Document #7

**2016 Annual Meeting**

**ARRL Board of Directors**

**Report of the Chief Executive Officer**

To the Board of Directors:

This is my final report to a meeting of the ARRL Board of Directors as Chief Executive Officer and Secretary. While I always like to think more about the future than the past – as Past President Joel Harrison, W5ZN, is fond of saying, there’s a reason why a windshield is bigger than a rear view mirror – I cannot avoid indulging in some reflection.

The first Board meeting I attended was in May 1975, three years after joining the full-time ARRL staff as an Assistant Secretary. Dick Baldwin, W1RU had become General Manager that January following the retirement of John Huntoon, W1RW, who had served for 14 years in that capacity. The big issue of the day was how the ARRL would respond to an FCC proposal to restructure amateur licensing into a “dual ladder,” HF-only and VHF-only system, and in fact the meeting was held two months early in order to permit the formulation of an ARRL counterproposal prior to the comment deadline. In January the Board had instructed the staff to conduct a membership survey on the restructuring issue, and an astounding 56% of the membership returned the 46-question survey form. How we managed to process and tabulate 56,000 questionnaires is a story in itself. It was a success and a great learning experience.

The Board meeting itself was a good example of a group with disparate opinions working to achieve consensus. To a man the Board believed that a strong, unified ARRL position was needed to confront an FCC that was heading down the wrong track. The League’s position was set out in 17 separate motions, with every director (except the Canadian director, who abstained on FCC matters back when Canada was a division of the ARRL) assigned to make at least one and with every single motion adopted unanimously.

By that time I was already heavily involved in the preparations for what became the 1979 World Administrative Radio Conference, an oft-told tale that need not be repeated here. Somehow I managed to pick up an MBA along the way, which gave me needed skills. The additional degree probably also helped to reassure some of the Board members, even though they knew me pretty well by then, when in 1982 it came time for them to elect a 32-year-old as General Manager.

Today I am in the same office and literally at the same desk that I inherited from Dick Baldwin. I was not the youngest person to head the ARRL staff; that distinction belongs to Founding Secretary Clarence Tuska followed by K. B. Warner, W1EH, who took the reins after World War I at the age of 24 and was hired by the Board on Tuska’s personal recommendation. It was Warner who built the ARRL, serving as Secretary and General Manager until his untimely death at age 53 in 1948.

I’ve never wanted any other job, but 34 years – and another 10+ years working here in other capacities, starting with a summer job in 1968 – is long enough. Something else I’ve never wanted is to follow Ken Warner’s example by dying in office.

Other than those previously mentioned and aside from a period in the early ‘90s when Barry Shelley and I were co-managers, the only other person to serve in this position was A. L. Budlong, W1BUD, from 1949 to 1961. For a 102-year-old organization that’s a pretty short list. I have always been conscious of the legacy of my predecessors. I hope my own service will be regarded in years to come as having added to that legacy.

That’s enough about the distant past. Let’s talk about 2015 and even more important, 2016 and beyond.

A successful once-in-a-century celebration is a tough act to follow. I believe we succeeded.

As President Craigie predicted as 2014 drew to a close, the buoyant spirit of the Centennial lived on as the ARRL began its second century. This is reflected in an increase in the membership count of almost 3% in 2015, from 165,662 to 170,528. We had only anticipated membership growth of about 1.2%. Marketing Manager Bob Inderbitzen, NQ1R, and his team, especially Membership Manager Diane Petrilli, KB1RNF, deserve considerable credit for this accomplishment.

On January 1 we implemented the dues increase that the Board adopted last July. At this point it is safe to say that the implementation has gone as smoothly as anyone could possibly have imagined. It has been especially gratifying to see how ARRL members have rallied in defense of the increase in response to the occasional dissenting voice. While a temporary decline in membership is inevitable, I believe it will be less than we predicted on the basis of past experience. It has not gone unnoticed that we are doing more for members than ever.

FCC Amateur Radio licensing also increased during the year, by 1.3% (according to figures kept by the always-reliable Joe Speroni, AH0A), from 726,275 to 735,405. This, too, was above expectations, driven by exam and licensing activity that was much closer to 2014 levels than we had anticipated. Our dedicated Volunteer Examiners are keeping the VEC Department busy, not only with processing applications for new licenses but – significantly for an organization that does better reaching Extras and Generals than Technicians – with upgrades. After declines in the number of upgrades each year from 2007 to 2013, that trend was reversed in 2014 and in 2015 we saw the most upgrades since 2008.

