



NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2003

REMARCS

www.marc-radio.org

DIGITAL TV, HOLIDAY PARTY AT NOVEMBER & DECEMBER MEETINGS

At the MARC meeting on Tuesday, November 25, **Ray Kiesel K3RIZ** will present a program on the transition from analog to digital television. This would be an excellent meeting to bring friends who are in technical occupations but aren't hams yet. Sometimes these people don't think they'd have much in common with hams because they suppose ham radio is an old-timey thing. Once they discover that ham radio and radio hams are interested in today's technology -- and tomorrow's -- they may be more inclined to study for a license.

The annual holiday party will be held on Tuesday, December 23, at the usual meeting location. We'll have special refreshments, and you're invited to bring your family members. There will not be a technical program, just good fellowship and good stuff to eat. If you have other holiday obligations that evening, it's perfectly okay not to stay as long as usual. At press time, we have not confirmed the name of the event captain. If you'd like to help with refreshments, please contact a member of the board to find out who's in charge of the party.

But wait! There's more! **Dick K3IIN** says programs for 2004 are shaping up. He has already lined up several programs on emergency communications and emergency preparedness. For example, after the lengthy power failures of this autumn, did you hear yourself saying, "I wish we had a generator at our house"? One program will be about what's involved in selecting and setting up a generator for the home. We're also planning a Skywarn training session and a presentation about what the average citizen needs to know about being aware of terrorist threats in the community. Put the 2004 MARC meeting dates on your calendar and attend these and other great programs.

PUBLIC SERVICE EVENT CALENDAR

MARC has two events on the November calendar. To volunteer or get more information about what is involved in participating in communications for these events, please contact **Bob N3JIZ** (610-687-4587).

Saturday, November 8 -- Penn-Wynne Library 5k Run, Narberth.

Sunday, November 16 -- Vietnam Veterans of America 5K Run, Norristown.

Both events need you to be there at 8 AM, and both are done by mid-day. At these race events, hams are stationed along the course to report problems or accidents to the net control station, who notifies the organizers to dispatch appropriate assistance. Most of the time, there aren't any incidents to deal with, and it's just a morning out in the fresh air. However, when something goes wrong -- say, a runner starts having chest pains that could be a heart attack -- having ham radio communications available can literally be a matter of life and death.

Doing these events is interesting, worthwhile, and not a strain on your brain cells. Why not volunteer for one of them today?

KIM KB3COV - SILENT KEY

MARC member **Kim KB3COV** passed away on October 1. She was only 48 years old. MARC sends deepest sympathy to her husband **Bob WA3PZO** and all her friends and family members. Memorial contributions in Kim's name may be made to the Lincoln High School Alumni Association, Railsplitters Three Scholarship Fund, PO Box 11102, Philadelphia, PA 19136.

LICENSE TEST SESSION

MARC will sponsor license tests on Saturday, November 1 at the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church. Arrive by 9 AM to do the paperwork. Please pre-register with **Bob W3ZQN** (rjlees@aol.com, 610-265-6032), because the session will be cancelled if no one pre-registers.

MARC members may take part in one club-sponsored test session per year free of charge. Waiting for the Morse code test to go away? Maybe it will, maybe it won't, but the sunspots are going away for sure for 11 long years! So upgrade now and get in on the fun of HF while this solar cycle is on its last gasps.

NICK FUND NEEDS \$\$ YOU CAN HELP A FELLOW HAM

Nick Bortnik UX0ZZ is a Ukrainian ham whom MARC has been helping for a number of years. **Mike KF3CD**, Nick's QSL manager, learned that Nick suffered from terrifying seizures. The state of medicine in Ukraine -- especially in the remote area where Nick lives -- is so rudimentary as to be incomprehensible to us Americans. Doctors in Ukraine could not diagnose Nick's problem, and he believed he was going to die.

Like Nick a family man with young children, Mike went into action. After lining up *pro bono* medical tests in this country for Nick, Mike fought State Department callousness for many months trying to get Nick a visa to come to the USA for medical evaluation. Finally, thanks to a person in Congressman **Curt Weldon's** office, a visa was granted and Nick came to the USA. His seizure disorder was diagnosed as the result of hurting his head in a skiing accident years before, and appropriate medication was prescribed.

