

Richmond Amateur Telecommunications Society
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APRIL 2000

NO APRIL MEETING

Because our regular meeting night falls on Good Friday, the Board of Directors voted not to hold the April meeting. RARC president Helen Ratcliffe extends an invitation for those interested to attend their meeting on Friday, April 14, 8:00 PM at Bon Air United Methodist Church on Buford Road. The meeting will feature a slide presentation of the ham shacks of several members.

Congratulations to Eddie, KE4PRL, on his recent upgrade to Advanced class.

Please inform the editor of new licenses, upgrades, and vanity or other call sign changes.

If anyone has old (mid-1980s) call books that they could make available as needed, please let the editor know. With restructuring, call books will provide one way to document that an amateur held a particular class license by a specific date. Email editor@rats.net.

COMING EVENTS

Special Olympics will be held in mid-June. Volunteers are needed.

Field Day June 24-25

We need someone to chair this event and others to help out with setting up, operating, cooking, etc., perhaps with a family picnic on Saturday evening. We have a suitable site in mind. Contact any board member and let them know you want to participate.

VE EXAMS

Saturday, April 15, 2000 9:00 AM at 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. Pat's test information web page is: <http://www.mindspring.com/~k4ow/hamtests.htm>

Monday, May 1, 2000 at 7:30 PM at C. E. Curtiss Elementary School, 3600 W. Hundred Road (Route 10), Chester, VA. 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 .

RULES & REGS

News from the ARRL and FCC

LOOK OUT, GOLDEN ARCHES: VEs SERVE LOTS OF HAMS

If ARRL-VEC statistics are any indication, starting April 15, the HF bands will be buzzing with new licensees. ARRL-VEC Manager Bart Jahnke, W9JJ, says interest in obtaining element credit prior to the big day has been nothing short of intense. ARRL-VEC statistics show that the number of individuals served has risen by more than 135% in the three months since the FCC announced restructuring. The number of applicants--many Tech Plus ticket holders--attempting to pass Element 3B to upgrade to General rose by several hundred percentage points over last year's numbers. Interest skyrocketed among applicants--many Advanced licensees--trying to get credit for Element 4B, the Amateur Extra written examination. The number attempting that element rose on the order of 1500%. Demand for General and Extra license study materials also has been unprecedented.

Jahnke said that while a typical ARRL-VEC examination session last year served maybe a dozen or so examinees, sessions the first quarter of this year have seen five or six times that number--and more. VE teams across the US have scheduled so-called "paperwork processing" and examination sessions on April 15, some of them starting at the stroke of midnight so licensees can get an early start on using their new privileges. The upswing in the number of applications has slowed the normally swift flow of paperwork through ARRL-VEC. As a result, it now can take up to 10 days or more for a new license to show up in the mail.

Tnx ARRL Letter Online, April 7, 2000

CERTIFICATION PROGRAM POSTS "SPECIAL TOPICS" FORUMS

Nine "special topics" forums have been posted to supplement the general forum accepting membership comments on the ARRL Certification and Continuing Education Program. Interim Forum Moderator L.B. Cebik, W4RNL, invites members to contribute ideas, help answer challenging questions or help formulate aspects of the program in any or all of the forums.

The Web-based forum site, <http://www.arrl.org/membersonly/forums/w-agora.php3> , went "live" earlier this month to collect member input on how the new ARRL Certification and Continuing Education program should be designed and what it should include. The complementary special topics forums were provided to help focus member comments in areas where forum participants have expressed a particular interest. These forums now include: Emergency Communications; Teaching and Training in Amateur Radio; Web-Based Education; Testing, Measure- ment, and Troubleshooting; Integrating Elmers into Continuing Education; Morse- -CW Proficiency; Advanced Communications Electronics Topics; Hands-On Experiments in Continuing Education; and Presentations and CEU Credits.

"If these prove fruitful, we may add more special topics forums," Cebik said. Since the forum opened, more than 650 comments have been posted, and Cebik says the input has generally been extremely helpful.

"There have been many good contributions," he said. "Some are expressions of needs--and from some of those will emerge the list of advanced or special topics study units." Cebik said some contributors have offered definite ideas on content, while others have called attention to other sources of information and other programs that may serve of partial models.

According to Cebik, the Emergency Communications forum has been the most active of among those in the special topics group. "Pat Lambert, WOIPL, has been absorbing the incoming ideas and revising a working outline for the group to use as a source for further input," he explained.

Members are invited to suggest specific programs and areas of study or skills development they would like to see as part of the Certification Program. All comments posted are available for all participants to read. Return visits are encouraged. "All ideas are welcome and valuable in shaping the program to come," Cebik said.

