5 Pre-Session Activities

Figure 5-1 shows the Session Preparation menu displayed after selecting "Pre Session Activities" from the main menu. This menu is superimposed on the Main menu displayed when the program was started. Figure 5-2 shows how the display actually appears. Except where otherwise noted, all screens are superimposed upon any previous screens.

Figure 5-1   Session Preparation Menu

Figure 5-2   Superimposed Session Preparation Menu

"Define/Select Session" allows you to create a new session record, or to retrieve a past session from the history data. In general, new sessions will be created, however it is sometimes desirable to retrieve an earlier session (E.G. to reprint a CSCE that contained a mispelling that was not noticed until later). When creating a new session, it can either be done just before VE and candidate registration, or it can be done days or weeks in advance (as would be the case if candidate pre-registrations were accepted).

"Configuration" allows you to set session defaults, define the printer configuration, and specify database backup procedures. Session defaults are useful if, for example, your sessions are sponsored by the same group, or take place at the same location. Session defaults can be overridden at session creation time. Printer configuration needs to be defined and/or verified to insure that CSCE's, 610's and session

reports are generated properly. Multiple set of defaults may be stored, allowing the same database to be shared among more than one VE team, each with its own sponsor, location, printers, etc. An important reason for sharing databases is the global candidate lookup feature that speeds candidate registration by filling in data from a previous exam session.

"Generate VE Invite List" is used to generate a mailing list that can be used with a work processing program to generate postcards or letters to inform VE's of an upcoming exam session. It is normally used by the team leader about a month or so before the scheduled exam session. Included with the VEWD package are sample Word and WordPerfect documents to generate postcards from the file generated by this function.

5.1Configuration

Figure 5-3 shows the table displayed when **"Configuration"** is selected from the "Pre-Session Activities" Menu. The center portion of the screen is a scrolling list of pre-defined configurations. The currently selected item is displayed in inverse video. At most one configuration will have the prefix "Default" in front of it. This is the last selected configuration. This is the configuration that is automatically loaded at program startup. To change the default and load a new configuration, highlight the desired line and press Control-Enter.
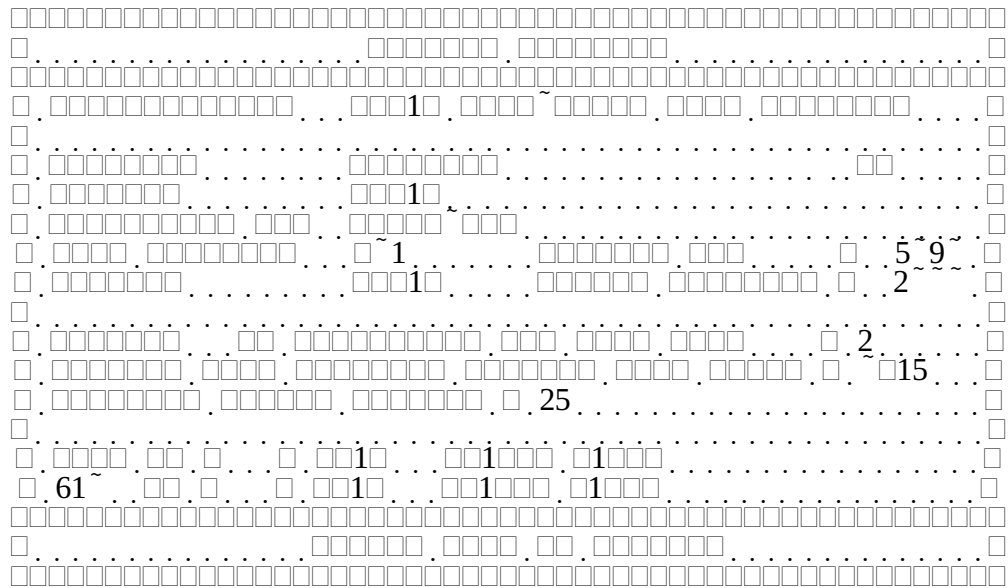

Figure 5-3   Configuration Selection Table

5.1.1Session Defaults

Figure 5-4 shows the **"Session Defaults"** screen displayed when modifying an existing configuration. The following paragraphs describe each of the fields on the form. Unless otherwise specified, any field may be left blank.

Figure 5-4   Session Defaults

"Configuration" is the name displayed on the configuration selection table. Its only purpose is to provide a one line description of the configuration record. This field cannot be left blank.

"Location" is the default session location. It consists of two fields, City, and State. This value is filled in for Session location on the Create Session display. The default value may be overridden at session creation time.

"Sponsor" is the default session sponsor. This value is filled in for Session Sponsor on the Create Session display. The default value may be overridden at session creation time.

