



# SPARKS



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Newsletter of the Puget Amateur Radio Society

October 1998

## License Restructuring

Since ARRL Director Mary Lou Brown, NM7N, is going to be our speaker this month, it seemed like a good opportunity to sort out the ARRL and FCC proposals for restructuring our license classes.

The FCC and ARRL have both recommended eliminating or phasing out the present Novice and Technician Plus licenses. The ARRL plan would meld these and General licensees into a new "Class C" license; the FCC would cease issuing new Novice and Technician Plus licenses, but

says nothing regarding whether present Novices and Tech. Plus licensees would gain or lose any privileges under this plan.

The ARRL plan is more specific: It would grant present Novice and Tech. Plus licensees the same privileges as the current General class license, with no additional testing. It would relax the code requirement to 5 wpm for the General-equivalent license, and 12 wpm for the Advanced- and Extra-equivalent licenses.

The written test for the Technician-equivalent license would be purged of questions relating to

Present Class	FCC Proposal			ARRL Proposal		
	New Class	Written Req't	Code Req't	New Class	Written Req't	Code Req't
<i>Technician</i>	<i>Technician</i>	<i>To be determined</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Same difficulty, no HF questions</i>	<i>None</i>
<i>Novice</i>	<i>No new</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>C (existing licensees grandfathered, no additional testing)</i>	<i>Similar to current General exam</i>	<i>5 wpm</i>
<i>Tech. Plus</i>	<i>No new</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>			
<i>General</i>	<i>General</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>TBD</i>			
<i>Advanced</i>	<i>Advanced</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Similar to current exam</i>	<i>12 wpm</i>
<i>Extra</i>	<i>Extra</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Harder than current exam</i>	<i>12 wpm</i>

has yet to determine what privileges the present license holders would have.

The FCC proposal is quite preliminary, and seeks input from hams regarding what written and code requirements should apply to the remaining license classes. It suggests that Tech. Plus licensees who got their tickets before 3-21-87 could upgrade to General by passing the 13 wpm test, but that assumes that the General license requirement remains at 13 wpm. The FCC

HF operation, since Technicians have no HF privileges, but retain the same overall level of difficulty. The General- and Advanced-equivalent written tests would remain roughly the same, while the Extra-equivalent test would become more difficult to compensate for the relaxed code-speed requirements.

Since there would be no more Novice licensees, the ARRL proposes elimination of the Novice CW segments on 80, 40, and 15 meters, and

*Next general meeting* - Thursday, Oct. 15 at 7:00 PM at the Bellevue Senior Center, 4063 148th Ave. NE in Bellevue (**Note new time!**). Mary Lou Brown, NM7N, ARRL NW Division Director, will be there to update us on license restructuring and other regulatory matters affecting hams. And be sure to join us at 5:30 PM for dinner at Coco's, 14804 NE 24th St. in Redmond (**Note new time!**). Visitors are always welcome at the meetings and at Coco's.

*Next board meeting* - At the home of Al Staples, N7VOF, 409 - 109th Ave. SE in Bellevue, Thursday, Nov. 5 at 7:00 PM. All PARS members are welcome.

expanding phone privileges on those bands by 50 kHz at the expense of the CW segments.

Why are both groups wanting to eliminate the Novice and Tech. Plus licenses? In its Notice of Proposed Rule Making (WT Docket 98-143), the FCC cites "an unnecessary overlap between the Novice, Technician, and Technician Plus license classes", and its desire to reduce the workload for the Commission and its Volunteer Examiners. Further, it notes that the FCC received less than one thousand new applications for Novice licenses in 1997, versus more than 21 thousand Technician applications. Clearly, the Technician license has become the "entry-level" license class for new hams.

As noted, the Commission observed that holders of the Tech. Plus license could upgrade to General by passing the 13 wpm code test, but failed to consider that the General code requirement may also change as a result of this NPRM.

