

Norm Fusaro, W3IZ, Editor

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**Remember When? Remember Now.**

By Norm Fusaro, W3IZ

At one time or another we have all drifted back to happier, simpler times to help ease the stresses of life. While many professionals might agree that an occasional trip down memory lane is healthy and often therapeutic, few would recommend that we live in the past. Our human brains are wired to remember things that are comforting and suppress unpleasant memories. That is why we tend to use phrases like "the good old days" even if the time in reference was peppered with hardship.

Depending on how you look at it, ham radio like the automobile, has either hardly changed over the last 100 years or has advanced dramatically because of technological progress. Today's automobiles are loaded with safety features and convenience gimmicks yet the basic car is still a wheeled vehicle that burns fossil fuel in an internal combustion engine in order to transport passengers from point A to point B. In comparison radio operators still modulate and demodulate electromagnetic signals to communicate with stations near and far. Computer processing and micro electronics play a big part in how these illustrations have evolved, but have things really changed?

Amateur Radio is just one of many sectors where we see state-of-the-art technology blended with traditional concepts. A trip to any marina will find modern sailboats made from composite materials and loaded with the latest navigational electronic devices but the basic component, harnessing energy from the wind to propel a vessel, has not changed in the thousands of years since its discovery. I am sure that you can think of your own examples where the application of modern technology has reshaped an old-fashioned idea, but the point is that while it is nice to remember and replicate things from the past, we live in the present.

Many people have an image of Amateur Radio as a nostalgic remembrance of another time when radio seemed to be magical when in fact it has always been cutting edge and futuristic. This portrayal of ham radio is reinforced by radio amateurs themselves through their reluctance to accept change and their insistence on preserving old technologies. The propensity to look back is not as prevalent in other activities as it is in Amateur Radio. When I go fishing I don't run into any anglers sporting woven rattan creels and bamboo fishing poles yet there is not a day that goes by when I am not reminded that "real radios glow in the dark" or some other witty reference to bygone times. How far back do we want to go to be authentic before it becomes absurd? "If it ain't spark it ain't radio?"

Years ago companies like Heath provided a way for many to get involved with Amateur Radio through kit building. The radio kit was less expensive than factory produced gear and, depending on the skill level of the builder, the finished products performed pretty well. Maintenance and repairs were easily performed because the builder had an intimate knowledge of the circuitry. Today, mass production and robotic manufacturing processes help drive down the cost of electronic equipment and in many situations make replacing a device more cost effective than repairing it. A current manufacturer of Amateur Radio that started life as a kit company quickly experienced a similar evolution. After a few

short years of producing kits, the company found that they could offer a better product at a lower cost by providing assembled circuit boards populated with surface mount components. Assembly is a matter of plugging-in boards and configuring systems similar to how a computer is built. Digital electronics has allowed the experimenter to trade-in the soldering iron for computer software codes and the term home-brewing, once a common ham radio activity, has now given way to a more descriptive phrase -- soft-brewing.

Developers like Joe Taylor, K1JT have completely re-written the rules when it comes to EME, meteor scatter and other exotic digital modes once reserved for the eccentric radio amateur. Today many hams employ WSJT software with modest stations to ricochet information to one another via the lunar surface. Other software experimenters are developing new modes and tools for the radio amateur to exploit the power of digital processing. Commercial interests are able to offer feature packed equipment that is relatively less expensive than gear offered in the past, and hams are finding applications for this stuff that could only be imagined a short time ago.

Amateur radio has many examples of innovation and creativity. Sometimes an idea can be ahead of its time. Take for instance an article that appeared in the July 1934 issue of QST that suggested "International Round Table Nets and Globe Circling Relays" using an elaborate network of tape machines and relays to remotely control HF stations as far as 200 miles away so that the ARRL broadcast could be made simultaneously in all 48 United States. We are able to do that exact thing today using Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) but there are some who will argue that this is not "real" radio. Phooey!

ARRL founder Hiram Percy Maxim, W1AW was a forward thinker who moved in the same circles as Edison, Ford and Firestone, people who changed our world. Maxim was innovative and has many inventions to his credit. When the spark gap transmitter used at Maxim's station 1AW, could no longer generate radio signals it was replaced by a modern transmitter that used vacuum tubes. When asked if there were plans to repair the spark gap transmitter Maxim acknowledged the position of employing modern technology when he remarked "The voice of the spark set at 1AW will not be heard again." (QST, January 1923, pg 14)

Maxim was always looking beyond the horizon. Displayed in a showcase at ARRL headquarters is the Elser-Mathis cup. This trophy was inspired by Col Fred Johnson Elser, W6FB and SCM Lt Cmdr Stanley Mathes, K1CY after Elser learned of Maxim's fascination with the planet Mars. The unique wooden cup is waiting to be awarded to any radio amateur for the first Amateur Radio Contact between Earth and Mars. I am certain that "tongue may have been firmly planted in cheek" when this award was conceived but I believe that this trophy may be awarded to some radio amateur in my lifetime.

I would like to think that if Mr. Maxim were here today he would be very happy to see that Amateur Radio and the ARRL have stood the test of time and continue to attract newcomers to the hobby nearly 100 years since the League was founded. However I would not be surprised if The Old Man shook his head in bewilderment to find that we have spent much time and energy worshipping the past instead of looking ahead to the future.

