The Illuminator

The monthly newsletter of the Carbon Amateur Radio Club

November 2001

November Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Carbon Amateur Radio Club will be held on Thursday, November 15, at 7:30 p.m. at the EOC in Nesquehoning.

Pennsylvania QSO Party 2001

By Glenn, K3PP

Ah! Autumn in Pennsylvania. The miracle of nature's metamorphosis blankets her rolling hills in a stunning brilliance of yellows, oranges, reds, and greens. The breezes are clean and blow from the north with just the right tinge of chill. It is a time of year eagerly anticipated by amateur radio operators, for just as the leaves change, so do the forces of nature that carry their signals around the globe. The highlight of this wondrous season in the land of William Penn brings forth a cacophony of signals from hundreds of operators spread across the commonwealth and beyond. It is the beginning of "contest season."

A competition is under way, but its enthusiastic participants pursue this particular endeavor, not with bitter rivalry, but with charm, dignity, and a remarkable camaraderie typical of this unique cadre of individuals. This atmosphere of cordiality notwithstanding, these intellectual athletes paradoxically scratch and claw their way through the weekend with intensity, passion, and an unquenchable desire to excel. Records will fall. Players will reach new personal highs. Successes will be many and the taste of victory will be delicious. Sadly, failure, too, will inflict itself upon many in this valiant crowd. Whatever the outcome, most will emerge from the battle harboring a warm sense of accomplishment, for the true wealth gleaned from this game lies in being one with the game itself.

One of these intrepid souls sits atop a secluded hill in the eastern county of Carbon, a largely rural region in the southern reaches of the Pocono Mountains. In the bowels of his home, this man, known by his compatriots as K3PP, is pushing his talents to the limit. His newly reconfigured command center is yielding positive results as he chases his own record score for his county. He doesn't expect to win, since his many of his fellow contestants possess stronger talents, refined over years, sometimes decades of experience in this sport. The criteria for his success will be a new record and a placement somewhere near the top of the pack.

I am K3PP and this is the story of how I progressed through the weekend, nearly caused a catastrophe, and how I fared at the conclusion of the 2001 running of the Pennsylvania QSO Party.

The contest begins with an explosion of energy emanating from all corners of Pennsylvania. I am testing on 10 meters and a few Europeans answer me. In the middle of my chat with ON4KML, the clock ticks over to 1600 UTC. He is the first entry in my log. My rate is strong as his fellow Europeans pour in to answer my call. This burst lasts about an hour and withers. Mother Nature tells me that ten meters is done for the day to Europe. I try 15 meters, but it offers little. I switch to 40 meters, the "money band" for this event. Wham! The rate climbs and stays high. My logging software informs me that my rate is above 200 several times. After four hours, I have 349 contacts logged. Life is good!

As the end of the first day approaches, my numbers are looking good. For some reason, the late afternoon is slow, but 80 meters comes alive as darkness falls upon the Eastern time zone. I run for two strong hours on 80 meters. Others are ahead of me, as expected, but strategies at this hour now focus on 160 meters. I am confident of my station's abilities on this band, especially in this particular event. I make my move.

I pounce on the opportunities of 160 and score a rapid succession of points. Suddenly, I receive a call from above. My wife requests my presence upstairs. Something outside is puzzling her. It is almost midnight and an unusual, bright light is illuminating the natural blackness enveloping our wooded property. She points out the front window, toward the source of the mysterious, flashing light. We now see nothing.

An idea enters my mind. A wire threads through the trees at that point. That wire is one end of the Inverted-V antenna for 160 meters. I suspect the high voltage generated on this antenna is arcing over to the trees. I ask my wife to watch out the window while I rush back to the station for a quick test. If my theory is correct, the light should flash in cadence with my transmitted signal.

Seconds into my test transmission, a frantic yell from upstairs is imploring me to stop and hurry back up. My theory was correct, but the test ignited leaves on a tree in the front courtyard and embers were falling to the ground! We both rush outside. It is, after all, autumn in Pennsylvania, so this event is not good news. The ground is a carpet of dry leaves, pine needles, and sticks. Few environments are more combustible than a dry forest, in the autumn, in Pennsylvania. Within minutes, those few embers could have grown into a raging wildfire, fueled by the dense population of pine trees and fanned by the constant winds sweeping up from the valley to the south. Our home, and a dozen others would likely have been engulfed at a most inopportune time of the night. It was a potential catastrophe and obviously would have brought my exciting competition to an abrupt end!

In the darkness, husband and wife inspected the flammable ground cover and the tree branches overhead. The situation appeared safe, but the risk was too profound to just ignore. A thorough soaking was needed to ensure a safe night for the hilltop neighborhood. After drenching the ground, our eyes turned upward.

