



# THE COMMUNICATOR

## Newsletter of the TAMAMI AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Incorporated 30 November 1984 – Venice, Florida  
Mailing Address: 1419 E. Manasota Beach Rd., Englewood, FL 34223-6341  
Web Site -- <http://tamiamiarc.tripod.com>  
W4AC Repeaters – 146.805 MHz(-), 444.100 MHz(+) both w/100 Hz PL



-- APRIL 2006 --

### -- PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE --

My trip to Sedona, Arizona where, amazingly, I ran into snow, and an extended visit from my stepmother, who resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico, have kept me a bit out of the TARC loop lately. I was sorry to miss the birthday celebration of Bernie Holtman-W4GO at Peach's, but I did enjoy seeing the pictures. Congratulations, Bernie!

As I write this, we are making final preparations for the set up and operation of the TARC Special Event Station K4S at the Venice Sharks Tooth Festival. This event will take place in the field across Harbor Drive from Sharky's on the Pier. We will set up after breakfast at Mel's on Friday, April 7, and the station will be in operation throughout the weekend. I encourage TARC members to come out, help set up, help operate, or just stop by to say "Hi," and wish us well.

VY 73 de Konrad-WA3RRS

### -- K4S ON THE AIR --

The Tamiami ARC will be operating Special Event Station K4S from the Venice Sharks Tooth Festival 07-09 April. Proposed frequencies are:

21.313	18.153
14.272	7.233

The station should come on the air before noontime on Friday, 07 April, and operate until 5 PM or later. On 08 and 09 April, K4S should be heard from 9 AM until 5 PM or later. If you work this TARC operation, you can receive a photo QSL showing an overview of the Festival and the K4S crew in action. QSL with SASE to W4JS.

If you plan to attend this Festival, please stop by the TARC booth for an eyeball QSO!

### -- TARC WEEKLY NETS --

Try to remember our two weekly TARC 2-meter nets. The TARC Simplex Net meets every Tuesday at 7:30 PM on 146.580 MHz; the TARC Net is held every Thursday, except on meeting dates, at 7:30 PM on our 146.805 W4AC Repeater (- 600 Hz offset and 100 Hz PL tone required). Take the time to check in and keep us updated on your activities.

### -- APRIL MEETING --

Our next TARC meeting will be at 7:00 PM on 13 April 2006 in the Community Room of The Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice, 601 South Tamiami Trail (Business US 41), across from the Venice Regional Health Center. After the business meeting, a program of interest will be presented. Come on out and show support of your club.

### --VANITY CALL SIGN RENEWALS --

All initial Vanity call signs were issued in November 1996, such that their renewals will be coming up later this year. While renewal applications can only be filed within 90 days of expiration, the FCC is already paying some attention to an inundation of renewals. (*Note: This does not apply to Extra Class licensees who selected a personal call sign when the "N" and "AA" series call signs were made available prior to 1996.*)

Those opting to retain their Vanity calls for the next 10-year license term must pay the current regulatory fee, now \$21.90, when renewing. (*Note: This fee may change in August or September.*) If the licensee no longer wants to keep a Vanity call, no fee is required, and the applicant should request a sequentially assigned call sign.

Vanity call sign renewals can be done on line, if the applicant has both their FRN and CORES password, with fees paid on line or mailed to the FCC's collection agency in Pittsburgh. Licensees filing on paper must use FCC Form 605 (main form) and FCC Form 159 (remittance advice). Use of the FRN is again mandatory.

Of significant interest, while the ARRL now handles routine license renewals for members at no cost, it does not process Vanity calls which require fee payments. However, the ARRL plans to add that capability in the near future.

The W5YI-VEC is already offering to handle renewals of Vanity licenses for a total cost of \$29.95, which includes the FCC fee plus a service fee.

(From *The ARRL Letter*, Vol. 25, No. 10 and "Washington Readout," Fred Maia-W5YI, April 2006 CQ)

## TAMIAMI AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

### Minutes of the Meeting

09 March 2006

Vice President Matt Klapp-W2EQV called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM and asked Andy Durette-KB1HIP to lead the pledge of allegiance. David Brandenburg-K5RQ of Osprey was welcomed as a new member, Gary Nachbar-K2HVR of Springville, NY and Mike Hickey-KI4FPV of Sarasota were welcomed as guests, and introductions were made all around.

