

Printed Circuit

Severe Weather Classes on March 15 — More information in the President's Column!

2007.03

A HAM'S JOURNEY BACK: COMING BACK TO HAM RADIO AFTER 50 YEARS

FRED HAMBY, KI4EZC
ARRL WEBSITE

Once a ham, always a ham, right? What happens when a ham comes back to Amateur Radio after a 50 year absence? While not unlike riding a bike after some time away, relearning ham radio presents its own challenges and is just as fun (if not more so) as it was more than a half-century ago!

Back in the 1950s

As a faithful reader of the Boy Scouts of America's magazine *Boy's Life* as a pre-teen and teen, I closely followed the articles and advertisements on Morse code and crystal radios. I built practice code buzzers and all sizes of crystal radios. Not long after, I was introduced to ham radio through classes provided by the Chattanooga Amateur Radio Club. The instructors only had a book, a black-board, and a code oscillator with a key. We went to class for several weeks, and at least six of us from City High got our coveted Novice ham license in 1955. My new call sign was KN4CPT (the "N" in the call sign indicated Novice).

The equipment I used as a novice ham was basic even for 1955. I built a three tube regenerative Knight Ocean Hopper (OH) receiver from a kit that I modified

with vernier drives for the main frequency selection and band spread tuners. I also added a "Receive/Standby" switch (for you collectors, I know I messed up a collectable OH by drilling holes and making alterations).

I obtained a pre-WW II designed wooden rack mounted 6V6 transmitter plus a power supply. After two long wire 80 meter antennas were installed in trees (one each for receive and transmit), I tuned the transmitter using a 40 W light bulb and started trying to fill my log with CW contacts. The 6V6 circuit was unstable with a tendency to key clicks and variations in oscillation. I worked 80 meters because that was the transmitter's standard configuration of tank coils, crystal and antenna. DX for me at that time was Tennessee to Michigan.

Novice hams in 1955 had to upgrade to General within one year or they lost their ticket. I had no way to measure my code speed -- I thought I was doing well toward 13 wpm within six months or so, but I probably missed by a mile. I didn't get a study guide for the General license and no classes were offered, so KN4CPT retired in 1956 after only one year of activity.

The Unlicensed Years: 1956-2004

I have no excuse for abandoning Amateur Radio during this time. I worked my adult priorities -- finishing a degree as a night student, keeping up a job as a computer programmer/analyst and spending as much time as possible with my young and slowly growing family. The electrical things I had learned as a ham were occasionally applied to troubleshooting, fixing the family car and appliance electrical problems. I know I missed out on a good hobby for a lot of years.

Toward the end of this period, people were predicting that I was not going to be happy as a retiree since my job had been so important to me. I needed help fast -- I needed to transfer my focus to something new and that something had not been exercised in a long time. My wife and I began to think about what we had enjoyed as young adults. During that process, we went camping in a cozy pop-up trailer, and I got "re-bitten" by the ham radio bug.

2004 -- A Return to Amateur Radio

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BUY-SELL-TRADE

John Eubanks, NONFY, has the following items for sale. Contact him at 417-624-2470 or jfeubanks.sbcglobal.net.

HP 8640B signal generator, .5 – 512 mhz AM, FM, Pulse tone. Asking \$400.00. It's in a military portable case, has all manuals, and works great. Use to tune receivers on HF, VHF, UHF radios, and repeater duplexer cans.

Astron power supply RS 35 amp, \$75.00

Pyramid power supply PS 20 amp, \$50.00

Alinco DJ 191 HT 5 Watt and drop in charger, \$50.00

Icom 228H 50 watt mobile 2 meter, \$80.00

Phelps-Dodge Duplexer Cans 440 mhz / tuned to 444.500 mhz, \$ 75.00

VHF Engineering 2 meter amp 10 watt drive & 175 watts out, \$100.00

MFJ 962c Versa Tuner III HF 1.5 KW, \$75.00

Low Pass Filter 1.8–30mhz 1.5 KW continuous power / Bencher, \$ 10.00

B&W low pass filter Model FI 6/100 6 meter, \$10.00

Industrial Communications Model 420 Pass filter 1.8–30 mhz 300 watts, \$10.00 ❖

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

ANDY GABBERT, KA0TUD

I want to express my appreciation for those who attended our program meetings and for Wayne Graham and Jim Scott for agreeing to present at the January and February meetings, respectively.

Next month, we must discuss the status of our repeater and how we will solve its performance problem. I invite all members to attend the meeting and offer their suggestions.

