

# The Groundwire

Monthly Newsletter of the Tyler Amateur Radio Club  
P.O. Box 6393, Tyler, TX 75711

## PRESIDENT'S SOAPBOX

'Tis The Season

One of the busiest times of the year is upon us. The holidays bring us family, food and celebrations like no other time of the year. And we are busier than ever!

Our wonderful hobby mirrors life (or does life mirror our hobby? 😊 ) as this is also one of the busiest times for the TARC and local amateur operators. Here is what's on tap for the next few weeks:

Date	Activity
TBA	ARES Simulated Emergency Test
Nov. 19	TARC Thanksgiving Feast
Nov. 27-28	Eyes and Ears @ Broadway Square Mall
Dec. 3	Tyler Christmas Parade
Dec. 4-5	Eyes and Ears @ Broadway Square Mall
Dec. 11-12	Eyes and Ears @ Broadway Square Mall
Dec. 17	TARC Christmas Celebration
Dec. 18-19	Eyes and Ears @ Broadway Square Mall
Jan. 21	NWS <sup>1</sup> Skywarn Training

Don't forget our regularly scheduled Monday night nets either!

[Skywarn](#)<sup>2</sup> training is one of our club's most defining activities along with Field Day<sup>1</sup>. Smith County Skywarn has earned a solid reputation with the National Weather Service based on our promotion and attendance of this annual training and effective and accurate operations during weather events. Let's keep up the good work!

The Tyler Christmas Parade is FUN! Making sense of the chaos of organizing over one hundred entrants in the parade is quite challenging, but the amateur operators lending assistance always come through. This is an excellent opportunity for a new licensee to participate and operate in an activity that in many ways mimics emergency operations. The mood is festive and light and laughs and memories are many!

"Eyes and Ears" is a program where local amateurs assist the Tyler Police Department and Broadway Mall Security by discretely operating inside and outside the Mall and reporting anything unusual to the proper authorities via radio. We set up a repeater in the ETECS<sup>3</sup> van and operate a controlled net Friday and Saturday evenings between Thanksgiving and Christmas. We don't chase or apprehend... we just report. This is another great opportunity for a new licensee to participate in a net with a relaxed atmosphere. Anyone who would like to try their hand at being a net control operator of a small, low-stress net should also join us.

As busy as we are, remember to give thanks that we are so busy during the holidays. It means we have the freedom and the free time to devote to the people and activities we enjoy.

73 and Happy Thanksgiving!

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<sup>1</sup> National Weather Service

<sup>2</sup> Skywarn is the NWS hazardous weather watch and warning program

<sup>3</sup> East Texas Emergency Communication Services

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## RECENT EVENTS

- TARC Board Actions

In its October meeting, the Board concluded its discussions regarding changing the Club's registered organization from a purely non-profit status to a [501\(c\)\(3\)](#) "charitable" status. One purpose of this change is to allow the Club to accept donations from outside sources. In preceding Board discussions, there had been concern regarding the IRS reporting requirements for such organizations. Further research and investigations by the Board into that matter concluded that, given the relatively small amount of money flowing through the Club's accounts, burdensome reporting requirements would be avoided both now and in the future. Club President Mark Taylor (W5MCT) allowed that he and Treasurer Alan Luce (KE5RFR) were taking the lead to see that the required forms get completed and filed.

- ARES, RACES and MARS

At the October Club meeting, John Newman (N9JN), the guiding force behind [ETECS](#) previewed his presentation<sup>4</sup> on local emergency communications support that he's been invited to give to the Palestine club. John's talk centered on the differences between [ARES](#)<sup>5</sup> and [RACES](#)<sup>6</sup>. The Army's [MARS](#)<sup>7</sup> program was mentioned as a third, somewhat similar service but not generally thought of in the same manner as the other two.

While purposeful similarities between ARES and RACES exist, they are fundamentally different in their charters, organizations and operating protocols which can lead to interoperability difficulties. A simulated emergency event, which John hopes to schedule soon, can go a long way towards locating trouble spots and getting them resolved before a real emergency occurs. Anyone interested in emergency communications support should [contact John](#) about joining the ETECS team.

