



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**"Radio Ray"
60 Years of Ham
History**

PG. 1

**Upcoming
Hamfests**

PG. 6

**What? A Record
Level of Ham
Licenses?**

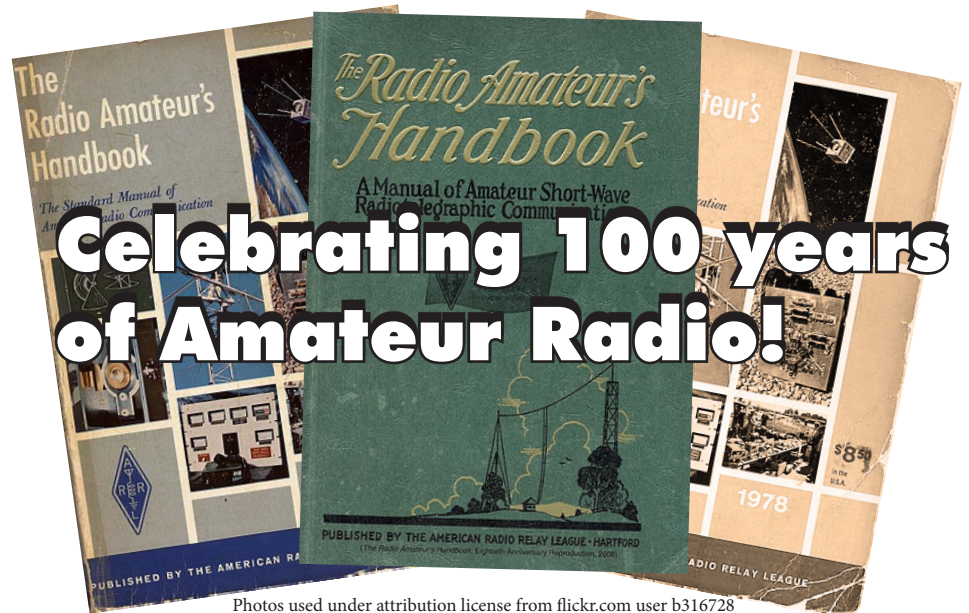
PG. 7

**What's New?
RIGblaster Blue**

PG. 9

**The Future of
Amateur Radio**

PG. 10



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"Radio Ray" 60 Years of Ham History

**Ray Grenier
K9KHW**

I was born in 1938. I reflect back to my youth and the impressions and visions that I had that got me interested in radio and what would eventually become a career in HAM radio. It was about 1943 and my family's entertainment center was a big Howard console Radio in our living Room. I remember Mom would listen to soaps in the afternoon. Dad would come home at night and listen to WWII news broadcasts from around the world. The Big Howard, I recall, had big green electric tuning eye which always fascinated me as dad tuned

in the various local and shortwave stations. So in my young age, when Dad wasn't around I would fiddle with the radio myself. I'd tune into all the weird noises, some high speed teletype, Morse code and those types of things. I was taken back by all the various music and foreign languages I'd hear and just really impressed by the radio itself.

Dad noticed my interest in radio and he was a real mechanical guy himself. So when I was about 7 years old he brought home a crystal radio set. This was a rudimentary radio which was a kit that we built. It was assembled on a board and required a pair of headphones con-

RADIO RAY



nected to it. I also required an antenna wire and a connection to ground. We used a small antenna connected to this crystal radio and we'd only receive the local home town radio station, KFIZ in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Being able to only receive one station it seemed that this first crystal radio didn't work too good in my opinion and Dad noticed I was disappointed with the limitations. Soon thereafter Dad brought home a ready made Philmore model, the next level in crystal radios. It worked a lot better, but I had the idea and thought I could get more stations if I had a bigger antenna. I remembered there was some more wire in the garage, and when Mom & Dad weren't home, "Little Ray" climbed up to the roof of our two-story house and attached it to the chimney and extending it to a tree at the end of the lot. It was at least 200 ft. long and terminated at the radio. The Philmore sat in my bedroom, at my bedside, and at that young age I was naive about static and lightning charges. Looking back I just didn't know that it was unsafe to have such an extended antenna terminated at my bedside. I guess Dad didn't realize it either. One of my life's lessons about lightning. I managed to get out that alive – live and learn.

