

# THE KEY

Official Journal of The Riverland Amateur Radio Club



The Riverland Amateur Radio Club is a Special Service Club affiliated with the American Radio Relay League. The club is active in community service as well as actively promoting Amateur Radio in the Coulee Region. The Club is open to all who are interested in Amateur Radio and will help unlicensed persons become licenses thru the FCC.

## The Climb

**Riverland  
Amateur Radio  
Club**  
P.O. Box 621  
Onalaska, WI.  
54636

**Repeater**  
146.970 PL 131.8

**RARC Net**  
8:00 PM Sunday  
night on the  
146.970 Repeater

**Club Meetings**  
Trustee Meeting  
3rd Monday of the  
month at King  
Street Kitchen at  
5:00 PM, all club  
members are  
welcome.

**Program evening is**  
1st Tuesday of the  
month at 7:00 PM,  
Gunderson Clinic  
conference room 1  
in the lower level.



As the picture shows we hold program nights and get into subjects that are not always about Amateur Radio. This night was about mountain climbing. Although Ham Radio could have been part of the climb it was opted to leave it at home because there was too much to consider in an attempt to make a successful climb. Read more about this program from Carl, kc9hds on page 4.

### Kevin's RF Problem

Sometimes, even as a ham, we think we have it all figured out, then we get a perplexing problem that we can not figure out. Well, this very thing happened to me this past winter. Once I had my garage cleaned out enough for my van to fit, I noticed I was having issues with my garage door opener. Every day I would leave for work, the door opens, I pull the van out and push the button and the door will not close. I am parked only inches from the garage door. I push and push and step out of the van with the clicker which only worked sometimes. So, I did what most normal people would do and bought a new clicker and new batteries. Now I have three, THREE clickers with all new batteries and the door will not close! So I looked on line and some said to expand the antenna, but my thought was why, it has worked all these years, why now does it not seem to work??

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So in conversation with a co-worker who is a master electrician, asked if I had LED bulbs in my opener. I said yes. He says that's my problem. LED light bulbs give off an RF frequency that interferes with the signal for the door opener! No Way!! So I took the bulbs out and that was over a month ago and not a problem since. So think about it, I push the button, the lights are off and the door opens, push to close, the light is on, it can not receive the frequency. I come home, push the button and it will open from three miles away because the light is off. I pull into the garage, park right under the opener with the antenna hanging just inches from the roof of my van and the door will not close. Moral of the story, RF is not always going to be our friend. So now my door has worked every time and now that I sold all my extra vehicles, I am the proud owner of THREE clickers.



**Riverland Amateur Radio Club**  
**PO Box 621**  
**Onalaska, WI 54650**

President.....Kevin Holcomb, KC9ZGD  
Vice-President.....Dan Abts, AB9TS  
Secretary.....Rick Kolter, KD9GVS  
Treasurer.....Greg Miller, K9LEC  
Trustee.....Carl Thurston, KC9HDS  
Trustee.....Roger Reader, KA9BKK  
Trustee.....Bill Wood, KE9XQ  
Newsletter Editor.....Greg Miller, K9LEC

The Key is published monthly and e-mailed to members and friends of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club. Address any correspondence to: Greg Miller at k9lec@arrl.net.

Visit our website at rarc.qth.com



Testing for new Ham's or upgrades for 2017 will be on the following dates:

April 28  
June 2  
August 4 (RARC Swapfest)  
November 10

Register 5 days in advance with Roger Reader, KA9BKK, 608-783-0723 or readers@centurtytel.net.

*Presidents Frequency Modulation* From Kevin Holcomb KC9ZGD



So another event for radio support over for another year. The St. Patrick's day parade once again went well without any issues. Of course our great volunteers who made it possible. Even if we are only needed for a total of an hour, we were needed and did well. Rick KD9GVS planned out the route and took over as net control with the assistance of Kevin KC9ZGD. We even had our picture taken with some Oktoberfest royalty. Picture taken by previous Festmaster and Judge Scott Horne.



