

President's Corner

September 2009

At last night's Business Meeting we decided to move the Business Meeting time to 7:30 pm. It had previously been at 7:00 pm; the change means that our General and Business Meetings are now at the same time. Business Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month at WSKG studios on Gates Road (off of Old Vestal Road) in Vestal. We may not have donuts or presentations, but this is where the nitty-gritty day-to-day details of running BARA are hammered out, and all members are invited and encouraged to attend.

Tomorrow I'll be volunteering to assist SVARA with their "Coffee Break" at the Whitney Point (I-81) rest area – a wonderful opportunity to get the various local ham-related organizations working together to promote our avocation!

I may have already made a new convert to the radio scene – a co-worker has expressed an interest in monitoring shortwave, and maybe even obtaining his ham ticket! I repaired a classic Icom R71A for him (when I first turned it on the 'magic smoke' started coming out – luckily no permanent damage done!), and also decided to use my knowledge to prepare a beginner's guide to shortwave listening for him. I've posted my guide online – you can check it out at www.lutins.org/kc2klc/shortwave.html. If you don't have Internet access and would like a paper or electronic copy, let me know.

Speaking of shortwave radio, I've notice a number of radio-related events in the news recently. At www.post-gazette.com/pg/09193/983408-53.stm you can read about Tom Stepleton, a Pittsburgh resident who noticed that a beacon atop the Grant Building, which has displayed "PITTSBURGH" in morse code since its dedication in 1929, was instead flashing "PITETSBKRRH". Hopefully they've fixed it by now.

Also, there's been more news of spies caught using shortwave radios to receive messages via "numbers" stations. Last June, Walter Kendall Myers and his wife Gwendolyn Myers, both ex-State Department employees, were charged with conspiracy to act as illegal agents of and providing classified information to the Cuban government. Court documents describe in detail their reception of shortwave "numbers" stations, and the use of computer software to decode them. They join a growing list of spies caught in this country utilizing this resource, including Adolf Tolkachev (a KGB double-agent arrested in 1981), Ana Belen Montes (sentenced in October 2002 to 25 years in prison for spying for Cuba) and Carlos & Elsa Alvarez (a husband-and-wife team out of the University of Florida, sentenced in February 2007, also for spying on behalf of Cuba).

Clearly hams aren't the only ones who recognize the benefit that shortwave radio provides for long-distance communication. Please write and me and let me know what *you*'ve been up to on the air lately!

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