



VOLUME 57 ISSUE 01 January 2007

**XMAS PARTY 2006**

The PPRAA Christmas party was held at the Country buffet on Academy on December 13<sup>th</sup> from 6-9 p.m. and was such a success an extra table was required to seat everyone. According to Mike Anderson WV7T, Christmas party chairman, "Folks showed up I had not seen in in years." Here are a few pictures from the party.



Mo up front and Jim ABØUK and his lovely wife are all the way in the back.



President Mike Allison KØMLA



Su Goguen KCØPRN and her husband



Secretary Susan Allison KCØSYA

## IN OTHER WORDS...

On December 19, 2006 the FCC ruled to drop the Morse code testing requirement to gain HF privileges, joining many other countries, including Canada and the UK. Dropping the Morse code element from testing has been a hotly debated subject but with the latest move by the FCC it was inevitable that the debate would continue and the jokes would begin.

The first comment I received was from Jeff Steinkamp N7YG from Tucson, Arizona who offered this news item:

*It was announced today that Kellogg's and the Federal Communications Commission have signed a pact to issue Amateur Radio Licenses on specially marked boxes of Corn Flakes.*

*In this unprecedented move the FCC believes this will not hurt amateur radio but allow all individuals to receive an amateur radio license without having to demonstrate any skills with the exception of being able to use a pair of scissors to cut out their operating permit from the breakfast cereal box.*

*Kellogg's spokesperson commented that they were proud to have been selected by the government to be the issuer of licenses for amateur radio in the US and hope to soon make an agreement with other cereal loving countries. They also expect that will be issuing certificates of achievement for DXCF for confirmed contacts with 100 corn flakers.*

Wes Wilson KØHBZ quickly followed with, “Gee, and I was sure it would be Cracker Jack boxes!”

All jokes aside, I was curious to know what people really thought about dropping the Morse code requirement for acquiring HF privileges so I asked some questions. I got answers ranging from “Gee, it is a done deal so do our comments really mean anything,” from Rick Brown KØSU and “The time for voicing opinions was when the FCC was asking for them,” from Roger Eslick NØVR

to “...perhaps [licensing exams] should get **really** relevant and cover knowledge of modern digital encoding systems, spread spectrum, and the like...” from Pete McCollum NØTDM (“No-code Tech”).

I asked a few simple questions and came up with a wide spectrum of answers. Even though my questions came after the FCC ruling and some hams considered them “late” they did not fail to respond.

Pete McCollum NØTDM also wrote, “Removing the code **requirement** was the right thing to do. We all understand the pros and cons of learning and/or using The Code, [but] in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is no reason for it to be **required** for a license. I assume that certain band segments are still CW-only and I think this is very appropriate.

“Should the 21<sup>st</sup> century ham license test have a suitable replacement for the code requirement—[such] as demonstrating an ability to handle emergency traffic?”

John Evans NØHJ wrote, “Well, I am not surprised [about the FCC ruling] at all. I really don’t see a reason to keep the testing for Morse code. It is just one of many modes after all. I think most folks that have issues with [Morse code want] ham radio to give them some sort of distinction or honor from the rest of the world. I personally think that we each walk our own path and make our own distinctions as we do so. If all we have to make us feel good about ourselves is passing some test or being a member of some elite organization, then I think we are in trouble.

“Having said that, I do hope [the FCC] keeps a good chunk of the bands for us who still use Morse code.

“Surprisingly, a fellow work at Hewlett-Packard told me today he had been studying Morse code and hopes to test soon. He hadn’t heard about the testing being eliminated, but once

## NONPROFIT STATUS

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I updated him, he decided...to study faster and hopefully pass before the testing went away next month.”

Bob Haggart NØCTV became a ham between 1978 and 1979 in Germany. “My first American call was KA3CSE.

“On one hand I’ve always felt that having to learn Morse code to be able to TALK was always out mode, but on the other hand, I know that a lot of hams really enjoy working Morse code. I applaud them.

“Since the mid 1980s and beyond I...wanted the FCC to make the code a separate division and nobody, NOBODY, could use it unless they had a permit for it. [Having]...a standard driver’s license, you cannot drive an 18-wheeler or a bus or a train or a plane. I think you get the picture. Having something given to you, [you don’t respect it], but make it so you have to [work for it, make it] special, you would treasure it.

“You could be a novice but having a code license would set you apart from the voice guys...yes, even the extras!”

Some amateurs who responded offered a bit of history, like Roger NØVR. “The original Amateur’s Code was written by Paul M. Segal W9EEA in 1928.

