



REMARCS



JANUARY / FEBRUARY, 1997

ELECTION, AUCTION HEADLINE JANUARY MEETING

The 1997 Board of Directors will be elected at the January 16 meeting. Ballots are enclosed with this newsletter. If yours is missing or mangled, please contact the editor for a replacement. Instructions on how to cast your vote are printed on the ballot. Let's thank **Deb AA3HE** for chairing the nominations effort . . . it is not an easy job.

All will not be serious stuff at the January meeting by a long shot. The annual "Get that junk outa the house!" auction is usually more fun than commerce. The ground rules are simple: (1) Only MARC members may offer items for sale -- no dealers. (2) Ham and ham-related items only. (3) MARC

receives 10% of the sale price of each item, or \$10, whichever is less. (4) Tag items with your name/callsign, what it is, and (if any) the minimum acceptable price. (5) Take home any unsold items. (6) All items are sold as-is. MARC gives no warranties or guarantees, implied or otherwise, regarding items offered for sale. The club and the auctioneer(s) will not be liable for any problems arising from sales. (7) Bring no more than 3 items for sale, so all can have a chance to participate.

Best bets for sale items are small stuff and bargains. Bring some small bills or a checkbook to handle the 10% donation. Any questions should be directed to President **Bob W3ZQN**.

1997 Board of Directors Slate

President:	Bob Lees W3ZQN
Vice President:	Tom Porett N3JMA
Secretary:	Roger Hehemann N3VBZ
Treasurer:	Gene Hoenig WB3FTJ
Membership Services:	Kay Craigie WT3P
Program:	Dave Laustsen N3LHY
Public Relations:	Bill Owen W3KRB
Public Service:	Bob Palin N3JIZ
Technical:	Jeff Chapman WA3RIZ
Member-at-Large (1997-98):	Bob Haase W3SA

1997 DUES ACCEPTED NOW

The membership year begins March 1, so you have ample time to pay your 1997 club dues. Many people like to pay at the January or February meeting. Others prefer to pay by mail. We don't care how you do it, as long as you do it. Sending out reminder notices to the lapsed wastes volunteers' time and the club's money. There's a renewal form in this issue of the newsletter. When you send in your money, why not add a note of personal news we can print in a future issue?

W3NWA REJOINS MARC!

Founder's Callsign Granted by FCC Under Vanity Program

On December 11, 1996, the FCC granted the club's application for W3NWA as a second club callsign. This happened 20 years plus one day after the first membership meeting of MARC.

Bob Young W3NWA was one of the founders of our club. Tragically, he died of a brain tumor in 1982 before many present-day members joined the organization.

Former member **Doug N3ADL** says, "Bob was my Elmer." **Gene WB3FTJ** adds, "Bob was *everybody's* Elmer." By example, Bob set the standard for operating on the MARC repeaters. If you stepped over the line, Bob advised you to shape up. But he did it in such a way, says **Gene WB3FTJ**, that you felt honored to have had your wrist slapped. That's a rare gift!

An employee of Western Union, Bob was one of those legendary Morse operators who could copy high-speed code in his head while carrying on a normal conversation with people in the room. When he died, his wife gave **Gene WB3FTJ** and **John WB3ELA (SK)** each one of Bob's telegraph keys, because she knew how much the club meant to him. We don't know what became of the key given to John, but Gene's is now nicely mounted on a plaque and was displayed at the holiday party.

While it is good to remember this kind of ham . . . nothing says we can't be that sort of Amateur today. We're going to use Bob's callsign to provide learning and self-challenge opportunities for MARC members. Some ideas are already in the works, but your suggestions are very welcome. This is what Bob would have wanted.



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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



REMARCS



MAY / JUNE, 1997

MARC'S 20TH ANNUAL FIELD DAY -- JUNE 28 & 29

There are people who don't like Field Day. This is America, so they're entitled to their opinion, but personally I've always put them in the same category as people who have no faith in baseball and rarely change their socks. Editors are entitled to our opinions, too.

Is Field Day a contest or an emergency-preparedness exercise? Yes.