**MINUTES** – Dil Kay-KB8YLK moved that the minutes of the February 2006 meeting be accepted as published in the March 2006 issue of *The Communicator*, seconded by Lois Marlatt-VE3CME, and passed.

**CORRESPONDENCE** – Secretary Jack Sproat-W4JS read from three letters pertinent to Club affairs: 1) A transmittal letter from Charlie Covell-W4DB which accompanied Charlie's donation of \$100 to the Club for "any equipment purchase, upkeep, etc. at the repeater site," and for which Charlie received a round of applause for his generosity. 2) An overview of a letter from the Education Foundation of Sarasota County, Inc. which proposed two alternative ways the Club could award scholarships via that organization. 3) The final draft of a letter written by Jon Hamlet-W4ZW for delivery to the Sarasota County School Board and school counselors, announcing the intention of the Club to award a \$500 scholarship to students "who have a high academic standing (3.5 or better), evidence of community service, and preferably a licensed amateur radio operator."

**TREASURER'S REPORT** – Treasurer Don Gray-WD7A reported that the 09 February starting balance was \$5099.32. Receipts were \$35.00 from the January 50/50 drawing, \$75.00 from dues renewals, and a \$100.00 donation from Charlie Covell-W4DB, totaling \$210.00. Expenses were \$240.55 for printing 1000 copies of the Club brochure, and \$15.50 for newsletter printing and postage, totaling \$256.05. The ending balance is \$5053.27. Croft Taylor-VE3CT moved acceptance of the report, seconded by Jon Hamlet-W4ZW, and passed.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

**SUNSHINE** – Jack-W4JS reported that Lee Darby-K4GCY was under the weather. Matt-W2EQV responded that a card will be sent.

**VE TESTING** – Jack-W4JS stated that five candidates were expected for the 11 March VE session.

**REPEATER/TECHNICAL** – Stew Haag-W4MO reported that he had ordered replacement duplexers, however, they were sent in error to Louisville, KY.

Jon-W4ZW reported on recent communications with the SERC president, and there was agreement that no used equivalent duplexers were available. The SERC president would meet with the SERC BOD to discuss purchasing of replacement duplexers.

**PACKET/GATEWAY** – Bob-N1RA reported that he has a BBS packet station on 145.610 MHz from his home. The antenna is indoors, however, on a trial basis at this time.

**CLUB PROPERTY** – Jack-W4JS reported that Rick Morandi-KI4RMO was interested in buying a section of the Rohn 25G, as well as donating some Rohn 20G to the Club. Jack quoted Rick a price of \$20 for the section of 25G and is awaiting response.

**PUBLICITY/MEMBERSHIP** – Don-WD7A reported that copies of our Club brochures had been distributed to both Radio Shack stores in Venice and to both public libraries. It was suggested that an article be prepared for the newspapers regarding our Special Event Station K4S that will operate from the Sharks Tooth Festival 07-09 April.

**EMERGENCY COORDINATOR** – Peter Pesa-N4RD thanked those TARC members who checked into the 13 February DARN Net via our W4AC Repeater, and asked for continued support by the members for the 13 March DARN Net. These nets are at 11 AM the second Monday of each month.

**NET OPERATIONS** – Jack-W4JS remarked that our Snowbird members who have served as net controllers will be leaving soon, and additional/new net control operators are needed.

**LIAISON TO EARS** – Matt-W2EQV reminded all of the Charlotte County Hamfest scheduled for 7 AM to 12 Noon this Saturday, 11 March.

**LIAISON TO QCWA** – Jack-W4JS reported that 22 Chapter 53 members and friends attended the 01 March lunch/meeting at Denny's in Sarasota. Bill Schlapfer-KA2HEA presented a program on his 2005 European Tour. The April program will be a power point presentation on the installation of TV and FM antennas on tall towers by Ed Allen-WA4ISB of Cox Broadcasting, and TARC members are invited to attend.

