

FM & Repeaters

Edited by **Jay Mabey, NU0X** • Editor, The ARRL Repeater Directory

The Old Gents' Net

By *Murray Green, K3BEQ*
5730 Lockwood Rd
Cheverly, MD 20785
e-mail mgreen@erols.com

I remember listening for the first time to the forerunner of the "Old Gents' Net" many years ago. It wasn't a formal net then; just two close friends meeting on the local 146.88 MHz repeater to discuss the day's happenings. The two amateurs were Drummy, K3GIU, and Bill, K3TZI. They met on the air each morning and evening without fail.

Net as Tranquilizer?

In the beginning I didn't pay much attention to their conversations. But as the weeks and months rolled by, I noticed that the simple act of listening brought an odd sense of relaxation. After coming home from a stressful workday, I found that their generic patter tended to act as a tranquilizer.

Both hams were retired, so their conversations didn't include work-related matters. Instead, they discussed their grandchildren, what was on the menu for dinner or lunch, minor problems in the neighborhood, day trips or vacation planning and health matters. You could tell right away that these two old friends had a *lot* in common. Bill's health did not allow him to get around much on his own, but that certainly didn't stop him from contributing greatly to the daily "net"!

The Bill and Drummy Show

So on those evenings when I was stressed out, I had only to tune into the "Bill and Drummy Show" for my dose of radio relaxation. They were my Amateur Radio "Lum and Abner." (Anyone who was listening to the golden days of radio will know what I mean!) I laughed when they laughed; savored over what was expected for lunch or dinner; agreed or disagreed on their low-key politics; envied their closeness and in general found myself engrossed in their stories.

Of course, there were times when I grew a little tired of the "same old thing," but I found myself returning time and time again to the frequency. In most cases I'd just sit and listen to a half hour or so. After a hard



MURRAY GREEN, K3BEQ

Two members of the Old Gents' Net: Gus Helms, K3KZS (center), the net's founder and NCS, Marv "Drummy" Drumheiser, K3GIU (right)—age 90 and still on the air. Drummy's wife, Gus, looks on approvingly.

day on the job, it was exactly the break I needed.

A "Real" Net

Eventually, other friends of theirs joined in, and suddenly what was two became four, then six, then seven. They finally decided to go ahead and establish a formal net that met on the repeater every morning at 9:30 AM and again in the evening at 6:30 PM. Thus, the "Old Gents' Net" was established.

Not everyone associated with the net was old (although the elder statesman of the group, Drummy, turned a spry 90 on March 24 of this year). In fact, the net has members in their 40s and 50s. Most participants, however, are over the 70-year-old mark. A number have become Silent Keys in recent years. Most sadly felt was the loss of Bill, K3TZI. His presence is still with us and the net carries on in his memory.

The Old Gents' Net continues to meet twice a day, seven days a week. As with most nets, some folks talk too long, while

others don't talk enough. All complain about their aches and pains and each member tells his story about the day's happenings. These topics can include cooking, driving, the weather or the purchase of a new piece of equipment—just as Drummy and Bill did in the earlier years. Nothing discussed is what you would call "big news" (beyond the birth of an additional grandchild, that is)—just a little touch of information and humanity in the flow of daily life. It's a very enjoyable change of pace from the hectic existence many of us endure.

As Henry Thoreau once said, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." Not so on the Old Gents' Net. Perhaps you have such an FM net in your area. Why not listen or, better yet, join in! I think you will enjoy the change. And if you ever find yourself in the vicinity of Greenbelt, Maryland (near Washington, DC), switch your rig to our repeater; maybe the net will be on the air. It's the 146.88 MHz machine, one of two repeaters owned and operated by The Green Mountain Repeater Association.

QST