, T, I and M. We didn't get too fancy with letters of mixed elements—just learn to distinguish dits from dahs. After five to ten minutes, the scouts could shout these letters as sent. Nothing was

written in dot-dash form; they had to associate sounds with letters. This helped build confidence in the scouts and some day may encourage them to learn more.

Legacy Gear

MAC members supplied the bulk of the gear including a Kenwood TS-530 and a Hustler vertical antenna for the low bands. The scouts also had an opportunity to pedal a bicycle-powered generator and make their own electricity.

In all, 10 hams, 20 Cub Scouts, and over a dozen Scout leaders and parents participated. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the outing and most learned quite a bit. Hopefully, this introduction to ham radio will lead some parents and scouts to pursue a license. It was such a hit; we're already considering doing it again next year. If you haven't tried JOTA, do yourself a favor and lend a hand at a JOTA event. You won't be disappointed! ■



CQ JOTA de WD9ICL

Jamboree On The Air

The Jamboree on the Air is a worldwide, annual Scouting event held the third full weekend in October. Following on a proposal by Les Mitchell, G3BHK, the first JOTA was celebrated at the 9th World Scout Jamboree, Sutton Park, Birmingham, England in 1957. This Jamboree received the appellation "Jubilee" to mark Scouting's 50th anniversary and the 100th anniversary of the birth of its founder, Lord Baden Powell.

All amateur radio operators are invited to participate in this on-air happening and join Scouts worldwide to exchange ideas and share the ham radio experience.



In 2007, as part of the 21st World Scout Jamboree and Centenary, July 27-August 7, special station GB100J operated from Hylands Park, Chelmsford, UK.

On August 4 operators at GB100J succeeded in contacting the International Space Station, NA1SS, as it passed over the site. Aboard the ISS was Clay Anderson, KD5PLA.

JOTA starts 00:00 hours local time Saturday and wraps up 48 hours later at 24:00 hours local time Sunday.

<http://home.tiscali.nl/world-scout/Jota/jota.htm>



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There Were Angels Dining at the Ritz

And a Nightingale Sang—on 30 meters

Rod Newkirk, VA3ZBB/W9BRD



Betty, VE3ZBB

The early years on my new favorite ham band produced logs-full of unforgettable CW friends. But the best, by far, was yet to come. It all began one magical day while I was casually tuning around for an interesting chat or two. Somebody near 10,107 kHz sent “73 Betty CUL.” Betty? My ears did a double take. CW YLs were, and still are, a rare commodity. Yes, there she was, VE3ZBB, signing off neatly and precisely. A small pileup

ensued. Fate was with me. My droopy W9BRD wire and TS-140S captured the rascal!

YLs doing snappy Morse code have always fascinated me. Intimidated is the better word. Over the years there were many. Lou Midas, W9LW, the tournament golf champion, sent code practice to me 70 years ago. She didn’t know that. I would sneak out of bed at three in the morning to hear her traffic skeds with KC4USA, the Little America Antarctic outpost of Admiral Byrd. And there was Sister Emiliana who taught science at a Massachusetts seminary and could switch to French, Italian, Spanish or Portuguese if you preferred. More recently I encountered a retired New England motorcycle cop with a smoking paddle on her Harley. Billie said she was thinking of joining Hell’s Angels. I think she was serious.

Back to that first QSO with VE3ZBB, I clumsily bored her with the usual queries including how come she’s doing great CW? Is she the only ham in her family? Etc. Betty patiently told me there were no other family amateurs and that she found Morse an exciting challenge. So there she was, enjoying the most fundamental and traditional radio sport of kings—and queens. Betty’s husband, though not a

ham, encouraged her special interest and participated in station installation, antenna work and the like. Right off the bat I knew the gal was unique, to say the least.

We exchanged QSL cards, of course. Mine was humdrum but hers was a calligraphic work of art, along with a pert photo of her with grandson Quinn. I looked forward to our next contact. But mundane matters intervened. My daughters and I, weary of exorbitant separate rents, spent several months purchasing and moving into a venerable Chicago two-flat. W9BRD finally returned to 30 meters at the new QTH. There was VE3ZBB doing a sked on 10,107! I lurked until we clicked again. I learned that Betty’s world had changed. Her husband of 42 years had passed away.

