

The COMMUNICATOR

The Tamiami Amateur Radio Club • Venice, Florida

COMMUNICATOR

MARCH 2004

-- PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE --

Ham Radio to the Rescue!!

On Monday, 23 February, Dona and I took our neighbors, Vicki and Gino Zangara, on a boat ride around Venice to see the dolphin by the Albee Bridge, and the other sights along the way. On the way home, we ran out of gas in the port tank. With an air of confidence ("no problem") I switched the gas supply hose to the full starboard tank. Disaster! The fitting on the empty port tank had broken off and was stuck in the hose. I had to quickly get out the anchor before we went into the rocks. For you boaters, we were in the Intracoastal Waterway by the Senior Fellowship Center, just south of the South Venice Bridge.

When I realized that our tool kit was in our motor home (a lot of good it does there.....), and that removing the jammed part would undoubtedly ruin the fuel line fitting, I grabbed my trusty HT and tuned it to our 145.130 MHz Repeater. I gave a call, and was delighted when Bob-KD4SOJ came back to me.

After a brief discussion of our predicament, Bob called Hermann-VE3IRX, and asked him to come up on frequency. By this time, we had Bob-WA6WAY and Jay-KF4PBC also on frequency, and offering to help. When Hermann came on the repeater, I asked him to go over to the store and pick up the part we needed, grab some tools, and call my other neighbor, Bob Millar to see if he could deliver it with his boat. Bob's phone was busy, so Hermann called me on the radio for advice and, after a short discussion, he drove over to Bob's home. Bob was available, and the plan was in motion.

We were further given that warm and fuzzy feeling of well being by Bob-WA6WAY, who advised us that, if the first plan failed, he could get the South Venice ferry boat and bring us the help we needed. Hermann called me from his mobile, said he was successful getting the part, and he was en route back to Bob's. When I next heard Hermann, he and Bob our neighbor were aboard the rescue boat and on their way. Hermann kept me advised of their progress en route.

We put out the fenders on the port side and awaited their arrival. When Bob and Hermann hove to with the part, I didn't really mind their smart remarks about my mechanical abilities, and the location of my (useless)

tool kit! Hermann hopped aboard with the tools and his German technical ability, and the problem was soon resolved. We were soon under way once again to enjoy the Florida sun.

Gino (a retired Brigadier General) and his wife, Vicki, were most impressed with Amateur Radio. Ham Radio (and our club members, of course) saved the day!

73 de John-VE6AIV

-- MARCH MEETING --

The March TARC gathering will be our **Annual Auction!** Consequently, we will kick things off, starting at **5:30 PM** on Thursday 11 March 2004 in the "Community Room" of The Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice, 601 South Tamiami Trail (Business US 41), across from Bon Secours Hospital. That's **one-half hour earlier** than our regular meeting time. Please be there early so your donated items can be identified and sorted by our experienced team of auctioneers.

For the benefit of our newer members, participation in the auction is quite simple. Pay \$2 and receive a numbered bidder's card. That fee is applied toward your successful bids, and you pay up any additional balance at the end of the auction. All proceeds go directly into the TARC Treasury. Come on out and enjoy the action! It's worth the "price" of admission!!

-- 2004 TARC DUES ARE DUE --

As we enter the third month of 2004, have you paid your dues for this year? If your dues card is not marked "2004", you're not paid up. Annual dues are still \$15.00 for individual membership and \$18.50 for family membership. Treasurer Bob Officer-WA6WAY will be pretty busy raking in the money at our Annual Auction but he can sure take a moment to accept your dues payment, or you can mail your check to Bob at:

Bob Officer - WA6WAY
1241 South Venice Blvd.
Venice, FL 34293

Those who have not paid by the end of April will be dropped from our rolls, as the 2004 TARC roster will be made up in May 2004.

"How can a president not be an actor?" - Ron Reagan

TAMIAMI AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Minutes of the Meeting

12 February 2004

President John Fyke-VE6AIV called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM. Bill Rockwood-KE4ZAK led the pledge of allegiance to the US flag. Martin Zippe-AF4ID of North Port; Andy Durette-KB1HIP, who's building a home in Venice; WCF Section Technical Coordinator and ARES Emergency Coordinator Darrell Davis-KT4WX and Kristina Davis-KG4NNM of Wauchula were recognized as visitors. Martin-AF4ID and Andy--KB1HIP subsequently joined TARC and were welcomed as new TARC members.