Boy Scouts & Dixieland

While in the Boy Scouts, when I was about 8 years old, we had to learn Morse code. We used a rudimentary Morse code device

and had to learn "flash-light" code as well. There was also a merit badge, in the scouts, to have an electronic project of some kind to build. We had a catalog of devices that was full of recommended and approved scout stuff and kits. I remember seeing a Two-Tube Regenerative Radio kit which was battery operated. Getting near Christmas I showed Dad the catalog and sold him on it! Next thing I know the Two-Tube Radio magically appeared on Christmas Eve. I was up till about 4 am, on Christmas, assembling that radio. I got it working and played with it all day till I finally passed out. I was able to hear far more stations than my unamplified crystal detector. The Two-Tube Radio required a 45V "B-Battery" as well as a couple double-A's. I would burn through those "B-Batteries" like matches. At this young age I was intense on listening to shortwave broadcasts. I also discovered by accident that I could pick up police calls at the top end of the 160M band at about 1900 kHz. The Police calls in Fond du Lac, WI were stronger than some of the broadcast stations. I'd hear "Squad 10-4" and thought that was way cool – as kid. Every night I would go to bed early, clamp on my headphones and do some late-night tuning.

As a result of my late-night tuning I picked up a station – WWL, New



A 1950 Crystal Radio Toy

Orleans. Dad was a connoisseur of Dixieland jazz and Big Band music and heard a lot of it on the old Howard growing up. "My gosh" I thought, "there was live Dixieland music from the source, Bourbon and Royal streets in New Orleans." I'd listen to this great music most nights till I fell asleep. I thought it was the best thing ever. As a side story, later when I was in the Air Force, I was walking around the base and saw a sign that announced that at the Airmen's Club – Tony Almerico and the Dixieland All-Stars would be playing. This was a guy I listened to a lot during those late-night listening stations. I would catch up with him later, after his gig, and let him know how much he meant to me – thanks to my Two-Tube Radio and those late-night sessions! Pretty cool stuff.

"HAM-thing"? A seed planted.

When I was about 10 years old Dad brought home a radio from a

RADIO RAY



WWII tank that he got from one of his friends. From my curiosity I would end up tearing the radio apart and learned about the parts that made a radio. The resistors, capacitors, transformers, etc... and those early impressions of how a radio was made. At about 14 years old, in 1952, we got our first Television Set which kind of replaced the old Howard. Those early sets all had about 24 tubes in them. Eventually one of the tubes would go bad and you'd need a service call to replace it. I remember one service call I had a little conversation with the technician and showed him my Two-Tube. He mentioned that if I liked radio so much I should be a HAM radio operator. "HAM Radio?", I thought. This obviously peaked my curiosity but didn't know what to make of it at the time. I didn't have a mentor for guidance, and didn't have any of the resources at such a young age to learn about this "HAM-thing" that I just learned about.

W9FXW

Christmas of 1957, 19 years old, good ol' Mom and Dad bought me a portable record player for school. With all of the music I was listening to, the thing soon crapped out on me. Not too far away was a Radio & TV repair shop. When I was walking in I noticed a car with a huge antenna on the back and "W9FXW" on the license plate. Through conversation I came to find out that this car belonged to the shop owner who was a HAM.

I remember he had some music playing (Earl Garner "Concert by the Sea") in the background coming out of a home-built Hi-Fi system. There were some Electro-Voice speakers, a nice turntable, a powerful tube amplifier, and this thing sounded pretty awesome!

