

**The Central Texas Amateur Radio Club
meets the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM at the
Bell County Communications Center, 798 West Avenue O, in Belton**

President's Corner

Kenneth Watkins, KE5ISN



Belton HamExpo is on October 1st. Hope that you have a chance to attend. I always enjoy attending this event for the eyeball QSO's. It is amazing to walk through the tailgaters and wonder how they can pack all of their wares into their vehicle.

September has been an interesting month weather wise. Record heat is still occurring along with record morning lows. As of this writing 89 days of 100 + temperatures have been recorded in Waco, 10 of these days in September. Rain has been hit and miss, hope you have been in the hit area. I have measured 0.86 inches from two different events. There have been several spectacular lightning displays that have wreaked havoc with the power grid. These lightning strikes can hit your shack so remember to disconnect the antenna.

The tropics have been somewhat of a disappointment to us in Texas. Only one tropical storm has come toward Texas this year only to die right off shore. Post Tropical Storm Ophelia appears that it will regenerate into a tropical storm. Tropical Storm Philippe does not appear to be strengthening, neither system poses a threat to the US. Hurricane season goes to the first of November and maybe we can still get some moisture from the Gulf.

Officer elections are coming up at the November meeting. If you would like to serve the club as an officer or director, contact W5VEX, N5ZXJ or KF5EVV.

Each Thursday night at 8:00 pm the club has its weekly net on the 147.140 repeater with a tone of 123.0. Try to take a few minutes and check into the net. I am also in need of net control stations. This is an excellent time to practice being net control for emergency nets. If you are interested e-mail me at KE5ISN@aol.com and I will discuss being a net control station in detail.

The next CTARC meeting will be October 4, at 7:00 pm in the Bell County EOC on Ave O in Belton. This meeting is open to all. Invite a friend, ham or non-ham, to the next meeting.

- 73 de KE5ISN



HamEXPO!



Sponsored by the Temple Amateur Radio Club -W5LM, the *Belton Hamfest* returns to the Bell County Exposition Center in Belton, **Saturday, Oct. 1st** from 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

Getting there is easy; from U.S. Highway 190 take the exit for Loop 121 and follow the signs to the Exposition Center. Plenty of free parking!

Talk-in frequency is 146.820(-) PL 123, and call for W5LM.

General admission for the public is \$5.00 at the door. Admission price includes one free raffle ticket for various door prizes raffled off during the event. Winners must be present to collect their winnings.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.tarc.org/hamexpo>



Ham Expo Amateur Radio Test Session

In conjunction with the HamExpo, amateur radio tests will be given at the Belton Police Station, sponsored by the Central Texas Amateur Radio Club.

The police station is located at 2nd and Birdwell (about a block west of the Belton Burger King hamburger joint). The **testing will begin at 9:30 AM** and end when all applicants have been tested, probably around 11:00 AM.

Since the test session is in conjunction with the very popular Ham Expo, we expect between 25 and 50 people taking the tests. This requires at least 10 Volunteer Examiners to properly staff the event. **The VE's participating should be on site by 9:00.** Both General and Extra VE's are needed since all test levels are being made available.

Directions from the Bell County Expo Center: turn right as you leave the Expo Center and take IH-35 North – you can stay along the frontage road – then take exit 294A to Central Avenue. Then turn one block west (left) to Birdwell, then two blocks north (right) to the Belton Municipal Courts and Police building located at Second and Birdwell.

This is a 'Ham Community' effort and all area VE's are needed and most welcome to participate. If you will be able to participate, please send an email to Joe Dorn - W5VEX, at: w5vex@arrl.net, or you can contact him by phone at (254) 939-5918 or (254) 721-0829.

People taking the test do not need to register before hand, just show up at test time. A photo ID and one other form of ID is required. The test fee is \$15.00.





The Central Texas Amateur Radio Net
meets every Thursday at 8:00 PM
on the W5BEC repeater,
on 147.140(+) PL 123.0
Join Us!

October NCS & Back-Up NCS Schedule

October 6 th : Net Control: KF5LNX Back-Up: W5VEX	October 13 th : W5VEX K6WXA
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October 20 th : Net Control: K6WXA Back-Up: AD5SK	October 27 th : AD5SK KE5ISN
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CQ CQ World-Wide DX Contest

Contest period runs from 0001Z,
October 29th through 2400Z October 30th
on 10, 15, 20, 40, 80 & 160 meters SSB.