"Sponsoring VEC" is the default VEC used in the exam sessions. This value is filled in for Sponsoring VEC on the Create Session display. The default value may be overridden at session creation time. The value entered must match one of the defined VEC's. If it does not match, a scrolling list of valid VEC's is displayed, and you can select the correct VEC.

"Call District" is the FCC designated callsign district where the examination site is located. Valid values are 01 through 09 for Districts 1 through 9, 10 for Call district 0, 11 for Alaska, 12 for the Caribbean, 13 for the Pacific, or DX for all foreign locations. Leading zeros must be specified. This information is printed, along with an FCC specified VEC code on any printed 610's. It is also used in generating the Electronic data filing format used by the FCC.

"Session Fee" is the default amount, in US dollars, each candidate is charged. This value is filled in for Session Fee on the Create Session display. The default value may be overridden at session creation time.

"**Liaison**" is the callsign of the session liaison. This person is listed on the generated Test Session Summary and indicates to the VEC who should be contacted if there is a problem.

"Amount Retained" is the default amount per candidate, in US dollars, normally retained by the VE team. This value is filled in for Amount Retained on the Create Session display. The default value may be overridden at session creation time. If the amount retained varies from session to session, leave this at zero.

"Maximum # of candidates per Code slot" is the default maximum of candidates for each code element. This value is filled in on the Create Session display. The default value may be overridden at

session creation time. Code slots are used when a given code element (1A, 1B, or 1C) is being given more than once at a session. This is quite useful for managing a large session, such as a convention. If you will not normally be scheduling multiple code tests at the same speed, leave this field blank. Refer to the Create Session display for further details on code slots and their usage.

"Default time interval between Code slots" is the time that is automatically added to the previous code slot time to determine the time of the next code test. This occurs at session definition only.

"Sequence Number Maximum" is the default maximum tracking number used during a session. This value is filled in on the Create Session display. The default value may be overridden at session creation time. Sequence numbers are used when it is desired to assign a number to each candidate and to track the candidate and/or the paperwork using this number. When the candidate registers, he or she is given a number from one up to some maximum, usually the amount of numbered folders the VE team has that they use to store the paperwork. If there are more candidates than folders the assigned number wraps around to 1 and starts over. If sequence numbers are used they are displayed on all screens that list candidate information. If your VE team uses another method of tracking (for example, 26 folders labeled A-Z, and tracking by last name), leave this field blank to avoid assigning and displaying sequence numbers.

"CSCE VE's" and "**610 VE's"** are the callsigns (which must be valid US callsigns) of the VE's that will be signing the CSCE's and FCC form 610's. If the VE's signing vary, leave these fields blank.

When the last 610 VE is entered or Control-Enter is pressed, the Session Options screen is displayed.

5.1.2 Session Options

Figure 5-5 shows the Session Options screen displayed after completing the Session Defaults screen. The majority of fields on this form are Y/N (Yes/No) choice fields. The following paragraphs describe each of the fields on the form.

"Use Last VE's on Signature fields" determines whether the CSCE and 610 VE callsigns are automatically filled in on the Update Candidate Status form when a candidate is done. If no, any VE's callsigns need to be entered manually. If yes, the last VE's callsigns used are automatically filled in on the CSCE VE fields if a CSCE is issued, and on the 610 VE fields if an upgrade is earned. For the first candidate to finish, the callsigns used are those from the Session Defaults Record. After that, the last callsigns entered are used.

"Require Full Address At Registration" determines whether the Address, City, and State fields must be filled in at initial registration or if they can be left blank. In general, there is little to no advantage to delaying entering address information. The time saved at initial registration is more than lost trying to fill it back in later. CSCE's or 610's cannot, and will not be printed without a valid address. About the only time it would be useful would be a large exam session, where candidates are given exams when they are registered, and there are two (or more) computers networked together. One could do the initial registration, and the second could fill in the address information. Even then, it might be quicker and easier to just have two registration lines.