Is Field Day relevant in an era when most Amateur emergency work is on VHF FM, rather than HF? Experienced emergency communicators will tell you that teamwork and cooperation, self-confidence, willingness to improvise, knowing how to get on the air quickly using unfamiliar equipment under nerve-jangling circumstances, getting back on the air fast when things go haywire . . . in short, all the stuff we practice at Field Day . . . are essential skills when its a no-kidding, sweaty-armpits emergency like hams are contending with in North Dakota and Minnesota right now, instead of a pleasant community walk-a-thon. For proof, read the story on page 6.

What has contesting to do with emergency preparedness? Successful testers can copy accurately for hours and hours through mind-numbing splatter and QRM. They have learned endurance, concentration, accuracy, and assertiveness. The good ones have a lot of technical know-how, too. When the stuff hits the fan, you can do a lot worse than have some skilled testers among your emergency communications volunteers.

So Field Day certainly has its serious and educational side. But it is also a great deal of fun. MARC Field Day has a lot of laughs and good fellowship and pretty good food, too. Many long friendships began at Field Day.

MARC's idea of winning at Field Day is trying new things, learning something, and having a good time together.

Set-up will begin at about 10 AM on Saturday, June 28, at the site on Egypt Road in Audubon, PA. For more information and a map to the site, please turn to page 5.

HAMFEST COMMITTEE MEETING MAY 18



The next MARC hamfest committee meeting will be Sunday, May 18, 2:30 PM, at the home of Mike N3IRZ. Any member who wants to help plan and manage the hamfest is welcome to attend. We need people willing to bite off and chew a modest chunk of leadership responsibilities. It doesn't matter how long you have been a ham, what your license class is, or whether you've ever been to a hamfest in your life. If you have a positive attitude and some time to donate towards the event that raises most of the club's annual revenue, come to this meeting and get involved!

On the other hand, back-seat drivers, Monday-morning quarterbacks, prophets of doom, and gas-bags whose idea of

hard work is picking fault with others' efforts should stay at home and find someone else to annoy.

At the March 16 meeting, decisions were made about direct-mail distribution of flyers, vendor recruitment, distribution of flyers at hamfests and via electronics retail stores, selection of a food vendor, other publicity and promotion activities, and clean-up plans.

Main door prizes this year will be an ICOM IC-T2A 2m handie-talkie and a Grundig shortwave receiver. Find out more about hamfest plans and how you can get involved, on page 2.

LET'S GO OUT TO THE BALL GAME!

MARC night at the Phillies will be July 5. **Bob WA3PZO** has reserved a block of 25 seats in section 306 for the 7:05 PM game versus the Chicago Cubs.



Okay, we all know the Phillies are playing terrible baseball this year, but following the game is a spectacular Independence Day fireworks show that will make a trip to the Vet worthwhile.

Tickets cost \$14 per person. Other expenses at the game will include about \$5 for parking and whatever you spend on souvenirs and food. This is a family event where spouses, kids, dates, and friends are welcome.

Contact Bob NOW to reserve tickets and make arrangements to pay him. His phone number is (215) 624-6450, e-mail bjosuweit@aol.com. Deadline to reserve tickets is May 15, the club meeting date.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BOARD MEETINGS



At the March 27 Board meeting, it was announced that the ARRL Eastern PA Section Manager plans to have a meeting of club officials in May. MARC's membership in the ARCC repeater coordination organization was renewed for \$50. Several hamfest tables have already been sold. There were also reports about the repeaters, future meeting programs, and public service.

At the April 24 Board meeting, topics discussed included public service events, future programs, plans for Field Day, and the hamfest. Board members brainstormed information to be included in our annual ARRL Special Service Club renewal report. The possible site change for '06 is temporarily on hold. The treasury balance was \$8,614.54.

FROM THE EDITOR'S JUNK BOX

Watching the TV news reports from North Dakota and Minnesota, where cities are under water and on fire, where hams are doing their best to help others while their own lives and homes are besieged by disaster, you can't help feeling grateful for the benign environment of the Delaware Valley.

While many communities in the USA sit there like bowling pins waiting for nature to hurl the next tornado, flood, forest fire, earthquake, blizzard, or hurricane down the alley, we are in more of a lawn croquet kind of situation. We get whacked sometimes . . . but the balls are smaller and they don't roll nearly as fast.

