

LINE OF SIGHT

A Message from the Editor

Dire Warnings of Work-Force Shortages

“**B**y next year, an estimated one-in-four U.S. aerospace workers will be eligible to retire; nearly one-in-three civilian scientific and technical workers in the Defense Dept. have already reached that milestone. And the full impact of the graying work force hasn't hit yet. In 2011, an 18-year-long wave of baby boomers will start collecting Social Security and Medicare benefits.”

This dire warning, written by Joseph C. Anselmo for the February 4, 2007 issue of *Aviation Week and Space Technology* is only part of his comments on the gloomy picture of the condition of today's aerospace and defense industries. Regarding the Social Security and Medicare benefits, some of the baby boomers who retire early will begin to collect Social Security benefits as early as next year!

In addition to the aerospace and defense industries, our air-traffic-control system is expected to see mandatory retirement of 15,000 air-traffic controllers in the next ten years. This means that the FAA will have to begin recruiting and training new controllers almost immediately. Additionally, it will have to recruit and train a considerably smaller but still significant number of electronic technicians who maintain the radar and radio equipment used by these controllers for managing this country's air-traffic system.

What can we do about this crisis? The good news in our hobby is the unprecedented spurt in growth of as a result of the elimination of the Morse code requirement for ham radio licensing. According to Dick Renaud, W8KDR, of the “ARRL Club News”: “Volunteer Exam sessions around the country, many of them club sponsored events, are churning out many new and enthusiastic hams. This is evident on the airwaves. The influx of good operators looking to learn the ropes of DXing, contesting, traffic handling, and just plain old rag chewing is remarkable.”

Will this growth be sustained? The pessimists claim that it will not. Citing other incentive licensing events as short-lived spurts in the growth of our ranks, they claim that “this too shall

pass.” As a pragmatist, I think that it very well may pass if we do not capitalize on the growth. One very important way of doing this is by good mentoring, or as we call it, “Elmering.” With this steady influx of new hams comes an immediate and strong need for them to be properly trained and mentored. Without it, they will not learn the needed good operating techniques and will become discouraged and leave the hobby, almost as fast as they entered it.

Going back to the growing industry shortages, we also need to work on recruiting and training amateur radio operators who show an interest in the technical side of our hobby. We can do this in a number of ways. For example, if you are considering retiring from your present job, you might think about using your new-found leisure time wisely by volunteering in the science or math department in your nearby middle school or high school. Better yet, if you have a bachelor's degree, you might consider becoming a school teacher. Every state in the country has some form of alternative certification for persons with a bachelor's degree. Check with your state's education department to learn about its requirements and how easy it might be for you to start a second career as a school teacher. You can also apply for a job as an adjunct instructor or professor in the electronics department of your nearby community or junior college or vocational school.

Speaking of alternative certification Jeff Sharrock, AF4CM, is just such an example. A former Marine, Jeff went through the military's Troops to Teachers program to become a history teacher at Wagoner, Oklahoma High School. During his tenure there he started an amateur radio club that capitalizes on the proud history of the Native American military code talkers, calling his club the Wagoner Windtalkers. You can read his story beginning on page 36.

Another way to find opportunities to volunteer is via your state's space grant consortium. You can locate your state's space grant consortium at <[\[space.ucsd.edu/spacegrant/webmap/spacegrant/homepages.html\]\(http://space.ucsd.edu/spacegrant/webmap/spacegrant/homepages.html\)>. On this website you will find a map of the U.S. Simply click on your state and you will be taken to its website. Once there, you will need to navigate around to learn about what amateur radio related activities might be taking place in your state. A clue is to look for a mention of CubeSats or balloon satellites on the website or via one of the links on the website.](http://cal-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Speaking of space grant consortia, beginning on page 14 in this issue is an article written by Kevin Carr, KE7KVT, that speaks to his experience with the Oregon Space Grant Consortium. Kevin is a newly licensed amateur radio operator who first got interested in radio communications as a youth. Now, at age 42, as a professor at George Fox University in Oregon he is teaching teachers of K-12 schools how to build amateur radio based payloads for balloon satellites as well as how to launch these balloons.

Sharrock's and Carr's articles are only two of the more than half of the feature articles in this issue that have education as a common theme. Hopefully, you will find something that will inspire you as you read through these articles. It is my plan to regularly publish education-related articles. If you have an education-related story to tell, please submit it to me (e-mail: <n6cl@sbcglobal.net>).

As I think of stories, I am reminded of the book *The Star Thrower*. In it, author Loren Eiseley writes of his experience of seeing a man throwing starfish back into the sea. In the course of his conversation with the man, he discerns that the man is trying to make a small difference in his world by saving one starfish at a time. One of the things that we are trying to do via this magazine is create an opportunity to bring in one new amateur radio operator at a time. We do this by way of publishing your story or giving publicity to your activity. While we are a small magazine with a limited readership, like the starfish thrower, we intend to make a difference, thanks mainly to you and your contributions. Until the next issue...

73 de Joe, N6CL