

President's Corner February 2009

Here I am in 2009, as BARA President again. Most of you are unaware that BARA is not the first amateur radio club for which I've served as an officer – that distinction would go to FLARC, the Fair Lawn Amateur Radio Club.

Fair Lawn is the suburban New Jersey town (15 minutes west of New York City) where I grew up. I joined FLARC in 9th or 10th grade, (I'd been a shortwave listener since junior high, and was looking to get my ham ticket), and as a high school Junior I became FLARC Secretary (the first post I held at BARA as well). By that time I had indeed gotten my Novice ticket.

FLARC meetings were a bit different from BARA's. For one thing, we met every week, but the business meeting was only held once month. After the business meetings, or on the other three Fridays of the month, we would hang out & talk about radios, electronics, etc., and fire up the HF radio. You see, we had the luxury of having ample, cozy meeting space in the same building where our equipment was set up (it was shared space, provided by the town to several community groups) – and a nice tower outside. One of our members served a couple of stints at the South Pole, and we were occasionally able to make contact with him there (ah, the good old days of high sunspot counts!) We also had a lot of test equipment set up in another room (and the attic looked like a hamfest, stuffed full of spare parts & tubes & such), so I was able to enhance my electronics knowledge.

The important thing about FLARC meetings was that we didn't exist solely to conduct business – we also actively participated in the hobby (with discussions and on-air activity) when we met.

At the last BARA meeting, no formal program was scheduled, so Tom Siglin (WA2LTD) kindly provided an impromptu discussion on an odd-looking 'show-and-tell' item he brought in (funkiest tube seen in a long time!). Afterwards, a number of us hung out for a while discussing all manner of stream-of-consciousness topics that the discussion spawned. And that took me back to my old FLARC days. THIS is what an amateur radio club was meant to be – personal interaction, where we get to enhance our knowledge of the hobby, and also trade war stories about operating radios, blowing up equipment, getting shocked by RF circuitry, and all sorts of other good times provided by our craft.

I would like to see this happen more often at BARA meetings. We've reserved one night a month to get together; why not hang out for a little while after the formal business is finished, and shoot the breeze? Me and the other 'youngsters' (hey, it's all relative, right?) I have a *lot* to learn from the old timers. And when the weather's nicer, hopefully there'll be several folks up for taking the short drive up to the shack site and actually getting on the air. There's no substitute for having seasoned operators at the controls, conveying their knowledge and tips to the rest of us!

73 de allen lutins KC2KLC