MINUTES - Pete Pesa-KG4MOB moved to forego reading of the minutes of the 08 January meeting as published in the February issue of *The Communicator*, seconded by Eddie Palmer-K4JP, and passed.

CORRESPONDENCE - Secretary Jack Sproat-W4JS reported receiving a query from Camp Watonka, up in Hawley, PA, which is looking for Radio Instructors for its science summer camp.

TREASURER'S REPORT - Treasurer Bob Officer-WA6WAY reported the 08 January treasury balance was \$3,374.51 with subsequent expenses of \$54.28 for printing and postage, and \$68.20 for a power supply. Income of \$382.00 was realized from 2004 dues payments, bringing the 12 February 2004 treasury balance to \$3,634.03. Don Dold-KD9SJ moved acceptance of the report, seconded by Lois Marlatt-VE3CME, and passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

SUNSHINE - Bill-KE4ZAK reported sending cards to Mayme, XYL of Bob Retter-KD4SOJ, Ken Truran-KC8BI, Bob Officer-WA6WAY, and Elizabeth, XYL of Croft Taylor-VE3CT. Bill followed up with details on the conditions of each of the above.

VE TESTING - Jack-W4JS announced that there was a candidate for the 14 February TARC VE session.

REPEATER/TECHNICAL - Eddie Palmer-K4JP advised that foundation work for the new Clear Channel tower had started, and passed around some photos of the work progress.

Stew Haag-W4MO reported that the EchoLink system was working satisfactorily. When Stew gets the HF Remote Base station in operation, he will provide operating instructions for publication in the newsletter.

CLUB GRANTS & DONATIONS - Eddie-K4JP reported that \$102 was received at the DeSoto ARC Hamfest from sale of equipment donated to the club.

Eddie reviewed the status of the financial grant from Sarasota County. As there was insufficient time for the 09 February filing deadline, the application team will concentrate on the 30 August filing date. The TARC has already received two dozen Motorola HTs from the County, which can easily be operated on two meters for

emergency use. The Red Cross has offered a decommissioned tandem-axle communications trailer to TARC at no cost. Therefore, the Phase II financial grant application will concentrate on specifying equipment for this trailer.

FIELD DAY COMMITTEE - Bill-KE4ZAK commented that Field Day participation would be dependent upon procurement of the above mentioned communications trailer.

LIAISON TO SERC/ARES/RACES/RED CROSS - Jim Frey-W8ISZ reported that the 01 March SERC meeting would be held at the Sarasota County EOC for a tour of that facility. Jim added that the SERC would be participating in an upcoming muscular dystrophy walkathon.

LIAISON TO QCWA - Jack-W4JS reported that 31 members and spouses attended the 04 February luncheon meeting of Suncoast Chapter 53.

OLD BUSINESS - Pete-KG4MOB offered comments about TARC members participating in a blood donor campaign as a public service. Vinnie Blas-WB1V stated that there would be a donor event 03 March at La Casa MHP in North Port. A show of hands indicated some seven members willing to participate.

NEW BUSINESS - John-VE6AIV gave recognition of the "Cruising with Ham Radio" article by Bob Avrutik-N1RA that was posted on the ARRL Web site, and a copy of the article was passed around.

Dil Kay-KB8YLK reported he is now busy rebuilding computers for "Girls, Inc." and "Women's Resource", two organizations for battered women, and requested donations of any unused computers.

Marty Horowitz-W4MHH offered tickets for the 06 March Charlotte County Hamfest.

Bob-WA6WAY moved that TARC purchase a \$10 table at that hamfest for sale of club members' items, seconded by Pete-KG4MOB, and passed.

ADJOURNMENT - Motion to adjourn at 7:49 PM was made by Eddie-K4JP, seconded by Bill-KE4ZAK, and passed. Thirty members and four guests were present.

PROGRAM - WCF Section Technical Coordinator and ARES Emergency Coordinator Darrell Davis-KT4WX offered a presentation on the "WCF Section Technical Support Program - How It Can Help Your Local Club."

