SPLATTER

This bulletin is printed from time to time and issued to the members of the Tamaqua Wireless Association a Public Service non-profit organization

Dec. Jan. | Holiday Issue | 2003

NO – Your Rig Isn't Broken !!!

Prez. Al W3ZRQ

Over the past few weeks those who usually hang out or work on the HF portion of our ham bands have experienced what is called Sunspots or a Solar Flare. Aside from disrupting telephone and satellite communications, they also plays havoc with the Ham Bands. Resulting in what you might think something is wrong with your receiver, especially to the new-comers and neophytes to Amateur Radio who have never experienced this kind of reception before.



Right after world War II one of the largest Solar Flares or sunspot storms hit the earth in 1947 when it completely wiped out the ham bands for over 3 weeks. The ham bands had just been given back to us by the FCC following the war and at that time we knew very little about this type of electrical storms. There were a lot of hams who tore their rigs apart, thinking something was wrong with their receivers.

The NOAA Space Environment Center says this recent flare was the largest flare since 1976 when they began keeping records. The flare that occurred on Tuesday October 28 reached the earth's magnetic field on Thursday afternoon at 3:37 p.m. and since then we have been experiencing all kinds of weird situations on the ham bands.

One might think there was no activity at all and turn their radios off. "WRONG THINKING", If you remember, later that week we had the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights as we know it, came shortly after the sun spot storm. This is what you want to look for. If you have a beam, point it north and check the 10 and 6 meter band out.

Cruising up and down the dial I found plenty of signals, the only problem, I was surprised to what I heard. QSO's were short and Russian 4's, VE 6's, and JA's were among the sections of the globe that I heard on 6 meters. Each area was sporadic and lasted only 2 to 5 minutes then another section of the world was heard. Occasionally it will affect the two meter band. Look for CW signals around 144.100 mhz. and Sideband from there up to 144.300 mhz.

Another weird thing happened, CW and SSB signals had a funny wobble sound to them which I had never heard before. Although perfectly readable, they sounded strange.

So, next time when we get a good sunspot storm, don't tear your receiver apart, but turn it on and make some contacts by bouncing your signals off the North Pole. Have fun with your radio, after all it's all part of the hobby. Enjoy it !

Diversitility

Editor W3TI

If you decided to look that word up in the dictionary you won't find it, I just made it up. You'll find *Diversify, Diversification,* and a bunch of other Divers – words that all mean the same thing. It's different, a variety, a bunch of new things, - - That is what our club is made of. We'll try anything and if it's successful we'll try it again.

There are clubs that are strictly VHF, some are DX only, and others mainly QRP. Amateur Radio has so many different facets you can become involved in and if your interest lies in one category only, it's still Amateur Radio.



Tamaqua Wireless Association on the other hand is Diversified, our interests are many. Individually, each member may have one main interest in the hobby, but club wise, our interests and activities include VHF, Contests, DX, experimentation, Public Service, Radio Controlled aircraft, Mobile operating and many more.

Each activity TWA has is a learning experience, which is basically what a club should be all about. That old adage, *"Experience is the Best Teacher"* holds true. Our new and younger members who attended VHF QSO party, Field Day and the Pennsylvania QSO Party should have increased their know-how on erecting wire antennas, and yagi beams in addition to making that contact and how to make on-the-air conversation.

Assisting KA3FUL and N3HHH's Grave-dig and our own Tamaqua Halloween parade is an exercise in teamwork. We agree, just listening to an activity has some advantages but getting into the act yourself and participating is the better of the two. It's called *"Hands On Experience"*. Agreed, mistakes are made, but it is by our mistakes we learn how to do it the correct way. You learned early in life what happens when you stick your finger into the light socket, that's a learning experience. I bet you won't try again.

The same goes for Amateur Radio. There are so many things to be learned, some are only the little things, but are still a small part of that ever growing vastness of knowledge in this world of Electronics.

Ye editor grew up in an atmosphere where the local licensed amateurs were not to keen on sharing their knowledge and experiences with the new kid in the block who wanted to become a Ham. Hence forth, from early on this Kid had to go it alone. I had to learn it all by myself and I don't stick my finger in the socket anymore.

TWA Annual Xmas Party December 13

Last Call. "He who hesitates will be left on the outside, looking in", and if you haven't made your reservation for the Christmas party you still have time until December 7th. This is the clubs last activity for the year and will be held Saturday December 13 at Martha's Restaurant on Lafayette Street, Tamaqua. Happy Hour and socializing begins around 5:30. Let's try to get each meal ordered in advance so they can be served at 7 o'clock A cash bar is open for refreshments and everyone orders from the menu for your choice of entrée.



