

Washington Amateur  
Communications, Inc.  
c/o Ed Oelschlager N3ZNI  
60 Carl Avenue B-2  
Eighty Four, PA 15330-2829

# The WACOM HAM

MARCH  
2006



Ed N3ZNI and Jim  
KC3HW operating the  
W3C Special Event  
Station from the  
Washington Sports  
Show.

Not shown: Jacqué  
N3ZNI and Bill KB3LIX.

Photo courtesy of and  
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Lusardi NØVLR

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## W3C SPECIAL EVENT STATION

Operated February 2, 3, 4 & 5, Washington County Sports Show, Washington Crown Center. It was another successful and fun event! We hope to have more info and more pictures by next month's issue!

## UPCOMING MEETINGS!



*Next WACOM Monthly Meeting:*

Thursday, March 2, 2006, 7:30 PM  
Room 103, Washington County Building,  
Downtown Washington.

*Next WACOM Board of Directors Meeting:*

Thursday, March 30, 7:30 PM  
Krispy Kreme, Washington

*All Welcome!*



# League to FCC: End Arbitrary Access to BPL Database

courtesy of the American Radio Relay League

NEWINGTON, CT, February 24, 2006 — The ARRL has demanded that the FCC order the United Telecom Council (UTC) to "cease its arbitrary limits" on access to the public BPL Interference Resolution Web site. UTC administers the site, which FCC Part 15 rules require to be "publicly available." In a complaint filed February 23 with the FCC Office of Engineering and Technology, the FCC Enforcement Bureau and UTC, the League charged UTC with "arbitrarily and unlawfully" preventing radio amateurs, the ARRL and other Amateur Radio groups from utilizing the BPL database.

"Quite simply, UTC's 'management' of this database has in a very short time proven a shambles," ARRL General Counsel Chris Imlay, W3KD, wrote on the League's behalf. "The Commission has taken no action in response to any BPL interference complaints, but UTC's restricting access to the database is directly and overtly contrary to the specific language of both the *Report and Order (R&O)* and §15.615 of the Commission's rules."

According to the complaint, ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ, found himself locked out of the BPL database February 14 after attempting to search a particular ZIP code. An "error" message warned: "The System has determined that this line of searching constitutes [sic] unauthorized use of the database. Cease operations immediately."

"There was no unauthorized use of the database," Imlay said, noting that an ARRL staff member received the same message after attempting to search two ZIP codes from an e-mail address in the "arrl.org" domain. "It was apparent thereafter that anyone using an 'arrl.org' domain name was unilaterally shut out of the database by UTC for an indeterminate amount of time," the League's complaint continued.

Imlay also cited the experience of Gary Zabriskie, N7ARE, the secretary of the Dixie Amateur Radio Club in Utah. On February 15, he attempted a search covering several ZIP codes in the club's membership area to report any BPL trials or rollouts to the

club's members. He received the same "error" message after entering the third ZIP code. The following week, Imlay noted, a member of the ARRL Laboratory staff conducted a series of searches to determine if previously noted discrepancies in the database had been corrected. After entering his seventh ZIP code search, he received a message indicating that he had exceeded his search limit, "though you may try again later," the message added.

An advisory on the BPL Interference Resolution Web Site page states: "Access via scripted or automated programs is prohibited. Each individual is allowed to search a limited number of times. Individuals are advised not to conduct random searches of the database, or their access to the database may be further restricted."

Asserted the ARRL in its complaint: "The limits placed unilaterally and apparently variably on searches of the database are each and all improper. There is nothing in any Commission document that authorizes UTC to limit access to the database whatsoever." Even worse, the League went on, UTC was limiting public access arbitrarily by IP address or domain name, "and apparently as few as three ZIP code searches trigger the cutoff mechanism." The League said there is no technical reason to limit the search function.

The League maintains that the design of the database and the restricted access are "clearly intended to frustrate the Commission's purpose" in requiring the database in the first place and "to inhibit complaints of interference" from BPL systems. As a result, the ARRL says, the FCC should immediately rescind UTC's appointment as the BPL database administrator or order UTC to end its arbitrary limits on access to the database "without delay."

Earlier this month, the League complained to the FCC that the UTC-administered BPL Interference Resolution Web Site database was "woefully incomplete and improperly managed."

