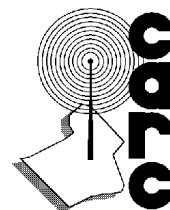




The Illuminator



The monthly newsletter of the Carbon Amateur Radio Club

October 2003



Andy Mihalik, KB3FSV, Passes Away

On September 10, 2003, CARC member Andy Mihalik, KB3FSV, passed away. He was the husband of Pattie (Kashnoski) Mihalik.

In addition to his amateur radio activities, Andy wrote the Bits and Bytes computer column for the Times News, as well as ProLog Quips for the ProLog web site. He also served as personnel director for Pencor, Inc. in Palmerton for a number of years.

Andy was a graduate of Mount St. Mary's College, earned a master's degree at Western Maryland University, and earned his administrative certification at Lehigh University.

He began his career in education in 1960 as a teacher at Coal Township High School. After that, he became principal of the middle school and, later, assistant superintendent of the Shamokin Area School District. In 1979, Andy became superintendent of the Palmerton Area School District.

Andy was ordained as a deacon in the Roman Catholic Church in 1990, and served as a deacon at St. Joseph and St. Stanislaus Catholic churches in Summit Hill.

He was a U.S. Army veteran and a Fourth Degree member of the Knights of Columbus.

Andy won numerous awards for his photography from the Pennsylvania Press Photographers Association, where he was a longtime member and a past officer. He also received many Keystone photography awards from the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association, as well as the Associated Press.

Our multi-talented friend will be sorely missed.

October Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Carbon Amateur Radio Club will be held on Thursday, October 16, at 7:30 p.m. at the EMA Center in Nesquehoning. See you there!

Treasurer's Report

By John, W3MF

As of October 2, 2003:

Previous Balance	1103.28
Receipts (dues)	0.00
Subtotal	1103.28
Disbursements	450.30
Final Total	652.98

Disbursements include \$5.92 for newsletter mailing, \$425.38 for repeater repair, and \$19.00 for Post Office box.

ARRL Rebukes FCC Commissioner's "Broadband Nirvana" Remarks

(From the ARRL Letter)

The ARRL has strongly objected to FCC Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy's suggestion that Broadband over Power Line (BPL) technology will contribute to what she described as "broadband Nirvana." Addressing the United Powerline

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Council's annual conference September 22 in Arlington, Virginia, Abernathy expressed unabashed enthusiasm for BPL and recommended a combination of regulatory restraint and the elimination or substantial modification of existing rules as steps along the "path to Enlightenment," as she put it. In a terse response faxed September 25 on behalf of the League's 155,000 members, ARRL Chief Executive Officer David Sumner, K1ZZ, asserted that Abernathy overlooked some significant issues in her Nirvana analogy.

"Nightmare is more like it," Sumner declared. "The technical showings submitted by the ARRL and others in response to the Commission's Notice of Inquiry (NOI) in ET Docket No. 03-104 clearly establish that BPL is a significant source of radio spectrum pollution. It cannot be implemented without causing harmful interference to over-the-air radio services."

Sumner told Abernathy that while BPL industry groups, such as the one she addressed this week, prefer to deny the evidence, the FCC is obliged to work to a higher standard.

In its comments in response to the FCC NOI, the League characterized BPL as "a Pandora's Box of unprecedented proportions" and said the Commission's Part 15 rules "should be modified so as to prevent interference to users of the HF and low VHF spectrum" from the outset.

Abernathy's speech, "Reaching Broadband Nirvana," never broached the topic of BPL's potential to interfere with other radio services. Recently, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) <http://www.ntia.doc.gov> — which regulates spectrum allocated to federal government users expressed "broad concerns" about interference to government users and launched an extensive modeling, analysis and measurement program for BPL. In his letter, Sumner reminded Abernathy that the radio spectrum is a precious natural resource.

"To squander that resource simply to add a redundant, unnecessary, and relatively poorly performing 'last mile' connection for consumers, is unconscionable," he said. Sumner expressed the hope that Abernathy will give the League an early opportunity to explain its BPL concerns to her in person.

