

K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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Apéritif

Stimulating Your Amateur Radio Appetite...

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

An apéritif is an alcoholic beverage usually served before a meal to stimulate the appetite.... There is no single alcoholic drink that is always served as an apéritif. Wikipedia

After the newly earned FCC license is proudly and prominently displayed on a shack wall and gear assembled to finally get on the air, the tyro op, over time, settles into a style of operating. That style may well serve in a most fulfilling manner for the entirety of that op's amateur radio career.

There may come a time, however, in every ham's life when as much as we enjoy our favorite mode(s), bands, gear and operating style, we find ourselves spending less time before our microphone, key, HT or keyboard. When that happens we've arrived in the Ham Radio Doldrums. As English poet William Cowper penned in 1785, "Variety is the very spice of life, That gives it all its flavor." Let's reinforce that sentiment by paraphrasing the opening Wikipedia citation, "there is no single *style* that ... always serves as an apéritif." With that in mind let's examine some doldrums-ridding options.

New Modes: Stray from your favorite(s) and explore one or more of the many digital modes available to amateur radio operators. Your shack probably already has most all the gear you need to go digital. CW hound? How about a round of AM or SSB? Jump on VHF/UHF FM and help repopulate simplex and repeaters. The recent influx of inexpensive HTs that include 1.25-meters (see: *K9YA Telegraph*, November 2017) could drive increased activity on that underutilized band.

New Gear: Been admiring the latest and greatest rig, tuner, SDR or other shack appurtenance for so long it's gone through Mark I, Mark II and Mark III versions? If finances permit make the leap and satisfy that itch. Nothing like exploring a new rig's (or station accessory's) features to get you on the air and smiling.

Vintage Gear: How long is that Heathkit going to sit on the topmost shelf of your shack's closet? Retrieve it, blow out the cobwebs, get it working and resample the joys and simplicity of an earlier time.

Build Gear: Whether 'tis nobler to build a kit or homebrew some gear is not the question. It's the answer to awakening and stirring your creative juices. There's nothing quite like hearing for the first time a signal on a rig you've just completed. *It never gets old.*

"It never gets old."

New Bands: Nature's not currently working with us on this one, but check online propagation sites and monitor conditions with your own rig for openings. Who knows, perhaps you'll hear a 10-meter FM repeater. Remember those? (<http://www.bandconditions.com/>)

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On Being W9BRD's Daughter

A Tale of Two Ham Licenses - Part I

Amanda Newkirk, WN9PMC



Amanda (L), Rod, Betsy, Grandma Simmons (R) in 1974.

I dipped my toe into amateur radio and although I couldn't put it into words at the time, the work and patience needed to build a solid, skilled and confident A.R.S. WN9PMC felt like a huge undertaking, requiring all my attention at a time when I seemed least able to give it. I let my amateur radio license expire in the mid nineteen-seventies when I was sixteen or so. My father, Rod Newkirk, W9BRD, veteran conductor of *QST* magazine's "How's DX?" column, CW operator extraordinaire, and personification of all things radio true and blue, was my Elmer. How lucky could I be? But the family was going through a stressful period as my mother and W9BRD's wife, the beautiful Carol Louise, had recently passed away—in 1974. My father had taken on one of the hardest roles ever—that of being a single parent to four children, age fourteen to twenty-one. I was the youngest—his “caboose,” as my father called me, then and for the rest of his life.

Those were difficult times for each member of the family. Each of us coped in different ways. My brother David, WB9CJS, at the time, left home shortly after the funeral towards parts east, having secured a job, with my dad's help, at the American Radio Relay League. After he settled in Connecticut, I would sometimes sit with W9BRD in his shack in Norridge, Illinois, the shack I had grown up in, cozy in the winter and wonderfully cool in the heat of summer. I would watch him work skeds with WB9CJS. In a world that had become shaky under my fourteen-year-old feet, my father and his world were a comfort. The ham shack was a reassuring constant, full of soothing sounds, smells,

and visions—the humming of the radios, the smell of tubes, sawdust, rubber cement, old metal of the clacking typewriter, Prince Albert pipe smoke and countless other basement-y occupants—all whirling in a blend that, if it could be bottled, might be called “Eau de Ham Shack.” Uncorked today, one waft would be enough to conjure the entire essence of all things homey and father-ish, indubitably W9BRD-ish. There was security here in a world gone awry.

