

PARA Connections

Official Publication of The Philipsburg Amateur Radio Association, Philipsburg PA
An Amateur Radio Organization Serving Clearfield and Centre Counties — Organized November 1992

Who's Who:

- President—Dave Runk AA3EJ
- Vice President—Filip Cerny AB3HK
- Secretary—John Szwarc N3SPW
- Treasurer—Jim Warg N3ONE
- Interclub Liaison — Dick Thompson K3BIE

PARA Repeaters:

- Rattlesnake Mountain — “The Big .43” 146.430 (+1 MHz, PL 173.8 Hz)
- Decatur Township — 444.750+ (PL 173.8 Hz)
- Chester Hill Borough — 146.64- (PL 173.8 Hz)
- Decatur Township — 144.390 APRS Digi-Peater.

ARRL WPA Section Manager Visits PARA

At the May 14, 2011 PARA meeting John Rodgers N3MSE, the ARRL Western Pennsylvania Section Manager, was the guest speaker.

John spoke about how the recent ARRL Board of Directors meeting featured a discussion on ARRL affiliated clubs. The ARRL is making an effort to further develop benefits for amateur radio clubs to be affiliated with the ARRL.

Other topics, such as the WPA Section’s emphasis on the NBEMS software package for use as an emergency communications tool with the ARRL’s sponsored ARES program. John thanked the members for their involvement in emergency communications and encouraged those that are not involved to consider becoming involved.

Following John’s comments the



American Radio Relay League Western Pennsylvania Section Manager John Rodgers N3MSE addressed the PARA members at the May 14th PARA meeting.

floor was opened for PARA members to ask questions and offer their thoughts about the

ARRL. PARA is honored to have the WPA Section Manager visit our club.

Inside this issue:

WPA Section Manager Visits PARA	1
PARA Helps Out at Black Moshannon 5K & 10K Race	1
April Meeting Minutes	2
PARA Resumes Publication of Newsletter	2
May Meeting Minutes	3
Ham Shack Showcase: AA3EJ	3
The Big .43 Repeater Upgrade Project	4

PARA Helps Out at Black Moshannon 5K & 10K Run

On May 28th PARA members once again provided communications assistance at the Black Moshannon 5K & 10 K Race/Walk. This event is held at Black Moshannon State Park and is a fundraising effort of the Moshannon Valley YMCA in Philipsburg.

Ham radio volunteers helping out at the race included Bernie Ropchock W3BAR, John Szwarc N3SPW, Rich Brnik KB3QKR, Jim Zuhlke KF3EA and Dick Thompson K3BIE. The ham radio volunteers

were stationed at various locations along the route. In addition to providing communications, they also called out run-

ners elapsed time as they passed by. This helps the runners pace themselves as they progress through the course.

Both the 5 kilometer and the 10 kilometer races started at precisely the same time, but from different locations within the park. Radio communications was the only way to coordinate the starting time. Cellular telephone service in the park is largely unavailable due to the rugged terrain. This makes the communications assistance provided by amateur radio essential for race organizers to successfully coordinate this event.



Pictured left to right are Bernie W3BAR, John N3SPW, Rich KB3QKR, John, Jim KF3EA, Dick K3BIE, and Frances Thompson.

April 2011 PARA Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Dave AA3EJ, Joe KB3CBN, Filip AB3HK, Scott W3EOD, Jim N3ONE, Mark K3ITG, Elaine, Dick K3BIE, Leo K3UMT, John N3SPW.

Meeting called to order by President Dave AA3EJ at 15:07 UTC.

Discussion about the Baltimore Hamfest Trip – PARA members Jim N3ONE, Filip AB3HK, Dave AA3EJ and John N3SPW attended the hamfest. “junk fest” was fun for all involved.

VE Testing – PARA VE Testing Coordinator Joe KB3CBN reports that the next ARRL testing session will be on Saturday June 11th at 4 PM. Location will be the Holt Memorial Library meeting room.

CW Heard – Leo K3UMT reported that he has heard a CW signal interfering with the AM broadcast band. Did not get a call sign. Discussion on possible reasons a CW signal would interfere and IF signals.

Treasurer’s Report – given by PARA Treasurer Jim N3ONE. Current balance of \$863.52 which does not include donations received today. Donations received at the meeting today from Sal WA3SAL, Joe K3JN, John N3SPW, Leo K3UMT, John N3SPW and Dave AA3EJ. One outstanding debit to ARRL for \$37.