While W9FXW repaired the record player I asked about his system. He also pointed out his HAM radio set-up that was in operation. I really got to talking to him about his HAM set-up. I harked back to the days I met the TV technician about 5 years ago. So I asked him a few more questions and he replied that if I came back to his shop tomorrow he'd show me some stuff. So I went back to him and he showed me how to make contacts – and boy was I hooked! I obsessed about HAM Radio and came back every day. It got to the point that I'd help him with side jobs around the store just so I could watch him use his radio.

Working at the Radio & TV Parts Shop, part-time, I would eventually go to the HAM club meetings with W9FXW who recruited me to the local radio club. The guys at the club helped me study for the exam so I would get my HAM Radio License. At this point, because I was so hooked on HAM, I started to build my own transmitter and receiver. I would strip down the parts from old TVs and radios, at the shop, and use

the parts to build my first radio. From the club I eventually met Terry Sterman W9DIA, who was still in High School. At this point I was in college already a year or two. Terry's Dad owned a local TV and Radio Parts dealership called Harris Radio Corporation in Fond du Lac. That shop supplied about 99% of the parts for TV and Radio repair men around town and about all of the TV antennas that were installed for miles around – a pretty going affair.

How AES Started

At this point some of the commercial Radios and Electronics available that were popular for HAMs were: Hammarlund, Hallicrafters, Drake, Collins, Stancor, and others. These manufactures were known in the commercial broadcast space, but had products that catered to the Military and to the HAM market. The amateur products were made available to dealers, like Harris Corp. For Terry, who was part of the HAM club, having these lines available at his Dads store was pretty cool he thought. Terry recognized the marketability in these products and eventually talked his Dad into keeping a corner of the TV shop open for selling the HAM radio gear. Terry began to provide equipment to amateur radio operators through the corner of the Harris Corp. shop. The name started circulating around local HAMs and some of the club guys would hang out at the shop. Terry and I became pretty good friends

RADIO RAY



and our girlfriends the same. He wanted to grow the business and get more of the word out, so I ended up doing some of the local HAMFESTS with him. Terry had a big Buick Roadmaster and we filled it up with product. We took off for a weekend to sell products out of the trunk of his car. It was lots of fun, with our girlfriends, selling HAM radio equipment at some of the regional shows. That's really how we started to get into the business and sales aspect of our hobby.

Mode Wars

At that time there was a transition in the market from AM to SSB mode. SSB was just developed and HAMs found it had a tremendous communications advantage. Quite a competition between the old AM'ers who were set in their ways and SSB'ers who were looking for something new! I remember the "mode wars" between the HAMs as to what technology was better. With this huge technology change taking place, Terry was at the right place at the right time. Lots of new stuff to be sold and lot of trades to be made. Ham radio was benefiting from all of the heightened publicity and excitement. Terry graduated from high school and wanted to be a technician. To accomplish that, he attended and graduated from the Milwaukee School of Engineering. During that time period he rented a store-front and with a new name, Amateur Electronic Supply, (AES) opened up

on North Avenue in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1957. The shop was downstairs and he lived upstairs and he started selling equipment brought down from Fond du Lac to the local HAMs, later branching to a mail order operation. Outstanding how we did business at the time with no marketing, no business sense, and would negotiate until someone would buy something.

The Military Years

When AES first started I was finishing my third year of engineering school. Vietnam was raising its head. I was concerned about the changing draft laws and thought I would take a break from college and education to join the military. As soon as I joined the Air Force I took some exams for placement. It turned out I had high aptitude for electronics. Therefore I was stationed at Keesler Air Force base in Biloxi, Mississippi. For a year I attended their outstanding Electronic and Radar School where I learned Electronic Countermeasures (ECM) and military radio. With all my HAM background College and electronics I taught myself, I was ahead of my peers which my supervisors noticed. Eventually I picked up my First Class Commercial Broadcast license, too.

After Biloxi I was stationed in Lincoln Air Force Base – Lincoln, Nebraska. There I became an "Air Crew Debriefing". In this role I talked to pilots and co-pilots after



An image of KLIN's Top 40 in 1960

their B-47 training missions to learn about any systems malfunctions. After these "debriefs" I would write-up the reports for the electronic shops. This required a lot of knowledge for the systems and basic systems on the aircraft. Every aspect of their mission was graded out and there was a lot riding on this information.

