

Richmond Amateur Telecommunications Society
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MARCH 2000

RADIOACTIVITY

MEETING

Friday, March 17 at 8:00 PM, Welborne United Methodist Church, Maybeury Drive at Patterson Avenue.

VE EXAMS

Monday, April 3, 2000 at 7:30 PM Aunt Sarah's, I95 & Willis Road. Pre-register with TONY AMATO, KR4UQ, at 717-5237. Tony's web page for test information is: http://www.kr4uq.org/Pages/ve_exams.htm.

Saturday, April 15, 2000 9:00 AM J. S. Reynolds Community College, 1651 East Parham Road, Building B, Room 201. Pre-register with PAT WILSON, K4OW at 932-9424 or email at k4ow@arrl.net. This test is under the new restructuring rules. Pat's test information web page is: <http://www.mindspring.com/~k4ow/hamtests.htm>.

"WESTHAMPTON SCHOOL" OFFERS EXAM SESSIONS

The "Westhampton School" which is sponsored by the RARC, is holding two test sessions. Saturday, March 25, at 9:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall at Bon Air United Methodist Church on Buford Road. Thursday, April 6 at 6:30 PM at the "Westhampton School", Libbie & Patterson Ave. Enter at the back door. This testing session is normally restricted to students at the school, but this time has been opened to others. All elements from Novice through Extra will be given. Pre-registration is encouraged but walk-ins are welcome. To register, contact Mike Ratcliffe, KC4AHE at 272-7167.

AMATEURS RECOGNIZED BY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Virginia's General Assembly has praised Amateur Radio efforts during the response to Hurricane Floyd last fall. A joint resolution unanimously passed the House and Senate January 27. A signing ceremony has been set for February 17, 11:30AM, at the Capitol in

Richmond.

The resolution praises the work of Virginia's ARES/RACES members last September when Hurricane Floyd totally isolated the City of Franklin, and rising flood waters forced city officials to abandon their Emergency Operations Center, forcing the city to rely completely on Amateur Radio for communication with the outside. "With traditional lines of communication inoperable, the Amateur Radio operators, members of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), provided the only reliable communication into and out of the flood-ravaged Franklin area," the resolution says.

The resolution notes that the Hurricane Floyd activation was "the widest geographical and longest-running ARES/RACES activation in Virginia's history" and involved nearly 150 ARES/RACES volunteers who put in some 9500 hours of duty to help coordinate emergency operations in Franklin.

"Due to the tireless efforts of amateur radio volunteers, the tragic effects of Hurricane Floyd were mitigated, the lives of those in the flood zone safeguarded, and the suffering of Franklin's residents alleviated," the resolution said in expressing the General Assembly's "admiration and gratitude for the vital contributions of Virginia's amateur radio operators."--Tony Amato, KR4UQ

Pictures can be seen at www.aresva.org Tnx Tony and Tnx ARRL Letter Online, February 11, 2000

RULES & REGS

News from the ARRL and FCC

NFCC, ARRL MEET

Three Board members of the National Frequency Coordinators' Council met with ARRL officials on February 15. The main purpose was to "touch base," with both groups feeling that the session was constructive and positive.

Representatives from the NFCC were President Owen Wormser, K6LEW, Secretary Dick Isely, W9GIG, and board member Nels Harvey, WA9JOB. Executive Vice President David Sumner, K1ZZ, Field and Educational Services

Manager Rosalie White, WA1STO, and National Frequency Coordinators' Officer Tom Hogerty, KC1J represented the League.

"Participants discussed a potential shift in philosophy by the NFCC away from seeking mandatory coordination and toward serving as an educational organization, a repository for a master database, and a point of contact with the FCC on coordination matters. The NFCC also sees a role for itself as a "centrist" or neutral organization to mediate and arbitrate disputes that cannot be resolved at the local or regional level."

Other discussions touched on repeater coordination and Repeater Directory policy.

Tnx ARRL Letter Online, February 25, 2000

FCC FINES HAMS IN FLORIDA, TEXAS

Pay up in 30 days or face the US Attorney. The \$20,000 fine imposed on a Florida man last summer for unlicensed operation, willful and malicious interference with Amateur Radio communications, and failure to let the FCC inspect radio equipment stands.

