

Brief Club History  
NCRC 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
September 15, 2024

While the club was officially chartered by the ARRL 75 years ago this July, it had reformed 5 years before that, after the FCC reauthorized the use of transmitters on Amateur bands following the end of WWII.

Prior to that period, the history is somewhat fuzzy. There was a Newport Radio Club, as well as a Bristol Radio Club. During WWII, several club members supported Civil Defense, and others deployed overseas. So, the club's history actually goes back more than 75 years.

After WWII ended, it was a real boom time for Amateur Radio. Many hams, returning from war, took advantage of the GI bill to obtain technical degrees from universities. NCRC seemed to have more than its fair share of MIT graduates, for example. The end of the war meant there was surplus gear available, and growing economic prosperity meant commercially produced gear, especially kits, could be had for those with deeper pockets. For many years the club met in Newport at the Seaman's Institute – there had been a

very long-standing relationship between radio and marine vessels.

From the beginning, the club was always a strong backer of education and licensing, teaching Morse Code and theory classes. Today, about 20% of all licensed hams in Rhode Island have taken one of our license classes. The club membership varied over the years but was approaching 100 members by the 1970/80s. NCRC was often in the public eye during that time due to the America's Cup races being held in Newport, and the Bicentennial, (don't forget the CB craze too).

50 years ago, in 1974, the club put its 2-meter repeater on the air (WA1AFY, now W1SYE). Repeaters were such an important part of the hobby at that time, that the club considered reforming itself as a repeater club (that didn't happen). In July 2009, NCRC put the state's first digital repeater on the air, W1AAD DSTAR.

Through the 50s to the 80s the club elected officers twice a year. This was due to a very strong relationship with the Navy. Many a Naval officer spent a half-year at the War College, so the club adjusted to their deployment cycle. During that time there were

multiple female presidents, something a bit unusual for a male dominated hobby.

The club had a strong relationship with the American Red Cross as well. Island dwellers seem to have a heightened sense of a need for preparedness. That relationship continued for decades until the ARC moved out of the East Bay area after 2010.

Speaking of 2010, like many ham clubs, NCRC found itself with declining membership as folks were spending their time with personal computers and cell phones (a 2-meter repeater with autopatch no longer seemed as exciting). Active club members took it upon themselves to start recruiting members by offering license classes and sponsoring new on-air activities, like Islands on The Air (Something Pete Lawson W1LAB was instrumental in – the namesake of the PLOA). A decade later our membership was around 150.

One thing that seems to have spanned many decades was summer Field Day. While the location for the event changed from time to time, the club always had a strong performance. Over the past two decades the club has usually finished in the top 2-5 nationally.

Winter Field Day was added about a decade ago with similar results. And the club continues to be a strong supporter of Scouting through merit badge classes and Jamboree on The Air (JOTA/JOTI).

So here we are, at this beautiful park on this beautiful late summer day reflecting on our storied past and wondering what Newport County Radio Club will be doing on our centennial in 2049. Thank you all for being part of our 75<sup>th</sup> celebration!

Bob Beatty WB4SON, September 15, 2024