K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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The Ham and the CPA

Long Ago and Far Away

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

Curious thing about amateur radio, it has very long tentacles, ligaments extending into seemingly unrelated areas. It may pop up and drive a conversation at unlikely places and unexpected times. At work I've had clients call whose word choice, niche knowledge or point of view strongly pointed to a ham on the other end. On the other hand, a non-ham may hear something from you that evokes, "You a ham?" or simply, "Huh?" and thereby hangs a tale.

"You a ham?"

Long ago and far away I had a temporary job with an income tax preparation company. This was a business-to-business company that worked with individual accountants and accounting firms, not the public at large. The accountants' clients filled in pro forma documents with their tax information and those forms were forwarded to us for computation, then as government tax forms printed on massive laser printers and returned to the accounting firms.

My responsibilities included taking phone calls from accountants requesting changes and corrections to their clients' data. The changes were entered by hand on "Is–Should Be" paper forms; time stamping the form and depositing it in the Changes basket. "Idle time," as such, was spent stuffing folders and filing those folders in a long wall of filing cabinets.

My coworkers were an interesting and bright group, mostly young people in between jobs, in school or supplementing a slim income. They included a couple of realtors, a filmmaker and a brace of vocationally undecided folks.

The accountants who called in were also a mixed crew, some more congenial than others. One frequent caller soon acquired a reputation for his terseness that rose, almost, but not quite to the point of abrasiveness. He expected we data takers to faithfully record his rapid-fire changes with a minimum of fumbles and "fills" no matter his rate of fire or words-per-minute. Some of my co-workers after a run in with this gentleman genuinely feared his calls and were reduced to waxy immobility on hearing his voice. At this point our concerned supervisor would intervene and complete the call.

One Friday afternoon, with April 15 drawing near, the rather terse gentleman was directed my way. His stream of corrections filled many "Is–Should Be" forms, occupied much time and by the last form I felt like I had just finished a hot and humid Field Day or an intensive weekend of DX contesting. More by CW force of habit than by directed vocalization, a swift dit-dit-dit dah-dit-dah escaped my lips. That SK was a reflexive expression of relief sealing our transaction. Unfortunately, soon as that pro-sign was voiced I feared I had committed an untranslatable, inexplicable *faux pas* with the client.

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Baby Boomer DXers

They Can't Do That on a Cell Phone

John Swartz, WA9AQN

Jack Benny

Many of us who started our amateur radio careers in the 1950's and 1960's began as children listening to ordinary broadcast transmissions. With our families gathered around for the weekly episodes of our favorites, we were thrilled to listen to *Dragnet*, *The Shadow* or *The FBI in Peace and War*. We laughed with our parents or grandparents and siblings when we heard Jack Benny, Burns and Allen, or any of the other greats, Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, and the others.

It didn't take too long to figure out which of those knobs set that warm, amber glow; nor did it take long to figure out which knob got us to the programs and voices that absorbed us for hours on end. Sometimes, we could sneak away and turn the set on by ourselves, and lie on the rug, listening to the lowered volume while our parents and siblings may have been absorbed in another part of the house or apartment.

> *"I think it's Morse code."*

We found out there were crystal sets, which magically pulled those signals out of the air without a battery or being plugged into a wall outlet. With the help of a skilled parent, we wound the coil, set the pins of the headphones in the Fahnestock clips and listened to those amplitude-modulated stations across the country. We quickly discovered that those and, if we were really lucky, the new "transistor" radios, could be secreted under the bed sheets and our parents would be oblivious to our midnight radio pursuits.

Some of us had parents with the foresight to buy a radio that included a knob labeled "SW1, SW2 and SW3." In the crackling and static heard when we set that knob were strange accents. There was London, right where the dot was on the dial, and Paris, and even Moscow. If our parents' set didn't include that Magic, the neighbor may have had one, or our grandparents did, but that was a feature that certainly caught our attention when we spotted a set not quite the same as the one in our own living room.

So we graduated to short-wave receiving sets, both regenerative and superheterodyne, and were introduced to the news from different parts of the globe. We could actually hear people in the countries we read about in *National Geographic*, and there were photos of the places named on that dial.

Then, one day, Sputnik went up and we read in the newspaper that you could hear its signal on a short-wave radio. We went out to the park to check if we could see it. If our radio dial didn't go that high, one of our buddies probably had a set with the right frequency on it. So we tuned, and we sat there listening, and if we waited long enough, we could hear the "beep… beep… beep…" not too far from one of those spots on the dial marked "Amateur." And, of course, we had to listen to what Radio Moscow had to say about it.

