



Second Century

Another Auld Lang Syne

2024 was a tough year for ARRL and, more broadly, amateur radio as a whole. ARRL has dealt with backlash from a restructuring of its dues, as well as a ransomware attack in May that showed us that, despite investments in security hardware and software, it is nearly impossible to prevent an attack. All of this pales in contrast to the many people — the many friends — who we lost this year to the ranks of Silent Keys. These were big names, some with notoriety outside of amateur radio. We are left with our memories of these people, as well as the legacy that their contributions and friendships will mean to us for the rest of our lives.

Within what we call the “board family” at ARRL are those volunteers who served our membership with their time, money, and passion. Someone I knew for years in the Hudson Division, and who I contested with on Antigua back in 2001 right after September 11, was former Vice Director Bill Hudzik, W2UDT. He was a kind and soft-spoken gentleman who was a leader in the hobby and within ARRL. We likewise lost former Midwest Division Director Cliff Ahrens, K0CA, who was a well-known judge and respected DXer. Southeastern Division Vice Director Jeff Beals, WA4AW, who seemed to have served or helped in every aspect of ARRL’s field organization with an emphasis on emergency communications, was recognized at his passing as a leader and organizer. And then there’s Carter Craigie, N3AO, husband of former ARRL President Kay Craigie, N3KN. Carter was always a gentleman and a generous financial supporter of ARRL. These board family members will be sadly missed.

Many hams ultimately chased careers stemming from their hobby or integrated their love of radio into their vocations. We recently lost Mike Valentine, W8MM, who had the distinction of being ARRL’s largest individual donor. Mike loved ham radio and his experience at the University of Cincinnati, which he molded into establishing not one but two very successful radar detector companies. He celebrated these experiences, and his time as a young engineer at R. L. Drake, with a bench in front of Headquarters where he included many of his friends — and put himself last.

We lost Bob Heil, K9EID, who innovated so many products into the sound industry, creating the industry standard headset in amateur radio that spanned decades. Just prior to his passing we had a long phone conversation about his love of AM and his desire to see hams continue to use that mode with their latest-model gear.

As amateur radio has seen one publication after another flounder and fail, one that hung in there was CQ magazine. Owner Dick Ross, K2MGA, passed away and with him the passion he had for publishing content for hams, operating perhaps the most important contests worldwide, and offering wonderful awards causing hams everywhere to chase prefixes and zones. Back in the mid-1980s, it was CQ that gave this young software developer a discount on advertising to help launch a PC morse code terminal for the IBM PC. Thank you, Dick.

How many of us worked new countries toward our DXCC awards because of the initiative and hard work of a passionate DXpeditioner we lost this year, Bob Allphin, K4UEE? Bob was not one to take on the easy places to operate — he had to activate many top 10 most wanted countries. Bob was a gentleman, a mentor, and extremely generous to ARRL.

There are others like Marty Engstrom, N1ARY, well known and loved by New Englanders as “Marty on the Mountain” with his weather reports from Mount Washington. And Dick Rutan, KB6LQS, world-famous aviator and pioneer. And the list goes on. Who in your close circle was lost in 2024?

As we ring in the new year and think about the renewal that it brings, let’s take a moment, “for auld lang syne,” to raise a toast to these friends of ours who we will dearly miss. Let’s celebrate them by being radio active. Let’s commit ourselves to being connectors and being kind to each other, in their honor. I wish you a happy and healthy holiday season, and a wonderful 2025. See you on the air.

David A. Minster, NA2AA
Chief Executive Officer