4
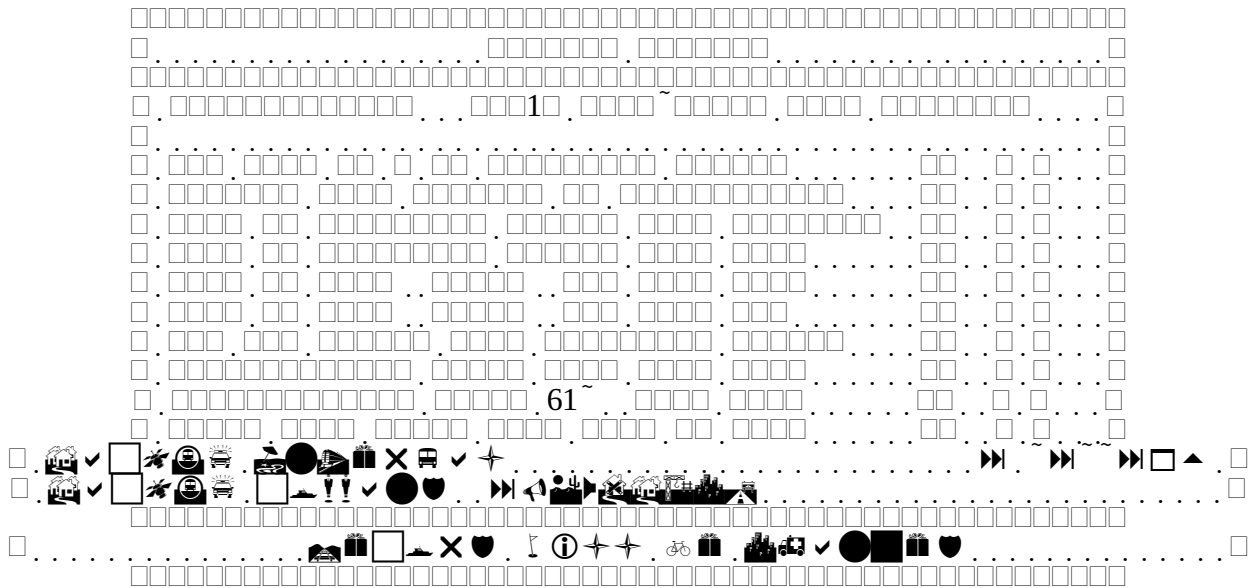
Figure 5-5   Session Options

"Fill in Candidate Record from Callsign" enables or disables the search feature of the global candidate database. This lookup is only performed when adding a candidate record. After entering a callsign the global database is searched for the latest record having the same callsign. If a matching record is found, the name, date of birth, address, phone numbers, and CSCE credits are copied from the old record. This can save considerable time at registration if you have candidates showing up at more than one session. If you have a really old and slow computer, and you have few "repeat customers" you might want to consider disabling this and the next option.

"Fill in Candidate Record from Name" enables or disable the same search and fill in feature as above, only does the lookup using the entire name (first, middle initial, last, and suffix). This lookup is only performed when adding a candidate record. This is not done if a callsign lookup succeeded. This handles the case of a candidate that shows up at multiple session before earning a license, as well as the candidate that earned an initial license at one session, and shows up at a later session after receiving his or her callsign. If this lookup succeeds and there is a different callsign in the history record then was entered at registration, a warning is displayed requesting verification of the candidate's callsign. Error: Reference source not found on page Error: Reference source not found provides an example of this warning.

"Fill in City, State, Zip from City" enables or disables setting the State and Zip code after entering City on the Register/Modify/Delete Candidate form. This lookup is only performed when adding a candidate record, and only if there was not a successful lookup from the global candidate database. If enabled, after a city is entered (and return is pressed to move to the state field), a lookup will be done on the location database. If there is one, and only one, match on city name, the state and zip code is filled in from the location database. If there is more than one city of the same name (e.g. Bedford, NH and Bedford, MA) a second lookup is made after state is entered (and return is pressed to move to the zip code field). If there is one, and only one, match on city and state, the zip code is filled in from the location database. If there is more than one record with the same city and state (E.G., Nashua, NH, which has 4 zip codes) nothing is done.

"Fill in City, State, Zip from Zip" enables or disables setting the City and State after entering zip code on the Register/Modify/Delete Candidate form. This lookup is only performed when adding a candidate record, and only if there was not a successful lookup from the global candidate database, or from the

city/state lookup. If enabled, after entering a Zipcode (and return is pressed to move to the state field), a lookup will be done on the location database. If there is one, and only one, match on zip code, the city and state is filled in from the location database. If there is more than one record with the same zip code, as would be the case of two adjoining small towns (e.g. Hudson and Litchfield, NH) no fill-in is done.

Once a lookup is done on a Register Candidate, whether it be a candidate, or city/state/zip, no further lookups will be done. This means you cannot do repeated lookups by entering data, backing up through fields and entering new data. To perform another lookup, you must completely leave the Register Candidate form (losing any data you may have entered to this point), and pressing insert to bring up the Register Candidate form again.