“The Radio Amateur is

- ✚ CONSIDERATE...never knowingly operates in such a way as to lessen the pleasure of others.
- ✚ LOYAL...offers loyalty, encouragement and support to other amateurs, local clubs and the American Radio Relay League, through which Amateur Radio in the United States is represented nationally and internationally.
- ✚ PROGRESSIVE...with knowledge abreast of science, a well-built and efficient station and operation above reproach.

- ✚ FRIENDLY...slow and patient operating when requested; friendly advice and counsel to the beginner; kindly assistance, cooperation and consideration for the interests of others. These are the hallmarks of the amateur spirit.
- ✚ BALANCED...radio is an avocation, never interfering with duties owed to family, job, school or community.
- ✚ PATRIOTIC...station and skill always ready for service to country and community.

Roger goes on to write that “[now] is the time to get on with life, help people who want to learn and use code, and offer assistance to those who don’t.”

I asked if amateurs thought Morse code (CW) was outdated. “J. C. Gainer KC7GOL wrote that “CW is no more outdated than PSK 31 is outdated. It is just a mode.”

Rick KØSU wrote that “...CW is not totally outdated as it is still used commercially in some places. Actually, it is still used by the military in some places despite what people may think.” Rick agreed with other hams that “...it was time for CW to go as a ham radio requirement. Basically, it was used as a filter to keep some folks out, although if you listen on the air you can tell it didn’t keep all of the bad operators out. There are many, many hams who passed a code test and never have made a CW contact in their [lives].” Rick enjoys “...the occasional CW contact but quite honestly most of my HF operation is on PSK 31.”

The Morse code requirement has kept many amateurs from upgrading even though they passed the elements for the General and Extra licenses. At one VE session I attended an amateur had passed everything but code and he tested on several occasions. He was down to the end of his

**Ø-BEAT DEADLINE**

The deadline for the February 2007 Ø-Beat is Jan. 25th.

Send all submissions to the editor via e-mail, US Mail, telephone or in person.

Please feel free to submit an article, joke, picture, or news – we need your fresh content!

365-day period to pass code and he failed again. The Morse code requirement was a stumbling block for many amateurs, even those who eventually passed and went on to Extra, like Dennis Major NØABC.

“Were Morse code not a requirement for any ham license then I probably would have gotten my first license in the late 1960s, and I most likely would have made it to General. In lieu of that, I went with CB (OK—“Chicken Band”) in 1971 long before the big CB craze. Then I enlisted in the Air Force at the end of 1971 and became a Ground Radio Communications Equipment Repairman—I got to play with radios to my heart’s content and then some!

“It was until 1995 when two co-workers suggested that I go to the PPRAA swapfest coming up in three or four days at Liberty High School and test for the no-code Tech license. I didn’t even know they were hams until then (Tim Nader KBØREH and Bob Armstrong WA4SV=>AEØB=>WA4SVJ). So I looked over/studied the materials and passed the two exam elements (Novice and Tech) for my first (no-code) license [and was granted] KBØSXC. In a few years I received credit for the General element, thinking that would give me [the] incentive to learn Morse code. It didn’t work.

“Finally, in 2001, Jerry VerDuft ADØA gave a class in Morse code and I managed to squeak by [on the test]! (Thanks again, Jerry) I went back to the next test session and got my General, and then a few months later [passed] Extra. [I asked myself], “What else can I do” and became a Volunteer Examiner.

“Last Sunday I saw the following short post: “I resigned as a VE yesterday. How do I unsubscribe from this list?” ...his actions... [do] nothing to enhance [amateur radio]. It won’t bring code back as a requirement. [He] still intends to Elmer, teach code and other classes and continue to enjoy ham radio, [so] why not remain a VE and continue to see the “spark” in those that “get it” and advance to the next level? He could also promote his code classes and the use of Morse code at exam sessions.”

Dennis has a point and it is one that other amateurs have made when I first asked my questions. Other hams, like Christopher L. Reeves KR4EZ believe “...the bad thing about [eliminating] the code is that many will never discover how great CW is to operate. I started as a