Membership Report – given by APARA Secretary John N3SPW. Membership currently stands at 26 active members. New since last meeting were Joe K3JN and Sal WA3SAL.

Repeater Reports – discussion lead by Filip AB3HK.

- 146.640-(PL 173.8 Hz) repeater – operating normally with no reported issues.

- 444.750+(PL 173.8 Hz) repeater – operating normally with no reported issues.

- 144.390 APRS Digi-Peater – operating normally with no reported issues.

- 146.430 (+1 MHz, PL 173.8 Hz) repeater – intermittent problems continue. Discussion about problem and decision to schedule a work party at the site for Saturday April 9th at high noon. Joe KB3CBN will bring his SWR bridge. Others are asked to bring various tools and outdoor tools to assist in cleaning up the site. It was discussed that the ultimate solution may be to replace the current repeater gear with new equipment. The battery back up system project has been placed on hold until technical issues are resolved. A repeater improvement committee was formed. By order of the President it shall be called the “Greater Philipsburg Repeater Coverage Improvement Committee” or GPRCIC. Committee members are John N3SPW< Filip AB3HK, and Dave AA3EJ. A plan of action will be presented at the next PARA meeting.

- 147.255+ (D-STAR) repeater – it was decided to discontinue operation of this repeater due to lack of interest and/or activity on the D-STAR system. All borrowed equipment will be returned to their respective owners.

Echo-Link – John N3SPW brought one of the 2.4 GHz Internet “Nano-Bridge” link parabolic dish and data unit to show the equipment that will be used to establish a internet link at the .43 repeater site. Joe KB3CBN explained how the system works and what is involved in assembling it. Once finished, this will

allow PARA to remotely locate an internet access point at the .43 site. This will allow us to locate the Echo-Link computer at the repeater site and eliminate the need for RF links.

Philipsburg Heritage Days Special Event Station W3P and Street Fair – Dave AA3EJ is coordination. Discussion on boro meetings and the need to inform the boro of special requirements for amateur radio operations during the street fair. Lou WB3AAI is building a double bazooka antenna for 80 meter band which will be used at Heritage Days. Banner for Heritage Days was discussed. Details to be presented at the May meeting. The idea of having a PARA flag in addition to the ARRL flag was introduced by Filip AB3HK. All agreed that this was a good idea. John N3SPW to investigate.

PARA Ham of the Year Nominations – nominations are currently being accepted.

Annual PARA Picnic – Scheduled for Saturday August 13th. Location will be Black Moshannon State Park. Lou WB3AAI is the designated Master Chef. Filip AB3HK offered to provide soft drinks for the event.

Black Moshannon Bike Race Communications Assistance – Dick K3BIE is coordinating. Will be held weekend of May 30th. No new information at this time.

Coffee maker discussion – Dick K3BIE reports that the library board has not had a meeting since the last PARA meeting and was unable to discuss the rules of usage of the meeting room. Topic tabled to next PARA meeting.

It was noted that Mark K3ITG is moving to Florida. This will be the last PARA meeting that Mark can attend. Many best wishes were

offered to Mark as makes this move.

Next PARA Meeting will be on Saturday May 14th at 3PM. Meeting location will be the library’s meeting room. Featured speaker at the May meeting will be John Rodgers N3MSE. John is the ARRL’s WPA Section Manager.

Meeting was adjourned by President Dave AA3EJ at 15:58 UTC.

PARA Weekly Net

146.430 (+1 MHz, PL 173.8 Hz)
Every Saturday at 9 PM

LOOK

Keep up on
PARA club
activities and
stay in touch
with local hams
by participating
in the PARA
Weekly Net.

PARA An Amateur Radio Organization Serving
Clearfield and Centre Counties **W3PHB**
... ORGANIZED NOVEMBER 1992 ...

**When Only the
Best Will Do**



Coffee mugs and other
PARA logo merchandise

www.cafepress.com/philipsburgara/

PARA Resumes Publication of Newsletter

After a 17 month hiatus PARA officials have decided it was time to bring back the club newsletter. Publication of the PARA News newsletter was stopped in March 2010 when PARA decided to participate with the Parasitic Emission newsletter which is distributed exclusively by e-mail. Parasitic Emission is published by Joe

W3BC and covers a variety of clubs from within Central Pennsylvania.

