

SHORT CIRCUITS

Newsletter of the Kent County Amateur Radio Club

December 2023

Officers		Repeaters
President	Paul Tuley N3BUH	146.970 (-) 77hz pl Dover
Vice-President	Jim Moore KC3BTV	146.910 (-) 77hz pl Camden
Secretary	Tim Reisinger KC3OO	147.300 (+) 77 hz pl N3YMS
Treasurer	Tom Libertore N3ARX	444.550 (+) 77hz pl Dover (down)
		442.450 (+) 127.3 hz pl Harrington
		449.775 (-) 114.8 hz pl N3IOC Felton

Merry Christmas

Happenings

December 2	Rehoboth Marathon, more below
December 9	VE Testing, Wyoming Methodist Church, 09:00
December 12	Annual KCRAC Christmas Gathering at the EOC, more below
January 9, 2024	Membership Meeting, Kent County EOC, 19:00
January 11, 2024	AUXCOMM Meeting, 19:30
January 27 – 28, 2024	Winter Field Day, more info to come
January 29, 2024	Emcomm Meeting, EOC, 19:00
February 8, 2024	AUXCOMM Meeting, 19:30
February 13, 2024	Membership Meeting, Kent County EOC, 19:00
February 26, 2024	Emcomm Meeting, EOC, 19:00
March 9, 2024	VE Testing, Wyoming Methodist Church, 09:00
March 12, 2024	Membership Meeting, Kent County EOC, 19:00
March 14, 2024	AUXCOMM Meeting, 19:30
March 25, 2024	Emcomm Meeting, EOC, 19:00
April 9, 2024	Membership Meeting, Kent County EOC, 19:00
April 11, 2024	AUXCOMM Meeting, 19:30
April, 29, 2024	Emcomm Meeting, EOC, 19:00
May 9, 2024	AUXCOMM Meeting, 19:30
May 14, 2024	Membership Meeting, Kent County EOC, 19:00
May 27, 2024	Emcomm Meeting, EOC, 19:00
June 8, 2024	VE Testing, Wyoming Methodist Church, 09:00
June 11, 2024	Membership Meeting, Kent County EOC, 19:00
June 13, 2024	AUXCOMM Meeting, 19:30
June 24, 2024	Emcomm Meeting, EOC, 19:00
July 9, 2024	Membership Meeting, Kent County EOC, 19:00
July 11, 2024	AUXCOMM Meeting, 19:30
July 29, 2024	Emcomm Meeting, EOC, 19:00
August 8, 2024	AUXCOMM Meeting, 19:30
August 13, 2024	Membership Meeting, Kent County EOC, 19:00
August 26, 2024	Emcomm Meeting, EOC, 19:00
September 10, 2024	Membership Meeting, Kent County EOC, 19:00
September 14, 2024	VE Testing, Wyoming Methodist Church, 09:00
September 12, 2024	AUXCOMM Meeting, 19:30
October 8, 2024	Membership Meeting, Kent County EOC, 19:00
October 10, 2024	AUXCOMM Meeting, 19:30

Hamfests

April 20, 2024 **Delmarva Amateur Radio and Electronics Expo, ARRL Delaware State Convention**

Sussex Amateur Radio Association

Cheer Center, 20520 Sand Hill Rd., Georgetown, DE 19947

Contact: Jamie Ashton , W3UC, 7446 Parker St. Pittsville, MD 21850

Phone: 410-202-7690 **Email:** ashton@mchsi.com **Talk-In:** 147.090 156.7

More hamfests listed at www.arrl.org/hamfests. Check at the web site, or call the contact person, before going to any hamfest to make sure it has not been canceled.

Editor's Comments

The QST issue that gets the most use in the "throne room" is the December issue with the Field Day results. I will sit and look at the number of contacts, how many people took part in the effort, what class was entered, and the trends. For instance, digital contacts were up by 8.5% while CW contacts down by 9.7%, and phone contacts up by 1.7%. The total number of contacts reported were 1,249,686 (a 2% decrease from last year), with 4,445 entries (a 10.9% decrease), 41.3% of those entries were classes A and B, an increase from last year. Even though total entries and QSOs are down, the number of "going to the field" participants are up. KCARC ended up 65th of 331 entries in class 3A.

It's also interesting to look back over the years and see how well KCARC did in earlier times. Available results, without going through our club records, only go back as far as 2000 on the ARRL website. For instance, KCARC used the call "W3W" with no GOTA station and made 1515 QSOs with 34 people for a score of 5250, placing 59 of 344. In relation, W3AO was 30A, 9908 QSOs and a score of 31,534 (an all time high then). The QST article used to put the "Top Ten" scores on the first page, but no more, that ending in 2021, and usually W3AO was always top.