**PRESIDENT:**

Mike Allison KØMLA  
KØMLA@arrl.net / 590-4812

**VICE PRESIDENT:**

Doug Nielsen N7LEM  
N7LEM@usa.net / 282-8554

**SECRETARY:**

Susan Allison KCØSYA  
susan@allisonfam.name / 590-4812

**TREASURER:**

Daniel R. Beals ACØCC  
dan80915@adelphia.net / 597-9947

**Ø-BEAT EDITOR:**

Jackie Cornwell ACØCA  
ACØCA@arrl.net / 632-8254

**DIRECTOR/PAST PRESIDENT:**

Christopher Taylor NC6T  
NC6T@arrl.net / 260-8081

**DIRECTOR:**

Mike Anderson WV7T  
WV7T@arrl.net / 229-8610

**DIRECTOR:**

Suisei Goguen KCØPRN  
cobweb@divide.net / 481-8684

**DIRECTOR:**

Paul Moraine NØPWM  
pmoraine@msn.com / 638-0273

**DIRECTOR:**

Jim Harris, ABØUK  
ABØUK@yahoo.com / 641-8477

No-code Tech and unwillingly learned code to get on the HF bands. Then I found out that CW was more fun than voice. Without the code requirement many will never make this discovery.”

Mike Dassero KØTER disagrees, doubting that “...Morse is going to go away for quite a while.” He explains that CW “...still gets through better than most modes although some of the newer (expensive) TNCs do an outstanding job in weak signal conditions, but that requires a computer and buying the TNC. Morse still requires just the transceiver and the human brain.”

Even Pete McCollum NØTDM believes “...Morse code communications is outdated and has been for decades. CW as a transmission mode and is most certainly NOT outdated. It is used in many modern digital communication systems, including things like garage door openers.” Well that explains what my Elmer told me about hearing code in appliances and all around me. Looks like he was right.

Pete agrees that it was time for Morse code to go as a “requirement”, “...with the emphasis on **requirement**. Morse is a fine historical system for those who choose to use it.” Using Morse as a requirement is not the solution for making it more difficult to get an amateur license, according to Pete, but he goes on to say that “[Within] a generation it will be come harder to find folks with good Morse skills. If hams are to survive they will have to be relevant and useful in today’s world and Morse has very little “practical” place any more. During a major emergency who is more needed, the ham with the (typically) non-portable HF CW rig or the guy with the working satellite phone?”

To answer Pete, not all CW rigs are non-portable, as many of you may already know, and a satellite phone is only useful if there are satellites to pick up the signal or if the satellites haven’t been jammed. In the case, CW rigs, portable or not, with their low power requirements would be more useful, but that’s another article altogether.

The future does not look as bleak as some amateurs would have it. According to Dave Sloan NØEOP, “...some emails that I have read from

other countries that have done away with CW, the CW activity has actually increased.” Dave doesn’t think issuing separate licenses for every mode is an option because “...the FCC could not afford to continue to provide free licenses to hams.”

The grumbling continues, but so do the jokes. Karl Lues believes this “...might be the answer to Radio Shack’s sales problems. Just put a 1500-watt rig on the shelf...with one of their knowledgeable sales persons who can whisper into [the customer’s] ear, “You know you are supposed to have a license to operate this, but I won’t tell.” Then cut funding to the FCC!”

Kurt Savegnago disagrees. “[The] change in rules is not going to do one iota’s harm to the current situation. With cell phones, FGRs, and, yes, even CB radios that are still out there, folks have plenty of communication choices and don’t have to mess with amateur radio. The only people who will get involved are those who pick up the manuals and find they might be interested in experimenting with the intricacies and the art of radio communications. You are not going to see a bunch of Joe Blows spending money on equipment just to screw up your airwaves. It costs too much and those beam antennas really get some home owners associations [upset]. With an ATS-3 or 3A, [you] can toss up a wire and indeed get some long distance communications with offending the neighbors. To do that, yes, they will need to learn the code and established operators should be ready for some on air elmering should it come to that.”

One thing that amazes me the most is the spirit of cooperation and the generous offer of help to anyone who wants to learn about amateur radio. It is one of the reasons I decided to get my license and to become a Volunteer Examiner. All things change, and mostly for the better, but it is the adaptable spirit of the amateur that will keep Morse code and amateur radio alive.

Where does amateur radio go from here? Rick KØSU offers this bit of wisdom. “How we treat new [amateurs] on HF with no code is going to make a big difference in on the air activity. I really think this could help us to increase the

ranks and lower the average age of the folks in the hobby. I certainly hope so!”

There are no easy answers and no real solutions. The fact is that the Morse code requirement is no longer a factor in getting an amateur radio operator’s license. Whether or not it is an outdated mode or a bit of fascinating history from the past that still beats text messaging in being the fast means of communication, I think we will all find what immigrants to America found out when their grandchildren started asking questions about their background. Curiosity usually skips a generation, but it is alive and well and waiting for an opportunity. Morse code on HF is not going to go away. The dits and dahs on the airwaves are like a magical code that will spark an interest in those with a sense of adventure and curiosity. Tell someone they can’t do something and they will find a way. I’m certain there are magicians who know the secrets of decoding the mysterious music of Morse code who will always be willing to teach what they know.