"Add New Cities from Candidate Record" enables or disables adding new records to the Location database when registering candidates with City/State/Zipcode combinations that are not already in the location database. If enabled, and a City/State/Zip that is not in the Location database is entered, it is added, and will be used in future lookups. This provides a useful way of building up the location database on the fly. **Note that if you misspell a city name, or enter an incorrect Zipcode, and it is added to the location database, it can interfere with future lookups.**

"Automatically print CSCE when done" enables or disables what is probably one of the most useful features of the VEWD program. If enabled, when a candidate is marked as completed on the Update Candidate Status form, and the candidate has passed one or more exam elements, a CSCE will automatically be printed. All you have to do is *VERIFY THAT THE CSCE IS CORRECT AND MATCHES THE PAPERWORK*, and sign it. To use this feature, you must have a supply of tractor feed CSCE's (currently, the only format supported is the ARRL/VEC's), and a printer capable of printing multipart forms. If you cannot print CSCE's, set this field to N.

"Automatically print 610 when done" enables or disables what is probably the second most useful feature of the VEWD program. If enabled, when a candidate is marked as completed on the Update Candidate Status form, and the candidate has earned a new license, or upgraded their license class, an FCC form 610 will automatically be printed. Everything *except* Section 2, Block A is filled in. This was done deliberately to insure a final sanity check is made on the paperwork. All you have to do is *VERIFY THAT THE DATA IS CORRECT AND MATCHES THE PAPERWORK*, and sign it. If this feature is used *MAKE SURE THAT THE CANDIDATE VERIFIES THE SECTION 1 DATA IS CORRECT, and signs it*. The information on the 610 is taken from the candidate record. This raises the issue of how you get the candidate information at registration time. *It is strongly recommended that EVERY candidate complete and SIGN a 610 before registering*. This is then collected and used for data entry. While this may appear to be a waste of paper and/or 610's, consider the case of the candidate who earns a new license and leaves before signing the 610. With a signed 610 in hand at registration time, you will never have to deal with this problem (The candidate left New Hampshire to winter in Florida the day after the session).

"Close Code Slots when time is past" will automatically mark a code slot as closed once the start time of the test has passed. Unless your sessions run so smoothly that every code test starts within a minute or two of the time specified set this field to "N". Code slots must then be manually closed when the test actually starts. This prevents a candidate registering at 12:30 PM from being scheduled for the 3:00 PM 20 WPM test when the 12:00 PM test hasn't started yet.

"Backup Interval" is the amount of time between automatic backups of the database files. It is specified in hours : minutes : seconds. A value of zero (blank) disables automatic backup. Note that while a backup is being done no other activities can occur.

"Backup command" is the command line passed to the DOS command interpreter when a backup is done, either automatically, or at user request. This usually contains the name of a batch file (.BAT

extension). Before passing the line to DOS the following information is appended to the end of the line: "code   session-date   session-id   current-time", where:

- code is 0 for automatic timed backup,
  1 for user requested partial backup, and 2 for user requested full backup
- Session date is in the form YYMMDD
- Current time is in the form HHMM

A sample file, VEWDBACK.BAT is included in the distribution files and is listed in Figure 5-6.

5.1.3 Printer Defaults

Figure 5-7 shows the Printer Defaults screen displayed after completing the Session Options screen. The following paragraphs describe each of the fields on the form.

There can be up to three different printer configurations defined, one for the printer used for CSCE's, one for the printer used to print the Candidate Roster, and Test Session summary, and one for the printer used for FCC form 610's. Each printer configuration consists of a printer control filename, and a port specification.

A printer control file is an ASCII file with a .DEV extension and contains a list of control names and the corresponding control sequence for the printer. Any line starting with an exclamation point (!) is considered a comment and is ignored. Each line is of the form: "**control:**   **value**", where **control** is the pre-defined name of a control sequence, and **value** is the control sequence information. Non-printing characters can be represented by <ddd> where ddd is the decimal value. Any white space between the colon (:) and the first character of value is ignored. If your printer doesn't have a control sequence, leave it out of the device file. Figure 5-8 shows a sample device file for a Centronics dot-matrix printer. Figure 5-9 shows a sample device file for a HP LaserJet 4P printer. Table 5-1 lists the defined control sequences.

Note that the CPI10 and CPI12 sequences are select only. No assumption is made about the presence of the required font. If, for example, you are using a HP LaserJet Series II to print your candidate roster, it is up to you to have a 12 character per inch font already loaded.

