SKYVIEW
Skyview Radio Society, K3MJW
K3MJW
2335 Turkey Ridge Road
New Kensington, PA 15068

# Q5er – The Official Newsletter of the Skyview Radio Society

## Swap & Shop
## Sunday, August 24, 2025

Early Notice

## 2025 SKYVIEW RADIO SOCIETY SWAP N SHOP!

SUNDAY AUGUST 24, 2025 8:00am until 1:00pm

LOCATED AT OUR CLUB GROUNDS NEAR NEW KENSINGTON PA
2335 Turkey Ridge Road
New Kensington, PA 15068

Approximately 13 miles northeast of Pittsburgh
Location is near the intersection of Rt. 366 and Rt. 380
**GPS Coordinates: 40.51761, -70.67714**

Talk-in 146.640- 131.8pl

Admission $5.00 – Table space is $5.00 (Bring your own table)

**Main prizes**
**ICOM IC-7300**
**Astron SS-30M-AP Power Supply**
**And other TBD Main Prozes**

**Door prizes**

**Begali CW Key Raffle**

Breakfast and lunch served
Get your Skyview Burger and your Skyview Dipole Hotdog!

Contact: John Italiano WA3KFS - 724-339-3821

K3mjw@arrl.net
https://www.facebook.com/SkyviewRadioSociety

**2025 is Skyview's 65th Anniversary !!**

**June 1, 2025**

- Wear Headphones
- 
- VE Testing
- 
- Keeping Traditions Alive
- 
- Electronics Stencils
- 
- New Members
- 
- Skyview Roster

**Sunspot Numbers Are Still High**

**Time to exercise the 10-12-15-17-20 Meter bands while they are Still Hot**

## Inside this issue:

## The Skyview Radio Society Clubhouse is the "Every Tuesday Place" . . .

Something is going on at 'the joint' each and every Tuesday evening, from about 1900 hours to whenever.

See the general schedule of Tuesday events on the Skyview Web Page: http://www.skyviewradio.net

For the latest up-to-date plan, check the Groups.io Reflector at : https://groups.io/g/K3MJW

Directions are on: http://www.skyviewradio.net Guests are always welcome !!

## From the Editor

Enjoy this issue. (It is a 'Powerful' Issue)

Writing articles for publication here is not difficult. I will take progress pictures whenever I'm working on something ham related. Then whenever it is finished, I will often write up a short story about it.

I do not do things just to be able to write an article about it - I was going to do it anyway. I just figured that something that I did might be of interest to others. So I share it

Maybe nobody will ever read it. But I get some satisfaction out of doing it.

Everybody can write stuff. I can lightly edit it if I feel that some clarification is needed.

Jody - K3JZD

Remember: The number of people older than you never increases, it only decreases

**Ham Radio is a Contact Sport**

## From the Treasurer

Not surprisingly, a new effort to add an Emergency Generator to the Skyview Facilities has sprung up.

The current conversation has been around going big on this, with a self starting propane powered commercial unit and an automatic transfer switch.

The current thinking has been to fund this primarily from donations. I will be creating a new tracking account in my books to track donations for a generator.

For those of you who are drawing from tax deferred IRAs and/or 401ks, Qualified Charitable Donations (QCDs) that are made directly to Skyview will reduce your income tax bill. Talk to your financial advisor, or reach out to me for information on the proper way to do QCDs.

Jody - K3JZD

*ADVENTURE: The respectful pursuit of trouble.*

**Skyview Radio Society is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a charitable non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. Donations to Skyview are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.**

**Continue Use the Skyview Facilities At Your Own Risk - It is Not Really Totally History Yet.**

Follow https://groups.io/g/K3MJW for COVID updates.

*The foolish man seeks happiness in the distance, the wise grows it under his feet. – James Oppenheim*

## Skyview Business Meeting Minutes

de Don - WA3HGW

**Skyview Radio Society**

**Monthly Business Meeting – May 6, 2025**

**Call to Order:** 7:30 PM by President Jerry Lasalle, W3UY.

**Attending** – 30 Members: WC3O, N3WMC, KB3DVD, N3DRB, NM3A, K3ES, W3IU, NJ3R, KE3IF, AC3IE, N3WMI, KC3CBQ, AG3U, AG3I, AC3KI, WA3KFS, K3FAZ, K3JZD, WA3HGW, N2MA, AC3GB, W3UY, AB3GY, K3STL, KC3VCX, W1MP, KC3PXQ, AC3Q, KC3TTK, and VISITOR WSH2647

**Prior Meeting Minutes:** The minutes of the April 1, 2025 meeting were distributed for review. One error was noted and corrected. A motion to accept the minutes as revised was made by NM3A and seconded by N3WMC. The motion passed without objection.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Jody, K3JZD, reviewed the Financial Report of 30 April 2025 (attached). Jody noted only typical activity for April. Once again there were no building maintenance or radio expenses in the month. There was income to the unallocated account from Half & Half plus the winner's donation, VE testing, sale of an Icom ID-880H and an additional donation. Unallocated expenses were for the Ambient weather station purchase plus shipping cost for returning one of the Icom IC-7610 radios for display replacement under warranty. A motion to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented was made by AG3I and seconded by K3ES. The motion passed without objection.

**Membership Report:** Tom, AB3GY, advised there are three new membership applications for May, and made a motion to open the membership rolls. The motion was seconded by KC3PXQ. The motion passed without objection. The applications are from:

- Dennis Kifer, N3QZU, an Amateur Extra class from Jeanette, PA.
- Della Kohlman, KD3AQP, a General class and family member of Dennis.
- James Henry, KC3YMC, a Technician class from Cheswick, PA

AB3GY made a motion to accept the applications, which was seconded by AC3KI. The motion passed without objection. AB3GY made a motion to close the membership rolls, which was seconded by AC3KI. The motion passed without objection. Membership now stands at 158.

**Radio Officer Report**: Bob, WC3O, reported all radios are working well. The Green station Icom IC-7610 display has been replaced under warranty and is back in operation. Still no progress with the crank-up tower, but instructions on installing the replacement upgraded hoist cable have been received. The advent of warmer spring weather should have that project completed. The 146.64 back-up repeater is still in use. It does not have working back-up power, so was off the air during the recent weather caused power outage. Bob went over some of the recent discussions on obtaining a generator with sufficient power to run the whole club site. We are expecting to fund this by member contributions. Some contributions have already been made, and Jody, K3JZD, will set up an account for collecting those funds.

**Kitchen Report:** Bob, WC3O, noted the kitchen fund is at $192. Supplies are good. Due to the recent extended power outage, some items in the refrigerator were spoiled. The spoiled items were discarded, and the refrigerator was cleaned.

**VE Report:** There were three candidates in April. All three passed the Technician exam, and two of them immediately took the test for General and passed. The next VE testing is May 10, a week earlier than normal due to a conflict with the Dayton Hamvention. As Cookie would say: "Ahhh…Dayton"! We have no applicants so far for May.

**Newsletter:** The April issue of the *Q5er* is out with 22 pages of great information and stories. Jody is looking for submissions by May 15 for the June 2025 issue.