This medication -- unavailable in Ukraine -- is still being sent to Nick, provided at cost by a pharmacist who is a ham. Nick's expenses for the USA trip and the ongoing

(Continued on page 4)

ABOUT MARC

wb3joe@marc-radio.org
http://www.marc-radio.org

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

4th Tuesdays, 8 PM, Tredyffrin Township
Bldg, Wayne/Berwyn. Guests welcome.
Smoke-free. Handicapped-accessible.

BOARD MEETINGS

4th Thursdays, 7:30 PM, Paoli Hospital.
Members may attend as observers.

SYSTEMS

145.13/R, 147.06/R, 224.42/R
145.13 & 147.06 linked, CTCSS 131.8 Hz
Webmaster: Steve N3ORH (610-327-8666,
smaslin@marc-radio.org)

NETS

Club Net, Sunday, 8:30 PM
Traffic net, M/W/F, 8:30 PM
Homebrewer Net, Saturday, 9 AM
All nets on linked 145.13/R & 147.06/R
Net Manager: Carter N3AO
(610-993-9623, n3ao@arri.net)

DUES

\$15 Full (licensed Amateurs)
\$5 Associate (unlicensed persons)
Family rate \$5 per ham after first
member pays full dues.

NEWSLETTER

REMARCS is published in the odd
months, edited by Kay N3KN
(610-993-9623, n3kn@arri.net)

BRING A FRIEND
TO A MARC MEETING!

ELECTION RESULTS

All candidates on the slate were declared elected when the votes were counted at the September 23 club meeting. Twenty-seven ballots were cast. One write-in vote was cast for secretary and two for public relations chairman.

Some members have asked why we have balloting when there haven't been any contested races in years. One reason is that the club's by-laws require it.

Of course, by-laws can be amended if it's the will of the membership to do so. However, amending the by-laws to skip balloting when there is no competition for a particular office would deny members the opportunity to vote for write-in candidates if they want to.

Did you see the ARRL Web story about "Tex" W5BQU, the El Paso, Texas, ham who is 103 years old and still on the air? Wow. MARC is proud of our own most senior statesman, Bill W3IGU, who turned 93 last summer.

VOX

Welcome new member **Carl KB3ILI**. MARC sends our condolences to **Bob W3LIA** and **Dori KB3JZN** on the loss of their 2-year-old grandson / nephew, and to **Marlene WA3UOC** and **Steve N3ORH** on the passing of their mother / grandmother. **Jerry WA2TTI** will be in St. Croix this month operating /KP2, when he isn't distracted by the beach and pool. **Leland N3LJB's** e-mail address at school is ljberman@cadet.vfmac.edu. Congratulations to **John N3RBJ** on upgrading to Extra. **Dieter K3DK** was one of 30 hams who did safety communications for the huge centennial parade in Hershey in September. **Harry W1JZW** is on e-mail as akenosian@earthlink.net. **Janet KA3VTQ's** e-mail has changed to ka3vtq@ccis.net. **Dave W3LAW** visited the Czech Republic; see his article on page 5. Former member **Roy W3GXR** became a Silent Key earlier this year. **Bart K4BF**, **Carter N3AO**, and **Kay N3KN** attended **David KA3HBK's** wedding on Flagstaff Mountain near Boulder, Colorado.

MARC members worked by **Kay N3KN** in the Pennsylvania QSO Party contest were **Dennis K3DS**, **Dennis KA3QOT**, **Dave WB3EHS**, **Charlie KB3CO**, and **Steve K3KFD**.

PUBLIC SERVICE REPORT

On October 26, MARC provided safety communications for the Radnor Run benefiting the American Lung Association of Pennsylvania. Volunteer communicators were **Bob N3JIZ**, **Dieter K3DK**, **Bob KB3FSQ**, **Steve KD0VA**, **Carter N3AO**, **Rick N3AGS**, **Gene N3HG**, **Floyd KA3OXA**, **Dick K3IIN**, and **Ray KB3IGL**.

Apart from one runner who experienced severe cramps and had to be transported back to the race headquarters, it was an uneventful event from the emergency standpoint.