For your convenience we have a registration form on the mailing cover page of this issue. We must give the restaurant and your program committee a few days for preparation, all who plan to attend must send the registration form to the secretary before 12 noon on December 7. No telephone calls Please.

TWA Officers for 2004

Nominations for each of the judiciary in the club were opened at the October 17 meeting with 40% of the club membership present. On a motion properly moved and seconded, it was stated, "all club officials should retain their present office for the year 2004".

It was brought to the attention of the members present the club now has a few hundred dollars worth of items donated or purchased. It was suggested by the secretary we nominate and elect a second trustee as overseer for said club properties. After discussion KB3DYJ was nominated and duly elected as trustee for all club owned items.
NI3H is trustee for the club amateur call W3CMA

A list of club officers is printed on another page of this issue.

Membership Dues for 2004

It's that time of year again folks. In closing the financial records for fiscal year 2003 we are still solvent. Reviewing the budget for next year we have no need to make any increase in membership dues.

There is no increase in postage slated for next year and the only other expenses will be for Field Day and the annual Family Picnic. Each of the additional activities this past year were VHF QSO party and the Pennsylvania QSO party where expenses for each were self sustaining.

Taking in account of any additional activities planed, on the spur of the moment, for next year, we shall be able to hold the club dues at $ 10.00. Your donation is payable between December 1st 2003 thru March 1st. 2004

License Renewal information

First off, the FCC 605 form and the VEC 605 form are not the same. You can renew your license 90 days or less before the expiration date. If your license has expired two years or more it is not eligible for renewal or reinstatement.

There are three ways you can renew that ticket.

1.Go to an ARRL VE test session, fill out a VEC 605 form and if you are NOT an ARRL member it will cost you $ 12.00. There is no cost to ARRL members who can get the renewal free.

2. Or you can renew your license free if you go direct to the FCC web site using FCC ULS
https://wtbwww05.fcc.gov/cgi-bin/UlsDataEntry.exe
Follow the directions given for the renewal.

3. You can also renew your license for the price of a postage stamp. Before your license expires fill out the 605 form and mail it to FCC, 1270 Fairfield Rd. Gettysburg, Pa. 17325

The FCC 605 form is available from the forms Distribution Center by calling 1-800-418-3676

QSL Via the Bureau

In past issues of Splatter we gave information on saving a few peso by sending your DX QSL cards via the Bureau. That only referred to the out-going QSL's. But I don't think we told you about responding QSL's from foreign countries. ARRL prints the information in QST about once a year.

The United States has ten call letter districts, zero to 9. We are in the 3rd. District which is comprised of Maryland, Delaware, District of Columbia, and Pennsylvania. Each district has its own incoming QSL bureau and ARRL has no connection or anything to do with them. They are usually operated by a large club who volunteers the time to handle your QSL's. Here is how it works.

Foreign QSL bureaus send their cards direct to each district where they are separated by call letters, e.g. NI3H, W3TI, KB3FSU, KA3WGG etc. If you want those cards get a couple of envelopes 5 1/2 by 7 1/2 or 6 by 9 inches

W3TI Postage Stamps

A.R. Breiner W3TI
212 Race Street
Tamaqua, Pa. 18252

Print the data on each with your name and call as shown in the above example. Place a 37 cent stamp on each envelope, fold in half and put them in another envelope and mail to :

3rd Call Letter district
408 Hillside Avenue
New Cumberland, Pa. 17070

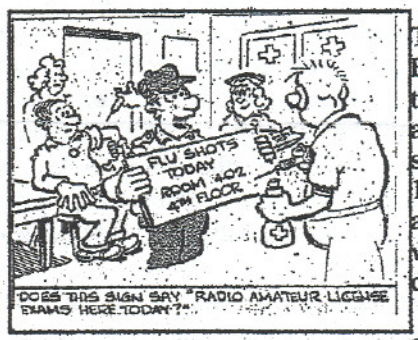
If they have any of your cards you will get them sent to you direct, not thru ARRL. Need more info, see W3TI

2003, The Beginning, the Middle, and the Finally

Editor—W3TI

.Wow ! What a year we had. Yep, year 2003 was a Jim Dandy. It began with a three day snow storm and that caused us to cancel the February meeting. Mainly because no one could even see our new meeting place, then try to get there was a job in itself because of the deep snow and winds made drifts and piles 4, 5 and 6 feet deep.

