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DEAR MS SALAS,

September 23, 1998

I hope that the entire HAM community will take a couple of minutes to reflect on this account of my past 42 years in Armature Radio, when they are considering the new ARRL licensing proposal.

I received my novice call when I was 14 years old, K8LLG, my instructor and mentor was a blind ham with a general class licence. He had a Viking ranger and a HQ----- something or other and I couldn't get enough of 10 meters, at his home. Of course, I also had my own shack a SX-99 and a Globe Chief, CW only, crystal controlled and 75 watts max. I pasted the 5wpm code speed but it was very tuff, the written however was a breeze.

Well as you all know that one year novice licence came up for upgrade very fast. I worked that whole year, with my radio club members, that were my age to get my code speed up to 13 WPM. Exam time came at the Ham Fest in Grand Rapids, Michigan and all my Ham buddies, 6 in all went together for the day. Well 5 passed and one did not, I was the one that failed. I of course didn't get to take the written because I failed the code test, so I waited in the hall while my buddies took the written test. It was a tough ride back home to Grand Haven, Michigan that afternoon with my 5 friends, but I stuck with Amateur Radio and kept practicing Morse code.

Since that time I graduated from High School, spent 6 years in the US Air Force as a air refueling operator on a KC-135 with 18 combat missions over Vietnam, graduated from a Big Ten university with a B.S.E.E. degree, worked in the electronics field, transformer design, manufacture and sales for 33 years and still have my original call K8LLG, as a Tech Plus.

I have taken the general code test 7 times over the last 42 years. I have tried every learning method published even hypnosis and I am still a Tech Plus, still on the air in the lower regions of Ham radio. I have never been able to talk to others on 20 meters or try for DXCC, always sort of looked down on, as a outsider who was never quite able to master the Mores Code and get into the main stream of Ham Radio. Does this mean that if one cannot master this code language technique they are stupid, dumb or don't try hard enough, as some would suggest. Before I graduate from collage in 1967 as a electronics engineering student I was required to know how to use a slide rule before graduation, does this mean that all B.S.E.E. graduates still be required to know how to use a slide rule, of course not.

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Now, is this the way we should promote Ham Radio today. Are we to ask a 14 year old boy or girl today to learn a circus trick or a outdated slight of hand so they can have the privilege of communicating with the world, with static!! Our young people have the entire World Wide Web to use with no code test, no written theory exam, just click on AOL.

I think we should nudge our aging fraternity, Morse code is a thing of the past, its no longer used in the military, aboard ship and I must say very little on the Ham bands. The only time I hear much CW on 20 meters is during a contest and then how many hams are using a keyer or a code reader. I think most of the Hams that are against the new licence proposal passed their code test decades ago, if most had to pass a code test today they would be a Tech Plus like myself. It does not promote Ham radio, it only keeps out the so called "Undesirables".

This letter is not written for your sympathy or because I feel sorry for myself. I wanted to try to convince some of my fellow Hams that code speed doesn't make a good Amateur Radio operator, code speed doesn't help you design a piece of equipment nor build a efficient antenna system. It doesn't help you to be curtious and professional on the air.

I love amateur radio. I want it to grow. I think the new ARRL proposal as written is great. I think we should learn the Morse code as part of our written exam, and I always thought the old one year Novice program was a good idea but to make 13 wpm a prerequisite for advancement any more than we should ask someone to climb a 50 foot tower or take 115 volts ac through our finger tips makes any sense in to days world. The more theory the better, the more operating procedures the better but Morse code is like a Atwater Kent, we love to think about it but no one uses it any longer.

Thanks for your time.

As always Kilo 8 Lima Lima Golf



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