Storm season is right around the corner; severe weather classes will be held at the Joplin City Hall on Main St. (old Hookup Building) on March 15 at 2:00 and 6:30PM. Park in the parking lot between Main and Joplin Streets.

Please attend one and make sure that you sign in as a ham. If you attend a class in another county, please request that Emergency Manager forward your name to me, so we'll have a record of your attendance.

The Tri-State ARES Group will be having an upcoming meeting in which we'll discuss our net protocol. One of our local operators, who happens to be a law enforcement officer, recently told me that we need to set a protocol so the net would run more efficiently.

This meeting is *not* to criticize any one operator or groups of people, but the county Emergency Manager depends on our spotters, and time is often limited during nets. We must set a protocol that will *facilitate* your report on the *first* report. In addition, Steve Runnels of the Springfield Office frequently encourages the general public to listen to our nets, so we must set a professional example.

I hope to see you at our business meeting on March 13. Remember this month, our program meeting will be held at Ryan's, as the club voted to have one dinner meeting each quarter. ❖

SECRETARY'S REPORT

MARK MITCHELSON, NOZPD

Andy Gabbert called the meeting to order; the Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports were read and accepted.

Larry Sparks, NOBHU, reported that the repeater's performance had deteriorated due to ice in the feedline.

Martin Matarazzo, WD6FIC, presented a letter from the Zimmer Radio Group and requested that it become part of the minutes. Martin once again raised his objections to the appointment of the technical committee.

Jim Scott reported on the hamfest.

Andy reported that the door for the Red Cross was not the correct size but that the Red Cross would obtain one. ❖

TREASURER'S REPORT

JIM JOHANNES, NOZSQ

Income during January included 4 dues renewals, a donation to the general fund, and interest on the money market account.

Expenses during this time included postage for the January and February newsletters, PO Box rental fee, and our liability insurance premium.

All of our accounts have balances. ❖

EDITORIAL POLICY

- 1 Articles are due the first Monday by 4:00PM.
- 2 Submissions may be handwritten, typed, or emailed.
- 3 Readers are welcomed to comment but should focus on the article.
- 4 Buy-Sell-Trade items may be posted for no fee.

All articles are subject to editing. ❖

A HAM'S JOURNEY...

(Continued from page 1)

I wanted to pick up ham radio where I had left off, but the license and the code skills were gone. I asked around about some old call books, so I could get credit for passing the code previously, but I could not find one -- it was back to a scratch start. I rejoined the American Radio Relay League and ordered the Technician class licensing manual, *Now You're Talking* (The ARRL Ham Radio License Manual has since replaced this book). I got the ARRL code CDs and went to work seriously and hard. You need an attitude of "serious and hard work" to pursue what you want sometimes.

I set out a plan for how I would like to catch up and enjoy ham radio:

- *Find a mentor;
- *Join a ham radio club;
- *Get my license for the modes I wanted to operate; and
- *Get some equipment.

The best code band for day and night use for Technician with HF privileges is often 40 meters, but the interference from SSB stations from south of the border reduces its usefulness for me. These poor band conditions drove me toward license upgrades so I would be able to communicate in what I saw as the more productive portions of the bands.

I soon appreciated the difference in the capabilities of my 1955 station. When I compare its one band-one frequency operation plus straight key to modern ham equipment with variable frequency tuning, digital signal processing and automatic memory keyers with their paddles and keyboards, there's no contest. It is a lot easier to operate successfully now with the advanced technology of ham station equipment, even in spite of the solar cycle situation.

Ham Radio Is Something Everyone Can Enjoy

All of these activities take time and study to earn the license privileges and the skill to put them to productive use. There is always a ham magazine or a manual waiting to be read, Morse code to practice, antennas to add or modify, a building project to continue or club business to perform. Because of these factors, ham radio is a very good option for a retirement hobby. There are endless directions to go. I can spend as little or as much time that I want to and get rewarded with a contact with a new or old friend, QSL cards, awards progress tracking or ham radio club interests.

A person moving toward retirement (at any age) or is in retirement and still wants to learn some new things should take a look at a hobby that is high technology, fun and friendly, and almost as old as the hills of Tennessee. Current hams should encourage their non-ham friends to participate, too.

My Method for Taking Tests

There are, no doubt, as many methods for studying for the tests as there are people who have taken them. I can only say this method worked for me -- I never made a perfect score, but I passed each test the first time.

Start with the next license you need and get the related ARRL study guides one at a time since they can become obsolete. Read the study material, highlighting the interesting concepts. Turn to the question pool when you are prompted, and highlight the correct answer only. For those questions that require calculations, copy all the formulas from the text needed for each answer. Get a scientific calculator and use it repeatedly each time you review the question and get the indicated result.

