



BARA Facts

Newsletter of the Binghamton Amateur Radio Association

March 2002

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

President's Corner

Bigger and Better Club Programs: Look for some great programs in the coming months (thanks to Bob, KC2DSS, our Program Chairman). March will have a two part program: I will talk briefly about a simple low-parts-count CW keyer that I am designing (a one-evening project for the CW nuts among us). Parts kits will be available in the fall.

The second part of the program will be an auction to benefit the club. There will be a scanner, boxes of parts, and lots of miscellaneous stuff that you can't possibly be without.

The program will be first, followed by a short business meeting. We will be keeping our business meetings short, so if you have something to bring before the group, please see me before the business meeting to get on the agenda.

Dinner Before the Meeting: Many of us will be meeting Little Venice (on Chenango Street, near the Bus Terminal) at 5:30 prior to the meeting, for dinner. If you want to come, just show up.

The Club Shack, a Great Resource: We have just finished our third contest of the season at the club shack on Milks road. We had a good turnout and everybody got some operating time. This was a phone contest and we worked most of the DX stations on 20, 15, and 10 meters. If you have never worked a contest before, come join us for the next one. It is a lot of fun and you get to talk to stations all over the world. With our high power and big antenna systems, we get fantastic coverage.

The Club Shack also a great resource for rag chewing or DX. I don't have a tower or beam at the home QTH, so I often go to the shack. If you would like to operate from the shack, either call me at 760-2775 or drop me an e-mail (george@townsoft.com). *73 DE George, K2CM*

The following notes from Jack, WB2GHH, were received after the last issue of the BARA Facts went to press.

Two BARA 2001 Recognition Awards, whose presentation were delayed due to scheduling difficulties, were recently presented.

Bill Coleman, N2BC, received an award for his ten years of service as a club officer, his leading efforts on shack improvements, and his sustained efforts on a variety of club projects.

An award to a non-member, which is quite rare, was presented to Bill Bartlett, KB2ETO, of Dryden, N.Y. Bill was recognized for his long term service to Binghamton area HAMS by being an HF liaison to the STAR net.

These awards are in addition to the two awards made at the BARA December Dinner Party. At that time Stan Progy, W2EWM, was recognized for his fifty years of grounds keeping and "put a hole over there" services. Ron Clothier, AA2EQ, was recognized for his computer lugging and set up actions for contests over the last four years and for his continuing high wire antics on the various antenna support structures.

Contesting on the Hill

By all accounts our last two contest efforts have been a success. The turnout at the shack kept the contests moving along at a crisp rate and we had a lot of fun.

The ARRL DX CW Contest in February was aggressive as the best operators in the club made the trek to the Hilltop. AA2EQ, K2FW, NE2W, K1OW, N2BC, and K2CM ran two stations for 48 hours with over 2,000 contacts made (an average rate of one contact every eighty-three seconds). The crew worked all six bands and hit just about every part of the world.

2001 BARA Recognition Awards

The March ARRL DX SSB Contest followed and although the attack was not nearly as aggressive as the CW contest the club made a very credible showing of over 1,600 contacts and the operators had a lot of fun. AA2EQ, N2BC, K2FU, WE2K, AA2MU, KG2FY, N3VKM, K2CM, K1OW KB2AVB, KB2SCF were on hand for the effort. Murphy stopped by and dropped power for about eight hours and one of the PC Power Supplies released its smoke just to make things interesting. In the true Ham spirit parts from an extra machine were used to cobble together a working computer and were back on line.

Your editor made the trek for the SSB contest (his first experience with *real* contesting). If you have never been up to the Shack during a contest I can tell you it is a lot of fun and I am certainly looking forward to doing it again. It's a bit of adjustment to realize that you have to be aggressive and jump in because nobody is going to hear your call if you wait until everyone else has finished shouting theirs. It's also a real thrill to realize that the operator in Japan, India, Poland, or some other distant location is actually coming back to you — the newbie sitting on a hilltop outside Binghamton, New York with an "old hand" nudging you and yelling "answer him!"

Thanks to Bill, N2BC, Ron, AA2EQ, and everyone else who loaned equipment and worked on setting up these efforts. Thanks to a superb location and a fertile Antenna Farm we were able to work just about everybody we heard!

Wall of Fame

Rick Melton, N3VKM, completed and installed the *BARA Wall of Fame* up at the Shack. This fine piece of cabinetry provides a fitting place to display the many awards and certificates that BARA has earned over the years. Rick built a "shadow box" with glazed doors at the instigation of Jack, WB2GHH, and the Board who felt that the club trophies deserved something better than a cardboard box. Rick carried out the plan with style and we can expect to see a permanent display of wallpaper and photos come together over the next few months.

Library Books Donation

Our first BARA Donation to local library is well underway. Through the efforts of Jack, WB2GHH, BARA ordered a package of ARRL Publications which is being donated to the Binghamton Public Library. This package will update the materials available for loan and will also get BARA some publicity through a "bookplate" in each volume.

Book Donations are an easy way to reach out to the community and they can pay big dividends in helping someone get a licence. Many of the study materials

available on Library Shelves are woefully out-of-date and some Libraries still have CB License Manuals and Amateur Guides that refer to the old "A", "B", and "C" Amateur Licenses.

Antenna Hints

At the last General Meeting Bob, KC2DSS, made an interesting presentation on Dipole Antennas. He had a VHF version constructed from discarded TV Rabbit Ears and he also showed us some ideas for a HF version built from insulated Conduit Wire with Center Insulator made from telescoped PVC Pipe-Caps and Stainless Steel Hardware.