And the ever-beguiling sound of the Morse code—I truly fell in love with it, and still am to this day. W9BRD never overtly tried to influence my decision to acquire my license; he knew I'd need to figure that out myself, and in my own way. Anyway, the die was cast. I was ready and my dad was overjoyed. I was extremely fortunate. W9BRD soon had me surrounded with everything I'd need for my adventures in Novice-license-procuring. I don't

remember much about the materials containing the basic theory I needed to take the written part of the test.

What I remember most was the great pleasure I felt in learning Morse code itself, and then learning to send and to receive it. I learned the code on an old J.H. Bunnell and Co. straight key

“How's DX?”



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from my dad's WWII days; a burnished gold color with a keypad the color of onyx. The key was steady, smooth and true; the design classic and beautiful to me still. My dad had an old Ameco code oscillator he set up for me and we would alternate sending and receiving so I could practice each. The tubes took a while to warm up but that was part of the fun. I cherished the chance to become proficient at this mysterious way of communicating, and I took to it very quickly. Maybe I'd learned it subliminally, my baby ears having heard the rhythm of its dots and dashes from the moment I came home from the hospital.

W9BRD had several—I should say many—passionate amateur radio pals who were also able and willing to administer the Novice exam. One of these was Elmer “Bud” Frohardt, W9GFF, and friend from boyhood and army days. He so enjoyed mentoring and helping new hams hone their skills and obtain their licenses that his given name, Elmer, was the name my dad used when he coined the soon-to-be-infamous sobriquet of an “Elmer,” “those unsung fathers of amateur radio....” He had no idea he was actually, at that moment of casual usage of W9GFF's Christian name, in the March, 1971 column of “How's DX?” in *QST* magazine, creating a new word for “one who mentors” in the English language, officially recognized now.

On the official American Radio Relay League website, this: Origin of the term “Elmer”-“someone who provides personal guidance and assistance to would-be hams.” “My Elmer,” or, to “Elmer” someone—these are common phrases now.

I remember taking my Novice test on one of those glorious, fresh and fateful summer days of school vacation; those summer days that seem endless to the very young.

It was early in the morning, hot and sticky, no air conditioning in our big townhouse, in other words perfect, in my adolescent world, for all human adventures.

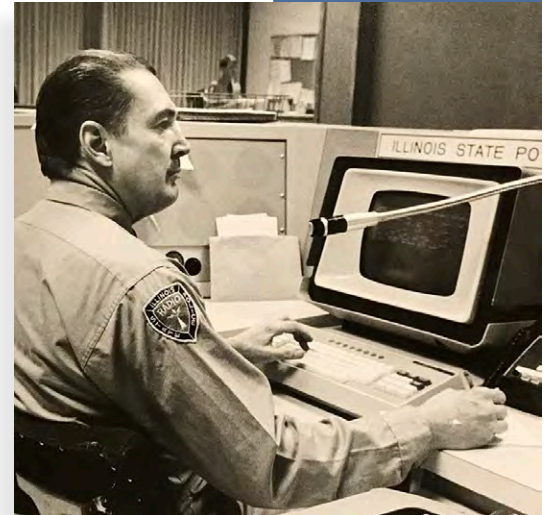
Early morning sunshine and its heat poured into the townhouse's friendly, if slightly shabby, kitchen—a kitchen that had good-naturedly endured four kids growing up and had pretty much lived

to tell the tale. My dad made a pot of his delicious Hills Bros. coffee, good to the last drop.

Out of the beauty of this dewy summer morning walks the redoubtable Ero Erickson, W9HPJ (later KA9DYS), W9BRD's boss at the Illinois State Police and one of the kindest souls in the world. He exudes calm and although I am nervous I am able to take the written test with no obvious indications of the anxiety threatening to explode my very pencil into bits. Then it's code time and I relax a little as I have prepared well for this part simply because of my love for it. Slow grins spread into smiles on both W9BRD's and W9HPJ's faces, as they listen to my version of the lilt of CW. Each ham sends code in his/her own unique style, every fist eventually developing its own distinctive sound, as singular as a signature or a fingerprint. I was very proud, indeed, when Ero said I had the beginnings of a very good fist. My dad, who had been telling me that for some time, seemed to swell up a bit in stature at hearing his honored boss's assessment of his daughter's burgeoning talents, I had done a fine job on the code part of the Novice test!

