



Greater Norwalk Amateur Radio Club

Newsletter

"The Voice of GNARC"

December 2006

Note from the Editor

The majority of this edition of the Newsletter is devoted to the 147.39 repeater that recently went SK -N1OLO

President's Corner **By Toy Alladin K1WYQ**

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER:

Many thanks to a handful of guys whose determination paid off in protecting the integrity and continuous existence of this organization. (GNARC) Had it not been for your sincere and dedicated effort, we would have perished and gone into a mere existence a long time ago. Keep up the good work guys; your efforts are recognized and worthy of praise.

As you well know, an on the air requiem was held for the 147.390 frequency which we had for well over 30 years, but as events unfolded before us, we had to say our goodbyes. A sad one at that, but suffer it to be so.

Our new and temporary frequency, 146.775 seems to be enjoying immense popularity among users old and new, and as you well know, we are transmitting from the SNET tower. We have the wide coverage that we desired and will be able to continue with our public service and ARES activities unhindered. As of now we do have some minor teething problems that will eventually disappear with some additional tweaking and what not.

We are also pleased to report that we have made some significant progress with the repairs of our 70cm repeater. The current 3db antenna was raised an additional 6 feet and we are currently getting better access to the repeater on low power from around the city. The amplifier has been

repaired and is undergoing some further testing before final installation.

The holidays are upon us and preparations are underway for the oncoming festive season.

Please remember to make your reservations for our holiday party on Dec 13th.

Happy Holidays.

73
Toy/K1WYQ

Next Meeting

Annual Holiday Party—See Page 6

Report from the 147.39 Big Switch Net

From our roving reporter Bill Barrett

In no particular order the following stations were represented: K1ROR, KB1LHP, KB1ILY, N1HSH, NN1H, KB1IFY, W1RGW, W1WJB, K3EIN, N1II, KB1AL, N1ZD, N1YV, NE2Q, K2OT, W1HAW,

Discussion ranged from the early days when WA1GOO (Now AB4IX), WA1OTY (Now N4VUK), and W1FSM built, re-built, and moved the "39" from OTY's grandmother's house, then to the CD office, and finally to the hospital, to some nice tributes to all who have worked to maintain and improve the repeater over all these years.

The unofficial historian for the net was N1II, Paul. It felt a little like New Year's Eve, somebody said, and that seemed about right to describe the atmosphere.

The Big Switch was pulled at 11:00 pm, Friday, November 17, 2006. SK

73, W1WJB

A History of the 147.39 Repeater

By Paul Danzer N1II

On November 17, 2006 after approximately 34 years of operation, the 147.39 repeater went silent. A brief on-the-air meeting was held at 10 PM that evening and several participants suggested that some of the memories be documented. Here is one memory.

The Early History of the Norwalk Repeater

Prefatory Note: This brief summary is, of necessity, a very personal account of the early days of the Greater Norwalk Amateur Radio club (GNARC) and the repeater. It is based on records in my possession and old log books as well as memory. It should also be understood that in the early days the club, the repeater and Norwalk Civil Preparedness (CP) - previously Civil Defense (CD) - were inseparable. Each supported the others; each owed its existence to support from the others.

de Paul Danzer, N1ii, ex-W1DQJ

In 1968, the City of Norwalk had a part-time employee, Bob Vollenweider, holding the post of *Director of Civil Preparedness*. A relatively newly licensed ham, Ken Lee, WA1OTY and by coincidence, at just about the same time, a somewhat more experience ham, Paul Danzer, then W1DQJ, approached Bob and asked if there was any ham activity supporting him. Bob, who was also a part-time real estate agent, related the fact that the Norwalk Amateur Radio Club, which had been in existence well before 1942-1945 (World War II), had gone out of existence a few years earlier. He showed us the remnants of the club, which also had prime mission of supporting Norwalk CD.

These remnants were in the tiny, ornate gatehouse of the Lockwood Mansion on West Avenue (now the Norwalk Tourist Information Office). Several VHF antennas were mounted on

the building, and pieces of wire antennas were strewn about. Located on the second floor were boxes of parts, moldy records and several *Gonset Communicators* (also known as *Gooney Boxes*). There were approximately 5 *Communicator* Is, IIs and IIIs and one IV.

Ken and Paul recommended that almost everything be thrown out and the *Communicators* be salvaged and moved to the current CP offices. This office was in the basement of what was then the “old Norwalk High”, which was awaiting renovation into the new City Hall.

The CP office consisted of one large room. It was partitioned off by stacks of 55 gallon drums that in an emergency were suppose to be used for drinking water and later for waste water – remember this was in the cold war era. A second adjoining room was available as a classroom, and the old coal cellar was accessible, and used to store tents and various other war-surplus materials later used by the club on field days.