In her remarks to the UPLC gathering, Abernathy contended that it's been regulatory restraint rather than heavy-handed regulation that has allowed nascent platforms such as direct broadcast satellite (DBS) to become competitively viable. "When the Commission completes this rulemaking," she said, "I expect that we will eliminate many existing rules and substantially modify others; the central question is the degree of regulation that will remain during the transition to a more robustly competitive market."

Individuals may e-mail Abernathy via her FCC Web site <http://www.fcc.gov/commissioners/abernathy/mail.html> or directly kabernat@fcc.gov. The text of her prepared remarks also is available on the FCC Web site http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-239079A1.doc.

The League's initial 120-page package of comments and technical exhibits <http://www.arrl.org/announce/regulatory/et03-104/> and its reply comments <http://www.arrl.org/announce/regulatory/et03-104/reply-comments-index.html> are available on the ARRL Web site. Additional information and BPL video clips are on the ARRL "Power Line Communications (PLC) and Amateur Radio" page <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/HTML/plc/>.

To support the League's efforts in this area, visit the ARRL's secure BPL Web site <https://www.arrl.org/forms/development/donations/bpl/>.

To date, more than 4600 comments — many from the Amateur Radio community — have been filed in response to the FCC's BPL NOI. They are available for viewing via the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/ecfs/>.



**Red Cross Unit Compliments Amateur
Radio Assistance During Isabel**
(From the ARRL Letter)

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Amateur Radio assistance in the Hurricane Isabel relief and recovery stage has continued this week in the Southeast. Ham radio's role has drawn compliments from the American Red Cross of Central Maryland, which praised the amateurs' dedication.

"I want to thank the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and the amateur radio community for coming out and supporting the American Red Cross over the critical 72 hours when Hurricane Isabel passed over Maryland," said Frank M. Eilbacher, KC0EKL, a Red Cross disaster communications lead. "We recognize you took time away from your families and, for some of you, your own personal disasters to support us."

During the storm's peak on September 18, Eilbacher said, electrical power and telecommunication problems abounded, but ham radio operators "filled the gap providing a crucial communication link between Red Cross chapters and shelter locations." Amateurs in the storm-struck region staffed state and county emergency operating centers and shelters, as well as the Maryland/Delaware American Red Cross Hurricane Watch Center.

The Salvation Army also has responded to affected areas including North Carolina, where Hurricane Isabel came ashore September 18. Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network (SATERN) volunteer Carlos Varon, K2LCV, from Flushing, New York, this week accompanied two Salvation Army canteen units from New York City to Morehead City, encountering heavy rain and wind on the way.

Varon, who took along his "orange box" portable ham station, reports the Salvation Army has been operating up to a half dozen field canteens. Carteret County Emergency Coordinator Rich Wright, KR4NU, and his ARES team have been supporting the SATERN operation. Operators were deployed this week to provide communication between the canteens and the local command post. Plans call for expanding the operation to shadows some Salvation Army officers. Varon has been working out of a Salvation Army warehouse facility, expediting the deployment of necessities bound for storm victims.

The Salvation Army is providing relief to affected residents and emergency response workers in

North Carolina, Washington, DC, and Baltimore, Maryland, as well as in smaller communities.

Earlier this week, ARRL North Carolina Section Manager John Covington, W4CC, reported that some ARES teams were providing communication support for localities — most in the hard-hit northeastern portion of the state — that still lacked power and telephone service. Covington said hams established point-to-point communication between shelters and emergency operations centers in affected counties. In one community, hams helped a fire dispatch center that lost its antennas in the storm.

In keeping with the Boy Scout motto, "Be prepared," Venturing Crew 80 of Alexandria — in Northern Virginia just outside Washington, DC — responded to requests for assistance from the Alexandria EOC and Fairfax ARES as Hurricane Isabel approached. The crew specializes in emergency communication and first aid and counts several ARES members among its membership and leadership. Some of the scouts remained on duty for several days.