As for the ARRL's motives, its proposal appears to have been a preemptive strike in advance of the NPRM, hastily assembled during its July 16-18 board meeting. In the September *QST*, Rick Palm, K1CE, implies that this proposal was the result of "two and a half years of study"; yet in the same issue, ARRL Executive Vice President David Sumner, K1ZZ, admits that the Board of Directors took no action on these studies until it became clear that the FCC intended to streamline the amateur licensing structure. The FCC released its NPRM on August 10.

The studies referred to were undertaken by the ARRL's WRC-99 Planning Committee, whose conclusions were released in Dec. 1996. (Our own Vice Director Greg Milnes, WA7AGQ, was a

member). The Committee commissioned an outside firm to survey ARRL members and non-members about their operating habits and opinions on various regulatory issues. They determined that as many as three-fourths of the 80,000 current Novices are inactive, that the Tech. Plus license is inadequate as a stepping-stone to higher HF privileges, and that "the large step from 5 to 13 words per minute.... represents a significant barrier to upgrading."

The Committee recommended that the Technician license be renamed the Basic license, with the same privileges, and that the Novice and Tech. Plus licenses be combined into a new Intermediate license. Existing Tech. Plus holders would be grandfathered to Intermediate; while existing Novice holders would be required to take an open-book test to upgrade, otherwise their licenses would not be renewed upon expiration. Intermediate licensees would have limited CW, phone, and digital privileges on all of the non-WARC HF bands, with maximum 200W PEP power.

Intermediate licensees would have to pass a 5 wpm code test, while the General code requirement would be relaxed to 10 wpm. The Advanced and Extra code requirements would remain at 13 and 20 wpm. The Committee recommended that all code tests include sending as well as receiving, and that the receiving test revert to the requirement for one minute of solid copy out of five minutes of receiving, as with the old FCC-administered tests.

The report also recommended elimination of the Novice CW segments and expansion of the phone bands on 75, 40, and 15 meters, as was adopted in the final ARRL proposal.

*PARS 1998 - 99 Club Officers:*

President - Jim von Seggern, KC7FEH

360-638-1715

Vice President - Lorie Graff, N7LCO

425-392-5846

Secretary - Kirk Bellar, N7UK

206-542-6742

Treasurer - Charles Beckmeier, KC7GMF

425-822-2339

**The Puget Amateur Radio Society, Inc. (PARS)** is an ARRL-affiliated club serving radio amateurs in the greater Seattle area. Meetings are normally held on the third Thursday of the month (except July, August, and December) at 7:00 PM at the Bellevue Senior Center, 4063 148th Ave. NE. Visitors are always welcome.

**Annual dues** are \$15.00 for individual membership, \$22.50 for family (2 or more). PARS will prorate the dues of new members joining after Jan. 31. Call Kirk, N7UK, for a membership application.

**Join us on the PARS net** every Wed. night at 7:00 PM, on the WS7K repeater, 443.2 MHz (103.5 Hz PL). The repeater is located on Rose Hill in Kirkland.

**Send articles**, comments, want ads, innuendos, etc. for inclusion in this newsletter to Kirk Bellar, N7UK, 19353 Greenwood Ave. N, Shoreline WA 98133, fax to 425-867-2160, or e-mail to n7uk@aol.com.

Present Class	ARRL WRC-99 Planning Committee Proposal		
	New Class	Written Req't	Code Req't*
<i>Technician</i>	<i>Basic</i>	<i>Same as current Technician license</i>	<i>None</i>
<i>Novice</i>	<i>None, existing licenses would not be renewed</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Tech. Plus</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Level of difficulty between current Tech. Plus and General licenses</i>	<i>5 wpm</i>
<i>General</i>	<i>General</i>	<i>Same as current license</i>	<i>10 wpm</i>
<i>Advanced</i>	<i>Advanced</i>	<i>Same as current license</i>	<i>13 wpm</i>
<i>Extra</i>	<i>Extra</i>	<i>Same as current license</i>	<i>20 wpm</i>

\* Code testing conditions would change, as noted on p. 2.