**CLUB HISTORIAN** – There were no volunteers for this position.

**OLD BUSINESS** – Scholarship/Financial Assistance: Jon-W4ZW will follow up with his letter offering a \$500 Club scholarship.

Sharks Tooth Festival: Matt-W2EQV asked for additional volunteers to help set up and operate Special Event Station K4S during this 07-09 April event, and Andy Durette-KB1HIP and Diana Gregory-KI4GRF offered their assistance.

See **MINUTES**, page 5

## CURRENT/PENDING DX ACTIVITY & PROPAGATION FORECASTS

CURRENT and/or SCHEDULED DX ACTIVITY										
COUNTRY – CALL SIGN	ACTIVITY PERIOD	BEAR-ING	HF BANDS and BEST OPENING TIMES (GMT)							
			80	40	30	20	17	15	12	10
Jan Mayen – JX9NOA	Now Operative	21	--	--	--	14-17	--	NO	NO	NO
Liberia – EL2AR	Now Operative	92	--	--	--	<b>14-01</b>	--	23-01	--	NO
Vietnam – 3W9JR	Now Operative	348	NO	NO	<b>11-12</b>	<b>14-17</b>	13-17	00-02	NO	NO
Mauritius – 3B8/ON4LAC	Now to 13 May	88	<b>23-03</b>	<b>22-04</b>	<b>23-04</b>	19-00	NO	NO	NO	NO
Malawi – 7Q7HB	Now to 10 May	90	<b>23-04</b>	<b>22-05</b>	<b>21-01</b>	<b>17-18</b>	1730	16-17	NO	NO
Gabon – TR8FC	Now to 30 April	88	--	--	--	<b>16-00</b>	17-00	17-00	NO	NO
Egypt – SU9HP	Now to 30 April	54	<b>23-04</b>	<b>22-05</b>	<b>20-01</b>	<b>15-22</b>	14-22	19-20	NO	NO
Ascension – ZD8Q	Now to 08 April	108	<b>23-08</b>	<b>21-09</b>	<b>20-04</b>	<b>13-01</b>	18-21	17-21	NO	NO
Fernando de Noronha – ZV0F	Now to 04 April	115	<b>23-09</b>	<b>21-11</b>	<b>19-04</b>	<b>14-01</b>	17-22	18-22	NO	NO
Turkey – TA3J/O	01 – 22 April	44	<b>00-04</b>	<b>22-05</b>	<b>21-00</b>	<b>14-20</b>	14-20	NO	NO	NO
Ogasawara – JD1???	04 – 18 April	317	<b>09-11</b>	<b>07-12</b>	--	13-14	1330	00-02	NO	NO
Mauritania – 5T6BT	07 – 16 April	81	<b>23-07</b>	<b>21-07</b>	<b>20-04</b>	<b>13-01</b>	16-00	16-23	NO	NO
Palau – T88AP	08 – 15 April	307	<b>09-12</b>	<b>08-12</b>	<b>11-13</b>	13-16	14-16	01-02	NO	NO
Maldives - 8Q7BO	08 – 20 April	41	<b>00-01</b>	<b>23-02</b>	<b>23-02</b>	<b>19-21</b>	21-22	NO	NO	NO
Dubai, UAE – C6ARA/MM (Bob-N1RA)	10 April	43	--	<b>23-03</b>	<b>21-05</b>	<b>16-20</b>	17-19	17-19	NO	NO
Western Sahara – S01R	11 – 30 April	75	<b>23-07</b>	<b>21-06</b>	<b>19-03</b>	<b>14-01</b>	13-01	23-00	NO	NO
Salalah, Oman – C6ARA/MM (Bob-N1RA)	12 April	43	--	<b>23-03</b>	<b>23-04</b>	<b>17-20</b>	17-19	17-19	NO	NO
Luxor, Egypt – C6ARA/MM	16 – 17 April	54	--	<b>23-05</b>	<b>21-01</b>	<b>15-22</b>	17-21	17-21	NO	NO
Andaman Is – VU4/Multiple Operators	18 – 24 April	8	NO	NO	22-01	11-02	23-02	13-15	NO	NO
“ “ “ “ “ “	“ “ “ “ “ “	<u>188</u>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	<u>01-02</u>	NO	NO
Alexandria, Egypt – C6ARA/MM (N1RA)	19 April	54	--	<b>23-05</b>	<b>21-01</b>	<b>15-22</b>	17-21	17-21	NO	NO
Aves Is – YX0A	19 - ?? April	119	<b>22-12</b>	<b>00-24</b>	<b>12-04</b>	13-04	00-02	NO	NO	NO
Mongolia – JT0Y, JT1Y	19 Apr – 08 May	354	--	--	--	01-04	02-03	NO	NO	NO
Kenya – 5Z/IZ1GDB	20 Apr – 01 May	76	<b>00-04</b>	<b>23-04</b>	<b>21-05</b>	<b>17-00</b>	17-22	19-21	NO	NO
Gabes, Tunisia – C6ARA/MM (Bob-N1RA)	22 April	57	--	<b>22-06</b>	<b>21-01</b>	<b>14-23</b>	16-23	NO	NO	NO
Lord Howe Is – VK9LNO	05 – 13 May	249	<b>06-11</b>	<b>05-12</b>	<b>04-08</b>	<b>01-05</b>	02-04	02-04	NO	NO

