

CQ de WA2LQO

The official voice of the Grumman Amateur Radio Club
May 2011 VOLUME 84 NUMBER 5

THE DISASTER IN JAPAN

By Bob Wexelbaum, W2ILP

Instead of continuing with my articles about Communication Theory, this month I have decided to relate some facts pertaining to the recent earthquake, tsunami and nuclear plant disaster that have occurred in Japan and its fallout, using sources of information that might be more diverse than that found in usual news media reports. I also plan on continuing to learn more about how the Japanese people have been coping with the situation in Japan.

My son, Mark, who lives in American Samoa, has a friend who was his classmate when he attended Commack High School and his roommate when he attended SUNY at Buffalo. He has been a friend to my wife and I as well. He now is an English teacher who lives and works in Tokyo, Japan and has a lovely Japanese wife. Here are some parts of an e-mail that I received from him on May 1st:-

Hello Mr. Wexelbaum,

We had to cancel our trip <to Long Island, USA>. My wife, as part of her duty, is on a committee responsible for emergency evacuation and had a lot of things to attend to and she could not get out of it. We were able to get refunds on our tickets and will try again in a couple of months. ...This is the new fiscal year- from April. I had to reschedule to a different course with different clients and it has turned out to be kind of complicated but things have not been too adversely affected for me.

The anticipated electricity shortages have led some companies to move production to other parts of the country and have caused a number of schools to redo their scheduling. So far there have not been any major blackouts, but they are expected to occur. East and west Japan are on separate power distribution grids due to historical reasons. We have been very careful about what we eat and do not drink any tap water. At night the city is much darker than usual because many stores have turned off unnecessary lighting. There is no way at present to replace the lost electrical energy capacity. Thank goodness the trains are running on time, with their lights off during the day. The problem will persist for at least 3 – 5 years they say...but who knows?

As you wrote in a previous e-mail, the power plants should never have been built in that area. It has turned out that the company which operates the reactors TEPCO <Tokyo Electric Power Co.> did not really have any emergency procedures in place and did nothing about it for two days causing the reactors to heat up. They had no backup system in place when the tsunami took out the diesel generators. The pouring of sea water was a futile desperate attempt. The government got the land on which the reactors were built by basically convincing local politicians and trying to win the support of local people following the oil shock. I guess that they told the anti-nuclear people that Japan needed a reliable source of power. I do not know what they will do to dispose of all the radioactive material.

The Japanese people have pulled together magnificently and one colleague has helped to secure drinking straws with special filters in case of shortages of bottled water. However some people are becoming increasingly impatient with the government and TEPCO because of lack of information. The IAETA, I think it is called, is going to inspect the area next week. What are your thoughts about the use of nuclear energy? The cleanup will take about 3 to 7 years. I guess that the extent of the damage is understood by most people abroad. The devastated area of Japan is comparable to the US coast from Boston to Virginia. I think that the fishing industry of that area is gone. <End of quote>

As an engineer I am a mugwump on the subject of nuclear energy. Nuclear plants are not cheap to build and because of the accidents in Japan, it will be very difficult to obtain private investment money to build any new ones. Our government is not in a good economic position to pay for any new nuclear plants and is trying to encourage more research and development of solar, wind and tidal energy. There is also resurgence for using coal, in spite of the resistance to carbon production that is alleged to be a significant cause of Global Warming. As of now there are four nuclear plants in California that are on known seismic faults, and two of them are near the ocean. Governor Andrew Cuomo of NY wants a nuclear plant shut down because it is near enough to populous New York City to cause chaos if emergency evacuation is ever called for. Engineers who write