RADIO RAY



I eventually got a side job with my First Class Commercial License at a local broadcast station. I met a local HAM, Vern Killion, KOEFB, on the air one night. Got to know him well and we became good friends. KLIN was moving location so eventually I helped him with a complete rebuild of their broadcast engineering department. So at that time I was working part-time for the Air Force and full-time for KLIN – a joke that I would often replay in my head. While at KLIN I did engineering, maintenance, and helped keep the station on air. All throughout my time in Lincoln, I stayed in touch with Terry at AES. About this time he approached me to sell his equipment while I was out there in Lincoln. I was actively involved in the base MARS program and I knew a lot of the local HAMS around town. I thought this was a good opportunity to make a few extra dollars. Terry would ship some products out to sell on a commission basis and the locals would buy it from me. I used what spare time I had to pick up some needed credits at the University of Nebraska at night.

At about this point I'm toward the end of my commitment to the Air Force. While on base I got to know some of the Industry Support Tech Reps. A lot of these technical guys were HAMS as well, so we developed an instant rapport. As concerned friends would ask

“What are you going to do when you get out of the service?” One of the Tech Reps helped me land a job with a company in the defense field. That job required supporting some of the aircraft systems that I was familiar with. This was an opportunity that required I move to New York.

AES

Soon after landing that job I made a call to Terry for a piece of equipment I needed to have shipped out to me. He asked, “What are you going to do after the Air Force?” I let him know I got a great job in New York. Then, he began to tell me that AES started advertising in QST Magazine and business was really starting to boom. He then went on to tell me that “what I needed to come back to Wisconsin and sell HAM gear”. Told him I had to think about it . . . all the sudden the phone rang again, “I want you to know I sent you an airline ticket! Come to Milwaukee and we'll talk about it for a few days.” I hopped on the plane and went back to AES. While there I hung out at the office while Terry picked up a few phone calls. I noticed he was getting calls from all over the world and business was “booming”, like he had mentioned,



Outside view of Milwaukee's AES store

all from that ad in QST Magazine. I talked to my wife, we really didn't want to move to New York, so I took the job with Terry and AES. I joked with Terry that when I started with AES “I would be starting at the top with the chance to work my way down.” Hauled back to Milwaukee from Lincoln, Nebraska and on January 17, 1964 and at 9 a.m. I walked into AES as a full-time employee. Little did I know at the time I would be embarking on my life's work.

HAMS: Like No Other

I learned over the last 60 years that the HAM community is like no other. There is so much camaraderie in the HAM community. If you're ever stuck somewhere in “Bodunk, Connecticut” you give a call and HAM would be right there to pick you up. A fraternity beyond compare. You'll never meet a better friend than a HAM – assuming that you didn't jam them or something!

UPCOMING EVENTS



Hamfests

<p>April 4/5/14 AES Superfest - Milwaukee, WI</p>	<p>May 5/16/14 - 5/18/14 Dayton Hamvention - Dayton, OH</p>
<p>June 6/13/14 - 6/14/14 HamCom - Plano, TX</p>	<p>July 7/18/14 - 7/19/14 ARRL National Centennial Convention Hartford, CT</p>