After you have studied the whole element, and while working all the problems with the calculator, try taking the

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HAMFESTS

16-17 March 2007. Claremore, OK. Oklahoma State Convention, Claremore Expo Center, 400 Veterans Parkway. Green Country Hamfest Committee. Talk-In: 147.09+ or 444.35. Contact: Merlin Griffin, WB5OSM, Box 470132, Tulsa, OK 74147-0132. Phone: 918-272-0066
Email: wb5osm@hotmail.com
www.greencountryhamfest.org/

21 April 2007. Kansas City, MO. HAMBASH 2007, Ararat Shrine 5100 Ararat Drive. Ararat Shrine ARC
Talk-In: 145.13-. Contact: Steve Dowdy, WJØI, 12411 Olive Street, Kansas City, MO 64146. Phone: 816-941-3392. Fax: 816-941-3392.
Email: sdowdy@kc.rr.com
<http://www.hambash.com>

28 April 2007. Bentonville, AR. Benton County Hamfest, R.E. Baker Elementary School, 301 NW 3rd Street. Benton County Radio Operators Club. Talk-In: 145.29- (PL 110.9). Contact: Jay Harrison, KC0CNB, 520 North 37th Street, Rogers, AR 72756. Phone: 479-631-7727.
Email: Texgun19@cox.net
http://members.cox.net/rwcollins/BCRO_Hamfests.htm ❖

NEW BAND CHARTS!

Visit the ARRL website at <http://www.arrl.org/> to download a copy of the new band charts, effective with the new rules.

Either a black and white or color chart is available for download. ❖

A HAM'S JOURNEY...

(Continued from page 3)

practice test at www.qrz.com. Shoot for at least 90 percent on the practice tests.

As I said before, taking and passing a Morse code test (Element 1) will no longer be required for any Amateur Radio license after February 23, 2007. That said, it is still a viable (and fun) mode of communicating. I learned Morse using some products that are readily available, including:

- **Your Introduction to Morse Code CD;*
- *MFJ 418 Pocket Morse Tutor; and
- *FISTS-based code sound tracks -- these can be obtained from the Internet.

I have found these best for not only initially learning code, but for long term speed improvement exercises.

How to Learn Morse Code

Pick one or more of the above products for code practice -- you will be listening to perfectly sent code. You may need 30 minutes per day for several weeks to get the job done.

Here are some things that I did that helped me pass Element 1:

- * Practice every day up until (and including) the test date;
- * The code is a language of sounds; learn it by sound not by a printed chart;
- * All practice sessions need to be in writing since the test is a written (not oral) exam;
- * Practice receiving each alphabet, number and punctuation character, plus prosigns separately or in small groups until you have instant recognition. If your study media allows flexibility on speed, you should set it a little over 5 wpm, say 7-8 wpm (this will make the actual test appear easier). Don't count dits and dahs, especially on numbers;

*After you can recognize all the characters, practice receiving QSO phases like QTH (location), NAME, RIG, WX (weather), RST (signal) and ANT (antenna). Practice receiving regular call signs like W1AW plus those with forward slash W1AW/2. Practice contacts can be done by listening to one of the products recommended above or on air HF CW bands. The ARRL provides excellent practice during W1AW scheduled transmissions;

*Practice sending some contact segments by whistling, tapping a pencil or using an oscillator and key; and

*Picture yourself being successful with the code. Condition yourself for the test by picturing it as just another practice session. You should consider doing a practice session outside the test location on test day to combat stress and get yourself up to speed.

It has been my experience that it takes about two years to get to functionally comfortable at about 18-20 wpm (at my age, anyway). I am still working on several goals with my almost daily practice on the code tutor. You can get to the speed you want by pushing your practice speed upward in small stretch steps.

I don't see anything wrong with using a memory keyer and keyboard to work CW. This is the age of computers; let the computer assist you to become error-free and a better operator. I use the key instead of the keyboard at times -- this allows me to operate portable CW comfortably with minimal equipment components.

Try Morse Code As a Communication Option

Morse code allows you the practice and experience of operating the small and inexpensive side of ham radio using QRP (low power, usually Morse code transceivers). A QRP station is fun to take on a camping trip or to a beach house. I take along my Elecraft KX1 (the whole station including a simple vertical

wire antenna) in a camera bag.