There has been a lot of recent discussions about FCC<sup>8</sup> part 97.113 regarding operators under employment with served agencies and operating ham radio equipment on behalf of their employer. In consideration of this, ETECS has added [these](#) procedures to their SOP<sup>9</sup> (click on ETECS SOP). (N9JN)

For those that want to hear more about these services, the ARRL has a free video on them narrated by none other than ex-CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite (KB2GSD). You can download the file (or watch the video) [Amateur Radio Today](#) from [this](#) page.

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<sup>4</sup> "Emergency Communications Today And In The Future"

<sup>5</sup> Amateur Radio Emergency Services

<sup>6</sup> Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services

<sup>7</sup> Military Affiliate Radio System

<sup>8</sup> Federal Communications Commission

<sup>9</sup> Standard Operating Procedures

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- Visitors and New Members

TARC was pleased to welcome the following new members and visitors at the October meeting. Club membership is open to all persons interested in amateur radio, licensed or not. Contact any Club officer (see below) for more information.

Name	Call	QTH	Interests
<b>Gene Coldwell</b>	<b>WB5CTQ</b>	<b>Tyler</b>	<b>ETECS, Antennas, Pub. Svc.</b>
Ken Finley	KB5WVK	Gladewater	Nets, Antennas, Home Brew
Kayla Denton	--	Tyler	Unspecified
Richard Wright	--	Tyler	ETECS, Nets
Jim Lindsey	--	Tyler	ETECS, Antennas, Pub. Svc.

**Bold denotes new member**

The Tyler Amateur Radio Club meets on the third Thursday of the month for fellowship and enrichment of our ham radio experience. Meetings are held at the Shiloh Road Church Of Christ, corner of Shiloh Road and Paluxy in Tyler at 7:00 p.m. Club meetings are open to all interested persons, with or without an amateur radio license.

- Monday Net Participation

Check-in statistics for the previous five nets are shown in the following table.

Date	Members	Visitors	Total	Traffic
10-12-09	30	10	40	4
10-19-09	28	4	32	2
10-26-09	28	6	34	5
11-2-09	32	10	42	6
11-9-09	36	6	30	6
<b>AVGS</b>	31	7	36	5

The Club's weekly two meter net is held each Monday at 8:00PM on the Club's K5TYR repeater, (147.000 MHz, negative offset and 88.5 PL tone). It continues to be one of the most active VHF nets in East Texas. The net is open to all licensed hams. More information about this and other area nets can be found [here](#).

- Licensing Testing Results

Congratulations to the following newly licensed / upgraded amateur radio operator(s)!

Date	Name	QTH	Class	Call
10-11-09*	--	--	--	--
11-8-09	Charles Hollowell	Flint, TX	Technician	KF5DUX
	Donnie Brown	Hideaway, TX	Technician	KF5DUW

\* There were no successful candidates at this session

Testing for new and upgraded amateur radio licenses is conducted by Club VEs<sup>10</sup> on the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 PM at the American Red Cross building at 320 E. Rieck Road in Tyler. Any

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<sup>10</sup> Volunteer Examiner – All amateur radio license tests are conducted by licensed volunteers.

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schedule changes will be announced on the TARC two meter net (details above). Mac McGraw, AE5FH, is the Contact VE. You can [e-mail](#) him or call him at 903-839-7916 for more information.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Change In Schedule

**The November Club meeting**, being our annual Thanksgiving Pot Luck Dinner, **will start an hour earlier** at 6:00 PM on Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>. All members and guests are invited. There's still time to sign up for the dish you wish to bring by visiting Misty Stevenson's (KE5RIT) site [here](#) or by e-mailing her [here](#). All members should plan on attending to share fellowship and thanksgiving for the blessings we all enjoy.

- After The Fox!

President Mark Taylor (W5MCT) floated the idea at the October Club meeting of having a "fox hunt". That appellation actually has nothing to do with the relatively small, furry carnivore that ranges throughout North America. Rather, it is an exercise in the ham sport of RDF<sup>11</sup>. No firm plans, schedule, etc. were made at the meeting so more discussion is sure to follow before anything definite is decided. Interested parties can click [here](#) for more information on "fox hunts".