In 2012 KCARC hit its all time high entering as 6A as K3PT (Bobby Manning's call at the time) making 2199 (couldn't get just one more??) QSOs, 36 people, and a score of 7280, ending up number 9 of 43 entries in that class. Compared to W3AO, that made 11,116 QSOs with 80 people as a 27A, a score of 35,984. Good propagation that year!

Looking through this years results, in the 1B class, KW8N made 1563 QSOs using 100 watts for a score of 6298. The score isn't the big thing, it's the 1563 contacts by one person. You wonder what kind of set up he had for that many contacts, and what mode(s) he used, and his antenna(s). This operator probably didn't get out of the chair too often and would be one you would want on the other end of some emergency traffic! The top 1F station, W6TX, had 1235 contacts, 10 people, and 4870 points. They had more QSOs than the top 2F, KC1CUE (+N1YNI) station which had 1081 QSOs, but 7199 points. Difference in the modes, obviously.

So what's all mean Alfie (to coin the title of the song)? We going to win some big prize? No, in fact the ARRL doesn't even recognize the top placing groups anymore, maybe a "woke" thing, but to see who is doing the best, and learning from their experience, one now must pour over the results and the make the inquires of how that group did it. Ever wonder how W3AO runs so many transmitters at once without interference? That is as valuable information as how KW8N made his 1563! There is a lot that can be learned by participating in Field Day and paying attention to what works, and what doesn't.

The "fun" of the amateur radio hobby is to make contacts. As the T-shirt says, "Ham radio is a contact sport", you got to pick up that mic or key, or computer, and contact that other station. Either during Field Day, or at your own shack every day. Keeping the bands alive with all modes, tells the FCC, and

Congress, that ham radio is alive and well and being used every day and will be there "when all else fails!" That's the prize we all get, keeping our allocated frequencies!

President's Column

No last words from the top!!!

Vice-President's Column

In late October I took my motor home to Cape Henlopen State Park for a few days. Just to see how things would go I took a two pair of hamstick dipole antennas, one pair tuned for 3.905MHz for the Delaware Traffic Net and the other pair tuned for 7.078MHz for ft8. I mounted them to a junction box with a common feed – just like a fan dipole - and have them up about fifteen feet using $\frac{3}{4}$ emt as a mast. I have a bulkhead double SO-239 in the side of my RV that the antenna coax plugs into on one side and on the other side a fifteen foot piece of coax that terminates at my operating position. The coax from the junction box is a twenty five foot piece RG8-X. It is a good setup for a campground where space is limited.

Once everything was hooked up, for some unknown reason, I decided to check the SWR of the antennas with my Nano VNA. Zowie! The SWR showed to be over 10:1 at both frequencies. I measured the SWR at the end of the feed line and it was 1.2:1 at 3.905MHz and 2:1 at 7.078MHz so obviously there is a problem with the fifteen foot coax or the bulkhead connector. I didn't think it was a length issue since both frequencies were affected but I tried adding an additional three feet to the fifteen foot section with no improvement.

What is the rule with ham radio? Be flexible. I just shifted my Xiegu G90 rig to the picnic table, hooked up the antenna coax directly, and successfully checked into the Delaware Traffic Net using 20 watts and made ft8 contacts at 8 watts to AZ, SD, CT and SC. It never hurts to check your antennas before you transmit – your finals will be happier for it.

73,
Jim KC3BTV
VP KCARC

From the Section Manager's Shack

Section Managers Column December 2023

A fond farewell and thank you to all who have worked with me and supported the ARRL programs over the last 18 months. A year and a half has seemed to fly by. This will be my last column as Section Manager. Steven Keller, KC3DSO, will be the new ARRL Section Manager for the Delaware Section starting January 1, 2024. I hope you will all continue to support Steven and the ARRL in its work as the advocate for amateur radio here in the United States and around the world. Many are the issues facing our hobby, particularly here in this country. Yes, there are things the ARRL could do better. Yes, the great group of people in the ARRL Headquarters in Newington, Connecticut, are trying to keep pace with the changing challenges that confront them. Change comes slowly. There is an inertia in any organization when it comes to adapting to new ideas. We have relatively new, younger, leadership in our Atlantic Division. You may have heard Bob Famiglio, K3RF, Division Director, speak to these issues. Therein lies the future of the ARRL.