Venture Crew members helped support communication at the Alexandria and Fairfax EOCs, at the Alexandria American Red Cross chapter house and at Red Cross shelters in both communities. While distributing bulk bottled water to homes lacking running water, crew volunteers got to meet Virginia Gov Mark Warner, who was visiting a shelter to thank volunteers.

Members of the Mount Vernon Amateur Radio Club and the Alexandria Radio Club also provided communications support to Alexandria and Fairfax operations. Repeaters operated by both clubs were used during the emergency response.

"Things are still messy down here, and some of us are still recovering," said Bill Stewart, W2BSA, a Venture Crew 80 chartered organization representative and committee member. "Most of Northern Virginia has power. The biggest problem we have had is flooding."

Power has begun returning to the half-million or so residents who still had none at the new week began. ARRL Virginia Section Emergency Coordinator Tom Gregory, N4NW, reports commercial power finally returned to his home September 24. He'd spent 141 hours running his

home from an emergency back-up generator. Gregory, who lives in Stafford County, lost power September 18. This week he strongly advised amateurs involved in public service communication to have a supply of emergency power available for such situations, so they can remain on the air.



ARRL Propagation Forecast Bulletin

Propagation Forecast Bulletin 40 ARLP040
From Tad Cook, K7RA
Seattle, WA October 3, 2003
To all radio amateurs

This has been a good week for HF propagation. Not only have we moved into fall with its associated good HF propagation around the equinox, but this week also saw rising sunspot and solar flux values coupled with quieter geomagnetic conditions.

Average daily sunspot numbers rose from the week previous by 33 points to 125. The average daily solar flux for the week was nearly 15 points higher at 133.6. Excepting the first day of the reporting week, when the planetary A index was 28, these numbers settled down to average only 12 — nearly 15 points lower than the previous week. The quietest days were Sunday through Tuesday, September 28-30. Even at high latitudes, conditions were stable, with Alaska's college A index at four on two of the days.

We are now within a solar wind, but it is moderate and probably won't cause any upset, at least for the next few days. Predicted planetary A index for Friday through Sunday, October 3-5, is 12, 10 and 10. On Monday it could rise to 15, then higher numbers are predicted, a planetary A index of 20 for October 7-8. Solar flux is expected around 120-125 over the next week.

Let's look at the numbers for the third quarter of 2003, which just ended: Average daily sunspots for July 1 through September 30 were 110.2, slightly higher than the previous quarter. From the third quarter of 2002 through the current quarter the average daily sunspot numbers were 193.5, 152.7, 120.3, 107.3 and 110.2. That reflects a definite downward trend with levels relatively unchanged from the last quarter to the current one.

Average daily solar flux for the same five quarters were 178.1, 164.2, 134.3, 124.2 and 120.8. No doubt about a smooth downward slide there. Propagation this fall will surely not be as good as last year's as these numbers continue.

Over the past three months, July through September, average monthly sunspot numbers were 132.8, 114.3 and 82.6. Average solar flux numbers for those same months were 127.1, 122.1 and 112.2.

Grim news emerged recently concerning the NOAA Space Environment Center in Colorado, where most of the data for these bulletins originates. I suspect due to some misunderstanding about their work, the Senate Appropriations Committee wants to eliminate the Space Environment Center's budget for fiscal year 2004, which officially began October 1. The Senate Appropriations Committee said in a report that NOAA's work should only be terrestrial and not extend to space, so it's proposing to cut all funding for the SEC. The House appropriations bill proposes cutting funding by 40 percent, even in the wake of severe cuts during the fiscal year just ended.

The funny thing about the Senate report is that all of the effects of solar flares and sunspots that concern us are here on Earth. Claiming that NOAA should ignore the sun because it is in space seems silly, since the same standard doesn't apply to NOAA's conventional weather forecasting. The SEC is a small part of NOAA, with an annual budget of just 8 million dollars.