The heat of the summer day in the kitchen became more intense. Central air conditioning was not installed in W9BRD's Norridge, Illinois QTH of a sprawling townhouse until around 1980, so I was used to the seasonal roasting we suffered each year. I began to sweat a bit, though, as W9HPJ looked over my written test, preparatory to bundling my morning's laboring off to the FCC. The written test I was not at all sure about. I was having difficulty grasping radio theory basics with my undisciplined teenage mind, so I wasn't sure at all if I could pass muster at this part of the examination.

Ero, in his everlastingly calm way, stood over me after I had completed the multiple question test. He was probably smoking his pipe, a pursuit he had in common with my dad, and the clouds of pipe smoke in the townhouse's kitchen were as familiar as the summer sweltering. ■



Rod Newkirk, W9BRD,
working at Illinois
State Police (1974)

“My Elmer”



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Picnic Table Portable

Paul W. Ross, W3FIS



Here in “Slower Lower” Delaware, we are blessed with very nice weather for a large part of the year. We do not have the deep snows of my native up-state New York, which, frankly, I do not miss! They are great when you are a little kid, but not so nice to drive in. On the Atlantic coast here, great beaches and lots of good state parks are available within a short drive of where I live.

I am not a hard-core type like the guys who climb moun-

tains with their pack animals to put “summits on the air.” I only have a 25-pound Lhasa apso-Shih Tzu mix who has enough trouble keeping out of trouble as it is. Thus, no pack animals to haul my stuff.

Delaware is quite flat—it is basically a big sand bar—and there are lots of beaches, parks, and areas that are easy to get to with a modest walk and short drive. So, how can we do ham radio in that environment? The answer is “picnic table portable.” Load your stuff into some convenient container, head to the beach or park, and set up operations for a pleasant diversion from that dark and musty shack the XYL and cleaning lady are banned from.

You are going to be limited to what is luggable. For me, this means keeping things reasonably light, but not with the constraints one would have if we were backpacking. A number of ten pounds or so seems to match what I do (the “Go Box” took a trip to the bathroom scale!)

Also, due to practical considerations, a simple and easily deployable antenna is going to be important. However, this is going to be a compromise—a multi-element Yagi is not in the cards, and the ideal dipole is likely not feasible as well. To make up for the compromise antenna, we might have to compensate by using a slightly more powerful transmitter. Flea

power QRP rigs might let us hear things, but we stand a good chance of not being heard.

With these limiting considerations, I have settled on the following kit. Obviously, “bend to fit” your particular circumstances.

- A Yaesu FT-817ND—A five-watt, multi-band, multi-mode rig, battery powered. Microphone, of course. The FT-817ND is a bit of a battery hog, but for deployments of typically a few hours, the built-in battery is satisfactory. Charge your battery before you leave home! A protective case is also available. For longer deployments, something like a 5- or 7-Ah SLA gel cell is acceptable. The “exotic” batteries are better yet, but beyond my budget!
- A LDG Z817 auto tuner to mate with the FT-817ND. Lighter tuners are available, but this one seems to be able to match a random wire on most bands. There are two jumpers, a PL259 male-to-male and a DIN control cable for the radio to ATU connection. The Z817 will work with any rig under 10 watts, but not automatically. The tuning sequence is initiated by keying up the transmitter and pushing the tuner’s “Tune” button. Using super “long-life” AA cells in this tuner makes life easier, I can get at least a year’s use out of a set, but a spare set of batteries is not out of the question. You do not want your tuner not to tune when you are in the field!
- A whip antenna for 2-meters and 70-centimeter operation into local repeaters, when nothing works on HF. The stock antenna is acceptable, but some aftermarket units work slightly better.
- A set of headphones in the interest of outdoor tranquility and not disturbing others. Ear buds from the local chain drug store work well.
- A key, if you want to do some CW. The microphone control buttons on the FT-817ND will serve as a key in a pinch, but I like a real key. My trusty J-38 works great. I do wish I had a leg

“bend to fit”



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clamp for the key, as sometimes finding a good level surface is difficult. Don't forget a pad of paper and pencil. The "mini" ARRL log is also good, unless you want to transfer information from your notes after your day's expedition.