We started the January meeting at our new facilities in the East End Fire Company. Lighting and heat was just what our group needed. We reviewed our bylaws and a few changes and additions, such as; Members going into active service in the military will be maintained on the member list. And a "student membership" was added to our bylaws. It didn't take long before we got our first two student members.



A few weeks later the Tamaqua Volunteer Exam team trekked through the leftover snow and held their first session of the year on March 1st. There were still piles and piles of snow lay waiting for a spring meltdown.

The March winds were a bit late and showed up in the early part of April, along with the April showers. Only, the showers turned into rain storms and it rained. It didn't rain for forty days and forty nights, but darn close to it. The wet weather continued well into the middle of May which caused the farmers a delay in getting their spring crops planted. It also hampered us "Back Yard Gardeners " and we were late getting our Tomato plants in the ground.

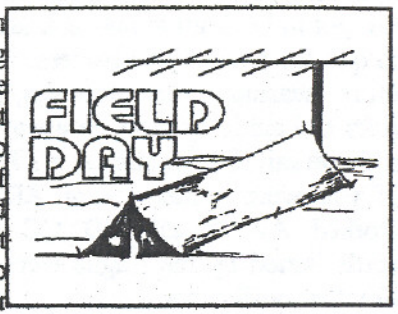
There was hardly any Spring season to speak of, so we waited for summer to arrive and plans were discussed for TWA's June activities. The VHF QSO party held on the second week end of June. There were no real band openings to speak of, yet it gave our new crop of members a taste of operating through QRM in a contest. Speaking of taste, NI3H prepared a mouth watering steak supper with all the added fix'ns.

Meanwhile, we had an offer for a 21 foot travel trailer, Free. All we had to do was haul it from Owl Creek (*close to our former Field Day site*) to its new home at Weickers Grove in Locust Valley.

It rained for 5 days in a row during the week prior to Field Day and we were all trying to grow webbed feet for the clubs greatest event of the year, Field Day. Then the Saints took pity on us and when the week end came, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday turned out to be gorgeous. Of course, Field Day would not be complete without some kind of problem, well actually it was almost a disaster.

Last year, 2002 N3HHH prepared and roasted a whole turkey over an open pit wood fire. The decision was to repeat and do the same again this year. But, instead of getting the same size turkey as last year, we had to have one much, much larger turkey. **Wrong Thinking**. The turkey was so BIG and that heavy the motorized mechanism on the spit refused to turn it. We had a dilemma on our hands. After some fast thinking, we still had Field Day supper of Roast Turkey, thanks to the XYL of KB3DYJ.

Meanwhile, week ends and early evenings of June, July and August were spent in preparing the trailer for occupancy as an emergency operating station. At its present stage you would never think it would look like a million bucks with all the refurbishing.



In the interim, when there was no work being done on the trailer, the usual work force would sit around the open pit camp fire and swap their tales of yore. They got so carried away telling stories that some got their shoes to close to the fire and their shoe soles caught on fire. Can you visualize someone's shoes on fire, running toward the creek, standing in the water to extinguish the blaze ?

Since that episode more members have accomplished the same thing. The place began to smell after burned shoes. They now have organized "The Great Fraternal Order of the Burnt Sneaker Society". Membership is open to anyone wishing to try it.

What little summer we had came and went before you knew it and in early September held the clubs annual family picnic as usual it was a blast. Some members didn't have enough picnic on Saturday so they started Friday evening and stayed over till Sunday. That is what you call dedication ! Or was it just because they needed the extra time for relaxation.

One of the items discussed at the picnic was the upcoming Pennsylvania QSO party on the second week end of October, and as usual, we had to get our feet wet in that contest. An HF station operating on 160 thru 15 meters was assembled and temporarily set up in the trailer. Unlike Field Day, the Pa QSO party moved at a more rapid pace and gave all who operated a good workout. After the smoke cleared and the log checked out we were surprised at our score. This is now another club activity added to the agenda and plans are in the works to enter again next year.

Then in October came the annual Grave Dig run by N3HHH and KA3FUL which was another blast. Followed by a few days later was our 37th. Annual Tamaqua Halloween parade which gave our parade team another exercise in organized confusion. But we all had a good time and fun doing it. Wow, is it 37 years we have been practicing for that event. Sooner or later we should be able to get all the kinks out and have it better organized. Practice makes perfect, only time will tell.

While typing up this article we had snow flakes flying around outside but no accumulation, but that is to be expected this time of the year. We still have the November club meeting and the last week of November is Turkey day followed by our TWA annual Christmas party.