We were learning things about other places and people not being taught in our classrooms. We could tune across those parts of the radio spectrum designated "Amateur" on those dials, and sometimes we heard with much crackling and thumping, faint voices in different countries and they were actually talking with each other. Or, if you could hear only one of them, you knew he thought he was talking to someone else. Who were those guys?

"What's that thumping?" "I think it's Morse code." And we knew what that meant. We had our secret decoder rings.

What kid wasn't intrigued by codes? We decided very quickly we could do that stuff we heard on the radio. So we found surplus stores and radio stores with books about license exams; 78 rpm records that taught Morse code; shelves of really, really fancy, neat receivers, transmitters, VFOs and microphones; boxes of crystals; Vibroplex™ bugs; speakers; headphones; and matchboxes (whatever those were).

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So we started building some of those kits. The transmitters looked pretty easy, some of the receivers didn't look quite so easy. We plunged in. On weekends when our parents would let our pals sleep over, we got up in the middle of the night in our pajamas, plugged in the soldering iron and worked some more on that transmitter. The smell of the solder… "Boys, go back to bed…"

We got our tickets. We found some kindly old guy who had a basement full of all that neat stuff we saw in the stores and in the photos in *QST*. But his stuff was plugged in, cabled together, and really worked. He had walls covered with cards from all those weird places, the Belgian Congo, Sikkim, Japan, Turkey, Russia, and Bolivia, even Tibet. We learned more geography from the radio guy than we did from any teacher in the classroom. Actually, he wasn't just a kindly old guy. He had a look in his eye like he was possessed by some magic. You could see it when he told you how he had tweaked the wires on his big cubical quad antenna and that had straightened out the lobe and brought it down four degrees, and that meant he was going to be stronger on the DX end and, well, that's getting ahead of the story. But the glint in his eye told you something…

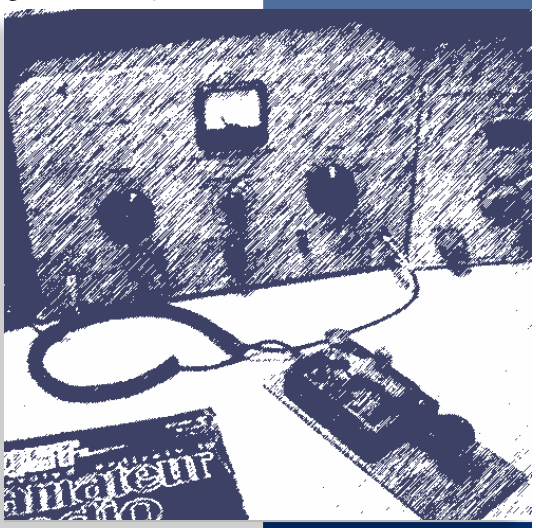
"OK, let's practice first. Are you ready? I'll start with some V's. Here goes." "V V V BT PACK MY BOX WITH FIVE DOZEN LIQUOR JUGS...." "Did you get that?" "Yeah, what does it mean?" "It means you passed… here's the written test…."

"We rushed home from school every day for weeks, it seemed, and finally an envelope arrived from the Federal Communications Commission. Our own real callsign… we hurriedly signed the paper to really make it ours (we couldn't turn on that transmitter with a real antenna on it if we didn't do that first, could we?). We were genuine Novices.

CQ CQ CQ went into the log, and it seemed like page after page of nothing but CQs. In those days, you had to keep a written log that included notations when you had called CQ, even if no one answered. Of course, being crystal controlled, some other Novice might have answered 75 kc away and you might never have heard him or known.

We were so excited when we encountered our first DX station. "Why won't he answer me?" It was frustrating. God forbid we should tune that transmitter for an ounce more than 75 watts DC input to the final amplifier tube! We had visions of the crystal exploding, or that black car would park in front of the house and a man in a black hat, black suit with a skinny black tie and a badge would knock on the door, "Ma'am, is little Johnny on that radio of his? We measured his signal and he is running 75.23 watts… I'm afraid he's going to have to come downtown with me…."

"We had to shed those Novice restrictions. The really good stuff wasn't listening for our crystal-controlled signals up in the Novice bands. So, we studied, and we practiced the code some more, and we rode the train into the city and found that dark office tucked up on the highest floor of the old federal building. And there he was, the government guy who never smiled, wearing a green eyeshade and a white shirt with that skinny old Government Issue black tie.