For further information, please visit:
<http://www.cqww.com/rules.php>

Birth of 73 Magazine

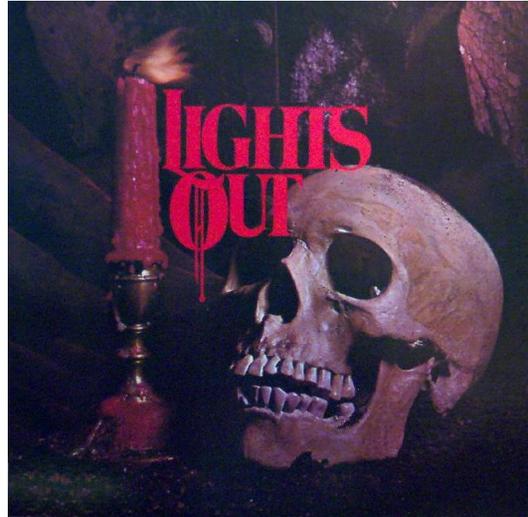
The first issue of 73 magazine was
published in October 1960, by its
founder Wayne S. Green II - W2NSD, a
former editor of *CQ*.



73 Amateur Radio Today would go on
for another 43 years until its last issue in
September 2003.

Strays

For your Halloween Listening Enjoyment



Lights Out was a very popular radio
show that dealt with horror and the
supernatural. The idea was to offer
listeners a dramatic program late at
night, a midnight mystery serial to catch
the attention of the listeners at the
witching hour. The programs were
characterized by grisly stories spiked
with dark, tongue-in-cheek humor. A
character might be buried or eaten or
skinned alive, vaporized in a ladle of
white-hot steel, absorbed by a giant
slurping amoeba, have his arm torn off
by a robot, or forced to endure torture,
beating or decapitation—always with the
appropriate blood-curdling acting and
sound effects. Though there had been
efforts at horror on radio previously,
there does not seem to have been any-
thing quite as explicit or outrageous as
Lights Out on a regular basis.

Tune in on Halloween night to any of
the 86 archived episodes of *Lights Out*
by visiting:
<http://www.archive.org/details/LightsOutoldTimeRadio>



E. Laird Campbell, W1CUT

Ever been driving along the highway and noticed a sign like this one? The reason for the warning is that radio frequency energy from an operating transmitter is strong enough in some cases to induce current in electric blasting caps and cause them to explode.

The danger of accidental firing increases as the leads in the electrical circuit of the caps approach a half wavelength or longer at the transmitted frequency. Since a current as small as 150 ma. is sufficient to fire an average cap, complete safety requires that the transmitter be turned off when near a blasting site.

The table below shows the minimum safe distance that should be maintained between electric blasting caps and an operating radio transmitter.

Transmitter Power (watts)	Minimum Distance (feet)
5 – 25	100
25 – 50	150
50 – 100	220
100 – 250	350
250 – 500	450
500 – 1000	650

It might be well to note that there is no danger that radio frequency energy will fire primers such as those used in the primer pocket of cartridge cases. Those primers are quite insensitive to anything except a direct blow or extremely high temperatures.



Mobile Radio Installations

Bud Garretson, AD5SK

In a recent issue of *CQ* magazine, there was a column by Jeff Reinhardt, AA6JR, with information from automobile manufacturers on installing two-way radios in their vehicles. Honda does not provide support for mobile radio installations; Chrysler and General Motors didn't respond to inquiries. Toyota and Ford were very generous with details on installing mobile rigs in their vehicles. Hyundai, according to one reader, gave him the run-around when he asked for information.



From the cover of Radio News magazine, August 1919

It is my opinion, and I'm entitled to it, that if a manufacturer wants you to buy their vehicle, they should give you all the information you need to install a mobile rig. They should even provide drawings and pictures showing the best routes for running power and antenna cables. If they don't want to do that, then their vehicles can sit on the dealer's lot, as far as I'm concerned.



The University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, Cooperative Program for Operational Meteorology Education & Training is pleased to announce the publication of the **SKYWARN Spotter Training Course**. This course consists of two modules; “*Role of the SKYWARN Spotter*” and “*SKYWARN Spotter Convective Basics*” that provide baseline training for spotters including an overview of the national program and its history as well as actions to

take during severe thunderstorms. Learners review multiple scenarios that walk them through procedures for making spotter reports with best practices for maintaining personal safety. They work through image galleries to practice identifying the spectrum of each storm feature in the field.