Starting from the WRC-99 Committee report, and believing that the FCC intended to relax the code requirement for *all* classes to 5 wpm, the Board countered with a proposal for a General-equivalent class with a 5 wpm code test and Advanced- and Extra- equivalent licenses with a 12 wpm requirement, in keeping with the opinion of most ARRL members polled in the 1996 survey. Not wanting to take any privileges away from current license holders, they recommended grandfathering Novices into the new Class C ticket, rather than forcing them to upgrade or relegating them to the Technician-equivalent class.

Any proposal for restructuring our license classes is bound to stir controversy. The ARRL Board itself was hardly unanimous in this decision: In three separate votes, the tallies were 8-7 in favor, 13-2 in favor, and finally 9-6 in favor of the proposal. The meeting minutes don't explain why they felt the need to vote three times.

Some amateurs see any relaxation of the written or code requirements as lowering our standards of proficiency, while other argue for more radical changes, particularly in the area of code testing. No-Code International (NCI), an organization dedicated to eliminating code testing for amateurs, argues that all International Telecommuni-

cations Union (ITU) signatories should limit all code requirements to 5 wpm, sufficient to satisfy the ITU requirement that all amateurs operating below 30 MHz be required to know the code. NCI, The Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC) and the Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB) have voiced their opposition to the ITU requirement, and many believe that the ITU will eliminate it during the WRC-99 conference.

The FCC will be taking comments on its NPRM until Dec. 1. There are other proposals relating to VECs, RACES stations, RF exposure, etc. Complete text and instructions on filing comments, as well as the text of the ARRL proposal, are at [www.arrl.org/news/restructuring](http://www.arrl.org/news/restructuring). The WRC-99 Planning Committee report is at [www.arrl.org/announce/board-9701/doc36.html](http://www.arrl.org/announce/board-9701/doc36.html), or in the March 1997 *QST*. - de N7UK

## Jamboree on the Air

John Heflin, KD7E, will be introducing a gaggle of Scouts (well, a dozen, anyway) to the wonders of amateur radio at the 1998 Jamboree on the Air (JOTA), this Saturday, Oct. 17 at the PARS trailer. The Scouts will be trying to contact other JOTA stations, not as a contest, but simply as a way to experience hamming first-hand. Hef and the gang will start at 0900 local and operate until at least 1200. They'd welcome a helping ham or two; give Hef a call or e-mail.

## Repeater Woes

The WS7K repeater fried its power amp sometime around Sep. 30. PSE employee Jon Fortier, N7WDF, came to the rescue the next day with a temporary PA, then repaired the original. Seems the final transistors had gotten so hot, they'd unsoldered themselves! Jon still doesn't know what made them get so toasty.

Chuck, K7CHV, is trying to make time after work to install a new controller. Until then, please remember to ID the repeater manually.

## PARS is on the Web!

Thanks to Hef, KD7E, we now have our own Web page: it's [www.qsl.net/k7par](http://www.qsl.net/k7par). He's added some zippy graphics, wallpaper, and even some animations. Eventually, we'll have *Sparks* there, too. Well done, Hef!

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## Minutes of the PARS general meeting, September 17, 1998

PARS held the September general meeting at the Bellevue Emergency Operations Center (EOC), rather than the Bellevue Senior Center, due to renovations occurring at the Senior Center.

The President called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. There were 14 members present, a quorum. Five visitors also attended, including ARRL Section Manager Harry Lewis, W7JWJ, and ARRL Vice-Director candidate Mary Lewis, W7QGP.

Following introductions and the Pledge of Allegiance, Jo Ann Jordan, Education Coordinator for the Bellevue Fire Department, described Bellevue's emergency management structure, diagrammed the conditions under which the EOC would be activated, and pointed out the features and equipment in the EOC. Chuck Stroeher, WA7EBH, described the operation of the Eastside Amateur Radio Support group (EARS), which supports the Bellevue EOC as well as the Eastside 911 dispatch center.

