

REMEMBERING BOB HILL

MARCH 2017

Accomplished shortwave listeners who were active in the 1950's through the 2000's either knew Bob Hill as one of the most accomplished DXers of his time [DX = long-distance radio listening], or knew of him. Bob was born on November 28, 1937. The DX world was saddened to hear of his death on February 27, 2017, following a stroke. As his obituary notes, he was a man of many interests, and his DX friends know that radio was chief among them.

Robert J. Hill Jr.



Robert J. 'Bob' Hill, Jr., formerly of Littleton, passed away peacefully under hospice care in Salem at the age of 79 on February 27, 2017. The beloved son of the late Robert Joseph Hill and Virginia (Walters) Hill, Bob is survived by his sister, Virginia N.H. Dodge, and brother-in-law, Dexter A. Dodge, of Swampscott, and his brother, Gregory W. Hill of Somerville, as well as several cousins and many friends. He was a graduate of the University of New Hampshire, Class of 1964, and served in the United States Air Force as a Russian language and intelligence specialist, finishing first in his class at Army Language School in Monterey, CA. After college and military service, he became a public relations guru and skilled marketing writer for many years in and around Boston, Connecticut and the San Francisco Bay Area. As a teenager, Bob qualified as an amateur (ham) radio operator and throughout his life enjoyed staying in contact with other hams throughout the world through his call sign, W1ARR. He developed a passion for contract bridge and participated in many tournaments throughout New England, ultimately achieving the rank of Gold Grand Master. With the advent of today's technology, Bob became part of a very special network on Facebook and will be missed by his many Facebook friends. He was an accomplished wordsmith with a deep love of the English language in all its variety and will be remembered for his sharp wit and keen sense of humor. Family and friends are invited to a memorial gathering to share their own words, stories and memories, spoken or written, of Bob at the Eustis & Cornell Funeral Home, 142 Elm Street, Marblehead on Wednesday, March 22 at 10:30AM. Interment will be private. The family wishes to express our deep appreciation for the skilled, compassionate care afforded Bob by the Hawthorne Wing staff at Grosvenor Park Health Center in Salem. Donations in Bob's name may be made to Thayer Academy, 745 Washington Street, Braintree, MA 02184, [Care Dimensions](#), 75 Sylvan Street, Suite B-102, Danvers, MA 01923, or the [charity of your choice](#). For condolences, guestbook and directions, please visit www.eustisandcornellfuneralhome.com.

Funeral Home

Eustis & Cornell Funeral Home
142 Elm Street Marblehead, MA 01945
(781) 631-0076

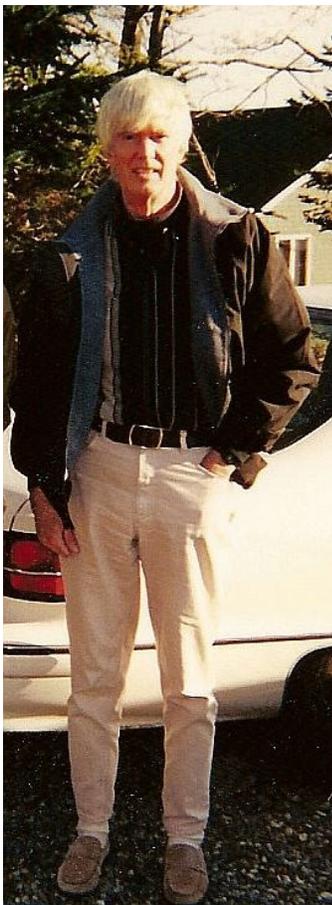
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Bob's degree from the University of New Hampshire was in English literature, and it foretold a lifelong interest in language. He learned Russian in the Army Language School and put it to use in Turkey, monitoring radio signals for the U.S. government. He was even more interested in preserving the proper use of the King's English. For many years Bob authored an occasional newsletter called "Words About Words" in which he shared "observations and opinions" with those of like interest (a copy of "WAW" is included below). Friends of Bob's were always prepared to have the finer points of their spelling, syntax, etc. scrutinized. It made you write a little more carefully, but Bob always found something worthy of correction. His vocation as writer and editor reflected his interest in language. For many years he worked for Raychem Corp. in Menlo Park, California, and later for Cascade Communications in Westford, Massachusetts. But Bob was a free spirit, and in recent years he worked mainly for himself.

