



QRZ NEWS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF
SOUTHERN PENNSYLVANIA AMATEUR RADIO CLUB, INC
PO BOX 1033 - LANCASTER, PA 17608-1033

(Founded June 1960)

AN AFFILIATED SPECIAL SERVICE CLUB OF THE ARRL, INC.

"Public Service through Communication"

Website: www.K3IR.org

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Repeaters: 145.230 - 449.975 - Packet 145.030 - ATV 902.145

October 2008

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEPTEMBER 2008 MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN PENNSYLVANIA AMATEUR RADIO CLUB (SPARC)

Held Wednesday, September 17, 2008, at the
Rapho Township Municipal Building

SPARC welcomes Kyle Hall, KB3RNL, as our
newest member.

The club is looking for someone to take over as
net coordinator.

The club is always looking for articles to put in
the club newsletter.

The club is planning a General license class for
the spring of 2009.

Terms for the current club officers end in
December. A nominating committee was
appointed to seek persons to serve as officers
and members of the Board of Directors.
Interested persons may contact George Gadbois
at gadboisg@dejazzd.com.

The club would like to have a technical
presentation each month after the business
meeting. Presenters are needed. The topics do
not have to be radio-related. Interested persons
may contact the club at k3ir@arrl.net.

A presentation on the Sable Island DXpedition
will be held on Wednesday, October 15, from

7:00 to 8:30 PM at Millersville University,
Osburn Hall. The presenter will be Chris
Patterson, W3CMP. RSVP to
Thomas.Bell@millersville.edu to reserve a
parking permit. Driving directions attached
with the newsletter

Some members of the club expressed an interest
in reviving the club's packet system to use for
message transmission during drills and
emergencies. Mike Warner has been working
with an email program called Outpost. There is
an add-on for Outpost that allows the user to
send data in the ARRL-approved message
format. It was suggested that we use 2m and 440
MHz to alleviate interference problems we have
encountered in the past when we tried to run
voice and packet on 2m from the same location.

SPARC's Special Service Club status has been
reinstated with the ARRL. The club received a
certificate from the ARRL testifying to that fact.

Upcoming Events:

- Wednesday, October 15 – Sable Island
DX presentation at Millersville University,
Osburn Hall starting at 7 PM.
- Thursday, October 16 – VE testing at
LEMA Training Center.
- Thursday, October 16 to Saturday,
October 18 – ARWG drill.
- Thursday, October 23 – Columbia
Halloween Parade starting at 5:30 PM. Rain
date Monday, October 27. Contact Rick Watson
at N3SWJ@arrl.net if you would like to help.

Editors Notes

There is very little new input on users DTV reception this month. I purchased a converter box for my own tests later this month or next. Please send any new data you have. I'll try to put a summary together for the December issue. Look back at the August issue of QRZ news for information on local broadcasting stations. Joe Lockbaum, WA3PTV, provided an FCC status report for the whole country which has station specific information. I'll forward a copy on request.

Fall is officially here and we haven't had much tropospheric enhancement on the VHF/UHF bands. Unfortunately, Lancaster County is too far from the Atlantic coast to get in on the coastal enhancement that has produced some great contacts as high as 10 GHz. Keep listening especially if we get some Indian Summer weather later this month or in early November. Warm days and cool nights are a good thing.

The technician licensing class at Lancaster General Hospital went well with about a dozen new licensees. I don't have the exact count. LGH is interested in sponsoring another class in the near future to get more staff members licensed. The Stager Conference Center is a great facility for classes of this type. Thanks very much to LGH for providing this service to the community.

Using QRZ.com

FCC Amateur station license information is a public record. Several sources are available for you to query that information. [ARRL](#) provides a search function for the data as do several other organizations. One

of the best known and often used services is [QRZ.com](#).

You should check your listing on QRZ.com and make additions or corrections as needed. You cannot change the FCC supplied licensing data, but there is a lot of information that you can add or change. If the FCC has the wrong information you must file for a license modification.

You may want to add your Email address so other hams can easily contact you. QRZ.com shows Email addresses as a graphic so that web crawlers cannot read your Email address for the spammers.

There is a place to insert a Postcard which is presumably a QSL card, but it could be a station photo. You may also want to add information about your station and Amateur operating activities.

One of the items you need to check is the latitude, longitude and [grid square](#) information. Grid square information is used for contest scoring and operating awards. Even if it isn't important to you, people who work you want the information. This data is used to aim antennas and at VHF /UHF you need it to be exact. Your grid square and other details are listed under 'Detailed info'. [Free software](#) is available to permit you to calculate antenna headings from 6 digit grid square data.

If you don't have a GPS device, get a friend to visit with one and determine the exact latitude and longitude at your station. Most GPS units have a display option for the Maidenhead 6 digit grid square, but you do not need that for input to QRZ.com. Latitude and longitude are sufficient.

