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# **BARA** Facts

*Newsletter of the Binghamton Amateur Radio Association*

**March 2005**

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

## **President's Corner**

Quite a bit of activity this month.

Thanks to Brian Adee for leading the effort to assess the future of the club repeater. Brian presented an overview at the January General meeting, we had an in-depth discussion at the February General Meeting, and input from the membership was collected via mail and email. At the March Board Meeting, the club officers voted unanimously for a Director's motion to donate the repeater to SVARA.

To review some the facts: Repeater coverage from the current site could not be improved - we would not be able to increase antenna height beyond the approximately 20' above the building. Moving the repeater would require finding another location and re-coordination, which would very likely be on a different frequency pair. Wide-area coverage locations are very difficult to find. Finally, the "mainstay" repeaters in the area are hardly overloaded.

By donating the repeater to SVARA, we will help to expand a superb wide-area coverage system to parts of the county that are not at all served now. SVARA plans to use the W2OW hardware with the addition of a UHF link to grow the SVARA system toward the Eastern edge of the county. This will enhance coverage for casual operation, and most importantly improve coverage for emergency operations such as SKYWARN.

Looking out in the future a bit... The BARA Owego Hamfest planning is tying up a few loose ends, but all the key pieces are in place for a great Hamfest on May 7th. Initial planning for Field Day has begun, mark "FD" on your calendar now, June 25 & 26.

Have you been on the air lately? I operated

a few hours in the ARRL CW DX Contest a couple weeks ago. I made a couple hundred contacts in about 90 different countries.... how many QSOs have you had in

the past month? This weekend (March 5 & 6), the HF bands are full of DX stations in the SSB portion of the contest. Contest operating is not everybody's "cup of tea", but they can be a great way to build skills and meet hams from around the country and around the world. There is no reason to think you have to operate 48 hours straight and there is no reason to think you have to send CW at 40 WPM.

Field Day is another opportunity. FD has a contesting element to it, but it is also a casual affair. You can operate CW or SSB or AM or FM or Packet or RTTY or ..... Let's have a great turnout for Field Day — if we make a few hundred contacts, so much the better! — *73 Bill, N2BC*

## **FCC Morse/Restructuring Proposals**

### **Could be out by Mid-Year**

The FCC continues to work toward developing a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) that will spell out what the Commission has in mind with respect to possible changes in the current Morse code requirement and Amateur Radio licensing.

A total of 18 petitions have been filed, including one from the ARRL, seeking *Part 97* rule changes addressing the future of the 5 WPM Morse requirement (Element 1) and revisions to the overall Amateur Radio licensing structure. The FCC plans to tackle all 18 in a single proceeding.

On the code issue, petitions — and comments in response to them — run the gamut from retaining or even beefing up the Morse requirement to eliminating it altogether. (The ARRL's proposal would retain the 5 WPM Morse examination for

Amateur Extra class applicants only.)

The League and others have also put forth proposals for a new entry-level Amateur Radio license class. At this point, personnel in the FCC

While the FCC appears unlikely to release an NPRM any sooner than mid-year, the issue still may be a major discussion topic during the FCC Forum at Dayton Hamvention, 20-22 May. Once public, the NPRM would initiate another round of public comments on what the FCC has proposed. An FCC Report and Order implementing any new rules is unlikely before the second half of 2006, although it's possible the Commission could wrap up the proceeding before then. — *ARRL Bulletin* 8, 1 March 2005

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#### Amateur Radio Shines

##### (part 2)

*Last month Steve, K2CDJ, set the stage with a description of the geographic and political situation in the Laccadives Island Chain. This month we continue with his notes on the Tsunami and how a Dxpedition "saved the day" by shifting gears to providing vital communications in the affected area.*

Some of the Andaman Islands do have wonderful beaches and scuba diving, and controlled tour guide groups through the beautiful rain forests for tourists. Tourists who do not have proper permits or attempt to wander off on their own are quickly detained by the military and shipped back to the mainland. Cameras, video recorders, etc. are carefully controlled. India has many different groups and agencies that are extremely protective of the primitive tribes, the coral, the rain forest, etc. and the military is used to uphold their wishes.

Permission to operate amateur radio in the Andamans to satisfy the needs of the worldwide DX community is not a reason to be granted permission. Permission was granted on the concept of publicity for the tourist industry. Bharathi had to produce much documentation that the tourists from various countries were the same countries that her group would be contacting to help inform them of the wonders of the Andamans. That was not all. She also had to show that the logistics of the operation in no way would jeopardize the current tourist season nor pose unusual needs of the military that would help oversee her conduct. Her operation also had to immediately cease if there was "any cause for

Wireless Telecommunications Bureau are continuing to review the thousands of comments filed on the 18 petitions.

concern by anyone".

When the operations started from VU4 in early December, it seemed "all the world" was calling for VU4. It was not "the best" of days for amateur radio. There was a never-ending line of impatient, ignorant and childish behavior. Granted that the five operators on this expedition were not of the highly skilled type that had frequented other DX expeditions. However, they were doing something that no one else had done in 17 years by securing permission to operate from VU4. Despite, the very bad behavior of too many calling, the five operators "soldiered on" and did their very best to work as many as they could around the world making in excess of 30,000 contacts.

When the earthquake hit near Indonesia, Bharathi knew very quickly that her group would have a new mission. All one has to do is look at a National Geographic terrain map and realize that the Andaman & Nicobar chain sits on a ridge that is very narrow and steep and runs on the west side of Sumatra right at the epicenter of that earthquake. Immediately after the Tsunami hit Port Blair area where Bharathi was operating, the military asked her group if they could provide emergency communications. Part of the group was moved to one of the devastated Nicobar Islands while Bharathi stayed at Port Blair. They handled tens of thousands of messages.

