

The Framingham Circuit

Newsletter of the Framingham Amateur Radio Association

January 2013, Vol. 80, No. 1

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President's Message

Hello,

I'd like to add my thanks to John (KB1VXY) and LouAnn Iwuc for opening their home to us for the Holiday Party. As stated by others, the arrangements were very nice, and a good time was had by all. The food provided by the caterer (Oliva's Market, Milford) was excellent, in quality, variety and quantity. This was a terrific event.

As I mentioned last month, Bev (N1LOO) will not be able to run this year's flea market. Well, thanks in advance to Steve (KB1NIV) for volunteering to lead this important event. The key word here is "LEAD" - this is not a one-person job, even in the capable hands of Bev & Steve, assistance (assistants) is (are) required to ensure a good outcome, and not make the experience too onerous for those who volunteer. Remember, more hands make for light work.

The January meeting is coming up soon - Fred and Anita Kemmerer, AB1OC & AB1QB, will present "DXpedition to Bora Bora" - people who have seen this presentation have said that it is very interesting. I hope to see you on Thursday, 3 January, at the Framingham Police Headquarters Training Room.

It's not too soon to be paying your dues. These may be paid at the meeting, or by mail (FARA, PO BOX 3005, Framingham, MA 01705-3005). Dues are still only \$15, \$10 for students and seniors over 65 years of age, with an additional \$10 for the repeater.

The 1950s, Amateur Radio's Golden Era

By Lew Nyman, K1AZE

Lew is a long time member of the club who moved to Alabama many years ago he wrote this for QST but they did not publish. —ed

Well, well, ham radio is now 100 years old! Yes, the FCC began licensing hams in December of 1912 although some were broadcasting prior to that time utilizing spark gap transmitters. Amateur radio operators have been the pioneers of radio development and innovation throughout the years. Technology has certainly changed the face of our hobby. And what is most exciting is that our numbers have been increasing. Interest is on the rise and it is possible that digital modes may be a factor today. No doubt the volunteer examiner program and no code licensing have contributed enormously to the boom in recent years as well. In spite of the no code

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Saturday, Jan 3

Fred Kemmerer AB1OC and Anita Kemmerer AB1QB on their DXpedition to Bora Bora.

FARA Horizons

January: Fred Kemmerer AB1OC and Anita Kemmerer AB1QB on their DXpedition to Bora Bora.

February: Show and Tell and Video of a DXpedition

March: TBA

April: TBA

FARA FLEA MARKET SUNDAY APRIL 7 AT KEEFE TECH!!

May: PIZZA PARTY

June: TBA: Election of Officers/Field Day

FARA 80TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY SUMMER 2013!

This month's Circuit sponsored by:

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licensing, I'm happy to report that CW is still very much alive and well.

Amateur radio has had many great years of growth. But I would like to focus on what I like to call the golden era of ham radio, the decade of the 1950s and into the 1960s. I have been licensed for 56 years and had the privilege and excitement of operating in the 1950s as a newcomer. You might ask why I call those years the golden era. There were three major factors for this assessment. First, many of you who know your ham radio history know that during World War 2 amateur radio operators in the United States were silenced by our government for security reasons. Hams were off the air until after the war ended. It was a total blackout. So, by 1950 many hams had with great excitement returned to the airwaves. Secondly, HF propagation was at an historic high as a result of a phenomenal solar cycle. The bands were jam packed with signals from end to end. Third, there was a tremendous influx of newly licensed hams with the introduction of the novice class license. It was the perfect storm for amateur radio, particularly in the U.S.

Radio manufacturers jumped on the bandwagon at that time with a proliferation of new American made ham gear. Many of us are very familiar with names such as R.L. Drake, E.F. Johnson, National Radio, Hammarlund, Hallicrafters, Clegg, Ameco, Heathkit and many more. Today, these radios are prized collectables. One can come across many of these radios at hamfests throughout the country and many are still on the air. They all contained vacuum tubes. Solid state was non-existent. Many hams had even assembled their own "home brew" radios, since parts were still readily available from many suppliers. There was also a proliferation of military surplus radios from the war which were made available to the consumer.