Jack Sproat-W4JS - Secretary

-- ARRL DROPS THREE AWARDS --

Effective immediately, three ARRL awards have been discontinued. These are the Rag Chewer's Club, the Old Timer's Club, and the Friendship Award. ARRL Membership Services Manager Wayne Mills-N7NG said that interest in these three awards had slowed to a trickle and "had outlived their interest level." DXCC and WAS remain the most popular ARRL Awards.

(From *The ARRL Letter*, Vol. 23, No. 07)

-- FCC OKAYS BPL PROPOSAL --

The FCC has unanimously approved a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) to deploy Broadband over Power Lines (BPL). The NPRM is the next step in the BPL proceeding, which began in April 2003 with a Notice of Inquiry that drew nearly 5,200 comments--many from the Amateur Radio community. The FCC did not propose any changes in emission limits for unlicensed Part 15 devices, but said it would require BPL providers to apply "adaptive" interference mitigation techniques to their systems.

The ARRL expressed disappointment with the FCC action. "The Commission clearly recognized that the existing Part 15 emission limits are inadequate to stop interference," said ARRL CEO Dave Sumner-K1ZZ, "but it's placing the burden of interference mitigation on the licensed user that's supposed to be protected." The FCC has not yet released the actual NPRM, and a presentation by the FCC's Office of Engineering and Technology (OET) revealed only its broad outlines.

Anh Wride of the OET staff spelled out the scope of the NPRM, which only addresses so-called "access BPL", the type that would apply radio frequency energy to exterior overhead and underground low and medium-voltage power lines to distribute broadband and Internet service. Wride said the FCC's BPL NPRM:

- o Applies existing Part 15 emission levels for unlicensed carrier-current systems to BPL systems. Part 15 rules now require that BPL systems eliminate any harmful interference that may occur "and must cease operation if they cannot," she noted.
- o Requires BPL systems to employ "adaptive interference-mitigation techniques, including the capabilities to shut down a specific device, to reduce power levels on a dynamic or remote-control basis, and to include or exclude specific operating frequencies or bands."
- o Subjects BPL providers to notification requirements that would establish a public database that would include the location of BPL devices, modulation type and operating frequencies.
- o Proposes guidelines to provide for consistent and repeatable measurement of the RF emissions from BPL and other carrier-current systems.

The FCC is expected to issue the complete NPRM within a few days and will invite comments on it sometime after publication.

(From *The ARRL Letter*, Vol. 23, No. 07)

-- SERC CHANGES CALL SIGNS --

The repeaters of the Sarasota Emergency Radio Club now have a new call sign: N4SER. Effective 01 February, the 146.730 machine will require a 100 Hz tone on the input frequency. This step is being taken to eliminate Miami and Orlando skip keying the machine.

-- FCC PROPOSES BPL RULES --

The 38-page FCC NPRM on Broadband over Power Line (BPL) systems proposes amendments to FCC Part 15 rules to define so-called "access BPL", make rules specific to BPL systems and provide measurement guidelines for BPL devices and systems. It would make no changes to Part 15 emission limits for unintentional radiators, however.

ARRL CEO Dave Sumner-K1ZZ opined that while Part 15's current limits on unintentional radiators on HF may be appropriate for short-duration, narrowband emissions, they are inappropriate for the sort of long-duration, broadband emissions BPL would employ. He compared short-duration, narrowband emissions to a helicopter flying overhead. "The noise is deafening, but is tolerable because it doesn't happen very often nor last very long," he observed. "To a radio user, having BPL in the neighborhood would be like having the helicopter hovering constantly overhead."

ARRL Lab Manager Ed Hare-W1RFI offered an example most hams could relate to. "The limit for an unintentional emitter on HF is 30 uV/m at 30 meters (100') from the source," he said. "If you take a dipole cut for 3.5 MHz and put it in a 30 uV/m field, you'll have a noise reading of S9 plus 15 dB at your transceiver."