Bob's presentation was well received and there was a lively exchange of questions and answers from the floor.

Meeting Reminder

Please keep in mind that our President, George, K2CM, and the Board are working to make the Club Meetings as enjoyable as possible. One change is to invert the usual order of the meeting and run the Program and Social portions *before* the Business Meeting. This makes it much easier to arrive "just in time" for the program (at 7:30), but anyone who plans an 8:00 (or later) arrival to miss the Business Meeting will probably be disappointed.

Shuttle Contact a Success

Richard, N2SPI, and Jerry, KG2FY, pulled off a very successful contact with the International Space Station on Valentine's Day.

Dan Bursch, KD5PNU, one of the astronauts on the current mission, is a native of Vestal and a graduate of Vestal Central High School. Since he requested a contact with the students this reversed the usual 3-year process where a school requests a contact. There was very little time to get ready and Richard used his past experience with space contacts (including the successful St. James/Kopernik contact last November) to pull together the Antennas and Equipment and to prepare the students.

By all accounts the contact was a success and it received favorable coverage from several local TV stations, as well as the Newspaper. The ARRL Letter and Website also had coverage of this event.

Additional support was provided by Kopernik Observatory which loaned the backup radio equipment; Ron, AA2EQ permitted his UHF Repeater to be used for rebroadcast; Jack, WB2GHH, manually repeated the Audio into the SVARA 146.82 machine and handled the ID/Timeout switching; Sally, KC2CCE, (Richard's wife), helped with setup and support; Ed, NE2W, posted news and audio on the Internet; and Ed, KB2SCF, assisted with

Is Ham Radio Relevant?

Every now and again there is a question in one of our hobby publications about the relevance of Amateur Radio. At issue seem to be a combination of the decline in the ranks of Ham Operators, the lack of “new blood”, the “dropout rate” among the newly licensed, and the specter of “The Internet”. Some lament the passing of the good-old-days when Ham Radio provided a technical training ground for the next generation of Scientists and Engineers.

While these concerns are certainly valid and thinning ranks and dropout rates should make us all question what we might be doing wrong, the hobby itself is still very relevant to the future of our increasingly technology-dependant society. The Internet is “big”, but if you stop and think for a moment it should be pretty obvious that the next “leap” of technology will be for the Web to go Wireless.

We can already see the beginning of this as Pagers and Cell Phones become as common as wristwatches and as Text Messaging to Cell Phones and Wireless LANs make inroads into our homes. RF is essential to these devices, but at the same time Analog and RF Engineering is being abandoned by college students in favor of Digital Engineering. Perceptive Engineers like Bob Pease have been remarking this for years and have pointed out that although the Digital and Analog worlds share some common ground, they are also very different and you can't take digital training and assume it is “good enough” for RF work.

That's where our hobby comes in and that's where each of us can help to make an impact. By doing so, we may manage to snag a few new life-long Hams and grow our ranks.

The traditional route into Ham Radio has been through an Elmer and although Elmering is still an important part of passing on our tradition it seems that it is becoming more the way that we advance our training and not the way that Hams get their first license. Many new Hams learn on their own from a Study Guide or through the Internet and their first contact with a “Real Amateur” may well be at the VE Session where they take their exam.

The Internet, it is true, is a powerful magnet and it is probably safe to say that given a choice between studying for a Ham Ticket and logging on to the Internet most people would choose the Internet, however we still have something to offer with our skills.

Many schools have a “Technology” or “Computers” curriculum and there are certain technical topics or standards which must be met in order to cover

this material. These topics may be new or unfamiliar to the teacher or they may require equipment that is not readily available in the school. That's where we can help: Some of this material may duplicate what we learned to get our license or what we have learned as we enhance our skills. Although you may not have the skills or confidence to present before a class, you may be able to help a teacher prepare to teach unfamiliar material or to develop demonstrations that make the material “come alive” and grab interest.

Think about it. Don't be shy about sharing what you know and don't be nervous about letting people know that Ham Radio helped you develop your skills. Seeing what Ham Radio can do and how it is relevant to the skills we need to live in a technological world may be just the sales pitch needed to hook someone into our wonderful hobby!

ARISS Packet News

From the *ARRL Letter* of March 1st we note that the ISS Expedition 4 crew installed a new packet TNC in late February. The packet system now is operational for the first time with a call sign (RS0ISS). The ARISS packet uplink is 145.99 MHz; the downlink is 145.80 MHz. Amateurs are asked not to leave messages for the crew, as no computer is attached to the system and the crew has little time to respond to messages anyway.

March Meeting

The program for the March General Meeting is in two parts: George, K2CM, will begin with a presentation on homebrewing your own equipment and Ed, KB2SCF, will follow with an auction of goodies donated to raise funds for the club. We have a nice selection of “stuff” to seed the auction, but donations will also be welcomed the night of the meeting (please see Ed, KB2SCF).

Operating and Other Events

7 APRIL: MS WALK. Please contact Ford Drake, AB2HS, if you want to help provide communications for this event (Seton High School to Otesnago Park and back).

10 APRIL: SVARA MEETING, 7:30 PM. Office of Emergency Services.

17 APRIL: SKYWARN TRAINING. The BARA Program for April will be our Annual SKYWARN refresher provided by the National Weather Service at the Binghamton Regional Airport. Jim Brewster, KD0LVE, is the scheduled presenter.

4 MAY: BARA HAMFEST! Mark your calendars and join the fun at Tioga County's Marvin Park

Fairgrounds.