With the consent of Bob Vollenweider the ARRL was contacted and a list of hams in Norwalk and surrounding towns was provided by them. A mailing went out and the first club meeting, attended by perhaps 30 hams began the resurrected GNARC.

A few years after, perhaps in 1971 or so, the first 2-meter repeaters began to show up in Fairfield County.

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Ken Lee, WA1OTY and Mark Weber, WA1GOO, put together the first Norwalk repeater initially housed in Ken's home on John Street, just south of the turnpike in Norwalk. Working on the antenna was a very risky business, since this house was built in the style of older New England homes with a steeply-pitched roof.

Very few in the club recognized the potential of repeater at this time. Equipment was not that readily available, and CP drills at that time were held in this area using the *Gonsets* on 2-meter AM.

Ken then underwent some family changes and the repeater was moved to his grandmother's house in East Norwalk, on Pine Hill Road Extension, not far from the beach. Kurt Seaton, W1FSM, was one of the prime participants in moving and installing the repeater at that time.

A short time later, probably in 1973-74, the repeater was moved into the CP headquarters. The antenna was located on the roof, mounted on the roof atop of a double A-frame hand made of 2 by 6 lumber.

Since city money was scarce the *Gonsets* were modified to operate on 2-meter FM. Their AM receivers were used in the *slope detection* mode – not exactly hi-fi but adequate. The transmitters were subject to a very simple modification where a few passive components were used to rout audio to the crystal-controlled oscillator and an adequate NBFM resulted.

According to the FCC rules in effect in those days, all contacts, from fixed or mobile stations had to be logged. One mini-log book – the type used by mobile stations in those days- shows that on October 28, 1972 W1DQJ worked WA1OTY via the Norwalk repeater, W1WHZ. W1WHZ was the Norwalk CP all sign, and used on the early repeater. WA1OTY was running 1 watt from Westport. W1DQJ's rig is not specified; however this probably was one of CD's *Gonsets*. The first rig W1DQJ used on the repeater from home was

a *Benton Harbor Lunch Box (Heathkit)* whose transmitter was modified to run NBFM. The *Lunch Box's* receiver was a superregenerative that could not be used on NBFM; instead an outboard inexpensive *Radio Shack* 9-volt powered portable called the *Patrolman* (130-170 MHZ) was manually tuned to 147.39.

Civil Preparedness drills from this point on were conducted on the repeater.

Serious equipment at the time consisted of retired *Motorola* taxi and police radios, generally referred to as *MOTRACS*. Some retired *GE* equipment was also available. The earliest ham-specific equipment were portable units with a few crystal-controlled channels such as the *TR-1*.

During this same period new hams were recruited through novice licensing classes, run jointly by CP and the club, and financed by CP. Class lists exist for 1972 (WA1R.. and WA1S..), 1973 (call signs in the sequence WA1S.. and WA1T) as well as later years (WB1 A., B..C..and D..) and 1981 (KA1I..) Many of these new hams immediately purchased 2-meter rigs and became active in the CP/ repeater drill activity and other club activities.

Periodic drills were held on the repeater all during these periods. During this same time, Norwalk had both a Police Reserve and Police Auxiliary, each of which were equipped with uniforms and firearms but no radio communication.

Each fall the club supplied the manpower, radios and vehicles for what was called the “Halloween Patrol.” The dispatching point was in CP headquarters in the building basement; the police auxiliary and reserve members rode in ham's cars. As calls relating to Halloween mischief were called in, a ham and policeman was dispatched by repeater to cover the incident. A number of ham's cars suffered the indignity of being hit by eggs; however the annual week of this activity served a very good real-time drill on the repeater.

By the late 70's most hams were equipped with multi-channel crystal controlled rigs. In this area at

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least two channels were utilized; one being the Norwalk repeater channel and the second 34/94 which was a national default frequency. The 94 frequency was generally used as a simplex channel.

Some local hams were equipped with modern, outboard synthesizers, such as the kit made by *GLB*, which plugged in into the rig and acted as a synthesized crystal, allowing operation anywhere between 146.00 and 147.990.

The Norwalk club continued to operate the repeater, with either weekly or monthly drills through the late 70s and 80s, and simultaneously continued novice and upgrading classes. At one point the FCC mandated that all repeaters use a call from the sequence WR1, so W1WHZ/ repeater became WR1ACV.

During this same period, the club, the repeater and Norwalk CP continually supported the drills, various emergency events such as supplying communications to National Guard trucks from the New Canaan Avenue Armory during hurricane costal evacuation, the annual field days and connection to the annual *ARRL Simulated Emergency Test (SET)* which took place every January.

For reference purposes, calls logged in early (1972, 73) W1DQJ log books included WA1OTY, W1FPT, W1CAH, WA1GOO, W1CEA, WB2ATX, K1LTJ, WB2NWX, W1DHI, WA1QYY, W3GTX/1, W1DHR and many others.