I'm not going away and fading into the sunset. I will be continuing to work with the Emergency Management community integrating amateur radio into the Response Plan. The running of the Rehoboth Marathon on December 2nd is an example of new things coming. We will have the Sussex AUXCOMM Group combined with CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams) volunteers from several communities in Sussex County supporting the event. Ham radio as I have frequently said is a

hobby of doing. And doing interesting, community supportive activities, is a great way to have fun, support the community, and get practice for the time when “all else fails”. And fail it will, unfortunately. The issues with HOA’s and antennas is a priority with the ARRL. They have spent considerable money and effort to get legislation introduced in congress. Unfortunately that’s as far as it has gotten in that semi-dysfunctional self-serving organization. We, however, on the local scene can make a difference through demonstration and education directed at the residents and management of the surrounding HOA’s. Several HOA’s in eastern Sussex now have CERT Teams. Partnering AUXCOMM with CERT is a way of introducing amateur radio to people in those communities that are interested in emergency preparedness. Favorable publicity of amateur radio participation in public events is another positive thing. A cliché’ perhaps, but Confucius said, “He who don’t toot own horn, hear no music”. Those in a position to support and enable amateur radio operation in planned communities, need to hear our “music”.

Later, 73 K3PFW

The Emcomm Corner

Sometimes we get in our minds that there is only one way to do things. I keep a stack of QST’s on the head of my bed to read articles before going to sleep. I recently read an article about a road race on logging roads that used ham operators like we do for marathons and bicycle events. There was one section of the course around a mountain where 2m communication would not work. They tried relay stations and even talked about a temporary repeater on the mountaintop. The repeater was not an option because it would have involved a multi-hour hike without a trail to carry up the equipment for a 6 hour event.

They then tried 80m NVIS and it worked. With the appropriate horizontal antenna (low – cloud burner) and frequency NVIS works great. I participate in several 80m NVIS digital nets weekly with participants from the New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey regions. The regional coverage area shrinks after sunrise but still works good for local communications. Frequently 40 meters is usable for regional NVIS as well and there is a new 40 m regional NVIS digital net on Sundays.

NVIS is why we have 3.905MHz as a emergency communication frequency. HF antennas for emcomm can be problematic but can be addressed creatively. One example is the use of hamstick dipoles. The goal with emergency communications is to be able to do whatever we need to do to meet the needs of the agency we serve.

73,
Jim KC3BTV
Kent County EC

AUXCOMM News

Thankful

Thanksgiving may be behind us, but taking a minute to be thankful is, or should be, more than a once-a-year occasion. I’m thankful for the time we could spend out of town with family, for safety in travel, and for all the delicious goodies we shared. (Though I do miss hosting and having all of the great leftovers in our fridge to munch on for days!) So, it seemed natural to continue this theme of thankfulness into the column for this month...

I am thankful for the 26 amateur radio volunteers who will be helping Sussex County with the 2023 Rehoboth Marathon on December 2nd and for the trust placed in us by the event organizers.

I am thankful for the significant number of amateur radio volunteers from outside of Sussex County who will be supporting the marathon and who regularly support Sussex AUXCOMM events and activities. I am thankful for the 9 volunteers from Ocean View C.E.R.T. who, for the first time, will team with AUXCOMM amateur radio operators to form 2-person teams at certain locations.

I am thankful that the FCC has received 3,456 comments regarding proposed rule changes for the 60m band and, without reading them all, I'm hoping that they are overwhelmingly against the proposed restrictions.

I am thankful that the FCC approved a symbol rate change in the regulations so that higher data rates, whatever can fit within a 2.8kHz bandwidth limit, are now available to amateur radio operators, getting us out of the "dial-up" age.

I am thankful for the support that Sussex County AUXCOMM receives from the EOC. Though we may be amateurs, we are provided with professional quality resources and in turn are expected to perform at a professional level. There are too many amateur radio EMCOMM groups that are told they can bring in their own gear and set it on a card table in some corner of the basement, if they are allowed in at all!

I am thankful for the editor/publisher of Short Circuits and all who contribute to this newsletter.

I am thankful for the increased presence and publicity amateur radio has enjoyed this year. We ain't dead yet!

Lastly, I am thankful for the freedoms we enjoy including a hobby with a long history that permits us to reach out locally, nationally, and globally.

How about you?

73's!
Bill, N3ID

Club Happenings

The Results Are In.....

Elections were held at the November meeting and if you had planned on becoming an officer, or voting, and didn't show up at the meeting, well, too late! All candidates ran unopposed and elected by the Secretary casting one vote for each. Elected are;

President	Jim Moore, KC3BTV
Vice-President	Hunter Grier, KC3VTB
Secretary	Tim Reisinger, KC3OO
Treasurer	Tom Libertore , N3ARX

New officers will be installed at the Christmas Party on December 12.

Further Election Results

Vice Director Martin Pittinger, KB3MXM(2,801 votes), of Owings Mills, Maryland, defeated candidate Robert Weinstock, W3RQ (1,044 votes) for the seat. Marty will assume his roles for term beginning January 1, 2024.

Atlantic Division Director Robert Famiglio, K3RF; ran unopposed in this election cycle, was declared winner.