We’ve come to the realization that a regional newsletter as the sole point of communication between a local club and its members is not the end-all solution that it was thought to be. In addition, PARA members

who do not use e-mail were not receiving any communication from the club. This makes it difficult for members who do not use email to feel involved in club projects and activities.

PARA will continue to provide information to Parasitic Emission for publication, but we will no longer be depending on it to

be the exclusive newsletter for PARA members.

The addition of a club newsletter will provide PARA once again with a direct link between the club and our members. PARA members should continue to receive Parasitic Emission via email and will also be receiving PARA Connections in their snail mail boxes.

May 2011 PARA Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance:

Dave AA3EJ, John N3SPW, Filip AB3HK, Mike WB3EQW, Jim N3ONE, Dick K3BIE, Rich KB3QKR, Leo K3UMT, Joe W3BC.

Guest in Attendance: John N3MSE

Meeting called to order by President Dave AA3Ej at 15:05 UTC.

Insurance – Philip AB3HK received a letter from the ARRL stating that they have changed the company they endorse for the ARRL equipment insurance plan. Following some discussion, it was decided to remain with the current insurance company for the time being.

VE Testing – Next PARA conducted ARRL VE Testing Session will be on June 11th at 4 PM. This will be immediately following the PARA June meeting and the location will be the Holt Memorial Library lower level meeting room.

Treasurer's Report – Given by PARA Treasurer Jim N3ONE. Current balance is \$955.52 with no outstanding bills.

Membership Report – Given by PARA Secretary John N3SPW. Renewal since last meeting is Tom W3TNE. Membership currently stands at 27 voting members with 70.3% of them being ARRL members.

Repeater Reports – discussion lead by Filip AB3HK.

146.640-(PL173.8Hz) repeater – operating normally with no reported issues.

444.750+(PL 173.8Hz) repeater – operating normally with no reported issues.

144.390 APRS Digi-Peater – operating normally with no reported issues.

146.430 (+1 MHz, PL 173.8 Hz) repeater – intermittent problems continue. The issues are apparently due to "tin whiskers" forming on the receiver circuitry. We also had reported an incidence of the TX being at what appeared to be a reduced level. John N3SPW presented a report prepared based on discussion of the "greater Philipsburg Repeater Coverage Improvement Committee". The report outlined a 4-stage plan to improve the .43 repeater. The first stage of the plan was to replace the TX/RX repeater deck with new equipment. The membership voted to proceed with stage 1 of the plan. Donation pledges from Filip AB3HK, Jim N3ONE, Leo K3UMT and John N3SPW will be put toward the project. Jim N3ONE, PARA Treasurer, was instructed to make the purchase.

Philipsburg Heritage Days – Report

given by Dave AA3EJ. Plans is to have two stations in operation from the PARA Heritage Days Street Fair booth. One will be CW only and the other SSB. In addition, we will also have a 2-meter station set up. The W3P Special Event Call sign is reserved.

Memorial Day Black Moshannon Park 10K and 5K Race – Report given by Dick K3BIE. Date will be May 28th at 10 AM. We need to be there at 9:30 AM to set up. We need volunteers. Anyone interested in helping out is asked to contact Dick K3BIE.

Next PARA meeting on Saturday June 11th at 3 PM.

Guest Speaker – John Rodgers N3MSE, ARRL WPA Section Manager.

Meeting adjourned by President Dave AA3RJ at 16:38 UTC.

Ham Shack Showcase: AA3EJ

I started around June or July of 1957 listening to a foreign broadcast (SWL) at W3CNI Jim Garvey's (SK) QTH in Osceola Mills, PA on Monday evenings on his Hallicrafters S20 receiver and long wire. It was through Jim that I got my interest peaked and novice license back in 1957 and in the mail came the "ticket" call sign KN3CAL from the US customs house in Philadelphia.

I upgraded to General in '58 with the call sign K3CAL and proceeded to operate a little CW with Jim, W3CNI, Dick-KN3BIE, Ron-KN3BIM and a bunch more of local hams all using CW around town. The local's were 599 plus on my Knight Kit "Ocean Hopper" receiver and WRL Globe Chief (pair of 807's in parallel), 75w rig.

