

Women in Ham Radio

By Joseph Parish



I am a firm believer that women can do just as much as men and my wife is living proof of that statement. Being in the military for twenty years I was required to be away from my family for months at a time and as such my wife quickly learned to do many of the usual tasks around the home that are traditionally reserved for the man of the house. In fact, the personal joke for many years was to refer to her as "Ms. Villa" when something needed to be repaired at home. She has even gone as far as changing out an engine on a small rally car which we once had in Spain.

Ham radio should be no different than any other task, for although one usually imagines the activity of radio communications as being a male dominated game, it is slowly being taken over by the YL's of America. YL is short for young ladies of which all women are addressed in ham radio regardless of their ages. It is the same as calling all the male radio operators OM or old men.

Most ham radio organizations welcome women with open arms and are more than willing to assist them in any way possible towards obtaining their technician or higher license. An interesting point that was made to me in this regard was that the normal high

female voice makes it much easier to understand and read a radio transmission than it would be for the usual male voice. That characteristic is especially vital when emergency radio communications are necessary and errors cannot be tolerated. During the good weather days women are taking to the airwaves and chatting to their male counterparts about local or long-distance road conditions and the various community events which are taking place in their part of the nation. However, when a disaster strikes and the storm clouds are on the horizon these same women are busy sending out emergency communications via airwaves.

Dawn Moss is just such a woman. When her home was threatened by rising flood waters, Dawn rushed her pets and children to a safe location and quickly made her way to her local CERT center where she transferred radio traffic for a continuous 36 hours. These messages were of an emergency nature, such as direct requests for help and various rescue coordination transmissions.

Ms. Moss is not alone in her pursuit of the ham radio hobby. More and more women are learning the operations of the radios, obtaining the necessary license and joining their communities Amateur Radio Emergency Services. The number of these female members has been increasing over the years and to this day their numbers range as high as 30 percent in some areas. There are more women involved today because they need only study some basic electronics and possess a willingness to give back to their community.

I personally am planning to get my YL interested in the program as well, for I feel it would be of great benefit in a retreat to have the wife trained in radio use as well. If this sounds like something you and your wife may be interested in you could conduct an internet search of your area for ham radio clubs. They are all over the nation.