



Squelch Tales



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for April 2014



FCC TO REINSTATE MORSE CODE TEST

**"It was a big mistake
eliminating the Morse Code
test," admits FCC official**

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

Washington, D.C. – April 1, 2014 - Today, the Federal Communications Commission (Commission or FCC) approved Report and Order 14-987af which reinstates the Morse Code test for General Class and Amateur Extra Class licensees. "It was a big mistake eliminating the Morse Code test," admits Dotty Dasher, the FCC's director of examinations. "We now realize that being able to send and receive Morse Code is an essential skill for radio amateurs. As they say, it really does get through when other modes can't."

Not only will new applicants have to take the test, but General Class licensees who have never passed a code test will have one year to pass a 5-wpm code test. Similarly, Amateur Extra class licensees that never passed a code test will have one year to pass a 13-wpm test. Those amateurs that fail to pass the test will face

revocation of their operating privileges. Materials for administering the examinations will be distributed to Volunteer Examiner Coordinators by the end of April, so that they can begin the testing on May 1, 2014.

"This isn't going to be one of those silly multiple-choice type tests," noted Dasher. "We're going to be sending five-character random code groups, just like we did in the old days. And, applicants will have to prove that they can send, too, using a poorly adjusted straight key."

Technician Class licensees will not be required to take a Morse Code test, nor will a test be required for new applicants. "We discussed it," said Dasher, "but decided that since most Techs can't even figure out how to program their HTs, requiring them to learn Morse Code seemed like cruel and unusual punishment."

When asked what other actions we might see from the FCC, Dasher hinted that in the future applicants taking the written exam may be required to draw circuit diagrams, such as Colpitts oscillators and diode ring mixers, once again. "We're beginning to think that if an applicant passes an amateur radio license exam it

should mean that he or she actually knows something," she said.

For further information, contact James X. Shorts, Assistant Liaison to the Deputy Chief of Public Relations for the FCC at (202) 555-1212 or jim.shorts@fcc.gov. For more news and information about the FCC, please visit www.fcc.gov.

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OH, BY THE WAY, APRIL FOOLS!



Receiver Sensitivity, a short tutorial

In a past issue of the Monitoring Times, Ian Poole had a nice tutorial on the topic of receiver sensitivity.

Receiver sensitivity is one of the vital specifications of any receiver. Whether measured as a signal to noise ratio, SINAD or noise figure it is essential that any receiver has a sufficient level of sensitivity. Check out the following website to review Ian's article:

<http://www.monitoringtimes.com/html/sensitivity.html>

We hope you find it informative.



ARRL membership: Is 25% asking too much?

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

In the March 2014 issue of QST, ARRL CEO Harold Kramer, WJ1B, makes a big deal of the fact that ARRL membership is now up to 162,200 members and is growing at a rate of about 1% per year. After patting the ARRL on the back about this, WJ1B launches into a discussion of the different programs that WJ1B feels have contributed to the membership growth.

Let's take another look at the numbers, though. As the editorial points out, 10,300 ARRL members are international members, meaning that 151,900 U.S. hams are ARRL members. Another article in the March issue, "New Licenses," notes that the total number of licensed radio amateurs at the end of 2013 was 717,201. If you do the math, you'll find that only slightly more than one in five licensed radio amateurs are ARRL members. I personally don't think that's so hot, and it's certainly not worthy of all the self-congratulation going on in this editorial.

The licensing article also points out that "the amateur radio population in the US grew by slightly more than 1 percent last year." That being the case, ARRL membership has grown at about the same rate. If all the programs noted in WJ1B's editorial were so effective, wouldn't you expect membership growth to be at least 2%?

I've said this before, and I'll say it again. I think the ARRL should set a goal to enroll at least 25%

of licensed radio amateur as members. I think that this is achievable, and it seems to me that any group calling itself "the national organization for amateur radio" should have at least one in four amateur radio licensees as part of its membership.

What do you think? Is reaching 25% asking too much? If you think I'm right, please reach out to your ARRL division director and tell him so. More members would mean that the ARRL could deliver more services and have more clout in Washington. That sounds like a good thing to me.

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When he's not worrying about ARRL membership, Dan, KB6NU enjoys working CW on the HF bands, teaching amateur radio classes, and building kits. For more information about his operating activities and his "No-Nonsense" series of amateur radio license study guides



The tribal wisdom of the Plains Indians, passed on from generation to generation, says that:

"When you discover that you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount.

"However, in government (and academia) more advanced strategies are often employed, such as:

1. Buying a stronger whip.
2. Changing riders.
3. Appointing a committee to study the horse.
4. Arranging to visit other countries to see how other cultures ride dead horses.
5. Lowering the standards so that dead horses can be included.
6. Reclassifying the dead horse as living impaired.
7. Hiring outside contractors to ride the dead horse.
8. Harnessing several dead horses together to increase speed.
9. Providing additional funding and/or training to increase the dead horse's performance.

10. Doing a productivity study to see if lighter riders would improve the dead horse's performance.

11. Declaring that as the dead horse does not have to be fed, it is less costly, carries lower overhead and therefore contributes substantially more to the bottom line of the economy than do some other horses.

12. Rewriting the expected performance requirements for all horses.

And, of course ...