My personal highlights since the July 2015 Board Meeting were the IARU Administrative Council meeting and Region 3 Conference, both held in Bali, Indonesia in October, and a brief visit to the World Radiocommunication Conference, WRC-15, in Geneva the following month. International Affairs Vice President Jay Bellows, K0QB, has given you an excellent report on the Bali events. I will only add my perspective as Secretary of Working Group 2 of the Conference. It was a special privilege and pleasure to support the Working Group Chairman, YB3PET. Jay noted that Titon is Deputy Director General of Spectrum Policy and Planning for the Indonesian administration but did not mention that he is an active radio amateur and was Head of Delegation for Indonesia at WRC-15. At the Region 3 Conference he volunteered for the position of Region 3 Coordinator in the IARU Monitoring System (Intruder Watch), a significant development considering that the Indonesian government’s monitoring network reports to him. At WRC-15 Titon took the floor on behalf of Indonesia to argue for a more generous power limit for amateurs in the new 5 MHz allocation, unfortunately to no avail.

As for WRC-15 itself, while in Geneva for the IARU reception I had the opportunity to compare notes with another old ITU hand who was a key spokesman for his administration at the 1979 World Administrative Radio Conference and subsequent ITU conferences. We agreed that the WRC process is broken. Decisions are now made only by consensus (the last vote taken at a WRC was in 1995), which means that any administration with strong opposing views can block an agreement if it is willing to resist all pressure to go along. This is in contrast to the process followed at WARC-79 where the amateur allocations at 10, 18, and 24 MHz, among others, were gained. There a proposal needed more than simple majority support to go forward, but decisions could be made over the objections of a minority. That is not possible today, leading to a “lowest common denominator” outcome for any proposal that does not have near-universal support. A comprehensive review of spectrum allocations such as was undertaken in 1979 could not occur today, at least not with the existing mechanisms; the ITU is simply not as good at forging consensus as was the 1975 ARRL Board. This has profound implications for the telecommunications industry as a whole, not just for the amateur and amateur-satellite services. While it may provide some leverage for us if we can recruit administrations to hold out against proposals that would limit our future spectrum access, if nothing changes we will have to recalibrate expectations of what we can accomplish through the WRC process in the way of new or improved allocations.

Since the first word came out of my plan to retire from ARRL employment I have been asked many times what I’m planning to do with myself. Aside from tackling a long list of postponed antenna projects and deferred maintenance around the house, you might conclude from the preceding two paragraphs that I have a continuing interest in the IARU – and you would be right. I hope to serve the IARU in some volunteer capacity while I’m still able. In that I have the full support of my wife Linda, KA1ZD, without whom I could have accomplished very little in the past 35 years.

While I will not repeat too much of what is said in other reports that you will receive at this meeting, I would be remiss to not mention the excellent progress on the Amateur Radio Parity Act that was achieved in 2015. This is thanks in large part to Mike Lisenco’s tireless efforts and constant badgering of the rest of us. Mike and other Board members, the Keelen Group, Chris Imlay, Dan Henderson, and I, along with additional staff as required, have learned how to work effectively together under President Craigie’s leadership. We are closer than ever to a positive legislative outcome on this important issue, but we must remember that the practical deadline for getting the Parity Act across the finish line is fast approaching.

Not much will be going on in the 114th Congress once the major party conventions begin this summer.

At this meeting the Board will be considering what I believe is the best strategic planning document that has been developed for the ARRL in at least 35 years. In 1981 the ARRL Long Range Planning Committee prepared and delivered a report in two phases that called for significant departures from “business as usual.” The Chairman of the LRPC was Vic Clark, W4KFC; I was privileged to be an active member of the committee. Vic and I were elected to our respective positions of President and General Manager the following year with the expectation that we would work together to implement the plan, and so we did. Tragically, Vic’s tenure as ARRL President was cut short after just 20 months when he suffered a fatal heart attack in November 1983. If you never knew Vic I urge you to read the three-page tribute beginning on page 9 of January 1984 *QST*. It will give you some sense of the measure of the man and the depth of the loss we felt at the time.

The ARRL has weathered many such unexpected losses in its 102-year history. Hiram Percy Maxim himself in 1936. Vice President Charles H. Stewart, W3ZS, who had died five days before HPM, leaving a gaping hole in leadership succession. *QST* Editor Ross Hull, accidentally electrocuted in 1938 as recounted in November 2015 *QST*. Managing Editor Joel Kleinman, N1BKE, who died in a house fire in 2012. John Hennessee, N1KB, perhaps the most universally liked staff member of all time, who we lost in 2006. Several Directors and others who have died while serving in office or on staff.

Filling their shoes seemed impossible at the time, yet the institution for which they labored, volunteer and staff member alike, has continued to fulfill its mission.

As it must.

As I am certain that it will.

Safe travels to Windsor.

Sincere 73,

David Sumner, K1ZZ

Chief Executive Officer

Newington, CT – January 7, 2016

Annex A: Media and Public Relations

Annex B: Development (to be distributed later, when yearend figures are available)

Annex A to Document #7

**Report to the Board of Directors - January 2016  
Media and Public Relations - Sean Kutzko, KX9X**

The second half of 2015 was focused on the development of National Parks on the Air, continued work on Outreach Through Discovery, and expanding ARRL’s presence in social media.

