



THE COMMUNICATOR

Newsletter of the TAMAMI AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Incorporated 30 November 1984 – Venice, Florida
Mailing Address: 1419 E. Manasota Beach Rd., Englewood, FL 34223-6341
Web Site -- <http://tamiamiarc.tripod.com>
W4AC Repeaters – 146.805 MHz(-), 444.100(+) both w/100 Hz PL



-- JANUARY 2006 --

-- PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE --

Little did I imagine when I attended my first TARC meeting last January 2005 that I would be writing this column in the waning days of the same year. Without a doubt the TARC has been the Number One factor in making this 2004 Pennsylvania transplant feel like he really has a new home. I've thoroughly enjoyed getting to know a great group of folks, and I especially enjoy our breakfast gatherings even if I only drink coffee!

It was really nice to see so many members, spouses and friends at our Christmas Dinner at the Boca Royale Golf & Country Club. I think we can all agree that the décor, food, and the musical entertainment provided by the "Diana Gregory Duo" were first rate. My wife, Leneé, was very impressed by the sight of all those hams wearing jackets and behaving themselves!

I hope you have all had a chance to try out the relocated TARC W4AC 146.805 machine with its new antenna installation up 200' high on the Newport Offices tower off River Road in Englewood. My tiny Larsen antenna on the file cabinet can now light it up with a mere 5 watts. Our plans call for new transmission lines and additional antennas for 220, 440 and perhaps HF. Many thanks to all the members who helped with this project; especially Jack-W4JS, Don-WD7A, Jon-W4ZW, Jim-KI4MOZ, and Stew Haag-W4MO—who generously donated the first year's lease payment and to Stew's Son, David-KF4VGD, who did the tower climbing and antenna installation. Let's all try to give this repeater and its EchoLink mode plenty of use.

As of this writing, the TARC is well on the road to providing a Special Event Station for the annual Venice Sharks Tooth Festival, where we will be using the call sign K4S. In addition to providing some good publicity for both the Festival and our Club, we will acknowledge all QSLs received with a specially designed photo QSL. More on this as the date comes closer.

VY 73 de Konrad-WA3RRS

*Laws do not persuade just because they threaten –
Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BC – 65 AD)*

-- JANUARY MEETING --

Our next TARC meeting will be at 7:00 PM on 12 January 2006 in the Community Room of The Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice, 601 South Tamiami Trail (Business US 41), across from the Venice Regional Health Center. Our guest will be West Central Florida Section Manager Dee Turner-N4GD. Come on out, ask questions, and learn what's going on throughout the WCF Section.

-- TARC WEB SITE UPDATE --

TARC Webmaster John Fyke-VE6AIV has been busy keeping our web site current. If you haven't visited the site recently, check out these pages for the most recent input:

Recent/Upcoming Events – Photos of our Christmas Dinner, courtesy of Bernie Holtman-W4GO and Dil Kay-KB8YLK

Club Photo Album – Ground and tower top photos of our W4AC Repeater

Club Repeaters – Map showing location of our W4AC Repeater

Announcements – Notice of the proposed Orlando charter bus and Ladies Activities at Orlando; Press Release of our tower lease agreement

Members List – Welcoming our newest members
Take a bit of time and visit our TARC web site; it's at <http://tamiamiarc.tripod.com>. You can see how John has been keeping busy.

-- THE "LEAP SECOND" --

Did you notice that extra delay in the New Year's Eve "dropping ball"? That was due to the introduction of a "time step" at the end of December to add a "leap second" as 2006 arrives. Leap seconds are needed to keep clocks in step with Earth's rotation, which varies by several thousandths of a second per day. As 2005 transitions to 2006, Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) will be retarded by exactly one second. Thus the last minute in 2005 will be 61 seconds long. This adjustment will affect UTC and all time scales based on UTC. GPS times will not be so adjusted.

