



THE COMMUNICATOR

Newsletter of the TAMAMI AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
 Incorporated 30 November 1984 – Venice, Florida
 Mailing Address: P. O. Box 273, Nokomis, FL 34274-0273



– FEBRUARY 2005 --

– PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE –

Welcome to all the Snowbirds and new visitors who have joined us for the winter season. Glad to see you!

I have been electronically incommunicado for the last two weeks, what with no radio shack or e-mail service due to Wilma’s updating of our house. That means spending big bucks for imported tile, paint, etc. Anyway, by January 30th I now have the e-mail back on line.

A group of TARC officers and camper trailer experts met at the home of Jack-W4JS on January 15th to inspect the trailer that was donated to us by the Red Cross. We concluded that the gift would cost more to fix up than what we would spend to purchase a used trailer. As it leaks everywhere and has a rusted frame, we are looking for someone to come up with an idea of how to dispose of this trailer.

I hope everyone has marked their calendars for the Ham Valentine’s Picnic at 12:00 Noon on February 13th. And, don’t forget the Annual TARC Auction where you can sell off your surplus equipment for the benefit of our treasury.

A group of members got together, and we now have a new repeater going on 146.805 MHz. Using our club call, W4AC, it also has EchoLink and offers good coverage in the region.

I’m looking forward to seeing everyone at our February meeting, if not before.

73 de Eddie-K4JP

– FEBRUARY MEETING –

The February TARC meeting will be at **7:00 PM on 10 February 2005** in the Community Room of The Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice, 601 South Tamiami Trail (Business US 41), across from the Bon Secours Hospital. Following the business meeting, an ARRL video “Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Antennas...but were afraid to ask,” featuring Frank Rutter-K3AW, will be shown. This is an informative video, and you will probably learn some new things about various antennas.

“The high-minded man must care more for the truth than for what people think.” - Aristotle

– W4AC REPEATER ON THE AIR! –

Feedback reported at recent club meetings was consistently negative with regard to the TARC obtaining a coordinated 2-meter frequency pair. This frustration led to formation of an *ad hoc* Repeater Committee, consisting of Eddie Palmer-K4JP, John Fyke-VE6AIV, Stew Haag-W4MO, Pete Pesa-N4RD, Bob Avrutik-N1RA, and Hermann Rieper-VE3IRX. The Committee’s objective was to get a 2-meter TARC Repeater on the air, using our own W4AC club call sign.

Study of the Florida Repeater Council’s Web site revealed that a coordinated frequency pair existed in Venice, however, its status with the FRC had not been updated since 1999, i.e., it has been inactive for over five years. Contact was made with former Section Manager Dave Armbrust-AE4MR, who represents Area 6 (Sarasota County) on the FRC, with a positive response. The Committee was directed to activate the W4AC repeater on the coordinated frequency pair of 146.805/146.205 with a 100 Hz PL tone. As of 25 January 2005 the W4AC repeater is operational from the Anderson Electric site. So, program your 2-meter rigs accordingly and come aboard!

– REGIONAL HAMFESTS –

- 5-6 Feb Dade Radio Club of Miami “Tropical Hamboree” at Dade County Fair and Exposition Center, 10901 SW 24th St (Coral Way), Miami. TI: 147.000, Info: Evelyn-W4WYR, 305-642-4139
- 11-13 Feb Orlando ARC “Hamcation” at Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 W. Colonial Dr. (SR 50), Orlando. TI: 146760, Info: Hal-KK1B, 407-923-8699
- 19 Feb Brooksville Hamfest at Hernando County Fairgrounds, US 41, 2 mi. S of SR 50. TI: 146.715, Info: John-WB4NOD, 727-856-2568
- 26 Feb Sebring Hamfest at Highlands Agri-Civic Center, 4505 George Blvd. TI: 147.045, Info: Ben-KA6R, 863-314-0963

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TAMIAMI AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Minutes of the Meeting

13 January 2005

President Eddie Palmer-W4JP called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Harry Harvey-N9AR led the pledge of allegiance to the US flag. Al Howes-KT4IO was welcomed back as a member. Merritt Moss-KI4GCE of Venice, David Senkpiel-W4INN of Englewood, Paul Toth-NA4AR of Seminole, Bob Janssen-WB0HJK of Aberdeen, SD, Adriaan Arbeider-KB3GCQ of Galetton, PA and Jim Briggs-WA9TIR of Bensonville, IL were recognized as visitors.