***National Parks on the Air***

Once the Board approved the National Parks on the Air program, getting all aspects of the event up and running became the top priority for PR Manager Sean Kutzko. Numerous staff meetings involving nearly every department at HQ were held, and HQ pulled together nicely to get NPOTA off the ground in time for the kickoff on January 1. Both Sean Kutzko and Norm Fusaro have been very active on the NPOTA Facebook group since it was created on October 15, which Sean created as a way to have real-time communication with NPOTA participants. While initial NPS involvement wasn’t what we had hoped, we are starting to see signs they are coming around to ham radio as a tool to promote their Centennial. ARRL has received an official welcome from the NPS superintendent of the North Country National Scenic Trail, and we have heard from many Activators that operating in their park over the first weekend in January attracted positive interest and comments from NPS employees they interacted with. The pileups are big and there is a lot of activity in the Facebook group; many members have expressed appreciation for Sean and Norm’s highly visible presence, answering questions and providing administrative status updates on NPOTA. All indications are NPOTA is a major hit.

***Outreach through Discovery***

In October 2015, a modest level of funding was approved during FY2016 budget discussions for Outreach through Discovery, the plan proposed by Sean and Ward Silver, N0AX. Ward and Sean will spend 2016 identifying parallel groups that may prove to be good target audiences for promoting amateur radio as a logical extension of their current interest (building, astronomy, etc) and developing information streams and recruiting people who have their feet in both camps who could serve as a conduit.

We are hopeful elements of this Outreach through Discovery will be incorporated into the implementation of the ARRL Strategic Plan.

***PR Committee***

PR Committee member Scott Westerman, W9WSW, invited Sean Kutzko and PRC Chair Katie Allen, WY7YL, to come to Michigan State University for two days in September. Westerman is Director for the MSU Alumni Association and has a wealth of experience in corporate communications, social media and customer service. Kutzko and Allen benefitted from access to the PR and Marketing departments of MSU’s Alumni Association, and received free guidance and training from them.

Steve “Sid” Caesar, NH7C, provided invaluable access to NPS Centennial staff during our negotiations of National Parks on the Air. We simply would not have had an audience with the NPS Centennial Chair Alexa Viets without his assistance.

***PR-101***

Efforts are underway to re-write PR-101 and bring it up to date. The plan is to change it from a course-based program with a test at the end to a PDF of tips and guidelines available for free, similar to the ARRL VE Manual. The PR Committee has also had discussions of adding short video segments on the ARRL YouTube channel to help teach certain components. This project will be completed by the end of 2016.

***Parity Act***

Kutzko assisted the ARRL team spearheading the Amateur Radio Parity Act with raising visibility on social media campaigns, providing some assistance with the Clarity on Amateur Parity video produced by the Keelen Group, and writing material used on the new RallyCongress service ARRL has contracted with.

***Education***

In July, Kutzko shot video of the Teacher’s Institute held at ARRL. This footage will be the basis of a short promotional video to help boost awareness of opportunities and programs the ARRL Education Department has to offer. The three-minute video highlighting the TI should be produced by February 1, 2016.

***Social Media***

Expansion of ARRL’s presence on social media continues to move forward. Social Media has been a large component of outreach for the Amateur Radio Parity Act, and is also provides a venue for highlighting activities at every level of ARRL: programs at Headquarters, interesting developments in ARRL Sections, and ARRL clubs and members throughout the organization.

Two paid ARRL promotions on Facebook in the second half of 2015 involved the dissemination of the ARRL “Clarity on Amateur Parity” video and the urgent call to action for a letter-writing campaign on the eve of the Parity Act vote to get it out of the Congressional Subcommittee. In both cases, the Facebook promotion resulted in more than doubling the views of the Parity Act content, mostly to people who had not “liked” the ARRL Facebook page.

Funding for a Social Media intern for the PR department is included in the FY2016 budget plan. Erin Day, a senior at Central Connecticut State University, will be the PR Department’s first intern. She is a Communications major with an emphasis on public relations and plenty of experience with Twitter. Day will begin at ARRL on January 20 and be active through the Spring semester.

With the expanded emphasis on promoting ARRL on social media, questions have begun to arise on whether ARRL should have a social media policy. This is a delicate, complicated matter, but one that all major corporations and non-profits have had to address in recent years. Different theories exist on the best approach; Kutzko will continue researching this for discussion at a later date.

A new Field Day bonus for use of social media has been approved by the Programs and Services Committee, effective with Field Day 2016. Kutzko will work with Dan Henderson to draft guidelines for this new bonus.

Respectfully submitted,  
  
Sean Kutzko, KX9X  
ARRL Media and Public Relations Manager

Annex B to Document #7

ARRL Development Report

To the Board of Directors

For the 2016 Annual Meeting

[to be submitted when yearend figures are available]