(From *The ARRL Letter*, Vo. 24, No. 50)

---000---

TAMIAMI AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Minutes of the Meeting

08 December 2005

President Matt Klapp-W2EQV called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM and Charlie Covell-W4DB led the pledge of allegiance. Introductions were made all around.

MINUTES – Dil Kay-KB8YLK moved that the minutes of the 10 November 2005 meeting be accepted as published in the December issue of *The Communicator*, seconded by Charlie-W4DB, and passed.

CORRESPONDENCE – Secretary Jack Sproat-W4JS summarized the 21 November letter sent by President Klapp to the Sarasota Emergency Radio Club, requesting return of the repeater, duplexers and ancillary equipment owned by TARC and being used by SERC at the Laurel/Nokomis repeater site.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Treasurer Don Gray-WD7A reported that the 13 October starting balance was \$4891.57. Receipts were \$10.00 from the November 50/50 drawing, \$561.00 from Christmas Party reservations, \$54.00 from dues, \$128.00 from sale of surplus club items at Tampa Bay Hamfest, and \$600.00 donation from Stew Haag-W4MO for the first year's tower lease, totaling \$1353.00. Expenses were \$13.92 for newsletter postage and printing, and \$34.00 for party reservation refund, totaling \$47.92. The 08 December ending balance is \$6196.65. Peter Pesa-N4RD moved acceptance of the report, seconded by Konrad Owens-WA3RRS, and passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

SUNSHINE – Matt-W2EQV reported that a card had been sent to Marty Horowitz-N4FA, following his nasal surgery.

VE TESTING – Jack-W4JS commented there should be at least two candidates at the 10 December session. He then explained that the VE team has been withholding \$2.00 from each candidate's exam fee over the past year, such that we will contribute over \$60.00 to the Venice Public Library in appreciation of use of its facilities for our exams.

REPEATER/TECHNICAL – Jack-W4JS discussed his meetings during the past month with Darrell Newell, President of Newport Offices, LLC and with Steven Roberts, Newport's legal advisor. As the anticipated use of our 501(c)(3) status to procure space at Newport's tower did not appear legally feasible, Newport has offered the TARC a lease to the tower site for \$50 per month. All TARC officers favored such an agreement, and Newport has presented a lease for our approval. In the discussion following, it was requested that the equipment list be made more generic and open to addition of supporting equip-

ment. Jon Hamlet-W4ZW moved acceptance of the lease agreement with Newport Offices, as so amended, seconded by Bob Avrutik-N1RA, and passed. The lease is scheduled to be signed 14 December.

Stew-W4MO was presented with a letter of appreciation by Matt-W2EQV, recognizing Stew's contribution of the first year's lease payment of \$600.00, for which Stew received a round of applause.

Peter-N4RD moved that \$2000 be allocated for expenses relative to installation of our W4AC Repeater at the Newport site, seconded by Jon-W4ZW, and passed.

PACKET/GATEWAY – Bob-N1RA reported that he has all the equipment needed for installation of this facility, and that he was going to take the computers over to the east coast for programming. When completed, the facility will operate temporarily from Bob's residence.

CLUB PROPERTY – Charlie-W4DB reported that the club made \$128 profit from sale of miscellaneous surplus items at the Tampa Bay Hamfest on 03 December.

PUBLICITY/MEMBERSHIP – Don-WD7A passed around copies of the proposed TARC brochure. Peter-N4RD moved that the brochure layout be accepted and brochures printed, seconded by Charlie-W4DB, and passed.

EMERGENCY COORDINATOR – Chairman Peter Pesa-N4RD gave some background on the Venice Diocese Amateur Radio Network (DARN) and reported that Don Sullenberger of DARN will talk at a club meeting after the W4AC Repeater is operational from the new site. There is a good likelihood that DARN will provide TARC with a standby generator in the future. It was clarified that the motion passed at the November TARC meeting authorized DARN to have priority use of our W4AC Repeater during any emergency operations.