## The Lights Are On But Nobody's Home Ward Silver NØAX

After this past weekend's ARRL DX CW extravaganza, a local ham said on our club net, "Gee, all evening I could hear these strong stations on 80-meters all the way from the East Coast - NH, MA, NJ, NY. Then tonight, nothing! Like the band is dead!" This was somewhat tongue-in-cheek, but it's not an uncommon reaction. I also hear this after the 10-Meter contest during low sunspot years. For months, not a peep is heard on 10-meters until 0000Z Saturday when the band springs to life!

Obviously, contesters tend to have good stations and that tends to open up a band beyond what a more modest station might accomplish. Nevertheless, the disparity between weekdays and weekends is often dramatic. New hams (and even long-timers) are prone to ask, "Where did everybody go?" The bands are obviously wide open, but we're just not making ourselves heard.

Which leads to the probing question, "When was the last time you called CQ outside of a contest?" A regular old "come in anybody" CQ - the kind we used to log a lot of as Novices with a big, old "X" in the next column of our logbook indicating no response to our puny signals. To be perfectly honest with you, it's been a while for me. I'll bet it's been a while for you, too!

Why? Well, partly because contesters tend to spend

their weeks getting ready for the weekends. Also, the Internet and email push a lot of information to us that we don't have to go trolling for on our own. Hey, you're reading this instead of putting out a signal, aren't you? By the time you get done reading the email from a couple of reflectors, check your favorite Web sites, and scan the spotting network for any New Ones, your evening is shot!

This isn't some sinister plot or a great moral failing, it's just a rebalancing of how we "do" ham radio in the Information Age. The information "about" radio is found on-line and we use it to more carefully target our on-air activities. Sort of a "just-in-time" philosophy for ham radio where you only get on the air to make that particular DX contact or for a weekend of contesting after doing all the research to make sure the on-air time is spent as efficiently as possible.

All well and good, but in becoming so successful at doing a particular thing, we've forgotten how to...yes...goof off on the air without having a goal in mind. A good portion of what got us on the air and kept us there as new hams was that "What will I work today?" feeling you got sitting down in front of the rig waiting for the tubes to warm up.

*(NØAX Continued on page 3)*

We were saddened to hear that Betty Turnbull, wife of ARRL Honorary Vice President Hugh Turnbull W3ABC, passed away on Saturday evening, February 4th. Hugh and Betty were married for 63 years. Services were held on Friday, February 10th.

Congratulations to the South Towns Amateur Radio Society in West Seneca, NY on their Special Service Club renewal and also to the Washington Amateur Communications, Inc. in Eighty Four, PA for their club's designation as a Special Service Club

Congratulations are also in order for several Atlantic Division members. Tony Zona WB3KGT was appointed as an Atlantic Division Assistant Director. ARRL President, Joel Harrison W5ZN, has reappointed Russ Healy K2UA to the Contest Advisory Committee; Bob Josuweit WA3PZO to the Public Relations Committee; Chris Shalvoy K2CS to the DX Advisory Committee and Bob Weinstock W3RQ to the Public Relations Committee.

The Atlantic Division Awards deadline is coming close. The deadline for receipt of the awards nominations is Saturday, March 18th. For more information check out <http://www.atldiv.org/AtlAwards.htm>

The Foundation for Amateur Radio has a number of scholarships available. Information on the scholarships can be obtained by going to: <http://www.atldiv.org/scholarships.htm>

Upcoming hamfests within the Atlantic Division are:

- 03/05/06 Lancaster ARC, Williamsville, NY
- 03/18/06 Butler County ARA TechFest, Butler Twp Park, PA
- 03/25/06 Baltimore ARC, Timonium, MD
- 04/01/06 Drumlins ARC, Marbletown, NY
- 04/02/06 Delaware Valley Radio Assn, Hamilton Twp, NJ
- 04/22/06 PRO's Club, Sardinia, NY
- 04/23/06 York Hamfest Foundation, York, PA
- 04/30/06 **Two Rivers ARC Hamfest**, Boston, PA

A more complete listing of hamfests & conventions can be found at: <http://www.arrl.org/hamfests.html>