- Some wire for the antenna and a ground/counterpoise. I find that fitting one end with a banana plug to plug into the tuner and the other end with a small alligator clip makes antenna deployment more convenient. I modified the LDG tuner with a banana binding post instead of the stock wing nut—it speeds connecting and disconnecting the ground wire. Any metal object, a signpost, or the like, will work as a ground. If that is not available, just stretch the ground wire out on the ground as a counterpoise and hope for the best.
- A checklist of necessary equipment. You do not want to be out in the woods and find you have forgotten some critical piece. Been there, done that, and had a half-hour trip back home once on Field Day...

Now, what do we put all this stuff in? Over the years, I have become enamored of what are called "sportsman's dry boxes." These are like the old World War II ammunition boxes, but made of plastic. The best part is that they have a nice rubber O-ring to seal

against dirt and moisture, and a generous handle for carrying. Some have a small compartment in the lid (for that whip antenna, pencils, maybe some small tools), and a removable tray. Put a piece of foam padding in the bottom as a shock absorber for the equipment. There are some smaller sizes, like those used for rifle ammunition, that are good for HTs with their chargers, antennas, speaker microphones, and the like. These can be obtained at any good sporting goods store or on-line in a variety of colors.

My setup and teardown time for picnic table portable is only a matter of minutes. Most of the time is finding a suitable place to set up and deploy the antenna. With the right band conditions—check HF propagation characteristics during the day—you should be easily able to make lots of contacts. It is amazing what five watts and a little patience will do!

Oops—two more things—water and treats for the dog. Very important—for the dog. ■



Yaesu FT-817ND



The Central Arizona DX Association (CADXA) has selected the 2018 Memorial Day week to put K7UGA back on the air—commemorating the 20th year of the passing of Senator Barry Goldwater (AZ).

May 28 – June 3, 0000Z – 2359Z, K7UGA, Phoenix, AZ. All bands and all modes.

QSL via:

K7BHM

1623 N LOS ALTOS CT
CHANDLER AZ 85224-8357

<http://www.cadxa.org>

Calling All Authors

Standby for an all prefixes bulletin.

We're on the lookout for your stories.

Every ham has something to say, we are recognized communicators—AM, SSB, CW, digital and more—now it's time to exercise your literary mode. With your article in the *K9YA Telegraph* you'll be talking simultaneously with hams in more than 100 countries—broadcasting is welcome on our spectrum.

What kind of stories are we looking for? That's easy, anything of interest to amateur radio operators—technical discussions, club activities, contesting, book and kit reviews, home-brewing, fiction, station operations, ham radio history, opinion and that's for starters.

Not sure of your writing skills? No problem, the *Telegraph's* staff will edit your manuscript. The important thing is to share your story. Remember: "A good story is a terrible thing to go untold."

Click [HERE](#) for additional information.



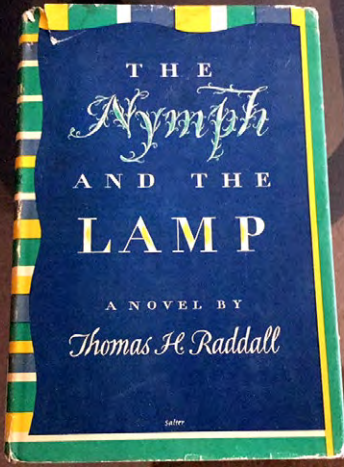
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The Nymph and The Lamp

Book Review

John Swartz, WA9AQN



This book is now an “oldie.” But, it’s not as old as I am, so it doesn’t rise to the status of a classic, yet. Several months ago my good friend, Woody Hester, WD9F, let me know he had the book and offered it to me. I was only too happy to accept. Besides, the bands haven’t exactly been in great shape (slight understatement), so I didn’t feel my attention would be terribly diverted.