NET OPERATIONS – Net Manager Bob Murphy-WA1UHG was not present, but Jack-W4JS remarked that we are getting about eight, or so, check-ins for our two nets. Jack added that we need additional net control stations.

LIAISON TO EARS – No Englewood ARS members were present.

LIAISON TO QCWA – Jack-W4JS reported that 22 Chapter 53 members and friends attended the 06 December lunch/meeting at Denny's up in Sarasota. Stew Haag-W4MO provided a very interesting program on Software Driven Radio, which may be the favored means of communication in the future.

See MINUTES, page 5

---000---

CURRENT/PENDING DX ACTIVITY & PROPAGATION FORECASTS

CURRENT and/or SCHEDULED DX ACTIVITY										
COUNTRY – CALL SIGN	ACTIVITY PERIOD	BEAR-ING	HF BANDS and BEST OPENING TIMES							
			80	40	30	20	17	15	12	10
Ascension Is – ZD8I	Now to March	108	22-08	20-09	19-00	13-22	14-20	16-19	16-19	NO
Nepal – 9N7EF	Now to March	13	23-02	21-03	13-21	14-20	NO	NO	NO	NO
Jan Mayen – JX9NOA	Active ASAP	21	22-13	09-18	13-18	14-16	1430	NO	NO	NO
West Malaysia - 9M2/PA0RRS	Now to 08 March	352	11-13	11-14	13-16	14-20	15-19	17-19	NO	NO
Chad – TT8PK	Now to 28 Feb	73	22-06	20-08	18-00	14-21	15-20	16-18	16-18	NO
Minami Torishima – JD1YBJ	Now to 15 Jan	308	06-13	05-15	13-16	21-22	21-22	2100	NO	NO
Gabon – TR8CR	Now to 12 Jan	88	22-06	20-08	19-00	14-22	15-19	16-19	16-19	NO
Rodriguez Is – 3B9/FR5EZ	03 – 11 January	84	22-01	21-03	20-00	17-22	17-20	16-19	18-19	NO
Western Kiribati – T30DX	05-22 January	277	06-13	05-15	08-16	14-00	19-22	19-21	19-21	NO
Cambodia – XU7ADI	06 Jan – 06 Mar	349	11-13	10-14	13-15	14-19	15-18	16-18	1630	NO
Western Sahara – S0/???	07 – 13 January	75	22-09	19-10	12-00	14-20	15-19	16-18	16-18	NO
Cambodia – XU7ACY	07 – 21 January	349	11-13	10-14	13-15	14-19	15-18	16-18	1630	NO
Reunion Is – FR5EZ	11 – 17 January	91	22-02	21-03	20-00	17-22	18-20	16-19	18-19	NO
Congo – 9Q/F5HRH	15 – 22 January	88	22-05	21-07	20-00	14-22	15-20	16-19	16-19	NO
Ogasawara – JD1BLX, JD1BLY	19 – 28 January	317	07-13	06-14	13-17	14-17	2130	NO	NO	NO
Somalia – 600N	20 Jan – 02 Mar	66	22-04	21-05	20-00	15-21	16-19	16-19	NO	NO
Juan Fernandez Is – CE0Z	20 – 28 January	177	00-11	22-13	12-01	13-00	15-22	16-21	15-21	19-20
Tanzania – 5H1C	24 Jan – 02 Feb	83	22-04	21-05	20-00	15-22	15-19	16-19	16-19	NO
Senegal – 6W/G4WFQ	04 – 17 February	87	22-09	20-10	15-00	13-22	15-21	16-19	16-19	NO
Peter I Is – 3Y0X	07 – 21 February	183	02-11	00-12	00-06	16-00	19-01	NO	NO	NO

Updated 31 December 2005, based on 21 December 2005 *QRZ DX*, 26 December 2005 *The Weekly DX*, and *DX Alert Issue 601*

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

-- DECEMBER SOLAR ACTIVITY --

During December, the Solar Flux ranged from 85 up to 106, with a mean value of 90.8 (vs. 94.6 for December 2004 and 115.1 for December 2003). The A-index was ≤ 10 on 21 days.