Bob discovered DXing when he was 14, starting out with a National NC-125. He listened on mediumwave at first, finding the shortwave broadcast bands after about a year. During his DX career he heard well over 200 countries. ([Here](#) are some of Bob's reports of

stations heard in the mid-60's [http://www.ontheshortwaves.com/SWLing/Bob_Hill-DX_reports-1965-66.pdf]). He had little interest in QSLing on the SWBC side. There he QSLed four countries, and was mischievously happy to say "it used to be six but I lost a couple."

Over the years Bob belonged to many clubs. He was a member of the California-based Universal Radio DX Club, which operated from 1933 to the 1960's. From 1955 to 1957 he served as editor of the Eastern Section of the club bulletin, *The Universalite*. The North American Shortwave Association was born in 1961 and is still in business. Bob was the club's contest editor in the 1960's; editor of the Log Report "A" section of the club bulletin, *FRENDX*, from 1974 to 1976; and editor of *DXtra*, the club's mid-month "flash sheet," from 1987 to 1989. Among the other radio groups to which Bob belonged were, domestically, the Newark News Radio Club, Numero Uno, and Fine Tuning (where he edited "The Sked Shed" in the 1970's). Overseas he belonged to the Australian Radio DX Club and the Union of Asian DXers (Sri Lanka), among others.



An aspect of radio monitoring at which Bob was particularly adept was the tuning of Asian signals during east coast afternoons, a feat that required unusual knowledge of equipment, propagation and stations. All of it was second nature to Bob. In 1997 he presented a paper on the subject to a radio monitoring gathering in Ohio. *Afternoon Asian Reception on the Low Bands* is included below, and remains an authoritative treatment of the subject.

Bob became known both nationally and worldwide in the shortwave listening community. But he was also passionate about ham radio. He was a licensed amateur, W1ARR, and though he had not been active for a long time, at his death his ham license was still current. He started hamming in 1954, and obtained his extra class license in 1967. He worked over 250 countries during his ham career, and in hamming he was an active QSLer, with over 225 countries QSLed.

As a ham, Bob was a member of the American Radio Relay League and the Potomac Valley Radio Club, among others. Bob was competitive, and he had a special interest in contesting. He was the contest editor for the ARRL journal, *QST*, from 1967 to 1969. He also belonged to the Northern California Contest Club and in 1974 was editor of the NCCC *Contest JUG* (read Bob's explanation of "[How the JUG Got Its Name](http://www.nccc.cc/newsletter2.html)" [<http://www.nccc.cc/newsletter2.html>]). In the early 1970's he was one of the principal founders (maybe *the* founder) of the highly successful Murphy's Marauders, a New England contesting club based in Hartford, Connecticut.

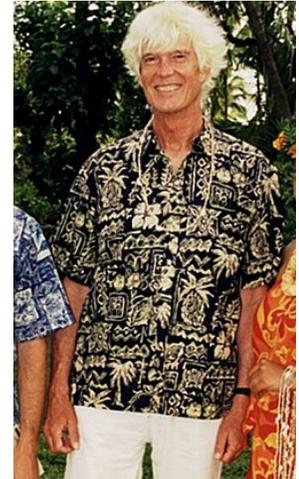
Through the years he used many receivers, including the National NC-125, Hammarlund HQ-129X and HQ-180, various R390's and R390A's, the Yaesu FRG-7, the Drake R-7, the Kenwood R-1000. His last receiver was the Sony ICF-2010, for which he had high regard.

Bob had other interests as well. He loved classical music, and he was an active player of duplicate bridge, whose devotees, he lamented, were, like DXers, graying and going

unreplaced. He also enjoyed reading, wine tasting, travel, backpacking and table tennis. At the end most of his DXing was on the standard broadcast band, where he had started out. Many people, with many interests, will miss Bob Hill.