Extracts from this novel have circulated in the amateur radio community over the years. And while those extracts focus on the art and skill of radiotelegraphy as it was practiced in the early part of the 20th century, I wanted to see how the rest of the book fared in comparison. I was not disappointed.

Thomas Raddall, the author, had been a maritime Morse operator both aboard ship and on shore. His intimate familiarity with the history and procedures of maritime Morse operation gives the book a special flavor for those of us who grew up with Morse as our anchor in the amateur radio world.

The major figures in the plot are Carney and Isabel Jardine. Carney is a seasoned Morse operator in charge of a coastal station on a fictional island called Marina, located off the Nova Scotia coast. Marina could easily have been what we know as Sable Island, with its own shifting sands and DXCC status, where the author had been stationed for a year. The story begins in 1920. Carney is one of the senior men in the service, having arrived on the island two years before the Titanic struck its iceberg. Carney is taking a long-overdue and well-earned break, returning to the mainland for the first time.

Unlike most operators posted to Marina, who wanted to escape the island as soon as possible, Carney preferred the solitude of his shifting sandbar. So, he remained beyond the usual posting. He is an exception to the infamous “Peter Principle”; he is a master of Morse and satisfied to be doing what he knows and does well.

Upon arrival ashore, Carney checks in at the business office in Halifax and there meets the young, overly confident corporate character who runs the office. The staff includes a woman who is accomplished, who knows her business, and who seems to be confident and assured in her independence. She is Isabel Jardine. But it is a different era.

The story is one of transitions, for Carney, for Jardine, for their colleagues in the wireless business, the small community of neighbors on the remote island, transitions in the business itself and its emergence from the world of spark and coherers to continuous wave and superheterodynes. It is about the transitions that are taking place in the communications world in which technical advancements threaten to make Carney obsolete and replaceable, and in which the roles of women in business and society are evolving.

“...spark and coherers...”

Raddall wrote this book 49 years before commercial Morse operations ceased. Today, we celebrate our forebears on the annual “Night of Nights” sponsored by the Maritime Radio Historical Society each July 12. But that event does not really give us much of the sense of what it must have been like to have “been there, done that, earned the T-shirt” in the world of commercial radiotelegraphy. The Nymph and the Lamp takes the reader a lot closer to what it must have been like. Had I read it when radio was new to me, in the 1960s, my own then-tender age and lack of worldly experience might have prevented me from seeing the depth of character and emotion portrayed in each of Raddall’s characters. I would have thoroughly enjoyed his treatment of the radio business, and,



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who knows, I may have been tempted to take a different path in my own adventure. But now, in my 70s, I see how much more of real life there is in each of the personalities Raddall created, and have some better sense of what the shifting sands of that sandbar symbolized.

On its release, *The Nymph and the Lamp* was heralded as a work of literary merit and it deservedly achieved a measure of success. It was also re-packaged and marketed to appeal to a mass audience as a “romance” novel. If you check out some of the on-line booksellers’ pages, you will notice the different covers having been given to the original issue and to the “romance” novel release. Had I seen only the romance version’s cover, I might have been less interested in venturing beyond the extracts of the radio related text. But, then again, having reached the age where I can be accused of just being a dirty old man, maybe that cover isn’t so bad. I’ll admit, there were parts where the plot turns seemed predictable, but not all of them were and those that weren’t made the investment of time in finishing the book well worth the effort and time away from the amateur bands. What moved me was the impact of Raddall’s depiction of what life was like for the Morse operator and those around him, or her, in the early days of radio.

Raddall was a celebrated and prolific author. Nothing I saw on the Internet hinted that Raddall had had an amateur call, however. Pity. No matter, he was qualified and no doubt could have passed had he wanted it. I’ll give this one a good 579 and hope that you will take the time to locate it at your local library, a local antiquarian bookstore, or from one of the online booksellers who stock out-of-print works. ■

The Nymph and the Lamp, Thomas H. Raddall, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1950

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

Garey Barrell, K4OAH SK



Garey Barrell, K4OAH, in 1958

It is with great sadness we report the passing of Garey Barrell, K4OAH, of Rome, Georgia on February 18, 2018, at 75 years of age. Garey was born in Louisville, Kentucky, attended the University of Kentucky and was appointed as a “Kentucky Colonel” by the state of Kentucky.

