



Getting Started

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Ode to a Kilocycle Kop

Last issue's column on intermod and mixing was pretty technical (and pretty long). I thought I'd better throttle back this month and tackle something on the social side. We've yet to see if this one is also going to be pretty long. I hope not.

But before we get started, a special message to *Getting Started* readers. Now that I'm editing the whole magazine, I think that it's time to look for someone else who's full of ideas for new hams to take on this column. Not that I don't like doing it. If I had my druthers (whatever a "druther" is, and I don't know whether I've ever had mine or not, but I suspect I haven't), Wayne would still be alive and kicking, and this column would be my contribution. But this cookie crumbled differently, and now I need to share the load... er, wealth. So if you've been thinking you'd like to teach the young whippersnappers a thing or two, now's the time. Drop a line to kn4aq@sera.org and let's discuss it.

Now back to our regularly scheduled column.

I've been accused of it, and I admit it. I am a Kilocycle Kop. My local radio club even gave me a badge and a pair of giant ears at an awards presentation a few years ago. So it's no secret. Nor is it a source of shame. In spite of what you may have heard about the term, I'm kind of proud of it. I think I do it pretty well.

If you're not all that familiar with them, Kilocycle Kops are hams who get on the air and tells other hams when they've screwed up. Don't confuse this with an OO (Official Observer). There are some significant differences. An OO has an ARRL field appointment. Kilocycle Kops appoint themselves. OO's discretely mail the notice of violation of rules or good operating procedure to the offender. Kilocycle Kops just get on the air and tell them, in front of God and everybody. The offender appreciates and respects the communication from the OO, and corrects the deficiency in their procedure or equipment immediately. Yeah, right.

Suddenly I'm feeling defensive, and I did it to myself! Now I'm either going to justify my behavior, and maybe recruit a few good Kops, or convince myself to stop.

Let's look at some case studies.

It was a dark and stormy night. I was working the late shift, monitoring the local repeater. A couple of new Techs had been chatting for a while, when one of them came upon the interesting notion of moving to a simplex channel. Probably read it in the ARRL Repeater Directory or something. Not a bad idea, though I don't endorse the dogma that you should only use a repeater when you're not in simplex range. Repeaters aren't just holes in the sky that allow your signal to be heard farther down the road. They're social vehicles where people gather. It's as much about the audience listening as the performers talking. But I'm not granting license to hog a repeater that might be busy with other users. That might bring out the Kop in me.

Now how did I start out *there*, and end up *here*? Let me take a step back and listen to those new Techs again. They were going to go to a simplex channel, but they had

a problem. They didn't know exactly what a simplex channel was. They hadn't immersed themselves in the band plan yet. Can't say I blame them. The two meter band is a mess. Repeater inputs here, there, and there. Outputs there, and here. SSB over here, and satellites over there. Squeeze in some packet, some beacons, a slice of cw.... It's nobody's fault. The band grew in fits and starts, so there was no chance to plan things and have them in nice, neat rows. Nobody even thought about a band plan for two until FM and repeaters came around and started filling it up.

So these new Techs (remember them?) didn't quite know where to go to operate simplex. They picked a nice, round number: 144.0 MHz. I knew I had to act, and I had to act fast.

You see the problem. 144.0 is the band edge. You can't operate FM there because some of your signal will be fall outside the band. A frightening no-no. And that's not all. 144.0 to 144.1 is cw only, per FCC rules (we Kops like FCC rules – we're experts on them). So even if your signal somehow stayed inside the band, modulation isn't permitted.

I grabbed the mic and called them, before they had the chance to switch their dial. Whew – I was in time. They replied, and I explained a bit of the band plan, and suggested they might want to use one of the band plan simplex channels. Somehow I avoided the debate about using 146.52 for rag chews or just monitoring. Then I sat back and waited for their heartfelt thanks, and possibly the praise of my fellow club members monitoring the repeater.

One of the Techs answered me, sounding 1) confused, and 2) hurt. But they didn't go to 144.0. I think they just stayed on the repeater and didn't go to simplex at all – too much trouble.

Here's a more recent example – yesterday, in fact, as I write this. I was driving home from the Kinston NC hamfest, just coming into range of my home repeater. It sounded like some hams



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from out of town were using the machine to coordinate their arrival in several cars. They decided to do the noble thing and go simplex as well. And they picked 145.95. OK, I'm gonna let you think a moment and figure out the problem here. We'll make this open-book and you can look up a chart if you want.

Doo-dee-doo-doo, doo-dee-doo (that's the Jeopardy theme, in case you don't recognize it).

