

## WHY AN AMATEUR IS CALLED A "HAM"

Have you ever wondered why radio operators are called "Hams"? Well, it goes like this — the word Ham was applied in 1908 and was the call letters of one of the first amateur wireless stations, operated by some members of the Harvard Radio Club. The operators were Elbert S. Hyman, Bob Almy and Peggy Murry. At first they called their station Hyman-Almy-Murry. Tapping out such a long name in code soon called for a revision and they changed it to HY-AL-MU using the first two letters of each name.

Early in 1909, some confusion resulted between signals from amateur wireless HYALMU and a Mexican ship named HYALMO, so they decided to use only the first letter of each name and the call became HAM.

In the early pioneer unregulated days of radio, amateur operators picked their own frequency and call letters. Then, as now, some amateurs had better signals than some commercial stations. The resulting interference finally came to the attention of congressional committees in Washington and they gave much time to proposed legislation, designed to critically limit amateur activity.

In 1911, Albert Hyman chose the very controversial Wireless Regulations Bill as the topic for his thesis at Harvard. His instructor insisted that a copy be sent to Senator David I. Walsh, a member of one of the committees hearing the bill. The Senator was so impressed he sent for Hyman to appear before the committee. He was put on the stand and described how the little amateur station was built and he almost cried when he told the crowded committee room that if the Bill went through, they would have to close the station as they could not afford the licence fees and all other requirements which were in the Bill.

The debate started and the little station, HAM, became a symbol of all the little amateur stations in the country crying out to be saved from menace and greed of the big commercial stations who did not want them around.

Finally, the Bill got to the floor of congress and every speaker talked about the poor little station HAM.

That is how it started. The whole story may be found in the Congressional Record. Nationwide publicity associated station HAM with amateurs and from that time to possibly the end of time in radio, an amateur is a "Ham."

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