The League expects to roll out the initial phase of the Certification and Continuing Education Program later this year.
Tnx ARRL Letter Online, March 31, 2000

WORLD AMATEUR RADIO CORNER

THEY ALSO SERVE WHO SIT AND LISTEN

As one of the several operators taking part in last week's dramatic on-air rescue operation of young Willem van Tuijl, ARRL member Fred Moore, W3ZU, knows better than most that sometimes the best help is to just stand by.

"Basically, what needs to be done is a lot of listening and very little talking," said Moore, who lives near Philadelphia and is a regular participant on the Maritime Mobile Service Net. "The net control station is obligated to make well aware that there is an ongoing emergency and that he will not accept any frivolous calls. And that's what I did through the night."

Moore and others spent some 14 hours on the Maritime Mobile Service Net the night of March 28, rendering whatever assistance they could to facilitate Willem's rescue and transfer to a hospital in Honduras. The 13-year-old from The Netherlands--now the subject of national news coverage--was shot and seriously wounded by pirates who had boarded the family's sailboat. After the incident, the boy's father, Jacco van Tuijl, KH2TD, turned on his radio to seek help, breaking into a QSO involving Phil Fiol, WB2BMC. Fiol moved KH2TD down to the Maritime Mobile Service Net on 14.300 MHz. The other station called the US Coast Guard, which summoned the Honduran Navy.

Moore's ability to speak fluent Spanish turned out to be crucial. "At one point, there was so much chaos and some confusion because the Honduran Navy people could not understand English well," he said. At that point--after monitoring the situation for some time--he was able

to step in himself and assist, with the blessing of the net control station. "There was a need to get some order on the frequency," he explained.

Moore said he was able to get position reports and, in general, coordinate communication between Jacco van Tuijl and the Hondurans, up to and including the airlift of Willem and his mother, Jannie, KH2TE, to a hospital in La Ceiba, Honduras.

Moore says that unless a net control can maintain a high degree of order, things can break down in a hurry. During the recent crisis, he said that most operators abided by the rules, although a few persisted in "their nonsense," as he called it. There was even some intentional interference. Moore also says it's hard for some hams to resist the urge to press the push-to-talk button and put in their two cents worth. Sometimes, he says, egos get in the way of common sense. But he urged operators encountering an emergency net to simply "be quiet and listen" unless they can contribute to the situation.

Moore had high praise for net participant Tony Fabrizi, WOIVY, who stood by for the entire crisis, only occasionally letting Moore know he was available if he needed a break. "That's a real amateur," he said. "I laud that man."

Moore says the long hours of duty and little glory can be gratifying. "It makes me feel good when there's a positive result. Hopefully, we were instrumental in helping to save that boy's life, who was at no fault."

Willem remains in Children's Medical Center in Dallas, Texas, thanks to efforts by ARRL President Jim Haynie, W5JBP.

Other stations identified so far as having assisted in the crisis include K4TCV, KD5BZ, K1LNC, WB1AVE, J39GH, N3FK, W1KY, and YV5/VE7AMV. Tnx ARRL Letter Online, April 7, 2000

NEW DXCC ENTITY--EAST TIMOR--IS ACTIVE

East Timor--now under United Nations administration--has become the latest DXCC entity, and two stations already have been on the air from the former Indonesian territory. The International Telecommunication Union has assigned the prefix block 4WA- 4WZ for use by radio stations within the areas administered by the UN Temporary Administration of East Timor--or UNTAET. The prefix assignment is for the use of UNTAET as long as it exists. It will be released to the ITU at the end of its existence.

UN stations within East Timor may be assigned 4U prefixes for official use, while UN Amateur stations may use the prefix 4U1. This includes the UN Amateur Radio Club station, 4U1ET. All private Amateur Radio stations in East Timor will use the prefix 4W6. Permanent residents of East Timor who were previously licensed also may obtain permanent call signs. Third-party traffic is permitted within the area, and with countries that permit third-party traffic.

For DXCC purposes, UN Temporary Administration of East Timor will be added to the DXCC List with the effective date of March 1, 2000. QSL cards for QSOs made after that date will be accepted starting October 1, 2000. Tnx ARRL Letter Online, March 17, 2000

SOUTH AFRICA, AUSTRALIA JOIN 5WPM COUNTRIES

South Africa has approved a full HF-access license plus what it called "a practical based student license"--both requiring a 5 WPM code test. The new Class A3 ticket--with a distinctive ZT call sign prefix--provides "full license" privileges at up to 100 W output. The new entry-level Class B license aimed at school-aged youth, requires completing what's called a "modular syllabus"-- essentially a construction project that results in a completed station. Licensees will be assigned ZU-prefix call signs and be able to operate at up to 25 W output on selected band segments. The 12 WPM Morse code requirement remains in place for the Class A1 "full license," which carries the ZS prefix, privileges on all bands and a maximum output of 400 W.