MARC appreciates the help from those who served at the race.

TRAFFIC NET CERTIFICATES . . .
YOU CAN STILL EARN ONE!

Members and friends of MARC still have time to earn a certificate for sending and/or receiving radiograms on the MARC nets. Send and/or receive at least one message per month, and you'll receive a genuine, home-made MARC traffic-handling certificate endorsed for the months in which you participated.

Almost 3 dozen people had qualified for certificates by the end of September.

Knowing how to send and receive formal message traffic is an important skill that is included in the ARRL's emergency communications certification courses. Only one other club in the Philadelphia area offers regular VHF traffic nets on which all license classes can learn and practice the skill.

MARC's nets are training nets. You can hear how experienced operators do it and receive instruction in handling your first radiograms. Net Manager **Carter N3AO** will send you literature on message-handling and will answer your questions on the air, by telephone, or by e-mail.

Unfortunately, much of the message traffic in the ham radio systems today is spam that means nothing to the recipients ... or annoys them. By encouraging you to originate messages to people you know, or on behalf of people you know, MARC swims against the tide of junk mail with genuine messages that will mean something to the recipients.

FROM THE EDITOR'S JUNK BOX

"Bad boys, bad boys, whatcha gonna do? Whatcha gonna do when they come for you?"

We've all heard the saying, "It takes all kinds to make the world."

Can somebody explain to me why?

(It's called The Problem of Evil. Give me a break, guys -- I was a philosophy major in college.)

Traditionally, a bunch of us who like to work the Pennsylvania QSO Party gather on 75 meters on the evening before the contest to gab, find out who's where, and give (truthful) signal reports to portable stations.

This year, the roundtable only lasted half an hour because of relentless malicious interference. Unfortunately, we had set up on the 75m National Moron Frequency. Some fool with a single-digit IQ made loud hooting noises and played back audio clips. We ignored the QRM, but the fun was spoiled. Several of us went to 160m for a few minutes of idiot-free chat, but not everyone has antennas for that band. It was disappointing.

The argument that we need bad things so we can recognize and appreciate good things has always struck me as the sort of "makes you feel better as long as you don't think about it very hard" stuff you find on the inspirational paperback book racks at the Acme.

It assumes that humans are even dumber than we look. Give yourself some credit. You could perceive good if there were less evil available to contrast with it. You could still spot intelligence walking down the street if there were a lot less stupid going around. Think about the finest people you know. Do you really need the Enron executives, let alone the 9-11 hijackers, to get it through your skull that your good guys are good guys? I didn't think so.

Now, I can be reasonable. Supposing that dirtbags play an essential role in the world -- which I do not concede, this is just a "what if?" -- which cosmic balance would be wrecked if there were, I dunno, say only half as many morons whose idea of fun is making fun impossible for others? What universal scheme of things would go out of whack if the ratio of horses' backsides to horses' frontsides were a whole lot closer to 1:1?

While theologians, philosophers, and all sorts of bar-stool Einsteins may debate The Problem of Evil, in ham radio **Riley Hollingsworth** and the ARRL's Official Observers work steadily to ensure that Evil always has a Problem. That's a philosophy I can go for! -- **Kay N3KN**

MEMBERS-ONLY SECTION OF MARC WEB PAGE

There's a members-only section of the MARC Web page. At the present time, we have old issues of *REMARCS* posted there. Free copies of *REMARCS* are offered to prospective members, but we don't want to give away to just any old Web-surfer what you, as a club member, have to pay for. That's why we don't post the newsletter in the public area of the site.

What information do you suggest as content for the members-only section? Possibilities include Adobe PDF versions of the membership roster and the autopatch operation guidelines. Please send other suggestions to **Kay N3KN** (n3kn@arrl.net) or **Steve N3ORH** (smaslin@marc-radio.org).