## **Its been a mild but lengthy Winter...** by Carl Thurston, kc9hds

Winter is always troublesome. This Winter is no exception. Although it has been a relatively mild one, it seems to be hanging on far to long. Its difficult to enjoy a winter like this one. Its lack of snow has made skiing, snow shoeing, or snowmobiling less than ideal. It has been just nasty enough to make one want to stay indoors. Which for Hams, that's not all that bad. So long as your shack is nice and warm things are OK. The sun spot cycle has been bad, but in spite of that there has been some activity on HF especially on 20 and 40 meters. So things could be worse. This time of year, there isn't much activity with events for the RARC, so that makes things lag a bit too.

One sort of longs for the pleasant breezes and the flowers of Spring, but alas, that seems a long way off yet. Meanwhile we can do needed maintenance on equipment and prepare for things to come. My QTH, I've been planning and working on some improvements to my station set up. No matter how well you plan, and rearrange your station, there is always room for improvement. As the days wear on and the needed tasks are completed, one just itches for an event to make use of the new equipment arrangement. I'll just have to settle for the usual scanning of the bands in search of QSOs.

I can't help but wonder if it wouldn't be a good idea to do a field trip to the Twin Cities to take in the newly remodeled "Pavek Museum of Broadcast History" in St. Pau; Park and a side trip to Radio City in Mounds View, MN. There are a couple of things laying around my shack in need of professional technical support that I just don't have the parts or the tools to deal with myself.

Beyond that possibility, my mind wanders to the annual RARC picnic in June, followed by the 2018 Field Day event. It still seems a long way off, but it will be here sooner than you might think, so those are things to prepare for. Oh yes, there are other things to think about, like the marshaling of the MS Walk, the annual Half Marathon and one or two other things that might pop up before Summer is here.

So as things continue to thaw and refreeze, one can only bear up with the vagaries of weather as the days tick by. Thankfully there are several members of the RARC who have taken it upon themselves to encourage new directions for the local Hams to pursue. We still have occasional soldering sessions hosted by Bill KE9XQ, Echo Link activities being pushed forward by Dave KB9EWG, and there are one or two more VE Testing sessions that may be activated as needed by Roger KA9BKK.

After reading the latest Annual Antenna issue of QST, I'm once again thinking of the antenna modifications that I could do to improve my station's efficiency. It seems that as I try new things with my antenna arrays, I'm constantly finding new ways to get more out of my rig and send and receive more QSOs with DX stations. One of these days, I might even get things going so well that I'll be able to make some contacts in Asia and Oceania. That would be nice, as most of my QSOs have been to Europe, Africa, and South America. It would be nice to expand my global coverage.

With that in mind, I look to the weather to get milder and more suitable for out side pursuits. With the continued thaw and warmer temps, I might even be able to drop down my "Mystery Antenna" and recheck it's solder joints. I seems that as mild as the Winter has been, it still reeked havoc with the "Mystery Antenna" and also my "Butternut" vertical. I look forward to completing repairs on both of them so that I'll be able to make use of them again, as they have both been iffy all winter long, forcing me to use less than ideal set ups to get on the HF bands. With effort and some luck I'm hoping to chase away the "Gremlins," at least for a while.



# Greg and the Mountain... ■ ■ ■ by Carl Thurston, kc9hds

There are achievers and there are over achievers but Greg K9LEC strove to be an over the top achiever. When an opportunity to do several things at once came his way a few years ago, Greg pushed his limit to climb that mountain.

When some one needed help paying for health care he stepped in to line up pledges to help. That was the easy part. Next he trained vigorously for several months in preparation of the attempt to climb Mount Rainier, a peak that is over 14,000 feet high, in Washington State. He researched the entire process to be sure that he was well equipped physically, mentally, and emotionally for this under taking.

He didn't do it alone. It is doubtful that most people would be able to do that trek alone. He had the help of his son who is a Green Beret in the Army, his son's friend, also a Green Beret, his son's pastor, and a few others who pitched in to join in climbing that mountain.