Garey was a retired aerospace engineer at NASA and also worked at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory. To the ham community, he was known as an avid R.L. Drake radio enthusiast. He authored and sold Drake supplemental servicing information on CDs. Garey had a reputation for being extremely helpful to any ham troubleshooting a radio—no matter its brand.

The *K9YA Telegraph* published Garey’s ham radio autobiography, *Genesis*, in the April, May and June 2012 issues. Anyone interested in obtaining these back issues may request them by contacting us via e-mail.

Survivors include Garey’s wife, the former Carol Jean Taylor, to whom he was married for 56-years; a son, Kevin Barrell (Sonja); a daughter, Leslie Bledsoe (Mark); a sister, Christie Hora (John); 6-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.



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More Power: QRP op? Try QRO.

Less Power: QRO op? Try QRP. That was easy.

Antennas: Spring is here, time for antenna building, mods and maintenance. Improve your signal; it's amazing what a length of wire, some hardware, a hank of rope and some elbow grease can do.

Read: Non-fiction and fiction, anything that touches on radio, not just amateur radio, but broadcasting, utility, military, aviation and maritime operations, personalities, and history. Technical books, available online and from your local library make it easy to bone up on those topics.

Write an Article: Be your own amateur radio author. Write a book; write an article for your favorite magazine or newsletter. Make your thoughts known; teach, show, entertain, amuse, remember, captivate, challenge, it's all good. (<http://k9ya.org/index.php/k9ya-telegraph/author-s-guide>)

Join a Club: Local, national or international, dues paying or gratis memberships. In addition to general interest clubs, others are devoted to various modes, bands and operating practices. They'll all help you get involved, on the air and communicating.

Elmer: This one is very important, and traditionally the backbone of the amateur radio service. If there's no newbies to Elmer locally how about becoming a code mentor from afar? Check out FISTS' Code Buddy program (<http://www.fistsna.org/coddebuddy.html>) and CW Ops Club's CW Academy (<http://www.cwops.org/cwacademy.html>). Consider volunteering as a Boy Scouts of America radio merit badge counselor. (<https://www.meritbadge.org/wiki/index.php/Radio>)

Qualify as a VE: Beginning in 1984 the FCC left it to us to administer amateur radio examinations. Become a Volunteer Examiner. (<http://www.arrl.org/become-an-arrl-ve>)

Learn Morse: Many resources available online and, for the nostalgia-minded among us, there are tapes, vinyl and software learning aids. Two of the best books on the subject are the ARRL's out of print booklet, *Learning the Radiotelegraph Code* and William G. Pierpont's, NØHFF (SK), *The Art & Skill of Radio-Telegraphy* available as a download in early revisions and, in the latest revision, as a print on demand book from <http://www.lulu.com/shop/william-pierpont/the-art-and-skill-of-radio-telegraphy/paperback/product-20947390.html>.

Master Morse: Simplest, time-tested and best method? Get on the air and work other CW ops. Increase your speed by working at the upper edge of your receiving comfort zone, then push ever higher.

Hamfests: Online sales are great, but don't neglect to support your local hamfests. Things to buy, but becoming ever more significant as a place to socialize, renew old friendships and launch new ones. Moreover, hamfests often host seminars to attend, exams to VE and bratwurst to ingest.

Certificate Hunter: Clubs and other entities worldwide offer colorful wallpaper for meeting their qualifications.

Special Event Station Hunter: Every week clubs and other groups offer opportunities to commemorate a wide variety of events. Work the stations and earn more colorful wallpaper.

Portable Operations: From a picnic table, to Field Day, Summits on the Air (SOTA), Parks on the Air (POTA) to a trek along the Appalachian Trail, there's much to choose from to suit your lifestyle and energy level.

Rag Chewer: Conversational, tradition-laden, amateur radio. No QSOs-by-the-numbers. Meet and greet fellow hams in depth; some on-air friendships live on for years.

Contester: Can't beat 'em? Join 'em. Most every weekend you can take your pick of local, national and international contests – all modes, all competitive. Pick off a few contacts for practice or stick around for the contest's duration. ■



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