

by Edith Lennon, N2ZRW, Editor

Radio Rescue's Reach: From Sea-Level To Mountain Tops And All Points Between

Pretty much since its inception radio has been saving lives. It's almost hard to believe that Nikola Tesla's radio patent applications of 1897 predated what was likely the first use of radio in the aid of a ship in distress by only two years, when the *East Goodwin Lightship* transmitted a distress signal for the merchant vessel *Elbe* after it ran aground off the English coast.

The story of people using radio to help others in need stretches unbroken from then to the present, as is demonstrated so inspiringly by the subject of our cover story, West Mountain Emergency Communications Search and Rescue. The technology has certainly changed greatly since those early years, since the *Elbe* incident and since the *Carpathia* heard that infamous ...---... in 1912, but the dedication to saving lives has not, and West Mountain continues that tradition. Rather than racing to save a sinking ocean liner guided by relatively primitive tools, however, West Mountain uses state-of-the-art communications equipment to aid lost and injured hikers, snowboarders, climbers, and others who find themselves in distress in a large area centered around Oregon's Mount Hood.

The comparison of West Mountain to the *Carpathia* may be an unfair one in light of the non-profit, volunteer organization's high success rate—the *Carpathia* arrived too late to save over 1,500 who perished when the *Titanic* went down. A more apt comparison is with the *Baltic*—a less heralded rescue ship that saved all hands when two steamships collided in heavy fog in 1909. After the rescue the captain of the *Baltic* made a prophetic comment in his journal: "I see no reason to think that we have reached the climax of invention for safety devices in navigation. There is always something new. Who would have thought ten years ago of wireless messages to be used in saving life at sea? Nobody

dreamed of it; and it is quite possible to conceive that other discoveries may be made of equal benefit to navigation."

But seas and mountains aren't the only environments where radio aids travelers. Summertime means a huge increase in road travel, and our CB radio feature shows just how relevant the one-time "fad" 11 meter band still is. There's a lot more to CB than trying to outsmart "Smokey": often the first news about road conditions and requests for assistance on highways come from CB operators—and they still know where the cheap gas is!

Let's also not forget that communications technology is a lot of fun. And if you haven't tried that GPS of yours outside your vehicle, you're missing out on a great way to enjoy technology in the great outdoors. Check out "Got A GPS? Then Go Geocaching" in this issue for an introduction to this terrific hobby that's one part treasure hunt and one part "Da Vinci Code" sleuthing and code breaking.

Announcements

The radio community at large received very sad news recently of the passing of L.B. Cebik, W4RNL. This antenna expert was a gifted educator and author who mentored many during his too-short life. This month Kirk Kleinschmidt, NTØZ, reflects on his work and legacy in a sidebar to his "Ham Discoveries" column.

While another goodbye must be said this month, this one is not sad—only fond and bitter-sweet. This issue marks the last "Homeland Security" column by Rich Arland, W3OSS. Rich has served the readers of *Pop'Comm* well and faithfully for over six years. I know readers will miss his insights—I will, too. But I'm happy to report that I won't let him off the hook for features, so keep looking for that byline. We'll introduce Mitch Gill, NA7US, his extremely capable successor, next time.

Popular Communications invites your comments, questions, criticisms, compliments, article submissions—in a word, your thoughts. Write to me at editor@popular-communications.com.

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