While there were days when no sunspots were visible, the general absence of geomagnetic disturbances made for good propagation during the month. DX openings into the Southern Hemisphere occurred on 10 and 12 meters late in the month.

-- JANUARY PROPAGATION --

During January, solar activity is expected to be at very low to low levels. No greater than 10 MeV proton events are expected.

The greater than 2 MeV electron flux at geosynchronous orbit is expected to be at high levels on 29 December - 04 January.

The geomagnetic field is expected to range from quiet to minor storm levels. Unsettled to active levels are expected on 07 January due to effects from recurrent coronal hold wind streams. Otherwise, expect quiet to unsettled conditions. The Solar Flux should range from 85 to 90 during January.

(From *NOAA Weekly Highlights and Forecasts, 27 December 2005* and *NOAA 27-day Space Weather Outlook Table, 27 December 2005*)

It should be a toss-up between 17 and 20 meters for daylight DX propagation during January. Before local noon, 17 meters will a slight edge, with 20 meters taking the lead after noon and optimizing during the late afternoon hours. The optimum nighttime DX

band should be 40 meters, however, 80 meters should also be hot.

An overview of expected propagation during 2006 follows:

10 and 12 Meters – During quiet periods these bands could have fair to poor north-south openings.

15 Meters – Should be fair during the first half of the year during daylight hours. As Cycle 23 fades away at the end of 2006, DX openings will be rare.

17 Meters – Will behave much like 15 meters but with more frequent and longer openings.

20 Meters – Will be the main player during this year of low solar activity.

30 Meters – Moderate openings, especially from a few hours before sunset until a few hours after sunrise.

40, 60, 80 and 160 Meters – Worldwide nighttime DX on 40, coast-to-coast openings on 60, and early spring, late fall, and winter openings on 80 and 160.

(From “Propagation,” Tomas Hood-NW7US, January 2005 *CQ*)

-- ANDAMAN ISLAND TO BE ON AGAIN --

The National Radio Society of India which sponsored the December 2004 Andaman Island DXpedition is arranging an international ham radio convention to be held in Port Blair, Andaman Islands in April 2006. Ham radio operation is scheduled, and foreign hams will be permitted to operate from this rare location. Propagation will be pretty dicey from here, being limited to 20-meter short path openings at 0030-0230 and 1230-1400 GMT. Updates to follow!

CONTESTS & ACTIVITIES

Contest/Special Event	Begin-End Times/Dates	Bands/Modes	QSO With	Exchange
ARRL RTTY Roundup	1800Z 07 Jan 2400Z 08 Jan	80 – 10 Meters Digital Modes	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S/T + State/ Province
North American QSO Party	1800Z 14 Jan 0600Z 15 Jan	160 – 10 Meters CW Only	States, Provinces, North American Entities	Name + State/ Province
Midwinter Contest (Dutch)	1400Z 14 Jan 2000Z 14 Jan	80 – 10 Meters CW Only	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S/T + Serial No.
Midwinter Contest (Dutch)	0800Z 15 Jan 1400Z 15 Jan	80 – 10 Meters Phone Only	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S/(T) + Serial No.
Hungarian DX Contest	1200Z 14 Jan 1200Z 15 Jan	160 – 10 Meters CW Only	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S/T + Serial No.
070 PSKFest	0000Z 14 Jan 2400Z 14 Jan	80 – 10 Meters PSK Modes	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S/T + State/ Province
North American QSO Party	1800Z 21 Jan 0600Z 22 Jan	160 – 10 Meters Phone Only	States, Provinces, North American Entities	Name + State/ Province
80-Meter Straight Key Sprint	0130Z 21 Jan 0330Z 21 Jan	80 Meters CW Only	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S/T + State/ Province
Bulgarian Open Championship	0400Z 21 Jan 1200Z 21 Jan	80 & 40 Meters CW Only	Anyone, Anywhere	Serial # + Serial # of previous QSO
BARTG (British) RTTY Sprint	1200Z 21 Jan 1200Z 22 Jan	80 – 10 Meters RTTY Only	Anyone, Anywhere	Serial Number
UK DX RTTY Contest	1200Z 21 Jan 1200Z 22 Jan	80 – 10 Meters RTTY Only	Anyone, Anywhere	R/S/T + Serial No.
REF French Contest	0600Z 28 Jan 1800Z 29 Jan	80 – 10 Meters CW Only	Stations in France and French Territories	R/S/T + Serial No.
UBA (Belgian) Contest	1300Z 28 Jan 1300Z 29 Jan	80 – 10 Meters Phone Only	Belgian and European Union Countries	R/S + Serial No.

