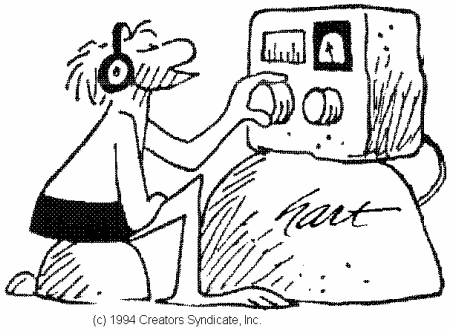

BARA Facts

Newsletter of the Binghamton Amateur Radio Association

November 2003

Website: http://www.wtsn.binghamton.edu/bara

BARA Election Notice

All BARA Members are advised that the annual Election of Officers and Directors will be held at the November General Meeting.

The current slate of Candidates for the 2004 Term is as follows:

BARA OFFICERS:

President: Bob McCabe, KC2DSS
Vice President: Ron Reagan, N2RWK
Secretary: Allen Lutins, KC2KLC
Treasurer: Paul Slocum, N2NCB

BARA BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Four Positions, Five Candidates):

Steve Orzelek, N2MSB
Mel Snitchler, WE2K
Malcolm Heath, KC2EOV
Bob Handel, K2FU
Bill Jaker, WB8RAE

We extend our appreciation to those members who have agreed to stand for election. The election will be conducted during the General Meeting and, as always, nominations from the floor are invited.

BARA Meeting Location

The search for a new location for the BARA General Meeting has been successful. Thanks to the efforts of Mel, WE2K, we will have the use of the Town of Binghamton Town Hall for our General Meetings on the Third Wednesday of each month.

Our November Meeting will be conducted at the current facility at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Riverside Drive, Binghamton; our December Meeting will be the BARA Christmas Party at Russell's Steak House in Endicott.

In January 2004 we will begin meeting at the Town of Binghamton Town Hall.

Slightly over a year ago Jack, WB2GHH, made a solicitation for tidbits about early amateur radio in the Binghamton area. His intention was to meld the material into an article for the BARA Facts. Although the overall response was underwhelming, some wonderful material was received from Bob, W2IFA.

BARA Thanks Mel, WE2K, for his efforts in scouting out and arranging this new location. We also thank Bill, WB8RAE, for identifying an alternate location which we would have pursued if the Town Hall had not worked out.

BARA Christmas Party

It's time to start planning for the BARA Christmas Party and Hedy, AA2MU, is — as always — on top of this. She has reserved tables at Russell's Surf and Turf in Endicott (across from the Enjoi Golf Course) for Wednesday Evening, 17 December. The evening will begin at 6:00 PM with informal socalizing in the bar and we hope to have everyone seated by 6:30 with dinner arriving about 7:00. The planned menu is attached to this issue of the *BARA Facts* and we ask that anyone who is planning to attend contact Hedy at 748-4387 to let her know who will be there and your menu selection.

The Christmas party is always fun with lots of good conversation and fellowship — not to mention the raffles and prizes. Please join us and please make your reservations with Hedy early because it saves a lot of calls, extra effort, and last-minute arrangements in December.

Friends-to-Friends Results

The results of the Boscov's Friends-to-Friends fund-raiser are in and the BARA Treasury is $81.00 to the better. We thank Mel, WE2K, for noticing that this event was coming up and for assuring a place for BARA. Thanks also to Jack, WB2GHH; who held down the fort from 0900 to 1700 at Boscov's assisted by his lovely (and long-suffering) wife Bernadine.

My Early Days in Amateur Radio
Bob Ghor, W2IFA (ex W8VLJ, ex W2VLJ)

My first awareness of the existence of Amateur Radio in the Binghamton area was in 1936 when my parents and I arrived in Binghamton from Wilkes-Barre, PA *[a suburb of Pittston, PA. — WB2GHH].* Our first home was the lower floor of a duplex on Annette Ave, a street off Grand Boulevard on the west side of Binghamton.

At that time our entertainment center consisted of a 5-tube Zenith AC/DC table model broadcast receiver. One evening a definite "non standard AM broadcast" voice was heard and the letters "W8DHO" were heard. Remember, the receiver was only a "standard broadcast receiver." Sometime later I was informed (possibly by Joe Novak W8TQZ) that the mystery call sign and voice belonged to Dr. Charles Lyons who lived on Prospect Street.