The FCC proposal takes a broader view of interference. The NPRM declares, "Amateur operators and amateur organizations in general are opposed to Access BPL and advocate emission levels that are lower than the existing Part 15 limits." The NPRM concedes that Amateur Radio operations "are likely to present a difficult challenge in the deployment of Access BPL in cases where amateurs use high-gain outdoor antennas that are located near power lines. Noting that power line noise already presents a significant problem for hams, the FCC said, "we therefore would expect that, in practice, many amateurs already orient their antennas to minimize the reception of emissions from nearby electric power lines." (*Obviously the FCC doesn't know that "high gain outdoor antennas" are aimed at the station with whom one wants to communicate--not in deference to any power lines!*)

The NPRM goes on to point out that because BPL has the capability to stay clear of specific frequencies, BPL providers can simply "avoid the use of amateur frequencies when in close proximity to amateur outdoor antennas." (*Better crank up your antennas so the BPL provider will know there's a ham in the neighborhood.*)

The NPRM emphasizes that under the proposed rules, operators of Access BPL would be responsible for eliminating any harmful interference that may occur. Sumner suggested that, with licensed and government users taking up large portions of the HF spectrum, protecting all licensed users will be a nightmare for BPL providers. (From *The ARRL Letter*, Vol. 23, No. 09)

-- CRUISING WITH BOB-N1RA --

By the time you read this, Bob Avrutik-N1RA/C6ARA will be aboard a cruise ship out in the South Pacific. Bob and Marie departed Hawaii 24 February and will arrive in Auckland, New Zealand 13 March. As on his previous cruise around Great Britain (see "Cruising with Ham Radio" on the ARRL Web site), Bob plans to be on the air as much as possible, especially while at sea.

Following are the frequencies Bob plans to operate on, or near, and the best times for openings from our area to Samoa, Fiji and New Zealand, and points in between.

Date	Call Sign	Band	Phone	CW	GMT
05/03	C6ARA/MM	40	7075 Tx	7006	0400-1300
and			7205 Rx		
06/03		30		10108	0300-1400
		20	14205	14015	0000-0300
		17	18150	18077	0000-0100
		15	21280	21015	1800-0000
		12	24950	24897	1800-2300
		10	28485	28035	1800-2300
07/03	5W/N1RA	40	7075 Tx	7006	0500-1300
			7205 Rx		
		30		10108	0400-1400
		20	14205	14015	0100-0200
		17	18150	18077	Not Open
		15	21280	21015	1800-1900
		12	24950	24897	Not Open
		10	28485	28035	1900-2100
08/03	C6ARA/MM	40	7075 Tx	7006	0600-1300
and			7205 Rx		
09/03		30		10108	0400-1400
		20	14205	14015	1300-1400
		17	18150	18077	0100-0200
		15	21280	21015	1900-2300
		12	24950	24897	Not Open
		10	28485	28035	2000-2200
10/03	3D2/N1RA	40	7075 Tx	7006	0600-1300
			7205 Rx		
		30		10108	0400-1400
		20	14205	14015	1300-1400
		17	18150	18077	0100-0200
		15	21280	21015	2300-0000
		12	24950	24897	Not Open
		10	28485	28035	2000-0000
11/03	C6ARA/MM	40	7075 Tx	7006	0600-1300
and			7205 Rx		
12/03		30		10108	0500-1300
		20	14205	14015	0500-0900
		17	18150	18077	Not Open
		15	21280	21015	Not Open
		12	24950	24897	Not Open
		10	28485	28035	Not Open
13/03	ZL/N1RA	40	7075 Tx	7006	0600-1200
			7205 Rx		
		30		10108	0500-1300
		20	14205	14015	0500-0900
		17	18150	18077	Not Open
		15	21280	21015	Not Open
		12	24950	24897	Not Open
		10	28485	28035	Not Open

All openings predicted at 50-100% probability, with 40 and 30 meters being the best bands.

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-- TARC NET SCHEDULE --

The following schedule is provided by the TARC Net Manager, Bob Murphy, WA1UHG:

Date	Net Control
02 Mar (s)	Bob - WA6WAY
04 Mar (r)	Bob - WA1UHG
09 Mar (s)	Don - KD9SJ
11 Mar	Meeting - no net
16 Mar (s)	Bob - WA1UHG
18 Mar (r)	Jim - W8ISZ
23 Mar (s)	Jim - W8ISZ
25 Mar (r)	Jack - W4JS
30 Mar (s)	Bob - WA6WAY
01 Apr (r)	Charlie - KD4FZ
06 Apr (s)	Jack - W4JS
08 Apr	Meeting - no net
13 Apr (s)	Bob - WA6WAY
15 Apr (r)	Don - KD9SJ
20 Apr (s)	Jim - W8ISZ
22 Apr (r)	Peter - N2IZD
27 Apr (s)	Jack - W4JS
29 Apr (r)	Jack - W4JS

(r) = 145.130 repeater; (s) = 146.58 simplex

Show your support of TARC by turning out for the Tuesday night simplex net and the Thursday night repeater net--both at 7:30 pm local time.