MESSAGES FROM SOME OF BOB'S DX FRIENDS

Even though I visited with Bob a couple of weeks ago and saw that his condition was very serious, this is still a shock. Bob was one of my oldest and dearest DX friends, a friendship that goes back to circa 1970 when we were living near each other outside D.C. More recently we would meet for breakfast at a bagel place and talk about shortwave's "good old days." And when he was active there was no east coaster better at afternoon shortwave DX from Asia than Bob. R.I.P., Bobbus (or "bay-ahchay" as I used to call him; I was "jota-bay" [our initials in Spanish]). – Jerry Berg



I remember Bob from the [Boston Area DXers] meetings some years ago. Always had something funny to say, and he coined the epic line, "a tubby little anthem." – Ross Comeau

Another "silent 'phone" among our brothers. Thanks for passing on the sad news. Like some others, I never had the honor to meet Bob in our many years of DXing, but I certainly know him as a great DXer and remember seeing his name many times during the "peak" years of DX. Bob was one of those hobbyists whom many of us relatively newer in the hobby looked up to and counted on for their depth of knowledge and willingness to help when asked. Sad to think that, as the hobby is fading away, many of the memorable and most skilled DXers are as well. – Bruce Churchill

A sad day in the DX community. I remember Bob from many 90's/2000's-era BADX meetings at the sports club in Lexington and elsewhere. He and I often talked about WRUL/WNYW/WYFR when sited in Scituate. He mentioned how good his former hometown of Cohasset was for DX, other than his receiver front ends getting ganged-up-on by WBZ out of Hull and the WRUL etc. shortwave rigs out of Scituate. Bruce Conti and I, among others in the medium wave side of the house, have used Bob's "tubby anthem" appellation in more than a few DX reports. Algeria 549 comes to mind. There are a whole lot of great DXers "up there" now. Any of us could come up with a dozen names in the blink of an eye. Richard Wood, Ernie Cooper, Gordon Nelson, and John Bryant are the first few names that came to me. Now Bob is among them. 73 / RIP OM – Mark Connelly, WA1ION

Never knew the "tubby anthem" terminology was originally coined by Bob. I'm sure he's enjoying many tubby little anthems without static now. May he finally get all his missing QSLs with the angels. – Bruce Conti

Sorry to hear this. I will miss Bob, as he had interesting DXing perspectives. – Eric Cottrell

I met Bob several times and always enjoyed his company. He was a quality DXer and

had a great sense of humor. Bob was among the last of a dying breed of great listeners who will be missed. – Rich D'Angelo

Very sorry to hear this news. I do remember Bob from the handful of BADX meetings I attended in the late 90's. He seemed like a great guy. My condolences to his family. – Marc DeLorenzo



SEP • 66

I am very sorry to learn of Bob Hill's passing. Bob was a great guy with a tremendous sense of quiet humor. More than once he made my sides ache in laughter at some humorous remark. He was also a fantastic DXer. He helped me out numerous times with unidentified stations. We also briefly worked together at the same company in the mid 1990's, Cascade Communications in Westford. At one of our annual Christmas dinners at The Great Wall, someone snapped a picture. Bob was sitting next to me with an innocent smile. I was a mess, cracking up at something he said! I will be headed down to the Winterfest, and I will make sure that our dinner table will have a toast to Bob. He will be with us in DX spirit. – John Fisher (Mass.)

At one time Bob lived two houses down from me, but I did not know him at that time. I am surprised that he never noticed the K1YUB number plate in the driveway as he drove by, but who looks at things like that when you are driving. Sorry to hear of his passing. – Paul Graveline

Thanks for the info. I considered Bob a friend, as well, having met him in 1965 when he lived in D.C., just off Dupont Circle. Bob, with his "straight HQ-180," did more in RF-noisy areas than any DXer I've ever known. I certainly looked up to him as a young DXer. I helped him move from Dupont Circle to Riverdale, Maryland, since he didn't have a car. We went to an NNRC picnic at Asbury Park, NJ together. Bob was a great guy, very gracious, and being able to converse with him and Bill Sparks in San Francisco during Bob's tenure in the San Francisco area in the 70's was a highlight of my DXing life. Of course, our trip to Maine with Bob for a DXpedition will also never be forgotten. He will always be missed. – Dan Henderson

I had occasional contact with Bob. He developed an interest in domestic BCB DX in later years and loved to play contract bridge. For several years he edited a newsletter, "Words About Words," while working as a writer. Andy is right; he surely deserves to be called a "legend." *Afternoon Asian Reception on the Low Bands* [see below] is a presentation Bob Hill made at the 1997 Reynoldsburg DX Weekend. It's a great way to remember Bob and appreciate his knowledge and skill as a DXer. – John Herkimer

Indeed, a great loss to our hobby! I never knew he went to the military language school in Monterey. In fact my wife works there (the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center [DLI]). – Ron Howard

It was sad to hear of the passing of Robert (Bob) Hill. Our paths never crossed but I still remember his comments and contributions to the DX community. Thank you for the photo of Robert and his radio shack from the 70's . . . impressive equipment! – Edward Kusalik