The port is a choice field specifying where the printer output should be sent. Supported printer connections are parallel ports LPT1 through LPT3, and serial ports COM1 through COM4. These are the standard PC ports. No provision is made for supporting unusual I/O addresses or non-standard hardware. In addition to the hardware ports, provision is made to allow printing to a file. If you're having trouble getting a report to print properly on your printer, you can always print to a file and use the text editor/word processor of your choice to reformat it to your liking

Figure 5-6   Sample backup batch file
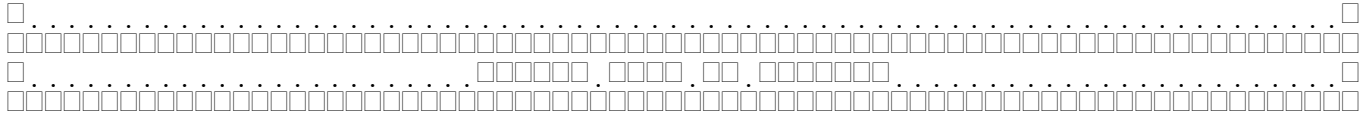
Figure 5-7   Printer Defaults

Table 5-1   Printer Control Sequences

Control	Max Bytes	Description
LPINIT	16	Initialization. Used at the start of printing each report (CSCE, 610, Roster, Session Summary)
LPI6	16	Selects 6 lines per inch.
LPI8	16	Selects 8 lines per inch. (Currently not used)
CPI10	16	Selects 10 characters per inch.
CPI12	16	Selects 12 characters per inch.
LANDSCAPE	16	Selects landscape mode.
PORTRAIT	16	Selects portrait mode.
FCCALIGN1	16	Inserted before Item 1, to candidate name
FCCALIGN2	16	Inserted before Item 2, to line up address
FCCALIGN3	16	Inserted before Item 4b, to line up items 4b, 5, 6
FCCALIGN4	16	Inserted before Item 8, to line up candidate signature date
FCCALIGN5	16	Inserted after Item 9, to line up blocks A(test only) and C
FCCALIGN6	16	Inserted before VE #2, to line up for VE #2
FCCALIGN7	16	Inserted before VE #3, to line up for VE #3
FCCALIGN8	16	Inserted after VE #3, to eject page or line up for next form
FIELDSEP	4	Not truly a printer control sequence, it is the character sequence used to separate fields in the data files generated for form letters.
RECORDSEP	4	Not truly a printer control sequence, it is the character sequence used to separate records in the data files generated for form letters.

5.2 Generate VE Invite List

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Figure 5-8   Centronics printer control file

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Figure 5-9   HP LaserJet 4P printer control file

Figure 5-10 shows the **"Generate VE Invite List"** combination form and menu displayed after selecting "Generate VE Invite List" from the main menu.

One of the responsibilities of a VE Team leader is to insure that there are enough VE's to properly support the exam session. This pre-session function is designed to help in notifying a set of Volunteer Examiners that an exam session is pending by generating an ASCII text file of VE names and addresses that can be used in a mail merge program to generate letters or postcards to the members of the VE team.

Figure 5-10   Generate VE Invite List

"Last Exam Date" is the session date and ID of the exam session used for determining the VE's in the "Last Exam Attendees" group.

"Next Exam Date" is the date of the upcoming exam session.

"VE RSVP Date" is filled in with a date seven days earlier than the next exam date, but may be overridden by the user.

After entering the VE RSVP date, the cursor moves in to the menu portion of the display. The four choices determine which VE's are included in the output file.

"Regulars + Last Exam Attendees" generates a mail merge file that includes those VE's that were at the session specified in the Last Exam Date field, and those VE's that have are considered "regulars" by having the "Notify" field set to yes in the VE database. If a VE meets both qualifications, only one output record is generated.

"Regulars Only" includes only those VE's that have their "Notify" field set to yes in the VE database.

"Last Exam Attendees Only" includes only those VE's that were at the last exam session.

"All VE's" includes every VE contained in the VE database.

The output file is generated in the default directory and is called INVITEVE.TXT. If the file exists, the old contents are overwritten. After the file is generated the cursor is moved back to the last exam date field, allowing a single escape to return to the previous menu. Each output record contains eight fields separated by the FIELDSEP string and terminated by the RECORDSEP string defined in the printer control file for the current Report printer. The eight lines, in order are shown in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2   Invite VE file fields

Field	Description	Sample
1	Last session VE attended	April 21, 1994
2	Next exam date	Saturday, June 18, 1994
3	RSVP date	Saturday, June 11, 1994
4	VE's full name	James M Heedles
5	VE's callsign	WW1Y
6	VE's address	6 Birch Drive
7	VE's city, state, Zipcode	Amherst NH 03031
8	VE's first name	James

Included with the distribution files are WordPerfect and Microsoft Word 6.0 merge files that are the back and front of a session notification postcard. Refer to your word processor documentation for further information on merging documents and generating form letters and mailing lists.

5.3 Define/Select Session

The **"Define/Select Session"** menu item displays the Session List table, shown in Figure 5-11. If the session database is empty, the "Create/Modify/Delete Session" form is displayed. The Session List is a scrolling table of all sessions in the session database. The list is displayed in time reversed order. The most recent session appears first. The following paragraphs describe each of the columns of the table.

