

OSSBN History

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The Ohio Single Side Band Net did not start as a traffic net. Back in the time following Ham Radio being started up again after WWII a new mode was authorized for phone, Single Side Band (SSB). Many innovative Hams were trying it out and perfecting it. Collins was the big promoter, but their equipment was very expensive. A lot of home-brewing was going on and a lot of help was being passed around. Area groups were formed for on-the-air assistance and development.

Ohio had such a group and it chose 3.9725 MHz as its frequency; between Georgia's 3.975 MHz and Iowa's 3.970 MHz. As time went on (1950's), these groups formalized and set up their individual operations, complete with officers, constitutions and scheduled operations. New equipment was also becoming available, such as Heath's adapter to convert an AM transmitter to SSB, and Swan transceivers – yes, now we had it all in one box, which made mobile operation much easier.

The Ohio net had a traveling salesman, K8VBK, Larry as its manager, and he and other mobiles were always given preference during call ups. Some of the early SSB Hams were also good CW operators and were involved in traffic handling with the NTS (National Traffic System). The NTS was totally managed by the ARRL (American Radio Relay League) out of Newington, CT, and W1NJM, the League's traffic manager appointed all positions of all the NTS nets. He also set the schedules and all operating procedures for Transcontinental, Area, Region, and Section nets.

There was one problem with the NTS, outlets. Sound familiar? As traffic came down to the Sections, the loss of CW operators in many locations caused a lot of traffic being mailed or serviced back. Back then, postage was still cheap. Some of the SSB operators, who were also in the NTS, started picking up traffic to transfer to other SSB operators they knew would meet the next NTS net and deliver it into the area. This was going on and became more prevalent up into the mid-1960's when for some reason, NTS picked Ohio to bring it to a head and insist that the OSSBN (Ohio Single Sideband Net) become a Section net in the NTS and abide by their rules.

There was an organization, The Ohio Counsel of Amateur Radio Clubs that met annually to meet with the ARRL Great Lakes Director and ARRL Ohio Section Manager for them to hear the latest news out of the ARRL, and for the clubs to give them their ideas and input to take back to the ARRL Board meetings. Jim Benson, W8OUU was the permanent secretary of this group, and still may have some records of these meetings.

Because of their broad coverage, the sideband net had been handling more and more traffic and was meeting with the Interstate Net for out of state traffic as well as the NTS traffic brought into the net. The net did not want to lose its independent status but the ARRL NTS insisted all nets conform to their control.

After much discussion of a heated manner, a compromise was reached and voted on; with a majority, not an unanimous vote, it was passed and sent by the Great Lakes Director to the ARRL for acceptance. (1) All traffic would be in formal ARRL format. (2) 8RN would be the liaison net. (3) All outgoing traffic would be offered to NTS first, not the independent nets. (4) OSSBN would meet schedules set by the NTS. (5) Net members would qualify for Brass Pounders League and should list traffic scores with the Ohio Section Manager. In return; the OSSBN could retain its independence by electing its

own officers; Net Manager, Advisory Board Members, and others appointed by the Net Manager. Also, the OSSBN could retain their constitution and maintain their annual in-person meetings. The OSSBN would be “affiliated” with the NTS, and identified as such in the preamble. The deal was approved and became a model for other sections to improve their deliveries and help traffic handling. Ohio should be proud.

Back then, you weren't really a Ham until you had your General License and had checked into the OSSBN. The various clubs around the state made sure they were represented and had several regular members, so that it was covered every day. With no Internet, e-mail, or cell phones, there was a lot of third party traffic for non-Hams as well as internal messages and informals. I remember one session during the Christmas season, with over 100 formal messages. Garlock, K8BYR was the Net Control.

We also transferred some traffic to RTTY for another group of outlets, when needed. Traffic was now the primary function of the OSSBN and being an on-the-air club with technical and information sessions was dropping out. If you didn't bring or get traffic, there was little reason to meet the nets.

Why do we need a traffic handling and net system? Natural disasters, weather or accidents, as well as terrorist threats can never be predicted and be wide area in scope. In these events, we need to be prepared to assist when and where needed to provide channels for vital information that saves lives and protects property. It is important that this be done timely and with assured accuracy. It is one thing to have taken a course to know the procedures, but another to have actually done it so it is second nature. Regularly scheduled nets, operating in an organized system, using common rules and techniques will provide a means for training personnel to be the framework for an emergency communications system when needed.

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