



The QUARAE



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Editor John Lindvay

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My Apologies

I spent two weeks in August on vacation in Oakland, California. It was the vacation from hell. I fell down twice and bruised my ribs. Then I discovered shingles, all over my torso. Yes they are painful. Then I discovered I had gall stones that put me in the hospital for a week. Now I have Pancreatic pain. No excuses here, I just decided not to publish in September, but I will combine the Sept/Oct issue to keep everyone informed.

The colder the x-ray table, the more of your body is required to be on it.

Technician Class Books

It seems that I give out the books to use and never get them back. Let's face it. You passed your Tech test and now you don't need the manual anymore. Be nice and pay it forward. Give me your manual to pass on to new people to study for their Tech license.

If Webster wrote the first dictionary, where did he find the words?

Don't Forget

The Pennsylvania QSO Party is coming up. October 14th and 15th. This is good opportunity for Techs to get on the HF bands and improve their listening and mike talking skills. The club house will be open for the entire time. Just come out and participate in the face to face talk.

ARRL Realizes that there are Problems

An item in the July 2017 ARRL board meeting caught my attention. It notes that a committee of staff members was tasked with identifying the challenges facing ARRL and possible solutions. The August 3, 2017 issue of the ARRL Letter ran the following report:

“ARRL Chief Executive Officer Tom Gallagher, NY2RF, presented the report of six Headquarters staffers who had been tasked with identifying the challenges facing ARRL and devising feasible solutions. Specifically, the committee addressed market research findings that have continued to reveal that only a small percentage of new hams join the League, and only about one-half of new hams actually get on the air.

“The committee began with the premise that ARRL must act in order to remain relevant going forward. It proposed instituting a Lifelong Learning Program to focus on developing a clear developmental path for all radio amateurs, from newcomers to established radio amateurs. The committee recommended the creation of new programs and services to increase the knowledge base of



**Radio Association of Erie
Club Meeting – Thursday
October 5 at the Red
Cross Bldg. located at
4961 Pittsburgh Ave.**

**7:00 PM- General Meeting
Program: TBA**

newcomers in order to get them active, as well as programs to keep experienced amateurs up to date with changing technology and practice.”

The board meeting minutes were a little more detailed:

“Mr. Roderick yielded the floor to CEO Gallagher who presented the report of a committee of staff members tasked with identifying the challenges facing ARRL and possible solutions. The members of the committee – Diane Petrilli, KB1RNF; Norm Fusaro, W3IZ; Becky Schoenfeld, W1BXY; Debra Jahnke, K1DAJ; Steve Ford, WB8IMY; and Sean Kutzko, KX9X, joined the meeting at 9:20 AM, to present this report. Their findings show the importance to ARRL of getting newly licensed hams actively on the air and how that relates to continued growth of the organization. In order to achieve that goal, the committee proposed developing a lifelong learning department, which would address the needs of all amateurs with the focus being on developing a clear knowledge path for all amateurs. They proposed creating straightforward programs and services to enhance the knowledge base of new amateurs as well as to enhance their sense of community within the hobby.

“Another recommendation involved refocusing the priorities of the emergency preparedness department to address the current trends in public service.

“A third recommendation was to improve the value proposition of membership. The committee proposed doing a survey, which would include test material that is targeted to the interests of newer hams. The content would include a strong emphasis on serving communities, agencies, and partners; digital communications, and human interest. Projects would be simple. The survey would obtain information on new ham’s interests and needs in the hobby. The survey would also try to determine the delivery system that might best meet the newcomer’s desire for receiving this type information (print, digital, messaging, etc). The test

material is proposed to be delivered to recipients in fall 2017.

“From the committee’s vantage point, the status quo is no longer adequate: we need to have a vision of the future and convey it to our current membership. If we do not convey the need to change the paradigm, the ARRL’s relevancy will not move forward.”

The good thing here is that the ARRL finally realizes that there are some serious problems. I’ve written about these in the past. I’ve challenged the ARRL to set a membership goal of 25% of the licensed amateurs in the U.S (<http://www.kb6nu.com/arrl-membership-is-25-asking-too-much/>). I’ve also encouraged the ARRL to play a bigger part in emergency communications research (<http://www.kb6nu.com/go-big-go-early-go-fast-smart/>).

...strategic planning that doesn’t get the membership involved right from the start just isn’t going to work.

Unfortunately, it appears that the ARRL is approaching this issue in typical ARRL fashion. That is, working on these issues in their little cocoon in Newington and then issuing these statements as if they expect everyone to just fall in line. I quote, “From the committee’s vantage point, the status quo is no longer adequate: we need to have a vision of the future and convey it to our current membership.” That approach is doomed to failure. Any “visioning” or strategic planning that doesn’t get the membership involved right from the start just isn’t going to work.