MINUTES - Jim Frey-W8ISZ moved to forego reading of the minutes of the 09 December meeting, as published in the January issue of *The Communicator*; seconded by Roger Schmitt-WD4HDW, and passed.

CORRESPONDENCE - Secretary Jack Sproat-W4JS announced that the Foundation for Amateur Radio is soliciting applications for 55 scholarships, with emphasis on Florida, and the process will be in the February newsletter. He had received a phone call from Jack Godefroy-KA0DZE in which Jack passed along his best to fellow TARC members. A call was also received from Frank Lester-W4AMJ, a founding member of the QCWA, thanking all who had sent him cards in recognition of his 98th birthday. Flyers were also received, announcing the 32nd Annual Charleston Hamfest to be held 05 February in Charleston, SC.

TREASURER'S REPORT - Treasurer Peter Pesana-N4RD reported that prior to the meeting the current account balance was \$4,317.76. There are four outstanding checks, namely, \$87.90 for the ham donated to the Tampa Bay Hamfest vendors' dinner, \$56.71 for the past president's plaque, \$44.88 for corsages at the 2004 Christmas Party and \$200.00 for deposit with Boca Royale Country Club for the 2005 Christmas Dinner, totaling \$389.49. Income was \$138.50 from membership dues and \$13.00 from the 50/50, totaling \$151.50. The current account balance is therefore \$4,079.77. Dil Kay-KB8YLK moved acceptance of the report, seconded by Don Fontaine-N4ET, and passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

SUNSHINE - A get-well card was circulated for Mel Bullock-W4PSE, a regular at our Friday breakfasts, who is hospitalized for gall bladder surgery. Peter-N4RD advised that, as he is now Treasurer, another volunteer is needed for the Sunshine Committee. A request for a volunteer by Eddie-K4JP yielded no results.

VE TESTING - Jack-W4JS reported that there were three candidates at the 08 January VE session. Bill

Bruno-KG4QOT of Sarasota and Carl Pacini-KI4AII of Naples upgraded to General Class, and Stephen Elwood of Venice is now KI4IHW with a Technician license.

REPEATER/TECHNICAL - Jim Frey-W8ISZ commented that the repeater is running satisfactorily. Jim's inquiry regarding allocation of a 2-meter frequency pair was unsuccessful, as there are no frequencies currently available. Jim was urged to work through Dave Armbrust-AE4MR to obtain both 144 and 440 MHz frequencies.

Discussion ensued regarding future installation of PL tone on the repeater. An uncoordinated repeater in the Tampa area is operating as a "remote base" on 145.130 MHz, causing interference with our machine.

NET OPERATIONS - Jim-W8ISZ reminded all of our Tuesday night simplex net and our Thursday night repeater net, both at 7:30 PM.

FIELD DAY COMMITTEE - TARC members are welcome to participate in Field Day with either the Englewood ARS at the United Methodist Church on East Dearborn Street, Englewood, or with the Sarasota Emergency Radio Club at Twin Lakes Park, Clark Road, Sarasota.

CLUB GRANTS & DONATIONS - Eddie-K4JP expressed his desire that the club apply for a grant to refurbish and equip an emergency communications trailer.

LIAISON TO SERC/ARES/RACES - Jim-W8ISZ invited interested members to attend the February ARES/RACES meeting which will be held in the Sarasota EOC office. All should be there by 7:15 PM to gain access to the building.

LIAISON TO RED CROSS - Status of the title to the Red Cross trailer now in our possession is still unknown.

LIAISON TO EARS - Marty Horowitz-W4MHH advised that he is president of the Englewood ARS, and remarked that EARS members involved in RACES are affiliated with the Charlotte County EOC.

LIAISON TO QCWA - Jack-W4JS reported that there were 24 members and guests at the 05 January meeting of Suncoast Chapter 53 in Sarasota, and he invited anyone interested in the QCWA to attend a chapter lunch the first Wednesday of every month.

CLUB HISTORIAN - Marty-W4MHH has been sorting through numerous items that have surfaced, including some old photos and membership rosters going back to the initiation of the TARC.