**Facilities:** Ted, KC3VCX, is looking for volunteers to do a Spring cleanup-fixup around the club grounds. Needed work includes gathering tree debris, cleaning and painting the outdoor kitchen shelter and general out-

door maintenance. He reported no damage from the recent storms that did cause extensive damage all around the area.

**Building Committee:** Marty, AG3I, noted the architect is still working on our project plans. He is formulating some alternative items which can make the project simpler and easier to complete.

**Operating Events Recap:** The recent Hams for Pan Can special event went very well. There were 14 members participating from the clubhouse in addition to the several members operating portable from the event in Schenley Plaza.

**Calendar of Events:**

- May 15-18 – The fabulous Dayton Hamvention. Skyview flea market is location 7506. Info at Space7506@groups.IO
- June 8 – The fabulous, local, and not to be missed, Breezeshooters Hamfest. Setup help needed on June 7.
- June 21 – Rachel Carson Trail Challenge.
- June 28 to 29 – ARRL Field Day. The club may set up a Field Day station in an actual field this year.
- July 1 to 7 – 13 Colonies special event. Skyview is K2M. Operation of K2M from the K3LR site on July 5.

**Old Business:** Nothing to report.

**New Business:** Nothing to report.

**Weather Night:** K3FAZ reports "The weather lately has been terrible". Better weather is on the way. The new weather station on the VHF/UHF tower came through unscathed. Steve thanked all the operators who sent in reports via the Skywarn nets, direct to NWS and on Co-CoRaHS.
- May 13 – Advanced Skywarn training.

**Elmer Night:**

- May 27- Delayed WB3JOB presentation on communications system grounding.
- June 24 - KJ6ER presentation on antennas, with emphasis on POTA.
- July 22 – Possible presentation on Digital transmission modes.

**Smoke & Solder Night:** Every Thursday evening 6:30 to 8:30 PM. Possibly cancelled for May 15 due to Dayton.

**Net Report:** Check-ins averaged 42 in April. The high check-in night was 48 on April 3. I didn't note the NCS that night.

**50/50 Drawing:** The 50/50 total collected was $63. The winner of $31.50 was Ted, KC3VCX. Ted donated his proceeds to the club generator fund.

**Meeting Adjourned**: A motion to adjourn was made by NM3A and seconded by AC3KI. The motion passed without objection. The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Don Stewart – WA3HGW
Secretary; Skyview Radio Society, Inc.

## Wear Headphones

de Bob - WC3O

> Here's a tip from your old Uncle Bob

> To hear better on the radio, wear headphones.

> You say DAH Bob! Who didn't know THAT?

> You didn't hear me. I said wear headphones. I never said anything about plugging them in!

Headphones, not plugged in, make great passive noise filters. Don't take my word for it.

Try it. You are listening on a band with a lot of background noise. Put your cans on and listen.

You'll note that you hear the voices or CW better without all the hiss and other noises.

("Cans" is slang for headphones, a term used back in the very early days of radio)

> A little tip from your old Uncle Bob


# Skyview VE Sessions

**Skyview provides VE Testing at the Skyview Clubhouse each month (Details provided later, near the end of this newsletter)**

**Here are some of the recent success stories**

**April 2025**

Fiona Carter KD3BCU passed the Technician exam

James Darney KD3BDI passed the Technician exam

Della Kohlman KD3AQP passed the General exam

Chad Witco KD3BCV passed the Technician exam

**May 2025**

— NONE —

***de Bill - N3WMC***

# Camper Radio Power Adventure

de Dan - NM3A

Last fall, we spent about a month on the road during a trip to and from Los Angeles. On the way back, a tire blowout on our 2011 Aliner Expedition camper took out much of the electrical wiring.


As I really did not want to fix all that, the camper was re-homed to someone more amenable to work on it.

In its place is a brand new Aliner Expedition that we ordered as soon as we came home. We picked it up the end of February and I have spent a couple of weeks modifying it to suit my needs.


Seems as if manufacturers of vehicles and RVs just don't understand what hams want! Now you may be wondering what a ham wants in a camper. Well, the main thing is POWER to run things, especially radios.

I spent a lot of time understanding RV power systems, in particular lithium batteries, specifically LiFePO4 battery systems (LFP). As you may be aware, LFP weigh about 1/4 as much as Flooded Lead Acid batteries (FLA) for the same nominal storage capacity, can use a much higher percentage of their stored power, have a much flatter voltage discharge curve, are much more efficient, have a much lower self discharge rate, and last about five times as long as FLA. In addition, LFP do not out-gas or leak, so can be mounted anywhere, and are not prone to fires. Up front cost is considerably more, but cost per charge cycle is actually much less over the life of an LFP versus the 4 or 5 FLA you would buy during that time. LFP also have a higher resting and charging voltage than FLA.

Much of this information is directly applicable to a ham who wants to change to LFP batteries to run their shack. If you are setting up a battery backup system for your shack, you probably want LFP as they are much more efficient and cost effective in the long run. But if you already are using FLA (or GEL or AGM), you will have to look into changing your charging system. Some of the items herein may be useful to you.

There is one more issue for campers. Almost all vehicles and RVs are set up for FLA or AGM batteries. Even most hybrids and EVs use a lead acid battery to run the 12 V systems. Charging systems need to be different for LFP. Both types need Bulk and Absorption cycles for charging; FLA also need a Float current to maintain the charge. LFP do NOT want a Float, in fact, that can damage an LFP. FLA are prone to sulfation, so a special cycle is often added to minimize this. This is also not necessary and may even damage LFP. So a different type of charger must be in place. Fortunately, most new RVs have chargers that can handle either type of battery. But most tow vehicles or engine electrical systems in RVs are set up for FLA .

Tow vehicles (and motor home) engine electrical systems usually charge the 'house' batteries in the trailer while towing (or motoring) from place to place as well as to power refrigerators and other devices in the trailer. If

you just hook up directly, you may partially *discharge* the house LFP while you are towing, as the LFP voltage is likely higher than the tow vehicle! In addition, modern vehicles have a wide range of voltages, depending on battery SOC and vehicle power demands .

To handle the above issues, you need a DC-DC convertor to interface the two units. This takes whatever voltage/current coming from the tow vehicle and converts it to the voltage/current that the trailer battery needs. This is basically a buck/boost voltage convertor. It must handle whatever loads are running in the camper and a bit more to make sure the house battery is being charged while towing.

Our camper came with a size 24 marine/deep cycle FLA. Not marked on the battery, but probably an 80 Ahr specification. As you can only use half of that storage before the voltage is too low for practical use, it's effectively 40 Ahr. Why is this an issue? Well there are a few amps being used by the camper itself. They are variable from 0-15 amps, but let's say about 2 amps on average. That will drain the battery to minimum in about a day. If you want to operate a radio, that will drain even more current.

At QRP levels, maybe an additional 1 amp. Using a 100 W radio, that's about 10 amps (more or less, depending on your TX/RX cycling) average draw. So now your time is only a bit more than 3 hours. And say you have a laptop (running on 12 V) too. That's another couple of amps. Now it's under 3 hours. And you'll want some light for playing cards or cooking dinner after you're done playing radio. Well, now your battery is essentially dead and it isn't even bedtime yet!