As a veteran widower, I joined her many on-the-air friends with condolence and consolation. I realized that Betty and I now had much in common. Soon we began keeping regular schedules, lively Morse music with upbeat lyrics, augmented by mail and landline. I coaxed her into her first air travel and a visit to Chicago, eagerly reciprocating with trips to lovely Ottawa. My stodgy existence changed into one big happy blur. Our families and friends were nearly as delighted as

we were when we married in Canada—a lightning-fast ten years ago.

Better somewhat late than never, I’m hitched to a vivacious multidimensional multitasking 4’ 11” dynamo. Homemaker deluxe, gourmet cook supreme, outdoors enthusiast for every season, she makes it all look so easy. You really should hear her piano medleys of our favorite golden oldies; hidden talents keep emerging. The term overachiever is widely bandied about; now I know what it means. How fortunate for me that she managed to find time to add CW to her limitless bag of tricks! So, verily do I assure you, when stars above the ionosphere are just right, the stage is set for miracles, I know. I was there. I’m still there. ■

*“...radio sport
of kings—and
queens.”*



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"Hog Morse"

K9YA Telegraph Staff



The origin of "Ham" in ham radio has been endlessly debated; everything from the Cockney "am" for "amateur" to "ham-fisted" to early non-commercial wireless operators "hamming it up" on the air. Now here's another to toss in the mix.

L. C. Hall's article, "Telegraph Talk and Talkers: Human Character and Emotions an Old Telegrapher Reads on the Wire," in *McClure's Magazine*, January 1902, states:

Like any other language, Morse has its patois -- a corrupted version of the purer speech used by the inexperienced or by those to whom nature has denied the finer perceptions of timing and spacing. This patois might be called "hog-Morse." It would be quite impossible to give even a rude idea of the humor contained, for the expert, in some of the corruptions of which hog-Morse is guilty. These consist largely in closely joining elements, which ought to be spaced, or in separating others that are meant to be close-coupled.

Here's where the term, now universally applied, appears in Hall's article:

The original message had been transmitted by senders of hog-Morse, called technically "hams," and the receivers had absent-mindedly recorded the words as they had really sounded.

"Clannishness of Operators."

If anything else were needed to complete the parallel between the telegraphese and a recognized vehicle of expression, I might add that the users of the language of dots and dashes are animated by a spirit as clannish as that of the Highland Scots. Bring two strangers together; let each know that the other is acquainted with the wire tongue, and in five minutes' time the pair will be swapping telegraph yarns as if they had known each other for years.

Yep, the more things change the more they remain the same. ■

CONTINUED - OBSTACLES FROM PAGE 3

of petition was laid down all right by the Constitution, but not the obligation of the institutions or the officials to provide an answer. Probably that's why the addressee did not condescend to reply to my S.O.S...

After a year or so I met a telegraphy course classmate on the street. He already had his transmitting license, he scraped together a transmitter and had worked ZS4 on 40-meters. He offered a new bit of information: Comrade Alexandru was called back to active service; the new chief of the radio club was Costi Dumitrescu, YO2BI. "Go to the club, he's a good guy, maybe he'll give you a hand", added my colleague as we parted.

A Hand Held Out

Feet atremble, I ascended the familiar wooden stairs. Indeed, in this room decorated in blue tapestries by comrade Alexandru, sat a nice looking young man. I detailed my experiences and showed him my SWL certificate. He smiled sadly, sympathetically, stood up and from a locker extracted a form. He filled it in with my name and the frequencies of my poor radio set: 7 and 14 MHz. He then consulted a register and added to the call sign column: YO2-1117. "Go to the central post office and ask them to stamp it." Turning to another ham in the room, he said, "Unbelievable, isn't it?"

A month later I returned, this time with about 300 QSL cards, my very first stations heard as a licensed SWL. I brought a copy of my log as well: younger colleagues may not know that in those years one had to present carbon copies, even for receiving, to be verified by the "authorities." Costi looked over the pages and said, "Well, well, how nice it would be if the transmitters could keep their logs as orderly as this one!"

The Human Spirit Transcendent

With this a chapter came to an end for me, but not so the ordeal of my obstacle course. I ran this race, I reached its finish only in 1980, after 17 years of filling in forms, applications, protests, memorials and... a lot of shortwave listening. I obtained my transmitting license at an age when other hams had since accumulated some 20 years of activity.

This was my experience with comrade Alexandru and the oppressive regime. I hope with my whole heart that today's aspiring young hams won't encounter such characters, who did much harm to Romanian amateurs in a time plagued by arbitrariness and totalitarianism.