There's a story on this subject on the ARRL Web site (see "Space Environment Center Funding in Jeopardy")

<http://www.arrl.org/news/stories/2003/10/03/3/>.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer ran a story in its October 2 editions

http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/142217_space02.html, and there's an item on the September 20 SpaceWeather.com Web page, available in the archive for that date

<http://spaceweather.com/archive.php>.

I've contacted my representatives in the Senate and House and found that, as expected, staff members really had no idea what the obscure sounding Space Environment Center does. The only hope is that when the House and Senate

committees work out that portion of the budget, funding for the SEC will somehow be preserved. You might contact your representatives to inquire about this. Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee are listed on the committee's Web site <http://appropriations.senate.gov/>.

For more information on propagation and an explanation of the numbers used in this bulletin see the Propagation page on the ARRL Web site <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/propagation.html>.

Sunspot numbers for September 25 through October 1 were 122, 127, 137, 139, 108, 116 and 126, with a mean of 125. The 10.7-cm flux was 132.6, 131.1, 129.7, 137, 135.1, 133 and 136.8, with a mean of 133.6. Estimated planetary A indices were 28, 17, 9, 6, 7, 7 and 10, with a mean of 12.



Amateur Radio Enforcement "The Riley Way" Marks Five Years (From the ARRL Letter)

Close to 1000 Amateur Radio enforcement cases have crossed his desk since Riley Hollingsworth was tapped five years ago to resurrect the FCC's Amateur Radio enforcement efforts. That doesn't include countless ham radio "situations" he's resolved through informal counseling on the telephone or through an exchange of e-mails. At the time he took the job in the fall of 1998, Hollingsworth — whose official title is Special Counsel for Enforcement — called it "a new day for Amateur Radio" after years of amateur enforcement neglect on the Commission's part. As he sees things today, rules compliance and on-air behavior have improved since the new sheriff rode into town, but there's still lots to do.

"I'm fairly satisfied with the progress that we've made in five years," Hollingsworth said in modest acknowledgment of the milestone, "but I think we need at least five more years of this type — of this level—of enforcement, because the bands have quite a long way to go. It's no time to rest."

Five years ago, Hollingsworth began with a "top-10" list of alleged high-profile Amateur Radio offenders. By and large, he's slowly — and most

would say successfully — worked his way to the point that many of today's cases appear comparatively mundane. But they get the same level of attention.

"The biggest problem we have now, I think, stems from conduct-type problems — lack of courtesy, taking serious offense and reacting to what is perceived as deliberate interference," Hollingsworth said this week. "Ninety percent of the interference that's reported to me is not deliberate." As he regards all enforcement cases, the remaining 10 percent are "serious."

"I think a lot of the 'radio rage' has subsided, but I wish that people would be a little more aware of just how valuable Amateur Radio is and how they sound on the air," said Hollingsworth. That's a message he's repeated often on the hamfest circuit.

"Maintenance mode" is a goal he'd like to see enforcement achieve. Hollingsworth explained that's when the number of enforcement cases is perceived to be in balance with the number of licensees. "I don't think we're there yet in the Amateur Service, but I think that we can get there," he said. Hollingsworth credits the amateur community's desire for strong, even stern, enforcement for his program's success.

"Probably 99 percent of the reason it's worked is everybody wants it," he said. "In this service they plead for enforcement. In every other service, they don't want to see you coming." This attitude, he believes, stems from a sincere desire by licensees to keep Amateur Radio a self-policing service. He counts keeping the support of the amateur community among his major accomplishments.

Looking out on the Amateur Radio enforcement horizon, Hollingsworth said he'll "keep pedaling" and chipping away at the enforcement workload. He'll also continue to look to the assistance and cooperation of his fellow radio amateurs, whom he called "just good people."

Amateurs "have got to stick together and cooperate and stay away from the infighting because they've got some very serious external threats," Hollingsworth said, citing BPL as just one example. "To the extent that they're not rowing together, it makes those threats more dangerous."