## Upcoming Events

- March 4, 5 — ARRL DX Contest SSB
- March 18 — Breezeshooter's Groundwave Contest (SSB)
- March 25, 26 — CQ WPX Contest SSB
- April 16 — WPRC Quarterly Meeting, Washington PA
- April 30 — 2 Rivers ARC Hamfest, Boston PA \* **New Date** \*
- May 19, 20, & 21 — Dayton Hamvention
- June 2, 3 — US Power Squadron's Amateur Radio Net Special Event operating from W1AW
- June 4 — Breezeshooter's Hamfest
- June 24, 25 — ARRL Field Day
- July 9 — North Hills ARC Hamfest, Wexford PA
- November 5 — WACOM Hamfest, Washington Co Fairgrounds

## FYI Networks

*For Your Information needs*

Make FYI Your Internet Service Provider  
 CONTACT FYI AT 1-877-FYI-4NET OR WWW.FYI.NET  
 MENTION THAT YOU ARE A WACOM MEMBER FOR A SPECIAL  
 PRICE OF \$18 / MONTH.

Early this month, Hudson Division Director, Frank Fallon and I sent out a joint grassroots email to ARRL members and amateur radio clubs located in New York state requesting amateur radio operators send letters to Governor Pataki, and the president of NYSEDA requesting that the State of New York use its influence to ensure that the Briarcliff Manor BPL project is either brought into compliance with the FCC rules, or shut down.

—73, Bill Edgar N3LLR, Atlantic Division Director  
 & Tom Abernethy W3TOM, Atlantic Division Vice-Director

**In Honor of National Safe Boating Week, the United States Power Squadron's Amateur Radio Net will be operating from the Maxim Memorial Station, W1AW, on June 2 & 3.**

**All are invited to join USPS & ARRL on the air!**

**For more information on this event or on the USPS, please contact Don Stark N3HOW at [stark84@nb.net](mailto:stark84@nb.net)**

*(NØAX Continued from page 2)*

New assignment - choose an on-the-air activity that you don't know what will happen when you do it! Maybe it's as simple as calling CQ or maybe putting the keyer in beacon mode while you read email. Look through the QST Special Event listings (or on-line at <http://www.arrl.org/contests/spev.html>) and see if you can find them. There are lots of things to try out there and who knows, maybe you'll find somebody tuning around looking for you from across the continent!

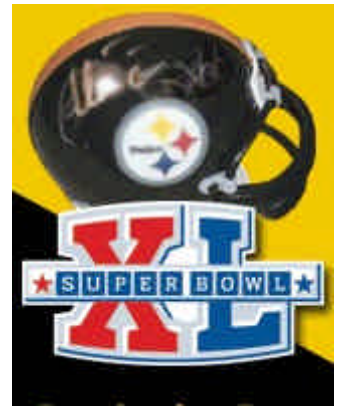
# JOIN WACOM ON THE AIR

2 meter net: Every Tuesday at 8:30 PM on the W3CYO repeaters, 145.49 and 443.30 MHz

YL Net: Every Wednesday at 7:30 PM on 146.79 MHz (OM's are welcome too!)

10 meter net: Every Tuesday at 9:00 PM on 28.340 MHz

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*We're On the Web!*  
[www.wacomarc.org](http://www.wacomarc.org)

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The editor welcomes articles and timely information of interest to members and the general amateur community.

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## PLEASE SEND YOUR 2006 DUES AND APPLICATION INFORMATION

Annual WACOM membership dues are only \$15 .  
A couple pays only \$22.50.  
Send your check payable to WACOM to:

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## WACOM e-Mail Reflector

An e-mail reflector has been set up for WACOM members.

What's a reflector? It's a mailing list which lets you send one e-mail message to the list address — [wa3com@yahoogroups.com](mailto:wa3com@yahoogroups.com) — and have it "reflect" to all members of the list. Unlike a personal mailing list, you don't need to know all of the e-mail addresses for every single member of the list. Only group members can send e-mail to other members of the reflector — no spam allowed!

E-mail reflectors are being used by many area Amateur Radio clubs as a means to facilitate news and information at a moments notice. Yahoo! Groups (formerly eGroups) provides this service for free to anyone who wants to avail themselves of their list server. Yahoo! also provides calendar, file storage, & additional services.

To join the WACOM reflector, simply send a blank e-mail to:

[wa3com-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:wa3com-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)