Since he was notified of the fine last July, hams in Florida say "Rabbit Ears" has continued to violate federal law. He has regularly interfered with hams on 10 meters, 2 meters and other places.

The only response to last year's Notice of Apparent Liability was a copy of a one-page bankruptcy filing.

Two Texas hams face fines of \$8000 each for allegedly interfering with a local repeater and failing to identify. The fines were imposed after an FCC investigation that used direction-finding equipment to track interference with a local repeater. The direction-finding equipment showed the source of interference to be the vehicles of the two hams. Both men deny the charges. The FCC has ordered both to pay the fines within 30 days or file written statements.

Tnx ARRL Letter Online, February 18,2000

ARRL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The ARRL has given the thumbs up to the development and implementation of an initiative to promote self-education by radio amateurs. The new ARRL Certification Program will aim to inspire amateurs to continue acquiring technical knowledge and operating expertise beyond that required to become licensed and give them a chance to test their own limits.

Details are still being worked out, but the program is scheduled to be in place later this year. The ARRL will be asking for member ideas for topics to be included. They want the content of the program to be what the members want it to be, and not have the content dictated from above. A Web-based message board will be used for member input.

Quoting ARRL Executive Vice President David Sumner, K1ZZ, "Many ARRL members believe there is a widening gap between what the FCC requires amateur licensees to know and what it takes to be truly knowledgeable about Amateur Radio. Whether or not you agree, it's certainly true that those of us who took our FCC exams years ago have never had to demonstrate an understanding of current technology. We could use a new challenge."

Participants will be able to earn credentials at various levels of depth and difficulty in different courses of study—possibly such as

ionospheric propagation, receiver design, and Morse code proficiency. The ARRL should and will continue encouraging the development of Morse code proficiency beyond the basic HF licensing requirements, according to Sumner. The ARRL certification standards could be more stringent and more uniform than FCC exam requirements.

Sumner sees the new program as a welcome opportunity for individual self-development and as a response to the perceived "dumbing down" of qualifications. And it comes at an appropriate time as we enter restructuring.

Although the program will be self-supporting, startup costs would be funded from the Exceptional Merit

Stipend established by the late Ethel Smith, K4LMB, as the program is foreseen. The program will be dedicated to her memory. Smith helped found the Young Ladies Radio League and was its first president. She died in 1997, leaving the majority of her estate to the ARRL.

A Web-based message board should be available soon to get members' input. The League will then seek outside expert input to set the knowledge or performance threshold at the optimal level. The program will include some professional development aspects, possibly giving Continuing Education Units (CEUs). The League is asking related professional organizations for cooperative arrangements. A memorandum of understanding with the National Association of Radio-Television Engineers already exists and one is being sought with the Society of Broadcast Engineers.

This program also fits in with the goals of Jim Haynie, W5JBP, new League president. Haynie wants greater promotion of amateur radio, especially among youth and in schools, and programs to rekindle interest and activity among current licensees.

Tnx ARRL Letter Online, February 4, 2000

WORLD AMATEUR RADIO CORNER

OTHER NATIONS LOWERING CODE REQUIREMENTS

Canada and Australia may be joining the list of countries reducing the Morse code requirements. Radio Amateurs of Canada will seek elimination of the 12 WPM Morse requirement and the RAC Board of Directors unanimously favors the proposal. If adopted, Canadian amateurs would have full HF access with 5 WPM.

Australia could see the maximum Morse code exam speed decline from 10 to 5 WPM.

The 5 WPM standard has been adopted in the United Kingdom and Sweden for full HF privileges. South Africa appears to be ready to act on lower code speed requirements.

Israel has a new license with a 6 WPM code requirement which gives CW-only access to HF bands but it does not include all HF bands.

Tnx ARRL Letter Online, February 18, 2000

STATES-WIDE-RADIO

HUMANITARIAN AWARD ANNOUNCED

Edwin Petzolt, K1LNC, of Hobe Sound, Florida, is the winner of the ARRL 1999 International Humanitarian Award.