-- UPCOMING HAMFESTS --

- 06 Mar EARS/PRRA Charlotte County Hamfest, Charlotte County Fairgrounds, El Jobean Rd (SR 776), 2.4 mi W of US 41. TI: 147.255(+), Info: George-KA4JKY, 941-697-3445
- 20 Mar Martin County ARA Hamfest, Martin County Fairgrounds, 2616 SE Dixie Hwy, Stuart. TI: 145.15, Info: Peter-W1MNY, 772-288-1048
- 27 Mar Gulf Coast ARC Hamfest, Ridgewood HS, 7650 Orchid Lake Rd, New Port Richey. TI: 146.67, Info: Donald-AA3EK, 727-372-3811
- 03 Apr Greater Jacksonville Hamfest, Dog Fanciers Assn Field, Morse Ave. Exit 12, Blanding Blvd (SR 21) off I-295 South, north on Blanding \pm 2 mi. to Morse, left on Morse 1 mi. to site. TI: 146.76, Info: Deborah-KG4ADZ, 904-739-9713

(From Web site of Bill Britton-KB4VOL, <http://bell-southpwp.net/k/b/kb4vol> and March 2004 QST)

"Temper's something only the very strong or the very rich can afford." - John Parrish (Glenn Ford) in "The Violent Men"

"Men always find reasons to avoid living in peace." - Doc Henry Crowell (Raymond Greenleaf) in "The Violent Men"

CURRENT/PENDING DX ACTIVITY and HF PROPAGATION FORECASTS

CURRENT and/or SCHEDULED DX ACTIVITY									
COUNTRY - CALL SIGN	ACTIVITY PERIOD	BEARING	HF BANDS and OPENING TIMES (GMT)						
			80	40	30	20	17	15	12
Solomon Is - H44MS	Now Active	275	07-12	07-13	05-14	13-16	14-15	20-00	2100
Cambodia - XU7AJV & XU7TZG	Now to 12 March	347	1130	11-12	11-13	12-20	14-19	16-18	16-18
Norfolk Is - VK9NB	Now to 13 March	250	07-12	06-13	05-14	13-14	02-03	22-00	0100
Namibia - V51/DJ0SO	Now to 15 March	107	23-05	23-06	22-07	18-23	17-21	14-19	15-17
Dem Rep of Congo - 9Q0AR	Now to 20 March	88	23-05	22-06	21-07	17-01	16-00	15-21	16-20
Morocco - CN2R	Now to 31 March	64	23-07	21-09	20-11	12-01	13-21	16-19	17-19
Revilla Gigedo - XF4IH	03 to 20 March	259	00-13	00-24	00-24	14-02	15-00	16-22	18-20
Togo - 5V7C	06 to 12 March	87	23-07	22-08	20-09	13-01	13-23	15-21	16-20
Brunei - V8???	08 to 15 March	330	11-12	10-12	10-12	13-19	14-15	15-16	NO
Swaziland - 3DA0CF, CG, DM, AX	12 to 22 March	106	00-05	22-05	22-06	18-21	19-20	14-17	18-19
Tonga - A35DA, A35DH & A35DJ	15 to 29 March	253	06-12	05-13	04-14	00-03	00-02	19-00	20-22
Franz Josef Land - R1FJ	17 to 25 March	6	00-10	22-12	20-14	14-17	NO	NO	NO
Rodrigues Is - 3B9C	20 Mar to 14 April	84	23-02	23-03	22-03	19-21	NO	NO	NO
Bhutan - A52PRO	22 Mar to 01 April	8	NO	23-00	22-02	00-03	14-16	NO	NO
Banaba Is - T33C	04 to 15 April	278	06-12	05-13	05-14	12-16	13-15	19-22	19-22
Cameroon - TJ???	09 to 11 April	83	23-06	22-07	21-05	18-03	18-21	22-01	NO
Clipperton Is - FO???	?? April	242	00-12	00-24	00-24	13-05	16-00	18-22	00-02