Because exchange copies of *REMARCS* are sent to a few people who aren't club members, we aren't going to print the info on how to access the members-only section. If you'd like the password, please contact Kay.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2004

PRESIDENT

Steve Maslin N3ORH 610-327-8666
smaslin@marc-radio.org

VICE PRESIDENT

Bart Feroe K4BF 610-367-4288
k4bf@arrl.net

SECRETARY

Bob Haase W3SA 610-293-1919
rhaase@bellatlantic.net

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Carter Craigie N3AO 610-993-9623
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MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

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Dick Thompson K3IIN 610-688-0874
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MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

To 9/30/2004: Al Maslin N3EA
610-446-4936, amaslin@earthlink.net

To 9/30/2005: Gene Hoenig N3HG
610-353-3281, n3hg@arrl.net

CALLSIGN TRUSTEES

WB3JOE: Al Maslin N3EA
610-446-4936, amaslin@earthlink.net

W3NWA: Kay Craigie N3KN
610-993-9623, n3kn@arrl.net

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BOARD MEETINGS

At the September 25 meeting, the treasury balance was \$12,813.21. A letter was received from the ARRL thanking MARC for our \$250 donation to the fund to oppose Broadband over Power Lines (BPL). Future programs were discussed, and the board applauded the election of a program chairman for the first time in several years. The club has 3 public service events for the rest of the year.

At the October 23 meeting, the treasury balance was \$11,995.93. The repeater link was temporarily down because the '06 cabinet had to be moved and the cable wouldn't reach to the link radio. Plans for the 440 repeater were discussed. Reports were given on public service, future programs, the Nick Fund, and membership services. The board agreed to contact Paoli Hospital to find out if board meetings for 2004 could be changed to the second Tuesday of the month. A combined November - December meeting will be held on December 4.

NICK FUND NEEDS \$\$

(Continued from page 1)

cost of the medication are paid by donations from hams who want to do a kind thing for a fellow ham overseas.

MARC receives the donations, holds them in our bank account, and reimburses the documented expenses of purchasing and shipping the medications. Because some club members oppose spending the club's money on Nick, no MARC funds are used for this activity.

The most recent shipment of medication to Nick has depleted the fund to the point that we need to ask for more donations. MARC members are invited to make donations if they wish, ear-marked for the Nick fund. **Mike KF3CD** plans to pass the hat at the holiday party. If you can't attend the party, you can send a check payable to Mid-Atlantic Amateur Radio Club, with "Nick fund" on the memo line. Contributions for this or any other MARC activity are NOT tax-deductible.

If you'd like to know more about Nick's situation before you make up your mind about donating, please contact Mike (610-935-4429, mpilotti@anro.com).

WORKING THE 46TH SCOUT JAMBOREE ON THE AIR

By Steve Blatman N1HDP

On Saturday, October 18, Jon N3VZG and Steve N1HDP operated a JOTA station from a scout camporee in Warwick Park, Knautown, PA. Many scouts and cubs visited our station and learned a bit about Amateur Radio, and some stayed to play. Several of the boys helped tune the transceiver, listening to other JOTA stations, and several got to talk with scouts in other parts of the country.

We operated on 20 meters and 2 meters. Antennas were an inverted vee for 20 and a 1/4 wave vertical ground plane for 2 meters, on a 40-foot mast, all home-brewed. We didn't manage any 2m contacts outside the park, but we had contacts all over the US and Canada on 20. Our most unusual contact was a station on Moose Island, Maine, involved in the US Islands contest. We were hoping for some European contacts, but the only stations we heard were involved in contests and uninterested in working JOTA stations.

Since we were set up adjacent to the EMS folks (and since Jon was helping out there, as well), we ran their "Emergency Medical" flag up our mast. Jon will send pictures to QST.

COMBINED BOARD MEETING SCHEDULED

The MARC board will hold a combined meeting for November and December on Thursday, December 4. This is done to avoid conflicts with holidays.

2003 FIELD DAY RESULTS

MARC's 2003 Field Day score in class 4A was 3,120 points. Thanks to the interactive contest results page on the League's Web site at www.arrl.org/contests/results/, we can see how MARC's score (or any other club's) measures up.

First, let's look at Eastern Pennsylvania Section, where we finished 14th out of 52 total entries. That's just a hair below the top 25%. There was only one other EPA entry in class 4A, and they did a little better than we did. Although they had a lot more QSO's than MARC, they beat us by only 110 points.