In his many public appearances — including several at Hamvention — Hollingsworth has stayed "on message" over the five years of his amateur enforcement tenure. "I just want everyone to realize what they have," he said. "We have incredible frequencies, power, modes, and so forth." He said a realization of the value of Amateur Radio itself is a deterrent to potential rule breakers, but he said Amateur Radio enforcement is "permanently ensconced" at the FCC.

While he's had some very interesting assignments and enjoyed nearly every day of his tenure with the FCC, he says the past five years have been the highlight of his 30-year FCC career.

"My greatest satisfaction is thinking that I may have paid back a debt," said Hollingsworth, who's been licensed since age 13. "It's the most rewarding thing I've ever done with the Commission."



Rohn Files for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy (From the ARRL Letter)

Rohn Industries <http://www.rohnnet.com/> filed a voluntary petition for Chapter 11 bankruptcy September 16 in the US Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Indiana. The best-known manufacturer of tower and tower hardware for the Amateur Radio community, the Peoria, Illinois-based company manufactures towers, antenna support structures and "infrastructure equipment" for the telecommunications industry. In business since 1948, the firm also makes security fencing and provides design and construction services.

"Our immediate goal is to stabilize the company's financial situation and utilize the Chapter 11 process to enable the company to conduct normal business operations as the company works to complete a sale transaction," Rohn Industries President Horace Ward said in announcing the company's bankruptcy filing. Rohn says it's now in discussions with an unrelated third party regarding a proposed asset sale while it continues to conduct business as usual. Ward told ARRL there is "no truth" to a rumor circulating on some Internet newsgroups that disgruntled workers had damaged manufacturing equipment beyond repair in reprisal

for consolidating fabrication facilities last January into a single plant in Frankfort, Indiana.

The impact of Rohn's troubles on the Amateur Radio community is not clear, but at least one major antenna products supplier reported earlier this summer that it was having problems getting Rohn products, although I continues to offer them. Ward told ARRL this week that Rohn intends "to execute the orders we have and to continue to take orders in the normal course of business."

In the company's statement, Ward attributed the bankruptcy filing to a severe downturn in the telecommunications industry. In July, NASDAQ delisted Rohn Industries after it was unable to meet its minimum bid price requirement. The company remains eligible for listing on the Over the Counter (OTC) Bulletin Board (OTC-BB: ROHN). During the past 52 weeks, the company's stock has sold for as little as a penny a share.

At the same time it filed for Chapter 11 protection, Rohn has announced it's entered into a \$9.5 million debtor-in-possession credit line with its lenders. The bankruptcy court must approve that agreement.



ARRL DX Bulletin

DX Bulletin 40 ARLD040
From ARRL Headquarters
Newington CT October 2, 2003
To all radio amateurs

This week's bulletin was made possible with information provided by PP2BT, YV5SSB, the OPDX Bulletin, The Daily DX, 425DXnews, DXNL, WA7BNM and Contest Corral from QST. Thanks to all.

ANNOBON ISLAND, 3C0. Station 3C0V is QRV until October 11. QSL via DJ9ZB.

ANTARCTICA. 8J1RF is active from Dome Fuji Base, IOTA AN-016, and has been QRV using RTTY on 15 meters around 1600z and then 20 meters around 1800z. QSL via operator's instructions.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, A6. Don, N1DG is QRV from the QTH of Saeed, A61AD from October 6 to 11 during his spare time. Look for activity using CW, SSB and RTTY. QSL to home call.

PRATAS ISLAND, BV9P. Members of the Chinese Taipei Amateur Radio League will be QRV as BQ9P from October 7 to 16. Activity will be on 160 to 6 meters, including the newer bands, using CW, SSB, RTTY, SSTV and PSK31. They will be active generally near the DX windows. QSL via KU9C.

CANARY ISLANDS, EA8. Frank, DH5JG is QRV as EA8/DH5JG from La Palma Island, IOTA AF-004, until October 14. Activity is on 80 to 10 meters, including the newer bands, using mostly CW with some SSB. QSL to home call.