73 as always...

Jackie Cornwell  
ACØCA  
Zero Beat editor  
[zerobeat@ppraa.org](mailto:zerobeat@ppraa.org)  
[ac0ca@arrrl.net](mailto:ac0ca@arrrl.net)

**Jess Miley**  
**KØTAA**

719 W. 7<sup>th</sup>, Florence, CO  
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**AMATEUR RADIO LICENSE EXAMINATIONS**

The Pikes Peak Radio Amateur Association Volunteer Examiner (VE) team holds testing sessions at 9 AM at the Colorado Technical University, 4435 North Chestnut (just west of I-25 and just south of Garden of the Gods Rd).

Exam fee is \$14.00 for 1, 2, 3, or all 4 elements at a session.

Checks should be payable to ARRL/VEC. For further details and a list of what to bring, contact Erik Mugele KGØXE or Dennis Major NØABC, or visit the PPRAA web site.

Mark your calendars:

Feb. 10, Apr. 14, June 9, Aug. 11, Oct. 13, Dec. 8

**El Paso County Emergency Operations Center  
(EOC) KCØMWQ  
101 West Costilla**



Amateur Radio - HF, UHF, VHF, ATV



Amateur Radio - UHF, VHF, Packet, State and County Radios



Meeting room with areas for different County, City, Red Cross, Search and Rescue, and other agencies that may be called in during emergency activation.



They all have a cabinet assigned with telephones, telephone books, and special forms needed to supply information to their departments.



We are looking for interested amateur radio operators to help man areas with available equipment and to help expand the ATV and portable packet capabilities."

Doc Cornell WØMCT

## Morse Code: Obsolete Hobby or Crucial Skill?

Morse code, or as it is used in amateur radio, CW, is indeed a low tech mode of communication; but out dated, it is not.

Most everyone, especially those outside the ham ranks, think that the (truly) high tech cell phones are so ubiquitous that they completely surpass any communication need such as amateur radio, and most especially the Morse code used in the CW mode.

The generally accepted opinion is that anything high tech completely replaces the need for low tech; therefore, we should dispense with and relegate to history this obsolete Morse code along with its CW form of radio use in the amateur radio bands. *Au contraire! (Quite the contrary!)*

This is a great example of how the future of America is threatened by shallow and convenient-for-the-moment thinking as opposed to learning from what has happened in the past and adjusting our behavior accordingly for the purpose of future survival.

I ask you one question that can, in itself, answer whether Morse code is still necessary. What happened to the cell phone service in Manhattan on September 11, 2001?

Cell phones, that high tech wonder none of us can really live without any more, are not to be relied upon *exclusively* in the wake of a grand scale emergency. When, in the future, such an emergency takes place on a nationwide scale—and this is “when” not “if”—what will people most easily be able to rig together in order to communicate over distances when all the cell phones, land lines, and internet services have collapsed? They need a device that can be used to communicate and only requires power be turned on and off in short and long intervals to facilitate communication.

When that day comes we will all groan and yearn for the previous wisdom and vision to have preserved the most basic low tech form of communicating. Oh, that we only had some pre-determined code that would enable us to

communicate using the tools and equipment available, some form of sound or light. Too bad we so quickly abandoned that old low tech primitive and out dated form of communication.

I am not a farmer or the son of a farmer, but an old farmer once told me a truth he learned that served him very well during times of difficulty. It has served me quite well throughout my own life. That valuable principle is **Diversity**. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. It is true in farming. It is true in investing. It is true in education and developing life skills. It also holds true in protecting and defending our freedoms and the greatness of America.

We, as Americans, so quickly leave our roots. Rather than diversify we too often abandon the old and totally replace it with whatever is new. The new is necessary, good and right, but it should never to be a complete replacement for the old, only a new way to diversify in order to strengthen us and deepen our roots, to sustain us in difficult times. America does this in many ways.

Let us not embrace the new only to abandon the old. We should always be open to the new, but test it and prove it carefully. Yes, add the tested and proven new to our repertoire, but never abandon the old unless it has been proven incorrect or wrong. Diversify. Don't just replace. Must we continue to relearn these costly truths over and over?

I will never forget something my fifth grade teacher taught us in history. I never seemed to listen much in school in those days—especially in history—but somehow this one lesson stuck. We were studying the great Roman Empire.

“How was it that such a great and powerful empire such as Rome could ever fall?”

