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BARA Facts

Newsletter of the Binghamton Amateur Radio Association

September 2006

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

President's Corner

Today is the first day of school and I'm sure there are lots of happy parents out there! For my wife, my youngest son, and my daughter-in-law, today was "back to work" as the kids streamed (screamed?) back into school.

I hope everyone had a pleasant summer and managed to stay dry.

September signals the start of the Fall contest season. The annual September VHF QSO party will have happened before this is published and I am looking forward to some fun on 6 meters. September 23rd is the CQ HF RTTY contest, always fun and tons of contacts on the digital modes all around the globe.

I hope everyone spotted my shack pledge letter last month. Response has been good. So far almost 1/3 of the membership has responded and pledges total over \$7600. We need to keep going if we are going to make our goal. Please send back the pledge form even if only with your comments.

By the time you read this there will be two computers installed in the shack. Thanks go out to Mel, WE2K, for doing some investigative work with Binghamton Wireless. It looks like we can get a high speed wireless Internet connection on the hilltop without too much trouble. This will enable us to implement remote operation of the equipment. Imagine.... eventually any of us will be able to operate "from the hilltop" right from our own home!

The most important near-term event for the club is the 2007 officer elections which will occur at the November 15 general meeting. In order to keep our not-for-profit status, we need to have a full slate of officers. Contact Bob Handel, K2FU, or me if you are interested in any of the officer positions.

One final thought. The club officers meet at 7PM on the first Wednesday of every month at the Broome County Emergency Operations Center (aka the "jail" behind BCC on Front St.). The meeting is open to all BARA members. This is a great forum for new ideas. The meetings are noted in the BARA FACTS calendar page. Come to a Board Meeting, I promise much less intrigue than your standard Corporate BoD meeting, sometimes we even have fun! Seriously, this is the session where we do much of the club's "business". Come to a meeting and find out. — Until next month — *73, Bill, N2BC*

Radio Active

I'd like, as Editor, to take a moment to note our accomplishments in the past year and to remark on several items of importance to all BARA Members.

Today we have accomplished two things that might have been thought impossible a couple of years ago. In the first place, we are now a recognized Non-Profit Organization — a recognition that took a lot of work and required some outlay of cash on the part of our Club, but it gives us a certain legal standing and position that is to the benefit of BARA and also to our members.

Secondly, after much searching and field-work we have returned to our roots and re-established our presence at the Site on Milks Road.

Our Officers and several Members in particular chased down many leads and dead ends in an effort to find a permanent site before we finally concluded a new lease with the Milks Family. We are "home" once again and work to renovate and overhaul the site is under way.

So this September we — as a Club — can look with satisfaction at a job well done and begin to plan for the future. And it is this future that I want to

reflect on for a few minutes.

By now everyone should have received the letter soliciting pledges to place BARA Projects on a sound financial footing and I do hope that everyone has submitted his or her response. Given that “*No, with regrets.*” is a possible answer, there is no reason not to respond. We need to be frank: progress will not come without a plan and a plan cannot be executed without funds. The BARA Checkbook is not so well-padded that we can finance major activities with cash on hand and we need to be realistic and recognize that Club Dues and the Hamfest are sufficient to cover most ordinary operations, but they will not fund expansion. We can’t grow unless we have an estimate of how much YOU will support that growth.

This brings me to my final point: Leadership and Participation. I’ve been a member of BARA since 1995. Besides editing this Newsletter, I have also served a couple of terms as president and I have worked closely with our Club Leaders. I make that point with respect and gratitude, because I know how much has been accomplished and how much work so many of them have poured into our Club. In November we will elect new officers and as one who appreciates our leaders I would like to challenge YOU to step up to the chair.

It’s wonderful that we have enough confidence in our Officers that we elect them time and again, but as members we owe them a chance to stand down (if they wish) and to take a well-deserved break from office. No Officer would fail to appreciate a vote of confidence, but no officer should be taken for granted either.

That is my two cents, take it for what you will.