This is assuming you are boondocking (camping without any utilities). The easy thing to do it find a campground with 'shore' power (120 VAC) and just use your AC to 12 VDC convertor to keep the battery charged. But I can't always do that. So there are a few other ways to extend that time. First, we ordered our Aliner with a 180 W solar panel on the roof.

If you're in full sun, that will give 180 W at peak times, less so otherwise. I'll assume it can give 90 W for much of the day, say 8 hours out of 12 hours of sunlight in the summer. (In the desert, it might be closer to 150 W.) That's about 50 Ahr of energy. So during the day it will extend our time considerably.

Another thing we can do is increase our storage capacity. What I have done is replace the 80 Ahr FLA with two 100 Ahr LFP batteries in parallel.


You can reasonably use 80-85% of the stored charge in the LFP. So now we are starting with about 170 Ahr stored. That extends our time to about 10-12 hours at 100 watts and we can probably add up to 6 hours time with the solar panel. It's still not enough to be sustainable long term, but it is a big improvement.

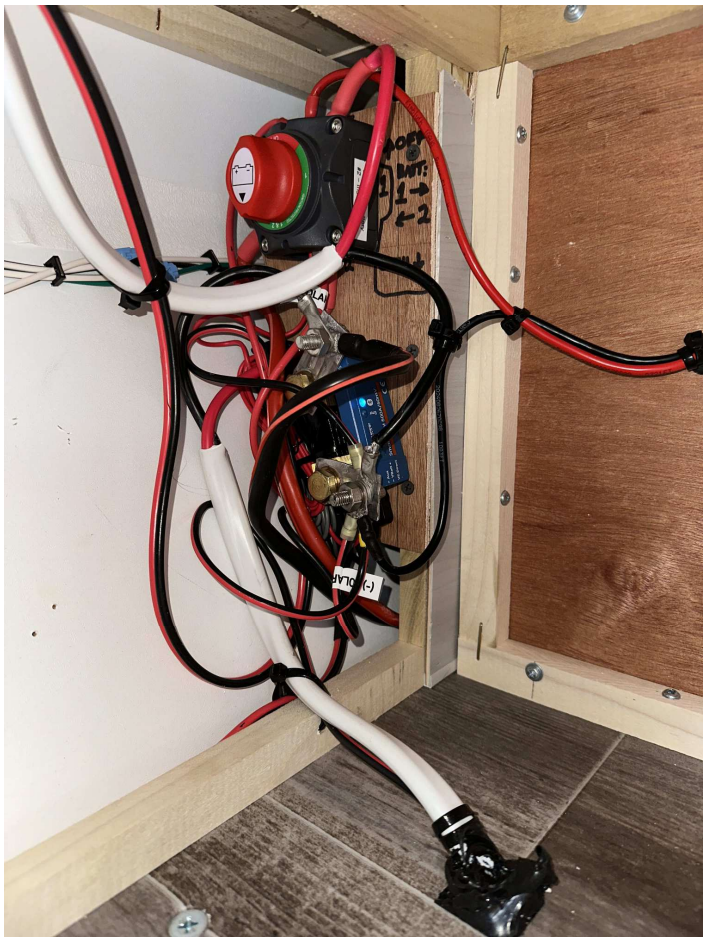
The biggest thing we can do is lower our TX power. If we half our TX power (3 dB or ½ S unit), we nearly halve our power usage and our QSO rate won't change significantly. If we drop it to 1/4 power (6 dB or 1 S unit), we will have about 1/3 the current draw at 100 W. We have to remember that RX current draw doesn't change. Now our QSO rate probably drops, but not nearly as bad as you might think. At this level, our current usage is close to sustainable with the solar power. And if you go to QRP levels, you definitely are sustainable, especially if you use an efficient radio that doesn't draw a lot of power on RX. For instance, my shack Elecraft K3s draws about 2 amps on RX, which is typical for many 100 W transceivers. But my Elecraft KX2 only draws less than 200 mA on RX, 2.4 A on TX (10 W), and my QRP Labs QMX only draws about 90 mA on RX, 800 mA on TX (5 W, 13 dB or only 2 S units down from 100 W). And you'd be surprised at how easy it is to make contacts with QRP (</= 5 W)! That's close to ½ A draw average! At this rate, we have way more than enough generation and capacity to function forever! Even with a less efficient QRP radio averaging 2 A, it still is easily sustainable.

A few other items had to be added to our camper to make the transition to LFP. First, the onboard AC-DC convertor needs to be LFP compatible. Fortunately, most new convertors can handle FLA and LFP without modification. Many have a switch for this, while mine automatically determines the battery chemistry and adjusts accordingly. This allows us to recharge the house batteries anytime we are connected to 'shore' power. This can source 35 A, which fairly quickly recharges the batteries when 120 VAC is available. Next, a DC-DC convertor needs to be installed to power the 'house' and charge the batteries when towing


I chose Victron parts for this and the other units. The charger I use can source up to 18 A which can power the fridge with some current left for battery charging. The fridge uses 15 A, but its duty cycle is well under 100%, and dependent on outside temperature. Other phantom current draws are under 1A.

The solar panel needs a charge controller. Mine came with the Aliner and can handle up to 75 V from the solar panel and provide up to 15 A at 14.2 V for the battery. It is an MPPT (Maximum Power Point Transfer) unit, which is essentially a DC-DC convertor that changes high voltage solar panel current into battery appropriate lower voltage at increased amperage for charging .


To round things out, I put a battery charge monitor in the system. This allows me to see the battery bank State of Charge (SOC) at any time. This is given as a percentage of full charge on the battery bank. It shows and keeps track of how much net current is instantaneously going into or out of the battery and keeps track of SOC over time, as well as number and depth of charging cycles. It also shows estimated time left at the current rate of power draw. All these Victron units have BlueTooth connectivity, so I can set them up or check on things from my phone at any time.



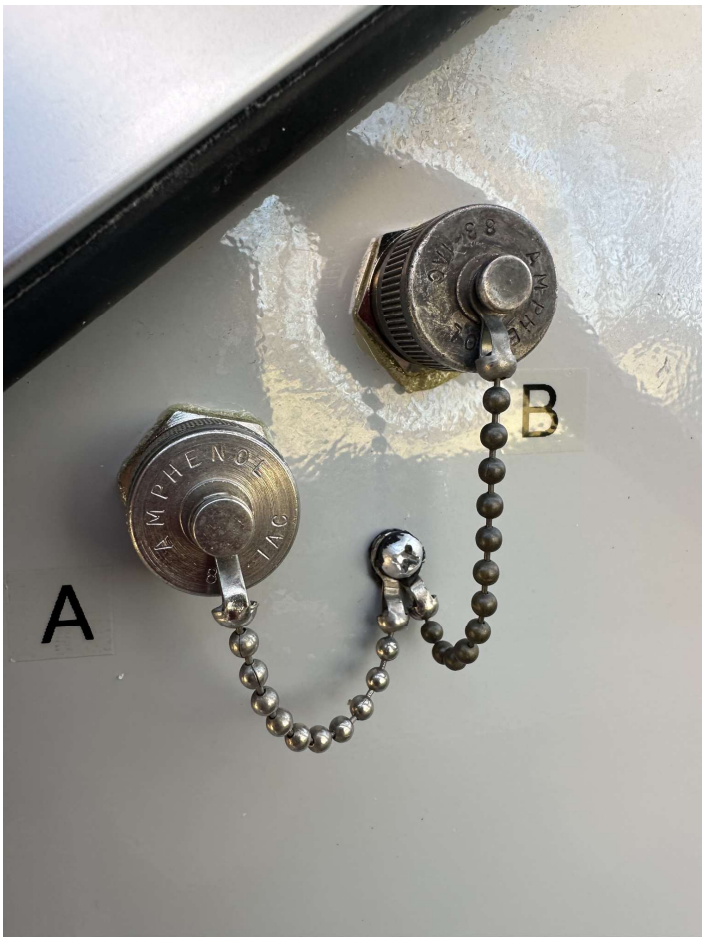
At the top of this rat's nest is the gray, 300 A, dual input D/C switch. On the outlet at its top, the fat red wire goes to the rest of the camper system via the white cable at top left. The two other fat red cables go from the two LFP batteries to the D/C switch inputs. The #10 cables at right feed the PowerPole distribution block. The SOC monitor is the blue item in the center. It monitors all current via the negative power cables