OLD BUSINESS - Condition of Red Cross Trailer - As only Jim - W8ISZ showed up for the scheduled 03

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CURRENT/PENDING DX ACTIVITY AND PROPAGATION FORECASTS

CURRENT and/or SCHEDULED DX ACTIVITY										
COUNTRY - CALL SIGN	ACTIVITY PERIOD	BEARING	HF BANDS and BEST OPENING TIMES (GMT)							
			80	40	30	20	17	15	12	10
Macquarie Island - VK0MT	Now Active	220	09-11	07-12	–	05-12	--	--	--	--
Djibouti - J20FH	Now Active	61	23-04	22-05	20-06	16-00	16-22	15-21	16-18	16-18
Angola - D2/LA9IAA **	Now to 15 February	95	23-06	22-06	20-06	–	–	–	–	–
South Cook Is - ZK1SDE, SDZ, WET	Now to 17 February	246	05-13	03-14	02-15	16-01	17-00	18-00	19-23	20-22
Rotuma Is - 3D2RE/R	Now to 22 February	263	06-13	05-14	04-15	18-01	19-00	19-00	20-22	20-22
Somalia - 6O0CW, 6O0G	03 - 17 February	66	23-04	22-04	21-05	17-00	17-23	14-21	15-20	15-20
Mongolia - JT1FCY, JT1FCZ **	10 - 18 February	354	09-12	22-13	00-09	--	--	NO	–	–
Crozet Is - FT5W (???)	12 Feb - 01 April	131	23-02	22-04	02-05	03-08	NO	NO	NO	NO
Fernando de Noronha Is - PY0FF	16 - 22 February	115	23-09	21-11	12-01	13-23	15-21	16-21	17-20	17-20
North Cook Is - ZK1SDE, SDZ, WET	17 - 24 February	255	04-13	03-14	02-14	17-01	17-00	18-22	18-22	18-22
Peter I Island - 3Y0X	17 Feb - 03 March	183	01-11	00-12	00-06	21-01	21-01	NO	NO	NO
Mauritania - 5T0CW **	24 Feb - 04 March	81	22-08	21-10	19-05	13-00	14-22	15-20	17-19	17-19

Updated 29 January 2005, based on 26 January 2004 *QRZ DX*, 25 January 2005 *The Weekly DX* and *K1XN DX Alert #201*.

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 are underlined. All forecasts calculated via *W6ELProp V.1.03* propagation software,

<<http://www.qsl.net/w6elprop/>> by Sheldon C. Shallon-W6EL; Solar Flux and K-index vary as per NOAA 27-day forecast.

-- SOLAR ACTIVITY DURING JANUARY --

During January, the Solar Flux ranged from 81 up to 111, with a mean value of 102.4 (vs. 114.1 for January 2004 and 143.9 for January 2003). The A-index was ≤ 10 on only 8 days during January.

While the first half of January was rather docile, it all changed on 15 January when two large flares erupted from Sunspot 720. Over the next few days the planetary A-index rose to 63, 72 and 62 on 17-19 January, with the high-latitude A-index soaring to 114, 136 and 106 on those days. On 17 January another big flare headed towards Earth, On 20 January a huge X7-class flare erupted—the largest of the past year and triggering the largest radiation storm of the current Sunspot Cycle 23. (From *ARRL Propagation Forecast Bulletin 3*, Tad Cook-K7RA, 21 January 2005)

-- FEBRUARY PROPAGATION --

During February, solar activity is expected to be very low to low through 05 February with a chance of M-class flare activity from 05-19 February due to the return of Sunspot Region 720. The greater than 2 MeV electron flux at geosynchronous orbit is expected to be at high levels on 08-10 February. The geomagnetic field is expected to range from quiet to minor storm levels. Coronal hole high speed streams are expected to produce unsettled to active with occasional minor storm periods through 08 February. Otherwise expect quiet to unsettled conditions. The Solar Flux should range from 90 to 120 during the month. (From *NOAA Weekly Highlights and Forecasts, 29 January 2005* and *NOAA 27-Day Space Weather Outlook Table, 25 January 2005*)

-- MACQUARIE ISLAND --

VK0MT is the first station on from Macquarie Island since VK0MM was there in 2000. While the latter had a Web site and published schedule, the present operation is more hit and miss. Try 14.205 and 14.245 between 0630 and 1230Z, and listen on 7.085 between 1100-1130Z. QSL via JE1LET. This is a semi-rare one, ranked #21 in the USA in the 2004 Most Wanted Survey by *The DX Magazine*, and worth the effort to find and work. Macquarie Island is only accessible to Australians employed in that country's weather service.