When both WA1OTY and WA1GOO left the area, Rich, currently K1OF, accepted the responsibility of running the repeater under his call sign.

excellent operators bring the past to the present and participate in the annual **ARRL Straight Key Night**. The object of this friendly event is to enjoy some good, old fashioned QSO fun, using straight keys. The emphasis is on rag-chewing rather than fast contest-type exchanges. **SKN 2006** begins at 7:00 p.m. EST December 31 and runs for 24 hours through 7:00 p.m. EST January 1 (**0000 -- 2400 UTC January 1, 2006**).

When participating in **SKN 2006**, instead of sending RST before sending the signal report send the letters **SKN**, to indicate your participation, and to clue in passers-by who may be listening that **SKN** is going strong. After **SKN**, send the Contest Branch a list of stations worked, plus your vote for the best fist you heard (it doesn't have to be one you worked). Also, include your vote for the most interesting QSO you had or monitored.

Don't forget to post your comments and interesting photographs from your **SKN** adventure to the **ARRL Contest Online Soapbox** at www.arrl.org/contests/soapbox Entries should be emailed to the Contest Branch at StraightKey@arrl.org or may be sent via regular mail to SKN, ARRL, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111. The Soapbox becomes an on-line album of stories and photographs to share with others. Entries for **SKN 2006** must be received by January 31, 2006. Votes for 'Best Fist' and "Most Interesting QSO" will be tabulated and included in the April 2006 issue of *QST*. If you have questions about **SKN**, please visit the Contest Branch Web Page at <http://www.arrl.org/contests> or contact contests@arrl.org

Straight Key Night

Excerpted from the ARRL Website

In this era of digital communication, keyboarding, FM and electronic keys, once a year many

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WA7BNM Contest Calendar
Decemembr 2006

| Contest Name | Time/Date/(Band) |
|---|--|
| EU-PSK-QRP Contest | 2000Z-2400Z, Dec 1 |
| ARRL 160-Meter Contest | 2200Z, Dec 1 to 1600Z, Dec 3 |
| TARA RTTY Melee | 0000Z-2400Z, Dec 2 |
| Wake-Up! QRP Sprint | 0400Z-0429Z, Dec 2 and 0430Z-0459Z, Dec 2 and 0500Z-0529Z, Dec 2 and 0530Z-0600Z, Dec 2 |
| TOPS Activity Contest | 1800Z, Dec 2 to 1800Z, Dec 3 |
| New Mexico QSO Party | 0000Z-2359Z, Dec 3 |
| ARS Spartan Sprint | 0200Z-0400Z, Dec 5 |
| ARRL 10-Meter Contest | 0000Z, Dec 9 to 2400Z, Dec 10 |
| NA High Speed Meteor Scatter Winter Rally | 0000Z, Dec 10 to 0700Z, Dec 18 |
| NAQCC Straight Key/Bug Sprint | 0130Z-0330Z, Dec 13 |
| Russian 160-Meter Contest | 2100Z-2300Z, Dec 15 |
| OK DX RTTY Contest | 0000Z-2400Z, Dec 16 |
| MDXA PSK DeathMatch | 0000Z, Dec 16 to 2400Z, Dec 17 |
| Croatian CW Contest | 1400Z, Dec 16 to 1400Z, Dec 17 |
| International Naval Contest | 1600Z, Dec 16 to 1559Z, Dec 17 |
| ARCI Holiday Spirits Homebrew Sprint | 2000Z-2400Z, Dec 17 |
| Run for the Bacon QRP Contest | 0100Z-0300Z, Dec 18 |
| RAEM Contest | 0200Z-0959Z, Dec 24 |
| DARC Christmas Contest | 0830Z-1059Z, Dec 26 |
| RAC Winter Contest | 0000Z-2359Z, Dec 30 |
| Feld Hell QSO Party | 0000Z, Dec 30 to 2400Z, Dec 31 |
| Stew Perry Topband Challenge | 1500Z, Dec 30 to 1500Z, Dec 31 |

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The 2006 GNARC Annual Holiday Dinner

Will be held on Wednesday, December 13th, 2006 at the Ischoda Yacht Club, Water Street (Next to Rex Marine RTE 136), Norwalk, CT.

Social hour including hors d'oeuvres from 6:30PM - 7:30PM - Cash Bar available.

Buffet Dinner beginning at 7:30 PM. - Soda, Coffee, Tea, & Water served with dinner

Fees are \$30.00 for one person or \$50.00 for a couple.

Raffle will be held.

Prizes will include an ICOM 2m Mobile Radio, Portable Fiberglass Mast, Products from West Mountain Radio

Tickets for the Raffle will be \$5.00 each and 3 for \$10.00.

Talk in will be available on both GNARC repeaters

146.775 - PL 100 and **448.075- PL 114.8** .