I first met Bob in the early 80's when he was editing the NASWA Flash Sheet, I think. He was the one who introduced me to DXing the 60 meter band Indonesians in the late afternoon during the winter months. I heard a few new ones, but never was able to get the results he had. A great DXer with a great sense of humor, he will be missed. – Chris Lobdell

I'm sad in Bob's passing, but I don't think Bob would have wanted that. Bob had one of the funniest senses of humor I've ever met, and he would deliver it with a deadpan face. Incredible. I was amazed to find out, after seeing all his loggings in the afternoon, that he would go to a nearby park, hang an active Sony AN-101 antenna from a tree, and DX on a Sony ICF-2010. I couldn't believe he heard so many interesting things with such a simple setup. His shortwave skills were amazing, just like he was. – Paul McDonough

I had contact with him in the late 90's, early 2000 time frame. At the time, he was indeed doing quite a job logging Asians from the East Coast, using, as I recall, only a Sony 2010 and an AN-1 antenna, both of which he would take to a local park to enjoy a low noise floor. Bob knew the bands, to say the least. We had the opportunity to speak a number of times by phone and I'm happy to say Bob "took me to school" a couple of times. I was not aware Bob was ill and was shocked to learn of Bob's passing during an early morning phone call from Dan Henderson. Indeed, the hobby has lost another of its giants. Fair winds and following seas, Bob Hill. – Chuck Rippel

I'm very sorry to hear this. Although I never had any direct dealings with him, Bob was among the select group of DXers that I looked to while progressing in the hobby back in "the day." While the word "legend" is overused these days, it surely applies to Bob. – Andy Robins

Oh no! What a giant in the hobby. I recall visiting his shack in an apartment in San Francisco . . . two R-390's and it was an overnight I still remember to this day, with Bob explaining sunset conditions, pointing out Indonesians all over the bands, and generally acting

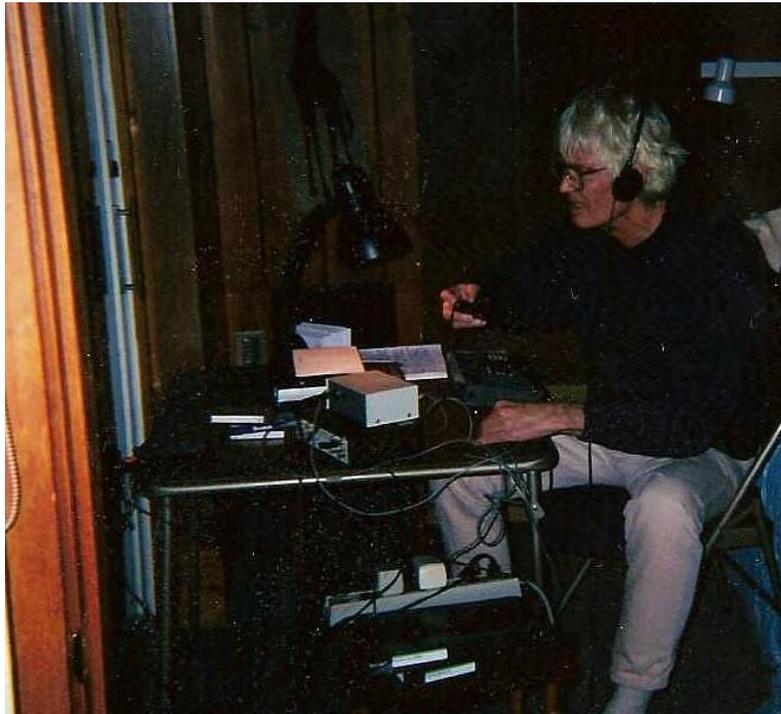
as the mentor he was, to a still young DXer. Will always cherish that photo of Bob, sitting in front of those twin R-390's. – Dan Robinson



Wow. I think that Bob Hill was one of the first DXers I was aware of back in the late 60's/early 70's when I became active, and one of those fabulous DXers I could only dream of becoming. The years march on, unfortunately. I never met Bob, but sure felt that I "knew" him via the DX press. R.I.P. OM. – Walt Salmaniw

I'm saddened to hear about Bob. I recall most his way with words. He did some writing for a living. Like me, he was a classical music lover with a preference for the heavy stuff, and complained about the "tinkly little tunes" played on WCRB when commuting. And who can forget the sign-off log, in which he had trouble making out "some tubby little anthem"! – Gary Thorburn