Updated 25 February 2004, based on 25 February 2004 *QRZ DX*, and 23 February 2004 *The Weekly DX*

Notes: ??? = Call sign not yet known, ++ = Phone Only, ** = CW Only, NO = No opening forecast, **Time in bold** = Best Band(s) for opening
Long path bearings and opening times (if any) are underlined. All forecasts calculated via *W6ELProp V.1.03* propagation software
<http://www/qs1.net/w6elprop/> by Sheldon C. Shallon-W6EL. Solar Flux and K-index vary in accordance with NOAA 27-day forecast.

-- NOTE HF BAND CHANGES --

Due to the decline in Sunspot Cycle 23, the chance of 10-meter band openings is 1-25%, if at all. Therefore, we have dropped 10 meters and added 30 meters to the table of DX Activity/Propagation.

-- SOLAR ACTIVITY DURING FEBRUARY --

During February, the Solar Flux ranged from 95 up to 122, with a mean value of 107.0 (vs. 124.6 for February 2003, and 205.2 for February 2002). The A-index was ≤ 10 on 13 days during the month.

-- MARCH PROPAGATION FORECAST --

During March, solar activity is expected to range from very low to low levels. Predominantly very low to low activity levels are expected through early March. Mostly low level activity may return by mid-March due to the return of Region 564. No greater than 10 MeV proton events are expected. Geomagnetic activity is expected to range from quiet to minor storm levels, with a coronal hole high speed stream due to return 09-14 March, which is expected to produce active to minor storm conditions. (From *NOAA Weekly Highlights and Forecasts, 24 February 2004*)

March is one of the optimal DX months, as the Spring Equinox approaches. Spotty 10-meter openings will occur, usually along north-south paths. The 15-meter band will be the band of choice, with daytime paths being good and the band remaining open into the evenings. All nighttime paths will be open on 17 and 20 meters, with prime time evening hours being when the

sun is rising across Russia, Africa, and both the Near and Far East.

Between sunset and midnight, expect DX openings in all bands between 20 and 160 meters, with occasional openings on 15 and 17 meters when conditions are High Normal or Above Normal. From midnight to sunrise, expect optimum DX conditions on 30, 40, 80 and occasionally 160 meters.

Conditions should be *Above Normal* 14-17 and 20-21 March; and *High Normal* 6-9, 13, 18-19, and 22 March. (From "Propagation", Tomas Hood-NW7US, March 2004 *CQ*)

-- WHAT'S ABOVE AND HIGH NORMAL? --

How do we define *Above Normal* and *High Normal*? Under *Above Normal* propagation conditions, the path will be open on or more than 14 days during the month with exceptionally strong, steady signals greater than S9. Under *High Normal* conditions, the path will be open on or more than 22 days during the month with exceptionally strong, steady signals greater than S9, and between 14 and 22 days with moderately strong signals varying between S6 and S9. (From *The Shortwave Propagation Handbook*, George Jacobs-W3ASK and Ted Cohen-N4XX, 1979)

-- TO4E/EUROPA QSLs --

Dany-F5CW has advised *QRZ DX* that the TO4E QSLs are expected from the printer the first week of March. Upon receipt they will start filling them out for mailing. (From Carl Smith-N4AA, 25 February 2004)

CONTESTS & ACTIVITIES

Contest/Special Event	Times/Dates	Bands/Modes	QSO With	Exchange
ARRL International DX Contest	0000 GMT 06 Mar 2400 GMT 07 Mar	160 - 10 Meters Phone Only	DXCC Entities Outside USA	R/S + State
North American RTTY Sprint	0000 GMT 14 Mar 0400 GMT 14 Mar	80 - 20 Meters RTTY Only	Anyone, Anywhere	Call Signs, Serial No., Name, State
Russian DX Contest	1200 GMT 20 Mar 1200 GMT 21 Mar	160 - 10 Meters Phone & CW	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S(T) + Serial Number
10-10 Mobile Contest	0000 GMT 20 Mar 2359 GMT 20 Mar	10 Meters Only Any Mode	Anyone, Anywhere	Call, Name, State, County, 10-10#
9KCC 15 Meter Contest	1200 GMT 21 Mar 1600 GMT 21 Mar	15 Meters Only Phone & CW	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S(T) + Serial Number
CQ WW SSB WPX Contest	0000 GMT 27 Mar 2400 GMT 28 Mar	160 - 10 Meters Phone Only	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S + Serial Number
Polish DX Contest	1500 GMT 03 Apr 1500 GMT 04 Apr	160 - 10 Meters Phone & CW	Polish Stations Only	R/S(T) + Serial Number