WALLIS AND FUTUNA ISLANDS, FW. Vlad, FW/AC4LN has been QRV on 20 meters around 1000 to 1100z. He has later been QRV on 40 meters around 1200z. QSL via UA4WHX.

ITALY, I. Nuccio, I7YKN, Christine, I7OCD, Marisa, IK0ZSL, Gianfranco, IZ0BFK, Marco, IZ7CDE, and Massimo, IK0RNR, will be QRV as IG9L from the Pelagie Islands, IOTA AF-019, from October 5 to 11. They will be active on 40, 20, 15, 10 and 6 meters using CW and SSB. They also plan to activate the lighthouse Capo Grecale, ARLHS IOTA-025, on Lampedusa. QSL via IZ7CDE.

ALAND ISLANDS, OH0. Hadi, DJ2PJ will be QRV as OH0JWH near the village of Oeverby on Eckeroe Island, IOTA EU-002, from October 5 to 13. His main focus will be the digital modes, especially on PSK31 with RTTY and SSTV. QSL to home call.

BRAZIL, PY. Julio, PP2BT is QRV as PY9BT from Chapada dos Guimaraes in Mato Grosso until October 8. Activity is on 80 to 10 meters using CW and SSB. QSL to home call.

SEYCHELLES, S7. Norbert, DL2RNS will be QRV as S79NS during his holiday here from October 4 to 17. He will use mostly CW. QSL to home call.

PALAU, T8. Jim, W7UG and Tom, K7ZZ are QRV as T88ZX until October 8. Activity is on 80 to 10

meters using CW and SSB. They place emphasis on the newer bands. QSL via K7ZZ.

MICRONESIA, V6. After their Palau operation, Jim, W7UG and Tom, K7ZZ will be QRV as V63ZT from Yap Island beginning October 8 for one week. QSL via K7ZZ.

CHRISTMAS ISLAND, VK9X. Gerhard, DJ5IW, Thomas, DL2RMC, Hartmut, DM5TI and Andree, DL8LAS will be QRV as VK9XW, VK9XM, VK9XT and VK9XA, respectively, from October 4 to 14. They will emphasize the low and newer bands, but will generally be QRV on 160 to 6 meters. QSL all calls via DL2RMC.

MYANMAR, XZ. XZ7A has been QRV on 12 meters using CW around 1500z. Activity is on all bands. QSL via DL7DF.

VANUATU, YJ. Look for YJ0AMY and YJ0ATU to be QRV from Tegua Island, IOTA OC-110, in the Torres Island group for about 10 days. Activity is on 160 to 10 meters using CW and SSB. QSL via OM2SA.

VENEZUELA, YV. Look for 4M9YY to be QRV from San Fernando de Apure, from October 7 to 12. Activity will be on all bands and modes. QSL via operators' instructions.



Dash-L

By Paul Dunphy, VE1DX

One of the Local QRPers came by the other day, and he was carrying a laptop computer and a pair of handie-talkies. There was joy in his stride and a gleam in his eye. We had seen him coming and, for a fleeting few seconds, considered ducking out the back door. This fellow was a high-tech QRPper, and he usually wanted to talk about something that was over our head. Thinking back to what the Old Timer had told us about being open to new ideas, and about the Amateur's Code, we decided to see what was up.

We opened the door and the QRPper burst in, laying his equipment on the table and looking at us with a happy gaze in his eyes. "I've found the perfect way to work DX!" he proclaimed. It's so much easier

than chasing HF propagation, or listening to Red-Eyed Louie's reports on the DX he's heard lately. Besides, Louie's job has been replaced with packet clusters. Who needs him anymore, for that matter?" We thought about it for a minute and wondered who would feed the data into the clusters if all the Red-Eyed Louies of the world packed it in. However, we'd learned many years ago not to present a QRPer with too much logic. Maybe another day we'd both be up for that argument, but today he seemed to have other things on his mind. "How are you going to work DX without understanding propagation?" we asked carefully. "Simple!" the QRPer began, "And I'm here to show you how it's done." We just looked on as he opened up his laptop and started plugging in cables and hooking up adapters. "Shouldn't you bring that into the shack?" we asked, "That's where all the HF gear is, and the coax runs to the tower and all the antennas too." The QRPer grinned and simply said, "Don't need it. I'm working on 2-meter DXCC. I want to be the first in the world to do it, too!"