Novice Amateur Radio Station

"OK, you passed, who's next?"

"Mom, I'm home. I passed. I'm a General, I'm a General. Can I get that VFO kit and the microphone so I can be ready when the license comes from the FCC?" "Oh, dear, shouldn't you wait until it gets here to be sure?" "But, Mom, the man said I passed." "You had better ask your father when he gets home…."

"OK, you passed, who's next?"

We learned that sometimes it wasn't so easy to actually hold a conversation with someone half way around the world, but we tried. Even clipping along at 13 words per minute, it took a long time to tell someone he was 569 in Chicago, Illinois and that your name was John, especially since it was drilled into us to repeat all that drivel, and for good measure some of us sent it three times. No wonder the guy wanted to make contact with someone else! He was probably falling asleep listening to our repetitious patterns of information. Some of us took French, or German, or Spanish in high school and actually tried to use them on the air, in Morse code. But, we were hooked. There, having all that cool, high tech gear was our goal. If only our parents had allowed us to put up real cubical quads instead of just stringing a dipole to the tree at the back of the yard!

We took up the challenge. We were going to do it, even if we didn't have one of those big antennas. We learned which bands were open to which parts of the

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Dear Hiram

On the Road...

Bob Cashdollar, NR8U

Bob, NR8U, Visiting The Old Man's Final Resting Place

Well, we made it "there" and back. There was the American Radio Relay League's Centennial meeting at Hartford, Connecticut. It really was a trip of a lifetime and the culmination of Fritz, WD8E, and mine, NR8U's, combined 70-plus years as amateur radio operators.

On our way to the convention we made a detour to Hagerstown, Maryland and visited your final resting place. Rose Hill Cemetery is a really nice place and immaculately kept up. After paying our respects, we traveled on to Hartford.

We arrived very late in Hartford and after securing our room we hit the sheets. Early the next day, Friday, we took the Dash bus to the convention site and got our "credentials." (The Dash is a bus the Hartford Transit runs on a circular route in the downtown area that includes the convention center and the best part is it is free.)

> *"Really, really good"*

The ARRL picked a great site for the Centennial celebration. Unlike our experiences at Dayton, the convention center appeared to be fairly new. No falling tiles, dirt on the floor, or potholes that could swallow a Humvee in the flea market area as everything was in the very large main hall on the first floor. Your ARRL had a very large area just inside the main entrance to the hall and was busy both days selling ARRL merchandise. I managed to buy a tee shirt and a polo shirt after standing in line for a while.

One of the things I noticed when standing in line was that everybody seemed to be relaxed and willing to chat. Maybe it was because everything seemed to be running smoothly this early in the day.

After visiting most of the vendors and small flea market in the back of the hall, I came to realize that maybe everybody's good mood might have something to do with the way the hall was laid out. The aisles were very wide and you could actually walk up and down them without banging into everybody. That was very nice. At 1:00 pm Fritz attended Martti Laine's, OH2BH, talk entitled, "OH2BH's 50-Year Radio Journey."

Fritz said Martti spent some time talking about how amateur radio in Europe is losing ground.

We spent most of the rest of the day just walking around in the hall and outside every now and then. The "usual suspects" were there as far as the vendors were concerned. Just about every major radio and accessory suppliers we have seen at Dayton was there.

As noted, the flea market area was very small and located at the back of the hall. On our way out of the hotel going to the convention center we rode down in the elevator with several people who had spaces in the flea market selling a variety of connectors and other things.

In the early afternoon, I stopped at their area and bought some 90-degree connectors. I asked the guy who waited on me how they were doing and his comment was, "Really, really good."

We finally left the convention center in the early afternoon and caught the Dash back to our hotel to get ready for the Friday night dinner and Wouff Hong ceremony later in the evening.

The Friday night Centennial dinner was held at the convention center. We counted around 93 tables with 10 people at each table. The dinner was very good with the food, chicken, being well cooked and actually hot when we got it.

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I actually don't remember a lot of what Craig Fugate, KK4INZ, FEMA administrator had to say in his keynote address. I do remember he was very happy to get his amateur license, but that was the extent of it. It may have had something to do with me being very tired at that point of the day.

For me, it was a bit of a disappointment that none of the overseas societies' representatives who presented Centennial gifts to ARRL President Kay Craigie, N3KN, spoke.