articles in the IEEE “Spectrum” and are in favor of new nuclear plants, say that nothing is perfect. They believe that the extremely small probabilities of nuclear accidents must be risked in order to provide adequate fossil free energy sources. New designs are said to be an improvement over the GE plants that failed in Japan. The French have designed their own nuclear plants. They have the most plants and have had no reported accidents. The French plants have been built with government money and are owned and operated by the French government. A ham, KI6DCB, who lives in San Jacinto, CA, has been running a thread on QRZ which pertains to the radiation levels there. He has the equipment required to measure radio activity levels in mR/hr and seems to be very generally knowledgeable about nuclear radiation. There is not enough room to graph all of his readings here but I can report that he says that the normal background radiation level before the Japanese reactor accidents was roughly 0.02 mR/hr. It rose to 0.09 mR/hr on March 16th and varied from 0.04mR/hr to as much as 0.12 mR/hr on April 14th. It is now running at about 0.08 mR/hr. These readings are not considered to be dangerous...at least not dangerous enough to take iodine pills for (as some panicking folks did). One can only imagine what the levels may be in Japan. If you are interested in KI6DCB’s posts on QRZ and the responses to them, go to QRZ.COM and click on RAGCHEW. Then find the thread called “Background Radiation Levels in San Jacinto, California”. The evacuated Japanese who have been exposed to high levels of radiation must bathe and get all of their clothes cleaned. Shoes and boots must be carefully cleaned to remove all dirt. After that any radiation sickness is not contagious. In spite of that fact, there are reports of Japanese school children bullying or refusing to play with the children who have been relocated from the contaminated areas. The Japanese government now censors news about the reactors and the radiation levels. Most Japanese are not certain about what is fact and what may be fiction. Rumors are spinning and that may make things seem worse or better than they actually are. I’ll try to update relative information next month.

PRESIDENT’S NOTE by ED GELLENDER, WB2EAV
May 2011

Field Day is coming up quickly – the weekend of June 24 and 25 – and now it is time for us to make plans. This year we have decided to make some changes. In the past couple of years, we have found that setting up separate antennas for three stations is a grueling task for the small setup group. In addition, we have found lugging around the generator to be extremely difficult, as it is too large to put in a car and the only suitable way we have to transport it is on W2SFT’s trailer. Now, Northrop Grumman stores it in a location where I don’t even have access. They pat me on the head and say that they will provide access when I need it....On a weekend? Yeah, sure.

A smaller generator of suitable quality to operate one or two transceivers does not fit our budget. (those \$99 specials have terrible regulation) Besides, we have no place to keep it. We are thinking about possibly operating Class 1D, using commercial power. Of course, there is the matter of principle – Field Day is an emergency drill, after all. However, I doubt I can even get near our generator. By the way, in a real emergency, I’m sure company policy is to safely secure it out of harm’s way.

The group has slowly realized that overnight operation does not have the panache it once had. If we limit our operating hours, we should be able to find a nice location – one that either allows us to put up a tent, or have access to something indoors; perhaps this time with an air conditioner that works.

Keep the date in mind. Final arrangements will be in this space next month. Let us know your intentions so that we can plan.

On a different subject, I am active in the Boy Scouts and they expressed an interest in a Morse Code event at a “Camp-o-Ree”. I distributed plans for a simple code practice set built around a Radio Shack sonalert and stuff from dollar stores (email w2eav@yahoo.com if you want to see), and a list of the 15 simpler letters. Several groups built the set and practiced a little beforehand. I sent twenty letters to each group of 5 scouts and helped them use the guide to decode each one as we went. Total elapsed time was the score. That way everyone at least got the idea. Two boys actually had learned the code for other reasons and did it from memory. Third place went to the “virtuosos of the cheat sheet.” In one day, 237 Boy Scouts got a bit of hands-on exposure to Morse. I hear the boys said that it was a refreshing diversion from the knot-tying and fire-building contests.

**GRUMMAN AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING 4/20/2011**

By Karen, W2ABK, Secretary

The meeting was called to order by Gordon at 5:30 PM.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Ed, WB2EAV

Finances continue to be in good shape.

REPEATER REPORT – Gordon, KB2UB

The repeaters are working.

NET REPORT – Karen, W2ABK

Thursday night net at 8:15 PM on 146.745 MHz had one check-in.

Thursday night net at 8:30 PM on 145.330 MHz was well attended.

Sunday morning net at 7:30 AM on 7.289 MHz had a nice turn out.

VE REPORT – Bob, W2ILP

One applicant took the Amateur Extra Class exam and passed.

4 VEs were present: AB2EF, AB2ZW, W2ABK, and W2ILP

OLD BUSINESS

The Ellsworth Park management held a meeting which was attended by Jack, WA2PYK, and Karen, W2ABK. Plans to expand the park were discussed..

NEW BUSINESS

We discussed plans for Field Day 2011, which might involve downsizing. We might use the club station with a 12 Volt battery, but no generator. This would be a “Class A” category station. We are also looking for a new location.