"How are you going to work DX without radios and antennas? And you and I both know you can't work 2-meter DXCC without repeaters or satellites. Repeater assisted contacts don't count for DXCC, and if you do it by satellite, it's a Satellite DXCC, not 2-meters."

"Just watch me," he said mysteriously, reaching down and unplugging our phone from its wall jack and plugging in a line from his computer. We shoved our cap back on our head, scratched a bit, and pulled the cap back forward. "What are you doing with the phone lines?" we asked, wondering if he was up to something illegal. "You're not hooking up one of those things to make long distance phone calls without paying for them are you?" The QRPer looked up at us in consternation. "Don't be so foolish," he said, "I know better than that. I'm hooking the laptop up to my ISP." We didn't know exactly what an ISP was, but we thought back to the wisdom of the quote, "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt."

As soon as he had things set up to his satisfaction, he typed in a few lines and the computer squawked and squealed for a few seconds, and then a couple of windows popped open. "There," he said, "I'm connected."

"OK," we said quietly, wondering what he was connected to. "Here's how it works," he began, "I'm dialed into the Internet with my laptop, and I've got my 2-meter handie-talkie connected to the computer with a RigBlaster. Follow?" We nodded, for although we still weren't sure on the ISP part, we knew what a RigBlaster was, and we knew what the Internet was. We'd seen a demonstration of the Internet at a shopping mall last fall. And one of the PSK31 types had tried to hook a RigBlaster up to our TS-920 last summer. Since we weren't overly impressed with the Internet or what the RigBlaster had done to our HF rig, we were just as happy that the QRPer was contented to stay out of the shack.

"Now, here's how it works," he said, stepping back and holding the second 2-meter handie-talkie. All I do is key up the EchoLink node number of the station I want to work on my DTMF keypad here. I've got this radio on the same simplex frequency as the one connected to the Laptop with the RigBlaster. Just using 250 milliwatts, too! That will select the DX station from the EchoLink list and connect us by VoIP. Then I just talk to them and bingo! I've got a DX QSO. I can connect to anywhere in the world! This is pretty slick, right."

We didn't know what to say. We decided to ask for clarification, in spite of our previous decision to not remove the doubt of our being thought a fool.

"What's VoIP and what's an EchoLink?" The QRPer gave us a pained look and answered "VoIP is Voice Over IP and EchoLink is the controlling software that runs on my laptop. Where have you been the last year or so?"

We decided not to argue and simply replied, "OK, we understand. So where's the DX?" The QRPer's look of exasperation increased and he blurted out, "Where it's always been, in those far away lands over the horizon like VK, ZL, and in all of Europe and Asia. And in the Caribbean and the like. Where did you think it would be? On my laptop?"

At this point we still weren't sure, so we just nodded and the QRPer punched a few codes into his handie-talkie. Then he called a GM station. We jumped back as the Scottish accent called him right back. Son of a Gun! We were impressed, but not convinced this was DXing. The QRPer exchanged a few more words with the GM station, ending it all by saying, "And be sure to QSL by the bureau, best 7'd3s." Up until the "best 7'd3s" we had managed

to take things in stride, but enough was enough. "What kind of foolishness have you dreamt up this time?" we roared! "Every time you start playing with computers, you come up with some way to cheat your way into more DXCC points, or to bend the rules, or to keep acting like you just were licensed last month! You know better than this!"