Nationally, MARC finished 44th out of 111 class 4A operations -- nice to be in the top half of the bunch.

How did our neighbor clubs fare in Eastern PA Section competition? Pottstown Area ARC was 1st in class 3A, and RF Hill was 2nd in 5A. Only Phil-Mont and Warminster competed in class 6A, and they finished in that order.

Our friendly local rivals, the multi-club Field Day put on by Mobile Sixers, Marple Newtown ARC, and Delaware County ARA, made the only entry in class 7A, so of course they were in first place. Putting on a 7A operation is quite an undertaking, so they are to be congratulated for getting it all together. However, even with the additional transmitters, their 7A score of 2,514 wasn't as good as MARC's 4A score of 3,120. See you at Field Day next year!

MORE ABOUT ROY NEAL K6DUE

Phil W3GNG says he knew **Roy K6DUE** when they were both young fellows living in north Wayne. Roy's callsign at the time was **W3GIB**. This was around 1938, and both Phil and Roy were on 160 meters. Phil recalls that Roy used to ride his bike to visit a man named **Tom Consalvi W3EOZ**, who was probably Roy's Elmer.

Roy's father taught Latin at Radnor High School, and Phil can still remember him beginning the lesson on Caesar: "Omnes Galliae in tres partes divisa est."

CALLSIGN FUN QUIZ

1. **Jenny KA3WVD** is going on a cruise with stops in XE, V3, HR, and ZF. What countries will she visit?
2. A story about **Dave W3LAW**'s visit to the Czech Republic is in this newsletter. What's the usual prefix in that country?
3. **Carter N3AO**'s cousin Helen lives in Miami now, but her native land is the country whose ham radio prefix is YN. Where's she from?
4. If you go skiing this winter in Wyoming and Colorado, how many call districts will you visit? Which one(s)?
5. If you vacation in the area whose prefix is VE2, would it be useful to speak some Serbian?

The answers are on page 5. How'd you do?

MARC thanks the members who served as Net Control stations for the club and traffic nets in 2003: **Bob WR3K**, **Dick K3IIN**, **Ed KB3JGU**, **Bob W3ZQN**, **Bart K4BF**, **Leland N3LJB**, and **Carter N3AO**. Want to try being a Net Control in 2004? Contact Carter.

VISITING RADIO PRAGUE

By David Laustsen W3LAW

[Editor's Note: Prague, capital of the Czech Republic, has its share of drab buildings from the Iron Curtain era. However, because it wasn't bombed during WW2, the city still has a great deal of picturesque architecture in the older quarters that is being restored to good condition now. For hundreds of years, Prague was an important center of culture and learning in Europe. Today, it's a walkable, tourist-friendly city, and not very expensive. Carter N3AO and I did the old-stuff-and-museums angle of Prague on our visit several years ago. David W3LAW and his wife Jean took a look at something more modern.]

Jean and I visited Radio Prague (the international service of Czech Radio) in early September. The station broadcasts to North America in English and other languages. Begun in 1923, Czechoslovak Radio was founded by the Elektra Bulb Company, later known as Tesla, and had the call sign PRG. Later call signs were OLR3A and OLR4A. The station began with broadcasts from a tent at a transmitter site in Khely. The international service, known now as Radio Prague, began on August 31, 1936. Radio Prague now operates with six HF transmitters, satellite, and HF relay stations.

"Chip" Cip is still there, a consulting engineer for Czech Radio, and a founder and active member of the HFCC, the High Frequency Coordination Conference, an international body that coordinates frequencies of HF broadcast stations to avoid interference. He noted that Radio Prague operates with 100KW transmitters, a much lower power than some of the "big guns" in shortwave broadcasting. However, Radio Prague uses modern digital compression to get the maximum apparent loudness that it can from its lower power transmitters.

"Chip" notes that "the station uses a combination of rhombic and curtain antennas to cover certain target areas in North America." He wants "all the signal reports I can get" for RP on 7.345. Send them to cip@radio.cz. Be sure to visit the excellent website at www.radio.cz. There you'll find programs in Real Audio and MP3, and news in all of the languages in which it broadcasts: English, German, French, Spanish, Czech, and Russian. You can sign up for daily e-mail news bulletins from RP. Very interesting is RP's web feature on the Roma minority in the Czech Republic.