For my part, I am proud to be a part of this organization and to count you as friends. It is not by accident that I capitalize our Club: to my mind YOU come together as a group greater than its parts and I am proud to associate myself with BARA. I hope YOU feel the same way. — *Eddie the Editor*

A Good Time Was Had

Thanks to everyone who showed up for the annual BARA Picnic in the Park last month. Official nosecounter Paun, N2NCB, reports that about forty members, spouses, friends, and assorted hangers-on stopped by for an evening of fun and companionship.

The weather could not have been better and the bugs stayed home, so a good time was had by all.

A magnificent spread of assorted goodies tempted the willpower of one and all while a bevy of chefs and “kitchen assistants” stoked the fires and cooked the burgers and dogs.

Murphy, of course, stopped by, but in the Grand Ham Tradition we improvised, filled in the gaps, haywired the connections, and pulled through. The only thing missing was, well, the members who couldn’t make it. Happens, that’s life, we carried on for you and we hope that one and all will be there in 2007.

Thanks to EVERYONE who made the BARA Picnic a success and a “night to remember!”

Book Review — The Polish Officer

Alan Furst is noted for taut and realistic novels set in the World War II era. His heroes are decent men and women caught up in events that they cannot control and which they may not be able to master. Survival and maintaining their humanity and decency in a world falling apart is part and parcel of their daily struggle. In *The Polish Officer* we meet Captain Alexander de Milja a cartographer in the Polish Army and one of the defenders of Warsaw against the might of Hitler’s *Wehrmacht*. The outcome — of course — is a given, but duty demands and honor requires the full measure of valor of the soldier. But as the battle draws to an end the Captain is offered a mission: to spirit the National Gold Reserve to Romania. By page thirty-five the Captain’s assignment is completed, but de Milja’s role in the continuing struggle is just beginning.

Through Poland, France, Russia. Against the background of a world gone mad; a chess-game controlled by masters in London and Berlin is played out. de Milja — Sometimes a pawn, sometimes much more than an pawn — is one player among many and his story weaves with many others in a well-plotted page turner. Alan Furst has clearly done his homework: Facts check against history and the fiction is eminently believable. Of particular interest are the scenes connected with radio: de Milja communicates with his superiors through a clandestine Network that matches well the equipment and techniques used by the OSS. On the German side, the *Funkabwehr* deploys the best in German Technology to locate and neutralize the Network. These pages alone make *The Polish Officer* worth treading, but they are really an added bonus to a story

that stands on its own merits.

For an exciting and thoroughly entertaining “thriller” with a bit of a “radio” subplot you can hardly do better than *The Polish Officer* by Alan Furst (ISBN 0-375-75827-5). Be warned, though, that it is Sorry to report that Vincent (Vince) Homer, Jr., W3HGS, 86 years old and a resident of Sophia Lake, Brackney, PA (prior to around 1967 a resident of Vestal, NY) became a Silent Key on August 16, 2006. Vince held various positions, including President, in the Binghamton Amateur Radio Association. Fortunately there are a number of photographs of Vince (circa 1948) taken at the Milks Road hilltop site during field day operations. During World War 2 Vince served in the Air Force and piloted Flying Boats. He was employed at General Electric for 33 years in the engineering department. — *Jack, WB2GHH*

Memory of a Moment

In those fondly remembered and sepia toned days of childhood there seems a constant presence of wires, batteries, and assorted “junk”. Like many kids of my time, I learned the basics of electric circuits using batteries, bell wire, knife switches, and bulbs. Books from the library supplemented what I learned from my father and my neighbor Mr. Federline and by the time I was eight or nine I had a fair understanding of electrical work. An old Cub Scout Handbook showed me how a Crystal Receiver went together and I really wanted to make a radio that worked.

