

LETTERS

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This column is open to your considered comments. Opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of Monitoring Times. Your letters may be edited or shortened for clarity and length. Please mail to Letters to the Editor, 7540 Hwy 64 West, Brasstown, NC 28902 or email editor@monitoringtimes.com

Happy monitoring!
Rachel Baughn, Editor

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Farewell to Passport

We were sorry to hear the news that *Passport to World Band Radio* will not be revived in another form. When the decision not to publish the 2010 edition of this well-respected book was announced, the hobby anticipated a follow-up announcement of a change in delivery format. But it appears editor-in-chief Lawrence Magne plans to retire in earnest, and *PWBR* will not be revived.

On the website www.passband.com/category/receivernews/ Magne recounts how the book began and thanks his many contributors and supporters. Read it quickly, because the website is being closed down soon. It is indeed the end of an era.

Gayle Van Horn, MT's Frequency Manager, said, on hearing the news, "The *New York Times* called *Passport to World Band Radio*, 'the TV Guide for world band radio' – and rightly so." *Passport* held a place in listening posts across the globe, including mine. I will miss the informative reviews, features, programming guides and the Blue Pages. Whether using a hand held portable or a table top receiver, *Passport* kept the shortwave community informed. My sincere good wishes to Larry Magne in any future endeavors.

We join in Gayle's well-wishes. Larry Magne, who wrote receiver reviews for *Monitoring Times* for ten years, fought hard for the hobby throughout his career, and he remains a good friend. We all will miss his useful "Blue Pages" listings and in-depth receiver reviews.

It is sad news, but, trying to be philosophical, past generations have already discovered that when one's life's work is born out of one's passion, it can only be passed on if someone is found with an equal passion to continue it. But, who knows? Maybe waiting in the wings is some youngster who will start a new listener service, streaming international broadcasters and sending a Twitter message to his subscription list as the next broadcast begins – or maybe he/she will do something new we haven't even dreamed of yet ... just like Lawrence Magne did.

Cruising for DX

Long-time MT subscriber Maury Midlo (author of April's *First Person Radio* article) took a cruise last February and hoped to be able to visit the bridge and check out the radio room. He said, "Security is tight, even on ships these days, so I am not surprised by the inability to visit [the bridge]."

As to DXing shipboard, Maury said, "I took along a scanner and a shortwave radio. The shortwave listening was not exciting and the ship's few routine VHF & UHF communications were mostly not in English."



Long-time Monitoring Times subscriber Maury Midlo relaxes on his cruise-ship stateroom balcony with his scanner and SW radio. (Feb., 2010.)

March Corrections

The photograph on page 8 of March MT should have been credited to Kevin Burke. The photo on page 55 of the same issue should have been credited to Brian Topolski. MT regrets the error.

Also, thanks to Steve Silverwood for testing all the links in the SW Guide list of SWB URLs! A labor of love, indeed, and much appreciated by all who read MT.

Monitoring MURS

James Newman wrote: "I was reading your article on MURS (Feb MT). I drive a truck around the country; sometimes I'll scan FRS GMRS and MURS. I have found a lot of Walmarts, Lowes, and Home Depots using MURS, and at least one MacDonalds. I have been scanning those freqs. for about a year. I think I even heard some crane crews that are building windmills in the midwest."

Jim KG4TRI

"Thanks, Jim, for the interesting info on your MURS monitoring. I'm glad to hear that MURS is being used. It's got a lot going for it. I hope that eventually more manufacturers will start making more versatile MURS HTs available."

Ken Reitz KS4ZR

EDITOR'S SOAPBOX: HAM RADIO IS NOT DYING!

By Larry Van Horn, N5FPW

I have been a licensed amateur radio operator now for 36 years. During this time I have experienced three solar cycles, seen major changes to the rules and regulations that govern the amateur radio service, and participated in a technological revolution that is still rewriting amateur radio history books. It has been fun to be a part of such a dynamic and cutting edge hobby.

One of the things that has remained a constant during my many years as a ham is the number of times I have heard or seen it written that "the ham radio service is dying." In fact, that statement always seems to be spoken in the same breath with "the whole radio hobby is dying."

I have seen this written on the net, in various print publications and recently on a shortwave radio station broadcast. For instance, in researching this soapbox article I ran across this headline on the internet, "Top 25 things vanishing from America: #16 – Ham radio."

In that article was this little gem: "As cell phones and the Internet siphon off much of what once attracted people to amateur radio, the nation's ham radio population is graying rapidly. Given the cash value of the radio bands allocated to amateur radio, there will be relentless pressure on the government to take back those bands so they can be sold. All these elements speak to a long, slow diminishment of a pastime that began with Marconi."

So, maybe it is time to sprinkle some sunspot dust on the radio community, and use actual facts and figures to get to the truth. I recently did a search using my favorite search engine Google™ and uncovered an online article on the ARRL website titled, "2009 Sees Surge of New Amateur

Radio Licensees."

According to the ARRL, in 2009, the FCC issued more than 30,144 new amateur radio licenses.

"This past year was a banner year for new amateur radio licensees," according to ARRL VEC Manager Maria Somma, AB1FM.

According to the ARRL piece, the number of new licenses issued in 2009 was an increase of almost 7.5 percent from 2008. In 2005, 16,368 new hams joined amateur radio's ranks; just five years later, that number had increased by almost 14,000 – a whopping 84 percent increase in growth between 2005 and 2009!

"When looking at the statistics over the last 10 years, these are some of the highest numbers we've seen," Somma explained. "Additionally, our total number of licensees across all three classes has grown each year."

Currently, there are 682,500 licensed amateur radio operators in the U.S. In 2008, there were 663,500 licensed amateurs; there were 655,800 in 2007. Broken down by license class, at the end of 2009 there were 17,084 Novices, 334,245 Technicians, 150,970 Generals, 60,795 Advanced and 119,403 Amateur Extra licensees.

Not a bad number for a radio service that is supposed to be dying. If you aren't currently licensed, now is a good time to jump on the amateur radio band wagon. Licensing requirements have never been easier.

So, I'm glad to report that 2009 was a very good year for amateur radio, and I am excited by the promise of 2010 for a service that is clearly "not dying."