

Dear Fellow Members -

This letter is not simply about poetry, but rather is about a growing trend which sees more and more non-DX related material in the pages of DX News. I will repeat here what I wrote to Bill Wurtzel on January 28, at the time we edited out his poetry and that of others in the Feb. 5 issue:

Traditionally DX News has limited itself to those areas directly related to the DXing hobby. In the old days, when mimeograph was used, a total of 20 pages (without any reduction as in the offset process) went out each week. It was absolutely necessary that only tip value material could appear due to this limitation. With the advent of offset printing in 1968 (sic) we were able to add variety to DX News, using photos and clips, drawings and the like. At the same time all publishing committees since that time have re-emphasized the need to "hold the line" on material used in DX News; to keep it related to DXing and of use to the membership as a whole. Anything we print comes from the income from general membership dues and we here in Louisville feel an obligation to insure that the membership as a whole is served.

This general statement of policy is not all that original in content, and is supported in letters we've received. Dallas Lankford, in a copy of a letter received here:

The primary reason for Musings has been (and I think most members agree) to provide information about what they hear and the equipment they use. Letting some personality come through is reasonable, since otherwise Musings are cut and dried. However, finding out about individual personalities can best be done by personal letter. The NRC is not a "pen pal" club.

Joe Brauner was more concise: "The original purpose of NRC was to collect and distribute anything of worth about DXing. Nothing more or less." Our insight as to what the membership wants was reinforced by responses to the member survey we took in 1977. John D. Bowker compiled the survey results. In a recent letter he sent to Ernie Cooper, he mentioned that a number of members had commented that non-DX material, even that which was the result of considerable time and attention and, occasionally, artistic, had no place in DX News. Those responding on this subject generally said that time and space in DX News should be used on something more related to the goals of the club.

A few will say, "Well, that's just your idea of what should be in Musings." Not so! Something John Callarman wrote in a lengthy letter prompted me to go into our bulletin files and see just what NRC policy was stated over the years. In 1968 we read:

Thirty line limit with a request for more brevity...No v/s, SW, TV, FM in Musings. --- Please keep all but BCB DX items out of your Musings -- Musings. This section is as old as the NRC is gentlemen. It has always been the place where members tell of their DX doings. We notice of late a tendency to use Musings as a gabbing spot with no DX mentioned, even though DXing has been done! This is the system in another club, while a club even older than NRC has now eliminated all reports of members in paragraph form! The BCB section of that Club has shrunk to about six pages a month! Moral: Keep this section full of DX doings and tips.

In 1971 we read: "Make your Musings informative - give dates and times to help others." We are also reminded over the years that Musings were not intended to be used for acknowledging correspondence; Musings were to be concise and to the point. The above are, of course, from Ernie Cooper.

We here as both editor for the whole bulletin and publisher sincerely believe that Musings must be limited to DX, to information of use to others. In a Feb. 14 letter to Ernie I wrote:

I realize Musings are a form of personal expression and some are good and bad.¹ At the same time Musings reflect the character of the club as a whole. Personal items do help establish a sense of comradeship, I have no argument with that, but Musings and any other contributions should relate reasonably to the hobby. To have a contributor merely state his own philosophy of life over several issues or to show his expertise at putting together words, phrases and sentences in every issue has nothing to do with DXing. NRC all these years has been a quality club and we just don't feel we should allow the club to get away from DXing, even if the feelings of some members are hurt.

¹Repeating something Ernie wrote to me.

Ernie, in a Muse, picked up on a comment received here in a letter from another member. He asked us to look up definitions of editor and publisher. Editor is defined as "one who directs the policies and contributions of a newspaper, magazine, book of reference, etc." Publisher is "one who prints and issues from the press."

Two points of reply. First, DX News is NOT a newspaper. We don't put items of general interest, other than DX, in the bulletin. Also, in taking on the work of publishing we did not give up the editor's role, the role of leading NRC. We are greatly interested, in this dual role, in the content of DX News.

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Before going any further, I'll acknowledge some constructive criticism given by John Callarman. As a former publisher, he more than most, knows fully our situation as a publishing committee. He wrote: "...the suddenness of the decision, without any apparent forwarding to Cooper, Wurtzel or the membership in general, made it seem like a harsh, dictatorial decision made after receipt of a few anonymous (anonymous to the general membership) letters. This, I'm sure, was not the case."

A little background is called for. Shortly after we started publishing here we received a number of critical comments about non-DX items which appeared in DX News. Being new to publishing, we did not make much of the comments, preferring to let the editors edit their columns. With the arrival of Bill Wurtzel on the scene and the poetry week after week, we finally felt a need to take some action.