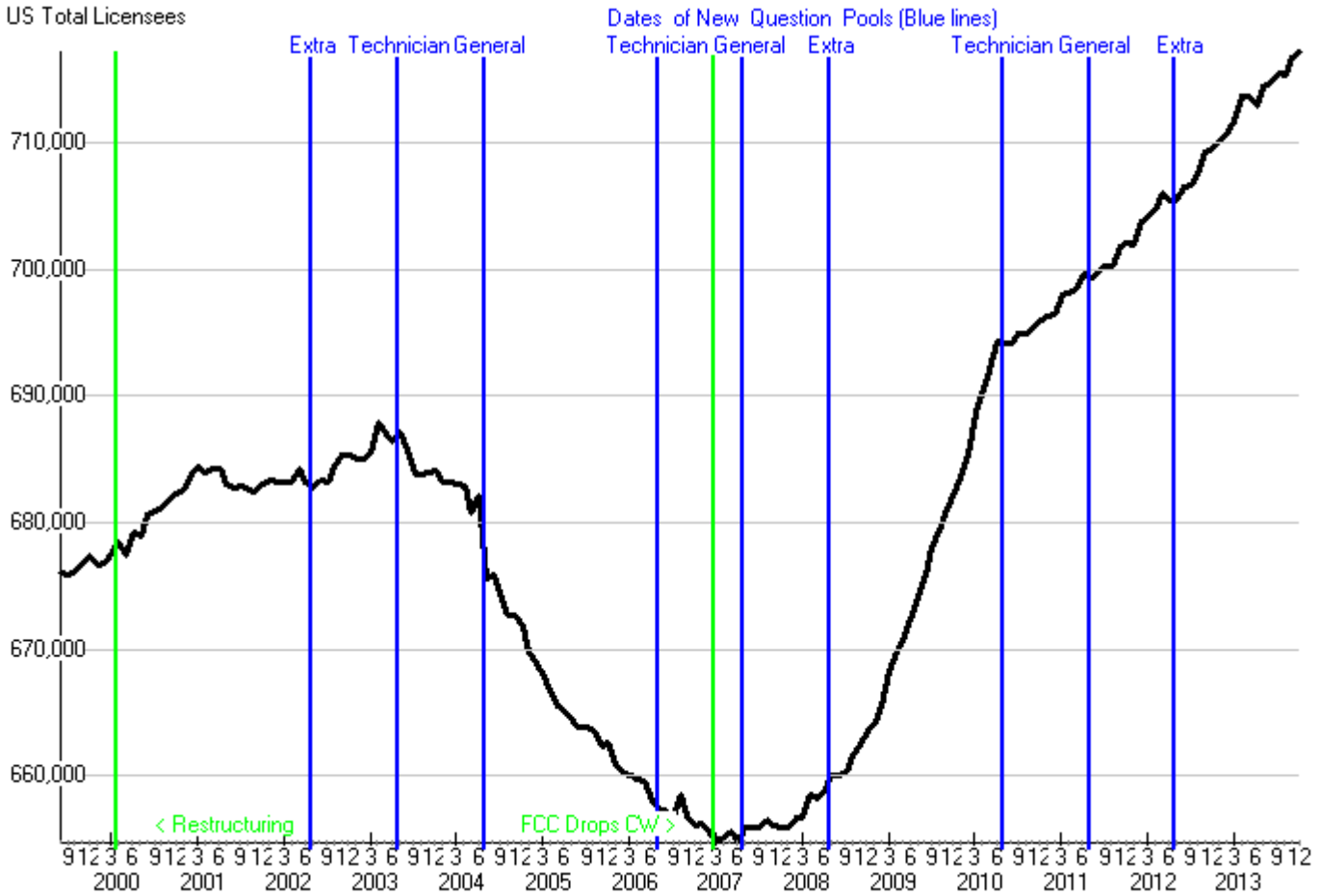
Dayton Hamvention RTTY Contest Dinner

<p>May 5/15/14 Crowne Plaza Hotel - Dayton, OH</p>	<p>Reserve a spot for dinner with special guest speaker, Larry Gauthier, K8UT</p> <p>http://www.rttycontestdinner.com/</p>
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Customer Comments

<p>“I have recently purchased the Comspkr Computer Speaker System and I have been very delighted with them! My friend has had great success with the CLRDsp Clearspeech® DSP Noise Reduction Processor and referred me to purchase from you guys. Keep up the good work for amateur radio!”</p> <p>“I was very surprised that my order arrived in the mail so quickly! This was the first time I have ordered from West Mountain Radio and if the equipment is as good as the customer service, I am sure I will be more than satisfied with the RIGrunner and the additional equipment.”</p>	<p>“Thank you very much for the tech support I received. It must be some of the best in the business. I’m very grateful for the help and I will pass this on to all my friends.”</p> <p>“I am very impressed. It took less than an hour from placing my order to get my tracking number. That has to be record. Thanks for such great service and products!”</p> <p>“I appreciate the great tech support I have received with getting my Rigblaster Pro up and running with my Kenwood 480S. The support tech was very patient and knows his stuff, and that says a lot for Mountain West Radio especially.”</p>
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RECORD LEVEL OF LICENSES



What? A Record Level of US Ham Licenses?