This course includes photographs, video, audio narration, and companion print versions. The intended audience for the SKYWARN Spotter Training Course is the general public interested in becoming storm spotters, and after this training, you can register to become a SKYWARN spotter with the NWS. Please follow this link to enroll in the course: http://www.meted.ucar.edu/training_course.php?id=23. Online registration is required.

The UCAR/COMET welcomes any comments or questions you may have regarding the content, instructional approach, or use of this module. Please e-mail your comments or questions regarding this course to Bryan Guarente at: guarente@comet.ucar.edu or to Liz Page at: epage@comet.ucar.edu.

The **ARRL Simulated Emergency Test** is set for October 1 - 2, 2011. This nationwide exercise is the chance to test your emergency operating skills and the readiness of your communications equipment and accessories in an emergency-like deployment. ARRL Field Organization Leaders at the Section and local levels along with many other volunteers, who are active in public service and emergency communications, are developing emergency-like scenarios in consultation with a variety of agencies for which radio amateurs are known to provide service during emergencies.



The ARRL Simulated Emergency Test is an ideal opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities of Amateur Radio and to improve them when necessary by experimentation. Community and public service agency officials will learn first-hand by taking a role in the SET and by providing an objective evaluation afterwards from their perspective.

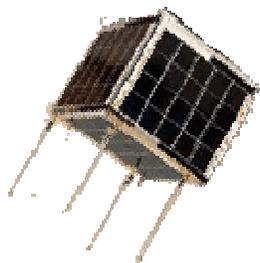
The Amateur Radio Emergency Service, the National Traffic System, the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service and members of the ARRL Field Organization will participate and practice emergency operation plans, nets and procedures.

To find out how you can step up and be a part of the local or Section-level activities, contact your Section Manager. You can find contact information for all 71 ARRL Section Managers on page 16 of any issue of *QST*. Information about specific SET guidelines and reporting forms for ARRL Field Leaders are posted on the ARRL website.

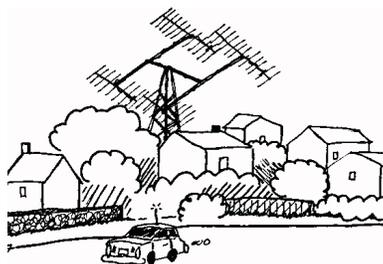
AO-51 May Soon Be Lost

Launched on June 29th 2004, the ageing Amsat Oscar AO-51 appears to be a dying bird. This, according to Control Station N8MH, reporting via the Amsat News Service weekly newsletter.

In an update on AO-51's health, it was noted that since the failure of the first cell on the six-cell battery in May, ground controllers have been limited to simple commands for basic configurations. Now ground stations have discovered there is a second cell in the battery showing problems. The control team thinks that battery will be the next cell to go. If that happens the probable result will be that AO-51 could go permanently QRT.



As an FM satellite, AO-51 has always been easily workable with gear as simple as a VHF/UHF dual band hand-held radio, as long as a station knows when the satellite's footprint is within reach. Transatlantic contacts have been made without much effort, as long as the satellite is approximately mid-Atlantic so that the edge of the satellite's footprint is within reach on either continent.



OK, FRED. I'M ON MAPLE STREET.
NOW, WHICH ONE IS YOUR HOUSE?

Special Event Stations

SP5DRH will activate Pigeon Island as **H4ØKJ** between October 8th to the 21st. His main target will be Europe on 160, 80, 15 and 17 meters. QSL via SP7DQR.

Germany's special event station **DR16BENE** will be on the air through October 31st on 80 through 10 meters using SSB and PSK31. This to celebrate the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Freiburg at the end of September. QSL via DL7BC.

New Zealand amateur radio operators will replace their ZL prefix with a **ZM** prefix throughout September and October. This, in celebration of the Rugby World Cup which runs from September 9th through October 23rd.

Two special event stations in celebration of the Rugby event are **ZL4RUGBY**. It will be on the air through October 31st. QSL via ZL4PW. The other is **ZL6RWC**, which will also be operational through October 31st. QSL via ZL1VK.

Canadian special event station **CJ3A** will be active during the entire month of October 2011 to celebrate the Centennial of Parks in Canada. Operations will be on all HF bands. QSL via VE3LA.