I can fondly remember looking at Bob's logs of wonderful exotic late afternoon DX, rare Asian and African stations, and always amazing stuff. I was fortunate to meet Bob a few times over the years. Rest in peace, Bob Hill, I hope the DX is better on the other side! – Larry Yamron



From: "Bob Hill" <hill.writer@verizon.net>
Date: May 14, 2008 11:52:15 AM GMT-04:00
To: "WAW Mailing List" <hill.writer@verizon.net>
Subject: Words About Words #77

Words About Words (#77 / May 2008)

A Monthly Column of Observations and Opinions for Clients, Colleagues, Associates, and Friends

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A recent column in the weekly newspaper supplement *Parade* reminded readers that Dumpster, Frisbee, Jeep, Kleenex, Ping-Pong, Popsicle, and Windbreaker are still registered trademarks.

As a matter of fact, so too is the title of the column: "Ask Marilyn."

Plus Ça Change ...

Jayne Wilson forwards a much-admired essay by George Orwell (yes, he of 1984 fame), "Politics and the English Language." Here's the opening paragraph:

"Most people who bother with the matter at all would admit that the English language is in a bad way, but it is generally assumed that we cannot by conscious action do anything about it. Our civilization is decadent, and our language—so the argument runs—must inevitably share in the general collapse. It follows that any struggle against the abuse of language is a sentimental archaism, like preferring candles to electric light or hansom cabs to aeroplanes. Underneath this lies the half-conscious belief that language is a natural growth and not an instrument which we shape for our own purposes."

The essay was written in 1946. It's not difficult to imagine what Orwell would think of the state of the English language A.D. 2008.

Miracle on the Mound

From the sports pages of *The Boston Globe*:

"[Red Sox pitcher Daisuke Matsuzaka] does not speak the language, so he must rely on others to talk and to translate, and to announce for him."

Apparently the reporter doesn't speak the language either. "Assuming this would not involve the Angel Gabriel appearing to the Virgin Mary," comments Ginny Dodge, "the correct word is *enunciate*, meaning to articulate clearly."

Watch Your Language

A few columns ago, *Words About Words* offered some examples of the potential perils that come with translating an English word, phrase, or sentence into another language. That reminded Larry Magne of ... well, let's let him relate it:

"When my mother—whose French is good but not perfect—was in Paris, she received a phone call from an unknown gentleman who asked for his wife. Wishing to explain that he had the wrong number, she replied, '*Monsieur, vous êtes tromper.*' The gentleman was clearly not amused, and for good reason. In French, 'You are mistaken' requires a reflexive verb, so it should have been '*Vous vous êtes tromper.*' Unfortunately, '*Vous êtes tromper*' means 'You are being cuckolded.'"

Now You Know

Ned Raub passes along some tidbits of linguistic trivia:

- *Stewardesses* is the longest word typed with only the left hand.
- *Lollipop* is the longest word typed with only the right hand.
- No word in the English language rhymes with *month, orange, silver, or purple*.
- The words *racecar, kayak* and *level* are palindromes, spelled the same whether read left to right or right to left.
- Only four words in the English language end in *-dous*: *tremendous, horrendous, stupendous, and hazardous*.
- *Typewriter* is the longest word that can be made using the letters on only one row of the keyboard.

Cattle Call

An excerpt from *The Publicity Hound*:

"The next time a journalist hangs up on you, or yells 'no thanks' into the telephone, or refuses to answer your emails, she might be more than just busy. She might also be angry. Really angry. At what? Her lousy pay. Her horrible work schedule. Her editor who cow-tows to the advertising department."

Henry Stimpson adds his trenchant comment: "Moo!"

To *kowtow* is to prostrate oneself or touch one's head to the ground in complete submission to someone else; to servilely and obsequiously comply with the wishes and demands of someone or something. The word comes from the Chinese *kòu tóu* (from *kòu* "to strike" + *tóu* "head"), meaning prostrate genuflection before a potentate or religious shrine. It demonstrates absolute surrender of one's will to that of someone highly respected.

That's the last word for this month's *Words About Words*. As always, your comments, contributions, philosophical observations, and writing/editing assignments are welcome.

Until next month ...