In the Section manager race here in Delaware, newcomer, as he describes himself on QRZ, Steven Keller, KC3DSO, defeated John Ferguson, K3PFW, by a vote of 130 to 111. Steven's QRZ page lists his residence in Milford, and he is a General class operator.

Notice of upcoming vote on by-law change

The following is the proposed changes to the by-laws discussed at the November meeting. The old parts of the section are crossed out and the new parts are underlined. If there are any questions, contact Tim, KC3OO or Tom, N3ARX.

SECTION 4: DUES Regular annual dues of \$25.00 are hereby assessed in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Kent County Amateur Radio Club, for the purpose of providing operating capital to meet current expenses. In addition, immediate family members within the same household may join the KCARC for an additional fee of \$15.00 for each additional family member. Annual dues for those under 18 years of age shall be \$10.00. When a new member joins partway through the year the dues shall be pro-rated and rounded up to the nearest whole dollar as follows: 9 months remaining shall be ~~\$20.00~~ 75% of the annual dues, 6 months remaining shall be ~~\$15.00~~ 50%, 3 months remaining shall be ~~\$10.00~~ 25%. *Note: The club repeater is technically "open." Club membership is not required for occasional use. Licensed amateurs using the KCARC repeater on a regular and continuing basis will be expected to join the Club and are invited to submit their application for Membership.*

146.910 Repeater Back On the Air

I was told I missed the fact that Nick, N3YMS, and crew got the new antenna and repeater back into DivCom, and the machine is working fine. Be sure to thank Nick when you see him at the meeting. Give the repeater a try sometime and my apologizes for omitting this fact from last month's newsletter.

Rehoboth Marathon on December 2

Again, an omission on my part, but Bill, N3ID, did put the information in his November column. This public service event is a marathon and a half marathon run on the same course at the same time. It is a fun event and the participants really appreciate amateurs that volunteer. Contact Bill, N3ID, at WS3EOC@gmail.com immediately if interested in helping.

Christmas Party on December 12

The meeting in December will be our Christmas Party, at 6:00 PM at the EOC. Carolyn, AA3ZH, has volunteered to "chair" the event. It will be a "pot luck" affair, meaning you bring your favorite dish to share and serve 6 to 8. You don't need to make five gallons of Chili, just a small pot!

There will also be a "Chinese Auction" and you are asked to bring a small gift, of not more than \$20, and mark it for a male or female. Here's a chance to get rid of something extra you don't use anymore and pass it on.

The Field Day Report.....

The cherished December issue of QST is out, on digital anyway. One of the things I get from the ARRL is when the new issues of their magazines come out, so I took a peek at QST.

Seems there were 18 stations that entered from the Delaware (DE) section. One in 2A, 4 in 3A, 6 in 1D, or work from home station, and 7 in 1E (home with emergency power). The breakdown is as follows;

2A Battery	W3PP	233 contacts	3 people	2455
3A	N3Y	850 "	25 "	4670
3A	W3DRA	502 "	15 "	2040
3A	W3LF	42 "	12 "	934
3A	W3Z	110 "	4 "	602

1D	AA3R	160	"		1 person	606
1D	W3TAS122	"		1	"	538
1D	W3RLO	24	"		1	146
1D	K3LT	21	"		1	134
1D	W3DCS	16	"		1	82
1D	N1MWU	24	"		1	48
1E	NW3Y	240	"		1	1110
1E	W3KS	242	"		1	734
1E	N3MWQ	124	"		1	598
1E	KC3MAL	55	"		1	370
1E	KE3E	30	"		1	270
1E	K0UWO	10	"		1	190
1E	WA0CIE	18	"		1	186

So there you have it, as reported straight from QST. KCARC at 3A was the high point group and also high QSO total. KCARC owes a big thanks to Eric, WG3J, for manning the CW tent during Field Day. KCARC ended up 65th of 331 entries contest wide. Not too bad. Plans for next years event should begin now. See me for the article from QST.

From the ARRL.....

ZCZC AX16
 QST de W1AW
 Special Bulletin 16 ARLX016
 From ARRL Headquarters
 Newington CT November 21, 2023
 To all radio amateurs

SB SPCL ARL ARLX016
 ARLX016 SKYWARN Recognition Day Is Ready to Go

The 2023 SKYWARN Recognition Day (SRD) is December 2 from 0000z to 2400z.

The event honors all SKYWARN storm spotters and amateur radio operators for their contributions to the National Weather Service (NWS) during severe weather. Amateur radio operators also provide vital communication to the NWS and emergency management when normal communications fail.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) website is now updated with the SKYWARN registration form, mapping form, and rules and information you'll need to check in for this year's event. Information can be found at, <https://www.weather.gov/crh/skywarnrecognition>.