After dinner adjourned, a lot of people waited around for the Wouff Hong ceremony. Since you already know what that is, I'll just say I was honored to be inducted into the society.

A late trip back on the Dash and we collapsed in our room and slept in just a bit Saturday morning.

Saturday at the convention center was my day to attend some forums and presentations. I went to hear John Amodeo's, NN6JA, presentation on "Presenting Amateur Radio to the Media" at 9:00 am (UGH!) Saturday morning. He naturally talked about *Last Man Standing*, but made some points on how to present amateur radio to get the media's attention.

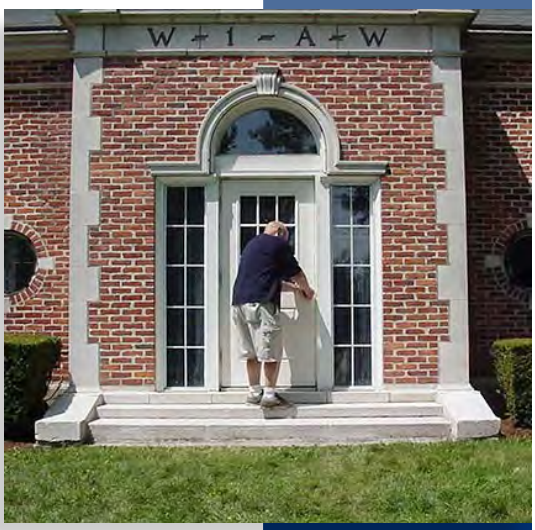
At 1:00 pm (a more civilized time), I attended "The Enigma and Other Communication Enciphering Devices" presentation put on by Tom Perera, W1TP. Perera is the man who has the Enigma stall in the Dayton flea market area. Perera's talk with slides was excellent and covered almost all the history of message enciphering from ancient times to President Obama.

One of the problems with the forums and presentations was the time limit of one hour. In both rooms I attended there was an ARRL representative who pressured the speakers to wind it up. I realize there were a lot of forums and such, but it was a little disconcerting to the speakers and audiences when the rep came up and cut short the presentation.

The rest of the day for me was spent wandering around the area and taking in some of the local sights around the convention center.

Late in the afternoon the Centennial Convention closed and became amateur radio history. So we caught the Dash and went back to the hotel and both of us took a nice nap.

We were on our own for dinner Saturday night, so Fritz suggested we get the car out and take a scouting trip over to ARRL headquarters and at the same time look for someplace to eat. We almost drove past the site, but managed to recognize the iconic W1AW building in time.



Historic W1AW

On our return trip we noticed a real corner bar/restaurant called The Corner Pug. Yes, it was called the Pug as in the dog. We stopped and went in and had a nice dinner.

"The Corner Pug"

The manager/owner (?) noticed the tee shirt I was wearing. It was an older Hamvention® one and he came over to the table and exchanged a few words with us. Apparently the convention was featured in the local paper and he was familiar with amateur radio as some of the ARRL headquarters people come there for lunch once in a while.

Once we got back to the hotel it was an early night as we were scheduled to visit ARRL headquarters and operate W1AW Sunday morning at 10:00 am.

Saturday, some of the ARRL people running the shuttle to ARRL headquarters suggested we could drive there rather than take their shuttle. So, on a bright Sunday morning we drove over to see W1AW and visit ARRL headquarters. It was the highlight of our stay in Hartford.

For Fritz and me, going to W1AW took us back to the days of listening to their code practice transmissions and wondering if we would ever be able to pass the 20-wpm code test. (I still occasionally listen to the current practice code transmission, more out of nostalgia than anything else.)

We were there early enough that we got to walk around the headquarters building casually visiting different areas and talking with the headquarters people.

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HT Programming Made Simple

Paul W. Ross, W3FIS

Baofeng HT

With the influx of very inexpensive Chinese dual- and single-band HTs on the market, every ham I know has gotten at least one of them. You can never have enough HTs! These are not your father's Yaesu, but at the price, you surely can't beat them. They are apparently re-purposed commercial Part 90 radios, which are acceptable for Part 97 of the FCC regulations we work under.

Here in "slower lower" Delaware, we have run into what seems to be the common problem–how do you conveniently program them, with or without software. I do admit that manual programming can be tedious, but when I got my first one (a Wouxun), I hand programmed it for about nine of the local repeaters in about 20 minutes or so. This meant recording the repeater's frequency, offset, shift and optional PL tone.