From January 2006 issues of *QST* and *WorldRadio*

-- REGIONAL HAMFESTS --

- 21 Jan Ft. Myers Hamfest, Araba Shrine Auditorium, 2010 Hanson Stl, Ft. Myers. Exit 136 off I-75, west on Colonial Blvd to US 41, north on US 41 to Hanson, east ½ block on Hanson to site. TI: 146.880, Info: Earl-K4FQU, 239-332-1503
- 28 Jan DeSoto ARC Hamfest, Turner Civic Center, 2260 NE Roan St., Arcadia. East of US 17 on SR 70 to Turner Ave (Tractor Supply Co.), north on Turner 1 mile to Roan, right on Roan to site. TI: 147.075, Info: Doug-KN4YT, 863-491-0618
- 4-5 Jan Tropical Hamboree, Sunshine Hall, Tamiami Park, 11201 SW 24th St., Miami. TI: 146.730 (PL 71.9), Info: Robert-KE4MCL, 786-306-5900

(From <http://bellsouthpwp.net/k/kb4vol>, the Web site of Bill Britton-KB4VOL and January 2006 *QST*)

The plea of necessity, that eternal argument of all conspirators – William Henry Harrison, 27 Sep 1829

-- TARC NET SCHEDULE --

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

- | | | |
|--------|-----|------------------|
| 03 Jan | (s) | Jack-W4JS |
| 05 Jan | (r) | Bob-WA1UHG |
| 10 Jan | (s) | Bob-WA1UHG |
| 12 Jan | | Meeting – No Net |
| 17 Jan | (s) | Dil-KB8YLK |
| 19 Jan | (r) | Charlie-W4DB |
| 24 Jan | (s) | Jack-W4JS |
| 26 Jan | (r) | Bernie-W4GO |
| 31 Jan | (s) | Bob-WA1UHG |
| 02 Feb | (r) | Bob-WA1UHG |
| 07 Feb | (s) | Bob-WA1UHG |
| 09 Feb | | Meeting – No Net |
| 14 Feb | (s) | Jack-W4JS |
| 16 Feb | (r) | Bernie-W4GO |
| 21 Feb | (s) | Bob-WA1UHG |
| 23 Feb | (r) | Charlie-W4DB |
| 28 Feb | (s) | Jack-W4JS |

Note the following:

(r) = 146.805 W4AC Repeater; (s) = 146.58 Simplex
Remember to check into our twice weekly nets at 7:30 PM, so we know you're alive and kicking.

MINUTES, from page 2

CLUB HISTORIAN – This position remains vacant, with the items being stored at the home of Jack-W4JS.

OLD BUSINESS – In response to a request for programs, Joh-W4ZW offered to recount his experiences working in Russia as the program for February 2006.

Don-WD7A reported that he has received reservations for 31 people at our Christmas Party.

Matt-W2EQV reported that 19 people have signed up for the charter bus to Orlando. The \$30/person cost includes the \$8 admission ticket to the hamfest.

NEW BUSINESS – Matt-W2EQV reminded all that 2006 dues are now due.