Meanwhile, the Wireless Institute of Australia is claiming a substantial victory in its efforts to get the Australian Communications Authority to lower the Morse code license test speed for full access to HF bands there from 10 to 5 WPM. The ACA has said it plans to merge the privileges of the current Intermediate and Unrestricted licenses. The change will take place by mid-year, just in time for the expected influx of visitors for the Olympics in Sydney.

Under the plan, Australian Intermediate licensees will get the same HF privileges as so-called "full call" licensees. The two license classes and their distinctive call sign blocks would remain, however, as would the 10 WPM code requirement for the Unrestricted ticket. The Intermediate License currently requires a 5 WPM Morse test and has restricted access to 80, 15, and 10 meters at 100 W output. So-called "Full calls" get access to all Australian amateur allocations at up to 400 W. Once the ACA upgrades the Intermediate license, holders would have full HF access and privileges. Tnx ARRL Letter Online, March 31, 2000

INTERNATIONAL MARCONI DAY

40+ International Marconi Day Special Event stations around the world will participate in commemoration of milestones in the development of worldwide wireless communications. For information see <http://news.eham.net/news.cfm?Num=343> . Tnx ARRL Letter Online, April 7, 2000

STATES-WIDE-RADIO

SMOTHERS BROTHERS TO PERFORM AT DAYTON

Dayton Hamvention® has announced that the Smothers Brothers comedy team will headline the post-banquet entertainment this year. This year's Hamvention also will host the ARRL National Convention.

The Smothers Brothers, Tom and Dick, are perhaps best known for their TV variety program, "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour," which aired in the 1970s. The comedy duo will perform Saturday, May 20, at 8:30 PM, following the Hamvention banquet in the Nutter Center. The Grand Banquet begins at 5:45 PM.

This year's banquet keynote speaker will be FCC Special Counsel for Amateur Radio Enforcement Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH. Hollingsworth's appearances at last year's Hamvention were a huge hit. He'll also appear again this year as part of the FCC forums.

Returning for the third year as master of ceremonies for the 2000 Hamvention banquet will be Carl Nichols, N8WFQ, chief meteorologist for WDTN channel 2 news in Dayton. See the Dayton Hamvention Web site for details on this year's event, <http://www.hamvention.org> . Tnx ARRL Letter Online, April 7, 2000

CQ NATIONAL FOXHUNTING WEEKEND

Hams will fly the freeways and beat the bushes the weekend of April 15-16 as the third annual CQ National Foxhunting Weekend brings out radio direction finding enthusiasts all over the country. There are no detailed rules. It's just a time for clubs and groups to try this enjoyable activity. RDF competition takes place on foot or in vehicles, tracking one or more hidden radio transmitters. See the April issue of CQ magazine for event details. Groups participating in the CQ National Foxhunting Weekend are asked to send reports of their activities to NFW moderator Joe Moell K0OV, PO Box 2508, Fullerton, CA 92837, or via e-mail to nfw@homingin.com . For more information, visit Moell's Web site, <http://www.homingin.com> .-- Joe Moell, K0OV Tnx ARRL Letter Online, April 7, 2000

INTERNET InSITES

Amateur Radio, Electronics and Technology Related Websites

NEW NATIONAL CONTEST JOURNAL WEB SITE OPENS

NCJ, the National Contest Journal, this week opened a new Web site to complement the printed magazine. Created by Bruce Horn, WA7BNM, the new site offers sample articles from recent NCJ issues; rules, records and information about the popular NA Sprint and North American QSO Party contests; DX-Ventures, a wealth of information about operating overseas; and a calendar of upcoming contests. The site will also feature timely topics of special interest to the contest community, beginning with coverage of the World Radiosport Team Championship to be held this July in Slovenia.

The National Contest Journal is a bi-monthly magazine published by the ARRL for the contesting community. Each issue is loaded with information of interest to testers and DXers, from casual observer to hardcore competitor, from little pistol to big gun. NCJ covers the latest innovations in contesting and profiles testers in action around the world.

But you don't have to consider yourself to be a tester to enjoy reading the magazine. "Testers build some of the biggest and most effective stations in the world, and they develop the most efficient operating techniques around," said NCJ Editor Dennis Motschenbacher, K7BV. "Some of the information in the NCJ, like that pertaining to antenna system design and equipment improvements, is valuable to a broad range of ham radio enthusiasts."

Visit the new NCJ Web site at <http://www.ncjweb.com> . Tnx ARRL Letter Online, March 31, 2000

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