Members of the "Holyland DX Group" will be active as **4X5A** from Akhziv Island between 0700 UTC on Friday, October 21st through 1200 UTC on Saturday, October 22nd. Operation will be on 40 through 10 meters using CW and SSB. QSL via 4Z5LA.

JK1KSB, will be operational as **8Q7SO** from Mirihi Island in the Maldives between October 28th and November 4th. His activity will be on 80 through 10 meters using CW, SSB, RTTY and PSK31. QSL via his home callsign.



Winter Forecast Outlook

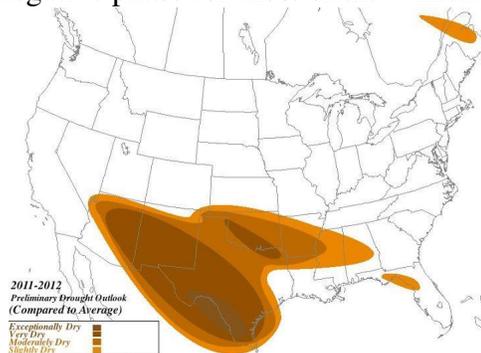
Last year's winter was a result of the Pacific Ocean going through its La Niña phase. La Niña is unusually cold temperatures in the eastern Pacific. This is a result of cold water welling up from the depths of the Pacific Ocean which creates well-below normal surface temperatures. La Niña has re-emerged in the tropical Pacific Ocean and is forecast to gradually strengthen and continue into winter.

Then there is the Northern Atlantic Oscillation or NAO, which is a major factor when forecasting just how cold and snowy any winter will be. There are two phases of the NAO; a positive phase and a negative phase. When in its negative phase, the polar jet stream will drop farther south, pushing the storm track farther south. When in a positive phase, the polar jet stream retreats farther north, and with that, the storm track shifts north. It is expected that the NAO will remain in a negative phase for most of the winter.

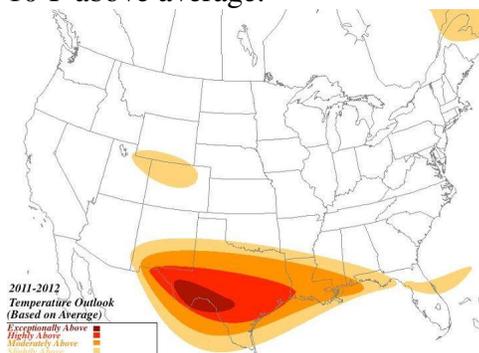
So what do these major weather patterns mean for the 2011-2012 winter?

Meteorologists are predicting no immediate end in sight to the heat or drought afflicting our state.

Texas was subjected to its driest summer ever, with a statewide average of only 2.44 inches of rain -- 5.29 inches below the long-term average and the distinction of experiencing the warmest summer on record of any state in America.



Historically, during a La Niña winter, the southern tier of the U.S. experiences a warm and dry winter. This winter, expectations are for southern Texas to experience an exceptionally warm winter. Temps may be in the 70's during the middle of January and in the 80's in March. In the surrounding area, it is forecasted to be a highly above average winter. This area should be far warmer than any normal winter, with temps 5 to 10°F above average.



Fire season is expected to persist through this autumn with abundant dead growth remaining as fuel. Cold fronts will usher in gusty winds and low humidity levels. Without significant rainfall a significant fire season is likely throughout this winter.

No measureable precipitation fell during the month of September – and little appears in the offing. Normal precipitation amounts for the

month of September range from 2.5 to 4 inches across north and central Texas. The Climate Prediction Center outlook favors the driest tercile throughout autumn and winter. Thus, the drought is likely to persist or worsen into 2012.

Reservoir capacities are down 63% statewide; aquifers are at their lowest levels since records were first kept. We Texans are urged to be responsible with our water usage.

Still Burning After 300 Days

Janna Zepp, Fort Hood Sentinel

We're on fire, folks and it is bad. But I don't have to tell you that. You've all heard the news. The Texas wildfires have been burning for more than 300 days now. I'm afraid to ask how much worse this is going to get.

We haven't faced this kind of drought and fire danger in Texas in more than 50 years. It's terrifying. If ever there was something that could bring us to our knees, it's this.

We need rain, but I fear none is coming. Texas is my home. It's your home, too. I've written much about what Texas was, what it is and what it should become. Sometimes you agree with me; sometimes you don't. That's alright. But I'd like to ask each of you what it is you value so highly that you are willing to fight to preserve it. We will call that Texas.