-- PETER I DXPEDITION DELAYED --

Delays in renovations to the ship that will transport the team from Chile have caused a delay in the 3Y0X Dxpedition. The team is now scheduled to assemble in Punta Arenas, Chile on 08 February with departure on the 10th. Sailing time is about 6-7 days, and the first priority is establishment of a safe, secure and self-sufficient camp. Then the stations and antennas will be set up for a full two weeks of operation. (From *QRZ DX*, #2005-04E)

-- CROZET ISLAND --

Crozet Island ranks #11 worldwide in the 2004 Most Wanted Survey by *The DX Magazine*. After about 12 February, FT5WJ will be QRV until the end of March around 14.278 MHz. QSL to his home call F5BU if you get him. Similar to Macquarie Island, Crozet is only accessible to French military or weather service personnel, so get it when you can. (From *The Weekly DX, Vol. 5, No. 01*)

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CONTESTS & ACTIVITIES

Contest/Special Event	Begin-End Times/Dates	Bands/Modes	QSO With	Exchange
North American Sprint	0000Z 06 February 0400Z 06 February	80 - 20 Meters Phone Only	Anyone, Anywhere	Calls, Name, Serial #, State
North American Sprint	0000Z 13 February 0400Z 13 February	80 - 20 Meters CW Only	Anyone, Anywhere	Calls, Name, Serial #, State
Asia-Pacific Sprint	1100Z 12 February 1300Z 12 February	40 - 20 Meters CW Only	Asia-Pacific Countries Only	R/S/T + Serial No.
FISTS CW Winter Sprint	1700Z 21 February 2100Z 21 February	80 - 10 Meters CW Only	States and Canadian Provinces Only	Name, R/S/T + State
50 th Anniversary Dutch PACC Contest	1200Z 12 February 1200Z 13 February	160 - 10 Meters Phone and CW	Dutch Stations Only	R/S/(T) + Serial No.
ARRL International DX Contest	0000Z 19 February 2400Z 20 February	160 - 10 Meters CW Only	DX Stations Only	R/S/T + State
UBA (Belgian) Contest	1300Z 26 February 1300Z 27 February	80 - 10 Meters CW Only	Belgian and European Stations Only	R/S/T + Serial No.
REF (French) Contest	0600Z 26 February 1800Z 27 February	80 - 10 Meters Phone Only	Stations in France and Overseas Territories	R/S + Serial No.
High Speed CW Contest (High Speed CW Club)	0900-1100Z 27 Feb 1500-1700Z 27 Feb	80 - 10 Meters CW Only	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S/T + HSC # or "NM"
1 st Annual US Virgin Islands QSO Party	1201Z 26 February 2359Z 27 February	160 - 6 Meters Phone and CW	US Virgin Island Stations Only	R/S/(T), Ser#, Name, State

From February 2005 *Worldradio* and February 2005 *QST*

-- GOT NOISE? --

Ken Alexander-VE3HLS has created a Web site to assist amateurs identify noise that interferes with radio reception. The *VE3HLS RF Noise Page* contains samples of noises recorded off the air. Some of the samples are identified, such as BPL and an electric fence 1/8 mile distant, while others are from unknown sources. Ken started this site with noise he personally encountered, however, others—including Ed Hare-W1RFI at ARRL--have now contributed their own noise samples. As a result, the site now offers over 40 noise samples.

Visit <<http://ve3hls.tripod.com/noise/rfhome.html>> and hear BPL for the first time from these MPEG3 files. You can also click on the View Waveform buttons to see what the noise looks like on an oscilloscope.

(From *Surfin': Got Noise?*, Stan Horzepa-WA1LOU, ARRL Web Site, 14 January 2005)

"The mystery of government is not how Washington works, but how to make it stop." - P. J. O'Rourke, "Parliament of Whores", 1991

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-- CANADIAN HAMS: "DUMP CODE" --

Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC) reports that an Industry Canada (IC) analysis has found "overwhelming agreement" (*better than six to one!*) that Canada should move away from retaining a Morse code requirement as "the sole means of gaining access" to the HF amateur bands. Industry Canada still has to make and announce a decision on Morse retention or deletion.