Updated 31 March 2006, based on 29 March 2006 *QRZ DX*, 27 March 2006 *The Weekly DX* and *K1XX's DX Alert #603-B*

Note: **Time in bold** = Best Band(s) for opening; ??? = Call Sign not yet known; ++ = Phone Only; \*\* = CW Only; NO = No Opening forecast.  
Long Path bearings and opening times are underlined. All forecasts are calculated using *W6ELProp V.1.03* propagation software, available at <http://www/qsq.net/w6elprop/> by Sheldon C. Shallon-W6EL. Solar Flux and K-index varied in accordance with NOAA 27-day forecast.

### -- MARCH SOLAR ACTIVITY --

During March, the Solar Flux ranged from 72 up to 86, with a mean value of 75.2 (vs. 89.8 for March 2005 and 111.6 for March 2004). The A-index was ≤ 10 on 25 days.

There were numerous days during March when no sunspots were visible. Propagation conditions were generally favorable during the month, other than 19-20 March when a high speed solar wind storm caused the Earth's geomagnetic field to be moderately disturbed. This disturbance had been quite accurately predicted by the NOAA 27-day Space Weather Outlook Table of 28 February 2006.

### -- APRIL PROPAGATION --

During April, solar activity is expected to be at very low to low levels. No greater than 10MeV proton events are expected.

The greater than 2 MeV electron flux at geosynchronous orbit is expected to be at high levels on 16-22 April.

The geomagnetic field is expected to be at quiet to unsettled levels for the majority of the period. From 14-16 April, active to minor storm conditions are expected due to effects from a recurrent coronal hole wind stream. The Solar Flux should range from 75 to 80 during April.

(From *NOAA Weekly Highlights and Forecasts, 28 March 2006* and *NOAA 27-day Space Weather Outlook Table, 28 March 2006*)

Short-path propagation into the southern hemisphere will be strong and reliable when the paths are open. Due to declining MUF, don't expect much from 10, 12 and 15 meters.

During April the 17- and 20-meter bands will offer occasional 24-hour DX to all parts of the world. If you hear a lot of echo on a signal, try beaming in the opposite direction.

The 40-meter band will remain good and 80 meters will have occasional DX openings around sunrise. The seasonal increase in noise will degrade these bands, however.

(From "Propagation," Tomas Hood-NW4US, April 2006 *CQ*)

### -- ANDAMAN ISLAND ACTIVITY --

A first-ever hamfest will be held in Port Blair, with numerous operators being licensed to operate 18-25 April from this entity, which is the 5<sup>th</sup> Most Needed in North America. Propagation potential was notably better back in December 2004, when this entity was last on, however, for those who need this one, now is better than never! Good Luck!