Bob

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AFTERNOON ASIAN RECEPTION ON THE LOW BANDS

Presented by Bob Hill at the Reynoldsburg DX Weekend, August 7-10, 1997

Along with death and taxes, one of the few certainties in life is that the sun will rise every morning and set every evening. It so happens that when the sun is rising at your location, it is setting somewhere else on the other side of the world. Conversely, when it is setting at your location, it is rising somewhere else. It all depends on the location of the terminator which, of course, as we all know, has nothing to do with an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. The terminator is the constantly shifting sunrise-sunset line that circles the globe, dividing day from night.

Now, none of this is a hot news flash to anybody here. But I wanted to begin by mentioning it because it is the whole foundation for late-afternoon tropical band reception of Asian stations and by "Asian" I mean South East Asia and the Far East.

In general, afternoon trop-band Asian reception is possible for DXers in the eastern United States and Canada, with the northeastern U.S. and the Maritime provinces generally getting the most frequent openings. The best openings tend to be around our autumnal and vernal equinoxes, but the potential is there at any time of the year.

The most prevalent kind of afternoon Asian reception is via the so-called grayline mode, which occurs when it is sunset at the listener's location and sunrise at the transmitter. At the DXer's QTH, this phenomenon can begin anytime from as much as two hours to only a few minutes before sunset, depending on the season and the transmitter's location. During this period, signals can be enhanced by as much as 20 db, often suddenly rising out of the muck, peaking at sometimes astounding levels for a while, then sinking back into the muck as suddenly as they appeared. Since grayline periods at the Equator are very brief as short as five or ten minutes, and rarely longer than 20 minutes the opportunities for hearing an Indonesian regional on the Equator usually don't last very long, even under ideal conditions. This is particularly true on 75 and 90 meters. (If you really expect to log an Indo on 120 meters, we have a saying in the Boston area--"Good luck to you and the Red Sox.")

But you don't have to go very far north or south of the Equator before the window gets noticeably wider, particularly on 60 meters. Ujung Pandang, for example, is only about 300 miles south of the Equator, but the signal on 4753 is often readable for as much as two hours. As you go farther north, Asians in higher latitudes will hang in for long periods during their grayline time because the transition from darkness to light is far more gradual than it is in the tropics.

For a few weeks around the winter solstice, the West Coast also enjoys sunset reception of Asians on the trop bands via the grayline mode. The difference is that their terminator passes through Central Asia, South Asia, and the subcontinent -so those are the Asians they hear. The Far East and South East Asia are several hours into daylight by then.

Incidentally, sometimes an East Coast DXer will report, say, a Brazilian around 0900 -when it is sunrise at both the listener's QTH and the transmitter -and call it grayline reception. Now, no doubt this is a period of enhanced reception, but it is not grayline. Grayline reception occurs only when it is sunrise at one point and sunset at the other.

How do you know what to look for at your sunset? The obvious answer is that you have to know where it is going to be sunrise at the same time. Reference publications, and devices like the DX Edge, are essential. (In fact, I can't imagine anyone trying to DX late-afternoon, low-band Asians without having the DX Edge on hand.) There are also software programs that let you follow the terminator as it moves -much like the famous Geochron clock, which will do the same thing for you if you have about \$1,400 to spare. I also have a booklet of sunrise and sunset times that I obtained from the late, lamented SPEEDX more than 20 years ago. And I keep a copy of the Farmer's Almanac around so that I'll always know precise sunrise and sunset times at my own QTH.

Having said all that, I still believe that the best way of being prepared for late-afternoon openings, especially those quickies, is to commit Asian sunrise and sunset times to memory as much as possible. That way you don't have to constantly plow through tables and charts every time you look for a particular target, or unexpectedly come across something that lights your fire. Even if you only familiarize yourself with the sunrise times along the Equator, you'll be ahead of the game because these times never change more than a few minutes during the course of the year. Granted, sunrise times do change significantly from month to month as you go farther north, but since the grayline openings also last longer, you have more time to consult the DX Edge or a reference work or whatever.

Up to this point, I haven't mentioned anything about longpath reception and its role in the DXing of late-afternoon Asians. It is not really essential to spend a lot of time on this topic after all, what's important is that you log them, not necessarily what path they took to arrive at your receiver. Serious ham DXers do need to know this stuff because they have to know where to point their yagis and quads, and switch their phased arrays. It is a very complex and interesting phenomenon -one that John Bryant, Dave Clark, and Tony Ward have covered at length in their Proceedings articles. If you haven't read these, I urge you to do so.

