

*UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA*  
*AMATEUR RADIO CLUB*



**Minutes of the Amateur Radio Club**

University of Pennsylvania  
**Philadelphia, PA 19104**

<http://www.seas.upenn.edu/~uparc/>

Special 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Club Meeting: Monday, October 5, 2009 in room 307, Levine Hall, on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM EDT and adjourned at 7:39 PM EDT.

Attendees:

In attendance in Houston Hall on the Penn campus:

Matthew Blaze, WB2SRI (Penn faculty member)  
Stephen Karpf, WJ2P  
Sam McGarity, KB3DZU  
Russ Miller, WA3FRP

In attendance via telephone:

Bob Bartlett, W8FTD, HP3FTD (Panama via Skype)  
James (Buzz) Beitchman, W3EMD (Tokyo via Skype)  
Jan Carman, K5MA (Falmouth, MA)  
Howard Dicker, WA2IMB (Staten Island, NY)  
Jesse Hasty, W3YK (Huntingdon Valley, PA)  
Colin Phoon, AE3A (Scarsdale, NY)  
Marv Sheldon – WA2BFW (Anaheim, CA)  
Jim Talens, N3JT (McLean, VA)  
Hesham Wahby, KB3RNV (Egypt via Skype)

## President's Welcome, Update and Comments

President Russ Miller called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and welcomed everyone to the October, 2009 meeting of the University of Pennsylvania Amateur Radio Club.

Russ began a very interesting discussion of the 100-year history of the University of Pennsylvania Amateur Radio Club by discussing some of the detail he was able to obtain from old Club documents and the Penn archives. He was able to locate documents which include old callbooks, newspaper articles, books, QSL cards starting with a 1935 W3ABT QSL card, information on the original founder of the Club, several Club yearbook photographs taken in the 1950's, and numerous QSL cards from recent W3ABT QSO's made by K5MA.

Russ continued his presentation with a story he found in the October 4, 1909 issue of the "Pennsylvanian" with the title "Wireless Waves Coming." "Pennsylvanian" was the original name of the current "Daily Pennsylvanian", better known as the DP. Wireless telegraphy was the big topic of the day, and Penn wireless enthusiasts were anxious to make on-air contact with other Ivy League institutions such as Columbia, Cornell and Princeton.

In 1909, the maximum number of students permitted in an on-campus Club was fifty and the Club quickly reached this number. The students had to learn Morse code and build and erect antennas. Much was learning by doing and experimenting. In January, 1910, after wire antennas were erected on the roofs of Houston Hall and Logan Hall, signals were received, including signals from the steamship Lucitania in Florida.

Other interesting notes researched by Russ indicate that the Philadelphia Navy Yard was in communication with both Washington and Norfolk. After the Titanic disaster and quite a bit of amateur radio QRM, amateurs were required to obtain operating licenses and receive call signs from the Department of Commerce in Washington, DC. Russ also noted that in 1909, the Cornell University Wireless Club had an operational 3 KW spark-gap transmitter. Can you just imagine what a 3 KW spark-gap would do to the 80-meter CW band if someone called CQ in 2009?!!.

The UPenn ARC was the first club to call for and organize an intercollegiate organization for colleges and universities. In March, 1910, a letter to 75 colleges and universities inviting them to a meeting in Houston Hall to create a university wireless organization. The first meeting of the Intercollegiate Wireless Association included Penn and MIT.

## W3ABT/100 Month of October

The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the University of Pennsylvania Amateur Radio Club will be celebrated during October with on-air activities using the W3ABT/100 callsign. Jim Talens, N3JT, will be the coordinator of callsign usage by alumni Club members. At least initially, we determined during the meeting to begin the W3ABT/100 activities as follows:

- W3YK, Jesse Hasty, Huntingdon Valley, PA will be active using SSB on the HF bands
- K5MA, Jan Carman, Falmouth, MA will be active using CW on the HF bands
- WA3FRP, Russ Miller will be active using RTTY on the HF bands
- AE3A, Colin Phoon, Scarsdale, NY will be active on SSB and occasionally CW on the HF bands.
- N3JT, Jim Talens, McLean, VA will set up a schedule and monitor activities to make sure there is no confusion.