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## CONTESTS & ACTIVITIES

Contest/Special Event	Begin-End Times/Dates	Bands/Modes	QSO With	Exchange
Japan International DX Contest	0700Z 08 Apr 1300Z 09 Apr	80 – 10 Meters CW Only	Japanese Stations Only	R/S/T + CQ Zone
EU Spring Sprint	1600Z 08 Apr 1959Z 08 Apr	80 – 20 Meters CW Only	European Union Stations (3.550, 7.025, 14.040)	Both Calls, Name, Serial No.
Yuri Gagarin DX Contest	2100Z 08 Apr 2100Z 09 Apr	160 – 10 Meters CW Only	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S/T + ITU Zone
YU DX Contest	2100Z 15 Apr 0500Z 16 Apr	160 – 10 Meters CW Only	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S/T + ITU Zone
Holyland DX Contest	0000Z 15 Apr 2359Z 15 Apr	160 – 10 Meters CW and Phone	Israeli Stations Only	R/S/(T) + Serial No.
EU Spring Sprint	1600Z 15 Apr 1959Z 15 Apr	75 – 20 Meters Phone Only	European Union Stations (3.730, 7.050, 14.250)	Both Calls, Name, Serial No.
Florida QSO Party	1600Z 22 Apr 0159Z 23 Apr	40 – 10 Meters CW and Phone	Anyone, Anywhere CW – 35 kc from band edges; SSB on 7.260, 14.260, 21.335, 28.485	R/S/(T) and Florida County
	1200Z 23 Apr 2159Z 23 Apr			
DX Colombia International Contest	0000Z 22 Apr 0000Z 23 Apr	160 – 10 Meters Phone and CW	Colombian Stations Only	R/S/(T) + Serial No.
Polish DX RTTY Contest	1200Z 22 Apr 1200Z 23 Apr	80 – 10 Meters RTTY Only	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S/T + Serial No.
Helvetia Contest	1300Z 29 Apr 1259Z 30 Apr	160 – 10 Meters CW/SSB/Digital	Swiss Stations Only	R/S/(T) + Serial No.

From April 2006 issues of *QST* and *WorldRadio*

### -- REGIONAL HAMFESTS --

- 15 April Tampa ARC Hamfest, TARC Operations Center, 7801 North 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Tampa. TI: 147.105 (PL 146.2), Info: Biff-K4LAW, 813-265-4812
- 15 April FREE Hamfest, University of Miami Physics Dept., 5001 San Amaro, Coral Gables. TI: 146.865 (PL 103.5), Info: Bill-WA4TEJ, 305-254-4465
- 22-23 Apr 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Poor Man's Hamfest/Computer Show, Gainesville ARS, Alachua County Fairgrounds, 3400 NE 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue (SR 222), Gainesville. TI: 146.820 (PL 123.0), Info: Ray-W4YTC, 352-339-4210

(From <http://bellsouthpwp.net/k/kb4vol>, the Web site of Bill Britton-KB4VOL and April 2006 *QST*)

### -- UPCOMING DARN ACTIVITY --

The Diocese Amateur Radio Network (DARN) will be conducting a communications exercise at 11 AM on 10 April, and TARC members are encouraged to check in when prompted by the Net Control. As the DARN will be using our W4AC Repeater, please avoid use of EchoLink during the exercise period. Thanks!

*"He who laughs last thinks slowest."*

### -- CRUISING WITH BOB-N1RA --

Marie and Bob Avrutik-N1RA are again hitting the high seas on a cruise from the Arabian Gulf into the Red Sea and across the Mediterranean Sea. Bob will again be operating from shipboard while under way, generally using his C6ARA/MM call sign. Propagation will be more favorable as Bob progresses westward. Bob intends to be on the following frequencies:

- |                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 40 M – CW 7.006  | SSB 7.075/QSX 7.205 |
| 30 M – CW 10.108 |                     |
| 20 M – CW 14.015 | SSB 14.205          |
| 17 M – CW 18.077 | SSB 18.150          |
| 15 M – CW 21.015 | SSB 21.280          |
| 12 M – CW 24.897 | SSB 24.950          |
| 10 M – CW 28.035 | SSB 28.485          |

Check out Bob's schedule and propagation probabilities in the DX activity table on page 3.

### -- MATURE MEDITATIONS --

\* Did you ever notice that when you blow in a dog's face, he gets mad at you, but when you take him on a car ride, he sticks his head out the window?