The original wiring was #10 AWG. This was marginal even for the 80 Ahr FLA, but woefully inadequate for the 200 Ahr LFP bank. I added #6 AWG from charger to batteries paralleled with the original #10 AWG. A heavy duty 300 A disconnect switch was added to allow for complete battery disconnect during storage without needing to physically disconnect the battery terminals. The solar system connects directly to the battery, so a second disconnect is in line with the MPPT to prevent it from drawing down the battery during storage. All cable ends were crimped onto the wires and soldered to ensure long lasting, low resistance connections. Forty amp fuses are at each battery.

To power the radios, I installed a fused four outlet PowerPole block near the table


It can handle 30 A. It is connected via a 1 foot #10 AWG cable to the #6 AWG wires on the main system, ensuring minimal voltage drop. A voltage monitor is plugged into here for another monitor to the system.

To get antenna cables into the radio operating position, two 2-inch bulkhead feed-through SO-239s were placed in the side wall. Tethered weather caps cover the outside when not in use.




I also installed a TPMS (Tire Pressure Monitoring System) on the camper tires to make sure a blowout doesn't happen again, or at least I get quick warning and can pull over before I destroy my wiring again!

I am excited to take it out on a test run soon. POTA, here I come! This is being written late March 2025, so by the time you read this, I'll have a number of POTA outings to report

**de Dan—NM3A**

## Interesting de N1EA - CW Reflector

The Japanese are notable for keeping traditions alive.

Even today, Morse Code is used by their fishing fleet which continue to carry Radio Officers.

Here is another example of how they keep things going.

The train station, Kami-Shirataki Station, was situated in a remote area of Japan and was scheduled to be closed due to a decline in ridership.

However, the railway operator, JR Hokkaido, learned that a single student, who needed the station to get to school, was the only person using the train.

JR Hokkaido decided to continue operating the station and the train specifically for her commute until she graduated from high school.

This decision highlights the importance of education and the dedication of the railway company to ensure the student's ability to attend school, even in a remote area.

The station was eventually closed after the student graduated, fulfilling the initial purpose for its continued operation.

## Early Days of Packet Radio in Pittsburgh

de Don - WA3HGW

On May 1st, Marty, AG3I posted a link to a very interesting YouTube video on the Q5 Worldwide Ham Radio blog about the founding of ARDC, Amateur Radio Digital Communications. You may have noted the numerous scholarships they fund by way of the ARRL. Here is the link to that video:

https://youtu.be/D4DyoMlf0cA?si=V16znLPjTLUoDnIP

This video brought back some memories for me. In the video, Bdale, KBøG, mentioned that Mike Cheponis, K3MC spurred him to get his ham license. I remember Mike from the old Western PA VHF Society when I first moved to Pittsburgh.

Mike was at my house one day and I was lamenting about the large Beech tree next to the house making it hard to position antennas. He offered some advice: Call in a tree company to trim the tree, recommending it be trimmed down to about 6 inches! Bdale also mentioned Bob Hoffman, N3CVL, in the video. I'm still good friends with Bob, as are many hams here in WPA.

Some of you have heard this story, but here goes. I still have my TAPR TNC-1 that I built in the early 80s on the recommendation of N3CVL.


**My TAPR TNC 1**

**The TNC 1 was just the circuit board as a kit. You had to supply the enclosure plus front panel controls.**

Packet radio was brand new back then. At the time I was living in Overbrook in the South Hills, right near Routes 51 and 88. That location is sort of down in a hole. Bob was in Fox Chapel, which was too far away for a simplex contact on 2 meters. We were the only two hams in Western PA with packet capability.

What to do? Bob came up with the idea of taking a Packet Radio demonstration on the road. We visited numerous radio club meetings around the area showing off this new-fangled packet radio thing. Bob would set up his station in the front of the room and I would set up mine in the back. We would send messages back and forth.

Bob would explain the operation of packet radio and the AX.25 protocol and answer questions. I don't remember what equipment Bob used at the time, but I was using my Icom IC-245 SSB 2 meter FM and SSB transceiver with the aforementioned TAPR TNC-1 and a Compaq "portable" computer. Yes, about a 30 pound "luggable" unit.

Around this time, all the ham radio magazines were promoting packet radio, and the TAPR TNC-2 (and others) was now available as an assembled unit. The road show worked well, along with all the Ham media attention. Before long hams around WPa were getting into Packet. That meant there were Digipeaters available so I could connect to Bob's station as well as all the other packet equipped hams around here and beyond. Before long there were packet bulletin boards, DX spotting networks, and lots of other things.

**Pittsburgh Marathon:** Moving forward a few years, packet radio was well established. The first Pittsburgh Marathon was held in 1985 and hams have been helping to provide communications for the event since then. Packet radio was introduced for the 1986 marathon. One of the problems found at the 1985 event was tracking the location of the end of the race. Friends and families of runners were looking for where they were when not found at the finish line. The decision was made to have a mobile packet station following the end of the race reporting any runners remaining on the course after the last recovery bus passed them by. It seemed there were some runners who refused to give up. If they didn't get on the recovery bus, they were on their own, and the streets were being opened to traffic. At least the finish line officials could have those runner's numbers if someone came by looking for them.