> *"You can never have enough HTs!"*

Our experience has been that many hams find them slightly intimidating. At least a major issue appears to be an incomplete understanding of how a repeater works. Without going into all of the horrid details, this is it:

- You receive the repeater on the listed frequency.
- You talk to the repeater on a *different* frequency.

This means you need to know the relationship between the repeater's frequency you *listen* to, versus the one you *transmit* on. For 2-meter operation, the offset is 600 kHz, and for 70 cm, it is usually 5 MHz. In addition, the *direction*–above or below the repeater's frequency must be down–this is the *shift* parameter: "+" or "-". This is listed in the ARRL Repeater Directory, or can be obtained on-line from sites such as http://www.artscipub.com/repeaters/.

I find this on-line listing especially useful when I travel. I locate the destination, and either print out, or pre-program my HT for this location.

The additional parameter is what is known as a "PL Tone." This is the term Motorola used for their "Private Line" control feature. This tone (low frequency, below the range you can hear) is transmitted to the repeater to "open it up." This prevents "kerchunking" the repeater by stray signals. It can also be used on the output side of the repeater to give a "tone controlled squelch." We need to do this in our part of Delaware, as we get interference at various times from a stray signal on the cable network system. If we didn't use a PL tone on output, our HTs would open the squelch on stray signals.

Now, how about using software? For a $50 radio, cheap software is good, free is best, and free and delivered is best of all! Most vendors provide a link to software suites for programming the radio. In addition, you need the appropriate cable–USB connector on one end for your computer, and the other end with the proper connector to your radio. Some are interchangeable. The one for my Wouxun also fits one of my Baofeng HTs. At the USB connector end of the cable is an embedded level conversion chip. You need a piece of software called a "driver," so that your computer can "talk" to your radio. Without going into the messy details due to some "fake" chips, make sure you get the proper driver software from the same place you get your cable. My cable came shipped with a "mini-CD" with the necessary drivers.

As to programming software that is very handy, I can suggest CHIRP. It can be downloaded for free at: http://chirp.danplanet.com/projects/chirp/wiki/Home. This software is appropriate for the vast majority of HTs. The screen looks quite like a spreadsheet with columns for frequencies, PL tones, offsets, shifts and other useful parameters. The software runs on Windows, Linux and Mac OS systems. For those who want something that works nicely right "out of the box,"

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world at which times. We studied propagation. We did not have the Internet. The DX Summit was not even a dream. We learned these things on our own, from ARRL publications, from conversations on the air with more experienced DXers and at our local club meetings. We did not have "Reflectors" or "Bulletin Boards." We had telephone trees to alert our buddies when a "new one" came on the air. We read monthly DX bulletins. We studied the propagation charts in *QST* on a monthly basis, and learned what the WWV sunspot numbers meant. But, in large measure, we had to listen on the bands to find out what conditions were; there was no Skimmer to report that our "CQ" could be copied on three continents and 27 states. "Why aren't they answering me?"

And here we are, half a century later and we're still acting like the teenagers who just discovered radio. What was it that actually hooked us into this madness? Was there some subconscious drive at work? Through the development and use of technical abilities and skills, we learned we could find real friends beyond our own street, our own neighborhood, beyond the playground and schoolyard. We discovered an avenue into a world beyond the geographic confines of our other experiences. And that is what remains unchanged.

Amateur radio, and DXing in particular, has brought us a world beyond our school chums and teammates, college friends and fraternity brothers, our graduate school networks, our professional colleagues, friends, clients and even our families and lovers. The Internet, chat rooms, cell phones and email weren't there to distract us. In the amateur radio world, we didn't have the proliferation of repeaters and VHF/UHF gear to focus our attention locally. Our focus was well beyond the horizon. Yes, we wanted to be a little bit different than the kid down the block. We sure succeeded in that!

"…Playboy magazine was generally taboo."

I recently sent a test radiogram over the NTS traffic system to a friend on the West Coast. She was thoroughly surprised. She must have told her friends. One reportedly remarked, "You mean they still do that stuff? Haven't they heard about cell phones and the Internet?"

I am still trying to figure out how to get the guy on the DX side to tell me what it looks like out his shack window. What does he really see? There's that magic again when he tells me and I realize that all that way away, with a different language, different food, different clothes, styles and cars, he's really not much different from me. No, you can't do that on the Internet or a cell phone...

1. Years later we may have realized that we had not outsmarted our parents at all; it was they who had outsmarted us. Maybe they were taking advantage of the audio distraction in which we were absorbed in order to have a very private conversation between them!

