

# 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.

## Swap Fest Frenzy

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

**Repeater**  
146.970 PL 131.8

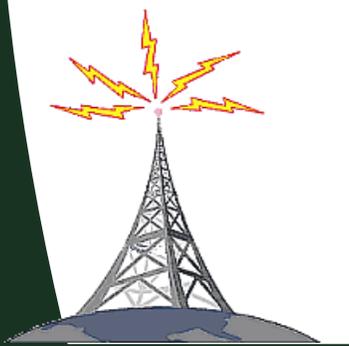
**RARC Net**  
8:00 PM Sunday  
night on the  
146.970 Repeater

**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.



RARC Swap Fest 2018 was well attended again this years. As some walked out with arm loads of goodies others enjoyed the comradery of visiting with new and old friends. It would appear that all had a good time which is always the goal of the annual Swap Fest.



Congratulations to Dave Peters, KB9EWG on receiving the DX Century Awards both in digital and voice. Good Job Dave!





Have I been a Ham too long? What I mean by that is looking back at my early years in Amateur Radio and trying to keep the old practices in the fore front means turning my back to all of the new paths that radio has to offer. Working with radios that are of the older technologies has put me in a stalemate with radio. It is time to start putting a better foot forward into the future. Recently, while reading different articles on where Amateur Radio is and were it is going it would appear that many doors are being opened to the Ham that wants to be explored. Right off the bat it is obvious to me that some of them do not interest me but there are many that do. So I think it is time to get out there and find my niche that will excite me again. I am sure that the older technologies will remain but hey, lets combine that with some of the new. Some one told me that now that I am retired I have the time to do it, I can only ask, "Where is that time?"



**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.

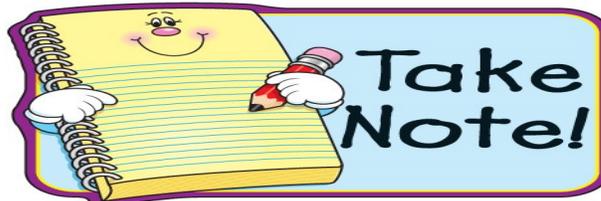
Visit our website at rarc.qth.com



Only one testing date remaining for 2018 for any new licenses or up grades.

November 10

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



- September 2...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Greg, k9lec.
- September 4...Program night, Roger Reader, ka9bkk, demonstration on Fox Hunting.
- September 9...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Carl, kc9hds.
- September 16...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Rick, kd9gvs.
- September 23...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Kevin, kc9zgd.
- September 17...Trustee Meeting at King Street Kitchen, club members are welcome.
- September 30...Sunday Night net on the 146.97 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control is Mark, kb9ofk.
- October 2...Program Night, analog vs. digital.

# Kudos to all...by Carl Thurston, kc9hds

To all of those who participated in the RARC SwapFest August 4<sup>th</sup>, kudos to you! Such events are getting to be few and far between. In fact there are only a handful of them left in Wisconsin, so all buyers, sellers, and lookers should be proud to have been there to see the RARC SwapFest have another successful year. If you were unable to be there, that's too bad, as it was a very nice event with many old friendships renewed and a lot of stuff changing hands, often from older Hams to younger ones. It is events like this that helps to keep the Amateur Radio community viable and strong.

The setup of the tables on Friday night went very smoothly and quickly, after which, those helping had an opportunity to choose their tables and bring in their things for sale the next day. Many hands made the work light and quick. Thanks to all who helped with the setup!

On Saturday morning, at 0700, the doors opened for the final set up of sale items on tables, the adding of price tags, and the paying of fees for sellers and buyers. The actual sale didn't start until 0800, and there were many Hams that were eager to buy those items that caught their eyes, but rules are rules and all sales had to wait until 0800 for the official start of the SwapFest.

At 0800 the buyers descended on the sellers tables and a flurry of sales quickly took place. After the initial transactions, there was a slight lull as both the buyers and the sellers took stock of what had just happened. Then everything settled down to a more leisurely pace and a lot of friendly reunions took place. It was good to see so many faces of Hams that one might have only known before by voice on the air. Nice to be able to see them, some for the first time, others for once more after some time. It was good to reconnect with old acquaintances, meet new ones, and make new friends. There were Hams there from as far away as Indiana and a few places even further away. Many came from different parts of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and other neighboring states. There were representatives from the ARRL to help renew memberships, check QSO cards, answer questions, and give away books.

There were a lot of door prizes. A 50/50 raffle was held. Some prizes were donated by various groups and suppliers. They included gift certificates, books, tools, and ARRL gift certificates. The drawings for the door prizes took place all day during the SwapFest, as did the sale of 50/50 raffle tickets, with the 50/50 raffle and grand prize drawings taking place at 1100.

Following that, many Hams settled down to a light lunch from the concession window, many showed off what they had bought, some took their newly purchased items to their cars, and a few left, satisfied that they had achieved what they had set out to do.