When the subject of the annual club auction in March came up, Stew-W4MO moved that the auction be cancelled. The members present confirmed that they have nothing to contribute to the auction. Peter-N4RD seconded the motion, which passed on a show of hands.

Matt-W2EQV called for ratification of the TARC Bylaws, as amended in November 2005. Konrad-WA3RRS moved that the required attendance for a quorum revert back to the original ten (10) percent, seconded by Jon-W4ZW, and passed. Bob-N1RA moved that the Bylaws, so amended, be passed; seconded by Peter-N4RD, and passed on show of hands.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS – Konrad-WA3RRS reported that he had contacted the sponsors of the Venice Shark's Tooth Festival, which will be held 07-09 April 2006. He had received a positive reaction and will continue to follow up. A show of hands indicated a number of members willing to assist in a Special Event operation from the festival.

ELECTION OF 2006 OFFICERS – Matt-W2EQV turned the Chair over to Bernie Holtman-W4GO, Chairman of the Nominating Committee. Bernie announced the following candidates willing to serve:

President – Konrad Owens-WA3RRS

V. Pres. – Matt Klapp-W2EQV

Secretary – Jack Sproat-W4JS

Treasurer – Don Gray-WD7A

Director – Stew Haag-W4MO

Director – Bob Avrutik-N1RA

Director – Jon Hamlet-W4ZW

Director – Croft Taylor-VE3CT

Bernie called for nominations from the floor, and there were none. Peter-N4RD opined that we are fortunate to have those who are willing to serve as officers, however, there should be more interest by other club members to be willing to serve. Dil-KB8YLK then moved acceptance of the slate of can-

didates presented, seconded by Charlie-W4DB, and passed by unanimous vote.

ADJOURNMENT – The meeting adjourned at 8:31 PM. There were 14 members and no visitors present.

Jack Sproat-W4JS
Secretary

-- FEDERAL PHONE CHARGES --

(The following comes from a 03 December 2005 column by Financial Adviser Malcom Berko in the Englewood Sun.)

A reader questioned the \$6.50 "FCC Charge for Network Access" on his monthly BellSouth telephone bill. Verizon makes this same charge as the "Federal subscriber line charge." Berko concluded that this charge was "the usual bureaucratic panoply of mindless government mumbo-jumbo that was sneaked on our monthly bills by phone company lobbyists who covertly enrich myriad Congressional bank accounts."

"And, by golly, that's just what it is. This monthly largess is a fee that the Federal Communications Commission allows phone companies to charge its customers to compensate themselves for part of the cost of providing local connections for long-distance calls. What a load of tommyrot. Those costs have been recovered many times over."

"The FCC does not require BellSouth to charge this fee, and not a penny of that money accrues to the FCC. In early July, I wrote Bill Nelson and Mel Martinez, both US senators from Florida, and quite nicely asked them for an explanation of this charge. Neither Bill nor Mel answered my letter."

Another fine example of your government standing up for the consumers of the nation.

-- INTERNET LOG SEARCH --

The Internet site <http://dx.qsl.net/logs/> is a treasure trove of QSO records from myriad DX stations as well as some Stateside special event stations. QSOs are posted from back in the '90s up until the current months.

First, find the DX station in "Select a log." This will allow you to scroll through all the stations, arranged in alphanumeric order, that have logs on this site. If you find the station you're after, enter your call in the "Callsign" block. Hit "Search log." If you're in that station's log, a page will come up, tabulating all your QSOs with that station. QSO data for rare stations have been filtered, showing only date, mode and band, otherwise the data show date, time, band and mode. QSL info is provided, as well as e-mail address, web site, etc. of the DX station.

-- W4AC REPEATER UPDATE --

In mid-December our W4AC repeater was relocated from the Anderson electric site to its new home at the Newport Offices property in the Morris Industrial Park, Englewood. Stew Haag-W4MO supervised the installation, assisted by Peter Pesa-N4RD and Jim LaCourse-KI4MOZ as the ground crew and with David Haag-KF4VGD aloft the 200' Rohn 45 tower. We owe them significant gratitude for their efforts.

