

Editorial: Getting It Right

I used to be a sailor; a radioman, in fact. You've probably seen a radioman in the movies. They wear earphones, and send "S O S" in Morse code as the ship sinks.

Radiomen are always scarce. You have to be a bit warped to qualify for the training, and not everyone finishes it. Our ship had low priority, so we were unusually shorthanded in the radio shack, working extremely long hours as we steamed toward Greenland.

We could hardly believe the message that said to change course and pick up another radio operator. We were even happier when he came aboard and we found that he knew his business. At last, we could get a good night's sleep.

He was a tall, red-haired fellow from Texas. His first words were: "I sure hope you all got Beech-Nut Tobacco here."

In a few days, he told how he came to join us.

We had picked him up from a shore station in Newfoundland, where his former job included sending messages by Teletype. What he typed in Newfoundland came out on a similar electric typewriter in Washington, DC.

To save time, the Navy has special coded signals which enable an operator to say almost anything, using only 3 letters. There are hundreds of these signals; you look them up in a book. For example, the letters "QRN" mean "I'm having trouble with static". QRT means either "quit sending" or "I am shutting down this station", depending on how you use it.

Radiomen quickly memorize more frequently used codes, and our new man had sent one from memory. He meant to say something like "I am having machine difficulty", but the 3 letters he used translated to "I am under Air Attack!"

Washington answered: "Roger. Standing by."

He was as surprised as everyone else when the sky suddenly turned black with jet fighters. Everything on the East coast had been hurled into the air to put a quick end to World War III.

A number of interested people made recommendations about preventing similar incidents in the future, but Tex's Commanding Officer was a merciful man, and chose instead to get him on the very next ship that passed anywhere nearby.

Since hearing that, I've believed in trying to get things right, and hoped to find the courage to admit a mistake before the situation gets worse.

It's often embarrassing, always difficult. Having to check instructions again can hurt our pride, and having to say "I'm not sure I did that correctly" is even tougher.

But an uncorrected mistake can have terrible consequences.

I know.

I once watched a Texan go 45 days without a chew of tobacco.

—Hale

Mileposts

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The dividend rate for Credit Union savings has been announced as 8.5% for the first quarter, 1982. At the same time, the Board of Directors announced a new ceiling for signature (unsecured) loans: members with 15 years or more of service may now borrow up to

\$2,000 without collateral. The former maximum was \$1,500.

Loans secured by title or Deed-of-Trust may be made for up to \$8,000 under current guidelines, with a repayment period up to 4 years.

Office Manager Linda Gillespie says the Credit Union welcomes inquiries from borrowers or depositors.

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Bob Hale, Editor



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