



REMARCS



MARCH / APRIL, 1997

MEMBERSHIP DUES PAYABLE NOW

Maybe you have been in a tango-dancing marathon, or trapped up a free by a hostile Chihuahua, or busy dipping lizards in chocolate for your son-in-law's snack shop for the terminally weird, or participating in a tree-stump look-alike contest . . .

. . . But the chances are you meant to pay your MARC dues and just forgot. If you did pay your dues already, then we heap thanks and praise upon you. If you can't remember one way or

the other, please check the sticker on the back cover of your newsletter.

All kidding aside (*that'll be the day!*), it uses up a lot of club resources and volunteer time to chase people down and hound them into paying their dues, if they don't respond to the notices in the newsletter. Please pay your dues now, so we don't have to pester you.

MIKE PILOTTI N3IRZ HONORED BY ARRL

For his humanitarian project to bring **Nick Bortnik UX0ZZ** to the USA for medical treatment, **Mike Pilotti N3IRZ** was formally commended with a Certificate of Merit by the ARRL Board of Directors at their meeting in January, 1997.

Mike was nominated for the 1996 ARRL International Humanitarian Award by our club's Board of Directors. With assistance from **Bob WA3PZO**, an excellent nomination was prepared by **Bill W3KRB** and **Bob W3ZQN**.

As it turned out, the International Humanitarian award was given to the two hams who founded MediShare International, a program of the Medical Amateur Radio Council (MARCO).

However, because the other two nominees for the International Humanitarian Award also deserve recognition, the League decided that **Mike N3IRZ** and **James Jacobs K1GHT** should receive Certificates of Merit.

Wearing another hat, it was your editor's great pleasure to offer the ARRL Board motion honoring Mike.

In a world where a lot of people won't give you the time of day, one ham's devotion of countless hours to getting help for one other person who is sick, scared, and thousands of miles away is truly remarkable. Thank you, Mike, for reminding us that one Radio Amateur CAN make a very big difference.

MEETING ROOM CLEAN-UP DAY APRIL 26

The Winsor Room at the library in Wayne has been our home free of charge for quite a few years. Recently, people noticed that the room has become dirty. Rather than complain, the Board decided to volunteer the club to clean up the Winsor Room and the adjacent kitchen which we use for our refreshments.

The clean-up day will be Saturday, April 26, starting around 1 or 1:30 PM. Some club members plan to gather for lunch at nearby Minella's Main Line Diner about noon before heading over to the library to clean.

All cleaning supplies will be provided. The job should go quickly if enough people help. Knowing our members, we'll have more than a few laughs along the way.

Parking on Saturdays in Wayne can be tight. It may be necessary to park on a nearby street. There is a metered parking lot across Lancaster Avenue by the train station, if all else fails.

MARCH / APRIL MEETING PROGRAMS

Our March program will be on the Automatic Packet Reporting System (APRS), an innovative integration of packet radio, mapping graphics, and the Global Positioning System. It's being used in emergency communications, and ARRL has recently published a book explaining how to use it.

The April program will feature **Gene Pressler W3ZXV**, describing how he used radio to track the comet that crashed into Jupiter. Here's a program that will be literally out of this world! **Dave N3LHY** has more programs scheduled that you won't want to miss. Stay tuned . . .

FROM THE EDITOR'S JUNK BOX

This isn't about ham radio, so if you only read things with schematics, press "0" now. This is going to be plain talk, so if reality isn't your cup of tea, do not pass "go."

Nice, middle-class Americans like my parents, who worked for everything they had and did the very best they could, simply do not look at each other over the dinner table one evening and say, "Hey, sweetie, how about we take no thought whatsoever for our future old age, so we can wind up old, sick, broke, and a burden to our kids?"

They don't say it. They just do it.

My parents made no provisions for what would happen to them if they became disabled and could no longer live in their own home, no plans for how they would pay for the care they might need. Social Security and pension? Peanuts, compared to what it costs two disabled old people (or even one disabled old person) to live. Medicare? Medicare doesn't pay for ordinary nursing home care or the expensive medicines many older people must take to stay alive.