This is not to say that big ones cannot happen in Pennsylvania. Talk to the hams who remember Johnstown and Hurricane Agnes, for example, or the aftermath of Three Mile Island. But the small-scale, short-duration emergencies more typical of this area hurt people and disrupt communities, too. Consequently . . .



Every ham should register and participate with his or her county's ARES/RACES program. No excuses. No "been-there, done-that." No "I'm-too-young-too-old-too-busy-too-this-too-that."

In return for the privilege and delight of being hams, we should all accept responsibility for learning how to serve the community.

A pretty good deal, if you ask me. **Bob W3ZQN** can tell you about Montgomery County RACES. For information about Chester County ARES/RACES, phone (610) 344-5000, Monday - Friday, 8:30 - 4:30. If you have information on ARES/RACES in Philadelphia and Delaware Counties, send it to me and I'll print it. -- 73 de WT3P

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 1997

PRESIDENT

Bob Lees W3ZQN, 610-265-6032
rjlees@aol.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Tom Porett N3JMA 610-896-8413
tporett@netaxs.com

SECRETARY

Roger Hehemann N3VBZ
rgrh@earthlink.net

TREASURER

Gene Hoenig WB3FTJ, 610-353-3281
ehoenig@pol.net

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

Kay Craigie WT3P, 610-993-9623
wt3p@msn.com

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Bill Owen W3KRB, 610-325-3995

PUBLIC SERVICE

Bob Palin N3JIZ, 610-687-4587

TECHNICAL

Jeff Chapman WA3RIZ, 610-265-6593
jchapman@voicenet.com

PROGRAM

Dave Laustsen N3LHY, 215-230-9816
dslaustsen@aol.com

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Bob Haase W3SA, 610-293-1919
Deb Kendzierski AA3HE, 610-644-5392
kenziers@ucis.vill.edu

CALLSIGN TRUSTEES

WB3JOE: Al Maslin W3DZI, 610-446-4936
amaslin@earthlink.net
W3NWA: Kay Craigie WT3P, 610-993-9623
wt3p@msn.com

MARC TO COMMUNICATE FOR MEMORIAL DAY PARADE



Volunteer communicators are needed for the Memorial Day parade on May 26, in downtown Wayne. As in previous years, MARC will provide safety communications for the colorful event.

Last year, we had a car in the parade, too. We hope to do that again. We will need to be in Wayne in the morning to receive our instructions and assignments. Contact **Bob N3JIZ** (610-687-4587) for details.

CLEAN-UP DAY AT RADNOR LIBRARY'S WINSOR ROOM

"Everyone says you're the nicest group who uses the room," said one of the librarians to our clean-up squad on Saturday, April 26. "You treat the Winsor Room as if it were your own." Library officials sincerely appreciated the elbow-grease applied by our volunteers: **Bob W3SA, Carter N3AO, Edie KA3NKP, Jeff WA3RIZ, Dan KA3KHR, Bob W3ZQN, Kay WT3P, Steve KD0VA**, and Steve's son **Andy WA0WGH**.

We washed the kitchen cabinets, counters, stove-top, and walls, then vacuumed and scrubbed the kitchen floor. In the

meeting room, we dusted all sorts of stuff, cleaned the baseboards, washed chair-back scuff marks off the walls, damp-wiped all the chairs and table tops, spot-cleaned and vacuumed the carpet, washed crud off the ceiling ventilation grilles, cleaned the chalk board, swept the projection room, and cleaned the lectern. We also dusted, vacuumed, and picked up debris in the lobby and coat-rack areas.

It only took about an hour and a half to do all this and more, and we had a good time doing it.

OPERATING FUN ON VHF-UHF

by Kay WT3P

A lot of hams today are looking for a challenge. Many of them could find it on the bands above 30 MHz, but outside the FM sub-bands.

There are many reasons why VHF-UHF may appeal to hams who're bored by whatever they're doing now. A great deal is not yet understood about radio propagation above 30 MHz. The higher the band, the more you must experiment and build your own equipment and antennas. If you don't have HF privileges for DXing, you can work stations far outside the local area on VHF-UHF, even work other countries . . . something you can't do on FM repeaters. You can earn operating awards and play in contests, if you want to.