Figure 5-11   Session List

"Date" is the date of the session followed by the session ID. The purpose of session ID is to provide a unique designation for each session when multiple sessions occur on the same day.

"Location" is the location of the session

"Sponsor" is the group or club sponsoring the examination session

"Cand" is the total number of candidates served at the session

"VE's" is the total number of VE's that supported the session

"D" is the session deleted flag. If a "Y" is shown, the candidate data for this session is no longer stored in the history database (VICTIMG.DAT).

To create a new session, press the Insert (Ins) key, and the "Create/Modify/Delete Session" form is displayed. To recall an old session, making it the "current" session, highlight the desired session and press Control-Enter. To just look at the session definition, press enter.

If you reload an old session the please wait message shown in Figure 5-12 is displayed while records are copied from the global database files into the session database files. This includes copying the candidate records from VICTIMG.DAT into VICTIMS.DAT, and copying the attending VE list from SESSION.DAT to ATTVE.DAT.

If, instead of the display in Figure 5-12, you see the display in Figure 5-13 **BE VERY CAREFUL!** It means you've created a session, probably registered VE's and candidates, and never performed a post-session merge into the global history database. If you try to select or create another session without doing a merge, the data in the ATTVE and VICTIMS databases will be **FOREVER LOST!** If this is a real session that is probably not what you want to do. Refer to the "Merge Active Session" of the "Post-Session Activities" menu for details on how to merge the current session.

Figure 5-12   Loading Session Message

Figure 5-13   Potential Loss of Session data

If the display in Figure 5-14 appears you also need to be careful! It means a previously merged session has been recalled (by copying the history records in ATTVEG and VICTIMG back into ATTVE and VICTIMS), modified, and not re-merged into the history database. If you try to select or create another session without re-merging, the changed data in the ATTVE and VICTIMS databases will be **LOST!** Whether you care about this depends on why the session was recalled, and what was done after recalling it. Going through almost any form in the recalled session, or printing any CSCE's or reports, or re-computing session counts, will cause this message to appear. **In general you do not want to re-merge the session.** The only real reason for re-merging a session is if additional VE's or candidates were added, which normally should never happen. Minor corrections, such as phone numbers, can be made directly to the global history data.
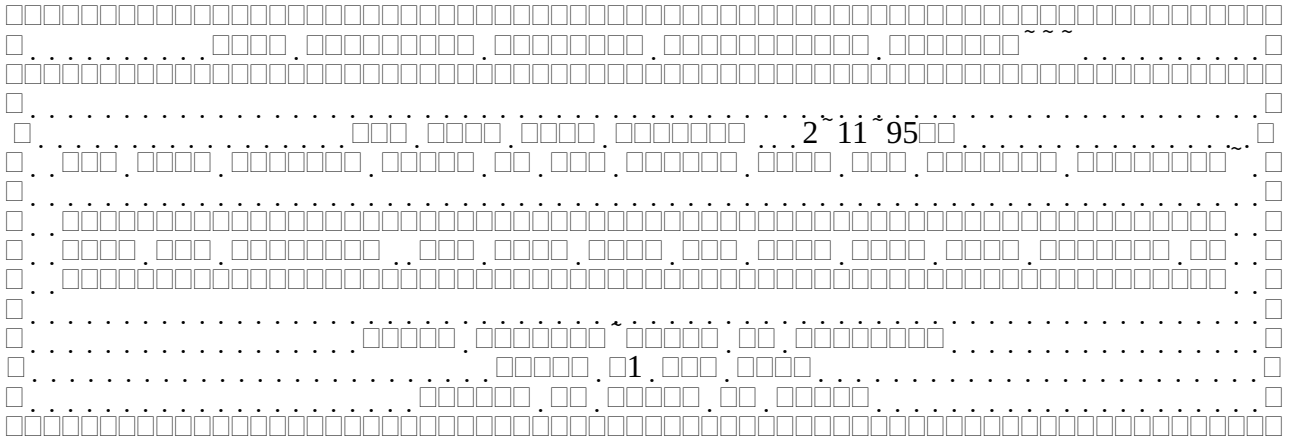
Figure 5-14   Potential Loss of Modified Session data

If you recall a session and play around with it, it is possible for the session counts to end up wrong. If you do not keep backups of the real data (which is highly recommended), you may have to perform the following steps to restore the proper counts:

- Clear the modified session (or load another session), ignoring the warning.
- Reload the session from the global history database.
- Select the "Recompute Session Counts" from the "Miscellaneous Functions" menu under the "Session Activities" menu"
- Clear the session again, ignoring the warning.