These fires threaten everything we hold dear. Almost anything seems better than remaining in the path of imminent disaster. If, however, we stand together and do the right thing, I believe every one of you will prove yourselves worth 10 in return. We will show not only the world what Texans are made of, but we will also survive this horrible time.

Please ... I'm asking you ... please, think before you set a fire outside, whether it's candles, a cigarette or an outdoor grill. The tiniest spark can set off a massive conflagration. Is any of it worth the price of losing your home, your animals, your neighborhood, your town or your life?

This is not a time to panic; it's a time to pay attention.

In the meantime, pray for rain. I think we need that even more than hope.

Wildfire Update

Texas Forest Service

Texas is battling its worst fire season in state history. Nearly 3.8 million acres an area roughly the size of Connecticut, have burned since the start of the season last November 15th as hot and dry weather, coupled with a historic drought, made conditions ripe for rapid fire growth.



Bastrop Fire – Photo courtesy KA5OST

The largest single wildfire in the state, the Bastrop County Complex Fire, which includes the 719 acre Union Chapel Fire, consumed more than 34,000 acres and destroyed 1,554 homes. Two civilians were found dead as search crews went through the charred subdivisions.

Closer to home, the Union Grove Fire consumed 500 acres, approximately 15 miles south of Killeen.

Since Labor Day weekend, aircraft have flown more than 1,800 hours and dropped more than 5.5 million gallons of water and retardant. Six heavy airtankers, three water scoopers, 15 single-engine airtankers, four C-130 airtankers, 13 helicopters and 17 air attack aircraft and lead planes are being utilized.

Citizens who witness or suspect arson activity are encouraged to call the TFS at: 1-800-364-3740.

Monitoring the Texas Wildfires

Rick Murray, K6WXA

Lately I've grown accustomed to the familiar sound of a firefighting helicopter flying over my house, going from its' re-fill point somewhere to some smokie destination off in the distance, and back-and-forth again.

Curious, I researched the frequencies in use by the Texas Forest Service and the National Incident Radio Support Cache and programmed them in to my scanner.

While these frequencies that I've listed below are not all of the frequencies utilized by these two services, they are those that I've found to be active in my neck of the woods. These frequencies may or may not be active in your area, but try plugging them in and giving them a listen.



Bell UH-1H Iroquois

122.925	Texas Forest Service	Air Ops, Primary Zone 1
135.675	Texas Forest Service	Air Ops, Primary Zone 5
151.300	Texas Forest Service	Air to Ground Primary
151.385	Texas Forest Service	Air to Ground Inter-Op
151.475	Texas Forest Service	Fire Tac 8
154.265	Texas Forest Service	Texas Fire-2
154.280	Texas Forest Service	Texas Fire-1
123.025	Inter-Agency	Air Ops
166.675	Inter-Agency	Air Tactics
168.650	Inter-Agency	Air Tactics



Bombardier CL-215 Superscooper – Courtesy KE5WVC

Some other suggested frequencies that you might consider listening in on might include: 154.130-Texas State Fire Net; 155.670-Texas State Inter-Agency Net; 155.370-another Texas Inter-Agency Net and 155.490, the Texas state-wide Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Net.

Other state-wide mutual aid frequencies can be found at:

<http://www.radioreference.com/apps/db/?aid=1005>

For a complete list of all radio frequencies utilized by the Texas Forest Service, please

visit: <http://www.radioreference.com/apps/db/?aid=87> and for a list of all the frequencies used by the National Incident Radio Support Cache, go to:

http://wiki.radioreference.com/index.php/National_Incident_Radio_Support_Cache

Thanks to KE5ISN for his contributions to this article.

Origin of the Q Code

The Q code was created in 1909 by the British government as a list of abbreviations, for the use of British ships and coastal stations licensed by the Postmaster General. The Q codes facilitated communication between maritime radio operators speaking in different languages, so they were adopted internationally. A total of forty-five Q codes appeared on the "List to be used in Radio Communications" which was included in the Service Regulations affixed to the Third International Radiotelegraph Convention in London. The Service Regulations were signed on July 5, 1912, and became effective July 1, 1913.