All my life I had learned to play woodwinds clarinet and alto sax and took music major up to HS graduation, and

took private tutoring lessons each Saturday as well for clarinet. I played in PMEA and regional band all with my clarinet and then graduated in 1960 and enlisted in the USN Naval School of Music and served overseas in the 6th fleet in Europe for three active years.

After serving in the USN I went to Williamsport Technical Institute (then WACC and now Penn college) in the electronics tech program. Upon graduation a company paid my moving expense to the Boston area where I worked in the high-tech computer systems manufacturing and support role until moving back home to Philipsburg.

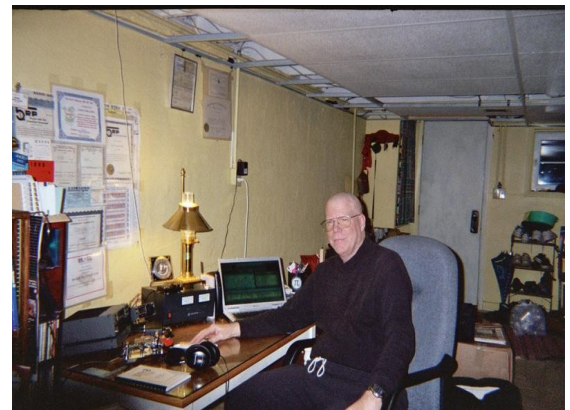
While I was living in Acton I held the call W1DHD (old general call. I used W1DHD about 23 years doing some SSB but gradually going to CW.

I started the Data General Amateur Radio Club DGARC and the 145.27 repeater with Jim-AE1C,

eric-K9ES and others which continues to operate today. After the recession came and many hams got displaced with several companies I finally moved back home and switched to retail until retirement...

After moving back home to Philipsburg now 20 years or so ago, re-married and took retirement at age 62, now 68, I am still enjoying ham radio like never before, on CW and am currently principal clarinet in the Bellefonte community band and really enjoying the relaxing living, now the rat race is over..

I enjoy building QRP CW rigs, and found that elecraft is the up-and-coming state of the art



communication company which displaced Heathkit from Benton Harbot, MI..

I currently operated mornings around 7.028 when I'm QRO or 7.030 QRP and this morning 14.060 QRP area. with a newly built K3/100 160m-6m plus general coverage SWL transceiver and a 80m FW wire loop and a Butternut HF9V vertical with a 32 radial ground system.

I currently live at home, retired with Jeanne (XYL) and Buddy Beagle.. 73's Dave,aa3ej

C/O John Szwarc N3SPW
PO Box 207
Kylertown, PA 16847

We're on the Web!

www.philipsburg-ara.org

The Big .43 Repeater Upgrade Project

In May 2011 PARA officials outlined a plan to repair and improve the club owned and operated 146.430 (+1 MHz offset, PL 173.8 Hz) repeater. This is a four phase project with the first phase being the replacement of the repeater RF deck and controller.

The Big 43 repeater was originally built with a converted GE Master II commercial mobile radio. It was an inexpensive approach to getting the repeater on the air and served our purposes well. But as time progressed it was found that the older GE Master II gear, which served as receiver and transmitter for the repeater, lacked in reliability. Regular maintenance was necessary to keep the repeater alive. At the May PARA meeting it was de-

ecided to move forward with the first phase of the project and purchase a HiPro R1 repeater. The cost of this phase of the project was \$1,175.54. It is expected that the new Hi Pro repeater will be trouble-free for many years.

Following the equipment replacement project, PARA plans to allow some burn-in time before reconnecting the EchoLink node to the repeater. The strategy is to change one thing at a time in an effort to isolate and correct any problems as they are discovered.

Phase two of the project will be the replacement of antenna system. The make and model of the replacement antenna has yet to be determined, but discussions currently seem to be

leaning toward a 4-bay folded dipole array. This antenna configuration will provide additional gain over the existing antenna system, allow for creation of directional coverage area and also allow for a small amount of downward beam tilt in an effort to better cover the lower valleys. It is expected that the antenna will be addressed in late Fall 2011 or early Spring 2012.

Phase three of the project will be to evaluate the effectiveness of what has been done up to that point in terms of coverage and reliability. Phase four will be the installation of remote receiver sites if it is found to be necessary.



Shown here is the Centre County owned tower on Rattlesnake Mountain with the Big .43 Repeater antenna at the top.