Bob Witte
KONR

The ARRL just reported that the number of FCC amateur radio licenses hit an all time high of 717,201 at the end of 2013. Since we all know that the internet has made ham radio communication obsolete, this is a difficult statistic to comprehend. Joe Speroni AH0A keeps a useful collection of ham licensing statistics including the ability to generate plots of the data. I used Joe's site to generate this plot of total US amateur

licenses versus time. Note that the vertical axis does not start at zero, so the plot tends to exaggerate the amount of change.

From this plot, we see that the number of licenses was in decline from about 2003 to 2007. The no code Technician license was introduced in 1991 which is earlier than the data on this chart. The FCC completely dropped the Morse Code requirement from all license classes in 2007, as indicated on the chart. (See Wikipedia for the exact

dates.) The decline in licenses was reversed at that time and has been growing ever since. There is an interesting inflection point in 2010 that coincides with the release of a new Technician License question pool. The line is noticeably less steep after this point, which seems to imply that something happened to slow down the rate of new licenses.

Over the last ten years, Technician licenses have grown slightly as a percent of the total, going from

RECORD LEVEL OF LICENSES



47% to 49%. So about half of US licenses are Technician. The grandfathered Novice and Advanced class licenses are in a slow decline and currently represent 2% and 8% (respectively) of the total licenses. The percent of General licenses has grown slightly over the past ten years, from 21% to 23%. Extra class licenses showed the most growth over the decade, going from 15% to 19% of total licenses.

While it's encouraging to see continued growth in the number of ham radio licenses, these statistics immediately raise a number of questions:

How many of these licensees are Silent Keys and their FCC license is just clocking time until it hits the 10 year expiration date?

Given the aging ham population, when will we hit a demographic brick wall and see the number of licenses decline?

How many of these licensees are actively involved in ham radio? I have a number of friends that keep their FCC license current but are never on the air.

Clearly, the 10 year license term will tend to mask any decline for a while but it seems that sooner or later the numbers will flatten off and probably start to decline. I don't know of anyone that has collected and analyzed the age distribution of hams, so I am basing this

on what I see at radio club meetings and major ham radio events. How many of these licensees are active? Really difficult to say. It seems that in the 21st century, people have many activities to choose from and their interest in any one of them may fade in and out. Not everyone is a Full Up 24/7 Ham Radio Enthusiast.

In the mean time, I am going to keep teaching Tech license classes and helping people get started in a hobby that I find to be a lot of fun. Remember the The Universal Purpose of Amateur Radio: To Have Fun Messing Around with Radios.

When you talk, we listen!

Make suggestions or comments on proposed new products.

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WHAT'S NEW



RIGblaster Blue

Sholto Fisher
K7TMG

This month we're delighted to announce our newest member of the RIGblaster family, the RIGblaster Blue. As its name implies it is built on Bluetooth® wireless technology and will pair your radio to a PC, smartphone, tablet or a Bluetooth® headset!

RIGblaster Blue connects to your radio much the same way as our other RIGblaster models but of course there is no physical connection to your computer or handheld device. From a computer point-

of-view you get two new devices: A Bluetooth® "sound card" and a virtual serial port. Simply configure your digital mode software for these and you're in business.