It may be comforting to stroll down memory lane and fire up the vintage radio for the evening. The warm glow of the tubes and the refreshing aroma of heat radiating from the chassis will create soothing reflections and transport you back to a time when there was no internet, e-mail or cell phones. As you blow smoke rings from your briarwood pipe and replicate the authenticity of what you refer to as "real radio," try to remember that the icons of technology that you pay homage to were once state-of-the-art, modern appliances that filled the dreams of many. As much as Amateur Radio owes to its past, adoration of vintage radio should not take away from Amateur Radio's future.

**New Arrl Award Products Available**

The ARRL now offers custom awards for clubs, groups and individuals for recognition and achievement, offering a wide range of styles and price levels. Each award is customized with your text and the ARRL logo.

Products offered include a tan leather rectangular key fob with a call sign on one side and the ARRL diamond on the other; a rosewood pen and pencil set with personalization available on the pen and pencil, as well as the presentation box; an 8x10 inch wood plaque with blue plate engraved with up to 14 lines of gold text; a swiveling wood desk clock that holds a photo or an insert --- personalize this with up to 25 characters on two lines, and a beautiful crystal 3-inch etched globe on a crystal base, presented in a velvet-lined gift box.

Do you have that one ham in your group who comes out every Field Day, rain or shine, who stays from beginning to end, helping out in any way possible? Acknowledge their involvement with a beautiful gift that shows how much you value their service? What about the ham in your club that has been a member for 25 years and has yet to miss a meeting? Show them how much you appreciate their contribution with a small personalized token. Do you have an Elmer you would like to thank with more than words? A personalized gift with their name and call sign on it would remind them of you every time they used it.

Each item features the ARRL diamond logo. Award orders will be processed and delivered within 20 working days. View the entire award product line, as well as ARRL clothing items, at the Barker Specialties Web site <<http://www.barkerstores.com/arrl>>.

### **ARRL Insurance Benefit**

Bill Morine, N2COP

ARRL Public Relations Committee Member

Several years ago, my automobile insurance carrier mailed me a new policy. I was about to file it away with my other papers when my eye caught the title of a section of the policy that read, "CB Radio/Telephone Exclusion". I read the language and called my carrier. The claims department spokesperson confirmed that my amateur radio equipment was excluded from the basic coverage however for an additional \$90 per year I could buy a rider that would cover my ham radio equipment. This was a nice offer but my equipment would still be subject to my policy's \$500 deductible. Another example of an inadequate insurance policy is the case of my buddy whose ham shack suffered a lightning strike. He had a \$1,000 deductible on his policy and to make matters worse, his claims adjuster had no knowledge about amateur radio. My friend has been off the air for several months as he and the adjuster argue over the process of repairing his HF transceiver.

That's when I realized another benefit of ARRL membership. - ARRL's "All-Risk" Ham Radio Equipment Insurance Plan. This is a comprehensive program that protects Amateur Radio equipment in your home car from all risk form which includes fire, lightning, theft, collision, and other accidents and natural hazards. Coverage can also be provided for computer software and hardware as well as station accessories such as antennas, rotators and towers.

Coverage is affordable and in most cases substantially lower in price than adding a rider to your current homeowner's or automobile policy. As with all insurance products, you should read the provisions of coverage carefully by going to <http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/regulations/insurance/equipment.html> If you're like me and you shop around for insurance then you will find that this is a good deal. What's more is the underwriter even has an agent dedicated just to ham radio claims so it's nice to know that if you should ever have to file a claim you will be working with someone who is familiar Amateur Radio.

**Once Affiliated, Always Affiliated**

Once your club is affiliated, it remains affiliated however a club can be listed as active or inactive. To stay actively affiliated, you must complete and submit an Annual Report at least once a year. Your club's status will be changed to inactive should 2 years go by without our receiving an Annual Report. Your club can return to active status at any time by simply completing and submitting an Annual Report.

Your club can update its record anytime important information changes. Information such as club officers, meeting time and place, etc. should be kept current so that prospective members can get in touch with you.

Updating your club record is as simple as following the update link on the ARRL Affiliated Club web page:  
[www.arrl.org/club](http://www.arrl.org/club)

If you need to update your Special Service Club record please visit the SSC page at:  
<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/club/forms/fsd7/index.html> >

You may direct any questions about clubs to [clubs@arrl.org](mailto:clubs@arrl.org)

#### ARRL Affiliation Milestones for December 2007

<b>10 Year</b>	*W2	SNJ	Delaware Valley Ragchew Club N2HQX
	*W3	EPA	Camp Watonka Amateur Radio Club KB3BUM
	*W4	VA	Franklin County Amateur Radio Club W4FCR
		KY	Big Sandy Amateur Radio Club K4PGA
	*W0	MN	Stillwater Amateur Radio Association W0JH
		NE	Strategic Air Command Memorial Amateur Radio Club K0AIR
<b>75 Year</b>	*W2	SNJ	Manchester Area FM Group W2SV
	*W3	WPA	Triple'A' Amateur Radio Association, Inc. N3TN
		WPA	Beaver Valley Amateur Radio Association W3SGJ
	*W0	IA	Des Moines Radio Amateur Association W0AK

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