The first Twelve Q Codes Listed in the 1912 International Radiotelegraph Convention Regulations consisted of:

- QRA What ship or coast station is that? / This is ____.
- QRB What is your distance? / My distance is ____.
- QRC What is your true bearing? / My true bearing is ____ degrees.
- QRD Where are you bound for? / I am bound for ____.
- QRF Where are you bound from? / I am bound from ____.
- QRG What line do you belong to? / I belong to the ____ Line.
- QRH What is your wavelength in meters? / My wavelength is ____ meters.
- QRJ How many words have you to send? / I have ____ words to send.
- QRK How do you receive me? / I am receiving well.
- QRL Are you busy? / I am busy.
- QRM Are you being interfered with? / I am being interfered with.
- QRN Are the atmospherics strong? / Atmospherics are very strong

Over the years, modifications were made to reflect the changes in radio practice. In the original international list QSW / QSX stood for "Shall I increase / decrease my spark frequency?" however, spark-gap transmitters were banned in the United States in the 1920s. Over a hundred Q codes were listed in the Post Office Handbook for Radio Operators in Britain in the 1970s, and cover subjects such as meteorology, radio direction finding, radio procedures, rescue, and so on.

Some Q codes were used in aviation by the International Civil Aviation Organization (the QAA through QNZ series). These codes are used in radiotelephone conversations with air traffic control as unambiguous shorthand, where safety and efficiency are of vital importance.

(See: http://www.pilotfriend.com/training/flight_training/communication/q_code.htm)

Another subset of Q codes is used by the Miami-Dade County, Florida local government for law enforcement and fire rescue communications. { *Editor's Note: one of the interesting Q Codes in use there is: "QTR" which refers to "The Thing".* }

The QOA–QQZ code range was reserved for the maritime service, but is no longer used as Morse code is now rarely - *if ever* - used by ships at sea. { *Editor's Note: The last of the commercial ship-to-shore telegraph stations in the U.S. signed off at 23:59 PST, on July 12, 1999.* }

The QRA–QUZ code range includes phrases applicable to all services and is allocated to the International Telecommunications Union.

QVA–QZZ are not in use. Many codes have no immediate applicability outside one individual service, such as maritime operation (many QO or QU series codes) or radio

teletype operation (the QJ series). For reference, see: <http://www.kloth.net/radio/qcodes.php>

Selected Q codes were soon adopted by the amateur radio operators. In December 1915, the ARRL began publication of a magazine titled **QST**, named after the Q code for “General call to all stations”. In amateur radio the Q codes were originally used in Morse Code transmissions to shorten lengthy phrases, and were followed by a Morse code question mark (••---••) if the phrase was a question.

Q codes are commonly used in voice communications as shorthand nouns, verbs, and adjectives making up phrases. For example, an amateur radio operator will complain about QRM (man-made interference), or tell another operator that there is “QSB on the signal” (...fading...) or “to QSY” (...change frequency...)

A complete list of Q codes applicable for use in amateur radio can be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Q_code#Q_codes_applicable_for_use_in_amateur_radio {

Editor's Note: In reviewing this page it is interesting to note that the Q code “QRRR” is missing. This code was previously in use some years ago as a distress code, the equivalent of SOS. }

There are also a few unofficial and humorous codes in use, such as QLF (“try sending with your LEFT foot”) and QSC (“send cigarettes”, not the official meaning of “this is a cargo vessel”). In the question form, “QNB” is supposed to mean, “How many buttons does your radio have?” A reply of “QNB 45/15” means “45, and I know what 15 of them do.”

Some other humorous -- and unofficial -- Q codes can be found at:

<http://www.ae5x.com/blog/2011/06/05/new-q-signals-for-old-farts> as well as some Q codes that never made the cut: <http://www.kd5om.com/qsignals-that-didnt-make-the-cut.htm>

- Thanks to KE5WVC for contributing this article

That First Contact

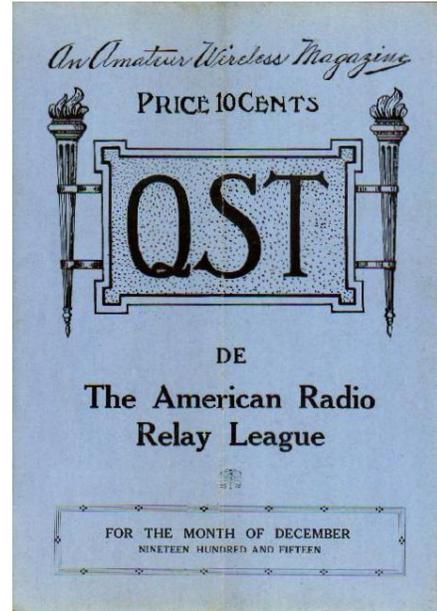
Maybe you’ve just received your license and you pick-up the mic and call “CQ” or put your call letters out over the repeater, and someone answers you. For any ham, that first contact or “QSO” is always special.