After the break, the President called the business meeting to order. The members approved, without revision, the minutes of the June meeting as published in the September issue of *Sparks*.

**Treasurer's report:** The Treasurer reported a positive balance for the 30 days ending on Sep. 8 [*PARS members may request budget figures from the Treasurer - ed.*]. The President reminded the members to submit any club-related expenses to the Treasurer for reimbursement.

**Old Business:** The Treasurer has donated a steel box to the club, which may be suitable to store a generator and gas tanks for backup power to the trailer. The Treasurer has already delivered the box to the trailer site.

The President congratulated Field Day chairman Bob Adams, KJ7BP, for another successful Field Day operation this year. During the break, Bob displayed snapshots of the event.

**New Business:** The President announced committee chairs for the coming year:

- ★Lorie Graff, N7LCO, programs
- ★Jim Darby, W7FYH, publicity
- ★Bob Adams, KJ7BP, Field Day
- ★Kirk Bellar, N7UK, trailer
- ★Bob, KJ7BP, and Al Staples, N7VOF, refreshments
- ★John Heflin, KD7E, Mike & Key hamfest

The President is still looking for a replacement for Jimmy Horn, KA7GKP, to run the Fox Hunt this year.

Chuck, WA7EBH, asked the members to participate in Sound Shake '98 on Sep. 22; and solicited participation in a SKYWARN training session, time and place to be determined. Harry, W7JWJ, also encouraged the members to participate in Sound Shake '98.

The Secretary reminded the members to inform him of any changes to their address, phone number, etc. so that he can update the roster.

The members discussed the proposed budget for fiscal year 1999. Arthur Rolfe, N7YKI, pointed out that the '97 and '98 figures didn't show the actual amounts spent for those years. There was no action taken on the proposed budget.

The members discussed the possibility of distributing *Sparks* by e-mail to save the cost of mailing. About one-third of the members present have e-mail capability. The Secretary also mentioned the possibility of putting the newsletter on the Internet, if the club had a Web page. John, KD7E, said that he could probably provide a free Web page to the club. The President tabled the issue for further discussion.

The Secretary announced that he would be operating in the Washington Salmon Run contest from the PARS trailer on Sep. 19-20, and that all members were welcome to participate.

With no further business, the President adjourned the meeting at 9:11 PM.

*Respectfully Submitted,*  
Kirk Bellar, N7UK  
PARS Secretary

## WA Salmon Run

Several PARS members put K7PAR on the air for the Washington Salmon Run during the weekend of Sep. 19-20. The Run, hosted by the Western Washington DX Club, is a contest to make as many QSOs with as many of the 39 Washington counties as you can (stations in WA can also work participants in other states, Canadian provinces, and DXCC countries for multipliers).

Members John, KD7E; Charles, KC7GMF; and Kirk, N7UK, braved RF burns and CW fright to represent the club for the first time in this contest. We competed in the multi-operator, single-transmitter club category, using the PARS trailer's IC-740 transceiver and random wire, as well as a 20-meter delta loop hoisted into the trees behind the Senior Center for the duration of the event.

Contacts were harder to come by than for Field Day and the major contests, and a surprising (and dismaying, at least to us) amount of the activity was on CW. On the plus side, 10 meters opened up coast-to-coast on both days, and we snagged New York, Pennsylvania, and Ontario on that band. Overall, we made 49 SSB and 44 CW QSOs, picking up 31 multipliers (including Russia!), for a total claimed score of 14,074. Not a bad effort, considering that we were using simple wire antennas and that this was our first experience in the contest

As I mentioned in last month's *Sparks*, the **ARRL Phone Sweepstakes** will take place Nov. 21-22. The object is to work as many stations in as many ARRL and RAC sections as you can. It's not hard to work all states in a weekend during this contest. Contest rules are at [www.arrl.org](http://www.arrl.org), or in the Nov. *QST*.

