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# THE CMRA **SQUELCH TALE**

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**Central Missouri Radio Association, P.O. Box 283, Columbia, MO 65205**

AMATEUR RADIO SERVING THE PUBLIC

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A Special Service Club

August 1996

## **VANITY GATES OPEN, WE'RE NOW KØSI!!!**

The club has received the in memoriam call KØSI, formerly belonging to SK Wellington B. Stuart. I've tried, and you can send KØSI in CW in a little over 1/3 the time as WDØDVG! It'll be a nice contest and Field Day call. Think I'll start bringing my keyer to the club station to practice for the next big contest.

Ray Lutz also reclaimed an old call, WØOAG. You've had a lot of calls recently, haven't you?!?! Actually, it's really nice to be able to do that, as it gives old timers who have let their license lapse a chance to get back a call that shows their time in the hobby and commitment to ham radio. If a lot of people change their calls over the next few months, I will send out a new roster.

## **GOOD BREAKFAST**

The turnout at the club breakfast on July 27 at Country Kitchen was good, even though the weather caused the fox hunt usually held afterwards to be cancelled. We do this on the last Saturday of the month at 8:00 am at the Country Kitchen on Providence just north of I-70. How about some of you in the club who can't get to meetings turning out for this? It's a good way to keep up as well as a way to meet the new members of the club.

## **AUGUST MEETING**

Our August meeting will be held on the 13th of August in Cafeteria Room B at Boone Hospital on East Broadway in Columbia. We start at 7:00 pm. We will have testing as usual after the meeting. Our attendance has been down somewhat so why don't we all try to make it for this one?

In theory, we should have our old room back at Boone Electric by September. The last time I drove by there construction still seemed well under way, so we will see. If the community room is not ready, we will continue to meet at Boone Hospital as we have been.

## **AMATEUR RADIO TRADER**

If you haven't heard of this, the Amateur Radio Trader is a biweekly shopper type magazine carrying classified advertisements from hams buying and selling all types of radio and computer gear. It tends to be more current than ads appearing in the mainstream amateur press (QST, CQ, etc.). Not a lot of bargains, in general (you can do better at hamfests in terms of price, plus having the opportunity to see before you buy), but a good way to know the approximate value of gear that you are selling or considering buying. A lot of people sell a lot of gear through this magazine, and I find it interesting to read. They have a column called Simpleton's, which gives plans for simple antennas and projects. I'm considering building a 2m quad antenna out of the last issue. Price is \$14.95/ year third class mail or \$34.95/year first class. Contact ART, P. O. Box 3729, Crossville, TN 38557, (800) 774-2623. (No, they're not giving me a free subscription to put this in!!).

## **BALLOON RACES COMING UP**

By the time you read this, the National Hot Air Ballooning Championships will be about a week away. Mark Carpenter, NØZOF, has been instrumental in recruiting operators for this event. Although communications will not be conducted on the ham bands (except for some balloon to ground communications -- try the simplex frequencies around 146.5, and DON'T KEY UP), we have tried to recruit some of our good operators so that communications may proceed in an efficient and professional fashion. Thanks to everyone who volunteered for performing a needed public service function.

## **QUICKIE ANTENNA REVIEW: THE SOLARCON A-99 ANTENNA**

I (AAØUJ) have used a Solarcon A-99 vertical antenna for a few years now, first as a CB antenna and later as a high band vertical from 15-10 meters. This antenna is primarily a CB antenna, and comes from the factory tuned to 27.2 MHz. However, I can use the antenna from 21-29 MHz with an SWR of not over 1.8:1. It handles full legal power easily on 10m, but does not do as well on 15m. Some weathering of the antenna was evident when I took it down recently to replace the mast, but it remains as flexible as a fishing pole, and has withstood 70 mph winds. This antenna costs about \$60 from the discount houses. I have used it in contests to make contacts on 15 meters that I could not with my long wire dipole, as it seems to have a lower angle of radiation, as one would expect. This is a relatively inexpensive and unobtrusive addition to ones antenna farm, and I would recommend it to anyone looking for an addition to a dipole or long wire antenna.

## **SUPPORT CMRA AND AMATEUR RADIO**

## HOW EASY SHOULD IT BE TO GET A HAM LICENSE?

By Mark Foecking, AAØUJ

I imagine we've all heard in some way about the fact that amateur radio as a hobby is declining in popularity. Computer communications, the perceived expense of amateur radio, interference to consumer electronics, restrictive antenna covenants, and the time limitations of many two earner families have all combined to make amateur radio seem difficult to find time and interest for. Many have said that one way to help the hobby is to make the licenses easier to get. This has historical backing; witness the huge increase of licensees after the introduction of the No-code Technician license. Seems like every time the FCC lowers the standards, more people find the time and inclination to get a license. But we also hear from those hams, either those who have been licensed a long time or those who have made Extra in a few months, that the lowering of standards brings poor operators into the service and cheapens the whole hobby.

I made Extra in 5 months, and I know of another who did it in only two. However, I don't feel I am any better operator than a General licensee who has been doing it since before I was born. I also don't feel that CW ability in itself make one a better operator. More versatile, perhaps, but not necessarily superior. With the increased use of digital modes and the phasing out of CW in many commercial and military services, it will become harder to justify the need to know the code for future operators.

If one tunes around the HF bands, particularly 75 and 20 meters, it is rare not to find an argument, hard language, or deliberate interference. There are frequencies which are reminiscent of the Citizen's Band at its very worst. Although, when I hear calls given in these situations, usually they are not new calls. Many are calls issued thirty and forty years ago!! (By the way, both code and theory examinations were more demanding before 1984. I have an old (1983) study guide that has theory required for the General class license that is not even required for Extra now. The only way you could pass the code test was to get one minute of solid copy. No guessing here.) Often, the people participating in these on-the-air free for alls have been licensed for many years, and passed more difficult tests, so the issue of underqualified operators messing up the bands becomes rather clouded. I feel that if you have a contentious personality or trouble expressing yourself without profanity, that a difficult licensing exam is not necessarily going to keep you off the air.

So am I saying that maybe we should lower the standards again? In a way, yes. There are a lot of people who have problems getting to 13 WPM who have little trouble copying 10 WPM (the dreaded HUMP). Perhaps the General/Advanced code requirement could be lowered to 10 or even 8 WPM, along with a greater emphasis on proper operating procedure and courtesy. Maybe the two licenses could be merged into a Voice/Digital license carrying essentially Advanced privileges. I would keep the Extra license basically the way it is, because people who are that interested will put forth the extra effort (pun intended). I would also give Tech-Pluses low power voice privileges on 160 and 40 meters as well, to give them more experience on HF. If the international code requirement is dropped, possibly No-Code Techs could also get these privileges.

I know that many present licensees who have worked very hard to pass their tests will resent their privileges being given to people who have not had to work as

hard. But if it comes down to amateur radio dying a slow death or being infused with new blood, I would rather see the new blood, and also an increase in policing efforts by OO's and the FCC. This is a very controversial subject, but one which all of us should think about. 73 OM/YL de AAØUJ...

Comments or rebuttals are welcome, and can be sent to mfoeckin@mail.coin.missouri.edu or 416 Alexander Ave. Columbia, MO 65203. I'd be glad to publish them here. Let me know if you want you name published.

*USE THAT LICENSE!!!!*

## Talk up Ham Radio

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\*\*\*Support CMRA!!!!\*\*\*  
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