In 1951, the FCC had restructured licensing into six named classes. Most notable was the new Novice class entry level license. On HF it permitted code transmissions only, with a maximum power of 75 watts input to the transmitter's final amplifier stage. The transmitter had to be crystal controlled, one crystal for each specific frequency. Novices initially could transmit Morse code only on small segments of the 80 and 11 meter bands. By 1954 Novices had CW privileges on 80, 40 and 15 meters and voice privileges on 145-147 MHz. To qualify for a Novice license, a candidate would have to pass a 5 word-per-minute

(WPM) Morse code test (send and receive) and a 25 question multiple-choice test. The test was first given at an FCC field office. From 1954 on it was administered by any higher class licensed ham who then sent the exam to the FCC for grading. The Novice Class license for several years was valid for only one year and was non-renewable. The Novice was expected to move up to General class to stay on the air. Tens of thousands of new Novices hit the airwaves and many did eventually upgrade.

My experiences as a new Novice were quite memorable. I had a very crude home brew station which took me many months to assemble. I was a young teenager with very limited funds. When my Novice ticket finally arrived from the FCC (it took 12 weeks) my station was complete and ready to go. It consisted of a 12 watt 40 meter CW transmitter with one crystal and a three tube Knight Kit Space Spanner regenerative receiver and a dipole antenna. The receiver was quite broad banded and it seemed like I was hearing the entire Novice band with the tuning dial set in one position. Hearing as many as two dozen CW stations at once made it quite difficult to copy most of my contacts. Over 50% of my QSOs ended in lost contacts. But, I'll always remember my first contact. I was living in the Boston area at the time. After sending out countless CQs, I finally heard my call sign. The station calling was KN2YXY (the N in the call sign prefix indicated Novice class) and he was from Freehold, New Jersey! Wow! DX! My hand was shaking and my palm was sweaty as I was tapping on my military surplus J-38 CW key. I was desperately trying to send my mailing address so that I could get his QSL card, which I eventually did receive. It's very special and I still have it to this day. In fact, I still have my original Novice station today. To me it's priceless.

Even though new Novices were supposed to be proficient at sending and receiving 5 WPM, most of us were at the 2 to 3 WPM speed during our on the air contacts. I guess it was primarily nervousness. A typical transmission would last at least 15 to 20 minutes and consist of transmitting an RST report and name and address. And many words were repeated three times. "Name name name is Bill Bill Bill. RST RST RST 469 469 469". RST reports were not overly generous but they were certainly quite accurate none the less. No one ever got a

599. The other station would respond (if he was still on frequency) with "RRR OK OM. Solid copy. But, please repeat ur name, QTH, and my RST". What!

A lot of my contacts were made starting at 4 o'clock in the morning. That was because there was significantly less QRM on 40 meters than during the evening hours and also signals were coming in from greater distances. But, all my contacts were still east of the Mississippi. My folks thought I was crazy. So did my brother. But, I was having a thrilling experience, anyway. And that's what it was all about. I did have a problem staying awake in school, though.

I must admit that in my old age I've gotten a bit lazy. I don't build as much as I used to. I have a very modern high end made in Japan HF radio with features that are beyond my ability to comprehend. Unfortunately, this radio like all radios of today is lacking something I sorely miss, toggle switches. Not one toggle switch! Whatever happened to toggle switches? But, at least it's not crystal controlled.

I'm sure ham radio will continue to thrive for another 100 years and beyond. The radios will change, of course, but the excitement will never fade. The ionosphere will always be there. Happy ham radio anniversary and best DX OMs.

Membership Dues

Annual membership dues are as follows:
(Make checks payable to FARA)

Regular FARA \$15

Student / Retired \$10

Repeater (voluntary) \$10

Sunday Night Net

Have you checked into the FARA Sunday evening net lately? One of the main purposes for checking in is to make sure that you and your radio station are capable and ready to assist in emergencies including natural disasters. The Sunday evening net is an easy, no pressure way to practice and improve your operating skills. The FCC has given us frequencies to use for such emergencies, so let's use them and not lose them. Support your FARA Sunday evening net by checking in at 7:30 PM each Sunday evening on the 147.15 MHz repeater. You may also learn something new from the "ham radio question of the week".

Pictures from the 2012 FARA Holiday Party



Club Information 2013

President	Paul King	NIVAM		president@fara.org
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Meeting: Club meetings are normally held on the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:30PM in the Framingham Police Station

Club Nets: FARA Net: Sunday, 7:30PM, 147.75/147.15 - social/chat, ARES preparedness

Club Station: W1FY, the club station and shack, is open Saturday mornings from 9:00-12:00. Call the club number, 508-879-8097 to confirm.

Club Web Site: <http://www.fara.org>

Mail Address: PO Box 3005
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