

Tips For Preserving Your Club's History

*By Rose-Anne Lawrence, KB1DMW
ARRL Affiliated Club Assistant*

As the ARRL Affiliated Club Assistant, I get several requests from club officials who are researching the history of their Amateur Radio club. Some of these requests may be as simple as when a club first became an ARRL affiliate and others, like a club's first callsign, may require a bit of research.

During one recent conversation, I stopped to think how fortunate I was to have the founder and first president of my local club living in my neighborhood near ARRL headquarters. George Hart, W1NJM, assumed the office of President of the Newington Amateur Radio League fifty-nine years ago.

Today George still attends annual holiday parties to share boyhood stories of the early days of Amateur Radio. Listening to the stories of some of the old timers in your club is certainly entertaining. It is, however, not the best way to document the history of the club.

Our club is fortunate to have a club historian. John Disarro, KA1HQK, is the historian for NARL and he has spent countless hours documenting and archiving items that tell the story of our club. John is very meticulous about how he carefully preserves club artifacts and newsletters for members to look at later on.

Long-time ARRL employee Perry Williams, W1UED, is now the current ARRL Historical Committee Archivist and he has some tips to pass along to the ARRL Affiliated Clubs who wish to preserve their history.

Keep Things Organized

Organization is the key to being able to retrieve documents in the future. Perry recommends that you use a manila folder or large envelope, at the very least, to organize your documents. Keep in mind that it will most likely be someone other than yourself who will be looking for these achieved items.

Protect Sensitive Material

Be sure to store poor quality items such as telegrams, newspaper clippings, mimeographs in a store-bought food storage bag. Newspaper articles turn brown and brittle in ten years. Perry says that folks who wish to archive club materials may purchase acid-free bags called stiffeners from an archiving supplies company librarians use.ⁱ Keep documents out of direct sunlight. If you receive a box of artifacts that smells musty and mildewy, try Odor Eliminator. This is an air freshener made of non-toxic volcanic ash in a net bag. It has a negative charge that ionizes the air. Refresh it in the sunlight for six hours, and it smells great again.

Catalog and Record Items

For your photos, write the name, date, photographer, anything unique in the picture, and a brief description of the occasion, for example: 2005 ARRL Forum, Dayton Hamvention. Include the names and calls of the people in the photograph.

When placing pictures in a photo album, be sure that you don't write directly on the picture because some inks can deteriorate on the back of photos over time. It is suggested that you write the documentation on a label to the side of the photograph in an album.

Souvenirs

Be sure to save one memento from each event or special occasion such as badges, pins, programs, etc., and store these in stiffener bags so they don't get damaged.

When saving papers, be sure to X out the side you don't want. Often notes are written on recycled paper, and it isn't always clear many years later which side is important.

I hope these pointers can help your club preserve its history and allow you to tell the story to those that will come after you. I would also suggest that you save obituaries, memorial programs and cards for a documentation of your Silent Key members.

If you would like to have Perry save something that is noteworthy to your club that hasn't been documented in an article, please send him the information. A special file cabinet has been set aside just for that purpose. Noteworthy events may include a milestone anniversary or service award received by your club.

Perry Williams, WIUED may be contacted at pwilliams@arrl.org

Rose-Anne Lawrence, KB1DMW is currently the ARRL Outgoing QSL Bureau Administrator however she has held many positions within ARRL HQ including ARRL Club Assistant, Educational Assistant, and Sales and Marketing staff. She is an active Extra class operator and involved her local club, the Newington Amateur Radio League. Rose-Anne is also active in emergency communications and public service and has served as EC in her community. As an accredited ARRL Volunteer Examiner, Rose-Anne conducts monthly license test sessions in Newington, CT.

ⁱ Light Impressions
205 South Puente Street
Brea, CA 92821