In addition to those selling items, there were two individuals who came to our VE test session to get a new license or up grade. Those taking the tests were successful; one new Ham got his Technician Class License and another Ham was able to upgrade to Extra Class License, so that was good.

There were also a number of Hams selling items out in the parking lot. A lot of interesting things were available there too. Those tailgaters are a vital part of such an event. They tend to draw some otherwise non participating individuals to the event and once they have looked over the offering outside, they then come on into the main event. It takes many different approaches to a SwapFest to make it work. This year was successful for the buyers, sellers, and the RARC. With all that took place, a good time was had by all in attendance and we can look forward to another fine SwapFest next year. Thanks again to all who helped make this a successful event. See you all again next year!



# My Name Is Patrick

By

Dennis Marandos - K1LGQ



The excitement for warm time operations is just heating up and getting out is easier now than it was a while ago. And judging from what I have already heard on the air, the rivalry for band space is getting hotter and harder to find. Let me tell you about an episode I experienced in Nashua one warm, sunny day when the adrenaline was kicking in and the sun was shining brightly. In the back of my mind-set was the sheer fact that **I am** radio-active, have a valid license, am getting on the air is what I love so what could possibly go wrong?

I arrived at the local city greenery named Greeley Park (after Horace Greeley) in Nashua, NH and scouted for some tall, white pines for a wire antenna. Here in the northeast, pine trees are like blades of grass...they're everywhere. Another friend of mine, we'll call him Mike, and I spotted a pine tree at the edge of the 150 yard field and I took aim with my trust surgical-rubber sling-shot, bought at the local Wal-Mart emporium, and on the second try landed a nice 95 foot shot into the coniferous tower. With my mighty homebrew antenna, called the 'Gusher,' the tentacle was placed into combat readiness within fifteen minutes after arriving to the park. We mountain men of the northeast don't waste any time in being prepared.

The yellow card table was unfolded, the collapsible chair was pushed into the ground for stability, and the tools of the day were unraveled. The NorCal 40a, a 40 meter homebrew transceiver, was attached dutifully to the MFJ-971 antenna tuner, which was then gingerly appended to the Gusher antenna, which culminated with a fully charged jolt of volts from the 7aH gel-cell battery. The log book was strategically placed to the right side, (I am left handed so all papers need to be in front of the writing hand and to the right. Smudges...you know.) Retractable Cross pen in hand, MFJ-24 hour clock blinking away, Vibroplex Bug (Original #2636801) adjusted, antenna swaying in the breeze—what's left?

Contest time and the calls were loud and clear. My first contact was WA4CMI. Great, we're getting out! Second QSO was with CH3Y (Canada), a special call for an event I'm still not sure about, dealing with the police department? I wonder if I can get a QSL or an acknowledgement from them...? My third contact was N2HMN in New Jersey, followed by KA3P in Pittsburgh, PA. It seems the RF was flowing to the north and south. The vertical long wire (a sloper) was still hanging in the tree pouring out two watts of pure, unadulterated New Hampshire power across the country...around the world. (I always like to think big.) Then another contact with K1TJ in Morristown, VA, followed by N2VPK in NY, WA4KAC in MD, W1XH in MA, K3AS in PA, N2YIY in PA, KF2HC in NJ, N1RXT on Mt. Monadnock, NH, N2SMH in NJ, AA6UL/4 in VA, W3BNB in MD, AA3LY in PA, WB3GCK in DL, K9UT in IN, KC1GS on Wachusette MT, MA, K8DSS in OH, AF3V in PA, W3GES in PA, K3TKS in MD, WK8S in MI, VE3FAO in Ont., VE3LCW in Ont., and K8JJC in MI. It was pretty exciting hearing and working all these good people on 40 meters and I wanted to thank each and everyone one of them...even the dupes.

Now what could have gone wrong during such a brilliant contest in the park such as this? During the Saturday sunshine, while in Nashua's public park, were also 35 to 50 fifteen to nineteen-year-old teenagers who were reenacting Dungeons and Dragons. Their crusade was to run, jump, whoop and yell it up. Okay, they were over **THERE**, and I was over **HERE**, about 150 yards apart; and we were worlds away from each other. **WRONG!** They wanted my space also. They wanted to "play" where I was and to see if I would notice them. Actually, they were the curious ones for many came to my table and asked, "What'cha doin'?" while snapping their gum and starring at the QRP rig. Boys and girls who were holding duct-tape swords, mock mallets and hammers in their hands, wanting to know why I was using Morse code and not a microphone. One brave young man, who looked like he needed a bath, said he had a radio too. My ears perked up and I asked him what his call was. He couldn't remember but he was on channel 19 along with his divorced mother. "Oh," I said and turned back to my CW.