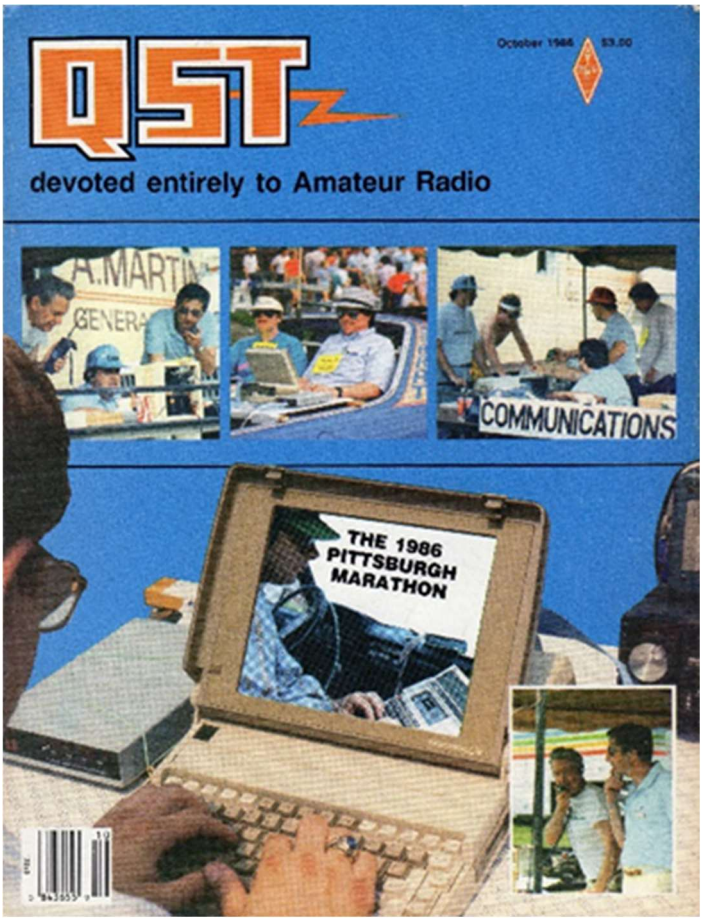
**The Setup:** I had a Subaru BRAT then. If you are not familiar with that vehicle, it was sort-of a pickup that had two seats in the bed. Like a smaller version of the Chevy El Camino if you can picture that. I constructed a platform to go across the bed to hold my 2 meter radio, a portable computer and a TNC 2 packet controller.


I also made about a 4 foot mast to get the antenna up higher and away from our heads while sitting in those bed seats. Laptop computers were a rather new thing at that time. I was able to borrow from the General Manager where I worked, his spiffy new Data General One laptop. This computer included a built-in thermal printer, which made it nice to have a hard copy backup of the packet traffic. This setup worked pretty well for the marathon.

Bob, N3CVL was at the net control packet station near the finish line at Point State Park. I operated the mobile packet station while a friend, Laurie, took down the runner numbers, and my wife Suzanne drove. The only glitch was at one location by Carson Street on Pittsburgh's South Side, where a policeman ordered us off the course. Once the marathon was under way, Pittsburgh police were told that no vehicles were allowed to be on the marathon course. Now there were ambulances and pick-up busses allowed on the course, and we had official Pittsburgh Marathon identification and door placards. That meant nothing to the cop.

We had to leave the course, and make a dash through South Side streets to the next place we could get back on the course near the Brimingham Bridge. A more reasonable police officer let us back on, where we waited for the end of the race to catch up with our mobile station. Any runner who dropped out between those two locations didn't get reported. Overall, the experiment worked pretty well.

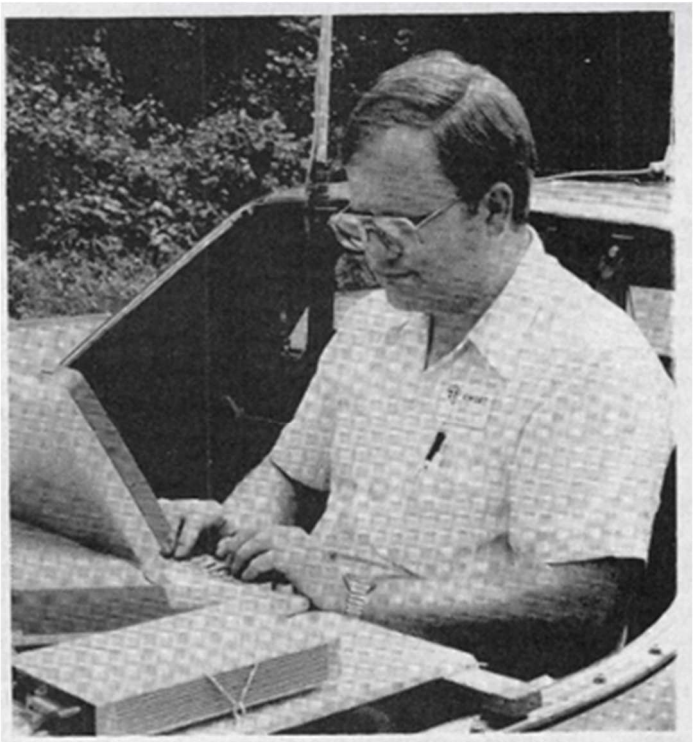
**Event Follow-up:** The big surprise for most of us who worked the 1986 marathon was when the October 1986 QST magazine arrived in our mailboxes. The cover story was about the Pittsburgh Marathon, with the cover photos featuring my mobile packet station.




It seems Bill Kristoff, N3BPB (SK) and EC for the marathon Bob Ferrey, N3DOK, submitted an article to QST about the marathon, and it was selected as the cover story. Both Bill and Bob kept it a secret for several months until that October QST issue arrived.

Looking at the cover photos I can see Nate Firestone, W3SVJ (SK), and Sam Fao, KC3TO (SK) in one photo. A much younger version of myself and Laurie were pictured sitting in the Brat. The main photo shows the Data General One computer with a photo superimposed on the screen. I'm pretty sure that photo is Mike Cheponis, K3MC, in his car with another mobile packet station. And It's N3CVLs hands on the computer keyboard.

The article in the Public Service column on page 75 has a photo showing N3CVL sitting in the back of my BRAT using the computer. That photo, and possibly all the photos, was by Chuck Gessner, KC3ET, now W3ON.



Bob Hoffman, N3CVL, transmits up-to-date information on the runners who have dropped out of the race via mobile packet radio. *(KC3ET photos)*

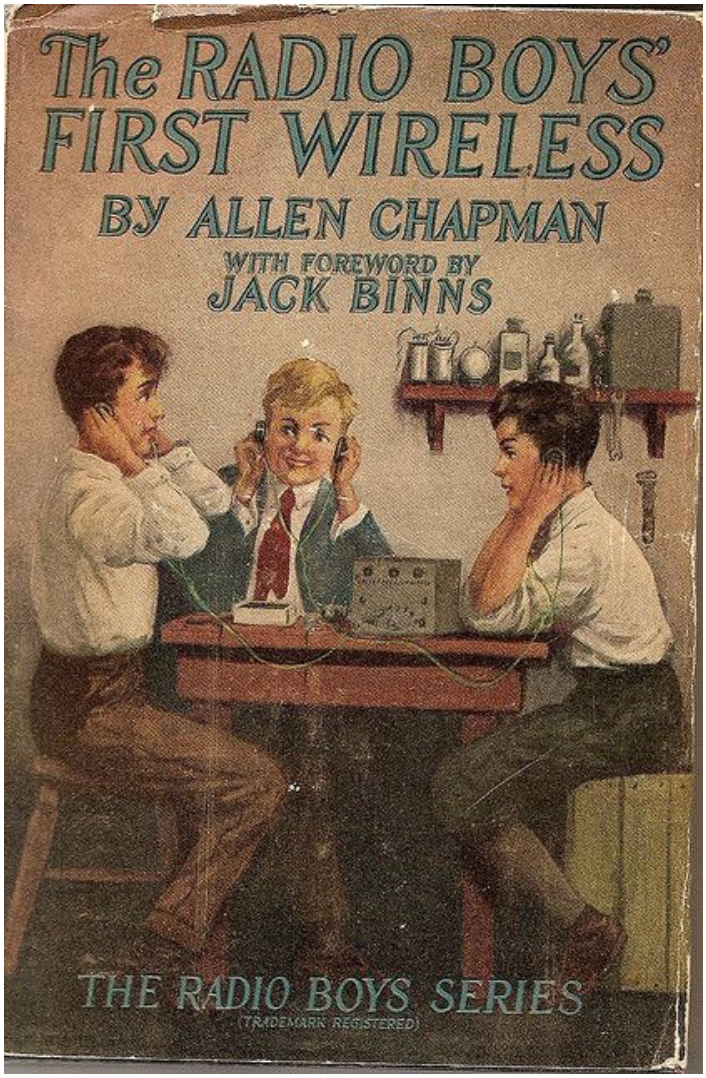
So, there you have it, a little more history about goings-on in the early days of packet radio in Pittsburgh. Hope you enjoyed.