13. Promoting the dead horse to a supervisory position.

Submitted by Steve Kerchel, AA4AK



ARRL MAINE SECTION MANAGER ELECTION, Two Bills in the running

If you are a member of the ARRL and live in the Great State of Maine you will soon be casting a ballot for the League position of Maine Section Manager.

There are two good candidates in the running and they are:

1. Bill Woodhead, N1KAT of Auburn (the incumbent)
 2. Bill Crowley, K1NIT of Farmingdale
- Both candidates were offered the opportunity to campaign at the upcoming MARA Meeting in Topsham and in addition to place a position paper in this newsletter.

The Following is the position paper provided by Bill Crowley, K1NIT:

Please allow me to introduce myself. I'm Bill Crowley, K1NIT, of Farmingdale, and I am a candidate for Maine Section Manager.

I got my first amateur radio license at age 16 in 1960, and have held every class of license except Technician. In addition to the ARRL, I am a life member of QCWA, and a member of the Augusta Amateur Radio Association, where I currently serve as president. I am the Maine Section Public Information Coordinator, and an Assistant Section Manager. Away from ham radio, I enjoy surfing the internet, traveling, and riding my motorcycle. I am currently in the process of bringing a 1953 Studebaker Starliner coupe back to life. In 2008 I retired after 21 years with the Maine State Police 9-1-1 Center in Augusta. I have also worked as a U.S. Census Bureau supervisor, in automobile and advertising sales, and as a news reporter/photographer.

I am running for Maine Section Manager because I see a need for change.

Our hobby is literally dieing. Two years ago, we had more than 5,000 hams in Maine; now, according to the FCC database, our numbers are down to 4,500, a ten percent drop. I would be willing to bet that the vast majority of us are over age 50, which means the census figures will keep going down.

We need to introduce more people to ham radio, particularly younger people. As Section Manager, I will appoint a special panel to investigate this project and come up with suggestions on how to work with local schools and youth groups to tell them about our hobby. We have many teachers, both active and retired, in our membership who can use their experience to help us solve this problem.

I would like to raise awareness of ham radio by publicly recognizing our members who achieve

greatness, not just in amateur radio circles, but in the community at large. If a ham is commended by the mayor, for example, we need to point out that he or she is a ham.

I see a need for more coordination between emergency management services and ham radio, and more coordination within the hobby as well. Currently one hand often does not know what the other hand is doing, with less than optimum results. We need to have our emergency response people talking to each other and to their emergency response people on a regular basis.

We need to get more Maine hams involved in the ARRL. Currently, less than a quarter of us are full time members, and as we know, more members means more influence in amateur related matters, whether it be legislation, operating activity, or development of the hobby. As Section Manager, I will appoint a Membership Committee and Membership Chairman to make this a reality.

As your Section Manager, I will listen to your concerns, and make sure they are received and understood in Newington. In my career at the 9-1-1 Center, I had to listen to what people were saying and what they were not saying, and make a sound decision on a preliminary course of action; it was often, literally, a matter of life or death. I will bring that ability and my people skills to the Section Manager position, and I will be consistent in my application of them. You can bank on it.

Maine has not had a Section Manager election in more than 10 years, and I am happy to have caused that to change. Now I hope to complete the change, to be your Section Manager, and to stop doing business as usual. The time for talk is over; it is now time for action. I would appreciate your vote.

The following is the position paper Provided by Bill Woodhead, N1KAT:

Since I took office, the Amateur Radio Community in Maine has been more active in public service.

After the ice storm of '97-'98, we were recognized for our help by the governor of the state and the president of Central Maine Power. We continue to participate in various volunteer events, such as the Trek Across Maine, the Dempsey Challenge, the Beach to Beacon 10K Road Race, the New England Forest Rally, the Kenduskeag Stream Canoe Race, the Can-Am Crown International Sled Dog Race, the Loon Echo Bike Trek, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society walkathons, and the World Biathlon Championship. The State of Maine has been so appreciative of our efforts, that on April 18, 2011, the State Legislature passed a joint resolution honoring the Amateur Radio operators. The Radio Community convinced the State Legislature to pass a bill to protect the rights of Hams to erect radio antennas which might violate local ordinances.

As Section Manager, I consider my greatest responsibility to be to help spread the word about Amateur Radio. To this end, I utilize part of my budget to supply and distribute entry level instructional books and upgrade manuals to the various clubs. Last year, I helped coordinate with Bates College for the 6th graders of Lewiston/Auburn to pose questions to Astronaut Chris Cassidy in the International Space Station via Ham Radio.

As Section Manager, I try to attend as many club meetings as possible, as well as visiting Field Day sites, flea markets, and casual breakfast meetings. I regularly attend Cabinet meetings and relay the information to the clubs.

With support from league members, I hope to continue to serve the Amateur community.

Respectfully submitted,
William A. Woodhead, N1KAT
Maine Section Manager

If you are a League member please remember to cast your ballot for one of the above good Bills.



WE HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL AT THE ARRL MAINE STATE CONVENTION AND “ANDYFEST”

March 28th & 29th

**Time: Friday evening seminars
7:00 – 10:00. Saturday, The**

**Hamfest will start at 08:00am
and end at 12:00 noon**

**Location: Ramada Inn
Conference Center,**

490 Pleasant Street, Lewiston

**Admission: \$7, 17 years old and
under, free.**

**Door Prize: \$500 Gift Certificate
to Ham Radio Outlet**