Dad, who is 83, has osteoarthritis in his spine. Despite the efforts of doctors, surgeons, and physical therapists, he isn't likely to walk very much again and so he uses a wheelchair to get around. From time to time, he gets compression fractures in the spine, causing intense pain that only strong narcotic painkillers can control. And he has heart problems, kidney problems, and an incurable bone-marrow condition.

Mom, who's 82, has a dementing illness (possibly Alzheimer's disease), in addition to major heart ailments. Her mind is like Teflon (nothing sticks to it), and although she still recognizes her family, her day-to-day reality just isn't what you and I call home. Trust me, it's a place we do not want to go.

One week last summer, both Mom and Dad fell down and broke their right hips, Mom on Wednesday, Dad on Friday. Mom has never believed she broke her hip. Some of the things she DOES believe... are unbelievable.

I recently moved both parents to a less-expensive nursing home, to get

their combined nursing home bill DOWN to about \$10,000 a month. That's what I said, a month. Not per year. Do the arithmetic! At that rate, how long would your assets last?

I am still working on cleaning out their house so I can fix it up and sell it for them. I've sold furniture, knick-knacks, old wrist-watches, ham gear, costume jewelry, an antique doll, old clothing buttons, a lawn tractor . . . and given away tons of stuff to charity or put it in storage for Jenny. I've donated a dozen bags of canned food to the poor and thrown away other food so old the labels were in Latin. My parents never threw anything away . . . 8 or 10 broken electric razors, a bank book from 1923, car loan papers from the 1930's, stained old table linens you wouldn't put under the dog's bowl.

There is still a mountain of stuff to dispose of . . . what can I sell? what should I trash? . . . and then repairs to arrange and oversee. There are bills and taxes to be paid, accounts to balance, forms to fill out, doctors to confer with, bureaucratic snarl-ups to untangle, endless photos and personal papers to sort . . . two households to manage instead of one, and two old people to comfort.

Now it's unsolicited advice time. You can take it or leave it. But think about it. First, if you qualify to purchase long-term care insurance, to defray nursing home bills Medicare doesn't cover, DO IT NOW. Or look into "life care" facilities, of which there are quite a few around the Philadelphia area. Unless you are very wealthy, your assets will not last as long as you do, if you become chronically ill or disabled. "Oh, my kids will take care of me." Really? And what will they use for a life, while they're doing that for years and years?

Second, get rid of stuff you don't use or need any more. Sell it, give it to charity, foist it off on your kids, or throw it away. Your family will have enough to do overseeing your personal care and your financial affairs, without having to dispose of a lifetime's worth of stuff, junk, tools, whatzits, broken things, scary old clothes that haven't fit in years, tons of books-papers-magazines, ten-year-old cans of food, a freezer full of dried-up TV dinners, and several million objects

whose origins and functions are known but to God.

Third, rely on your friends and be candid with your family. Don't be too embarrassed, suspicious, afraid, proud, or mule-headed to ask for help. Talk with family members about your future. If you're afraid of nursing homes, life-care facilities, or retirement villages, get over it. I certainly have.

My parents are intensely shy, private people who concealed even from me a great deal of what was going on with their lives.

They concealed it from themselves, too. "We'll see," they replied when I suggested a couple of years ago that maybe the increasingly dirty, cluttered, ill-maintained house was getting to be too much for them. If you've ever been a parent or a kid, you know that "We'll see," said with that fixed smile, means "Never in a million billion years."

The moral of this story is "Don't wait until the dirt hits the fan to think about buying a vacuum cleaner." None of us intends to end up broke, sick, and a burden. But the absence of bad intentions is not worth a damn unless we fake some steps to help ourselves.

I don't know if I would have been wise enough to learn from someone else's experience. But as I get to know more people with aging parents in chronic ill health, who may have dementing illnesses such as Alzheimer's, I discover that a great many Americans are finding out it CAN happen to us.

On the whole, I have an extraordinarily good life. Carter and Jenny have never let me carry the weight alone. But there are those days when I think I am going to pull my hair out by the handfuls. It didn't have to be this hard.

Although Carter and I will no doubt aggravate the hell out of Jenny in one way or another before she is through with us, we are doing everything possible to take responsibility for our own futures. None of us has a crystal ball (If you do, I want to talk to you about the Pennsylvania Lottery!), so all we can do is the best we can do.

-- 73 de Kay WT3P