RAC notes that until IC announces a decision to delete Morse, Canadian amateurs not holding the Morse Qualification may not operate on the HF bands.

(From *ARRL Newsletter*, Vol. 24, No.3)

-- HEARTFELT THANKS!! --

Your Editor would like to express his heartfelt gratitude to John-VE6AIV, Hermann-VE3IRX, Bob-N1RA, Marty-W4MHH and Pete-N4RD for their assistance in finalizing installation of the new 60' Aluma Tower and TH11 beam. And, I can't overlook my good wife, Yuli, who helped mix some 2700 pounds of concrete for the tower base, and who climbed up the old tower to hand me the coax I had dropped!

HAMFESTS, from page 1

27 Feb Zephyrhills Hamfest at the Lions Club, 5827 Dean Dairy Rd. TI: 147.135, Info: Ron-N8VFE, 813-782-1602

05 Mar Englewood ARS and Peace River Radio Ass'n "Charlotte County Hamfest" at Charlotte County Fairgrounds, El Jobean Rd. (SR776), 2.4 mi. W of US 41. TI: 147.255, Info: George-KA4JKY, 941-697-3445

(From February 2005 *QST* and Web site of Bill Britton-KB4VOL, <http://bellsouthpwp.net/k/b/kb4vol>)

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January inspection, a revised inspection was scheduled for 10 AM on Saturday, 15 January.

Tuesday Breakfast Venue - As EARS members did not want to the time of their Tuesday breakfast to join with TARC members at 8:00 AM, the time and venue remains at the Country Hound Café, Palm Plaza, Englewood.

NEW BUSINESS - There were several diverse items under New Business:

Ham Valentine Picnic - John Fyke-VE6AIV distributed invitations to this picnic, to be held on Sunday 13 February in Lemon Bay Park, Englewood. Eyeball QSOs at 12 Noon, and lunch at 1 PM. Bring pot luck dishes, beverages, plates and utensils, and wear something red.

2005 Christmas Party - A poll was taken amongst those who attended the 2004 party to see if they wanted to return to the Marco Polo Buffet or have the party at the Boca Royale Country Club in Englewood. By a vote of 8 to 5, Boca Royale won out. Marty-W4MHH will see if a reasonable date is available, and stated that a \$200 deposit would be required.

TARC Web Site - A prototype web site has been established by Juan Hernandez-KA4OWP, however, it is in need of input from the members regarding content, links, etc. to make it viable. One notable disadvantage of the site is the long URL required. John-VE6AIV commented that he had developed a web site with a simple URL and that he would be willing to maintain a web site. Pete Knorr-N2IZD will discuss this matter further with Juan.

TARC Membership for New Licensees - Eddie-K4JP proposed that, effective January 2005, new local hams who earned their licenses at TARC VE sessions be granted one year free membership in the TARC. Following discussion, Harry-N9AR moved approval of the proposal, seconded by Don Ferrick-N2BAT, and passed.

ADJOURNMENT - Motion to adjourn at 8:21 PM was made by Marty-W4MHH, seconded by Pete-N4RD, and passed. There were 22 members and six guests present.

PROGRAM - Paul Toth-NA4AR, President of the West Central Florida Group, Inc., gave an in-depth discussion of the use of the "Big Stick" repeater system during the four local hurricanes—especially from the aspects of his involvement with the National Weather Service at Ruskin. Following the presentation, Paul offered "Hurricane Survivor" T-shirts in exchange for tax-deductible contributions to support, expand and improve the Big Stick repeater.

Jack Sproat-W4JS
Secretary

– POTENTIAL TARC WEB SITE –

As was discussed at the January TARC meeting, Juan Hernandez-KA4OWP has developed a prototype web site for our club. This was done some time ago, but there has never been any formal review of the site, i.e., <<http://faculty.impacu.edu/jchernandez/tarc/tarc.htm>>, or any feedback offered to Juan, regarding the format, what the members would like to see on the site, etc.

One notable disadvantage of the above site is its complexity. Past President John Fyke-VE6AIV has developed a Web site for the residential development where he and Dona will spend their summers. Like the site developed by Juan, this site is also available at no cost to the user. You can check out John's site at <<http://ve6aiv.tripod.com/>> and note the very simple URL.