**de Don WA3HGW**

We have lots of new folks who have joined Skyview.

It is hard to get to know everyone. If you drop by the clubhouse on Tuesday evenings, you will find a lot of the regulars hanging out there.

The Swap & Shop has a lot of the positions manned by regulars. But there may be some opening you can fill. If you come out on Saturday and help setup you will meet some folks. Also you can end a hand on Sunday afternoon as we clean up and put things away.




Across all countries, cultures and class we share one thing. This drawer.

# A life of genius between patents and mechanical work.

## A craftsman known throughout the world is known for his innovative telegraph keys

Among the names that stand out are those of entrepreneurs such as Pietro Begali (Commendatore) of Brescia, whom President Sergio Mattarella ( Italian Government Minister) wanted to award even without being a Knight of Labour "for special merits due to his entrepreneurial history and international successes in the world of telecommunications"

"On Friday I celebrated 71 years of uninterrupted work. I did not expect this recognition. I have always worked honestly and perhaps for this reason I have never made money…"

Pietro Begali, entrepreneur from Brescia, does not abandon his usual Tuscan Cigar, smoking occasionally while talking at the door of his milling workshop. He expresses himself in refined Italian that does not hide his education and sharp mind.

Born in 1938, with over 50 patents in the sector of knitting machines and telecommunications. "Not much, just the fruit of intuition..." he downplays.

In his life he supplied telegraph keys to Motorola, he never failed to help Ari (Associatone Radioamatori di Brescia) and anyone who asked for help.

His name is known throughout the world for the new generation telegraph keys that he produces at Begali Keys Factory in Cellatica : "Little stuff..."

But in that little stuff there is the value of an entire life.

## Emergency Power

**Dan - NM3A**

The first week of May sure has been a fun time for many Skyview members and area residents! The unprecedented storm of April 29 knocked out power to many for up to a week, including up the joint. Presciently, Ted, KC3VCX, brought up a proposal for an emergency generator for Skyview just this past April. As it happened, there was no power at Skyview for many days and subsequently, the repeaters were down and the fridge needed to be cleaned out of spoiled food.

Turkey Ridge Road

Well, to be honest, the food in the fridge was probably spoiled long before the power went out, so other than cleaning out the fridge, there was really no loss there. (Thanks, Cooky and Paul!) Power came back to Skyview late on the fourth day, but not until midday on Sunday - a full 5 days - at my home QTH in Mamont.

At the height, about 500,000 power customers were out in WPA. We were part of the last few percent restored. So the generator is a great idea! Probably gonna happen someday.

At my QTH, we have had to deal with frequent power outages for the entire 22 years that we have lived here. Just a natural consequence of living out in the sticks. We have a lot of trees everywhere and they tend to fall from time to time. Sometimes when the trees just sway too far and touch the line, but don't fall, we just get a momentary blackout. That kind of thing happens a few times a month. But if they happen to lean against or take out a power line, someone has to come back and repair the line before we get power back. If it's just a local issue, the repair is done in a few hours.

Occasionally it is a larger issue and we have had probably yearly outages of 1-2 days. We had a couple that took 3 days and one that took 4 days. Those issues are variable as they are much less frequent after tree pruning takes place, but as the trees grow back in a few years, it becomes a frequent occurrence - maybe every month or two for short outages.

The late April/early May power outage was of a much greater magnitude due to the number of service lines taken down by tree falls and lightning strikes and the wide area affected. We were fortunate to have no damage to our house, outbuildings, pool, and none to my antennas, either. There were a few downed trees and large limbs, but nothing else and the driveway was clear.

We were at DFW when the storm came through and flew in to PIT a few hours after the storm. It was eerie driving home through many areas of no power, including many dark traffic lights. Even the Parking SPOT place had no power. We stuck to main roads and highways, but a

couple of trees across roads near us made it somewhat challenging, but not impossible, to get home that Tuesday evening.

Evans Road

I prepared for outages as soon as we moved in 2003. The house has a natural gas powered 9 kW generator with a wired manual transfer switch that powers critical circuits, such as our gas furnace, gas power vent hot water heater, well pump, refrigerators, freezer, alarm system, TV, and a few lighting circuits .

I have battery backups for the internet server, the cellular 'land line' telephone, the garage door opener, computers, and laptops. However, after each longer outage, I found new issues. Most of these battery backups were only designed for outages of at most 8 hours; a few last 24 hours. For outages longer than that, I found that many of these simply didn't last. So, I took to rewiring the critical circuits so these things would be powered off the generator and could have the batteries recharged. As we only run the generator when we are awake and home, we found that a few of the battery back-up items could not even last the night. Most recently it was the house alarm system. So, I am in the process of adding a much larger deep cycle battery to that to keep the alarm (fire and smoke alarm most important) running through the generator down times.

Solutions to these include larger battery backups, as I have done with a few items. A better solution is a large, whole house natural gas (or propane) generator with automatic startup and transfer upon loss of power. This can cover almost any scenario for indefinite periods of time. However, installation of this type of system comes with a high cost. Depending on the size, a whole house

generator can cost between a few thousand (for critical circuits only) to $20 thousand dollars (power everything in a large electric only house). Installation with gas line hookup and automatic transfer switch will up to double the cost. But, barring a tree falling on the gas meter (it's happened to us!), you then have virtually unlimited electrical power.

We have had limited choices for internet service in our area. Initially it was dial-up service. A year later DSL came in. Both of those were awful as the telephone lines were extremely noisy. So we turned to cellular internet. Faster than dial-up, but initially slow, it has eventually become fast and generally reliable. This has a battery back-up that will last for about 6-8 hours.

In the meantime, cable came to within 800 feet, but the $14 thousand dollar hookup fee was a wee bit unreasonable. And last year, Windstream installed fiberoptic cable. As our cellular internet is now fast and cheap, we passed on that. Given the number of trees across power, cable, and telephone lines, I wonder how many of those internet providers had failures this time.

So, a new issue arose this time for us. Along with the power outage, the local cell tower lost function as well. We had no internet or phone service for two days. Verizon, T-Mobile, and AT&T equipment are all on the same tower and I believe that T-Mobile was the only one affected. That leans toward an equipment damage issue rather than just power outage. A neighbor had Starlink, so no problem for them.