The ARRL HQ staff just doesn’t have the horsepower to pull this off properly. The staff is already pretty bare bones, and they still have to publish QST every month, keep Logbook of the World running, process thousands of license applications, etc., etc. The only way this is going to be a fruitful effort is if they get members—and lots of them—involved in this process.

If you agree with me, please let your director know. Contact your director and tell him that you want to be involved. The status quo of having the HQ staff not working with the membership “is no longer adequate.” That's how we got here in the first place.

Dan, KB6NU, is the author of the “No Nonsense” amateur radio license study guides and blogs about amateur radio at KB6NU.Com. You can email him at cwgeek@kb6nu.com.

Why do we sing "Take me out to the ball game" when we are already there?

The Future of Amateur Radio Is Not In The Numbers.

For close to three decades, ever since the Morse Code requirement for amateur radio was dropped for the Technician license in 1990 and then finally eliminated for all licenses in 2007, there has been a simmering debate about the future of amateur radio and how to make it appealing to young people in a high tech world with a lot of competition for their attention. And for just as long there has been a cheerleading faction that offers up the growing number of licensees as evidence that things are going great, or at least that's what they publicly claim. I am not nearly so optimistic. The future of amateur radio cannot be built solely on a foundation of numbers. Some hard realities need to be confronted if the future of amateur radio is to be as bright as the cheerleaders want us to believe.

Quantity over quality is a dead end.

There is no dispute that the number of licensed amateurs is indeed growing. What is lost in the statistics is that there is a lot of uncertainty about how many of those licensed amateurs actually participate in or care about the avocation to any meaningful degree.

[This blog article from five years ago](#) explains it very well. The **TL,DR** version: A lot of hams got their tickets for some specific purpose like a Boy Scout merit badge or to be part of a neighborhood watch program, and then left amateur radio when that purpose was fulfilled. The theory also assumes that anyone who is willing to pay for membership in a radio-related group can plausibly be

counted as “active” in the hobby. This is a pretty loose assumption, but for now we'll go with it. The other caveat is that there is no accepted definition of “active ham”.

If we recalculate the formula with today's numbers, the ratio is still the same: Only about 23% of licensed amateurs are considered active in the hobby; let's arbitrarily bump that to 30% to include those who are active hams, but not members of a radio club/organization (I place myself in this bucket). I'm willing to bet these admittedly unscientific estimates are close to accurate if not overly generous. From my own experience, there is a lot less enthusiasm for ham radio, even among the hams themselves, than there was back in the 1980's when I first got my ticket.

I realize anecdotal evidence is not real evidence, but it's not nothing, either. It calls attention to a completely valid question: If there are a lot more amateurs than there were thirty or so years ago, why is there no surge in traffic on the ham bands, no increase in club memberships, no higher attendance at hamfests, and no participation swell in on-air contests to correspond with the greater number of licensees? Going only by the raw number of issued licenses, the future of amateur radio should be highly visible and self-sustaining.

In 2007 the [Morse Code requirement was dropped for all license classes](#) and the written exams were dumbed down to the point that one can now get an Extra ticket with absolutely zero on-air experience and just a few evenings of memorizing test answers. The test pass rate was very high and licensing applications soared. For better or worse, lowering the bar of entry, presumably to cultivate the future of amateur radio, at least on the surface appeared to be achieving its intended result.

This little history lesson leads us to an understanding about why we have a lot more radio licensees but not a lot more radio participants: There are a disproportionate number of individuals who are hams on paper only. They have a valid license and are included in the total, but they don't do anything beyond being a number. The cheerleading faction is totally ok with this and even boasts about it.

All those ten year term ham tickets issued during the rush of 2007-2009 will soon expire. I predict in the next year or two we will see the net growth of licensees slow

down or even recede because the bandwagon-jumpers from a decade ago will not bother to renew.

The future of amateur radio needs action, not math.

Lamenting the events & decisions that got us here is also a dead end. The license changes of 1990 and especially 2007 generated a lot of bitter acrimony that still lingers today (I've actually received hate mail). I'm not interested in refighting the civil war. It's long over & done. I want to work with the system we have and play a part, however small, in ensuring a real future for amateur radio, not one that only brags about numbers and has no real heft behind it.

If young people are the key, then we elders need a plan, a list of things we can actually go out and do, that will make a difference. I sincerely hope this is a cause every concerned ham can join no matter what side of the civil war they were on.

In no particular order:

Stop hawking EMCOMM. Emergency communications is important, but it's become a tiresome public relations trope. Ham radio for EMCOMM is overrated now that cellphones and advanced public safety comms systems have nearly 100% uptime, even during stressful situations. I'm not saying EMCOMM is not worthwhile or not relevant, I'm only suggesting that it's not much of a selling point to bring in new hams, particularly the young.