Bill, by the way, had written to us in October and told us: "I would like to point out that I'm not giving away all my poems and limericks, but sharing them with your readers...Also, I intend to publish my own poetry, and someday get a book of poems on the literary marketplace. I reserve the right to do with my poems as I see fit." Trying to be agreeable, we waived any rights to Bill's poems which had appeared, but at the same time reminded him that we hoped to see his DX catches reported on a regular basis. We even told him then that poems would be okay on an occasional basis. Poetry continued to dominate his Musings.

Correspondence was exchanged with Ernie in early December regarding this matter. Ernie's Dec. 8 reply indicated he would try to have Bill limit his poems to DX. He also stated that they didn't take up much room, and that those who complained about the poetry would skip over them, using the analogy of a newspaper.

Meanwhile, additional complaints were received here about the poetry. On Jan. 28 we were startled to find not only poetry from Bill Wurtzel, but poetry from four others, including Ernie. Enough was enough. The full publishing committee felt it necessary to return to the historical purpose of Musings; to state a policy and follow it. We edited out the 5 poetic contributions and immediately called Ernie Cooper to let him know that they would be omitted from the Feb. 5 issue which we were putting together that day. Unfortunately, Ernie did not understand that the policy would begin with that issue. I apologized to him for apparently not making it clear in our call. Ernie had also asked me to write a letter to his good friend Bill, explaining that this was our decision and not his. This was done the same day, Jan. 28.

A comment which I typed in "Static" in a later issue, as Ernie correctly pointed out in a Muse, was in error. I stated we had cut out over a page and a half of poetry in the Feb. 5 issue. I thought we had edited one full page plus poetry and filler from two other Musings. I regret this error.

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Before the above digression, I mentioned the sense of responsibility we feel for DX News. Members who received their bulletins by Airmail paid \$15 for DX News beginning Jan. 1, 1974. Today the \$15 rate remains in effect, but it is inevitable, of course, that dues will rise. We feel every effort must be made to hold down dues. This can be done if DX News is kept manageable.

DX News is built around the three regular columns each issue, plus a front and back page. We first determine how many pages of IDXD, DDXD and Musings there are and then fill in the bulletin around them.

Ray Arruda recently told DDXD contributors that quality is better than quantity. If the columns, and in particular Musings, are not kept concise and related to DX tips and helpful information, we then wind up wasting money by printing extra pages unnecessarily.

We must have an even number of pages in the booklet printing process, (i.e. 20, 24, 40, 48, etc.) If 19 pages of IDXD, DDXD and Musings are received we must have 3 pages of filler to come up with a 24 page bulletin. On the other hand if the columns are kept concise, we could stop at 20 pages and save printing and collating time and money. A rare example of a perfect bulletin was that for Feb. 26, #18. Ray used a little filler on page 7, but the alternative was to leave part of the page blank. This is the same reason why we have no qualms about using cartoons, logos or Bill Hale's "ohmmeter". Filler material is used only after we've determined how much space is needed for the columns or special articles, and then only to fill in space which would otherwise be left blank.

We do feel that the savings to members would be considerable over a volume year if the Musings editor edits material such as philosophy, correspondence replies, and proposals put forth, as in the April 16 issue, to possibly add more non-DX material to Musings.

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A number of comments were received from members who felt we were not democratic and who questioned why we should make the poetry decision without a vote of the membership. These members are correct, we don't pretend to be DEMOCRATIC!

Without going into the full history of our present NRC government structure, I will note that for nearly 25 years, the various publishing committees of the NRC have kept up a position of silent government; based upon the theory that government which governs least governs best. There are not really a large number of decisions where the choice is not dictated by absolute necessity. Dues increases are unfortunately necessary. So is reprinting the Log and Pattern Book, New Member Kits, etc., and many logistical matters. Usually, the editors help in these decisions, as do some of the most active members. For example, last November we asked for input concerning long-range plans for NRC and received very good comments. We have not in the recent past, nor do we now feel a need for a highly-structured and complex governmental structure. We are not democratic and admit it. We do try to be responsive to needs however.

From the perspective of an outsider, the whole poetry debate would seem asinine. From the point of view of the time and space devoted to the debate we must agree. On the other hand, we will not continue to allow non-DX garbage in DX News. We will not compromise on this subject--we owe it to the membership to keep DX News for DX.

If some of our members can't reconcile themselves to the present government structure, or to the direction we see for DX News, there is an option. Just write to Ron Musco at Membership Center and we will refund your money.

None of the Louisville group will be able to make it to YAD, as the holiday weekend is of religious significance to us all. We do plan to be in St. Louis.

Sincerely -

Pat Hartlage

PAT HARTLAGE
NRC Secretary
For the LPC

P.S. Comments on this matter will no longer be accepted in DX News. as Ernie closed out the subject in #23. For those interested in such things, this will be going out to 96 members who commented or who expressed opinions on the subject in Atlanta.