It is amazing how dependent we are on communication connections. We had to drive to Delmont to get service. Backup communications like Starlink, fiberoptic, or cable would be a good idea if communication is critical. Just remember that your backup should be different from your main source of internet. For instance, if everything runs off your Comcast cable (internet, TV, phone) and one is out, so are all the others. Our main is T-Mobile cellular internet and our backup is our AT&T cellular 'land line' phone, which did function.

So how else do you get information if your internet is not working? AM and FM BCB and NOAA weather radio are ways. Those can be a simple battery power device.


We have a hand crank power AM/FM/WX radio in our camper. It also includes a flashlight. It's surprisingly good and you never need to look for batteries, although it can use ordinary batteries or a power adapter.

Next is TV. Local news and especially weather are provided by all local stations and are a good source of information. You may be able to get some of this over the internet on your phone as well. We have BC TV antennas at our house and one of the generator circuits will run one TV. We have eschewed cable or satellite TV, but those can be useful as well.

Lighting is critical at night. If your power is out, you need flashlights. And you need batteries. Batteries and flashlights often sit unused for long periods of time and are non-functional in an emergency. Keep extra batteries and spare flashlights on hand. Use them regularly to make sure they work. We have two hand crank flashlights that are extremely reliable. A few seconds of cranking gives a few minutes of light. Candles and kerosene lamps can be useful too. Just be extra careful and don't leave them unattended ever.

Cooking is another challenge without power. The microwave may not be useable. An electric stove is useless unless you have a very large generator. Gas stoves will need to be lit with a match as the automatic ignitor

won't work and virtually no recent stoves have pilot lights. Gas or charcoal grills work very well. You might want to keep some preserved food that doesn't need to be heated or thawed. (Trail mix, anyone?) And don't forget that the fridge and freezer need to be powered as well.

We are fortunate that we are relatively healthy and don't require critical support like oxygen or ventilator support. (If you are dependent on critical medical equipment, you need serious, reliable backups.) I do use a BiPAP machine, and that requires power. While I don't think a couple of nights without it is anything more than annoying, I do try to use it regularly. As we camp fairly often, I have it set up to run on 12 V if needed.

I also have a 20 Ahr lithium iron phosphate battery (LFP) in a go-box (that also has a dual band mobile rig inside).that I can use to power the BiPAP. The BiPAP will run at least 3 or 4 nights without charging the 20 Ahr LFP and charging is easy when the generator is running. The go-box can handle charging small items as well as emergency repeater access..

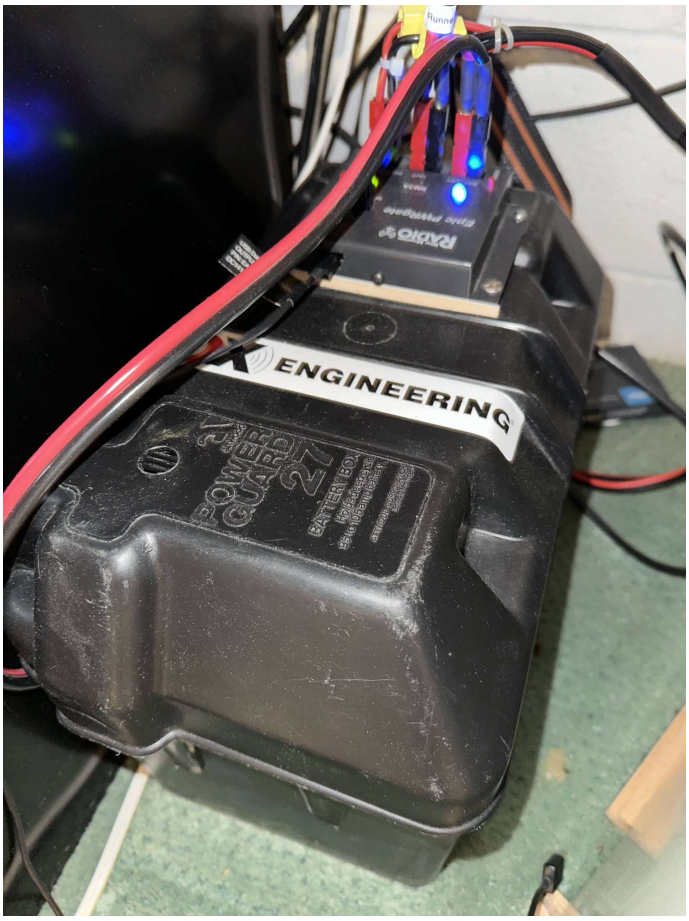

And if things get really bad, I can use our camper batteries and solar panel to charge small items. We use power toothbrushes regularly and the powered ones last quite a few days on a single charge, so should not be an issue. An easy backup is an old-fashioned manual brush. You probably don't have powered floss, but any other powered items (e.g. Water Pik) will need generator power or a rechargeable battery model .

Laptops are another issue. Most of mine will run 2-4 hours on a fully charged battery and use very little power when in sleep mode. (You just might find - as I did - that the battery doesn't last as long as you thought!) A quick check of internet items or emails can be done anytime; longer use is reserved for when the generator is running. In fact, I am writing this on an old Win 7 laptop with generator power! Desktop computers are usually more power hungry and need 120 V. Although our office isn't generator powered, I run an extension cord in there when the generator is running if the office computer is needed.

Now, my shack is set up for emergency power as well. All the HF, VHF, and UHF radios, my shack clock, and a 12 V LED lamp run off a 100 Ahr LFP all the time

The battery is kept charged normally through a 25 A station power supply and a West Mountain Radio Epic PWRGate. So I can run HF or U/VHF quite a while - probably 24 hours - without 120 V power if needed. When the generator is running, the battery is charged and I can even run my solder station and lighted magnifier if I

need to. Battery chargers for portable batteries and HTs can also be charged when the generator is running. Of course, the HTs and QRP rigs can be run directly off the 12 V station battery as well. The Epic PWRGate will also accept a solar panel input to charge the battery as well, but I have not gone that route to date




Remember Murphy's Law that 'Anything that can go wrong, will' and it's corollary; 'Murphy was an optimist.' And Cooky is right; 'Nothin's easy!' In summary, *NOW* is the time to think about your emergency power and preparedness for your home and shack. Real emergencies happen when you least expect it and it's good to be prepared. You'll find enough unexpected issues even when you *ARE* prepared. Don't wait to get a plan together!

**de Dan—NM3A**

## Tidbits — Chuck - K3CLT

### RF & Electronics Stencils for Visio

With more than 1000 custom-built stencils, this has got to be the most comprehensive set of Visio Stencils available for RF, analog, and digital system and schematic drawings! Every stencil symbol has been built to fit proportionally on the included A-, B-, and C-size drawing page templates (or use your own page if preferred). Components are provided for system block diagrams, conceptual drawings, schematics, test equipment, racks, and more. Page templates are provided with a preset scale (changeable) for a good presentation that can incorporate all provided symbols…

Kirt Blattenberger, RF Cafe.com

### How Are Shortwaves Propagated?

Prior to atmospheric sounding rockets and orbiting satellites, all information gained and theories developed on the nature of Earth's upper atmosphere and its interaction with electromagnetic waves (shortwave radio in particular) were purely academic, not the result of empirical data. That is not to say the theories were wrong (although some were), just that they were incomplete. For that matter, even today there is still much to be learned and, according to an excellent article in the October 2015 issue of the ARRL's QST magazine titled "Five Myths of Propagation Dispelled", there is still a lot of misinformation being believed and promulgated about shortwaves and how they travel in the atmosphere.

