

Some thoughts from Ben – K9BF

After a period of contemplation, I have become a proponent of dropping the incentive licensing system all together. In fact, why do we need any testing beyond a simple demonstration that an applicant understands the basic rules governing ham radio? Rules such as don't use profanity and knowledge of the band plans. If we did a better job of locking up radios so they can't be modified to transmit out of band and let the on air band police inform offenders of proper mode use, we would only have a dirty speech lesson to teach.

Let me elaborate a little on the logic that I used to come to this decision. Equipment, just about all the equipment hams use these days are commercially made. Wherever there is an area in which hams might be able to indulge in creativity and the process of deep learning, some manufacturer has already done it for them. There is no need to learn anything beyond the basic understanding of how to follow an instruction manual. Of course we shouldn't transmit into a heavily mismatched antenna, but this is covered in every owner's manual I have ever read. No need to teach this in a ham class. With most transmitters containing auto tuners and fold-back circuits, manufacturers don't have to worry about covering the repair of radios under warranties. So I have concluded that we can certainly do away with all that technical junk, and CW has got to go too. How in the world can we possibly expect contemporary applicants to suffer through hours of code practice only to never use it again?

As I reflect back over the 36 years I have been a ham, I have seen many changes. When I first became licensed, single side band and the use of an iambic keyer was all the rage. I remember that my novice license was only good for 2 years and that I needed to get to work and learn what was needed to obtain my general ticket. In those long ago days, I remember ham operators being admired by the general populace as smart, hard working and obsessive, with the key word being admired. In my studies to become a general class was laid an understanding of electronics that formed the foundation for my life long career in electronics. With pride and determination, I

moved from general to extra for the privilege of being able to operate in the 25 khz sections reserved for extras. This was all done the old fashioned way by learning and understanding the material, no memorizing test pool questions for me.

Times have changed of course and I don't propose we try to turn back the clock. We are told by those in the know that our bands are being threaded as never before and the only safety net we have is in large numbers, numbers that are large enough to subdue attempts to destroy ham radio by taking away spectrum or polluting it with BPL. To this end, we have come to accept a lower standard for those wishing to become a ham for the sake of more numbers. Numbers to fight back the commercial interests and numbers to which manufacturers can sell more goods!

What of the pride that was once held by those that advance to Extra? I have seen it destroyed in the faces of experienced hams who field questions from newly minted one by two calls. Questions like, what is a straight key or why doesn't my 6 foot high antenna hear the station being worked by a local ham with a beam at 70 feet. There is no point to incentive licensing when all it means is that an applicant has memorized and processed yet another question pool.

FCC Commissioner Abernathy Announces Her Departure

From ARRL News

FCC Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy has announced that she will exit the Commission December 9. Her tenure already was set to end when the current session of Congress adjourns. Appointed by President George W. Bush to fill an unexpired term, Abernathy, a Republican, has served on the FCC since May 2001 but never was nominated for a full term. In her announcement, Abernathy lauded the FCC's increasing reliance on competition rather than regulation.

"Our largely market-driven approach to advanced services has helped create a vibrant market for new wired and wireless telecommunications

products," she said, "and our spectrum reform initiatives have improved our ability to put this scarce resource to its most effective use."

In 2003, the ARRL strongly objected to Abernathy's suggestion that broadband over power line (BPL) technology would contribute to what she described as "broadband Nirvana." Addressing the United Power Line Council's annual conference that year, Abernathy expressed unabashed enthusiasm for BPL and recommended a combination of regulatory restraint and the elimination or substantial modification of existing rules as steps along the "path to Enlightenment."

Earlier this month, President Bush nominated Deborah T. Tate of Tennessee, a Republican, to serve out the remainder of the term of former FCC Chairman Michael K. Powell, which expires June 30, 2007. Under current FCC Chairman Kevin J. Martin, a Republican who succeeded Powell, the FCC has been operating with four members ever since, and it could be down to three if Tate is not confirmed by the US Senate before Abernathy's departure.

In addition to her other FCC responsibilities, Abernathy chaired the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service and participated in the 2002 International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Plenipotentiary Conference and in World Radiocommunication Conference 2003. She also chaired the 2004 ITU Global Symposium for Regulators. Before her appointment to the FCC, Abernathy was director for government affairs at BroadBand Office Inc. She also previously served as legal advisor to FCC Commissioner Sherrie Marshall and Chairman James Quello.

Martin thanked Abernathy for her "dedicated service" on the FCC and wished her well. "I have enjoyed working with Commissioner Abernathy since we joined the Commission together over four years ago," he said. "She has made valuable contributions to the agency during her tenure, and we have all benefited from her extensive knowledge of the communications industry."

The White House this month also reappointed Commissioner Michael J. Copps, a Democrat, for a new five-year term, starting last July 1. That appointment also is subject to Senate confirmation.

January is Home Brew Night

Dig out your homemade projects and bring them to the January TCARC meeting! We will revive an old tradition of demonstrating items we made ourselves. It appears that our hobby is losing the "home made" approach with all the imported equipment available, but we are convinced that enough of our members have items they built that we can have a night to demonstrate our accomplishments. If you have more than one, bring whatever you have. Each person can demonstrate their projects and explain how they were built. As with most of our meetings, we will be at the UI Fire Institute.

The Board meets on Thursday prior to the club meeting night. The Board Meetings are held at the UI Fire Institute at 7 p.m. All club members are welcome to attend the Board Meetings.

Twin City Amateur Radio Club Chili Supper

When: Thursday, December 8th

**Masonic Temple
14 Bel-Air Court
Champaign**

6:30 PM

This social is in place of our club meeting for December

**Bring your XYL/OM and the Harmonics
The club will provide chili, table service,
coffee, tea and soft drinks**

**Please bring a side dish
and/or dessert.**

**Pass the word around
Tall tales and some old tales**