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# **BARA** Facts

*Newsletter of the Binghamton Amateur Radio Association*

**January 2005**

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

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## **The President's Corner**

The votes are in, I am still analyzing the exit polls to figure out what happened. I can't tell if I'm red or blue or maybe green. I'm not sure ham radio has an official color! Anyway, thanks to all you voters, thanks to our outgoing officers, and thanks to the new officer crew!

We just finished our first Board of Directors meeting for 2005. The club officers have started work on some exciting activities for the upcoming year. First, some announcements:

- ◆ Brian Adeo, K2DLB, has taken the lead on the club repeater, W2OW 147.390. I have asked Brian to talk with the membership to determine a course of action for the repeater. Should we upgrade it, leave it alone, do away with it? Brian will give us a brief outline of some of the possibilities at the January 19th General Meeting and there will be an in-depth discussion at the February 16th General Meeting. Brian will make his recommendations to the Board of Directors after he has sorted out your input.
- ◆ Jack Connors, WB2GHH, will lead the effort to find an operating site for the club. Over the past year a number of sites have been evaluated, some are still in the 'hopeful' state. I've asked Jack to coordinate all these efforts so we have one focal point in the club. If you know of some property, make sure you pass it along to GHH.
- ◆ Mel Snitchler, WE2K, is in charge of getting our non-profit status completed. This is been a frustratingly long and expensive process. Any dealing with state and federal agencies can be like herding cats.

- ◆ Bob Mess, WS2U, and myself will chair the 2005 Hamfest Committee. As always, the yearly hamfest is a club effort. From setup through cleanup, we need a lot of help to pull off our number one fundraiser each year.

The January 2005 General Meeting (January 19th) will have a presentation by Mr. Thomas Vroman, Broome County Senior Fire Investigator and former Endicott Fireman. Tom will share some interesting pictures and his thoughts on radio communication effectiveness from his assignment as an American Red Cross Volunteer in Florida following the hurricanes. Besides his fire investigation chores, Tom works with the EOC communications equipment. Tom has also assisted RACES communication efforts over the course of his 22 years plus career at BC EMO I'm certain he has many interesting stories about his Florida adventure and I bet even a few about local activities of interest to amateur radio.

In addition to this exciting program, I have a small surprise planned. You will have to be at the meeting to participate. — *de Bill, N2BC*

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## **2004 BARA Award**

Congratulations to Jack, WB2GHH, the recipient of the 2004 BARA Award. Outgoing president Bob, KC2DSS, used the occasion of the 2004 BARA Holiday Party as an opportunity to present Jack with a framed certificate representing the thanks of our Club for Jack's many contributions to Our Club. Jack has been very active in the search for a new Shack Site and has contributed to BARA in many other ways. Thanks, Jack! It is good to have you aboard!

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## **Notes From the BARA Bash**

By all accounts the 2004 BARA Holiday Party was a rousing success. Around fifty members were present for the usual festivities and the ceremonial "Passing of

the Gavel” from outgoing President Bob, KC2DSS, to incoming President Bill, N2BC. We thank everyone who attended for helping to make the party a success and we especially thank Hedy, AA2MU, for organizing another successful evening of Fellowship and Festivity!

### **What do You Want?**

Our club has a charter.... To promote technical vitality in the radio art; to be ready to serve the public in times of communications emergencies. There’s one more – to have some fun!

I have a few ideas, but I bet there are many more out there. Do you have an idea for an activity? I have asked our club secretary, Allen Lutins, KC2KLC, to maintain a “Job Jar,” a place where we can collect ideas and keep them from floating away to never-never land.

If you have an idea for an activity, a guest speaker, some training, some fun... Contact Alan or myself. — 73, *Bill N2BC*

### **Ham Radio Exams**

Please note that in 2005 there will be only one scheduled Amateur Radio Examination Session per month. The Saturday Sessions in Endicott have been discontinued and this means that the sessions held at the Vestal Public Library are the only regular exams in our area. These sessions are held on the last Monday of each month that is not a Public Holiday at 7:00 PM. On months (such as May) when the last Monday is a holiday, the exams are moved to the preceding Monday.