Petzolt answered an emergency call on 20 meters on June 29, 1998. Heavily armed gunmen in Central America had kidnapped four missionaries in northern Guatemala and held them for ransom. Missionary Elam Stolfus, TG7XQS, used his only connection to the outside world—ham radio—in a desperate attempt to save his family. It was Ed Petzolt who answered his call.

Petzolt phone-patched Stolfus to the US Embassy in Guatemala City to arrange for military and police assistance. He stayed on the radio for most of the next seven hours, providing communications and relaying information that assisted the successful rescue of the hostages and the capture of the terrorists.

The award recognizes extraordinary service through Amateur Radio skills for the benefit of others in times of crisis or disaster.

On February 17, Petzolt again assisted with another rescue mission. "I patched a doctor from Honduras to a doctor in Pennsylvania this morning regarding a nine-month-old little girl with a life-threatening, congenital heart condition." The Pennsylvania doctor agreed to operate free. He then patched the ham—Ronaldo Roll, HR3RON, a

Catholic priest—into the US Embassy in Tegucigalpa, expediting the paperwork for the infant and her mother to get a medical visa. Roll agreed to pay their round-trip airfare. "I think I found my calling in life," Petzolt remarked.

Tnx ARRL Letter Online, February 18, 2000

POWER COMPANY MAKING PROGRESS IN INTEFERENCE COMPLAINTS

A Northern California power company is making progress in mitigating long-standing power line noise complaints from several amateurs, thanks to a push by the FCC. Hams turned to the FCC and ARRL for help after initial complaints to the power company of severe noise went uncorrected. The FCC reminded the utility of its "obligation to rectify equipment problems that cause harmful radio interference."

ARRL Lab Supervisor Ed Hare, W1RFI--the League's point man for RF interference issues --says the League has since received reports from additional hams in the area.

Efforts to clear up the interference include replacing poles, guy wires, insulator and transformers as well as installing radio/television interference "clips" at one site and re-routing a service drop at another.

"The FCC's Part 15 rules obligate utilities and others that fall under their provisions to not cause harmful interference to licensed services and to cease operating a device that's causing harmful interference upon FCC notification. The ARRL Technical Information Service offers more information on how to deal with power line interference at <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/rfielec.html>. Amateurs suffering from interference believed to be emanating from power generation or transmission facilities may contact Ed Hare, W1RFI, 860-594-0318; rfi@arrl.org

Tnx ARRL Letter Online, February 18, 2000

DITS 'N DAHS

A column about miscellaneous topics

WHO IS N4LID???

In January, Solid Copy reprinted the article "How to Sound Like a Lid," written by Rusty Bumpers. Shortly after, I was contacted by Rusty and made aware of his real identity. The time has come to let you in on the secret.

Rusty is none other than our own Stan Slaughter, N4GUX. Stan wrote the article and Mark Huff, WA4DHY, added to it.

I was not part of the amateur community when the article was first published, so I don't know what the reaction was then. Based on the fact that it is found on a good number of web pages, I would say it has been and is quite popular. And I did hear a lot of comments after it ran in January.

Thanks, Stan and Mark, for an entertaining reminder of how we should operate on repeaters.

INTERNET InSITes

Amateur Radio, Electronics and Technology Related Websites

April 15 and restructuring are almost here. For those who want to study and take practice exams, here are some websites. You can find links to these and to more information on my ham webpage at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/4817/ham.html>

Study for Your Exam <http://hamtest.com/study/index.html> All of the question pools for the amateur radio license exams downloadable in both text and html format.

AA9PW's Amateur Radio Exam Practice Page <http://www.biochem.mcw.edu/Postdocs/Simon/radio/exam.html>

eHam.net Practice Exams <http://www.eham.net/exams/>

ClikTRON Ham Radio Exams <http://www.clicktron.com/ham/index.html> From the QRZ site.

Added Bonus --

For those who still need to do taxes, here are some websites that may help. I have not used them, so I make no claim as to how good they are.

IRS – The Digital Daily: Income Tax Forms, Instructions, Publications,... <http://www.irs.gov/>

FREE tax software and online tax preparation at TaxACT.com <http://www.taxact.com/>

OnMoney – Tax Form http://www.onmoney.com/planning/taxes/tax_filing/download_forms_state_page.html Download federal and state forms

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