After a while we moved to an apartment on Main Street. The apartment was only a short distance from the Suburban (later the Crest)Theater. The theater was located opposite Bellevue Avenue and Ken Kenyon, W8BQX, lived on Bellevue. He was probably the second or third ham that I became acquainted with and he invited me over to his home and showed me his station. That "station" consisted of an "All Wave Console Broadcast Receiver" and a D104 microphone "installed" in his living room. A home-brew AM transmitter with a power amplifier comprised of a pair of 210's modulated by a pair of 50's was located in the basement.

Ken was employed by Fowler's Department Store *[not associated with the Fowler's in Wilkes-Barre, WB2GHH].* Boscov's presently occupies the former Fowler's building. In addition to the usual range of department store products, Fowler's sold and repaired radios and record players. *[I know, the youngest generation reading this is wondering what a record player is, WB2GHH. Think of it as a pre-scratched CD, KB2SCF.]* In later years, Ken worked with the Philco Radio Corporation. During World War II, he was sent to Newfoundland or Labrador and he developed and installed RADAR equipment which , of course, helped to deal with the Nazi submarine attacks which were at that time decimating Allied Shipping.

In early 1941, Ken helped me to get my first Ham ticket. My first call sign was W8VLJ, later W2VLJ (when the call-areas were redistricted). Ken assembled my first transmitter, a crystal-controlled 6L6 oscillator with a 6L6 final amplifier. Output was about 60 watts. My receiver was a Hallicrafters Sky Buddy which cost the huge sum of $29.50. The antenna was a Windom (an off center fed antenna). *[WB2GHH is still using one.]*

Other Hams of the era included Jim McTighe, W8BQY, a Science teacher at Binghamton Central High School and Joe Sarley, W8NSF, (whom I also first heard on a broadcast receiver. Another Ham was Art Smith, W2IRH, who lived on Park Street in Binghamton. Art used a transmitter built by RCA. Nick Piros, W8IMR, lived on Mygatt Street and I remember that Nick ran an AM Station mounted on a wooden plank. The transmitter had a pair of 100's with all the high voltage wiring exposed. It was a real "bread board".

Perhaps some will remember Tony Wheeler, W8DZY, who was an announcer for WNBF radio in the late 1930's. His son Bill (whose call I can't remember) was also an announcer, but for WINR radio. I also remember Charlie Reynolds, W8KQ, who with Ferris (Wolfie) Wolfinger ran the "Radio Testing Station", a repair and sales enterprise on Sturgis Street on the North side of Binghamton. Wolfie, W8CNA received some newspaper publicity as he was active in erecting some tall TV Antenna structures to receive New York City television. This was prior to any local TV availability.

Hams for CHOW

BARA Public Service Coordinator Ford Drake, AB2HS, and Brian Adee, K2DLB, coordinated Ham Radio communications for the CHOW walks on October 19, 2003. The walk from Enjoie through Endicott and return and the walk in Ostiningo Park were observed for any emergency and assistance situations. Participating HAMS were AB2HS, K2DLB, K2RUX, KB2SCF, KB2YEN, KC2KUW, KC2KUY, N2RWH, N2RWK, WA2QEL, N2ZMN and WB2GHH. K2QR provided a "visual" reference marker within the walking group. The efforts of the above resulted in approximately 50 hours and 150 miles being volunteered for this public service event.
— Details from Jack, WB2GHH, and Jack, KB2YEN.

73, 73

By way of the ARRL Letter of 10 October we learn that *73* Magazine ceased publication with the September 2003 issue. Citing economic problems Wayne Green, W2NSD, announced that the magazine was "SK after 43 years of publication". No definite plans for closing out paid subscriptions

have been announced.

The Hole Truth

The traditional tool for making holes in a chassis is a "Greenlee Punch". Neat and efficient in its operation, the punch easily enlarges a pilot hole to the required diameter, but these tools are today difficult to find and expensive when located, however reasonable and useful alternatives can often be found in the Electrical or Tool departments of well-stocked Hardware Stores.