\* Does pushing the elevator button more than once make it arrive faster?

\* If corn oil is made from corn, and vegetable oil is made from vegetables, then what is baby oil made from?

**-- SHUT OFF THE PHONE/RADIO! --**

*(The following was sent in by member Vinnie Blas-WBIV.)*

Cell phones and two-way radios can ignite fumes when their owners are fueling their vehicles.

Shell Oil issued a warning after three incidents where cell phones ignited gasoline fumes. In the first case, the phone was on the car's trunk lid; it rang, ignited the fumes, and the ensuing fire destroyed the car and the gasoline pump.

In the second, an individual suffered severe burns to their face when fumes ignited as they answered a call while refueling their car.

In the third, an individual was burned on the thigh and groin as the fumes ignited when the cell phone, which was in their pocket, rang while they were fueling their car.

You should know that:

- 1) Cell phones can ignite fuel or fumes.
- 2) Cell phones that light up when switched on, or when they ring, release enough energy to provide a spark for ignition.
- 3) Cell phones should not be used in filling stations, or when fueling lawn mowers, boats, etc.
- 4) Cell phones, should not be used, or should be turned off, around other materials that generate flammable or explosive fumes, e.g., solvents, chemicals, gases, etc.

The Petroleum Equipment Institute has researched 150 cases of fires resulting from "static electricity" at gas pumps. The results are interesting:

- 1) Of the 150 cases, almost all were women.
- 2) Almost all cases involved the person getting back in their vehicle while the nozzle was still pumping gas. When finished, they went back to pull the nozzle out and the started as the result of static. *(This is graphically shown via security camera on the PEI web site, <http://www.pei.org>. Once there, click in the center of the screen where it says "Stop Static.")*
- 3) Most wore rubber-soled shoes.
- 4) Most men never get back in their vehicle until completely finished. This is why they are seldom involved in these types of fires.
- 5) Don't ever use cell phones when pumping gas.
- 6) It is the vapors that come out of the gas that cause the fire, when connected with static charges.
- 7) There were 29 fires where any of a variety of vehicles was reentered and the nozzle was touched during refueling. Some resulted in extensive damage to the vehicle, the station, and the customer.

- 8) Seventeen fires occurred before, during, or immediately after the gas cap was removed and before fueling began.

NEVER get back into your vehicle while filling it with gas.

So, shut off those phones and transceivers when you gas up. A missed call or QSO is better than a trip to the hospital or a new vehicle.

**MINUTES, from page 2**

**NEW BUSINESS** – Matt-W2EQV commented that there were some members who favor moving the Friday breakfast to a new location. A show of hands indicated dissatisfaction with Mel's. Don-WD7A reported that he had checked with the management at Bob Evans and they could make an area available for us. Don had a breakfast menu available for review. Matt remarked that other venues suggested were Anita's in Nokomis and the Café 16-60 in Osprey. No decision was made at this time.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS** – Matt-W2EQV reminded all of our two weekly 2-meter nets, the twice daily Snowbird Net, and our Tuesday breakfast at Peach's and our Friday breakfast at Mel's, both at 8:00 AM.

**ADJOURNMENT** – A motion to adjourn was made by Bob Avrutik-N1RA, seconded by Bob Marchese-K1NOK, and passed. There were 24 members and two visitors present.

**PROGRAM** – Bob Sullenberger-KG4VDU, Communications Coordinator for the Diocese Amateur Radio Network (DARN) gave a very interesting presentation of the efforts of Catholic Charities, the development of the local DARN, and the interface between DARN and the TARC.

Jack Sproat-W4JS  
Secretary

**-- LIGHTNING PROTECTION PRIMER --**

An excellent overview, "Ham Radio Station Protection," is available from PolyPhaser, at <http://www.polyphaser.com/datasheets/PEN1016.pdf>. This 11-page monograph provides good discussions on virtually all aspects constructing a proper grounding system, and why you should develop one.

Also of note is the two-part Q&A "Lightning Protection" by Mike Tracy-KC1SX in the October and December 1994 issues of *QST*. Check <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/lightning.html> for these and other pertinent articles.