All TARC members with Internet capability are asked to access both the above sites and pass their comments to both Juan, whose e-mail is <drjhernandez@comcast.net> and John at <ve6aiv@rac.ca>. There is the likelihood that Juan and John will provide their cooperative efforts to creation of an admirable Web site for the TARC.

– CALL SIGN STATUS –

As of 18 December 2004, call signs issued sequentially in the Fourth District were up to:

<u>Extra</u>	<u>General/Technician</u>
AI4IB	KI4JDK

(From February 2005 *WorldRadio*)

"The Constitution is not neutral. It was designed to take the government off the backs of the People." - William Douglas, U.S. Supreme Court Justice, *An Almanac of Liberty*, 1954

-- HEATHKIT NOSTALGIA --

(Undoubtedly every ham that was active in any way prior to 1990 spent some time building one or another Heathkit. The following is taken from "Heathkit: Rise and fall of a Ham Radio icon," by Ronald Thomas-W8QYR, and published in the November 2004 issue of WorldRadio.)

The Heath Company (*Ed: I believe the founder's name was Howard Anthony*) started in the electronics business by selling surplus electronics parts after WW II. Then it began to offer electronic test equipment in kit form at very reasonable prices.

These kits were very successful, which motivated the Heath Co. to enter the Ham Radio markets in the 1950s, rather in concert with the creation of the Novice class license. These newly licensed operators needed a receiver and a transmitter. Receivers were complicated and most hams bought one from manufacturers such as Hallicrafters, National, Hammerlund, RME, etc.

However, CW transmitters were a much simpler device, and could be home brewed if the ham could find a suitable schematic and the required parts. If a ham didn't live close to a radio parts store, they usually had to order the parts from a mail order house, such as Allied Radio in Chicago. Then the builder had to determine how to arrange the parts on a chassis, cut the necessary holes, mount the parts and wire up the parts.

In 1952, Heath offered the AT-1 CW transmitter kit for \$29.50. There was little financial risk involved to the company. Heath already had engineers on board who found a suitable schematic and created a bill of parts, many of which were already available in Heath's extensive stock of surplus parts. The company had metal working and painting facilities that were used for its existing test equipment business. Heath had experience at writing step-by-step assembly instructions and creating the pictorial drawings for which the company was famous.

As the Novice license was only good for one year back then, Heath knew that most of those Novices would be moving up to a General Class license. They would need a more powerful transmitter that could also be used for AM phone operation.

Heath's answer to that need was the DX-100 transmitter. Heath used the same methodology to develop it as had been used for the AT-1. However, the DX-100 had a VFO and it could put out 125 watts on AM phone and 140 watts on CW. It was priced at \$189.50, and it was a success that put Heathkit on the road to becoming a Ham Radio icon.

In the late 50s, the TX-1 Apache became the top of the line transmitter, accompanied by the matching Coman-

che receiver. A phasing type SSB adapter was also offered.

The 1960s and 1970s were the glory days for the Heath Co. New Ham Radio equipment was offered on an ongoing basis. The HW-101 SSB/CW transceiver was a tremendous success—often referred to as the "poor man's Collins KWM-2." It was rare to find a ham who didn't own at least one piece of Heathkit equipment.

Hams loved building Heathkits. There was the thrill of opening the box, laying out the parts, reading through the instruction manual, and starting construction work. Most hams would work every evening and weekend until they had the kit finished. Hams loved to talk about their latest Heathkit, and this was a tremendous source of free publicity. The Heath Co. made significant profit from the sale of its Ham Radio equipment.

A number of factors led to the eventual downfall of the Heath Co. and the demise of the Heathkit. Surplus parts became hard to find, and Heath had to use more expensive new parts in its kits. The move to SSB, transistors and transceivers increased development costs and lead-time for new ham equipment. As many more components were needed in equipment like transceivers, there was increased possibility of failure. In addition, some of the equipment became increasingly difficult for hams to build, align and troubleshoot.

Furthermore, hams who started building Heathkits in the 1950 might be wearing bifocals in the 70s and 80s. Building the more complex kits was becoming increasingly difficult.

Perhaps one of the least understood factors that led to the demise of Heathkits was the printed circuit board. Widely used in the newest Heathkits, the builder soldered all the components onto the boards. However, printed circuit boards, unlike the old metal chassis leant themselves to automated assembly. Machines could be used to mount and solder components, dramatically reducing labor costs. Heath competitors, especially those in Japan, were well aware of the new economics of Ham Radio equipment.