When the wire antenna was installed a few years earlier, it was clear of all vegetation to prevent this very type of incident. As our eyes followed the wire, it became obvious that trees grow. The past year's fresh growth had come in contact with the wire, near the end and, as dictated by the laws of physics, the high voltage point. The station had not been used on 160 meters since the early spring. Now, the leaves not only touched this dangerous point on the antenna, but these leaves were now dry from the autumn transformation. One leaf in particular had a path burned through it and it was still attached to the tree, with the wire piercing through its center. Wow!

With disaster averted, I returned to my command center, banned from 160 meters by the family fire marshal. With about 40 minutes of the contest lost to firefighting, I finished the final hour on other bands. In this contest, we all shut down for the night and recharge our minds for the battles of the following day.

The next day dawns and I return to the fray. The morning smorgasbord of Europeans is strong, yet less productive than the first day. I blend the European feast on the high bands with a rich string of Americans outside of the Pennsylvania borders. By mid-morning, my old record of 130,208 points is surpassed. My ultimate goal of 200,000 points appears difficult, unless the remaining 8 hours yield conditions as good as day one. Alas, the pace is slower and multipliers are down. Common multipliers like Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Idaho, and Alaska never made it into the log. Two of Pennsylvania's 67 counties were also absent. This hurt. My CW performance was also down, so the extra point values for those contacts were missing from my ultimate total score.

So, I didn't reach the 200,000-point goal. So I didn't qualify for a "clean sweep" award for all 67 counties. So I missed out on a lucrative 160-meter endowment. I scored over 185,000 points. I shattered my old record. I attained a personal best effort. I didn't torch the hilltop. Best of all, I joined my brothers and sisters in a spectacular weekend of exhilarating action. The Pennsylvania QSO Party is the pinnacle of the spirit that embodies the sport of Amateur Radio. I was one with the game itself, so I am blessed with the true wealth of my pursuit. What more can I ever hope to achieve? I am delighted!



ARRL Propagation Forecast Bulletin

Propagation Forecast Bulletin 46 ARLP046
From Tad Cook, K7VVV
Seattle, WA November 9, 2001
To all radio amateurs

The big news this week is the huge geomagnetic storm that hit on Tuesday. Conditions were good last weekend for the ARRL CW Sweepstakes, but at 0150z on November 6 energy from a coronal mass ejection hit the earth's magnetic field. Planetary A indices rose to 8 and then 7 for several 3-hour reporting periods, and the planetary A index for Tuesday was a very high 112, indicating a severe geomagnetic storm.

Results included not only awful HF radio conditions, but dramatic auroral displays as far away as Southern California and Alabama. But by late Tuesday the radiation storm had subsided.

The Kansas City Star reported that local residents, unfamiliar with aurora borealis, kept law enforcement busy quieting their fears of a chemical spill or a ''nuclear death cloud.'' The same article quoted Bill Murtagh of the NOAA Space Environment Center, saying that this event might be the 6th or 7th largest in the last 10 years.

Average daily sunspot numbers fell this week by over 44 points, but average daily solar flux actually rose three points. On Wednesday solar flux jumped over 31 points to 268.6, then dropped 21 points on Thursday. Over the next few days, Friday through Monday, solar flux is predicted to be 245, 250, 250 and 255, and the planetary A index is predicted at 10, 15, 15, and 15, indicating unsettled conditions. Right now there is a growing sunspot moving into view, sunspot 9690, which is now about 10 earth diameters long.

Check out a fascinating story titled ''What Lies Beneath A Sunspot,'' which you can find on NASA's Science web site at http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2001/ast07nov_1.htm.

Sunspot numbers for November 1 through 7 were 157, 164, 162, 186, 159, 189 and 230 with a mean of 178.1. 10.7 cm flux was 235.6, 213.5, 216, 227.3, 234.6, 237.4 and 268.8, with a mean of 233.3, and estimated planetary A indices were 25, 6, 3, 7, 13, 112 and 15 with a mean of 25.9.

Carbon Amateur Radio Club
Regular Meeting Minutes
October 18, 2001

The October meeting of the Carbon ARC took place October 18, 2001 at Harleman's BOULEVARD RESTAURANT on SR 443 in Lehighton, PA with a supper meeting beginning at 6:30 PM with 12 people attending. The regular meeting commenced at 8 pm in the west room at the restaurant with President Goody K3NG calling the group to order. The Treasurers report was read and approved with a motion from K3PP Glenn and seconded by Lisa Kelly.

Our beginning balance was $713.30. There were no receipts. Expenses were $19.00 for the post office box and $6.80 for mailing the newsletter, leaving a balance of $687.50.