I intend to work the Sweepstakes from the trailer. Call me if you're interested in joining in on the fun. - *de N7UK*

## Board meeting minutes available

Anyone wanting minutes of the Sep. 3 board meeting should contact Kirk, N7UK.

## Christmas Party

PARS is looking for a suitable venue for our annual Christmas party, tentatively scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 19. If you'd be willing to open up your home to a couple dozen ho-ho-ho'ing hams and their spouses, or know of a cut-rate, eggnog-resistant meeting room for rent, call or e-mail Lorie, N7LCO.

## Birthdays!

Ivo Bricel, N7AY	Oct. 21
Mel Carlson, W7KDZ	Nov. 4
Joyce Stroeher, N7JPW	Nov. 3
Jim Von Seggern, KC7FEH	Nov. 6

## EARS hoping you'll call

Eastside Amateur Radio Service - interested parties contact John, W7HIL, at 425-391-8026 or Chuck, WA7EBH, at 425-392-5303. Always room for more help in this community activity.

### ◆◆◆◆ **PARS BAZAAR** ◆◆◆◆

Buy, sell, or trade your ham-, electronic-, or computer-related treasures here. Ads are gratis for PARS members. Call or e-mail Kirk, N7UK, to place your ad. The Editor reserves the right to capriciously refuse any ads he deems unsuitable, e.g. Pintos or lava lamps.

**WANTED TO BUY** Ham radio and test equipment that glows in the dark (anything with tubes). I enjoy restoring and most of all operating these beauties from a BYGONE ERA. They will get a loving home. Also will buy any tubes, parts, extra manuals, pre-1970 CQ-73-ARRL handbooks, or anything else relating to ham radio of that era. These items are of great value as a resource when restoring equipment. Jerry, WA7BUY, 360-457-6671 or **kit-susa@olypen.com**.

**KEYS WANTED** - Collector wants to buy straight keys, bugs, keyers, other telegraph-related instruments, books, and ephemera. Kirk, N7UK, 206-542-6742 or **n7uk@aol.com**.

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## The Prez sez...

It seems like I just did this, and here it is time again! I know I started this when Al was the President, I'd badger him to say something, however reluctant he might be. The shoe is now on the other foot, and I begin to understand what Al sometimes said to me on the phone.

At any rate, I want to be sure that all of you know that it is now the time to submit nominations to the Ham of the Year award. If any of you have someone you'd like to nominate please get in touch with me (360-638-1715), Chuck Stroehrer, WA7EBH (425-392-5303), or John Black, W7HIL (425-391-8026). It would help the committee if you could have some material supporting your nomination. We'd like to have all nominations by the end of October.

The program this month is by Mary Lou Brown NM7N, our Northwest Regional Director, who I'm sure can give us the very latest on the proposed changes for licensing requirements as well as the rest of the happenings at ARRL. I think this is a very important program for us to hear.

We also need to have someone volunteer who can host the annual Christmas potluck in December. Last year it was at my house, but this year I think the location will be a bit discouraging for a lot of you (Honest Injun, guys, that wasn't the reason I moved!). Contact any of the officers if you can host this social get-together.

I hope to see a lot of you at the pre-meeting dinner at Coco's and it would be great to see a 100% turnout for the meeting. - 73 de Jim KC7FEH

## Seattle Marathon

Bob Calkins, WA7NUU, is looking for at least a hundred (!) hams to provide communications for the Seattle Marathon on Sunday, Nov. 29. The 26.2 mile event will begin at the Seattle Center, wind through downtown Seattle, make a round trip across the I-90 bridge, head north along Lake Washington Boulevard and through the Arboretum, and cross Capitol Hill and the Queen Anne neighborhood before finishing back at the Seattle Center. There'll also be a half-marathon run, and 8K and half-marathon walks.

Anyone interested in volunteering can call Bob at 425-745-3543.