It's important to review the following event resources on the NOAA website:

- + Operating procedures
- + Participant registration lists
- + SRD 2023 contact log sheet
- + SRD 2023 NWS office contact log sheet
- + SRD 2023 NWS operational details
- + Social media planning document

SRD was developed in 1999 by the NWS and ARRL. Amateur stations exchange contact information with as many NWS stations as possible on 80, 40, 20, 15, 10, and 6 meters, plus the 2-meter and 70-centimeter bands. Contacts are also permitted using repeaters. Non-amateur radio spotters can exchange information with NWS offices using social media.

To learn how to become a trained NOAA storm spotter visit Spotter Training at, <https://www.weather.gov/pdt/spotterTraining>.

In 2022, more than 5,000 spotters participated in SKYWARN Recognition Day.

NNNN

/EX

DX Opportunities

In relation to keeping our frequencies active, below is the current listing from the DX Newsletter. As you can see, these are HF frequencies, except for the one reference to the satellite. As you can also see, there is some reference to FT8 and FT4, for those of you who work the "dark side". Get on HF and have some fun, and if you don't have HF privileges for SSB or FT8, upgrade and have a ball.

DX Activities

A6, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES:

The special event station A60WRC (with optional appendages /0 to /20) operates around the ITU conference WRC-23 until Dec. 15. For QSL information see: <https://www.qrz.com/db/A60WRC>

9L, SIERRA LEONE:

Shabu, M0KRI, is still waiting for his equipment to arrive in a container and now hopes to get on the air as 9L5M on Nov. 27. QRV on HF and via QO-100 until Dec. 5. A QSL route will be announced later.

CN, MOROCCO:

Yanick, F6FYD, signs CN2YD, beginning on Dec. 1. He stays in the country until March 15 in 2024 and also plans to visit the island Essaouira (AF-065), dates to be announced in due course. QSL via homecall, to be processed after his return.

HR, HONDURAS:

Gerard, F2JD, is now back in Copan-Ruinas and operates as HR5/F2JD until March 21 next year on 160-10m (including 60m) on CW, SSB, and FT8/4. QSL via F6AJA (B).

IOTA

IOTA QRGs

CW: 28040 24920 21040 18098 14040 10114 7030 3530 kHz

SSB: 28560 28460 24950 21260 18128 14260 7055 3760 kHz

AF-013; 5R, MADAGASCAR ISLAND: Moise, F4EZG, will be active between Dec. 5 and Jan. 3 next year as 5R8VE. QRV on 20-10m (SSB, FT8) with 100W. QSL via homecall, LoTW, eQSL.

AF-057; 5R, MADAGASCAR'S COASTAL ISLANDS WEST: From Nov. 29 until Dec. 3, Moise, F4EZG, signs 5R8VE/p from Nosy Faly Island. QSL via homecall.

AS-130; 3W, SOUTH CHINA SEA COAST SOUTH group: Jacek, SP5APW, activates Con Son Island as 3W9C from Nov. 30 until Dec. 9 on 20-6m (FT8). QSL via homecall.

EU-028; I*5, TOSCANA (TUSCANY) REGION group: Alessandro, IZ4WNA, puts Elba on the air from the 28th to 30th as IZ4WNA/IA5 on 80-10m (SSB, FT8). QSL via IZ4WNA.

NA-023; VP2V, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS: VP2VMM will be the callsign of a group operating holiday-style from Anegada Island between Dec. 4 and 12. QRV mostly on 20-10m (CW, SSB, digital). QSL via KU9C

(d/B), ClubLog OQRS, LoTW.

OC-003; VK9, COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS: Yuris, YL2GM, and Eugene, EA5EL, move on to Cocos Keeling and operate as VK9CY from Nov. 29 until Dec. 7. QRV with two rigs on 160-6m (CW, SSB, FT8). QSL via YL2GN, OQRS.

OC-011; V6, CHUUK ISLANDS: A group of German operators will be active from Dec. 4 until Dec. 16 as V6EU on 160-10m (CW, SSB, RTTY, FT8). QSL via DL2AWG, ClubLog OQRS, LoTW.

OC-024; T32, KIRITIMATI ISLAND: Members of the Rebel DX Group operate as T32TT from Christmas Island between Dec. 1 and 21. QRV on 160-6m (CW, SSB, FT8/4). QSL only via OQRS.

OC-032; FK, NEW CALEDONIA ISLAND: Jean Luis, F5NHJ, is currently visiting his family on New Caledonia and plans to operate for 1 week, beginning Nov. 25, as FK/F5NHJ from Pine Island. He stays until Jan. 14. QSL only via OQRS or LoTW.