"Stepped Bits" are cone-shaped tools with cutting flutes and are often used by electricians to cut and enlarge holes in electrical boxes. These tools drill and enlarge a hole from some basic diameter up to a maximum for the bit. This trick is accomplished by machining the bit as a series of discs of increasing diameter on a common shaft. About a quarter of the cone is cut away and the inside edges are sharpened to a cutting edge. In operation the bit can be used to cut its own pilot hole although a center punch and a small diameter bit will do a somewhat more effective job. The bit is run at a moderate speed and it cuts progressively larger diameters. Although the bit can be run in a hand drill, it's not a bad idea to clamp the work and to use a drill press, if available.

For larger holes a "Hole Saw" works well and metal-cutting versions of these tools can be readily obtained, however cutting oil, a drill press, and clamps for the work are essential safety measures. Don't try to rush the work and keep the cutter well lubricated.

"Fly Cutters" — tools that look somewhat like an adjustable beam compass — can often be found and seem to present an attractive option because the hole diameter is adjustable over a wide range, but their use is discouraged because of the need for extremely good clamping of the work and the very real danger of the "fly" jamming or working loose and endangering the operator.

When using any hole-cutting tools care and attention to safety are important. Work should be clamped and the operator should position himself away from the area that would be swept by the piece should the clamps break loose. Know your tools and keep them sharp. Pay particular attention to proper lubrication, cutting speed, and feed for the materials you are working. Too slow a rate is often as dangerous as too rapid a feed. Tuck in loose clothing and wear eye protection. Metal chips can break away and fly and a metal sliver is often more painful than a wooden one! It may be interest to note that a Machinists's Tool Chest often has a small mirror in the lid to aid in removing splinters from the face and eyes. A small hand-mirror in the toolbox along with a good pair of tweezers and a small, but strong, magnet (for picking up ferrous chips) can be as essential as bandages and disinfectant, but keep them in a pouch or case so that they are not damaged or soiled.

Change in EC Assignment

We learn through Jack Smith, KB2YEN, that he resigned the position of ARRL Emergency Coordinator (EC) effective 31 October. Jack served in this position for four years and we take this opportunity to thank him for his service and to note the time he gave to the position and the valuable working relationship he developed with the American Red Cross.

In the same breath we note that Brian Adee, K2DLB, has accepted the EC appointment. We welcome Brian as he assumes his new position and we solicit for him the support of all local Hams in the important work of Emergency Preparedness and Communications.

Our area has been fortunate in being spared the effects of natural disaster and emergency for many seasons. Aside from the power failures of this past summer, most of our "alerts" have been what some would call non-events. That may be true, but the fact that we have not been affected by any significant natural or human disasters should not lead us into complacency. Preparation for the unexpected is a significant part of our responsibility as Amateur Radio Operators and a primary justification for the spectrum that we occupy.

NWS/ARRL SKYWARN Recognition Day

The fifth annual SKYWARN Recognition Day will take place Saturday, December 6, 2003, 0000 UTC to 2400 UTC. During the special event, Amateur Radio operators visit National Weather Service (NWS) offices and contact other operators around the world. The purpose of the event is twofold: to recognize Amateur Radio operators for the vital public service they perform during times of severe weather and to strengthen the bond between radio amateurs and their local NWS office. The event is cosponsored by the American Radio Relay League and the National Weather Service.

Traditionally, hams have assisted the National Weather Service during times of severe weather by providing real-time reports of severe events and storm evolution. "You simply can't put a price tag on it," said Scott Mentzer, N0QE, organizer of the event and Meteorologist-In-Charge at the NWS office in Goodland, Kansas. "The assistance that radio amateurs provide to the NWS throughout the year is invaluable."

This year, radio amateurs once again proved their worth. On May 4, after tornadoes knocked out all communications in Stockton, Missouri, portable ham radio stations were set up and staffed by volunteers, with licensed NWS employees forwarding specific forecasts to hams at the Stockton Emergency Operations Center (EOC). In August, an Amateur Radio storm spotter in Iowa tracked a tornado until it lifted, providing the local NWS office in the Quad Cities with "ground truth." This resulted in more specific information and earlier warnings being disseminated to the public.

The story doesn't stop there. Deployed during a winter storm last March, hams in Fairbanks, Alaska reported pinpoint locations of freezing rain and snow. The information was relayed on 2 meters, which allowed the local NWS office to sharply define the warning area and provide detailed statements of ice accumulation. In Wisconsin, a volunteer operator reported to the NWS office at early one spring morning and solicited snowfall reports from amateurs across the region, allowing the NWS to produce a detailed snow graphic and make a public statement summarizing the storm. Amateur Radio success stories such as these occur every year, all across the country.