He carefully selected and procured the needed back pack and utensils required for a successful journey up Mount Rainier. He weight trained and practiced in preparation of that event by attaching 10 pound weights to his legs and carrying his fully loaded back pack by repeatedly climbing up and down Trempealeau Mountain in Perrot Park.

After months of training, checking and rechecking his equipment, and coordinating with the other members of the climbing party, he was ready to go. So off to Washington State he went where he meet up with the other members of the climbing party. All started off well enough, the group got the needed permits to do the climb and did the final check and made ready for the ascent.

Before they even got to the mountain, they had to trek across a trail that lead to the base of Mount Rainier. That was fairly easy but it did take determination to even cover that distance in time to make the ascent to Base Camp in the allotted time. Base Camp was several thousand feet up the mountain and was a staging area for climbers to regroup before the main climb. Among other things, the climbers needed to rest and melt snow for drinking water as they had used nearly all of the water that they carried in their water packs just getting to Base Camp. Thus refreshed and rested, they set out for the main climb up the mountain. Fortunately, the weather was perfect for their purposes and they were all eager to make the climb. It must be noted here that Mount Rainier is covered mostly by a glacier, so as a result in order to climb it safely the climbing has to be done at night. There are two main reasons for this, one is that during the day the ice of the glacier is moving and crevasses can open unexpectedly with potentially hazardous results, and also since there is snow and ice everywhere, the sun reflects brutally in all directions causing visual strains and the possibility of sun burn on all exposed skin. Another thing to deal with is that the climbers had to be careful not to over heat, so they were constantly pairing down their clothing to avoid perspiring resulting in wet clothing that would be uncomfortable and a potential health hazard. The further up the mountain they went, there were more and more challenges to over come. A combination of fatigue and difficult footing resulted in several of the party having to turn back to Base Camp. At 12,000 feet, Greg and the Pastor decided that they could go no further, so they came back to Base Camp where they went to sleep exhausted. At 13,000 feet two more members of the party turned back. Greg's son and his friend made it to the summit where they registered their accomplishment in a ledger in a weather tight box there. Although Greg didn't make it to the summit, he did achieve a great deal by climbing to the 12,000 foot elevation and he came back with lots of fine pictures and fond memories of his bout with the mountain.



# ARRL: How can we help?

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

Recently, I received this email from a reader:

"Hi Dan,

"Hope you're doing well. I have a couple of questions about the ARRL. I've been reading your blog and other sources, and it's clear that the ARRL is in a little trouble. I have to say, though, that as soon as the current administration in D.C. notices that some of their friends can make money off of amateur radio bandwidth, the whole amateur radio service is in very serious jeopardy. The only way I can think of to counter that would be an organization like the ARRL, and I think there's really only one organization like the ARRL. Is that not true? If it is, how can we help?"

I replied that it is true that there's only one organization like the ARRL. In the past, there have been groups that have tried to compete with the ARRL, but they've never really taken off. It's an incredible amount of work to set up an organization like the ARRL and none of the alternates have been able to get to critical mass.

The second question—How can we help?—is the big question. Here are a few thoughts:

Join the ARRL. If you're not currently a member, join. You'll have little or no influence, if you are not a member.

If you are a member, but your friends are not, encourage them to join. The more members the ARRL has, the more influence it will have. This is common sense, but the ARRL doesn't really seem to care about this. In the past, I've encouraged the ARRL to set a membership goal of 25% of licensed radio amateurs ([link 1](#), [link 2](#)). I honestly don't think this is asking too much, and I've never heard a good argument for them not to do this. They continue to ignore me, and the percentage of licensed radio amateurs that are ARRL members continues to decline.

Take an interest in ARRL matters and let your director and vice director know your views. Get your friends to do likewise. Get on the mailing lists for the board meeting agendas and minutes. To do this, log into the ARRL website, click on "Edit your profile," then "Edit email subscriptions."

Invite your ARRL elected officials—your division director, vice director, and section manager—to talk at your club meetings. Be prepared to grill them on issues that you think are important.

