

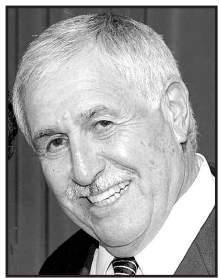
# Cutler Bay

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SERVING SOUTH DADE

## Back in the 1950s I used to send 'text' over the air

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I was one of the first "texters."

Well not actually, but back in the 1950s I began learning to use Morse code so that I eventually could get my Amateur Radio License. I don't know why the FCC required it but they did and if you wanted to become a "ham" you

had to be able to send and receive Morse code at 13 words per minute.

Some people (not me) took to it easily and could be talking to you and listening to a message in code at the same time and still understand everything the sender was saying. There was an advantage to it because sending signals out in code or CW (Continuous Wave) as we called it was a much cheaper proposition and your signals could go out a lot farther without interference. I built my first CW transmitter on an old cheese box and it cost in the vicinity of \$15.

It was quite a thrill to build something that actually sent out a signal through the airwaves that someone else could hear and respond to.

We did, just like the texters do now, need to have our own abbreviated language to save time and dots and dashes. For example the operator of the ham station was usually the OM or Old Man. If it was a female she was a YL or Young Lady, and once she became married became an XYL. (You figure it out.)

Once I saved up enough money I was able to buy a voice transmitter and actually could talk to people miles away. (See where I am going?) I even built a small rig, as they were called, that fit into my 1950 Chrysler and allowed me to speak to people right from my car. Was I ever the cool 16-year-old guy with a big antenna (whip) on my car and

driving along with a microphone in my hand talking to who knows who. It was great for picking up girls too.

Had someone told me that we would all, kids included, be carrying around complete transmitters and receivers smaller than a pack of Lucky Strikes, that actually showed videos as well, I would have thought that they were surely wacko.

Here's the funny part. A while ago I was asked to speak to a bunch of middle school students on career day. I told them how I used to build my own radios and how that led to a career in electronics, which I still am in today. Naturally I expected them, each with their own Blackberry's and iPhones, to be totally unimpressed. A week or so later I received dozens of letters from these students asking if I could teach them how to build a radio. I haven't done it yet, but I truly plan to once I get a little more spare time. I did build one with my 6-year-old grandson and I think he was impressed.

So what is the big deal about texting?

The other day, as I was driving, my daughter texted me to say where we were going to meet. Being the conscientious driver that I am I asked my co-pilot and navigator to reply to her.

Her answer, "I don't text and I will never learn to text, and if she wants to talk to me, let her call!"

I cautioned her that in the new world that might be the only way she will be communicating with her grandchildren. Even that didn't scare her. She is confident that she will be able to stay in touch. I'm not taking any chances.

If I can figure out how to get my fat thumbs around on that tiny keyboard, I may try a few texts myself. I have to stop writing now so that I can get in line to camp out and wait for the new iPhone-5. NOT!

In the mean time, as we hams used to say: -- . . . . .  
-- . (Look it up.)