David Vaughan is the Editor in Chief of Radio Prague and is

the number two person in a 70-person staff. He is a former BBC correspondent, and he enjoys living in Prague. Vaughan is no ivory-tower administrator, however. You can hear him on a number of RP programs. He is intrigued by the political soup of today's Europe -- whether and when the Czech Republic will become a member of the EU -- and the prospects for power-sharing in any EU constitution. A renaissance man, he hosts a classical music program and a literature feature on the station, as well as conducting news interviews.

"We're in a transition period in the Czech Republic," he observes, and "money is tight -- we have a staff of seventy." He notes that radio license fees and government appropriations pay for the two million dollar budget of RP. He emphasizes that "we have a completely different philosophy from the Swiss and the BBC," both of which have cut back or eliminated certain shortwave coverage. "Our philosophy is to combine platforms, limited to a certain extent by internet bandwidth, but able to expand into local platforms, as we did recently in the U.S. where RP hourly news programs were aired overnight on NPR stations."

That experiment was ended by the BBC, which now occupies that same spot. "It's tough to compete with the money and influence of the BBC," he said. Vaughan says emphatically that "shortwave is alive and well. There hasn't yet been anything to replace it in covering large portions of the world -- Africa, Latin America, and India. Digital Radio Mondiale could bring a revolution in sound on short wave," he said.

Today's Radio Prague has two buildings attached by a elevated pedestrian bridge. The newest structure is suspended on immense black springs which damp the vibrations caused by the subway trains running below the building. In 2000, RP built all-new digital studios. Journalists no longer use reel-to-reel tape. Field recording is done on mini-disc and is edited on a computer. The station uses the Dalet digital system of broadcasting. RP publishes a series of eight collector QSL cards every year. These are highly prized by collectors.

The friendly folks at Radio Prague will be happy to give you a tour of their station if you're visiting -- and maybe the address of their favorite Czech restaurant.

CALLSIGN FUN QUIZ ANSWERS

1. XE = Mexico, V3 = Belize, HR = Honduras, ZF = Cayman Islands.
2. The usual prefix in the Czech Republic is OK. In contests, you'll also hear Czech callsigns with OL prefixes.
3. YN is the usual prefix in Nicaragua.
4. You'll visit 2 call districts. Colorado is in the 0 district, and Wyoming is in 7. Without looking at a call district map, how many of the other states in the 0 and 7 districts can you name?
5. You might find a few Serbian-speakers in VE2, but you'll have a lot more use for French, because VE2 is Quebec, Canada.

"PENNSYLVANIA 67" AWARD

MARC sponsors an award for confirmed contacts with all of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. If things go as planned, the award should be mentioned in CQ magazine's awards column sometime early next year. For information about the award, contact **Kay N3KN** (n3kn@arrl.net).

Another state-themed award is the Penn-Ohio DX Society's Worked All Around Pennsylvania award. To qualify for this award, you must have in your possession six QSL cards indicating that you have made contact with each of the six states surrounding Pennsylvania via the HF bands. E-QSL's are not valid for this award. Sound deceptively easy, doesn't it? For details, contact **Jay N3DQU** (n3dqu@aol.com).

LOOKING AT LOGBOOK OF THE WORLD

By Kay Craigie N3KN

When we can pay our bills on the Web, some hams haven't understood why the ARRL and other major award sponsors do not accept "electronic QSL cards" -- QSL card images or QSO data e-mails exchanged over the Internet.

Long years ago, there was an "everybody's a Boy Scout" attitude about these things. It was assumed that nobody would want an award gained with phony QSL's, that nobody would lie about operating from a rare DX location. Proof that there were indeed some rotten apples in our bunch caused the Boy Scout to move to Missouri -- "Show me!"

In 1991, I was appointed to the ARRL Board committee tasked with making rules for checking of QSL's by volunteers for the DX Century Club (DXCC) award. I learned we were involved in something deeply controversial. Serious DXers didn't trust anybody but the ARRL DXCC Desk professionals to check DXCC cards. It took some doing to win them over.

