

History of the KCRA

The Amateur Radio repeater with the call sign of W8FWG/RPT commenced operation on May 18, 1983, and was funded privately by local radio amateurs. The KCRA came into existence on June 15, 1983 at an organizational meeting in Laurium with sixteen charter members. (A few years later, the organization applied for and received the call sign of KB8ZHB, which it held for only a short time. Still later, the call sign of a former member, Peter K. Englund was adopted as a Memorial, with K8MDH, the present call sign on the repeater) The United States Air Force provided a building, tower, commercial A.C. power; rent free to the organization. Improvements made over the years included a solid-state transceiver, controller, autopatch system and a back-up power supply.

The organization was founded

- To provide an auxiliary communications system for local law-enforcement and military agencies.
- To fill a communications gap that exists, due to the topography of Keweenaw County
- To augment local civil defense agencies.
- To provide assistance to boaters on Lake Superior.
- To provide a communications system for locating lost persons.
- To promote interest in amateur radio communications, the relaying of messages without charge, the furtherance of the public welfare and the advancement of the radio art.

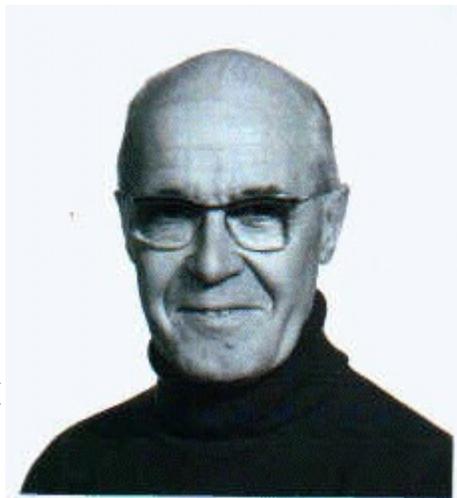
Club meetings are held at least four times per year. The second Wednesday of January, April, July and October.[PLEASE NOTE: DURING JULY 2009 only, the date is changed to Wednesday, July 15.] The annual meeting is in April. Special meetings may be called during the year by the president, upon notification to all of the members. The KCRA has a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, an Engineer, and a 5-member Technical and Advisory Group, keeping the system up to date, with state of the art equipment.

John Sincock Memorial

THE KCRA
NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL MEMORIAL
EDITION

REMEMBERING: W8CSI



FIRST PRESIDENT, W8CSI PASSES:

After a fall in his home at the end of May, and following surgery at Marquette General Hospital John was transferred to the Long-Term-Care Unit of the Ontonagon Hospital in June. John passed away early Monday morning, July 6, 1998. He is survived by his wife Thelma, a daughter Patricia and son-in-law Bruce Bjorseth of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Four grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren and a cousin, Dr. Robert Rowe of Port Huron, Michigan. A Memorial service was held on Thursday, July 9, from the Erickson-Crowley Funeral Home in Calumet, Michigan. John was born May 15, 1910 near Calumet (Red Jacket Shaft location) a son of William R. and Ruth Sincock. He graduated from the Calumet High School. John was a supervisor for the Michigan Bell Telephone Company for 42 years, and retired and built a home and resided at 95 Second Street in Laurium. John was a ham for 74 years, and held the call sign of W8CSI continuously. He married Thelma Staff on July 20, 1932 in Laurium. They would have celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary later this month.

CHARTER MEMBER OF KCRA:

John became the first President of the Keweenaw County Repeater Association and there were only 15 members at that initial meeting on June 15, 1983. Now we number close to 100 members. Starting with little capital, John was one of the first contributors to the organization and others followed suit. Of the three candidates for President, John was elected with a unanimous vote.

WHAT SHALL WE CALL OURSELVES?

Four names for the organization were proposed, Keweenaw Country Repeater Association, (KCRA) Gratiot Lake Radio Association (GLRA), Keweenaw Amateur Radio Association (KARA) and Keweenaw Peninsula Radio Club (KPRC). The KCRA won out.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Later, this group was formed, and after John stepped down as President (in 1990) he became one of the members of this committee. The "TAC" made recommendations for improvements to the repeater system (of which there were many); a new repeater, new power supply, new cabinet, a phone patch, a telephone line, and a controller was added. Later came the back-up power supply for the system, and a move to a higher elevation at the site. John's contributions bought and paid for the first control-circuit for this repeater when it went on the air at 11:48 AM on May 13, 1983.

NATIONWIDE TELECONFERENCE:

Shortly after being installed we linked the repeater through a telephone-conferencing arrangement in the city of Chicago, with approximately 100 conferees, nationwide, and we were selected to provide a representative to talk about antennas and problems with them. John was our local representative for this event, and was connected by telephone and radio links to 38 states and several Canadian provinces and four overseas connections. All of this was accomplished by a prearranged line connection directly from his home at 95 Second Street in Laurium, to the outside world. We were very proud to have been selected and even more proud to have our President, John speaking to the worldwide network of radio hams.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN:

I have asked for, and have received, many contributing articles from hams and non-hams alike who knew John, and who would like to relate stories of their contacts with him. The following is a summary of those events; memories from those who knew him.