Bharathi and her group have been praised around the globe by the world's leading newspapers and news organizations.

VU4 was on my needed list of one of my last DXCC countries. Like many, I was unsuccessful, but in a very rare and virtually unprecedented DX expedition scenario, it was an extremely fortunate situation as amateur radio was immediately able to provide much needed emergency communications in a terrible disaster. The professional manner in which Bharathi and her group handled this emergency will be a huge plus for Bharathi and group securing permission to do another DX expedition to VU4 in the near future. However, it does not open the door to other Indian citizens securing permission. India — even with thousands still missing in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands — still is very tough on who they

are accept outside aid. UNICEF has been granted a restrictive aid permit. Car Nicobar, which had a very sensitive military installation, suffered a huge loss as an uncounted number of military personnel and their families and their buildings were completely sent to the ocean. The only known images of this island since then have been from satellite images from an unknown source.

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#### **Praise From FEMA**

An ARES/RACES drill participation in Calhoun County, Alabama, on 9 February received much praise from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The communication drill was a scenario involving a nerve gas release, and Amateur Radio was the only communication system available to the local emergency operations center (EOC). The exercise, for the annual Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) was conducted by the Anniston Army Depot and the Calhoun County Alabama Emergency Management Agency and was aimed at checking the coordination of communications at the EOCs.

Calhoun County Emergency Coordinator Randall Landers, KG4EUD, managed his team's activities from the EOC, while Alabama Section Emergency Coordinator Jay Isbell, KA4KUN, and staff headed up communications at the US Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Noble Training Center at Ft. McClellan.

A mission of the Anniston Army Depot is to incinerate stockpiles of chemical weapons. In the exercise scenario, 36 land mines explode releasing VX nerve agent. The ARES/RACES team provided updates and deployed volunteers to hospitals and schools and to Emergency Activation System radio stations, where they disseminated official news releases. "FEMA Region 4 representatives said that the Amateur Radio group was the best they have evaluated, and that their knowledge of radio and communications was excellent," reported Alabama Section Manager Greg Sarratt W4OZK. — *from the ARRL Letter for 18 February*

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#### **The Things you Learn**

Who would have thought that a "local" TV Station intersected with early radio history in the form of a reassigned callsign? WDAU (now WYOU, TV22) down in the Wilkes-Barre Scranton area has a connection with "America's #1 Amateur" and

The tsunami has not changed the way India administers this virtually unknown part of the world but despite wireless networks, cell phones, etc., amateur radio — called quaint and old-fashioned by many — still proved its worth. — *Steve, K2CDJ*

although I can't explain how the Station Callsign ended up in the Wyoming Valley, I can tell you that it began in Boston...

In 1901 a young Mount Vernon, New York lad by the name of Irving Vermilya traveled to Canada with his father and their minister to hear Marconi speak on the subject of his Wireless. Inflamed by the subject and treasuring a bit of equipment that Marconi had given him, Irving returned home to build his first receiver and begin a lifelong dance with the nymphs and gods of the ether.

Progressing to more advanced equipment, young Irving honed his skills and when, in 1912, the US government required licences of all Wireless Operators, he took the exam at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and — at age 22 — he obtained *Certificate of Skill #1* becoming well, truly, and officially America's First Amateur.

Irving worked at the Marconi flagship station WCC in Cape Cod (Wireless Cape Cod) and as a shipboard operator. Obtaining Station Licence 1ZE, in 1921 he began to broadcast news, music, and entertainment to his neighbors in New Bedford and Upper Cape Cod, Massachusetts. His efforts came to the attention of the Slocum & Kilburn company which, in 1922, offered him a position running a broadcasting station from the "Radio Department" of their Hardware Store. In the last week of May 1922 the station — WDAU — went on the air officially. (Although Irving managed WDAU, he continued to operate 1ZE for more than forty years. Later, when International Prefixes were established, 1ZE became W1ZE.)

After some time Irving left WDAU to found WBBG. Slocum & Kilburn continued to operate WDAU until late 1923 when financial problems forced the sale of the station to Irving who brought it home (literally, he moved it into his house) and we may speculate that Irving thus became the first Amateur in the parade that includes N2BC, WB2SYQ, N2YR and others who have a "bit of AM

Power” in the cellar! We may also wonder how his beloved wife reacted.

Sadly, the story of Irving Vermilya ends in 1964 with his suicide — brought on by depression, his failing health, and the death of his wife. Irving was a pioneer and more of his history can be found online at <<<http://www.bostonradio.org/radio/vermilya.html>>> and in a lengthy extract from *QST* written by Vermilya himself at <<<http://earlyradiohistory.us/1917verm.htm>>>.

How WDAU ended up in Scranton is a story in another book, closed to me. Any who have information are invited to submit the same to the *BARA Facts*.

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#### **About Those Dues**

Please take a moment to check the “Dues Date” on the Address Label of your *BARA Facts*. If you are due, past due, or near due; you can be sure that our Treasurer Paul, N2NCB, would be glad to hear from you. Why not stop by the General Meeting this month to pay your dues and to find out what is going on with the gang?

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	
	Jim Lawson	KC2JED	
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, March 16th

Town of Binghamton Town Hall, 279 Park Avenue, South of the Ross Park Entrance

### ***Board Meeting***

7:00 PM, Wednesday April 6th

Broome Community College Campus, Office of Emergency Services (West Side of Campus)

### ***Exam Session***

7:00 PM Monday, March 28th

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

***Binghamton Amateur Radio Association, Inc.***

***P. O. Box 853***

***Binghamton, New York 13902***

*First Class*

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