Am I exaggerating the DXers' attitude? If we had a DX association in the Philadelphia area, you'd discover I'm not kidding when I call these people "serious." If the League blew the integrity of DXCC, no hole would be deep enough to hide in.

Is all the talk about DXCC integrity a load of self-aggrandizing hooley? No, it isn't. I have seen letters from the DXCC Desk kicking people out of DXCC for submitting forged or altered

QSL cards. In the 1990's, a Russian named **Romeo Stepanenko** claimed to be operating from super-rare North Korea. When this was proved false, Romeo was thrown out of DXCC. I know some DXers who were angry enough to throw him out the window! Anyway, the DXCC rules do have teeth.

However, just as there was reason to begin field checking of DXCC applications in the 1990's, there is reason to find a means of electronic confirmations in the 2000's. The software exists to do this now without risking the integrity of awards that have profound importance to many hams.

ARRL's Logbook of the World is the result. Yes, it's complicated to get started in the program, but once you've established your *bona fides*, things move right along.

Will ARRL continue to have QSL bureaus? Yes. Will ARRL continue to accept paper QSL cards for awards? Yes. Is Logbook of the World a profit-making scheme? No, the goal is break-even.

It's too bad that the dishonesty of a few hams necessitates all this legalistic rigmarole to protect the majority who do our best to be honorable people. However, instead of moping about that, let's spend our time working DX on the air, so no matter how we choose to confirm our contacts, we'll have fun, fun, and more fun with ham radio.

ECHOLINK TO ACCEPT DIGITAL CERTIFICATES ISSUED BY THE ARRL'S "LOGBOOK OF THE WORLD" PROGRAM

EchoLink, the Amateur Radio Internet linking system, has announced that it will begin using digital certificates issued under the American Radio Relay League's Logbook of the World (LOTW) contact-verification program as an alternate means of authenticating new users.

Upon requesting access to EchoLink, new users are often asked to provide proof of license to maintain system security. EchoLink system administrators currently process dozens of Amateur license photocopies each day, received by fax and e-mail. To streamline the process, EchoLink users who are participants in LOTW will be now able to prove their identities using LOTW digital certificates issued by the ARRL.

Once validated, new EchoLink users are able to set up simplex or repeater links that can communicate by voice over the Internet with any of thousands of other Amateur stations. Users can also use EchoLink to connect to distant stations directly from their PC.

"This is a major step forward in interconnecting Amateur Radio with the Internet," said **Jonathan Taylor K1RFD**, developer of the EchoLink system. "The merger of these two technologies

has always been hindered by the need for strong, reliable authentication. By issuing trustworthy digital certificates, the ARRL is making it easier for systems like EchoLink to leverage communications technologies that enhance the value of the Amateur Radio Service."

Now in its second year of operation, EchoLink has been adopted by more than 100,000 licensed Amateurs in 138 countries worldwide, with nearly 175 new users being added each day. The software and access to the system is offered free of charge to licensed Amateurs, and the system is managed by an all-volunteer staff of hams on three continents. Information on EchoLink is available at www.echolink.org.

[Editor's note: A few people have jumped to the mistaken conclusion that EchoLink's use of LOTW certificates means the League plans to accept EchoLink contacts for awards such as DXCC, VHF-UHF Century Club, and Worked All States. That is not true. ARRL offers awards and award endorsements for contacts made using Amateur Radio satellites, but no contacts made using other kinds of active repeating devices or power relay methods are valid for DXCC, VUCC, and WAS. There is no thought of changing that policy.]

*Feeling thankful for Amateur Radio?
Act on the feeling by joining ARES / RACES today!*

ANTENNA TALES

By Cliff Bader W3NNL

*[Editor's note: When Cliff heard about how **Carter N3AO** clobbered his left thumb with a misfiring slingshot gizmo that launches antenna wires over tree branches, he e-mailed some stories designed to remedy pain with laughter.]*

Back in the sixties, I was part of a group that had Field Day along the Schuylkill behind Synthane Corp. in Oaks. There were a lot of tall trees along the river bank which were ideal for supporting horizontal dipoles. Usually we resorted to ladders and old fashioned tree climbing, but on two occasions we got lazy and tried variations of the ballistic approach, with disastrous results.