"Being a fellow Eagle Harbor ham, where John and Thelma had a summer home for many years, I was

privileged to have known him for over thirty five (35) years. I was in the Air Force for many of the years but John was my radio contact with home and family when I was overseas. I made my first radio contact with John when I was stationed in the arctic on St. Lawrence Island, in the Bering Sea in 1960. He loved to tell the story of that first contact and resulting phone patch to my home in Eagle Harbor. I must say that with all of John's embellishments over the years, the original story became almost unrecognizable even though I was one of the principals! Over the years our friendship and radio contacts grew. Now that it is over I can truly say that ham radio has lost a great member and I have lost a great friend."

Denny Royce, K9GIR

Eagle Harbor

"I knew John from way back before the 2nd war. He was a model ham. We built our own ham gear and John was one who believed in perfection. He constructed and designed some equipment that rivaled anything on the market in the early days of ham radio. I had a lot of admiration for John as a ham.

Henry Olsen, W8ZMN

Escanaba

"A number of us young recruits' at Michigan Bell Telephone Company attended one of the courses that was taught by veteran instructor John Sincock of Marquette. We called his courses Sincock College' (as when completing one of his courses, it was like a college course!) And at the end of several weeks of training we went out to supper together at a fine supper club near Marquette to enjoy a few brews', and a steak dinner. At that time, John had a brand new automobile (A Carmen-Ghia) and after much story telling , merriment and laughter, some of us made our way out the side door and said, Let's play a trick on John....let just pick up' this very small car of his and carry it away!' (All six of us husky lads!).....In the meantime, the manager of the restaurant saw us'fooling' with the car and called the police! John (unknown to us!) witnessed the whole event from inside the restaurant. Two officers arrived in short order and commanded us to drop that car!' Flustered....we explained that this was all a prank that we were playing on our instructor who was John Sincock and who was in the restaurant! Glaring at us in disbelief, they escorted all of us into the restaurant and one of the officers asked John: Do you know these men?' John (with a very blank stare on his face....[good acting John!] said, Never saw them before in my life!' As the officers were ready to lead us all off to jail, John burst out laughing saying, Of course I do....they're with me!' We stopped shaking, the officers left, and we sat down and laughed all night about this incident!" David Zurcher (Michigan Bell, Retired)Houghton" My first meeting with John was in the city of Marquette during the early 50's. I was downtown at the Federal Building (post office) taking a commercial radio exam and one of the hams from Calumet told me of a Mr. Sincock' who worked for the telephone company in Marquette. They encouraged me to stop in and see him after taking the test. After passing my exam I walked up the hill to 200 North Third Street where he worked, and rang the doorbell, and asked (timidly) if I could see Mr. Sincock.' I introduced myself, told him I was from Laurium, and he welcomed me and showed me all around the Toll Test room, of which he was the upervisor. He introduced me to all of the men there, some of whom I was to also have the pleasure of working with years later when I became an employee of the same company. John took time from his busy schedule to ask all about the exam, How many people where here?'.....'Was it easy for

you?'.....'Are you going to use your new license?'....etc. etc. In later years,John retired to Laurium, and built a house(from scratch).....and I, along with other friends at work helped put up the walls at 95 Second Street. (Thelma also helped in the construction and I still have pictures here,showing her assisting John in the laying of concrete blocks for the foundation!)We became friends and I visited John and Thelma at the Eagle Harbor cottage too,during the warm summer months. Someone mentioned his attention to detail.....I too, can attest to that fact when seeing his work. I was just 19, and I was very impressed!"

George Thurner, W8FWG

Laurium

"John, in his sophomore and junior high school summers, acted as engineer' for my father, George Burgan, when they did the first non-commercial broadcasts of the World Series games on 9CYU from Hubbell. Dad picked up the broadcasts from General Electric in Schenectidy, N.Y. on 32m (2XAW), and renarrated them into his transmitter. Years later, in 1929, the station became radio station WHDF.

Roland Burgan, KB8XI

Hancock

"I had known John since I was a kid, before I got my ham license in 1931. John was one of the most active hams in Marquette. One of his duties when he started with Michigan Bell Telephone Co. was to send and receive telegraph messages to and from other telephone offices in the state concerning problems and troubles. John could send and copy both Continental and International Morse code. In the early days all hams built their own equipment and John did such a beautiful job of building his equipment that he was the envy of all the hams who saw it. When John retired and moved to Laurium,there was a group of us who have kept a schedule with him on 40 meters, on 7215 Khz every Sunday afternoon at 1:00 PM. John kept daily CW schedules with a friend of his on 20 meters who lived on the east coast and when Bill Jackson Sr. was living in Arizona, John kept daily schedules on CW with him."

John Akkala, W8AT

Marquette

"A perfectionist in building, he built most of his own equipment before it was available on the market. One unit he specialized in was building R.F. amplifiers. He was respected by all who knew him, he was a good teacher and helped many young folks get into ham radio."