While the 146.805 machine is running, and with the EchoLink capability, the installation is not yet complete. The current antenna feed line will be replaced with 7/8" hard line, the 444.100 machine and antenna are to be installed, and there is potential for a WiFi Internet connection.

The radio horizon of these repeaters is about 22 miles, which provides coverage to North Fort Myers, the western half of Charlotte County, the southwest quarter of DeSoto County, northeast to Myakka City in Manatee County, and northwest to Longboat Key and Sarasota.

-- SKYPE GOES MAINSTREAM --

Several of our computer-savvy members quite regularly utilize Skype, based in Luxembourg, which allows its registered users to make free computer-to-computer phone calls to each other anywhere in the world. Millions of people worldwide use it and the company was recently purchased by eBay.

Much less popular in the US than in Europe, Skype has mainly appealed here to techies and budget-conscious folks. There are two big reasons for Skype's niche status. First, most computers don't have microphones. Second, even when computers have mikes, they are clumsy when compared to conventional telephones. In addition, free Skype calls can only be made to other Skype users. To call non-members who use conventional phones, you have to sign up for a prepaid service called SkypeOut, although, at 2 cents/minute, the calls are cheap.

In early December Skype released a major new version of its phone-calling software, with added features—including video calling. It is also moving its service off the computers to a new breed of Internet-based telephone handsets.

While other companies have offered free computer-to-computer phone calls, Skype is the company most identified with free Internet phone calls. The new software, Skype 2.0 can be downloaded from Skype.com. Easy to use, this software searches for people you know to see if they are registered members.

(From "Personal Technology," Walter Mossberg, 05 December 2005 *Sarasota Herald Tribune*)

-- U.S. POSTAL RATE INCREASE--

A reminder that the U.S. postal rates will increase effective 08 January 2006. First Class domestic mail will go up from the current 37 cents to 39 cents for the first ounce; a 2-ounce letter will increase from the current 60 cents to 63 cents. Domestic mail post cards will increase from the current 23 cents to 24 cents.

A one-ounce letter to Canada or Mexico will increase from the present 60 cents to 63 cents.

A one-ounce Airmail letter to all other countries will increase from the current 80 cents to 84 cents.

(From 30 November 2005 *QRZ DX* and 05 December 2005 *The Weekly DX*)

-- HDTV MANDATORY IN 2009 --

Under the latest government measure to force HDTV on the public, broadcasters must surrender their analog TV licenses on 17 February 2009. Supposedly the federal government will realize "billions of dollars" from the sale of these analog spectrum licenses to wireless telephone and broadband providers.

While TV viewers who utilize cable or satellite sources will not be affected, there are 20.5 million US households still dependent on over the air broadcasts. The benevolent welfare-state US government doesn't want those hapless souls to lose access to the joys of TV. Therefore, the House measure includes a \$1.5 billion fund to provide each of those households with up to two coupons worth \$40 each for converter boxes to attach to their analog TV sets. (*Find that, or any, welfare in the US Constitution!!*) The Consumers Union isn't satisfied with that unconstitutional gift, however, claiming the government is "making your TV go black and then only paying part of the costs for some of the people to make it work again, and none of the costs for others." (*Ho Boy!*)

(From "House sets transition to digital TV for 2009," Stephen Labaton, NYT, *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, 20 December 2005 and "Hill making push for digital TV vote," Brooke Baliek, Reuters, 18 December 2005)

-- 2006 TARC DUES ARE NOW DUE --

While we still have your undivided attention, here's a reminder that your 2006 TARC dues are now due and payable. Under the Bylaws ratified at our 08 December meeting, all dues must be paid before 31 March 2006 or you will be deleted from the TARC Membership Roster. Dues are still just \$15 per year, payable (to "TARC") at our meetings or via mail to:

Donald Gray – WD7A
761 Mangrove Road
Venice, FL 34293