First published in the Romanian magazine *Radiocommunications and Amateur Radio* No.11/1999 and on the independent Web site www.radioamator.ro in November 2005. ■

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of (or even considered) the other operator's sexual preference—in the instance cited, heterosexual.

Pages 38 and 39: A General Electric vacuum tube advertisement and the author's comment. This is a rather strange interpretation of a visual metaphor; why does the author invest it with sexual intent or "political subversion"?

Page 49: Grinding a crystal was not in days of yore, nor today, a "heroic" effort akin to fabricating one's own vacuum tubes. The former was an ordinary task often undertaken to shift a crystal's frequency, the latter a herculean accomplishment undertaken by few souls. Rare enough, indeed, that a query by W8MEE in the May 1937 *QST* to that effect received but one confirmation, in August 1937, by a Belgian operator to state he had not yet made a triode, but successfully fabricated some diodes.

Various pages: Callsigns or call signs, not "license numbers."

The War Between OMs and YLs?

With those caveats out of the way, the book does provide some novel views, from one non-ham academic, of our favorite radio service. Looming large amongst those appraisals is the postwar war of the words between OMs and XYLs. Evidence for this "conflict" is based on the many primarily humorous articles and letters published in amateur radio periodicals during this period. These short stories, mostly written by unlicensed XYLs and a few XYL licensees, are lighthearted tales of the foibles of living with a ham spouse, much in the manner of Erma Bombeck's syndicated column. It takes a ham to really understand the inside jokes, vernacular and ham-specific situations described in these stories. I can't blame any non-ham for not "getting it," but those not "getting it" should be cautious in their analysis and pronouncements of what's going on there.

Vigorously counterbalancing this phony war between the sexes were the monthly YL columns in *QST* and *CQ* (in the postwar period these included Eleanor Wilson, W1QON, and Louise Ramsey Moreau, W6BBO, "YL news and views" columnists at *QST* and Louisa B. Sando, W5RZJ, "YL" columnist at *CQ* [See: *K9YA Telegraph*, September 2007, page 6]). These long-running features were replete with the accomplishments and activities of female amateur radio operators the world over.

Fabulous Fifties?

What about the amateur radio clubs that limited or prohibited female membership and the club whose members were "hinted" at having "sexual liaisons" during their visit to a northern California city? These occurrences must be viewed in context, until very recently many clubs of many persuasions restricted their membership based variously on race, religion, creed and gender. Amateur radio clubs of the time were not any guiltier than other social associations, and one suspects, more accepting. As for the alleged hanky-panky: What else is new?

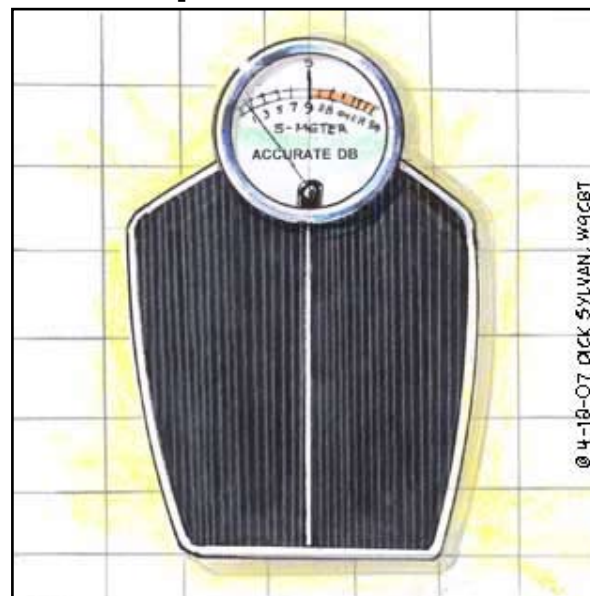
To MARS and Beyond...

The author makes much of amateur radio's ties to the American military, but nowhere is the Military Affiliate Radio Service mentioned. That one citation would have bolstered her argument; but her failure to do so is another manifestation of the need for experienced amateur radio operators' prepublication input.

Despite its flawed vision of the amateur radio service, the book's author earns plaudits for her choice of subject matter and the stimulating and thought-provoking reading it offers. It is not often that amateur radio is so thoroughly discussed outside of the usual publications serving its adherents. Unfortunately, aside from some short reviews on the 'Net and in *QST*, there has been little interest in a book that deserves a more thorough discussion within our community. ■

Ham Quips

DICK SYLVAN, W9CBT



"S-METER" SCALE