Gene Cole, W8VJD

Marquette

"We were in the airport in Lansing. He was going home for the weekend after teaching a class in a town near Lansing and I was going home after having attended a meeting of the State Board of Nursing. It was a miserable night.....rain, sleet, etc. Anyway, I saw this gentleman on the other side of the room and he looked familiar.....every time I looked his way, he was watching me! Finally, my curiosity got the best of me. When I saw him go to the main desk, I went over too, knowing if I heard his voice, it was the man I thought I knew. Sure enough, when he asked the clerk how much longer we had to wait, I new that voice.....I grabbed his arm and said, John'....he turned, surprised, and said, Vi', "What are you doing here alone?" After talking for a while he suggested renting a car and driving home. We did, and what a drive.....slippery roads, rain, sleet....when we got to Munising he called Thelma and she called George to let them know where we were, etc. When we got to Marquette George met us there. It was 7 AM and we had left Lansing at 9, the night before! I sure was kidded for having spent the night with John!"

Vi Lehtinen, W8JXJ

Ishpeming

"I have to say a word about Thelma! Not only was she a good cook, but John would bring his entire class home.....after work, and Thelma would graciously cook something for all of us! We were all young kids' going to one of John's classes (And John got to teach every new class that AT&T came out with!), and yet we were always welcomed to his home in Marquette. He treasured his summer home at Eagle Harbor and we had some good pasty suppers there, too! As I look back, I have to say that John had a good woman there.....quite a girl!"

David Moyle, N8KME

Laurium

This next narrative was related to us in one of John's classes by John himself.(Here's John):"Boy! That Moyle boy sure is quiet, isn't he? He attended one of my radio classes and he spoke so softly, you had to listen closely to what he had to say. He asked me, Can you tell me where the Palestra is?" (The ice-hockey rink). That night a group of us went to the game, and I said, "Isn't that Moyle out there, from our class, playing hockey!?" It was, and Dave was so shy he didn't tell anyone that he was on the C-L-K Hockey Team and was playing in that series, that night! The next day we said, "Dave, we didn't know you played hockey!?" Dave replied, "Yeah, I play once in a while, but I didn't know where the rink was here, in Marquette!"

"My brother Ed and I have been close friends with John and Thelma since 1935. We were brand-new hams' in that year and we were attending our first Michigan State Convention of Amateur Radio Operators' at the Northland Hotel in Marquette. We had been licensed only one month at that time (June 22, 1935) and we traveled to Marquette with a ham from the Copper Country and thought we were returning home the same evening. However, our driver decided to stay in Marquette overnight so we had to find a place to stay. John and Thelma invited us to stay in their home. As I recall, they took the mattress from their bed for us to sleep on the floor. They also provided us with meals.

Art, W8TTY and Ed, K8EK

Toldeo Ohio & Calumet

"The first time I met John I was not yet a ham, in fact Dave and I were still dating. It was Field Day 1966 at the Eagle Harbor lighthouse area. As usual, the wind was off the lake and very cold. John felt sorry for me, being the only female out there and brought me orange juice in the morning. He was always someone very dear and compassionate. He will be missed"

Sandie Harjala, WB8TTL

Rockwood, TN

"One of John's favorite stories (and he always reminded me of it, when we next met!) was working Japan on 2-meters from Mohawk! We didn't even have repeaters then, and I worked John simplex' on 2-meters. He was on another band (HF) at the same time, and was in contact with a ham in Japan, when he told me, "Just a minute, Chuck....."and when he came back he had made a connection between his 2-meter gear and the HF gear and I found myself talking to another ham in Japan! Each time he saw me on the street he would say, "Remember the 2-meter contact to Japan, Chuck!?" I surely did and while it lasted only a couple of minutes it was a rarity for me!"

Charles Savolainen, WB8FCY

Jacobsville

I moved to the Copper Country some years ago, when I retired, and one day, while completing my grocery shopping and was walking toward my car, there was a man standing there looking at my call letter license plate, (which was then WA9ZOC).As I approached he said, Oh, you're a ham! I said, Yes, I am!.....and he introduced himself as John, W8CSI. I had not known John before this chance meeting. We got to talking, and he invited me over to his house in Laurium, and I visited John and Thelma on several occasions and we became good friends. I was very happy to have found a new friend, in a new town where I was to make my new home."

Don Perkins, W8WZA-Calumet

(Ex WA9ZOC)

"The Sincocks' were one of the first families that we met, when we came to Laurium in August of 1921, (so I have been told!), as I was only five weeks old at the time! I know his father and mine helped as much as possible to put out the fire when it broke out in the old Washington School (in Calumet.) That fire, I do remember! I have a few photos, showing John. One must be still on the living room wall at 95 Second Street (in Laurium)

Lawrence Fadner, W3GN

Laurel, MD

WB8QJZ RECOGNIZED:

Stan La Muth, WB8QJZ, one of KCRA's Charter members was the recipient of the Information Technology Recognition Award for 1998. Stan, a senior telecommunications engineer, was cited for his work on the Wireless Research Consortium project at Michigan Technological University. "His expertise is unquestioned", Nancy Szofran said. "He has endless patience mixed enthusiasm, a commitment to detail, and a drive to see a successful project to completion." The award was presented at President's Convocation on September 23, 1998 and included a cash prize. Our congratulations to Stan from the KCRA officers and membership.