Thanks to DX Newsletter (DXNL)

A Reminder From the Section Manager

For those in the lower part of the State, the following comes from the current SM;

All, the next meeting of the Lewes Amateur Radio Society (LARS) will be this coming Wednesday, December 6 at the Lemon Tree 416 Savannah Rd., in Lewes. It's in a little strip mall on the left as you head towards the beach, gathering at 12:00 noon as usual.

Copies of the the original club constitution will be available. This will be an important meeting that you will want to attend, as we all try to get the club going again.

ARRL Delaware Section
Section Manager: John S Ferguson, K3PFW
k3pfw@arrl.org

Useless Facts of the Month

A person is moving Counterclockwise when they are going widdershins! (I knew there was something wrong with some people!!)

The world record for the most candles ever put on a birthday cake was 50,151. (Wonder what kind of cake it was??!!)

The average keyboard contains 3,295 germs per square inch. (Who knew this newsletter could be hazardous duty??!!)

Pablo Picasso's full name was Pablo Diego Jose Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno Maria de los Remedios Cipriano de la Santisima Trinidad Ruiz y Picasso. (Imagine sending that in CW, "name hr is.....".)

A lion's roar can be heard from up to five miles away. (Nice Kitty now!!)

Tid Bit of Information of the Month Department

Enemy Sub Delivers Unforgettable Gift

By Deseret News Jan 2, 2003, Lee Wayne Maloy as told to Kathie and Scott Armstrong

In the war years, I served my country as a merchant marine. By the time I was 19 years old I had traveled around the world three times, It was a great adventure for a young man, but life as a merchant seaman was very rough, and I had to learn to be tough to survive. New men went through initiations called "smokers." This is where you either sank or swam as a merchant marine. I found myself in a small boxing ring fighting the toughest man on board. I was knocked down time and time again, but I kept getting up, and each time I pulled myself to my feet, I got a little better and a little more confident. Though I never knocked the big guy down, I learned one of the best lessons of my life: to never give up and just keep trying. My efforts proved to be the right thing because everyone came over and patted me on the back and gave me a big hug. Even the biggest and toughest guy on board became a fast friend who always looked after me from then on.

These were the men with whom I would share so many amazing experiences. Though many of my memories have become grayed with the passing of the years, there are a few that still stand out as vivid as if they just happened. Let me preface this Christmas experience with the fact that even at my young age, I had faced death before. There was the time we were in the Indian Ocean on a tanker carrying war supplies to the troops. The year was 1944, and we had all been on alert for the entire week having heard several ships had been sunk by U-boats. The Germans were relentless and usually traveled in "wolf packs," making it most difficult to avoid being torpedoed.

The moon was bright that night, and I could see very clearly. I was on watch on the bow of the ship with binoculars in hand. I surveyed the horizon keeping myself sharp and alert for my task. My older brother was on board with me and was down in the galley having his coffee. I had been on watch for several hours and was getting a little cold and hungry. The sea was a fluorescent green, which made every white cap and fish glow. As I scanned the horizon I suddenly noticed two fluorescent streaks in the distance. I blinked my eyes just to make sure of what I was seeing. Yes, it was two torpedoes coming straight for the bow of our ship. I quickly grabbed the phone to warn the bridge, but it just rang and rang without anyone answering. Later they told me they saw the torpedoes as I rang and didn't think we had a chance. I didn't think we had a chance either, but as the ship rose on the swell of the next wave, the torpedo on our starboard side missed us completely. The one on our port side was invisible and I was invisible, and I wrapped my arms tightly around myself and closed my eyes as though I could protect myself from the impending explosion. I waited frozen in that moment of time with my shipmates as we heard the torpedo skim down the ship, clanging as it went. It banged into us four or five times, and then silence. By some miracle the torpedo's warhead never came in contact with the ship, and we were saved.

Several months later on Christmas Eve, I had just celebrated my 20th birthday on Dec. 21. We were on our way home from the Mediterranean approaching the Straits of Gibraltar on our way to the North Atlantic. We were happily bound for the East Coast of the good old USA. It was a stormy night that Christmas Eve, and I was once again on watch at the bow of the ship. The sea was covered in white caps, which make it almost impossible to see "turkey feathers," a term we used to describe the white plume that flows behind a submarine's periscope when it is close to the surface. Understandably all of our thoughts were of home and of Christmas and of hopes of soon being with our families.

The past days had been unremarkable, and the sights, sounds and smell of the ocean lulled me into a sense of well-being. Then it all seemed to happen in an instant. I saw the plume of a periscope appear off the port side of our ship. It couldn't have been more than 100 yards away. I had no chance to ring the bridge this time. They must have seen the periscope at the same time I did because the ship was suddenly alive with alarms and shouts of men scurrying to their battle stations. But there was no time to

ready ourselves for a fight. There was no time to protect ourselves in any way. The submarine was already on us, rising up out of that choppy sea. The enemy had us dead to rights.