From March 2004 *Worldradio* and March 2004 *QST*.

-- "NOISE" --

(The following is from "Aerials", Kurt N. Sterba, March 2004 *WorldRadio*)

An Amateur raised the point that when you put an antenna on the rig the noise comes up. While some of the noise is QRN, it's everywhere in the spectrum.

Yes, there is always noise out there. A good test of your receiver is to connect your antenna and see if the noise goes up. If it does, your receiver sensitivity is alright. If it doesn't go up, your receiver needs work.

But where does this noise come from? Some comes from outer space. It's called galactic noise or cosmic noise. The sun produces radio noise all the time. The stars in our own galaxy, being the stars closest to us, radiate noticeable noise. These stars are in the "Milky Way." This was the first noise received from outer space. Its discoverer, Karl Jansky, was investigating sources of static that might interfere with radio transmissions in the 15-meter region.

Galactic noise is heard at VHF and down to about 20 meters. In a quiet location, it is the principal noise source on the 10-meter band.

At lower frequencies, lightning static is stronger. There is a lightning flash somewhere in the world every 10 seconds. These blend into a continuous noise that is strongest at low frequencies.

Then there is man-made noise from power lines, machinery and electronic devices. Automobile ignition noise is one. Noise radiated from TV is another.

You can expect galactic noise to be 20 dB higher than the receiver's internal noise. In the country, man-made noise is about 15 dB higher. Man-made noise in the city is about 15 dB higher yet. This all occurs in the 1-30 MHz. band.

-- JIM WHITE-K4OJ, SK --

Well known Amateur Radio contester Jim White-K4OJ from Seffner, FL (just east of Tampa) underwent heart valve surgery 11 February, but succumbed to liver failure the following day. Jim founded The Florida Contest Group a decade ago, and served as its first president. He was last on the air during the First Class CW Operators' Club (FOC) Marathon 07-08 February.

White worked in the ARRL Contest Branch at ARRL headquarters during the 1970s, and was the son of Ellen White-W1YL and the late Bob White-W1CW, both well known amateurs and former ARRL staff members. After Bob White died in 2002, Jim established the R. I. White Memorial Operators' Club to keep his father's W1CW call sign active during various operating events.

(From *The ARRL Letter*, Vol. 23, No. 07)

-- MARCH--THE CONTEST MONTH --

The ARRL International DX Phone Weekend 06-07 March and the CQ WW WPX Phone Weekend 27-28 March combine to make this a busy contest month.

In the former, the world is trying to work the States, so they will be listening for QRP stations. In the latter, it's a matter of working anyone you hear. Some folks criticize contests as a waste of time and spectrum, but both are good practice to improve your operating skills.

-- CLASSIFIED - FOR SALE --

GAP Titan vertical antenna; covers all bands, 80-10 meters plus it will work on 2 meters. Tuned for the phone bands, and still assembled for easy erection. For complete specs, go to <www.gapantenna.com>. It's yours for \$160. Call Hermann Reiper-VE3IRX at 475-3785.

-- "SMOKE" --

(The following was received from an e-mail "contributor" up in the Carolinas)

"A Treatise on the Importance of Smoke" by Joseph Lucas (apparently of the British Lucas Company, noted for electrical components in British vehicles)

All electrical components and wiring harnesses depend on proper circuit functioning, which is the transmission of charged ions by retention of the visible spectral manifestation known as "smoke." Smoke is the thing that makes electrical circuits work. Don't be fooled by scientists and engineers talking about excited electrons and the like. Smoke is the key to all things electrical.