Run for office yourself. I ran for Great Lakes Division vice director twice. Unfortunately, I lost both times, but even running is a way to have an impact. I'd like to see the "loyal opposition" get organized and challenge the status quo, especially in divisions where I think the current director is making bad decisions.

Having said all that, there are ways to make an impact besides playing ARRL politics:

Get on the air. It's easier to lose bands if we're not using them. Encourage others to be active.

Be an Elmer to those that need it.

Teach classes to help those who want a license get a license and to help those who are already licensed to upgrade their licenses.

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Be an ambassador for amateur radio, especially to related groups, such as the "maker" groups that have sprung up around the country. Make sure that they know about your amateur radio club and the classes and exam sessions that you offer.

I'd love to hear any other thoughts that you all may have on this. I really do think that at this point, we need to inundate the ARRL Board and staff with input from the membership. While they may have a long history of ignoring the membership and just going about their own merry way, now is really a time of change, and this might be the right time to set the ARRL on a better path.

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When he's not getting all worked up over ARRL politics, Dan blogs about amateur radio at KB6NU.Com, teaches amateur radio classes, and works CW on the HF bands. He's the author of the *No Nonsense* amateur radio license study guides and *The CW Geek's Guide to Having Fun with Morse Code*



- April 1...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Rick, kd9gvs.
- April 3...No program night due to Skywarn Training at the Mary Crest Auditorium, Mayo Clinic.
- April 8...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Kevin, kc9zgd.
- April 15...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Dave, Kd9epn.
- April 16, 2018...Trustee Meeting at King Street Kitchen, club members are welcome.
- April 22...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Mark, kb9ofk.
- April 29...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net Control is Greg, k9lec.
- May 1...Program Night (Carl Thurston will give us an overview of a train wreck that he was involved in)

### **Future Events**

- April 28...MS Walk, LaCrosse
- May 5...Festival Foods 1/2 Marathon
- June...RARC Picnic...more information to follow.
- June 23-24...ARRL Field Day
- August 4...RARC Swapfest at the Onalaska Omni Center

# RIVERLAND AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

**Monday March 19th , 2018 Executive Meeting**

## MINUTES

**Call to order:** 5:07 PM, 2207 UTC

**Members Present** : Kevin Holcomb KC9ZGD, Greg Miller K9LEC, Roger Reader KA9BKK, Dan Abts AB9TS, Rick Kolter KD9GVS

**Approval of Minutes:** (no meeting last month)

**Treasurer's Report:** Greg K9LEC, financial report available from Greg upon request

## **Committee Reports:**

**Swap Meet:** Greg intends to pre-pay at Omni Center for Swap Meet. Fee likely to increase due to new management. Tailgaters would like a closer area nearer building, this may be possible on grassy area behind building ?

**Field Day 2018:** Rick has begun passing around the sign-up sheet for Field Day duties, already have a few duties assigned. Will pass around at May and June regular Club meetings to get more volunteers.

## **Old Business:**

Kevin will pick up Rotary Lites check this Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup>.  
Carl will be arranging the Club picnic June 9<sup>th</sup> at Rowe Park in Onalaska  
Roger will move VE testing to the afternoon of April 28<sup>th</sup>, if necessary, to avoid conflict with the MS walk that morning.  
Roger submitted an idea on new member recruitment.  
Greg suggested some education sessions covering Amateur Radio topics  
Possible host an "Amateur Radio Weekend" to promote the hobby  
Boy Scout troupe involvement – Nate Balk  
No update on club apparel acquisition.

### **Update on Monthly Program List:**

April-No Regular Club meeting, Storm Spotter Training that evening

May- Carl, Railroad presentation

June-Bill, Raspberry PI and/or Arduino presentation

July-Dan, boat trip

August-Kevin, Emergency night, mobile set-ups, Go Kits

September-Roger, Fox Hunting

October-Digital vs. Analog scanners

November-Kevin, Disney vacation

December-Annual Meeting/elections

## **New Business:**

**Motion to Adjourn** : 6:40, 2340 UTC