Kirt Blattenberger, RF Cafe.com

# Welcome New Members !!

Welcome the following Skyview Radio Society Members who have joined us since publishing the April 2025 newsletter:

**N3WMI – Neil McGee - Coraopolis**

**N3QZU - Dennis Kifer - Jeannette**

**KD3AQP - Della Kohlman - Jeannette**

**KC3YMC - James Henry - Cheswick**

Remember that something is going on up at 'the joint' every Tuesday. Sign up for the K3MJW Groups.io Reflector to get the latest news and event announcements by email.

If you are a reader who is interested in becoming a Skyview member, then go to: http://www.skyviewradio.net/ for information.

If you are a reader who is not yet a ham, and you are interested in becoming a ham, , then go to: http://www.skyviewradio.net/ for information.


## Skyview Radio Society Roster as of 31 MAY 25

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| NM3 A | K3 GT | K3 MRN | W3 SW |
| K3 AEB | AB3 GY | N3 MRU | KC3 TEX |
| KD3 AET | KC3 GZW | KS3 N | WV8 TG |
| N3 AFS | NY9 H | AC3 NA | N3 TIN |
| KD3 ANT | WB3 HFP | G4 NFS | N3 TIR |
| KB3 APD | WA3 HGW | KB3 NSH | W3 TLN |
| KD3 AQP | KB3 HPC | AJ3 O | KK3 TM |
| NA0 B | K3 HSE | WC3 O | N3 TTE |
| N3 BAH | AK4 HZ | WO3 O | KC3 TTK |
| W3 BRL | AG3 I | KC3 OCA | AG3 U |
| W3 BUW | AC3 IE | KC3 OCB | NS3 U |
| KF3 C | KE3 IF | KC3 OCC | WU3 U |
| KA3 CBA | KC3 IIO | K3 OGN | KB3 UIO |
| KC3 CBQ | AB3 IK | N3 OIF | N3 UIW |
| W3 CDW | WB3 INB | KB3 OMB | KC3 UNP |
| K2 CI | W3 IU | K4 PDF | W3 UY |
| K3 CLT | K3 JAS | KC3 PIM | KX3 V |
| K3 CWE | WB3 JHC | K2 PMD | KC3 VCX |
| N5 DB | N3 JLR | KE3 PO | KC3 VNB |
| K3 DCG | KA3 JOU | W3 PRL | K3 VRU |
| N3 DL | ND9 JR | KC3 PSQ | KC3 VYK |
| N3 DRB | K3 JZD | KC3 PXQ | W3 VYK |
| KB3 DVD | WA3 KFS | AC3 Q | N3 WAV |
| KC2 EGL | AC3 KI | NU3 Q | W3 WC |
| KC3 EJC | AC0 KK | KC3 QAA | KC3 WCJ |
| AB3 ER | K3 KR | N3 QZU | K3 WM |
| WA3 ERT | KC3 KXZ | NJ3 R | N3 WMC |
| N3 ERW | WE3 L | K3 RAW | N3 WMI |
| K3 ES | WA3 LCY | K3 RMB | KA3 WVU |
| KG3 F | AC3 LD | W3 RRK | K3 WWP |
| WB3 FAE | KC3 LHW | I2 RTF | N3 XF |
| K3 FAZ | WB3 LJQ | KI2 RTF | W3 XOX |
| KC3 FEI | WB5 LLI | K3 RWN | KC3 YEZ |
| K3 FH | K3 LR | KQ3 S | N3 YJN |
| K3 FKI | KC3 LRT | K3 SBE | KC3 YMC |
| KC3 FWD | AB3 LS | WA3 SCM | W3 YNI |
| AC3 GB | N2 MA | KC3 SDJ | KB3 YRU |
| N2 GBR | KC3 MBM | KC3 SNZ | W3 YS |
| AC3 GE | N3 MHZ | KB3 SOU | KB3 YT |
| K3 GIR | KC3 MIQ | K3 STL | KB3 YYC |
| KB3 GKX | K3 MJ | KC3 STV | KE3 Z |
| KC3 GPM | W1 MP | KB3 SVJ | K3 ZAU |

Notes: Only Call Signs are being published. Refer to QRZ.COM for more information. (Unable to publish those without Call Signs. )

## Kul - Links

Jody - K3JZD

There is lots of stuff out on the Internet… Some of it can brighten your day. Some of it can educate you.

I can't really copy and past it all in here. But, I can point you at some of it . . . . .

Now a software program to try to clean up software that was written by AI. Wonder what reviews the output that this clean up program produces? Maybe humans?

https://tinyurl.com/4neb9rbh

A vehicle that is simple enough to work on?
What a s novel idea !!
https://tinyurl.com/wsb9pm2z

Amazon continues to move forward with its Delivery by Drone program.
(de Chuck K3CLT)
https://tinyurl.com/yc27pc92

I found this interesting. It is as close to anything that I have seen that suggests self-learning.
Hey HAL, . . . Good? Or Concerning?
https://tinyurl.com/4amk89yj

I'll consider any Kul - Links that you find.
Email then to me at: K3JZD AT ARRL DOT NET

## Previous Issues

Previous Issues of the Q5er are available at

http://www.nelis.net

**Next Newsletter will be August 1, 2025**
**Closing Date For Submissions : July 15, 2025**
K3JZD AT ARRL DOT NET

## Become Well Known Publish in the Q5er

**The Q5er goes to other clubs and is available to all on our web site.**

**Submissions to : K3JZD AT ARRL DOT NET**

## >>>>>> WARNING <<<<<<

An Alarm System has been installed up at the joint. Do Not go in there on your own until you learn how to disarm and rearm it.

## **** Skyview VE Testing ****

**For Testing Dates, See :**
http://www.arrl.org/find-an-amateur-radio-license-exam-session
**Time:** Usually 8:15 AM

**Location:** Skyview Clubhouse Meeting Room
2335 Turkey Ridge Rd
New Kensington PA 15068-1936

**Contact:** Bill Dillen - N3WMC
(724) 882-9612
**Email:** bdillen@comcast.net
http://www.skyviewradio.net/ve-tests/

**Please E-Mail or call to register!!!**
While walk-ins are accepted, the exam session may be cancelled if no candidates are scheduled.


Q5er Editor & Publisher: Jody Nelis - K3JZD



email your comments and article submissions to: **K3JZD AT ARRL DOT NET**


**That's Easy . . . .**

**Come up to the Skyview Clubhouse on any Tuesday and ask !!!**

**And See : https://tinyurl.com/y79tqsr8**

**All General Information about the Skyview Radio Society is at http://www.skyviewradio.net**

Subscribe to K3MJW **groups.io** reflector for All Current News & Activities : https://groups.io/g/K3MJW
If you want to keep up with what is going on NOW, that is the place - have it forward msgs to your email


**Is this how your dining room looks ??**

**Send in pictures of your Ham Shack**