## UPDATE ON CAMPUS STATION

Russ started the installation of a GAP Titan DX 80-10 meter vertical on the northwest corner of the Moore School building with a coaxial cable run to the third floor of the building. The next step is to have the school's Facilities Department erect the antenna the mast. This is a good start to establishment of an operational HF station at the Moore School building.

Note was made that Club member, Matt, WB2SRI, is a member of the CIS faculty who may be influential in building relations with Moore School faculty and staff.

## HOW DOES THE CLUB DEAL WITH LACK OF STUDENT INTEREST IN AMATEUR RADIO?

This was a rather fluid discussion of ideas related to the disappointing lack of interest in amateur radio by the current Penn student population, both undergraduate and graduate students. Russ made note that there is only one undergraduate student and six medical school student members of the Club.

A comment was made that the current Club station is located on the third floor of the Moore School building near the spiral staircase that provides roof access and that the only available office/room is essentially a small closet! It is very unfortunate for the Club that the future availability of Room 214 (previous home of W3ABT for many, many years) is either zero or near zero! Matt Blaze, WB2SRI, a member of the CIS faculty and Club member is working on software-defined radio (SDR) projects. However, this kind of activity is not sufficient to sustain the on-campus Club. Bob Bartlett, W8FTD and HP3FTD, suggested that Club members

and supporters have not yet come up with a good reason as to why “I should join this club!” That is a critical question that must be answered before there can be any significant Club growth. An even better question that we should attempt to answer is ‘why should I be interested in amateur radio?’ The comment was made that there needs to be a specific and visible Club activity that drives student interest. These are critical issues that must be addressed for the Club to grow and, ultimately, survive. There needs to be more than just alumni who are driving Club activities and growth. Note was made that there are currently one EE undergraduate student and six medical student members of the Club. The rest are all alumni members.

## Club Collaboration with University in Guatemala

Jim Talens was contacted by a University of Guatemala professor (Juan TG9AGR) to participate in a meeting with prospective new hams via a Skype conference call. See the meeting minutes for February 2009. The goal was to have a discussion with interested students in Guatemala and respond to questions about Amateur Radio generally. The call took place last spring and Jim was assisted by Jonathan Coveney on the conference call.

## GENERAL COMMENTS

- Jeff Depolo, WN3A has been involved with installation of D-Star equipment at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital.
- Howard Dicker made note of the difficulty in accessing the Moore School roof compared to earlier years when students had easy roof access to adjust and/or repair antennas.
- Russ was asked a question regarding the status for a remotely operated station using software-defined technology over the Internet at the New Bolton Center in Chester County. The answer given by Russ Miller was “If we get student members – maybe!”
- Everyone agreed that the primary key to the success of an on-campus Club is to attract more students to join the Club and become active amateur radio operators. This will require some serious advertising and salesmanship techniques to convince undergraduate students that amateur radio is a compelling activity in which to occupy their spare time.
- Howard Dicker commented that new undergraduate students who have some interest in amateur radio (either licensed or unlicensed) are given no means of encouragement to engage in Club activities when they arrive on campus. The Club is invisible to new students because the UPenn ARC is no longer a registered on-campus activity. Alumni members would like to know how this issue can be fixed!
- A comment was made that the internet web site Facebook might be a feasible tool that can be used to recruit undergraduate Club members.
- Another suggested method of recruiting new undergraduate members to the Club might be to contact other college radio clubs, particularly the active Clubs with operational stations to get their suggestions. There are bound to be at least a few active amateur radio clubs that are thriving on college campuses elsewhere in North America, and perhaps we can learn from

their experiences about how they recruit active undergraduate student members.

- Note was made that both MIT and Stanford University have active clubs.

Finally, it was noted that the old W3TKQ callsign, which was originally assigned to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, is now assigned to a Philadelphia high school.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 PM EDT.

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

Jan Carman, Secretary and Russ Miller, President