Focus on data modes & video. Young people like to stare at screens. So give them a screen to stare at! Yeesh, this is such a no-brainer! Data modes & video are the closest thing amateur radio has to the way kids communicate these days. It's very relatable and an easy fit to the younger generation.

Forget about Morse Code: Much of the aforementioned civil war revolved around the "Know Code vs. No Code" issue. The Know Coders lost. It's been *ten* years. Let it go already; move on (cue hate mail). Making stiff proclamations about code's efficiency and ability to punch through poor band conditions, albeit true, are not a persuasive argument to get young people interested in radio. If you want to operate CW for your own enjoyment & benefit, fine...go for it. But embrace this basic truth: No modern teenager thinks its cool to tippy-tap dots and dashes [invented 180-plus years ago](#) .

Promote computer-based projects. [Arduino](#) and [Raspberry Pi](#) are becoming major players on the amateur radio landscape. Many books & articles have been written on how to incorporate these technologies into radio. Like data modes and video, Arduino & Raspberry Pi are a natural comfort zone for the young and one of the best ways to plant the seeds of the future of amateur radio.

Encourage contesting. This too is a no brainer. Many teens are involved with team sports, so radio contests are inherently attractive to competitive personalities. Kids can be coached to approach radio just as they would for a sport, then have the personal satisfaction of performing their best in an on-air contest. The parallels between radio contests and youth athletics are obvious: Goal-setting, teamwork, fair play, sportsmanship, achievement. Not capitalizing on these similarities would be an appalling missed opportunity.

Promote alternative/off grid energy. Whenever I give a presentation with my portable solar power equipment, I have the undivided attention of every young person there. They absolutely love the idea of zero emission, "free" electricity you can make yourself. The problem is that they are usually far more interested in the solar panels than they are in the ham radio gear. In fact, I could probably not even bring the radios and they'd still stand there and listen to me. Nevertheless, if alternative energy can be used as a bridge to amateur radio, then it's worth doing. Not everything in radio has to be about radio.

Be more selective. The confluence of lax licensing requirements and inexpensive equipment has attracted people who might not otherwise consider being a ham. A few will seriously pursue the hobby, but the vast majority jump into radio "just for the heck of it" and just as quickly drop away. [This startling piece](#) over on the KB6NU blog lays it all out on the table in a refreshingly blunt tone: "...only about one-half of new hams actually get on the air."

While I do not endorse being aggressively exclusive or elitist, I also do not believe we should waste our time on casual dabblers who are at high risk to quit without making any sincere effort to be a real ham. Before agreeing to be someone's [Elmer](#), established amateurs should consider if the person they are being asked to help is even worth the effort to train them. We need

motivated individuals who want to be turned into skilled, confident, and engaged *amateur radio operators*, and not merely test-passers. By the way, Elmers, this requires a commitment on your part to continue working with new hams *after* they have initially earned their ticket.

The concept of measuring success by how many people pass a test needs to go away and die. We can't foresee everyone's true intentions or control licensing requirements, but we can demand commitment, set high expectations, and mentor only those who show the ability & willingness to be a long term contributor to the future of amateur radio.

What you need to know.

This list could go on much longer. The focus of this article is attracting and retaining young people, but in truth anyone of any age is a potential good candidate to ensure the future of amateur radio. There are a lot of other ideas out there, but it's pretty clear to me that the numbers game is a not a viable path forward.

Why is it called "after dark" when it really is "after light"?

For Sale



A Satellite receiver, a SWR meter and a 300 watt linear. Contact Judith Rainsberger. 833-1732

How come abbreviated is such a long word?

Amateur Calendar

October 3- Corry Amateur Club meeting

October 5 – Radio Association of Erie Club meeting

October 7 - California QSO Party. See www.cqp.org/Rules.html

October 7 - ARRL EME Contest www.arrl.org/eme-contest

October 9 – Columbus Day

October 10 – Wattsburg Wireless Club meeting

October 12 – Union City Wireless Club meeting

October 14 - Pennsylvania QSO Party www.nittany-arc.net

October 14 - Arizona QSO Party www.azqsoparty.org

October 15 - Conneaut ARC Hamfest. See http://www.facebook.com/pg/W8BHZ/events/?ref=page_internal

October 16 – Conneaut Club Meeting

October 21 – VE Exams at Green Township Bldg.

October 21 - New York QSO Party. See www.nyqp.org

October 21 - South Dakota QSO Party. See www.kb0wsw.com/SDQP

October 22 - Illinois QSO Party. See www.w9awe.org/ILQP.html

October 31 - Halloween