The RIGblaster Blue supports the Bluetooth HFP (hands-free profile), HSP (headset profile) and SPP (serial port profile) for full bidirectional audio and CAT/CI-V control. Convenient front-panel controls permit easy audio adjustment and vox delay. Pairing with a smartphone or tablet is easy and

already on the Android platform there are apps for PSK31, RTTY, SSTV, HF FAX & NavTEX*. If digital modes are not your thing, pair the RIGblaster Blue to a Bluetooth headset for completely hands-free phone operation - both transmit & receive!

The possibilities of the RIGblaster Blue are only limited by your imagination!

* Wolphi Software: <http://www.wolphi.com/>



Use a Bluetooth headset with your radio!

Use with any compatible laptop or tablet for portable operation

Untethered Rig Control for mixed mode nets, plus PSK31, & more!

RIGblaster Blue for digital modes!



Screenshot of DroidPSK by Wolphi Solutions

Pairing your radio to any compatible smartphone or tablet opens the door for portable rig control or digital modes! Compatible software is required.

Bluetooth® is a registered trademark of Bluetooth SIG, INC.

FUTURE OF AMATEUR RADIO



year, and not hearing many of the 3k new license voices on FM, the issue of who we are recruiting to the hobby came up: We have been recruiting the somewhat curious, the “I want to track my wife’s vehicle on APRS,” and “I want to collect another license / certification” crowd. This crowd naturally turns on the local FM repeater, finds little activity or a pile of geriatric (old) hams chewing the fat about their medical problems, and immediately turns off the radio and chucks it in the closet.

What we need to “save” -- or better yet -- “change” is the heading of the hobby ship to recruit more creative people of all ages, genders and disciplines.

The Future of Amateur Radio

Matt Genelin
NOYNT

The rag chew topic of “what is the future of amateur radio”? or “where is this hobby going?” comes up often while I am driving around town in my car, chatting on the local FM repeater. While I find this question and discussion topic interesting air filler, I think it’s a bit ironic. Here we are, in the present, discussing what may become of our hobby after we all sign off the air in the next 30 minutes. Rather than enjoying the present moment, we all share in a conversation about worrying about the future.

This topic came up with fellow blogger, Todd KD0TLS, the other day when I was discussing the negative feedback items I received from my recent blog posts. Apparently not everyone enjoys reading

that the radio club that they belong to is dead. Or that HF is full of naughty radio operators.

The question I posed on the air during our recent round of this conversation topic: “Why the hell would anyone join in as a new amateur / licensee to this hobby? What do people see in it?” Discounting the obvious Preppers and my fellow engineers, amateur radio is much like uni-cycling or juggling. Fun hobbies on their own, but fringe hobbies at best. Those things are stuff that someone’s uncle or cousin does, not something that you or normal people do.

After discussing the common discussion points with the 3k licenses that we add nationally each

In a recent WIRED article “Why Startups Should Steal Ideas and Hire Weirdos” it became obvious what amateur radio is missing: The creatives. Form the WIRED opinion article:

“The most consistently creative and insightful people are explorers. They spend an enormous amount of time seeking out new people and different ideas, without necessarily trying very hard to find the “best” people or “best” ideas. Instead, they seek out people with different views and different ideas.”

Remember CFR 45, Title 47, Part 97, where it defines the Purpose and Basis of the entire existence of the amateur radio service?

FUTURE OF AMATEUR RADIO



§97.1 Basis and purpose.

The rules and regulations in this part are designed to provide an amateur radio service having a fundamental purpose as expressed in the following principles:

(b) Continuation and extension of the amateur's proven ability to contribute to the advancement of the radio art.

(c) Encouragement and improvement of the amateur service through rules which provide for advancing skills in both the communication and technical phases of the art.

See? Even the government calls radio operating, social interaction and idea sharing an “art.” WIRED calls this social interaction, sharing of ideas, “exploring” (above). Explorers, like amateur ops chatting, engage in what WIRED calls Idea flow:

“Idea flow is the spreading of ideas, whether by example or story, through a social network — be it a company, a family, or a city. Being part of this flow of ideas allows people to learn new behaviors, without the dangers or risks of individual experimentation, and to acquire large integrated patterns of behavior, without having to form them gradually by laborious experimentation”

This means we can learn much more quickly by socializing with other people than attempting every radio experiment on our own.