As was usual in those days I took apart such “junk” radios and TVs as came my way and one summer I hit the jackpot through my Cousin Chip who had acquired a “grab bag” of Electronics Junk through some surplus outlet. He presented me with a pile of parts — capacitors, test leads, odds and ends — and a mysterious “radio” in a metal tube with a screw-on lid. If truth be told, I now realize that it was an Antenna Matcher for some military radio. Hindsight tells me this for I can still see the SO-239 socket connected to “ANT” and “GND” posts through a LC Network and a “tuning light”, but to my mind this was a radio transmitter that could connect me to the world and I was determined to make it work.

With the enthusiastic ignorance of youth I set to work: “ANT” and “GND” were duly connected to a wire strung to the basement ceiling and the sewer pipe while headphones and a scavenged microphone

just as likely to be found in the “Literature” as in the “Mystery” section of your local book store

SK Vince, W3HGS

were connected in series through a dry cell to the SO-239. For hours I slowly tuned the Tank as I called for a contact using procedures gleaned from late-night WWII adventures watched with my Father.

Did I succeed? One magic moment there came a burst of static and a voice from the ether. I jumped and dropped the screwdriver used to tune the Tank, but the signal was gone — never to be heard again — but in that moment I was caught....

What had happened? The “wisdom” (such as it is) of age tells me that my cobbled-together “radio” was probably acting as a tuned circuit with a microphonic detector and I had happened to tune the Tank to a frequency that was in use (the LF, HF, and VHF circuits in Washington, DC of the 60s were full of traffic, I am sure) at just the right moment. My rig worked once and for a moment and then it was silent forever after, but in that moment another stitch was taken in the fabric binding me to the magic of Radio. Magic! How else can one describe the voice from the void?

SPecial hAMs

WOODJAH Beleave that one of the longest lines at the New York State fair on Monday Aug 28 was for samples of SPAM? Youngsters reading this are possibly thinking: “Who would stand in line for SPAM?” Elders reading this are also likely thinking: “Who would stand in line for SPAM?” How bout that. It is one of the few times in history that elders and youngsters, generations apart, are on the same wavelength (I had to work radio terminology into this article somehow). Oh boy, the same thought results from two much different perspectives. You younger folk consider that you receive enough SPAM on the internet and therefore don't need anymore. The rest of “us” consider we received enough SPAM as a result of standing in lines during World War II. (For folk who don't know what Roman numerals are, that is World War Two not World War Eleven.) Regardless of why YOU remember, SPAM or SPAM, it will more than likely be with us for a continued SPAM, oops I mean span of time. — *Jack Connors, WB2GHH*

Things To Do This Fall

- ☐ Return the BARA Funding Solicitation.
- ☐ Stop by at least one BARA Meeting.
- ☐ Think about running for a BARA Office.
- ☐ Mark your calender for the BARA Christmas Party.
- ☐ Get serious about upgrading or helping someone upgrade.
- ☐ Try something new in radio.
- ☐ Check into the STARNet.
- ☐ Plan to take in one of the Fall Hamfests and pile the whole family into the car for a nice lunch afterwards and a drive through the Fall Colors.
- ☐ Say thanks to someone you take for granted.
- ☐ Write an article for the BARA Facts.
- ☐ *Live every day and speak every word as if it were your last!*

Binghamton Amateur Radio Association, Inc.

P. O. Box 853

Binghamton, New York 13902

First Class

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Club Officers and Committees			
President	Bill Coleman	N2BC	748-5232
Vice President	Bob Handel	K2FU	693-4310
Secretary	Bob McCabe	KC2DSS	748-9808
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	Mel Snitchler	WE2K	723-9612
Newsletter	Ed Plesnar	KB2SCF	754-3810

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

e-Mail Address: w2ow@arrl.net



Next General Meeting

7:30 PM, Wednesday, September 20th

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

Board Meeting

7:00 PM, Wednesday October 4th

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

Exam Session

7:00 PM Monday, September 25th

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

Local Repeater Nets

146.73 MHz STAR Net (NTS Feeder) Every

Evening at 6:30 PM Local Time

146.82 MHz BRAT Net (Informal BARA) Sunday Evening at 8:00 PM Local Time