2. The *National Geographic* phenomenon is curious. We had access to a wealth of information about people and places all around the world. We could have stacks of them openly available, in spite of the fact that there were occasional photos of bare-breasted, brown-skinned women and girls, while *Playboy* magazine was generally taboo. We never had to explain that we actually read the articles. It is doubtful that feature had anything to do with our becoming DXers, however.

3. This character must have been the model for the guy who later appeared in much less sinister form as "The Man With No Eyes" in the Paul Newman classic, *Cool Hand Luke*.

4. Latin was a lost cause. In more ways than one.

5. Parental consent was a complex issue: Mom: "Won't that ruin the look of my garden?" Dad: "It'll cost what? And a tower? Oh, yeah, I don't think you want to spend that kind of money when you're only going to be here another two years before going away to college. What will we do with that thing then?" Ham: "But Mom, Dad, I have already saved about half the money by cutting lawns and shoveling snow. Please?" Dad (with finality and hope that Ham can't do it): "Let's talk about it when you have saved up enough to pay for the whole thing…" Mom, knowing that Ham can do it, shudders, "Dear, I really think we need to talk about this a bit more, don't you agree?" Ham, interjecting: "But Mom, please?" Mom: "Really, don't you think it would be wise to save all that money so you can pay for your college, instead?" Ham, exasperated at the lack of progress: "What's for dinner?" ■

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RT Systems (https://www.rtsystemsinc.com/) will sell you the proper cable, driver software and their software.

I have my HTs programmed for:

- Local repeaters.
- National Calling frequencies.
- Coast guard–receive only.
- Fire and police–receive only.
- Weather–receive only.
- UNICOM (if your HT receives AM)—this is your local airport tower.
- LEO satellites (cross band)—typically 2-meters uplink, 70 cm downlink and PL tones.

This is important—if you program your HT for any public service frequency, and transmit inhibit is not automatically provided, set the parameter for "no transmit" on that frequency. If you are using the National Calling Frequencies, they are simplex (transmitting *and* receiving on the *same* frequency), so issues of shift, offset and PL tones do not apply). ■

The Moment You Knew…

Of course you remember the defining moment when you had to get your ham ticket. Your eyes opened wide and you couldn't soak it in fast enough. Tell us about it—your Elmer—your first contact—your first rig, etc.

Send us an e-mail at: telegraph@k9ya.org

Ham Fables

DICK SYLVAN, W9CBT

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL,
WHO'S THE FAIREST YL OF ALL?

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Sure enough that Morse morsel induced, "What was that?" "Oh, just some Morse code meaning 'end of contact'." "You a ham? You know Morse code?" "Yes."

Now the terse gentleman became quite verbose, revealing his longtime desire to become a ham. Morse code for him being the hurdle that caused him to stumble on his way to earning a license. There was nothing unusual or unique to his story, it was the oft-told litany of real and imagined barriers that faced many seekers of the ham radio Grail. Minutes ticked by as I detailed the then current licensing requirements followed by his questions. With one eye on the office clock and another on my supervisor I tried to courteously close our discussion with an offer to Elmer and best wishes in his ham radio endeavors. Fortunately, my shift was about to end and I had to surrender my desk to another employee. So, with a hearty (explained) "73" I bid farewell to the CPA now hopefully re-instilled with at least a modicum of burning ham radio desire.

I have no idea if Mr. Now Verbose ever acquired the code or attained his license. Soon thereafter my time there ended, opening the door to discovering more links to amateur radio in the workplace and beyond. ■

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I had to laugh at how neat and orderly everything was as we strolled around. Talking to one of the lab guys, he sort of sheepishly smiled when I commented on how neat everything was in his lab.

At our appointed time we were in the operating area of W1AW and duly took our turn at operating. Unfortunately the solar flux did not cooperate on 40-meters and we both only made a couple of contacts. But that was enough, just to sit in the chair and look at the callsign above the radio, W1AW.

As we exited the W1AW building someone shouted they were going to take a group picture in front of the W1AW building. A whole bunch of people came around and stood in front of the building. There was a lot of relaxed banter, "Short people in front, and really short people in front of them!" as the photographer lined up his shots.

So ended our visit to Hartford and Newington; we had packed up and checked out of the hotel so we left from Newington and headed home.

It was a really nice convention and we were both proud to be part of the 100th Anniversary of your American Radio Relay League. ■

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