

Central Division News & Views

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Awards

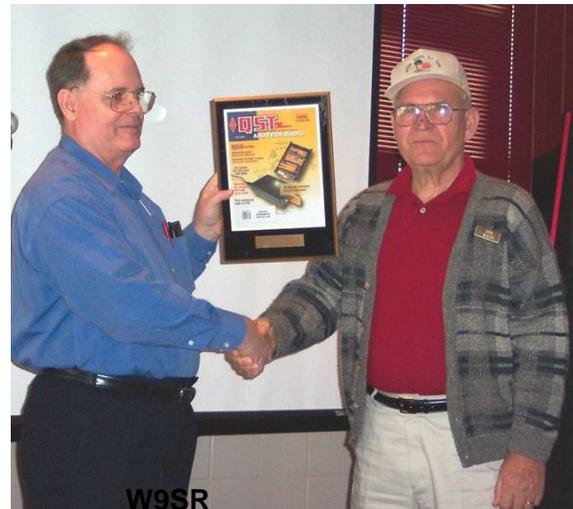


Last September, I was privileged to present a DXCC Honor Roll plaque to former Northern Illinois DX Association President, John Battin, K9DX. What made this presentation unusual was that John did not even have DXCC. Yes, he has worked them all, but never submitted the QSL cards. John Meyer, K9QVB, with the help of K9DX's wife, Angie, did all the paperwork and arranged for the card-checking. The result was a first-ever, surprise, zero countries-to-Honor Roll presentation at the 2004 W9DXCC convention.

K9DX

W9GIG

Last November, Richard Stroud, W9SR was awarded a fourth QST author's plaque for his article, *Copper Loops for 222 and 440 MHz* in the July, 2004 QST. Evidently, he must know something about writing - particularly how to make technical construction subjects easily understood. Keep up your excellent work Dick.



W9GIG

W9SR

Many BPL Questions Remain Un-Answered

Apparently, there is no commercial stampede to install large-scale BPL systems. I believe the *Cinergy* system in the Cincinnati, Ohio area is being promoted as the largest in terms of the number of potential users. But what counts is the number of subscribers and these numbers are still very small everywhere.

The RF spectrum pollution created by BPL has not been resolved by the FCC. The Commission has not developed an effective mechanism for dealing with the RF interference that is happening in those areas with so-called test or demonstration systems. The FCC has, so far, failed to reply to two ARRL requests for a shut-down of a small BPL system producing documented RF interference.

What happens next? ARRL legal counsel has been instructed to draft and file an FCC Petition for Reconsideration. I understand it will be filed once the FCC's formal approval of BPL has been published in the *Federal Register*. Legal research on possible Federal Appellate Court petitions is also underway.

Hopefully, the rapid deployment of the various wide-area microwave data systems will puncture the BPL balloon. They provide wireless Internet connectivity solutions at the same or lower cost than BPL with little or no RF interference to licensed users of the spectrum.

Regulation By Bandwidth

The ARRL board's Executive Committee reviewed parts of the proposal to regulate amateur radio spectrum use by bandwidth at its November, 2004 meeting. The full board will be reviewing this proposal at its January meeting. At the present time, there is no precise schedule for submitting it for formal FCC consideration.

Hundreds of email messages on this proposal have been received at ARRL headquarters and they have been forwarded to the respective division directors. I have tried to answer those messages that have more than just "approve it" or "dump it" in them. Many of these messages express concern about various digital communication systems and the potential interference due to the wide bandwidth and or auto-forwarding methods used by these systems. These problems will only get worse under our current regulations. I believe our bandwidth proposal has the capability to resolve these issues - depending on what the FCC approves and how it is subsequently administered.

Future Of The ARRL

The American Radio Relay League is facing two major, inter-related challenges that impact everything it does. It's no surprise to most of you that these two challenges are membership and finances. ARRL membership is still shrinking and is still growing older. At the same time, we find ourselves in the most challenging regulatory atmosphere since 1919 when it was proposed in Congress to abolish the Amateur Radio Service. There are no quick easy answers to these challenges, but we can win them over time.

However, ARRL headquarters staff and your leadership cannot do this by themselves. We will provide the tools - within our financial constraints - but it's up to all of our members to do the membership recruiting and to pay the bills. Recruiting new and lapsed members is easily done within an amateur radio club. If you are a club officer, make recruiting your number one priority. If you don't belong to radio club, join one, or get together with a few other like-minded hams and organize one. Increasing ARRL membership automatically increases the income side of our budget.

Which comes first, more members or more money? The best answer is membership because this generates more money. However, a good recruitment program, first for new hams and then for more ARRL members, takes time to have a major positive effect on the bottom line. The foundations for better recruitment and retention are still a work in process. Only time will tell how successful we have been.

Right now, the ARRL is fighting expensive battles on the spectrum defense front. Our success at WRC-2003 was the culmination of decades of work and expense and it's an on-going process in the international arena. FCC rulings in the past several years, BPL being the latest, represent a reversal in our government regulatory climate. Any idea for making money from the RF spectrum, regardless of physical limitations, is usually approved by the FCC to detriment of the incumbent spectrum users. Renting spectrum through license fees creates a revenue stream without locking into place uses that may be obsolete in the future. Selling spectrum is equivalent to killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. RF regulation has been

turned upside down in the last two decades.

The ARRL's large budget deficits of the past several years have been greatly reduced. The goal for 2004 was a slight surplus. I hope I am wrong, but I think we may end up with a small deficit. Additional expense reduction could result in painful reductions in member services and programs if we are to continue our current high level of spectrum defense.

Therefore, I ask all of you to make additional monetary contributions for the foreseeable future. There is no such thing as a too small donation, and they are all tax-deductible. Those of you who can afford it, please be as generous as you can. It is your generosity that will make the difference in a tight budget.

The end of this year marks four years for me on the ARRL Board of Directors. I have two more years to go in my second term. I will do my best - as I have been doing - to make sure every dollar is spent wisely.

I wish all of you a Prosperous, Healthy and Happy New Year!

73 - George R. Isely, W9GIG
Central Division Director