

## Lids, Kids, and Space Cadets

If you were on 75-meter AM in the 1950s and '60s, there's a good chance that you heard Myron "Mike" Premus, W2OY, in upstate New York, calling CQ for "Class A only; no lids, no kids, no space cadets." (Or "school bus riders" or anyone with a "K" or "WA" prefix.) Mike had one of the loudest signals on the band and he was a classic ham curmudgeon who didn't care for the "new" license classes that replaced Classes A, B and C in 1951. He made it clear that he wanted only to work those hams whom he felt met his standards for what constituted a "real ham"—basically, someone like him, with a Class A license and a "real" callsign that began only with a "W." According to some folks who knew Mike (there's quite a bit about him on the internet, with a particularly detailed tribute on [hamgallery.com](http://hamgallery.com)), he didn't really dislike kids—he just didn't care to work them on the radio.

I never heard Mike personally (he became a Silent Key in 1967 and I got my license in 1970), but his chant was already legendary and came to symbolize an entire generation of old-timers who wanted nothing to do with newcomers to the ham bands, especially young ones. I do recall being unwelcome at most radio clubs in my area at the time because of my age (15), so the chant took on added meaning for me.

I bring all this up because an old friend recently asked me to give a talk at a hamfest that his Boy Scout troop is sponsoring. When I asked him what topic he might want me to talk about, he said, "What about ways of bringing more young people into ham radio?" That led to reminiscing about the attitude personified by W2OY's legendary CQs, and observations about how attitudes have changed today.

One of the reasons for that change in attitude is the realization that ham radio, like any hobby, needs a constant infusion of new blood to thrive and grow. Another is the quarter-century-plus effort of one ham—perhaps the positron to W2OY's electron—to promote the contributions that young people can and do make to amateur radio. That ham is Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, and his ongoing effort is the Newsline Young Ham of the Year (YHOTY) award program. CQ is proud to be a corporate sponsor of the YHOTY program, and I am honored to have been a member of the judging committee for over a decade. I never cease to be impressed by the accomplishments of the nominees, and this year is no exception.

### Erin King, AK4JG

The 2012 Young Ham of the Year is Erin King, AK4JG. A 17-year-old from Columbus, Georgia, Erin is a third-generation ham who will be settling in at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as most of you read this. Erin's interest in ham radio came not so much from her family connections as from the advisor of a technology-focused club she joined in high school. The club competes in the FIRST robotics competition, builds and launches high-altitude weather balloons and participates in MIT's "InvenTeam" competition. Advisor Luther Richardson, K14AOJ, encourages club members to obtain their amateur radio licenses to help make the most of these projects, especially the balloon launches, which use APRS (Automatic Packet Reporting System).

Erin not only got her ham license, but helped to restart her school's long-dormant ham club, for which her great grandfather had been a mentor back in the 1950s (about the same time that W2OY was trying to scare kids off the ham bands). When Erin was accepted by MIT on early admission, her notification arrived in a silver mailing tube and a note inside encouraged students to "hack" the tube, or use it for some sort of cool technology-related project.

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As Erin explained on her YouTube page, "I decided to send my Tube to the edge of space! I turned it into an Amateur Radio High-Altitude Ballooning project." Once the balloon had successfully completed its flight, Erin edited the video, put it to music and posted it on the internet, where it now has been viewed over 85,000 times. (SEE: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moolW92f9hA> and the September issue of *WorldRadio Online* for more.)

### Space Cadets

Now think about this ... when W2OY was spouting about "no lids, no kids, no space cadets," being a "space cadet" was pure science fiction (those of you of a certain age will remember the TV show, "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet," which captivated America's youth between 1950 and 1955). In the 1950s, man had not yet flown in space; woman, not even considered. Yet now female astronauts are common and here is a young woman using ham radio to fly a balloon to the edge of space, track it and recover it.

Oh! Mike is probably spinning in his grave just at the thought of all this ... Erin couldn't possibly be a *real ham*. After all, she doesn't even know Morse code! (That's next on her ham agenda.) And worst of all, no doubt, she's a *girl!* I can guarantee you that if there was no place for kids in Mike's ham radio, there was certainly no place in it for a girl.

Well, Mike would have been wrong, dead wrong. Erin is indeed a *real ham*. She is innovative, she is creative, she is adapting existing technology to do new things, and if something doesn't already exist, she builds it. That kind of defines what hams do with technology. And that is why she not only deserves to be a ham, but also to be Young Ham of the Year.

Erin will help lead amateur radio into the future. And she won't be alone. More than one-fifth of the nearly 9,000 people who "like" the CQ page on Facebook are under age 35. These young hams may not be showing up at your club meetings or your hamfests, or checking into your nets, but they're out there. Many of them are involved with "Maker" groups, and you ought to be as well, if you're not already. Perhaps you have something to offer ... or maybe you can finally learn those building skills you've been putting off for too many years. Others are involved with such activities as high-altitude balloon launches or using X-box Kinect video game controllers to build satellites that can build other satellites in orbit (see summer *CQ VHF*).

Ham radio is being used for some amazing things by some amazing hams, and many of them are young, and female. If you're involved with some of these activities, you probably know some of them. If you're just doing the same old thing you've been doing for the past 50 years, then you probably don't, and you're probably wondering where all the young hams are. They're out there. You just need to go out and find them, and encourage them, and learn from them. And put a final nail in the coffin of "no lids, no kids, no space cadets."

### W2VU Trail-Friendly Radio Update

For those of you who have been following my slow and sputtering efforts at getting out in the wilderness with a QRP rig, I'm pleased to report that I've now made it out of my back yard and into a local park. Armed with a real battery this time, I got my 20-meter end-fed half-wave up into a tree, laid the counterpoise underneath it, and managed a full-length QSO with K4UFS in Rainbow City, Alabama. (Thanks, Rick!)

Bonus: Carrying on a QSO outside at dusk, with the fireflies lighting up all around me. It was indeed a magical moment. Chalk up another point for the "magic in the sky" we know as ham radio. —W2VU