I'll never forget what happened next. There was a flashing. Dash dash, dot, dot dash dot. I mouthed the letters as I saw the German submarine blinking its Morse code message. I couldn't believe what was I was seeing. M-E-R. Could I be reading it correctly? Another "R" and then, dash dot dash dash, a "Y." It was happening so fast as the second word flashed to us in the darkness. C-H-R-I-S-T-M-A-S. Then it was over. As fast as the U-boat had appeared it sank back into the blackness of the sea and was gone.

We all stood transfixed. No one moved for several seconds as we recovered from our shock and surprise. We had escaped death before by a twist of fate or maybe luck. But on this Christmas Eve we had been given a gift. As the reality of what had just transpired and the words "Merry Christmas" took hold in our minds and then our hearts, we unitedly sent up a cheer. A cheer of relief, and of joy and true celebration.

I have had many wonderful Christmases since that Christmas Eve in 1944. I was able to marry and spend 56 years with my lovely wife and help to raise our three children. Each consecutive Christmas has been surrounded by grandchildren and now, great-grandchildren. None of these memories would have ever been possible if it wasn't for that fortuitous night when the "enemy" gave a ship full of men the gift of peace and one of their best Christmas memories possible.

Thanks to The Rag Chew

A POST CHRISTMAS STORY

There was a man who worked for the Post Office whose job it was to process all the mail that had illegible addresses. One day, a letter came addressed in a shaky handwriting to God with no actual address. He thought he should open it to see what it was about.

The letter read:- Dear God, I am an 83 year old widow, living on a very small pension. Yesterday someone stole my purse. It had £100 in it which was all the money I had until my next pension cheque. Next Sunday is Christmas, and I had invited two of my friends over for dinner. Without that money, I have nothing to buy food with. I have no family to turn to, and you are my only hope. Can you please help me? Sincerely, Edna.

The postal worker was touched. He showed the letter to all the other workers. Each one dug into his or her wallet and came up with a few quid. By the time he made the rounds, he had collected £96 which they put into an envelope and sent to the woman.

The rest of the day, all the workers felt a warm glow thinking of Edna and the dinner she would be able to share with her friends. Christmas came and went. A few days into the New Year, another letter came from the same old lady to God. All the workers gathered around while the letter was opened.

It read:- Dear God, How can I ever thank you enough for what you did for me? Because of your gift of love, I was able to fix a glorious dinner for my friends. We had a very nice day and I told my friends of your wonderful gift. By the way, there was £4 missing, I think it must have been those bastards at the Post Office. Sincerely, Edna. *

Major Minnesota Marathon Canceled -- Amateur Radio Team was Ready

The Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon 2023, scheduled for earlier this month (October 10) was canceled just before the start due to forecasted record heat and humidity creating dangerous running conditions. However, the amateur radio team - one of the leading public event communications groups in the country -- was ready to roll. Here's a summary of what they had planned based on their extensive experience and education.

Amateur radio -- the Medical Communications Department -- again played several key roles in the Type 3, Unified Command event:

- 66 volunteers, mostly hams in yellow shirts, were stationed every half mile on the course to report runners down, entering/leaving aid stations and other situations. That data goes in our cloud database at each of four Net Control sites, and can be queried by our team in Family Medical Information to re-unite runners and loved ones. It is also presented to event leadership as a dashboard, which is queried in Race Operations and by mobile users. The plan was to allow EMS leadership to use the system. There are perhaps 500 radios in use - 350 rented, 63 ham, and at least 60 public safety officials.
- Taking a page from the CERT manual, the 200+ member volunteer Medical Team provides first aid, triage, and care to protect the EMS system and 33 area hospitals from an overwhelming surge of "green" or sports medicine type cases/calls that could be handled by volunteers, and provide early hands-on assessments to ensure serious cases were transported and care was provided quickly - we support them.
- We represented Event Medical at the Interagency Working Group - a table with our Regional EMS leader, an Incident Dispatcher from Hennepin County and St Paul EMS leader. The idea was, using software, to "deconflict" and coordinate event requests for EMS services.
- We were tasked in 2023 with providing SAG Bus "navigators" - to report runner location data and supervise the lightly injured or extra tired passengers aboard nine school buses. We insisted on a meeting with the SAG Bus Leader - who reported the data requested was not scheduled bus location, but individual runner/rider status in real time. A ten member Strike Team from the US Coast Guard Auxiliary - they have a radio club, W8WRR, that we partner with very closely -- was assigned here.
- If you have volunteers embedded at all leadership levels, hard questions can be asked by people without paychecks, careers, or pensions at stake. This might be a pro tip for police departments who need community involvement upgrades.