Got it? Give up? That's right - 145.95 is right in the Satellite band. What a terrible place for FM simplex. You can be wrecking a satellite transponder input and never even know. (There are some satellites that are set up for FM, if you want to play with them). The satellite folks beg FM operators to give them a break.

So I pounced again, and suggested 146.52. One of the transient hams responded and announced to the others to go to 52. The others did not reply. Maybe they had already moved to 145.95. Maybe they were just torqued that somebody would lecture to them (well, that sets *that* repeater's reputation!). Maybe they were just confused. I was too far away to listen and see if they got hooked up again on any frequency, but they disappeared from the repeater.

These two examples seem almost benign. We can get into more controversial territory by enforcing a club policy. My club has a reputation of being pretty strict on its repeaters (about 90% due to me, probably). We're not going to tolerate potty-mouth, but as far as subject matter goes, we're pretty lenient. We do prohibit attacking individuals or groups. So when a fellow complained about the "Jungle Bunnies" in his neighborhood playing their stereos too loud the previous night, he got a tap on the shoulder from yours truly.

He didn't even know what he did wrong. But this is the same fellow who had to be asked, then told, not to blatantly tell people what great deals the company he worked for had in their catalog, and how they should call him if they wanted to order something.

Cop on the Beat

I said Kilocycle Kops appoint themselves. But there's a subdivision that has more official sanction. The repeater Control Operator. *Control Op* is an FCC designation, and the repeater owner/trustee can appoint Control Operators to keep things legal. The Control Op may or may not behave as a classic Kilocycle Kop. They may just turn off the repeater if they hear something they don't like.

The Control Op is like the cop on the beat. And most of my Koppage happens on my club's repeater. I rarely try to "improve" operation on HF, or even someone else's repeater. I've been tempted. I think maybe this is where Kopping gets its really bad reputation, from Kops At Large. There are plenty of them, and there's plenty for them to do, but I wonder if it's ever effective. I doubt it.

On the Air, or Offline?


I lace up my tap shoes, and I shall dance. Is it ever appropriate to call down another ham on the air? Wouldn't at least a phone call be more acceptable? You can probably guess how I justify doing it on the air: Strike while the iron is hot. Make an example that others on frequency can appreciate. Make it more fun for me, the Kop. Good reasons, or just rationalizations? You be the judge, I'm just the Kop.

I try to be nice, except for those hams who need their attention attracted by a blunt instrument. I must admit that I ought to make more phone calls, and do less on the air.

R.A.R.E Opportunity

I also try to nip problems before they get started. The ham equivalent of D.A.R.E. - Radio Abuse Resistance Education. That happens in class, when I've got hams-in-training as a captive audience, and at club meetings. That may be the most effective time to be a Kop. Remember "Officer Friendly?" You loved him, but you screwed up later, anyway. Woe unto my students if I come across them later on the air, violating some sacred principle I tried to drill into their soft heads during class.

I don't recommend becoming a Kilocycle Kop. I don't think anyone chooses this career, anyway. The career chooses the Kop. It's probably a basic personality trait. All us Kops do it because we think we're making the hobby better, but that's a very subjective position. If you are called to this hard life, try to do it well. I'll be listening. ■



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SERA Full Repeater Membership Report												
Full Membership - By State - By Year - 1995 - 2002									1st QTR 2002 REPORT			
SERA STATE	TTL	TTL '95	TTL '96	TTL '97	TTL '98	TTL '99	TTL '00	TTL '01	Ttl. Mbr 1st Qtr.	TOTAL Mbr. %	TOTAL RPTRS	SERA STATE
GA	195	236	217	260	232	235	241	243	244	53.6%	455	GA
KY	80	122	129	140	154	165	166	181	174	55.4%	314	KY
MS	50	75	73	60	59	62	71	71	64	37.8%	169	MS
NC	243	274	295	283	288	278	329	320	280	59.9%	467	NC
SC	68	83	81	84	79	91	97	101	99	55.6%	178	SC
TN	188	202	193	227	221	206	225	232	211	44.3%	476	TN
VA ⁽¹⁾	157	178	162	181	189	182	170	181	183	47.9%	382	VA
WV ⁽²⁾	62	82	84	90	95	80	76	83	71	39.2%	181	WV
TTLs	1043	1252	1241	1325	1317	1299	1375	1412	1326	50.6%	2622	ALL

(1) Total Virginia list does not include 100 or more Repeaters in T-MARC Territory, (North of Highway 33 and Latitude 38-degrees North), and Outside of SERA Full Mbrs: 21
(2) 10 or more Repeaters in the West Virginia Panhandle area in T-MARC Territory. Last update: 4-15-02