My 1-inch Greenlee radio tube socket punch was just the perfect weight for throwing, so I tied a coil of string to it and tried to heave it over the desired limb. After a couple of near misses it soared right over the perfect spot, just as the line tangled around my shoe and broke. The punch made a beautiful arc past the tree and landed with a kerplunk right in the middle of the Schuylkill, where it rests to this day.

The next year, one of the guys brought his bow and arrows with line attached and had a go at it. Unfortunately, the trees had a lot of small branches for the line to get wrapped around, and we wound up with a bunch of broken lines and a tree festooned with arrows hanging by the remnants of their line. To add insult to injury (or vice versa), every now and then a breeze would loosen things and an arrow would come zinging down and imbed itself in the ground, so it was worth your life to walk under the tree. I think they all came down by the time we broke camp. Thank goodness we never tried a slingshot.

Back in the 1930's, my late friend **Lew Nagy W3FFX** got per-

mission from the landlord to tie one end of his dipole to the chimney of the house behind his parent's place in Phoenixville, where he had his shack. A new tenant moved into the house and bought a console radio, for which he needed an antenna. He went up on the roof, saw an antenna already there, and hooked a wire from it to the set. The first time Lew hit the key, the radio emitted a cloud of smoke and went belly up. Needless to say, Lew was unpopular. Always the mad Hungarian, he later had an antenna of heavy wire hooked to the chimney of the local AME church. A tree limb came down on the antenna. The wire held, but the chimney didn't.

In the late sixties, I had a TA33 Jr. beam mounted on the back of the house. One day I took off the headphones while sending but still heard code. Unplugging them didn't help, and I suddenly realized that the sidetone was coming from outside!

It turned out that the antenna had a bad trap that was arcing. The outer metal tube made a nice cavity resonator for sound waves, and the tone was emitted from its weep holes, just like a train whistle.

As far as I know, I'm the only ham who had a combination antenna and sidetone oscillator.

I've done a number on my left thumb with a hammer countless times, and had it whacked by the bolt of my M1 rifle in ROTC, and the thing seems diabolically equipped with nerves that have a priority connection to the brain.

Look at the bright side--at least you aren't in the middle of hitchhiking across the country.

Happy Holidays from MARC!

OPERATING FUN

Some people like to operate in contests for the competition, while others do it to work new states and countries. It's also a way of building up operating skills under heavy QRM. November and December offer a number of HF operating events to try. If contesting annoys you, remember that by custom there is no contesting on 12, 17, and 30 meters, so you can always QSY to those bands. To find out about competitive operating events of all kinds, check WA7BNM's contest calendar web page at www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/index.html.

ARRL November Sweepstakes

(CW: 2100Z November 1 - 0300Z November 3. SSB: 2100Z November 15 - 0300Z November 17)

Sweepstakes began as a traffic-handling contest, and its lingo still reflects that history. The exchange resembles the preamble of a radiogram. In the CW edition, the speeds are not for the faint of heart, given the length of the exchange. See October QST, page 107, and www.arrl.org/news/features/2003/10/21/1/?nc=1 for more Sweepstakes information and the ARRL web site at www.arrl.org/contests/forms/ for info about all ARRL contests.

CQ World Wide DX Contest - CW

(0000Z November 29 - 2400Z November 30)

DX from all over the world is on the air during the CQWW contests. The exchange is easy: 599 plus your CQ zone. Nearly all MARC members live in CQ zone 5, so we would send 59905. Many CW contesters use abbreviations for numbers: 9 become N, A becomes 1, and 0 becomes T. Please avoid calling USA stations in your home zone. They get no points for working you. Canadian stations in your home zone are okay. Info about CQ magazine's contests is posted at www.cq-amateur-radio.com/awards.html.

ARRL 10 Meter Contest - Phone and/or CW

(000Z December 13 - 2400Z December 14)

As the sunspot cycle declines, we work less DX and more North America in this contest. Even if the path to Europe is dead, there may be some trans-equatorial propagation to South America. The exchange is 59 or 599 plus your state. DX stations and stations in USA territory outside the contiguous 48 states will send the signal report and a serial contact number.