We know this to be true because every time one lets the smoke out of an electrical circuit, it stops working. This can be verified repeatedly through empirical testing. For example, if one places a large copper bar across the terminals of a battery, prodigious quantities of smoke are liberated and the batter shortly ceases to function. In addition, if one observes smoke escaping from an electrical component such as a Lucas voltage regulator, it will also be observed that the component no longer functions.

The logic is elementary and inescapable! The function of the wiring harness is to conduct the smoke from one device to another. When the wiring harness springs a leak and lets all the smoke out of the system, nothing works right afterward.

Starter motors were considered unsuitable for British motorcycles for some time largely because they regularly released large quantities of smoke from the electrical system.

It has been reported that Lucas electrical components are possibly more prone to electrical leakage than their Bosch, Japanese or American counterparts. Experts point out that this is because Lucas is British, and all things British leak. British engines leak oil, British shock absorbers, hydraulic forks, and disc brake systems leak fluid; British tires leak air and British Intelligence leaks national defense secrets.

Therefore, it follows that British electrical systems must leak smoke. Once again, the logic is clear and inescapable.

Sometimes you may miss the component releasing the smoke that makes your electrical system function correctly, but if you sniff around you can often find the faulty component by the undeniable and telltale smoke smell. Sometimes this is a better indicator than standard electrical tests performed with a volt-ohm meter.

In conclusion, the basic concept of transmission of electrical energy in the form of smoke provides a clear and logical explanation of the mysteries of electrical components and why they fail.

(Hence the obvious origin of the noted Amateur Radio term, "Tune for smoke.")

-- DX QSLING COSTS --

(Bob Avrutik-NIRA subscribes to a "message node" run by K8SMC and N8TO. The following, by Terry-K8SMC is of interest to those who engage in DX QSLing, and to anyone who wonders about the hidden costs in Ham Radio.)

What gives with this WF5E DX QSL Service? Four cards for a \$1 or 2 IRCs; yeah right! At \$1.75 per IRC, I'm going to send him \$3.50 worth of IRCs instead of \$1.00. If someone, say, had 300 DX cards to mail for the whole year, that would be \$75, or \$262.50 worth of IRCs, plus the cost to ship them to him. Lets see; membership to ARRL is \$39.00, and outgoing QSL Service is about \$4.00 per 75 cards, which comes to %55.00 plus shipping, and I get a monthly publication.

I also checked into the DX Stamp services and, unless you're a stamp collector looking for cancelled stamps, there aren't any bargains there. Unless I misunderstand the postal system, one IRC should return a 1/2-ounce via surface mail, and most of the countries that show up on the data bases for green stamps indicate 1 or 2 green stamps for airmail return. *(Note: This is incorrect as an IRC "i exchangeable in any country of the Universal Postal Union for the minimum postage for an unregistered priority item or an unregistered letter sent by air to a foreign country." Minimum postage is generally based on a 10-gram letter [about 1/3 oz].)* Yes, I did pay 80 cents to mail them (cards overseas), which makes those new ones I needed cost \$1.80 (obviously, using a green stamp) plus 2 envelopes and QSL card. Sure miss the days when we could end a card for 2 or 3 cents or airmail it for a nickel.

Makes a person really wonder how much better we have it now. We'll not count radio equipment, but let me see, QSLing costs for the first year include: computer \$1000, printer \$250, logging program \$100, 1000 QSL cards \$75, envelopes \$20, labels \$20, 750 cards via outgoing ARRL service \$50, 250 QSLs direct to needed countries \$450; it comes to about \$1.96 per QSL card.

For the second year, I didn't replace the computer or printer, just \$80 for printer cartridges, \$39 to upgrade logging program, another \$75 worth of QSL cards, another \$40 worth of envelopes and labels, but this time 850 cards to via the bureau for approximately \$60 and only 100 new ones direct for \$180. That's better; only a little over 47 cents per card. However, next year will make it go back up once I'm sure I'll have to replace the computer and printer.

Of course we have the LoTW now, and that is free, but the confirmation return so far is pretty low. Still have to have the printer, Internet service and logging program upgrade. Yeah, that's much better--only about \$2000 for the 2000 QSOs I send in for, say, 7% confirmation rate, or \$14 for each confirmation on the LoTW data base at ARRL HQ.

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