Maybe you’d like to especially thank that other ham that made it happen.



Or... maybe you’re an old-timer and a new ham has made his or her first QSO with you and you’d like to present that new ham something special to commemorate their first QSO.

The ARRL has a **First Contact Award** to recognize this memorable event and it can be presented by either amateur involved in that first QSO. Just visit: <http://www.arrl.org/first-contact> and fill out the submission form. There is no fee for this award.



Bright Outlook for Amateur Radio

Radio News, October - 1920

Since the war interest in radio telegraphy and telephony has increased to the extent that there is hardly a square mile in the populated sections of this country that does not boast of at least one antennae system.

This interest is partially due to the great number of men who received radio training in the Signal Corps of Naval Radio branches of the service, but possibly due in a greater degree to the very material increase in the range and efficiency of present-day wireless equipment.

As the number of radio devotees increases an added incentive is given to the pleasure of owning and operating one's own station. The American Radio Relay League, an organization composed solely of amateur operators, has undertaken to provide the opportunity of sending a message to anyone in this country without charge. And now, on any evening, hundreds of these "feeless" messages can be heard hurrying to their respective destinations via the obliging amateur.

The radio telephone, once an instrument of conjecture, can now be found in almost every progressive station.

The amateur station, unlike the commercial station, is unmolested by the patent situation, and for this reason amateur equipment rivals that of the most advanced commercial installation.

Dancing by radio is the latest fad; by the use of a radiophone and a phonograph at the transmitting end and a sensitive radio receiver equipped with an amplifier, and a loud-speaking horn at the receiving end music can be heard all over the hall. The station transmitting may be hundreds of miles away, but the notes are as clear and as well modulated as if the orchestra were in the same room!



Wireless concerts also give added pleasure to the owner of radio-receiving apparatus. The Western Electric Company experimental station 2XJ at Deal Beach, N. J., has provided entertainment of this nature for the past few months. The program includes selections by famous artists, band music, humorous pieces and lectures. This concert is given every Tuesday evening, starting at 10 o'clock and continuing until midnight, and can be heard for hundreds of miles in every direction.

The radio art is ever new. Although its development has been phenomenal, the next five years will see many radical changes, all affording greater efficiency and creating greater interest.



The Great Pumpkin Shortage

Megan Gibson, TIME London Bureau

As much as we hate to admit we *need* pumpkins - this time of year we really do. Unfortunately for those in the Northeast, pumpkins might not be so readily available for their Halloweening needs.

Thanks to Tropical Storm Irene and an especially stormy summer, there are severe reported shortages in pumpkin crops across the region as bad weather conditions have led to higher numbers of rotten vegetables. Which means that pumpkin seekers could be paying double for their Jack-o'-lantern canvases in some places and, in others, they could be out of luck entirely.



What's a Halloween lover to do? Now just because you didn't see this shortage coming, doesn't mean there's no hope for you. Now that you know, however, your first course of action should be to move quickly. David Dumaresq of *Farmer Dave's* told CBS that you should "buy your pumpkins soon for the best availability because there's not going to be too many around this year."

If you're too late, then we're sorry but you've got to move on and search for alternatives because, hey, there's plenty of other vegetables in the sea. The Hairpin has collected a list of some viable options of "alternate o' lanterns" to help get you brainstorming.

And a Consumerist reader suggests switching teams and moving away from vegetables altogether: try turning milk jugs into little ghosts by cutting out the back and sticking a candle inside.

Remember, these are all practical suggestions for coping, but certainly none of them will replace the feelings you got from shopping for pumpkins the week before Halloween.

But those days are gone.

You just have to remember that, above all else, you can't let pumpkins know how much they mean to you.



And finally, on this night of nights, remember the words of Orson Welles who closed his 1938 "War of the Worlds" radio broadcast by saying:

"That grinning, glowing, globular invader of your living room is an inhabitant of the pumpkin patch, and if your doorbell rings and nobody's there, that was no Martian... it's Halloween."