The answer that my teacher offered has made me think for the last 40 years. “It fell from the inside. It became weak, soft, decadent, self-serving and morally bankrupt. It became so weak that there was no will to fight for truth.” Can we not learn from history?

Here, we are faced with yet another such question. Are we to abandon Morse code because it is old? Because it is low tech? Because it is out

moded and out dated? May it never be! The day will come when we will have need of every resource available to us and Morse code will very likely be at the top of the list. Amateur radio operators have long preserved this knowledge and skill. Just because the FCC is short sighted by not seeing this as the valuable asset it is to this country does not mean that hams need be equally short sighted.

In a time when the popularity of ham radio seems to be waning, let us use this as the great service that we can do for our country and our freedom. Let us promote Morse code as never before. Let us use the challenge of keeping Morse code alive and well as the instrument that will actually keep ham radio alive and well. Let us preserve it so that it may one day help to preserve the freedoms, values and truths that have made America strong and good.

The ball is in our court. It is our opportunity and responsibility to hit it out of the park. Certainly, we must not just stand by and allow it to fly by us only to say years later, "Boy, THAT was a mistake!"

Guest columnist  
Phil Leach KKØPL

### **PPRAA MEETING INFORMATION**

The Pikes Peak Radio Amateur Association meets monthly at 7 PM on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month at the El Paso County Health Department Auditorium, 305 S. Union Blvd, downstairs at the apex of the two buildings. For a map, please visit our web site at <http://www.qsl.net/ppraa/> or contact any of the board members for more information.

## PPRAA PRESIDENT'S CORNER



As I look back on 2006, two things come immediately to mind. First, the last half of this year was a whirlwind for me, from getting a new job and being elected President of the PPRAA to going back to college for some graduate classes and spending time with the family.

Second, I believe that this will be a year that will go down in history for Amateur Radio. The two decisions made by the FCC to reallocate some bands to removing the CW testing requirement will change amateur radio for many years to come.

Next year will be an interesting one for both the PPRAA and amateur radio in general. The club is working on field day and the swapfest and I hope to have a couple of special events. The field day co-chairs are Dan, KBØPPM and Mike WV7T. These two guys have some great ideas for field day. Rob N7LV has agreed to be the Swapfest chair for this year, which will be held in June. Rob has some great help already, but if you can donate some time to help with this endeavor I'm sure that he won't turn you away. I also hope to have a couple of club sponsored special events this year. Mike WV7T is the coordinator for these events but I came up with a couple of ideas: a special event at the annual picnic and another around the club's anniversary on December 14<sup>th</sup>. This year will mark the club's 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary.

I truly hope that 2007 is a great year for the club and amateur radio in general, I also wish every member and their families a very happy new year.

73

Mike, KØMLA  
PPRAA President

SILENT KEY  
RICH HIGH WØHEP

Rich High WØHEP became a silent key December 4th, 2006. He was 63.

Rich was originally licensed in 1956 in Telford, PA as WN3IIO, and later, W3IIO. He and his XYL Elaine, WØHEM (formerly K3JSP) moved to Denver in 1961. He was very active in many areas of ham radio over his half century in the hobby. In the early 1990s he discovered the challenge and the fun of QRP and became an early advocate for low power amateur radio Rich co-founded the Colorado QRP Club in 1994 which has grown into a world-wide organization of over 800 members. Rich was CQC member #1. He was the editor of the club's award-winning newsletter, *The Low Down*, for many years.

Along with his interest in QRP he also enjoyed CW, contesting, DX, and Field Day. He actively participated in the Colorado QRP Club's competitive Field Day team and played a key operator role in the club's record-setting Field Day performances in recent years.

Rich was a recipient of the ARRL's DXCC Millennium Award for working 100 or more of the entries on the ARRL DXCC list in one year.

A memorial service was held on December 9th in Denver and was attended by many of his friends from the Amateur Radio community. Contributions may be made to the American Diabetes Association in Rich's name.

(Thanks to the Colorado QRP Club for this write-up)

# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

All memberships are up for renewal at the end of the year. If you haven't renewed your membership yet, please use the form at the bottom of this page, and fill out all of the appropriate information so that the Membership Committee can update the records. Include your family so they can share the value and the fun. If you know someone interested in joining, make a copy for them or have them visit PPRAA on the web and download a copy of the PDF file at [www.qsl.net/ppraa/membership.html](http://www.qsl.net/ppraa/membership.html).

Membership Application for the Pikes Peak Radio Amateur Association, Inc. P.O. Box 16521, Colorado Springs, CO 80935-6521	
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