In 2002, participants logged nearly 23,000 QSOs during the 24 hour event. Last year nearly 70 countries were contacted. To learn more, check out the NOAA Web site. — ***From material prepared by David Floyd, N5DBZ, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, NWS Goodland, Kansas and reported in the ARRL Letter for 7 November***

Review: *Signor Marconi's Magic Box*

The subtitle of this book is the most remarkable invention of the 19th century & the amateur inventor whose genius sparked a revolution which is an apt and fitting description of Marconi's accomplishments and in some 291 pages Gavin Weightman largely succeeds in placing Marconi and the invention of Wireless firmly in the context of the time.

Center Stage is Marconi, and details of family and personal history flesh out the bare outlines of his history as commonly received while characters ranging from the well-known deForest and Fessenden to the more obscure Fleming and Heaviside have their moment in the limelight before leaving the stage. Clearly it is Marconi who is the genius of the age, but although the credit is well directed, the execution leaves a bit to be desired.

Weightman clearly had access to archival and historical resources and he makes good use of them in presenting his case. His writing is clear and expresses well the magic and wonder of Wireless. He also makes valid and useful observations on Marconi's grasp of the technology, noting clearly that while Marconi was a skilled technician, craftsman, and adapter of technologies, he had very little theoretical understanding of physical principles that made his invention work. He also makes valuable observations on the fact that the Marconi Company attained its dominant position because it provided proven and well-tested technology and not because it was a leading-edge innovator. This fact explains why Marconi dominated the industry at a time when there were, in fact, many other competing companies, however the point begs for further development. Likewise, Weightman's own grasp of the technology is incomplete and marred by some unfortunate lapses (such as referring to condensers as "batteries"), however these points do not detract from the readability of this book. A more serious omission is the lack of footnotes and references which prevent the volume from becoming a valuable reference in addition to a "good read".

Ultimately the book was a pleasure to read and the chapters on Jack Binns and life-saving at sea as well as the affair of the murderer Crippen add excitement and help the reader to understand how a primitive technology intended for point-to-point communications and carried to its technical limits could capture the public imagination and transform the world. At the same time, Weightman's insights into Marconi's character — his genius, his flaws, and his essential modesty before the world despite his ambition — explain much while leaving the reader hungry for more.

***Signor Marconi's Magic Box* (ISBN 0-306-81275-4) is available for $25.00 through the usual outlets.**

Solar/Aurora Reports

The Editor of the *BARA Facts* solicits reports and

observations on the recent Aurora and Solar Activity and its effects on propagation and radio activity for possible compilation in an upcoming issue. If you made any interesting observations please drop a note to the editor of the *BARA Facts* at kb2scf@arrl.net or write to KB2SCF in care of the BARA Post Office Box.

Club Officers and Committees			
President	**Bob McCabe**	**KC2DSS**	**748-9808**
Vice President	**Jack Connors**	**WB2GHH**	**724-8822**
Secretary	**Ron Reagan**	**N2RWK**	**722-6790**
Treasurer	**Paul Slocum**	**N2NCB**	**687-2057**
Directors	**Bob Handel**	**K2FU**	**693-4310**
	Steve Orzelek	**N2MSB**	**775-0281**
	Ed Plesnar	**KB2SCF**	**754-3810**
	Mel Snitchler	**WE2K**	**723-9612**
W2OW Trustee	**Frank Scoblick**	**N2HR**	**729-4249**
Newsletter	**Ed Plesnar**	**KB2SCF**	**754-3810**

BARA, The Binghamton Amateur Radio Association is an ARRL Affiliated Club

Next General Meeting

7:30 PM, Wednesday, November 19th
Unitarian Universalist Church Riverside Drive, Binghamton, Next to Lourdes Hospital

Board Meeting

7:00 PM, Wednesday December 3rd
Broome Community College Campus, Office of Emergency Services (West Side of Campus)

Exam Session

7:00 PM Monday, November 24th
Vestal Public Library, Route 434 Vestal
1:30 PM, Saturday December 13th
Endicott Fire Station, Across from UE High School

BARA Dues

$18/year Single Member; $27/year Family

Binghamton Amateur Radio Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 853
Binghamton, New York 13902

First Class