The QRPer took a step backwards and then glared right back into our eyes. "Look Buster, just because you didn't think of it doesn't mean it isn't right. It's not just my idea, either! There are almost 1000 EchoLink users around, maybe even twice that many. Why even VE1YX uses it. And he's been around the track enough time to recognize a good thing when he sees it. This is the wave of the future, and it's time you threw away that CW and SSB technology from the last century and joined us modern DXers! There is nothing illegal or immoral about this. It's new technology, and just because I'm smart enough to figure out how to get my 2-meter DXCC with it doesn't mean it's cheating!"

"Isn't DXCC supposed to use a radio?" we bellowed back at him. "You're talking into a computer with a handheld! It's going through our phone line somehow and connecting to another computer in Scotland. Where the 2-way radio QSO?"

"Right here in my hand and in the GM's hand in Edinburgh!" he screeched back, getting beet red and shaking his handie-talkie at us. "It's a good contact!" We took a deep breath and counted to 10. "How do you know he has a radio in Edinburgh?" we asked slowly, trying to bring the conversation back down to a civil level. "Because he has an L after his call sign. That means he has a link to a radio, the same as I have! And if he didn't have an L, there'd just be his call, and I'd know he was just using his computer microphone and speakers. But this fellow has an L, so it's a good contact!"

"How does the L get stuck after his call?" we asked quietly. "He typed it there when he set up his EchoLink software," was the quick reply. We leaned over and looked at the computer screen. A few of the calls had R after them, and a few more had L, but most had nothing but the call. "What does the R mean?" we asked. "Repeater!" the QRPer snapped back at us. "I can't use those for

DXCC because they are connected to repeaters, but the L ones are good."

We looked a bit more and said, "That station in Hong Kong, if he were to stick an L after his call, or if that LA or GD were to do the same, and if they still used their computer microphone and speakers, how would you know?"

"How would I know? How would I know! I'd know because Hams are honest, especially DXers. No True Blue DXer would ever think of doing something like that."

We looked at him for a moment and then said, "Romeo was in Burma." He stared at us with a blank look and then said, "What?" We repeated slowly, "Romeo was in Burma."

He looked at us for a moment, then snapped off his 2-meter rigs, unplugged his computer from the wall and began packing things up in their case. "There is no sense talking to people like you," he said. "I try to show you how DXing will be in the new millennium and you start talking in riddles. "Romeo was in Burma. What is that supposed to mean?"

We shrugged our shoulders as he was walking out the door. There is no point trying to explain the Eternal Enigmas of DXing or the Mysteries of the Ages to someone who isn't ready to understand them. So we just watched him stomp down the hill with his laptop and handie-talkies under his arm. Some day he might figure it out ... but then again, maybe Romeo really was in Burma, too! DX IS!



Helpful Hints

Save electricity by turning off all the lights in your house and walking around wearing a miner's hat.



Shallow Thoughts

Why do they call it a television set when you only get one?"

Carbon Amateur Radio Club – 2003-2004 Officers

President: Anthony "Goody" Good, K3NG, goody@fast.net
Vice President: Rob Roomberg, KB3BYT, roomberg@ptd.net
Secretary: Darryl Gibson, N2DIY, n2diy@losch.net
Treasurer: John Schreibmaier, W3MF, w3mf@ptd.net
W3HA Callsign Trustee: John Bednar, K3CT, k3ct@fast.net
W3HA Repeater Trustee: John Bednar, K3CT, k3ct@fast.net
Public Information Officer: Lisa Kelley, ldkelley@voicenet.com

Directors

John Bednar, K3CT, k3ct@fast.net
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Bruce Fritz, KB3DZN (DC), bruce56@ptd.net
Darryl Gibson, N2DIY, n2diy@losch.net
Todd Deem, KB3IKX, kb3ikx@localnet.com

Services

W3HA Repeater: 147.255 MHz + PL 131.8

CARC Website: <http://www.learnmorsecode.com/carc/>
Webmaster: Rob, KB3BYT roomberg@ptd.net

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

Emergency Power Equipment Trustees: Lisa and Bill Kelley, KA3UKL,
ldkelley@voicenet.com

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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