PROGRAM

Bob, W2FPF lent us a video about the Dayton Air Force Museum. It showed WWII planes, gliders, balloons, blimps, hangers, uniforms and small items. It showed plaques and trees that were dedicated to the Air Force personnel, and the Presidential planes.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

GARC NETS: 40 Meters: 7.289 MHz at 7:30 AM EST Sundays

Net Controller: Eugene, W4JMX

2 Meter repeaters: Thursdays: 146.745 MHz (-600 kHz) at 8:15 PM; 145.330 MHz (-600 kHz) at 8:30 PM.

Tone for both repeaters: 136.5 Hz. GARC Net Controller Karen, W2ABK

ARES/RACES NETS: Mondays.

MEETINGS General Meetings of the GARC are held on the third Wednesday of each month, starting at 5:30 PM, at the Ellsworth Allen Park in Farmingdale. Driving directions and map can be obtained from <http://www.mapquest.com>. It is suggested that the GARC web site be checked to be certain of meeting location, which may change after this newsletter is distributed. Board meetings are held a week before the General Meeting at the Bethpage Skating Rink.

WEBSITE The GARC web site can be found at <http://www.qsl.net/wa2lqo> . Webmaster is Pat Masterson, KE2LJ. Pictures of GARC activities, archives of newsletters, roster of members, and other information about the GARC may be found there.

INTERNET LINK OF THE MONTH FOR INTERNERDS

In keeping with the subject of the Japanese adaptation of American nuclear plants that were designed by Americans (at GE?), let me present you with another Japanese adaptation of what is or was a part of Americana.

Not only do the Japanese play baseball like Americans; The Japanese manufacture baseball bats and baseball gloves for Americans.

Not only do Japanese musicians play every style of music that Americans play, they manufacture every type of musical instrument (both acoustic and electronic) that Americans might need, to play every style of music that is or was ever popular in America.

Not only are there many Japanese hams, there are many transceivers that are designed and manufactured by Japanese companies for American hams.

I know that many of our club members are old enough to remember the big band swing era. Now I will send you to a website where you can see and hear a Japanese high school swing band, which consists entirely of girls, plus one boy. It beats any high school band I have seen in New York and I saw many all-district bands competing when my son Mark played trumpet in high school.

There has always been a question about the necessity of teaching music and art in public schools. Some engineers believe that more attention and funding should be given to teaching math, science, and computer operation. The needs and likes of society change. To be fair, there must be a limit to what we expect the young folks to memorize. If a choice must be made, should we: Teach another language? ...Teach music? ...Teach "Computers for Dummies"?Teach Morse Code? You be the judge.

Enjoy the music of the Japanese Swing Girls band at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7N6slVrQeY>

There are other YouTube videos that show the Japanese Swing Girls. You can Google them up or link to them when viewing the site I suggested here. The Swing Girls made a movie that was popular in Japan and you can find parts of it on the web, with English translations. The Swing Girls band was disbanded soon after the girls graduated from high school, but they did manage to go on tour to various parts of Japan.

This brings to mind what a Japanese ham once told me a long time ago...

Only three things in life are truly universal: – Sex, music, and schematic wiring diagrams.

PUZZLE

Enough with the cryptograms. This month I will ask two history questions that are relevant to present day events.

- 1) In the 1970s American engineers were being lectured about what were called "Quality Control Circles". Who was the engineer who was believed to have introduced Quality Control Circles to the Japanese?
- 2) At a time when nobody else was willing to risk money for drilling for oil in Libya, who was the famous man who made a deal with Gadhafi, permitting drilling and establishing what became a successful source of oil which became very profitable for himself and for Gadhafi?

Solution to the April 2011 cryptogram:

THE TOWN WAS SO SMALL IT HAD ONLY ONE YELLOW PAGE. --ORSON BEAN--

GARC Officers

President: Ed Gellender, WB2EAV M/S:X08-14 516-575-0013 edward.gellender@ngc.com
or wb2eav@yahoo.com

Vice President: Gordon Sammis, KB2UB Retiree 631-666-7463

Secretary: Karen Cafalo, W2ABK 631-754-0974

Treasurer: Ed Gellender, WB2EAV (see above)

WA2LQO Trustee: Ray Schubnel, W2DKM Retiree

2 Yr. Board Member: Jack Cottrell, WA2PYK Retiree 516-249-0979

1 Yr. Board Member: Dave Ledo, AB2EF

1 Yr. Board Member: Bob Christen, W2FPF

Newsletter

CQ de WA2LQO is published monthly by the Grumman Amateur Radio Club for its members and friends.