After everyone had seen what they wanted to see, they left to conquer the world. Thank goodness for me, for now it is peace and quiet time. Well, not really. Standing in front of me, for minutes... not moving, was Patrick, a five year old boy who had no one to play with and deemed me his friend. **HE WOULD NOT GO AWAY.** He was inquisitive and pulled on the long wire which was connected to the MFJ-971, of which I said politely, "Please don't touch anything." He said okay, until he saw the cable from my gel-cell and wanted to know why it was red and black. I said politely, "Please don't touch anything." This appeased him until he saw inside my Xerox paper box filled with field strength meters, a frequency meter, coax, *et al*, something more interesting. Patrick wanted to see what else was inside and proceeded to empty, one piece at a time, the entire contents of what was there. "Wow, what are you doing?"...ran through my mind, but I looked at him and said politely, "Please don't touch anything." I, at this time, mentioned that his father was looking for him, or perhaps his mother wanted him too. Patrick said his mother wasn't there in the park but that his father wanted him to play with that nice man in the corner of the field...me. My eye lit open and I said nicely, "Why don't you go play with your friends." He said he wanted to stay and watch me. Patrick then spied the Oreo cookies I had in my Tupperware container in my Xerox catch-all radio box. He said that they must taste good because he has had them before. I offered two cookies to him and said make sure your dad gives you permission to eat them. Patrick ran away with smiles on his face and a kick in his gait.



Patrick ran back ten minutes later, mouth all loaded with black cookie crumbs and said that they were so good he was wondering if there might be more. Again, he got another two cookies and off he went. That was the end of Patrick, until he came back for the third handout. I said, "I am sorry Patrick, but you ate them all and now you'll have to leave here and not come back till I have over fifty contacts." He didn't understand what I meant but **HE LEFT!** Nice kid, but what a time to pick to be an inquisitive five year old!

Did I have a good time? **YES!** I can't wait for the next QRP contest in the park, and I know a lot of us are waiting for the good times to continue. I have always said that amateur radio has to be instant gratification and that's why I love it so much. This has got to be the best fraternity I've even been in and I love all you guys. You dudes are great and I want to work you all. And...Patrick, too!

# Almost over. ■ ■ ■ by Carl Thurston, kc9hds

It has been a fairly busy Summer this year. The prelude to it started in early May when Greg K9LEC and I went to Radio City to pick up his HF rig that was in there for repair. I went along for the ride and to take my FT 897D up there for repair. On the way we stopped at some of the "Hundred Mile" rummage sales that was going on at the time along Highway 61. Each of us found yet more things that we couldn't live without. The weather was perfect and we had a very pleasant trip up to



Mounds View and Radio City. I had hoped to get my FT 897D back by Field Day, but that didn't happen. By the time that it was ready to be picked up, Field Day was little more than a fond memory. Oh well, that's the way it goes sometimes. At Field Day, I was forced to use one of the club's HF rigs, and that was probably a good thing, as I hadn't used it before and learned much by using it. All went pretty well with Field Day and everyone had a good time.

The next event was our annual SwapFest. It was held at the Omni Center again this year, and it was a success. I went there with 5 large boxes of stuff and went home some what richer and with only 2 boxes of stuff left. When it comes to drawings or raffles, I almost never win anything useful, but the drawing at this SwapFest was different; I actually won some thing that I could use; i.e.: an ARRL back pack that was radio ready and very well made. On those rare occasions where I do win a drawing, it usually is something that I can't use and I wind up giving it to some one who can. An example of that was when I won a ticket to a distant swap meet at the Circus City swap last year. It was for a Swap meet in Huebertius! Not even sure where that is, but I knew that I wouldn't be going there, so I gave it back so that someone who might be able to use it could have it. When ever I buy raffle tickets, I buy them with the idea that I am contributing to the "cause," what ever it is, with little or no chance of winning anything useful.

When my FT 897D was finally ready for pick up, Greg K9LEC and I returned to Radio City to get it. Again, the weather was nice and we had a nice trip up and on the way back we stopped at Northern Tool where Greg found a nice set of aluminum ramps for a trailer that he was putting together to haul his quad tracker on. So it was another successful trip.

Back home, Greg K9LEC helped me with the fabrication of some plates that I needed to complete a hand rail project for the outside steps at my QTH. They turned out well and with the help of my Brother Dave, I was able to build two nice sturdy railings for the steps in the front and back of my QTH.



Having completed that long planned and awaited project, I was sitting around with little more to do, when Dan AB9TS put out the call for someone to accompany him to Radio City to pick up and antenna that he had purchased there. I answered the call and took along a couple of FT 8500s that I had that needed repairing so the trip was a success for me s well. On our way out of the Twin Cities area, we stopped at the Mall of America for lunch and then on to "AX-Mans's Surplus," just for the fun of it. I found a set of binding connectors that I was in need of and Dan found a couple of odds and ends that he had use for as well. The ride home was going well until we left Rochester on I 90. As we entered I 90, it started to rain and continued to do so all of the rest of the way home.

The next adventure is to go to Circus City for their annual swap meet where I hope to sell off more stuff. That should be another fine time, it usually is. On the way back, we will probably stop at "Delay's Salvage." But all of that will have to wait for another installment of "The Key." That should end Summer for this year. I'll be back in the Fall.



# SWAP FEST 2018