Because it is so complex and interesting, I'd like to spend a few minutes offering some examples of low-band, long-path reception. As we all know, shortwave signals tend to follow the great-circle path the shortest distance between transmitter and receiver. Often, however, they don't, usually because there is no path of darkness between transmitter and receiver via the direct great-circle route. That is when the long-path phenomenon occurs.

If short-path refers to the great-circle bearing, then long-path must refer to the reciprocal of that bearing. In other words, if the great-circle heading from Boston to Japan is 330 degrees, then a long-path signal must be arriving from the reciprocal heading, or 150 degrees. Right? Well, yes and no. As a ham, I've had the good fortune to use a number of

rotary beams and other directional antenna systems over the years, and I've consistently found that what we call "long-path" reception is more likely to be, in reality, skewed-path reception. In other words, the signal isn't coming via the short path, but it isn't coming from the exact opposite path either. It is arriving via some oddball path between the two.

Let's take, as an example, the Japanese station on 3925 variously known as R. Tampa, NSB or JOZ. As I said, the great-circle heading from Boston is 330 degrees, and so the reciprocal -or long path is 150 degrees. But when this station begins to fade in around 2045 or 2100 UTC during the winter, it arrives from the northeast, over Europe a bearing of about 50 degrees. Even stranger, the signal soon begins to shift southward, until finally it is coming in from true long-path by the time we are in total darkness.

Another example is the BBC relay in Singapore on 3915. The great-circle bearing from Boston is just about zero a straight shot over the North Pole. But during our winter, when this station begins to fade in as much as 90 minutes before our sunset, the signal nearly always starts out from the northeast, just like R. Tampa. As Singapore sunrise approaches, the path often gradually moves to the southeast -still not true long-path, but getting closer. And finally, it shifts back to the northeast as the signal drops off after the sunrise peak. You'd think that at some point it would finally take the true long path, directly over the South Pole. But experience has shown that it doesn't.

Incidentally, on the higher bands you often encounter the dual-path effect during the season. This occurs when an Asian signal is arriving simultaneously via both short- and long, or "skewed-path." You will notice an echo, which is caused by the very slight difference in arrival times from the two paths. I have heard dual-path signals as low as 49 meters, but it is primarily a high-band phenomenon because the low bands inherently tend to support only one path at any given time. Again, I don't want to emphasize this topic out of proportion to its practical importance to the SWBC DXer, but it is fun to know, or at least have some idea of, the route a signal might be following from the transmitter to your receiver.

So what should we be looking for, this coming season and beyond? Let's assume that our sunset is going to be somewhere between 2100 and 2200. I usually start a session by checking out certain fairly reliable stations that can serve as beacons. If they aren't coming in well, I figure that I'm probably better off not spending a lot of time looking for goodies.

The North Korean on 2850 is always a good barometer of Far East conditions on 75 and 90 meters and even the possibility of a Chinese regional on 120, although I'm not sure how many of those are still on the air. When Pyongyang is blasting through with their always-spellbinding programs from around 2100, it's a good time to check 90 and 75 meters for North Korean regionals, as well as for the Taiwan station on 3335. I think there are still a couple of Chinese outlets on these bands as well, although they haven't put in an appearance lately.

The two stations I mentioned before -BBC Singapore on 3915 and R. Tampa on 3925 are also worth checking. The two signal paths are just different enough that the BBC will sometimes be loud, while the Japanese station is weak, and vice versa. In other words, just because conditions from the Far East are better or worse than usual doesn't necessarily mean that the same will be true of South East Asia.

Certain eastern and central Indos tend to show up on 90 and 75 meters before Java and Sumatra. RRI Ambon, Maluku, on 3214.8 occasionally makes it around 2100, but rarely hangs in for more than 15 minutes or so. Banjarmasin, Kalimantan, on 3249.8 isn't easy under the best of circumstances, but it's even tougher when there is QRM from the North Korean regional 200 Hz higher. One that sometimes puts in a surprisingly good signal is Kupang, Nusa Tenggara, on 3384.9. I heard this one last fall during our BADX DXpedition to Maine around 2130 for about ten minutes at such a fine level that at first I thought it must be an African.

Some Sumatran RRIs to check for are Bukittinggi on 3231.8, Tanjung Karang on 3395.1, Banda Aceh on 3904.8, and RRI Padang around 4003. Again, if the 3915 Singapore signal is coming in well, look for these around 2300 to 2330. Sumatrans tend to show best during the late spring and early fall, when they benefit from grayline enhancement. And, of course, this always assumes that they are all active, which is often a big "if."