Generally, except on two of our ham led Med Comms nets, public safety radios are not used by event volunteers. And public safety does not use our event radios. This is deliberate -- the chains of command are not mixed or confused. The idea, under stress, the departments use their established procedures and there is not a change. We meet at the top, under Unified Command. For our race, we are event/volunteer led; our government partners have two large cities to run, and if we need them, we politely ask. (Some marathons are government led, which is a different model). – Erik Westgard, NY9D, Med Comms Lead, Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon

Thanks to the ARES Letter

It Just Takes One

"It just takes one," was the mantra of Steve Smith, W9GPI, ARRL Emergency Coordinator for Lee County, Florida. That "one" hit in late September 2022, when Hurricane Ian slammed into southwest Florida with 160 MPH winds making it a rare category 5 storm. The worst part of the storm passed over Lee County with barrier islands of Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel particularly hard hit. As destructive as the winds were, the water was worse, with 12-to-15-foot storm surge inundating much of the coast and inland area. In the end, 150 lives were lost and damages in the state exceeded \$100 billion with much of the local area left without power and water.

Smith called Lee County ARES into service beginning on Monday before the anticipated landfall of Wednesday. Initially, it appeared Lee County would be brushed by the storm. When landfall became apparent, Lee County ARES members were positioned in 12 emergency shelters, local hospitals, and at the area's two Emergency Operations Centers (EOC). Smith took the lead at the Lee County EOC, where he manned the net, which provided communications with all the ARES members and sub nets. He spent over 72 straight hours at the EOC, sleeping on a cot when necessary. He was helped by a

couple of ARES members who took over the main communications duties while Steve solved issues for the shelters or when he took a break.

When All Else Fails

The ARES slogan "When All Else Fails" came into play following the historic storm. During the storm, amateur radio became the only communications with shelter staff at several of the shelters. The system had been designed to rely on phones and internet to maintain communications with the EOC. Both failed early into the storm. Steve's ARES members became the link back to the county leaders.

The massive winds and storm surge washed out the causeway serving Sanibel Island and Captiva Island. The post-storm analysis predicted it would take months to repair. Steve and Sanibel officials came up with a plan to help with communications for the city government. During Hurricane Irma in 2017, the city of Sanibel lost communications. They noticed, however, that an amateur radio repeater on the island survived. Several Sanibel employees took classes and became licensed operators with the thought they could help if another storm hit. Hurricane Ian was that storm.

First, an assessment was made that the repeater on Sanibel survived and could be operated on emergency power. Second, the Sanibel city government (having lost their city hall in the storm) set up temporary offices at a hotel on the Florida mainland in Fort Myers. Steve worked with volunteers to procure a radio and antenna. He and a crew were able to get the rig installed on the hotel, and the city had communications with the island, all run by licensed amateur operators. Yet another example of "When All Else Fails."

Steve and the entire ARES team received high marks from local officials including those from Lee County. When Steve took over the EC slot, he created procedures and was instrumental in getting Lee County to fund the creation of "go boxes" for ARES use that support VHF/UHF communications and Winlink. He also was able to get permanent antennas installed on most of the designated emergency shelters, funded by the county.

Steve is an electrical engineer by training and worked in marketing for manufacturers like Square D during his career. He was also an EMT and served part time in law enforcement. As part of the Fort Myers Amateur Radio Club (FMARC) in addition to his EC duties, he served as Chair of the Education and Nomination committees as well as being a member of the VE team. In mid 2023, health issues forced the former Fond du Lac, Wisconsin resident to step down from his post as EC. Steve remains active in ARES and as a mentor to many in FMARC. - Jim Walch, K4DIP, Fort Myers, Florida

Thanks to the ARES Letter

Joke of the Month

The Last Wish

An elderly man lay dying in his bed. While suffering the agonies of impending death, he suddenly smelled the aroma of his favorite chocolate chip cookies wafting up the stairs. He gathered his remaining strength and lifted himself from the bed. Leaning against the wall, he slowly made his way out of the bedroom, and with even greater effort, gripping the railing with both hands, he crawled down the stairs. With labored breath, he leaned against the door frame, gazing into the kitchen. Were it not for death's agony, he would have thought himself already in heaven, for there, spread out upon waxed paper on the kitchen table were literally hundreds of his favorite chocolate chip cookies.

Was it heaven? Or was it one final act of heroic love from his devoted wife of sixty years, seeing to it that he left this world a happy man?

Mustering one great final effort, he threw himself toward the table, landing on his knees in a rumpled posture. His parched lips parted, the wondrous taste of the cookie was already in his mouth, seemingly bringing him back to life. The aged and withered hand trembled on its way to a cookie at the edge of the table, when it was suddenly smacked with a spatula by his wife,

"Don't Ernest!" she said, "They're for the funeral."

Quote of the Month

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:10 - 11