Japanese manufacturers began offering commercially built ham equipment that was competitively priced with Heathkit equipment. As much as they may have loved Heathkits, hams began to migrate away from Heathkits in favor of the Japanese equipment. By the 1980s, the Heath Company's then current corporate owner was well aware of the competitive difficulties and eventually the Heath Co. exited the Ham Radio

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market.

The demise of the Heath Co. and its Heathkits was a sad affair. The drama played itself out, over a period of several years, on the Ham Radio bands, where hams would talk about Heath's problems. When the end finally came, it was like watching the passing of a loved one.

While new Heathkits are no longer available, their memory still lives on in the minds of the hams who built and owned them. Some used Heathkits are still available at hamfests. Also, many Web sites feature photos of Heathkits and information about them. Therefore, it is still possible to enjoy the glory days when Heathkit was a Ham Radio icon.

(A letter to the editor in the January 2004 issue of WorldRadio adds some interesting comments regarding the demise of Heathkit. It follows verbatim.)

Heathkit...the rest of the story

As a former Senior Design Engineer for the Instruments Department of Heathkit, I witnessed the fall of a truly great company. Mr. Thomas was correct in his reasons for its failure, but added to those should be the facts that in 1982 the company was purchased by Zenith, with the promise that they would put Heathkits in all their stores. Within a week of the purchase, however, Zenith separated all the computer engineers (who had developed the H-8 home computer before IBM or Microsoft ever thought of a PC) and moved them to a different building.

It turns out, all Zenith wanted was the computer expertise and used it to build Zenith Data Systems. The rest of the company was left to "rot on the vine." It was a great place to work and indeed a sad day for all of us when Zenith reneged on their promise.

Also a factor was the fact that it often took more time and cost to develop the manuals than the product itself, further driving the cost up on the kits.

Today, I collect any Heathkits I can find at Hamfests.

A. Higgins, W4VFZ
Hiawassee, GA

- HAM VALENTINE PICNIC -

Don't forget this event at 12:00 Noon, Sunday 13 February at Lemon Bay Park, 570 Bay Park Boulevard in Englewood. (See direction signs to the park posted along Old Englewood Rd. at Kilbourne Ave.) Bring a dish to pass, your own cutlery and drinks. Wear something red.. For more information, phone Dona Fyke at 474-2087 Anyone interested in Ham Radio is more than welcome to attend.

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- FCC CHAIRMAN RESIGNING -

FCC Chairman Powell has announced that he will resign "sometime in March." Powell joined the FCC in 1997 and became chairman in 2001. Contrary to media accounts, which were generally laudatory of Powell, ARRL CEO David Sumner-K1ZZ called Powell's performance "a deep disappointment." "It's no secret that we thought Chairman Powell was going entirely in the wrong direction on BPL and dragging the other commissioners and FCC staff along," stated Sumner.

(From *ARRL Newsletter, Vol. 24, No. 3*)

-IT'S DUES TIME AGAIN! -

While a number of our members have already renewed their dues for 2005, here's a gentle reminder that we're now into our second month of the "new year." So break out those checkbooks and keep your membership current and our Treasurer busy. Pete will be glad to receive your dues at our February meeting, or you can mail your renewal to him as per:

Peter Pesa - N4RD
29 Waterford drive
Englewood, FL 34223

Dues are still \$15 for individual membership and \$18.50 for a family membership. Thanks for your continued support of the Tamiami Amateur Radio Club—YOUR radio club.

- FREE TARC MEMBERSHIPS -

As proposed and adopted at our January meeting, effective January 2005 all new local hams who earn their licenses at TARC VE sessions will receive one year's free membership in the TARC. If you know any potential hams in our area, advise them of this opportunity. Not only can these newcomers feel more at home in Amateur Radio via club membership, they will also have to opportunity to learn more from the experiences of our "Old Timers." Talk this up with anyone who might be interested!

- TARC VE SESSIONS -

Since mentioning license exams, perhaps it's wise to remind all of just when and where the TARC license exam sessions are held. The second Saturday of each month will find the TARC VE Team at the Venice Public Library, 300 South Nokomis Avenue. Official starting time for exams is 9:30 AM, but team members are usually there when the doors open at 9:00 AM. The exam fee is now \$14.00, of which \$2.00 is being held in escrow as a donation to the library at year's end.