When some of my friends point out that “amateur radio hasn't innovated anything new or technical since FM repeaters came around in the 1970's”, they are technically correct. But that's not the point of the service from Part 97.1 parts b and c. I would argue that the simple sharing of ideas is good enough to justify the amateur service, and it would appear by the government's choice of words, they agree with me. WIRED continues:

“The continual exploratory behavior of humans is a quick learning process that is guided by apparent popularity among peers. In contrast, adoption of habits and preferences is a slow process that requires repeated exposure and perceptual validation within a community of peers. Our social world consists of the rush and excitement of new ideas harvested through exploration, and then the quieter and slower process of engaging with peers in order to winnow through those ideas, to determine which should be converted into personal habits and social norms.”

Social Learning Is Critical

Copying other people's successes, when combined with individual learning, is dramatically better than individual learning alone. When your individual information is unclear, rely more on social learning;

when your individual information is strong, rely less on social learning.

It's about spreading ideas. It's about knowing how to use a repeater and how repeaters work that makes for a technically diverse population of radio ops. Discussing complicated things in a way that people can learn by simply listening to the two-way radio is engaging, interesting and exploring. Talking about your most recent surgery is not. While I enjoy poking a lot of fun at the older generation hams, I have learned a great deal from their conservative, suspicious, slow to change ways. It's good to have someone on the air to bounce new ideas off of that is just as excited as you; it's even better to have someone to poke holes, slow down your roll of ideas and find areas were you did not think things completely through. WIRED continues:

“When people are behaving independently of their social learning, it's likely that they have independent information and that they believe in that information enough to fight the effects of social influence. Find as many of these “wise guys” as possible ... and learn from them.”

Diversity Is Important

When everyone is going in the same direction, then it's a good bet that there isn't enough diversity in your information and idea sources, and you should explore further.

FUTURE OF AMATEUR RADIO



A big danger of social learning is groupthink. To avoid groupthink and echo chambers, you have to compare what the social learning suggests with what isolated individuals (who have only external information sources) are doing. If the so-called common sense from social learning is just an overconfident version of what isolated people think, then you're likely in a groupthink or echo chamber situation. In this case, a surprisingly good strategy is to bet against the common sense.

When I first got my license I thought that the local radio club is the best contesting group in the country. Until I discovered local super-contest station W0AIH in Eau Claire, I thought that the big contesting group in town was the group that rolled with no club station and two HF radios they took out of storage a few times a year. Additionally, I thought that I had to learn morse code to be a "real" contester. Not so. I needed to expand my experiences with radio clubs in the region to completely understand that many clubs suffer from groupthink (above), that they start drinking their own Kool-Aid. This kind of behavior results in the local club morning commute sounding like an echo-chamber of "how great we are, ra ra ra" on the local 444.100 "the dot one" repeater.

Until I went to Hamvention in Dayton, Ohio, I thought that funding for an amateur radio contest station was limited to one guy in Eau Claire. It turns out that with enough funding (more than the ARRL) you can have a station like DARA's W8BI. They do an amazing amount of contesting with what essentially comes down to five guys, two of which operate voice on a regular basis from the club station. See? You can raise money for amateur radio endeavors, and it's totally cool to be unlike other clubs and hams in your area.

Reading the complete WIRED opinion article, I learned that everyone with an amateur radio license has a duty to diversify their sources of information and think critically about where they fit into the hobby. All new and old amateur ops have a unique background and set of experiences they can contribute to the hobby -- and better yet, their creativity. Let's face it - nobody knows what the future of amateur radio is. But you and I can create the present a place that is fun, inviting and engaging for new and potential amateur radio ops to listen to. We can create a creative, joyous place where new ideas are shared, vetted and sometimes implemented. We have control over the present, and what tone and what energy levels are shared.



If you would like to submit an article for consideration in future newsletters please contact

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