Bob, WA2VCS, is the contact VE for these sessions and, as always, we note that our VEs dedicate their own time to providing the opportunity for exams on a regular basis.

### **Unlicensed Devices**

As Amateurs we are (or should be) aware of our responsibility to avoid harmful interference to users of our and other Radio Services. This is a serious responsibility and one which we should take to heart, but “Responsible Rfing” is not a concept that other users of electronic devices are aware of and with the proliferation of Electronic Consumer Goods — especially devices which fall in the category of “unlicensed radiators” we may find ourselves as Amateurs in positions where we need to educate members of the General Public on subjects of RF Interference.

Although FCC interpretation of their regulations draws a distinction between devices which are intended to operate as transmitters and receivers and those which are “unintentional” radiators and receivers, such

distinctions are easily lost on people who find that a Garage Door Opener “doesn’t work” or a Battery Charger “causes a problem”. Likewise, the ideas “must accept interference” and “must not cause interference” are as unfamiliar to the general public as the dark side of the moon. If we find ourselves dealing with such situations, we should act with tact and discretion and above all we should try and avoid letting emotional reactions turn neighbors into adversaries.

A recent issue of the *ARRL Letter* outlines an unfortunate situation in Texas where Battery Chargers were causing interference to an Amateur’s operations. Although the full details are not reported, it seems pretty clear that this was a situation in which the Amateur worked with his neighbors to mitigate the interference that *their* Battery Chargers were causing to *his operations*, but somehow the situation deteriorated into angry exchanges of letters and FCC involvement.

In another case (reported in the press last Summer) a new Digital VHF/UHF Communications System installed at an Air Force Base apparently created RF Levels that overloaded the receivers on Garage Door Openers in a nearby community. The Air Force — although a Licensed Primary User in the bands affected — nonetheless worked to mitigate their unintended interference by adjusting power levels and changing frequencies.

In each case it seems “clear” (to an Amateur, anyway) where the fault lies. Battery Chargers should be filtered and should not put out RF “hash” and Garage Door Openers should be engineered so that their Front Ends do not overload. Good design and engineering could have prevented both situations, but such arguments would be lost on a consumer who paid “good money” for a product only to be asked to solve “somebody else’s” problem.

We can likely expect such cases to arise more frequently in the future. Broadband over Power Line (BPL) is but a recent example of technology that aims to produce RF in ways that might interfere with the Licensed Services. Wireless Routers, Home Computers, Low-Voltage Lighting, Dimmers, and a host of other devices all have the potential to cause interference. Even worse, cost-cutting engineering designs have the potential to create “radio receivers” out of things that were never intended to operate in that manner and pity the Amateur who “gets into” his neighbor’s electronics.

Regulation could be part of the solution, but that is something that we can’t make happen on our own.

On this front it is fortunate that the ARRL “beats the drum” in Washington and reminds our representatives of a reasonably large segment of voters who should not be ignored. Closer to home, the answer is education — both for ourselves as Amateurs and of the General Public as Consumers. To read, study, and educate ourselves will be the best preparation for the day when we might find ourselves in an unfortunate RF “situation” and if that day comes an understanding attitude coupled with a open response that does not foster a me smart/you dumb view will likely be the best defense.

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### **Simple is Better**

We probably don’t need to be reminded that Amateur Radio is a vital link in time of emergency and disaster. True, Public and Private Communications Networks get better and more reliable as technology improves and economic realities dictate, but we all know that RF Remains When All Else Fails. The recent earthquake and tsunami events in South Asia demonstrate this once again and a quote of Radio Society of Sri Lanka (RSSL) President Victor Goonetilleke, 4S7VK is pertinent. In the ARRL Letter for 7 January, Mr Goonetilleke “declared that uncomplicated short wave radio had saved lives.” *Uncomplicated short wave radio*: isn’t that a phrase that sums up our abilities in a neat and easy-to-digest package. When communications are needed, Hams get the job done. We use what is available and improvise what is not and somehow or other the message always gets through.