VHF-UHF CONTESTS

VHF-UHF contests are held on weekends throughout the year. ARRL sponsors all-band contests in January, June, and September. Single-band "sprint" contests are held in April and May. There's a UHF-only contest in August. A 10 GHz cumulative contest is held on two weekends in August and September, and an Earth-Moon-Earth (moonbounce) contest is held on two weekends in the fall.

Other contests on the bands above 30 MHz are sponsored by CQ magazine and other organizations. Watch the contest columns in the ham magazines for dates and details.

Even if you are not particularly interested in competition, playing in contests is a good way to test your station's capabilities, improve your operating skills, and make contacts you can confirm to earn operating awards, such as VUCC.

ABOUT VUCC

The VHF-UHF Century Club (VUCC) award is offered by the ARRL for confirming required numbers of grid squares on each of the ham bands from 50 MHz on up. On 6 and 2 meters, you need 100 grids confirmed. On 222 and 432 MHz, it's 50 grids, and so on.

UM, GRID SQUARES?



The earth has been divided into 1° x 2° latitude / longitude rectangles

commonly termed grid squares. Each is identified by a unique combination of letters and numbers. Most MARC members live in the FM29 and FN20 grid squares.

Knowing your latitude and longitude, you can determine what grid square you live in by using a grid locator map, a chart such as the one on page 12-4 of the 1997 edition of the **ARRL OPERATING MANUAL**, or a computer program. Serious VHFers have their grid square locators printed on their QSL cards.

WHAT EQUIPMENT IS NEEDED?

VHF-UHF experimenting, award-hunting, and contesting are seldom done on FM. People usually use SSB and CW for these activities.

Many use all-mode rigs, either single-band rigs or one of the newer multi-band multi-mode transceivers such as the ICOM IC-706.

The alternative is a transverter, which uses an HF transceiver as an IF. VHFers who want to do CW/SSB on 222 MHz have little choice other than to transvert, since there are no all-mode rigs for that band.

As you move up into the microwave ham bands, you find more and more home-brew equipment on the air. Commercial ham gear scarcely exists, and the operators enjoy designing, building, and testing their own stuff.

You'll also need directional antennas with gain and amplifiers for the bands you want to use.

DO YOU NEED TO KNOW CW?

No, but it doesn't hurt. Helpful propagation Deacons on the bands above 30 MHz indicate band openings. Also, because a lot of VHF-UHF operating is "weak signal" . . . that is, signals barely above the noise floor

. . . the bit about CW getting through when SSB doesn't is very true.

If you become interested in microwave communications or moonbounce, knowing Morse is essential. That's what they use.

Some propagation phenomena (such as aurora) make SSB signals sound like people are gargling instead of talking, while Morse code is easier to make sense of.

On the other hand, some meteor-scatter enthusiasts report that SSB works much better for them than CW.

You can definitely have a lot of fun on VHF-UHF without knowing or using Morse code. But some interesting opportunities open up if you know CW.

MARC AND VHF-UHF

A number of club members have VHF-UHF stations and enjoy helping introduce people to this kind of operating. Some of them are **Bob W3ZQN**, **Steve KDOVA**, **Bob N3JIZ**, **Pete N3WUM**, **Rob W3S**, **Bruce N3JOV** (who has a design for a killer 6m homebrew Yagi), **Carter N3AO**, and **Kay WT3P**.

When will we enjoy a QSO with YOU?

TOWER CLIMBING SAFETY TIPS

Most ham radio antenna work is done in the worst weather . . . or so it seems. Anyway, here are all-season tower work safety tips from a professional tower rigger who spoke at the Pack Rats VHF Conference this fall. They could save your life!

- ◆ Wear hard hats and work boots - no sneakers and baseball caps, either on the tower or on the ground.
- ◆ Check all climbing belts for wear or damage.
- ◆ Have communication between workers on the tower and workers on the ground.
- ◆ Plan work carefully beforehand, and ask experts for advice.
- ◆ Take no shortcuts, and do not hurry the job.