In the unlikely event that a grid boundary goes through your station, you must decide

which side of the boundary you want to report. Once you decide which grid you want to report, tweak your reported latitude and longitude to agree with your decision. It is very bad form to later change your mind without actually moving your station.

ARES/RACES



As part of the clubs commitment to emergency communications, the SPARC repeater system is maintained as available for linking with other area repeaters.

Lancaster County VHF Net is held on the first Tuesday of the month at 2030 hours local time. Presently being held on the 145.230 and 147.015 MHz repeaters with minus offset and 118.8 PL.

Pennsylvania RACES HF Nets are held at 3993.5 kHz LSB on all Sundays except holidays.

The statewide net is on the first Sunday of the month at 0800 hours local time.

The Central Area (including Lancaster County) net is at 08:30 local time.

SPARC Nets

SPARC holds nets on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Tuesday (every Tuesday except the first) at 2030 local time on 145.230 MHz minus offset and a PL of 118.8.

Club Officers

President: Mike Warner - [N3XPD](#)

Vice-President: Rick Watson - [N3SWJ](#)

- Secretary: Position Open, VP Rick Watson, N3SWJ is presently acting as secretary.
- Treasurer: Ted Freedman - [K3KSA](#)
- Repeater Trustees: Dave Payne - [N3LOM](#)
- Past President: Dave Payne - [N3LOM](#)

When All Else Really Does Fail

Bill Sexton, N1IN/AAA9PC

Increasingly, Americans are living on the edge of disaster. Like reckless teenagers, we have been embracing risks while shrugging off the likely consequences . . . This is madness."

—Stephen Flynn: *The Edge of Disaster* (N.Y., 2007)

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For e-comm effectiveness, nothing beats being in the right place at the right time. Amateur Radio's great strength is the odds-on likelihood that wherever or whenever disaster happens, you'll find Hams within reach.

Certainly Joe Johnston, N7HAE (AARØPY), landed in the right spot when floods driven by hurricane strength wind battered the Pacific Northwest last December.

Johnston's home in Knappa, OR, was cut off from electric power, telephone, cell phone, city water supply and highway access. Nevertheless, for five days running the retired National Weather Service forecaster helped link up beleaguered local government with the state EOC and Army MARS HQ.

What's remarkable is that defying rock-bottom propagation, Johnston managed to keep emergency traffic moving over a

variety of modes and bands: via Army MARS WinLink on HF, Amateur Pactor over VHF, voice on HF and VHF. His G5RV survived the fearsome winds and his generator never ran out of gas.

Emergency preparedness: It's all about meticulous planning, right? Phone trees kept up to date. Operating SOPs rigidly applied. Net plans nailed down. Formal understandings cemented with supported agencies. Go-kits packed. Batteries kept on trickle-charge. Every "i" dotted and "t" crossed, nothing left to chance.

Well, that's one school of thought. Stephen Flynn, the retired Coast Guard officer now homeland security researcher at the Council on Foreign Relations, sees things differently:

- The really big disasters of the future — natural and manmade — defy popular imagination as well as society's capacity to cope. Think influenza pandemic on the 1918-19 scale (around 675,000 Americans dead, globally at least 50 million.)
- Terrorists won't be likely to gamble their meager resources on lesser targets after 9/11. Think something much bigger: an entire metropolitan area incinerated by an exploding LPG tanker, say, or the population of a major city sacrificed to a "dirty bomb."

"We will be attacked again despite our overseas exertions," says Flynn in his recent book, *The Edge of Disaster*. "It is as inevitable as a hurricane, earthquake, or major flood."

So, he argues, rather than focusing on thwarting lesser threats like aircraft hijacking, homeland security should be preparing to survive the more bizarre, unthinkable ones. To Flynn that means committing many billions of federal, state, and local dollars to restoring long-neglected infrastructure: hospitals, highways,

bridges, railroads, seaports, the already — overloaded electric grid — now.

"The uncomfortable truth about security and safety is that it is not just about preventing bad things from happening," he says; "it is also about mitigating the consequences when things inevitably go wrong."

But, you say, that's just not going to happen now, not in today's economic and political climate. And you'd be right.

Here is where Joe Johnston comes into the discussion.

In the "worst case" world that Stephen Flynn writes about, Joe's kind of Ham could be Amateur Radio's most useful contribution to homeland security: self-reliant, self-equipped, self-starting, on duty (as it were) in every corner of the country, and ready to respond in whatever role required.

Predicting the right time and place may lie beyond human calculation, but when the moment strikes there'll be Hams nearby. The question is whether their training and, yes, their imagination will be up to the mission.