My favorite portable location is a rented beach house in Florida. My 4.5 W QRP rig punches out to South America, across the Atlantic and all over the USA and Canada from there when conditions are right. It is like going on a DXpedition on a shoestring budget. Is Field Day coming up? Are you tired of the noisy generator? A lawn mower battery will run one of these 12 V rigs for days.

I do not see anything wrong with using a memory keyer and keyboard to work CW. This is the age of computers; you can let the computer assist you to become a more error free and a better operator. I would use the key instead of the keyboard at times so you can comfortably operate portable CW with minimal equipment components.

Conclusion

I hope you can use this information to recruit new hams and that you received the encouragement to use more of the privileges of our great hobby. I also hope that that some of the higher license achievements seem more attainable to you. The effort is definitely worth the trip.

Fred Hamby, KI4EZC, has been re-licensed since 2004 and holds an Amateur Extra class license. Operating mostly CW, he likes to ragchew and make a rookie showing at contests, as well as build equipment for his home and field stations. Fred is active in the Scenic City Amateur Radio Society (SCARS) and serves as an ARRL VE. Retired after 44 years in the electrical utility industry, Fred and his wife Evie live in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Editor's Note: Fred writes a great article. What are some of your ideas about helping someone re-enter the hobby or earn their first license? ❖

March

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| <i>Sun</i> | <i>Mon</i> | <i>Tue</i> | <i>Wed</i> | <i>Thu</i> | <i>Fri</i> | <i>Sat</i> |
|--|---|--|------------|--|------------|---|
| | | | | 1 Thursday Night Dinner—5:30PM | 2 | 3 Breakfast—9:00AM |
| 4 | 5 VE Testing—6:30PM Monday Night Net— 7:30PM | 6 | 7 | 8 Thursday Night Dinner—5:30PM | 9 | 10 Breakfast—9:00AM |
| 11 Daylight Savings Time Begins! | 12 Monday Night Net— 7:30PM | 13 Statewide Tornado Drill—1:30PM Club Meeting— 7:30PM | 14 | 15 WX Classes—2:00 & 6:30PM Thursday Night Dinner—5:30PM | 16 | 17 Breakfast—9:00AM Neosho Testing— 2:00PM (Pre- registration Required) |
| 18 | 19 Monday Night Net— 7:30PM | 20 | 21 | 22 Thursday Night Dinner—5:30PM | 23 | 24 Breakfast—9:00AM |
| 25 | 26 Monday Night Net— 7:30PM | 27 Program Meeting (Ryan's)—6:30PM | 28 | 29 Thursday Night Dinner—5:30PM | 30 | 31 Breakfast—9:00AM |

PRINTED CIRCUIT

2007

Note: W4VEC testing information is on the back page; those with questions should contact Martin Matarazzo, VE Manager.

Printed Circuit

Joplin Amateur Radio Club, Inc.
PO Box 2983
Joplin, MO 64803-2983

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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CONTACTING US:

President

Andy Gabbert, KAØTUD
ka0tud@arrl.net or 673-8371

Vice-President

Bill Reynolds, N6HXI
billsworldat61@yahoo.com

Secretary

Mark Mitchelson, NØZPD
mmitchelson@4state.com

Treasurer

Jim Johannes, NØZSQ
jimjohannes@sbcglobal.net

Editor

J C Alexander, K5DMI
jalexand@alumni.ou.edu

Website

<http://www.joplin-arc.org/>

Yahoo! Group

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/JARC-Members/>

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CLUB INFORMATION

Meetings

The Club meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays each month, except December. Meetings are held at the Joplin Red Cross (4th and Jackson) and begin at 7:30 PM. All amateur operators welcomed at meetings and other club functions.

Club Repeaters - Open for all to use

WØIN - 147.210+ (No tone)

WØIN South - 145.390- (91.5)

Weekly Net (Mondays at 7:30 PM, 147.210+)

All operators are welcome to check in the net. ARRL Audio News, ARES, buy-sell-trade, and other announcements are made.

W4VEC Volunteer Examining Sessions

On the first Monday of each month, exams are offered at St. Paul's United Methodist Church on W. 26th Street, west of Maiden Lane. Applicants need to bring 2 pencils, 2 forms of ID (including 1 photo ID), and the *original and 2 copies of any current license and/or Certificates of Successful Completion if applicable*. Registration begins at 6:30 PM. For questions, contact Martin Matarazzo, VE Manager, at 623-0298.

Social Gatherings

On Saturdays, members gather at Steak n Shake (Hammons Blvd.) for breakfast, beginning at 9:00 AM. On Thursday evenings, members gather at a local restaurant. Check with John Tudenham (624-8058) for location.