In closing the financial accounts for year our club treasury is well in the black and we foresee no increase in postage coming soon, so there is no need for an increase in club dues. The above is only a thumb nails sketch of what is going on in your radio club. Are you an active member or do you just belong ?

Happenings Here' n There

Since our last issue of SPLATTER we gathered a few items of interest for you to peruse. If you are a subscriber to 73 magazine you probably got the news about them going under. Their last publication was the September 2003 issue. It seems the editor, W2NSD (*Never Say Die),* got in hock up to his neck and had to fold up his tent and quit the publishing business. The ARRL board of directors, hearing of his problems, said they will miss his quirks and snide remarks he always had about the league. So, as we sail into the sunset, it's R.I.P. 73 magazine.

If you were a member of ARRL 25 years ago the "Worked All States", "DXCC certificate", and other awards issued by the league were free, no cost. Around 1990 their coffers were running a bit low so they asked for a fifty cent donation to cover the costs for said certificates. Then they increased it to a dollar and lately it was a five dollar bill for the honor of working your butt off to get all those QSL's collected. Then you sent them to the league, with the 5 bux, before they issued the award.

While Section Manager in 1996 I attended one of the annual Director called meetings when the item was discussed about using e-mailed type QSL's as verification for league issued certificates. Their excuse at that time was the work load at Headquarters was becoming to great and they wanted to simplify the system.

Another point of interest, if your radio club was listed as ARRL Affiliated you got certain benefits and one of the bennies was a $ 2.00 discount on your annual dues if you paid them thru the club secretary. Over 70 percent of our members took advantage of those two bucks and reuped their membership thru the club. Annual dues at that time was $ 34.00 and with the discount you paid $ 32.00

In a communications from ARRL in 1998 we received notice the two dollar discount had been discontinued. Now you must pay the full price, or $34.00 to belong to the league. In the same letter we were informed the annual membership fee had been increased another five dollars which makes it now an even thirty nine bucks. Taking a quote from the "Good Book", The League Giveth and the League Taketh away.

The final results had a number of members in our area drop their league membership. The latest report, league membership has dropped like the glide path of a fallen rock.

Getting back to those league certificates. It has now become a reality. You don't need to pack all those QSL cards and ship them to Newington. Just connect your computer to the ARRL web site and get an application for the certificate you want. Submit the application to them on e-mail and after they look it over, will issue the WAS, WAC, or DXCC by return e-mail. But you must utilize your computer to print it for you. If you don't have a color printer it will be in basic Black & white.

Oh ! I almost forgot, there is a fee for all this, it's not free, you must pay the league for that copy even though you use your own paper and printer to receive it.

There is one thing left which is a bargain. Sending your DX QSL's via the league. Shipping DX QSL cards thru the club cost about five cents each. The club collects 2 or 3 pounds at a time before sending them to the bureau. Our next mailing will be the end of February. Gather your cards together and bring them to any TWA club meeting and we'll take it from there. Happy Holiday's ya' all .

The TWA Oath

We the Willing
Led By the Unknowing
Are Doing the Impossible.
In the Interest of Public Service.
We Have Done So Much
For So Long
With So Little
We Are Now Qualified
To Do Anything
With Nothing

TWA Officers

President Al W3ZRQ
Vice Pres. Darryl N2DIY
Sect-Treas. Al W3TI
Trustee Nr 1.Chip NI3H
Trustee Nr 2. KB3DYJ
Activities Mgr. Ed KB3DYJ
COMMITTEES
EC & VEC Bill WY3K
RFI Bud KB3FSU
Antenna Crew Steve KB3FJJ
Awards Darryl N2DIY
Bulletin Al W3TI
TWA Web site Shane KB3JFK

Did YOU get your name on the Christmas Party List ?

TWA Calendar of events

TWA Annual Christmas Party Saturday December 13.
December 24, Santa Claus comes tonight
December 31, Straight Key Nite
January 16, TWA regular biz meeting, East End Fire Co.
February 20, TWA Regular Biz meeting East End Fire Co.
March 6, VE Exams, Tamaqua Municipal Bldg. 9 a.m.

Tamaqua Wireless Assn.
212 Race Street
Tamaqua, Pa. 18252

TIME LIMITED MAIL
MEETING NOTICE

Cut Here- Return this part to the club secretary -Cut Here

TWA December 13, 2003 Annual Christmas Party

Registration Form, Please Check one line please

[ ] Please place my call on the preregistration list. I will be attending alone.

[ ] I will be there with ________ additional guests.
Number

Signed ____________________________________ Call ____________________

All Registrations MUST be received before 12 Noon, Sunday December 7, 2003