Until *The Edge of Disaster* came along, my idea of the ideal e-comm operator was either a dependably regular participant in the nets and exercises of the sort operated by MARS and ARES/ RACES. Or alternatively, a highly skilled specialist — a whiz at net control, say, or maestro of the digital modes and WinLink. Or perhaps a managerial type who can pull together the separate realms of Amateur Radio and the emergency response bureaucracy, authoritatively speaking the lingo of both.

Here's the catch: In Flynn's disaster scenarios, the Amateur Radio structures that we're accustomed to — the MOUs, SOPs, repeater systems, HF net plans, etc. — may have been wiped out. Literally wiped out. That's not wild fancy; it's pretty much what

happened on a local scale in New Orleans three years ago.

Now imagine a 100-year earthquake spanning the New Madrid fault from Arkansas to Illinois. You're in shattered Memphis, say, or St Louis. You and your antenna survive the first shocks. Once the ground stops shaking you switch on your rig with battery power. All you hear is white noise. No signals. Nobody on the air. Nobody to copy your SOS. What does your Net Plan say to do now?

OK, it's far-fetched. But what if? That's what emergency preparedness is all about, isn't it: what if?

During a career in the U.S. Coast Guard, ex-Commander Flynn learned about port protection at home and antiterrorist operations at sea. At the Council on Foreign Relations in New York since 1999, he participates in that prestigious think tank's National Security Studies Program.

The Edge of Disaster, his second book in the field, unfolds a grim catalog of catastrophe, thoroughly researched on the ground and exquisitely grounded in detail.

There's the hour-by-hour scenario of terrorists scouting and executing coordinated explosions of supertankers loaded with liquefied natural gas within the harbors of Long Beach, CA, and Boston, MA, and the resultant domino impact on the world economy with those two ports (and populations) destroyed.

He points out the vulnerability of levees protecting the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, right smack in the California earthquake zone. Breach those dikes and half of California's drinking water is at threat along with the farmlands supplying 45 per cent of America's vegetable crop. How's that for "trickle-down effect?"

As for a pandemic, Flynn notes that even now "our fraying public health workforce and shrinking emergency care system are operating at the breaking point . . ." (Think: long ER waits on weekends.)

"Without drastic changes, there is simply no way the system will adequately respond to a local incident that involves more than 1,000 serious injuries," he says. "We are engaging in flights of fancy to pretend for a moment that our government and the health care system are remotely prepared to cope with a pandemic outbreak."

Flynn's analysis doesn't take in telecommunications. But it's not unreasonable to suggest that the existing amateur community can deploy an adequate response to a really major disaster if it comes to that. No federal billions required. Just a little encouragement, perhaps.

In Army MARS, we're taught that the first few hours of an emergency are when our resources are most important. State and federal relief forces can't react without detailed information on the incident's scope and the routes open for response.

One Ham might be sufficient to get that information delivered — if he or she was prepared for spontaneous response as Joe Johnston was.

The experience of 31 years with the weather bureau, 23 years as a licensed Ham and two years in Army MARS (he signed up right after Katrina) taught Johnston what he needed to know for establishing a one-man personal "EOC" without instructions from higher authority. But it was his own good sense that prodded him to do so. And of course he did have the instant cooperation of other Hams both in and out of the disaster area.

Using the MARS WinLink system, Johnston fired off four EEs (Essential Elements of Information) reports to Army

MARS HQ. His VHF Pactor link copied the Clatsop County declaration of emergency, and relayed it on to the inland state capitol bringing swift response from the governor.

At one point when none of the digital links seemed to work (propagation was uniformly poor), he called CQ on 80-meter voice and found one Ham, Mark Beadle, and KD7ZPP, in Reno, NV, who could relay his voice traffic. (“I have passed traffic with both PSK31 and MT63 before,” he recalled recently, “but I don’t think I used any of the sound card modes during that episode in December.”)

In all, Johnston’s Army MARS After-Action Report listed 60 pieces of record traffic handled.

The proof of the pudding is that within several hours of his initial calls for aid, federal authorities released the emergency relief resources at the nearest National Guard base.

Last summer at the ARRL national convention in Huntsville, AL, Army MARS chief Stu Carter spoke of the daunting challenges ahead for Amateur Radio.

“I think we are on the cusp of that ‘unthinkable future,’ ” he later commented in a year-end broadcast to MARS members. “Get ready.”

— *Bill Sexton, N1IN/AAA9PC can be reached by sending snail mail to: 105 West Rd., Richmond, MA 01254; or by e-mail to: sextonw@juno.com.*



Seizing the initiative on his own, Oregon Army MARS member Joe Johnston, N7HAE (AARØPY), established a solo relay operation shuttling emergency messages for state and local agencies during the Pacific Northwest’s disastrous flooding last December.