

Date: Friday, March 6, 1998 12:17:55 AM
From: HTHALLJR
Subj: I'm a ham

Hi, everybody,

I've been taking a class offered by my stake to help prepare to take the FCC exams to become a ham radio operator, and tonight I passed the test!

There are two entry levels for hams. The first is "Novice", which requires a minimal amount of technical knowledge but also requires passing a 5 word-per-minute Morse code test. The second level, "Technician", requires more technical knowledge but allows one to communicate on several bands by voice without requiring a Morse code test.

The FCC publishes 300 test questions, a random 10% of which are used on any given test. The tests are administered by other amateurs, who volunteer their time as a service to beginners. Tonight we were scheduled to take the novice test, which I passed, but the hams administering the test offered also to let us take the technician test, even if just for practice. I passed it, too -- barely. (I've always had a gift for passing multiple-choice exams with minimal actual knowledge of the subject). So as soon as the FCC posts my call sign on the web (http://www.qrz.com/new_hams.html), probably within a week, I'll be able to operate a ham station.

Now there's just one tiny detail -- obtaining some equipment! But that's far less intimidating than it used to be. Thanks to the wonders of microelectronics, one can now obtain a 5 watt transceiver for the popular 2-meter band for about \$150. These units are not much bigger than the old cell phones were.

The Church sponsored the class because it knows from experience the value of amateur communications in emergency situations. The stake even paid our test fee. Regular phone lines and cellular communications are fine for individual emergencies, but they become overwhelmed in general emergencies. Earthquakes and power outages also disrupt the cellular networks. (My phone lines have remained functional during several power outages I've had this year, however. The phone lines must be on different poles than the power lines -- or perhaps they're buried.)

Only ham communications seem to function well during disasters. I took the class for my own personal safety -- cell phones don't function here at Sundance, anyway, and most of the places where I like to wander are also out of reach of the cellular networks.

I'm telling you all this because I want you to know that it was much easier to learn the materials and pass the exams than I ever imagined. The study book cost me \$16, and I spent about 10 total hours in study. Of course, my interest in science and the experience I've had with electrical circuits and electronics helped some, but I'm sure that anyone could pass the two exams, depending on one's background, with 10-40 hours of total effort paced over several weeks. The exams are offered once a month at UVSC. There's no age requirement for ham operators, and several teens took the class and passed the exam. You can retake

we, here), etc.
and etc. Anyway, John died a few days ago after lying in the hospital in a coma for two weeks after a stroke, and Winnie didn't tell us until after he died. We greatly feel his loss and especially Winnie's. He was eighty-five years old, but spritely as could be right up to the last time we talked with him by phone, just before he had the stroke, about two and a half weeks ago. Talking then, we never would have guessed what was about to happen. We greatly feel his loss--what a friend and example! They joined the Church later in life and were not able to share the joy of it with their children. One son lives in New York and has never married, and fortunately their daughter and her husband live nearby. It was John's fondest wish to see his children join the Church, and we feel sad that he did not see that realization. But thanks be for the principle of eternal progression! Who knows, perhaps he can be of more influence from the other side.

On the other hand, Dan and I went to a happy occasion Saturday, when a friend of ours in our home ward invited us to the baptismal service of her husband. She has waited a long, long time for this. He needed to go under twice to be fully immersed, and she said she could have gleefully (actually, it was quite tearfully) watched him go under many more times. A very joyous and spiritual occasion! Earlier in the week my visit teachers had told me I should ask our bishop for a blessing, when I expressed my concern about my "oral defense." I told them I would never bother the bishop with something like that--that Dan gives beautiful blessings, but since our bishop was at the baptism, I did ask him if we could go into a side room, and Dan said a prayer first, and then Bishop Warnick pronounced a beautiful blessing. He told me I would sleep well all week, and that my mind would be clear and I would be able to answer the questions and remember what I had studied. So I had no business, getting all teeth-chattery the night before. Faith, faith. And it was just as blessed. I truly feel to thank our Father in Heaven for his many mercies and now hope I can figure out

what I'm really supposed to do with all this preparation and study. Any time I got discouraged and wanted to quit, I was reaffirmed that this is what I was supposed to be doing. But I still don't know what to do with it. But first I'll get my thesis all wrapped up. One thing at a time.

Jack Welch of BYU Studies has expressed an interest in seeing my "Annotated Bibliography of Literary Mormon Humor" (it turned out, with my introduction, to be over 200 pages--they publish one Bibliography a year), and also Lavina Fielding Anderson, who edits the Mormon Language Association Annual, has asked to see my thesis "Introduction" for possible publication. (she heard from someone about the preliminary version of it which I gave at the RMMLA Conf. last Oct.), so it is heartening to know the 1300 hrs. I put into this endeavor might not only end up on a dusty shelf at the Kennedy Center.

What my thesis basically proves is that there is a heck of a lot of "Mormon" humor out there, and I annotated it, so people will be able to tell if it's dark, light, or variously shaded humor and also indexed the original materials with over 1,000 topics, so people can select all kinds of humor to liven up talks, speeches, articles, etc. In my wild dreams, I imagine people actually using this material to gradually lighten-up the perception that Mormons are dark-suited, solemn types, who can't laugh at their own foibles. It simply isn't true. We have more literary humor than I could annotate in two years, and I think the mirthful, merry side of our people is an evidence of being in touch with the Spirit--though I did not say it exactly that way. I hope this thesis can help dispel some false assumptions and make us as a people seem more approachable and inviting to non-Members and perhaps have a positive influence in terms of sharing not only our culture, but also the gospel.

In the meantime, I got an MA out of it, so Hurrah! Thanks for much support from all of you friends and family. I certainly feel grateful to those of you who supplied encouragement, my children and husband for their encouragement and support, to some marvelous