*"Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to reform (or pause and reflect). – Mark Twain (1835-1910), Autobiography*

## -- SOS TO A FADING SKILL --

*(The following is an editorial published 15 March 2006 on the toledoblade.com web site via eham.net)*

A proposal by the Federal Communications Commission to eliminate Morse code requirement for gaining an amateur radio license is probably inevitable in the Internet age. Still, it marks another sad surrender to technological advance and a further step away from basic skills that stimulate the mind and improve the human condition.

The FCC is considering new rules that will no longer require applicants for a "ham" radio permit to send and receive messages with the electronic dots and dashes developed by Samuel F. B. Morse for his patented telegraph nearly 170 years ago.

The change, likely to be adopted next year, is mostly an issue for some 600,000 radio amateurs in the U.S., who now must demonstrate their code proficiency at five words per minute along with written examinations on technical matters and radio procedures for various levels of licensing. Dedicated hams believe the code requirement is among the factors that have separated them from the comparative frivolity of "citizens band" radio.

Learning Morse code once was considered valuable not only for simple communication but also because it sharpened the mind. Generations of Boy Scouts may have been bedeviled by code tests needed to advance in rank and earn merit badges, but they were better, more responsible individuals for the effort and experience.

Likewise, amateur radio operators who know and use Morse code are, in a sense, more in tune with themselves and others. With their battery-powered equipment, hams continue to play an important role in modern communications, as they demonstrated during Hurricane Katrina, when land lines fell to the storm and the failure of electric plants made cell phones and the Internet useless in the face of disaster.

While it is almost certain that the FCC will drop the code requirement for amateur radio licenses, we would do well to use the occasion to ponder one of life's fading lessons:

"Just because something is hard doesn't mean it's useless and, conversely, just because something is easy doesn't mean it's good."

## -- MATURE MEDITATIONS --

\* Never take life seriously. Nobody gets out alive anyway.

\* There are two kinds of pedestrians: the quick and the dead.

\* Health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die.

## -- WAR TAX ON COMMUNICATION --

Once those in the American colonies of England revolted against a 3-pence tax on a pound of tea, but that spirit ended in 1898. Yearning to go to war against Spain (*and try the first US colonial experiment in the Philippines*) the government needed some revenue. So, a one-cent per call was initiated on those who utilized the 1500 to 2000 telephones operating in the US.

In 1902, that tax was repealed, but then it was revived in 1914 as the congress noticed that telephones were no longer a novelty. There was real money to be made from a phone tax.

By 1990, with telephones multiplying like rabbits on Viagra, congress had upped the levy to the current 3%, calling it a "Federal excise tax." (*Local communications services tax, and Florida gross receipts tax, add another 7.8% to the bill.*) Currently, federal revenue is some \$5.9 billion from that "excise tax."

So, 108 years have passed. The Spanish-American War lies dusty in the annals of history; only one American of a hundred remembers "the Maine." But we still pay the tax.

Like a balloon inflated with hot air, taxes always grow larger and a congressional committee now wants to apply this tax to "all communications services." It might be nice if the phone companies put a big fat asterisk on the phone bill right next to that 3% tax, and down below it would explain that this eternal tax was initiated in 1898. Who wants to bet that, back in 1898, the sponsors promised the demise of this tax when the war ended. They always do, and they always lie.

(From "The War Tax That Never Went Away" by Ted Roberts, 21 March 2006, *LewRocwell.com*)

## -- RADIO SHACK DOWNSIZING --

*(The following comes from an 18 February 2006 post by Tim Verthein-KC0JEZ on QRZ.com.)*

In mid-February, RadioShack Corp. of Fort Worth, Texas announced it will close 400-700 of its some 5000 company-owned stores. It has 1500-1800 dealer-franchise stores which will not be affected.

For the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 2005, net income fell to \$49.5 million, and for all of 2005, net income dropped 21 percent to \$37.2 million. David Edmondson, president and CEO admitted that the company failed to achieve its financial objectives in 2005, even though several key changes had been implemented.

RadioShack plans to replace old slow moving items with faster moving merchandise, close underperforming stores, expand its kiosk business and relocate RadioShack stores to better real estate.

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