We also understand that DXpeditions were operating in the affected areas and that — in the best tradition of Amateur Radio — their operations quickly switched from recreational to the serious business of passing emergency traffic.

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### **The State of the Status Quo**

The ARRL does not anticipate the FCC will offer up any proposals on the Morse requirement and further restructuring of the Amateur Radio licensing system until sometime in mid-2005, possibly sooner. The FCC Wireless Telecommunications Bureau continues to review thousands of comments it received on 18 petitions for rule making — including one from the ARRL.

The various petitions called for eliminating or altering the Morse code requirement and changing other sections of the Amateur Service Part 97 rules, including further restructuring of the amateur licensing system.

In addition to agreeing on other changes affecting Amateur Radio, World Radiocommunication

Conference 2003 (WRC-03), left the choice to require Morse proficiency for HF access up to individual countries, and several already have dropped Morse code as an examination requirement. That has not yet happened in the US. Before the FCC adopts any changes in the Morse requirement and the license structure, it must complete its comment review, issue a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) reflecting its interpretation of consensus within the amateur community based on comments received, and invite further comments on the NPRM. The FCC then will review those comments before issuing a Report and Order that spells out any final rules. The ARRL does not anticipate any changes in the Morse requirement or in other Amateur Radio licensing requirements before 2006, possibly later. While this rule making process is under way, no changes have been made in the Amateur Radio Service rules. The 5 WPM Morse code requirement (Element 1) to gain HF privileges in the US remains in place, and no proposed automatic upgrades or other rule changes have been put into effect.

The ARRL has posted answers to frequently asked questions on its own restructuring proposals <<<http://www.arrl.org/news/restructuring2/faq.html>>>. — *from the ARRL Letter for 23 December 2004*

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### **A Good Word**

The *Binghamton Press* recently highlighted Blake McCabe, KC2GQX, one of our younger members in an article which neatly contradicted the conventional wisdom that Hams are middle-aged guys. Good job, Blake, for putting our best foot forward.

Through no fault of Blake, Murphy somehow managed to make sure that the *Press* connected up with old information on our meeting place.

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### **Omissions and Corrections**

Your editor regrets (since about ten minutes after sending the December *BARA Facts* to press) that he omitted several people from the “Roll of Thanks”. This note corrects those omissions and he hopes that he hasn’t forgotten anyone else:

Hedy, AA2MU, who takes care of printing and mailing the *BARA Facts* every month and Paul, N2NCB, for providing the labels for the same.

Ed, NE2W, for managing the BARA Reflector and for keeping it current with postings and timely information.

Bill, NK2H, who still manages W2OW QSLs.

Club Officers and Committees			
President	Bill Coleman	N2BC	748-5232
Vice President	Bob Handel	K2FU	693-4310
Secretary	Allen Lutins	KC2KLC	729-4817
Treasurer	Paul Slocum	N2NCB	687-2057
Directors	Steve Orzelek	N2MSB	775-0281
	Mel Snitchler	WE2K	723-9612
	Jack Connors	WB2GHH	724-8822
	Jim Lawson	KC2JED	797-1583
W2OW Trustee	Frank Scoblick	N2HR	729-4249
Newsletter	Ed Plesnar	KB2SCF	754-3810



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

*Binghamton Amateur Radio Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 853  
Binghamton, New York 13902-0853*

### ***Next General Meeting***

7:30 PM, Wednesday, January 19th Town of Binghamton  
Town Hall, 279 Park Avenue, South of the Ross Park  
Entrance

### ***Board Meeting***

7:00 PM, Wednesday February 2nd  
Broome Community College Campus, Office of Emergency  
Services (West Side of Campus)

### ***Exam Session***

7:00 PM Monday, January 31st  
Vestal Public Library, Route 434 Vestal

### ***BARA Dues***

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

### ***DX Cluster***

W2OW on 145.070 MHz with a Data Rate of 1,200 baud;  
questions to n2bc@stny.rr.com

### ***W2OW Repeater***

147.390 MHz, 100 Hz CTSS. BRAT Net every Sunday  
Evening at 8:00 PM Local Time

*First Class*