Editor: W2ILP 631-499-2214 W2ILP.RADIO@gmail.com **PLEASE NOTE NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS.**

Contributing writers: All GARC members (we hope). To submit articles or ham equipment advertisements contact the editor. Articles will only be edited when permission is granted by the author.

GARC Webmaster

Pat Masterson, KE2LJ Retiree 813-938-4614 Pat-Masterson@tampabay.rr.com

GARC VE Exams

We normally proctor exams for all classes of ham licenses on the second Tuesday of each month, starting at 5:00 PM. The exams are given at Briarcliffe College, 1055 Stewart Avenue, Bethpage, NY in room "Long Beach 5". Ham Exams are: Element 2 – Technician, Element 3 - General, Element 4 – Amateur Extra Class. All applicants must pre-register by contacting W2ILP. Time and location of exams are subject to change. If there are no applicants VE sessions will be cancelled. The fee for 2011 is \$14 for all exams taken at one sitting. New first time applicants should be aware that their Social Security Number will be required on the application form unless they register with the FCC for an FRN. Applicants for an upgrade should bring both their present license and a photocopy of it. All applicants should bring picture ID such as a driver's license. Study material may be bought from the ARRL-VEC or W5YI-VEC <http://www.arrl.org> or <http://www.w5yi.org> All VECs use the same Q & A pools.

Commercial FCC Radio Operator Exams

We are certified by the National Radio Examiners to administer exams for all classes of FCC commercial radio operator and maintainer exams. All Commercial Operator License Examiner Managers (COLEMS) use the same commercial license pools. Adminstrating fees vary. For information or to register contact W2ILP.

Editorial

I have recently switched my ISP from Cablevision to Verizon FiOS. Please Note that my e-mail address is changed to: W2ILP.RADIO@gmail.com This change had to be made because optonline.net is available only to Cablevision customers. Rather than using a Verizon e-mail address, I have selected gmail.com for my e-mail address. The gmail.com address can be used with any ISP. It is a Google function.

Another topic to report on is that Microsoft is continuing to try to improve Microsoft Word's ability to detect and correct grammatical errors. They have asked me for permission to use parts of our newsletters for examples of errors that might need correction. I granted permission. I'm always in favor of anything that might be used to improve the state of the art.

Grumman Amateur Radio Club
Sixty Seven Years 1944-2011
P.O. Box 0644
Bethpage, NY 11714-0644

FIRST CLASS MAIL
Do Not Delay

MOBILE COMMUNICATION TODAY

The recent tsunami in Japan was a test of the alerting systems and cell phone systems in the area where disaster struck. The major quake had destroyed the electrical supply lines and the water supply. The cell phone repeaters remained operational, using back up batteries designed for just such emergencies, until additional mobile batteries could be tapped or additional mobile repeaters could go on line. The repeater antenna towers were on high ground and thus avoided the flooding. Commercial radio towers of all types in Japan are designed to be somewhat quake proof, just as all tall buildings in Tokyo are. The designs allow structures to bend or shift when a quake occurs, rather than to crack. This is the same method that nature uses to help the flexible palm trees survive tsunamis and high winds, where fir trees or oak trees would crack or be uprooted. The people in the flooded area of northern Japan were mainly upper middle class. Many, if not most, owned cars and cell phones. The cause of a large number of fatalities was not because the people had not been alerted, at least by sirens. Many of those who perished were taking too much time deciding what they would bring with them and when they would leave their homes to seek higher ground. An American teacher of English spent too much time seeing that her elementary school students were all picked up by their parents. She knew that the flood was coming but she had underestimated its time of arrival. In such an environment, amateur radio mobile communication offered little to what was already available. In my humble opinion we hams must be realistic when we evaluate our possible contribution to backing up existing mobile telephone services. The reliability of commercial cell phones continues to increase as more users demand and pay for more robust service. The capability of ham VHF/UHF repeaters in our area has not improved much in recent years except for those which have been linked together via the Internet. As strictly volunteers, hams cannot be forced by government regulations to operate or run more reliable repeaters. Cell phone systems have had expansion problems in our area, but there is motivation and money to beat such problems. For example, I read in today's "Newsday" that the town of Huntington is forcing telecommunications companies who want to erect cell towers on municipal property to obtain stringent approval from the local town board. Town boards can apparently make decisions using their own rules, which may differ greatly from any FCC rulings about RF safety hazard power levels, distances, etc. In Huntington each case is individually handled by the town board and attorneys from T-Mobile. Each case may be driven by local politics...but demand for more robust cell phone channels will, in my opinion, ultimately win.