5.3.1 Create/Modify/Delete Session

The **"Create/Modify/Delete Session"** form is shown in Figure 5-15. The following paragraphs describe the fields on the form.

"Date" is the date of the session in the form MM/DD/YY. When creating a session the current date is automatically inserted. There is NO provision to change this to match the date formats used in other countries. *For those VE Teams operating outside the United States, remember this is the format that **<u>must</u>** be used in all your documentation that will be sent to either the VEC or the FCC.*

"ID", which follows the session date, is a letter, from A to Z, which in combination with the session date forms a unique designator for the session. The ID provides for the ability to have more than one session on a given day. The first session is A, the second would be B (or whatever letter chosen). Refer to Figure 5-11 for an example of two sessions occurring on the same day. When creating a session, the id A is automatically inserted.

14
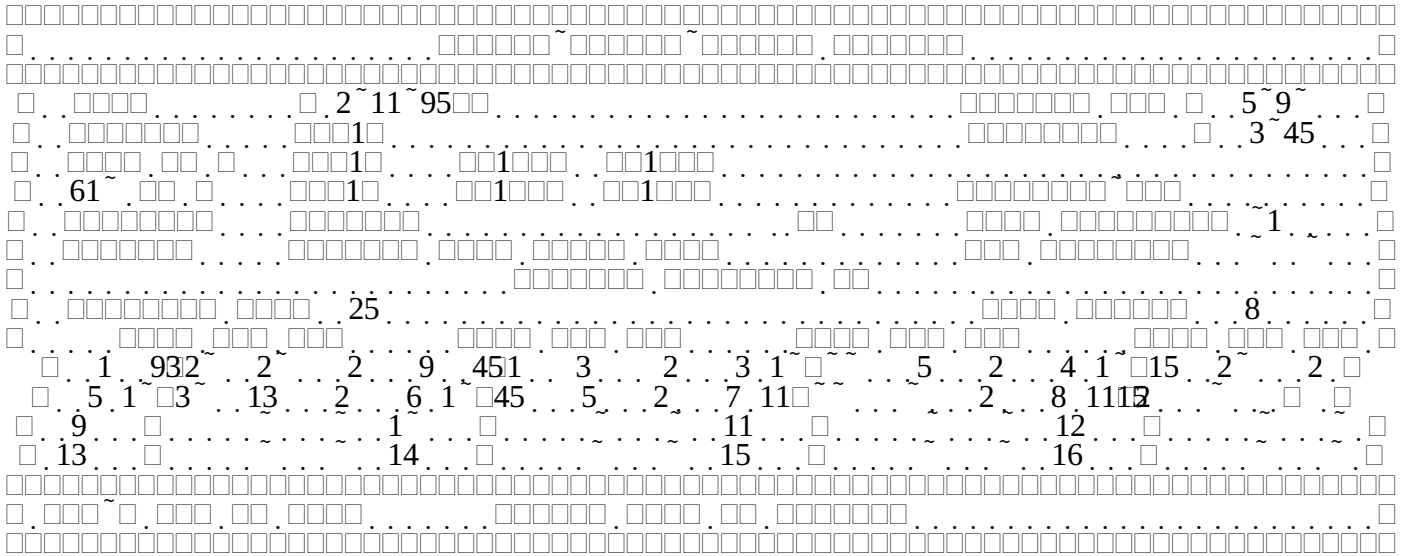
Figure 5-15   Create/Modify/Delete Session

"Session Fee" is the session fee charged each candidate. When creating a session, the default is automatically inserted.

"**Liaison"** is the callsign of the session liaison. This person is listed on the generated Test Session Summary and indicates to the VEC who should be contacted if there is a problem.

"Retained" is the amount retained by the VE team, per candidate. If may be left $0.00 until just before the Test Session Summary is printed. This is often the case since the amount retained is frequently not known until after the session is over. When creating a session, the default is automatically inserted.

"CSCE VE's" and **"610 VE's"** are the callsigns of the VE's that will be signing the various forms. This is initially filled in with the equivalent fields from the current defaults record. The purpose of a copy in the session record is to provide the ability to override the default configuration.

"VEC" is the sponsoring Volunteer Examination Coordinator. When creating a session, the default is automatically inserted. If an entry does not match one of the known VEC's, a scrolling list of choices is displayed.

"Location" is the session location. This is two fields, City/Town, and State. When creating a session, the default is automatically inserted.

"Call District" is the FCC designated callsign district where the examination site is located. Valid values are 01 through 09 for Districts 1 through 9, 10 for Call district 0, 11 for Alaska, 12 for the Caribbean, 13 for the Pacific, or DX for all foreign locations. Leading zeros must be specified. This information is printed, along with an FCC specified VEC code on any printed 610's. It is also used in generating the Electronic data filing format used by the FCC. When creating a session, the default is automatically inserted.