OLD BUSINESS: Bruce KB3DZN accepted the EC/RO position for our ARES/RACES operations. Goody, K3NG will continue to run the regular Wednesday evening nets for the time being. Positions are still open for Operating Events chairman, Communications chairman, and meeting program chairman. Anyone interesting in these positions please contact one of the board members for further info.

NEW BUSINESS: DJ7IK – a popular DXer – was unable to attend the dinner meeting. Bob K3PH and John W3MF would be participating in the CQ WW SSB Contest from the US Virgin Islands as WP2Z. Please look for them on the bands and work some locals as DX.

KB3BYT Rob would look into the Emerald Inn / Molly's in Jim Thorpe as another place for an on the road meeting as these have become a regular part of club meetings. Rob also brought up about having ham classes in the spring and offered some possibilities to be investigated. It was discussed with the new ham regulations, now would be the time for our members to upgrade and gain new members to our ranks. This was done several years ago and provided a few good operators to our club.

We are also going to investigate getting funding for emergency communications training for our members. We would check with Scott Forster to see if there was room in the EMA funding for this. Our 2m radio is in need of a new microphone or have the current one repaired.

Bert W3OWP brought up that the membership list with email addresses needs updating as messages

he has sent out with pictures has bounced a few times. It has been several months since this has been updated. K3PP Glenn has offered to attempt updating our club webpage and give it a new look so members may more easily add their ideas. W3EFI Denny has a website and is willing to add club items to his website at http://home.ptd.net/~w3efi/. Anyone wishing to add items or pictures to our website should forward them to Glenn K3PP at k3pp@ptd.net.

The location of the next meeting would be at the EOC in Nesquehoning, PA. Restaurant locations were discussed and listen to the Wednesday evening net for updates or changes to the November CARC meeting. Everyone is instructed to bring one person with them to the meetings and help improve our meeting attendance and perhaps increase our membership roster. Anyone interested in ham radio or shortwave radio is welcomed to attend our meetings.

We received membership dues from Ron Creitz of Tamaqua, PA for the year 2002 of $15.00. It was announced that dues for the year 2002 are now being accepted and the membership cards should be available at the next meeting. With that a motion by Lisa Kelley was made to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Glenn K3PP.

Respectfully submitted, Larry Lilly N3CR, Carbon ARC Secretary



ARRL DX Bulletin

DX Bulletin 46 ARLD046
From ARRL Headquarters
Newington CT November 8, 2001
To all radio amateurs

This week's bulletin was made possible with information provided by Tedd, KB8NW, the OPDX Bulletin, VP6BK, WA7BNM, The Daily DX, DXNL, 425DXnews and Contest Corral from QST. Thanks to all.

VIETNAM, 3W. Steve, WB2KHO is QRV as 3W2SF until November 16. His activity is on 40, 20, 15 and 10 meters using SSB. QSL to home call.

MADAGASCAR, 5R. Albert, 5R8GZ has been QRV on 30 meters around 0300z. QSL via G3SWH.

MALDIVES, 8Q. Dave, HB9KT is QRV as 8Q7KT on 30 to 10 meters until November 11. QSL to home call.

EAST MALAYSIA, 9M6. JA1BRK, JA1HGY, JA1RJU, JK1OPL, JA2ADH and JA8GQZ are active on 160 to 6 meters using CW, SSB and RTTY as 9M6/homecalls until November 15. QSL to home calls.

TONGA, A3. Roger, A35OY has been QRV on 15 meters around 0700z and then on 10 meters around 1100z. QSL via KF8OY.

CAPE VERDE ISLANDS, D4. Henryk, SM0JHF is QRV as D44CF. Activity is on 160 to 6 meters, using mostly CW. He will also be here for the upcoming CQ WW DX Contest. QSL to home call.

KYRGYZSTAN, EX. Alex, EX8MIO has been QRV on 15 meters around 0300z.

MARQUESAS ISLANDS, FO. Jan, SP9FIH is QRV as FO/SP9FIH and has been active on 80 meters around 0400z. QSL to home call.

SAN ANDRES AND PROVIDENCIA, HK0. Gerd, DL7VOG is QRV as HK0GU on 80 to 6 meters using mainly CW and RTTY until November 29. QSL to home call.

ITALY, I. Tony, IK8VRH is QRV as IB0/IK8VRH in his free time from the islands of Ventotene, IOTA EU-045, and Ponza, IOTA EU-045, until December 15. QSL to home call.

BELGIUM, ON. Belgian amateurs may replace their ON or OT prefixes with OQ until December 31 to honor the birth of Princess Elizabeth.