An exotic target on 75 meters is RRI Merauke, Irian Jaya, on 3905. The seasonal window for this one is short, perhaps three weeks at best. When it is audible, it peaks around 2040; by 2100 it is on its last legs. If you're lucky, you may catch the familiar "SCI" interval signal before total fadeout.

Unfortunately, neither Singapore nor Japan is a very reliable indicator for this path, which shares more of the characteristics of an Australian or PNG signal. So I often find that a better barometer is the PNG on 4890, which comes in skewed-path over Europe and peaks around 2030. If it is coming in well, you might have a shot at Merauke and the Irian Jaya stations on 60 meters.

3905 is one of the more interesting trop-band frequencies for Indo catches because both Merauke and Banda Aceh are there. The two cities are at the extreme opposite ends of Indonesia Banda Aceh is 3,000 miles west of Merauke which makes it nice because the terminator at our QTH has gradually shifted three hours during the transition from winter to summer. So in the winter you get grayline between Boston and Irian Jaya around 2030, and in the late spring and early fall you get grayline between Boston and Sumatra three hours later. When it is active and I did hear it a couple of times in May but not since then Banda Aceh is on exactly 3904.8.

If you are feeling adventurous, try for RRI Serui, Irian Jaya, on 4606.4 at 2100 sign-on. It won't hang in for more than a few minutes, so have your tape recorder handy. The best beacon for this one would be the 4890 PNG. Another Irian Jaya signal that is marginally more dependable is RRI Fak-Fak on 4789.1, which sometimes shows with "SCI" at 2100, and might stay in till about 2130 if conditions are right.

From China, the regional at Kunming is sometimes readable just below 4760, often with QRM to and from the Andaman Islands outlet of All India Radio around 2300. Because of its extreme southerly location near Vietnam, Kunming tends to show best during the late spring and early fall period. During the height of the season, it is more likely to appear during East Coast mornings. Another regional, Gansu PBS in north-central China, used to be fairly regular on 4865 around 2200. I haven't heard it this past year, though, and I'm not sure if it is still on the air.

Earlier, I mentioned Ujung Pandang. That is by far the most reliable late-afternoon trop-band Indo, and always a good barometer for overall 60-meter conditions to that part of the world. It usually signs on around 2100, and can sometimes still be audible as late as 2230 or even 2300.

I am going to expand the definition of "Asian" here to include the Australian CAAMA outlets in the Northern Territory on 4835, 4910 and 5025. Propagationally, afternoon reception of these stations is probably a bit closer to what you would expect from central Indonesia than from Sydney or Melbourne. Last year I managed to hear 4910 a few times at 2130 sign-on, but, unfortunately, Zambia came back on with their new transmitter and that was the end of that. Just a few weeks ago, though, I was surprised to hear the 4835 outlet mixing at just about equal level with co-channel Mali around 2200. Ordinarily, Mali completely covers that frequency, but you never know. I don't recall hearing 5025 yet, mainly because Parakou has always blanketed that channel. However, they have been on 7190 during a number of recent afternoons, leaving 5025 open for the possibility of the Aussie when conditions permit.

Other than Ujung Pandang and the Irian Jaya stations I mentioned, there aren't many Indos on 60 meters during the late afternoons. One is RRI Jambi, Sumatra, which can't make up its mind whether it wants to be on 4925 or 4927. As with the 90- and 75-meter Sumatrans, it comes in on grayline during the off-season, peaking around 2315 or slightly later. Several outlets in Malaysia, including ones in Sabah and Sarawak, live on 60 meters, but they have hardly shown at all over the past year or so. Apparently it is just poor conditions, as DXers in Asia and the Pacific continue to report them as being active. When Jambi is better than usual, that's the best time to set your sights on the Malaysians.

Having lived on and DXed from both coasts, I make no claim that the East Coast rivals the West Coast for reception of Asia during the morning hours. On the other hand, the West Coast doesn't get to enjoy the late-afternoon Asians that are possible from the East Coast.

In conclusion, if you have largely confined your low-band Asian DXing to the morning hours up to now, I would encourage you to expand your horizons and go after some of the juicy late-afternoon targets. Maybe they are not as regular as the morning Asians, but that's exactly why they are more satisfying to log. So try them -- you'll like them.