"Sponsor" is the local session sponsor. When creating a session, the default is automatically inserted.

"VEC Receipt" is for the VEC's use. It is filled in with the date the session paperwork was received at the VEC. It is used to generated the FCC electronic filing data.

"Sequence Max" is the maximum tracking number used during a session. Refer to the "Sequence Number Maximum" paragraph under "Session Defaults" for a detailed description of the use of sequence

numbers. To inhibit sequence numbers, leave this field blank. When creating a session, the default is automatically inserted.

"Code slots" is the total number of code elements (1A, 1B, and 1C) that will be given at the exam session. Up to sixteen (16) code slots may be defined. It is only used if code slot assignment and tracking is desired. Refer to Section 5.3.2, Code slots, an explanation and a rationale on page 16 for an explanation of when and how to make use of this feature. If no more than one of each code element is being given, set this field to zero (the default). If set to zero, the remaining fields are ignored and the form completes after pressing return.

"Time", **"WPM"**, and **"Max"** specifies the time (HH:MM), code speed, and maximum number of candidates allowed in each code slot. The only values allowed for WPM are 5, 13, 20, and 0. The 5, 13, and 20 indicate element 1A, 1B, or 1C, respectively, is to be administered during this slot. The value 0 allows for the dynamic allocation of code speed based on the demand. MAX is the maximum number of candidates allowed in a code slot. Once this number is reached, the slot is "full". When defining the code slots values, automatic fill in attempts to make the process go smoothly. When moving to a Time field that is blank, the previous time plus the interval specified in the session defaults record is inserted. When moving to a WPM field the next lower code speed is inserted, with 5 wrapping around back to 20. This is done only if the speed of the previous code slot was zero. Finally, when moving to a Max field the default "Maximum # of candidates per code slot" is automatically inserted. Once all the code slots have been defined the form completes.

In addition to the usual keys valid while on this screen, the following functions are available by pressing the Alt key and the specified letter key at the same time.

Alt-V (VE List) will display the callsigns and a one character class at time of session for each VE registered at the session. Figure 5-16 shows this display. Note that this display is only valid after a session has been merged into the history database. If the session selected is the currently active session the attending VE list is maintained in the ATTVE database and this display is will not contain valid information.

5.3.2 Code slots, an explanation and a rationale

The special purpose processing of the Morse code elements (1A, 1B, and 1C), or code slots, grew out of the realization that at a large, no pre-registration required, examination session (specifically, the 1993 ARRL New England Division convention):

1) There is no a priori knowledge of the number of candidates appearing, or what elements they will want to take.
2) There is limited seating.
3) The order that candidates wanting code elements arrive at the session is random.

It was decided to schedule eight code sessions, two at each of the standard code speeds, and 2 at the end of the session that would be left open to handle overflow. Since candidate registrations would be occurring in parallel with registered candidate's Pass/Fail results being entered, and also in parallel with completed candidates CSCE's being printed, verified, and signed, it was desired to minimize the additional load on the VE's handling the computer work by having the computer make the actual assignment of when a particular candidate would take a code test.

Without code slots, when a candidate indicates they want one or more code elements during registration, the VE at the computer enters a "Wants" in the field corresponding to the desired code element(s). Actually, as described in section Error: Reference source not found, Error: Reference source not found, on page Error: Reference source not found, the VE actually enters a "w". The computer fills in the rest of the word automatically. With code slots, instead of replacing "w" with "Wants", the computer

determines which is the first code slot at that speed that isn't full and/or hasn't started. If necessary, a slot designated as a "floater" by specifying 0 WPM for speed, will be assigned. The "w" is then replaced with a string of the form "HH:MM-N", where N is the slot number, and HH:MM is the time of the slot. The candidate is then told when to come back for the code test. At the 1993 ARRL New England Division convention the candidate was given a slip of paper that stated the time of the code session. It was the responsibility of the candidate to insure that he or she was present in time for the test.

A word of warning at this point. Code slots are useful only the extreme conditions of a convention or hamfest exam session. They are more trouble than they are worth at the "standard" exam session that is offering at most one of each code element. While they were useful and needed at the 1993 ARRL New England Division convention session, that is the only instance to date, that they have been used. Like many of the features of the VEWD program, changes were made after that session to incorporate what was learned at the session. Unlike the other features that have undergone this process through over twenty sessions to date, code slots have only had the one pass. Before using this feature at a large session, use it at smaller, more normal sessions. You should be very familiar with the use of the program under real-world conditions. Practice with using code slots before the large session.

Figure 5-16   Attending VE list