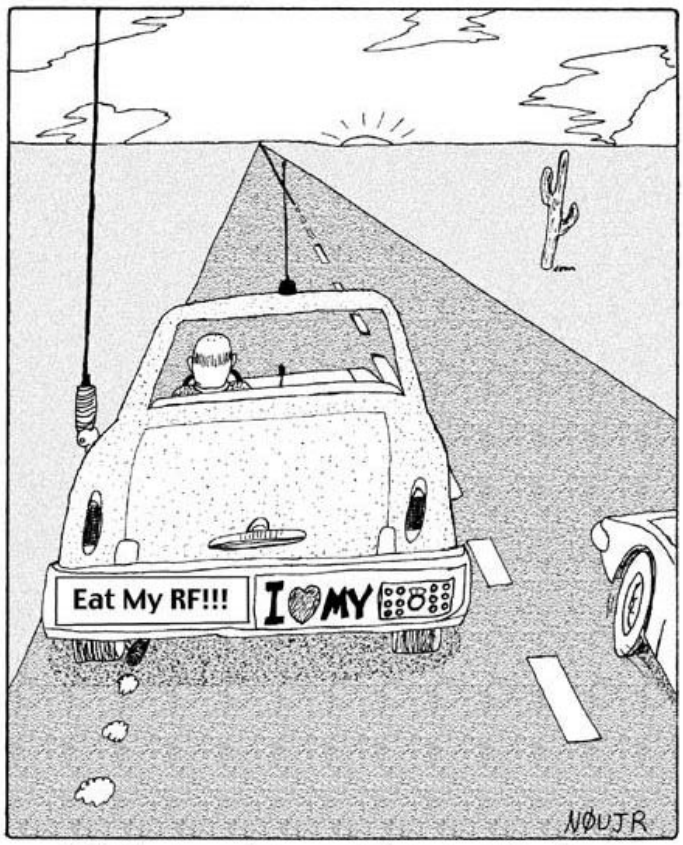
SEYCHELLES, S7. Clemens, DL2GAN will be QRV as S79GAN from November 15 to December 5. Activity will be on 40 to 10 meters using CW and SSB. QSL to home call.

CAMEROON, TJ. Eduardo, EA2TV and Javier, EA2COL are here from November 11 to 23, working on the installation of some HF and VHF stations in hospitals and missions. During their spare time they plan to operate as TJ2RSF, using mainly SSB and possibly some RTTY. QSL via EA4AHK.

UZBEKISTAN, UJ. Fedor, UK9AA has been QRV on 40 meter CW around 1300z.

DUCIE ISLAND, VP6/D. The Pitcairn Island Amateur Radio Association will be QRV from this possibly new DXCC Entity, with an IOTA number of OC-182, beginning November 16. The VP6 callsign will be announced at the start of operations. Activity will be on 160 to 6 meters using CW, SSB and RTTY. QSL via VE3HO.

TRISTAN DA CUNHA AND GOUGH ISLANDS, ZD9. Chris, ZD9IR has been QRV on 10 meters between 1400 and 1700z. QSL via ZS6EZ.



QCWA members with an attitude...

Check out http://incolor.inetnebr.com/n0ujr for other cartoons and to purchase N0UJR's book, "N0UJR and His Friends."

Heard Through the Grapevine…

Bruce, KB3FZN, has accepted the EC/RO position. Congratulations, Bruce! And, thanks to you for assuming this very important position!

Carbon Amateur Radio Club – 2001-2002 Officers

President: Anthony "Goody" Good, K3NG, goody@fast.net
Vice President: Rob Roomberg, KB3BYT, roomberg@ptd.net
Secretary: Larry Lilly, N3CR, ka3afy@ptd.net
Treasurer: John Schreibmaier, W3MF, w3mf@ptd.net
W3HA Callsign Trustee: Bill Dale, WY3K
W3HA Repeater Trustee: John Bednar, K3CT
Public Information Officer: Bill Kelley, KA3UKL

Directors

Bob Schreibmaier, K3PH, John Bednar, K3CT, Bert Rex, W3OWP

Illuminator Staff

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Newsletter Printing, Folding, and Mailing: Bob, K3PH

Services

W3HA Repeater: 147.255 Mhz + PL 131.8

CARC Website: http://www.cpals.com/~elitehom/carc/
Webmaster: Rob, KB3BYT roomberg@ptd.net

CARC Email Reflector: see www.qth.net CarbonARC list for details

CARC Membership Information

Regular Membership is $15.00, which includes autopatch privileges.

All amateur radio operators are invited to join the CARC ARES / RACES net held 21:00 local time every Wednesday on the W3HA repeater at 147.255 MHz + offset, PL 131.8. Any amateur radio operator or anyone with an interest in ham radio is welcome to attend our monthly meetings which occur the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM at the Carbon County EMA Center on Route 93 in Nesquehoning.

Carbon Amateur Radio Club
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