



Amateur Radio – the Original Social Network

Every week I get a couple of requests to become a friend of a Facebook or LinkedIn user. I guess the time has come to succumb and get with the program and respond.

I much more enjoy the real time Social Network of Amateur Radio where one can talk human being to human being. Since the beginning of the hobby, networks or “nets” of all kinds have been in place to share common interests. Many of the early nets were based on Morse code or “CW” and were used to forward messages between friends and family. In fact, the National Traffic System was created to ensure that there were stations in different zones around the U.S., then later the world. This would help guarantee the timely delivery of a message, whether it was a birthday greeting or an update on the health of a family member.

The Auxiliary Amateur Radio System (AARS) was created in 1925 by volunteer amateur operators and the U.S. Army Signal Corp. It was deactivated during WWII as operators were called into service for the war effort. Following the war, the system was reactivated as the Military Amateur Radio System (MARS). The network was used to forward “MARSgrams,” written messages and providing “phone patches” to allow overseas servicemen to contact their families at home.

Today I participate in two nets, both dedicated to boating and both used by many SYC ham operator members.

First is the Puget Sound Boaters net. This VHF “net” is held daily starting at 0747 on the 146.62 (tone 103.5hz) Mhz Gold Mountain (east of Bremerton) repeater. This net was formed to develop our skills and test our radio equipment for communications and safety.

The regular net control for this organization is our own Chris Warner (K7PAN). This net provides a great overview of the Puget Sound weather conditions and receives check-ins from Friday Harbor to Olympia. It is a fun exchange of who is up to what, or where is so and so going in the next few days or week.

The group is composed of boating enthusiasts of all ages, with interests in power or sail and from different clubs. We have hams checking in with ages from 9 to 88 years old. In fact our youngest “hamlets” are Sheridan (K7SEF), age 12, and Cameron (K7CMF), age 9 – daughters of Dave (K7DDF) and Ann Ferguson. They provide the Rose Point weather conditions, and we get to follow their travel adventures and music lesson schedules. They got their licenses at ages ten and seven. Dwight Shaw (WA7DS) checks in from the

University District, *the Center of All Learning*. We think he is still in bed when doing so.



Sheridan and Cameron Ferguson checking into the PSBN

The second net is the NW Boaters Net. It is held at 0830 on the 3.865Mhz HF Amateur frequency. The net control is Aaron Benson (N7XT) on Marrowstone Island. The coverage area is much greater than the VHF net. There are regular check-ins from marine mobiles, vehicle mobiles, and home stations from British Columbia to Southern Oregon and central Washington. Again, with this group you feel like a friend of each participant and get to follow their travels and ailments.

The social networks are slowly evolving to be an aid to amateur operation. The short message feature of “Twitter” and QRSPOTS now provide their followers with the call sign and frequency of a “rare DX” (translated – hard to contact foreign station somewhere in the world) station currently transmitting.

So regardless of being “on the air” or “over the Internet,” we all love to participate in “Social Networking” of some kind. 🌐

W7SYC – For more information about the Radio Rendezvous, the SYC Amateur Radio Committee or getting an amateur radio license, send an email to Dan Withers at dwithers@rodaxwireless.com or call (206) 947-2303.