- Monthly Club Meeting

The Club meeting primary agendas for the next three months are as follows ...

- November 19<sup>th</sup> – Thanksgiving Pot Luck Feast – Please sign up **now** for the dish you're going to provide by visiting [this](#) web site. (Misty Stevenson KE5RIT)
- December 17<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Social & Gift Exchange
- January 21<sup>st</sup> – Skywarn educational presentation by the National Weather Service

- Auction

The "experimental" auction slated for the October meeting was a non-event because no one brought anything to auction off. Undaunted, Club Treasurer Alan Luce (KE5RFR) has come forward and will bring some vintage ARRL<sup>12</sup> books to the November meeting for a [silent auction](#) with all proceeds going to the Club's general operating fund. All Club members are encouraged to follow Alan's lead and consider doing a bit of "shack cleaning" and bring useable but unneeded items to the auction as well.

## TECH TALK

This portion of the newsletter provides a venue for technical items of general interest to all hams. Broad topics such as antennas, feed lines, connectors, baluns, interference, etc. are all part and parcel of any ham activity. The purpose is to provide some basic information along with references and links for further reading and study. Here's an opportunity to "e-Elmer" each other – let's use it!

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<sup>11</sup> Radio Direction Finding

<sup>12</sup> American Radio Relay League – The flagship organization for amateur radio in the U.S.

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- Wherefore Art Thou?

Or, more colloquially, “Where you at?” If you’ve ever wondered exactly where you are (but not including *why* you are), you might find [this](#) web page useful. Using several (actually eight) web-based programs, given an address, it will calculate the exact latitude and longitude of that address ... well, more or less. Several example runs revealed that, beyond the “minutes” figure, none of them agreed on the calculated result. Note, of course, that for most ham radio purposes, e.g. determining beam headings, anything more precise than degrees isn’t really necessary.

There’s some other buttons on the page that you may find useful, but for the “Mother Lode” of links of links of most every imaginable sort, drop back to the .org level [here](#) and be prepared to spend some serious time with mouse in hand.

- Why 50 Ohms?

Being a neophyte at ham radio, there’s still a lot I have to learn and understand that the more experienced among my fellow amateurs take for granted. One such area of mystery is antennas and within that subject, the whirlpool of resistance, reactance and impedance still makes me dizzy. (No blonde jokes, please!) My learning path on this topic so far has led to the acceptance that coaxial antenna feed lines come basically in two flavors – 50 ohm and 75 ohm. OK, but why those two numbers? A couple of Google® searches provided some answers. As it turns out, there’s good, solid engineering behind the answer. The short explanation I found [here](#) while a longer, math-ridden explanation is [here](#). (I prefer the former!) While there’s still much to uncover related to this topic, e.g. velocity factors, for me at least some light has been shown into the still shadowy world of transmission lines. (KF5CCN)

- Antenna Height Revisited

Last month’s newsletter had an article that, among other things, discussed some aspects of antenna performance that are related to height above ground. The November issue of QST<sup>13</sup> has an excellent article on how antenna height can have a profound effect on antenna impedance, gain and even resonant frequency. The article appears in the regular feature “Hands-On Radio” and is on pages 64 and 65 of that issue. If you’re not a member of the ARRL and have any interest at all in maximizing an antenna’s performance, it’s worth your trouble to find someone who is a member and borrow their copy of the magazine – and then join!

## MEMBERS’ CORNER

- Don Simonton

Don has been a ham since 1994. He moved to Tyler in 1995, attended a TARC meeting and has been a member ever since. Don’s ham radio history includes a long and strong participation in activities beyond just operating. For example, he’s been interested in and heavily involved in Skywarn and ARES activities, including net control responsibilities, as well as serving the Club in several official capacities.

As for operating, besides supporting Skywarn, Don’s main interest have and continue to include a strong interest in VHF-UHF contesting where has won or placed highly in ARRL-sponsored

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<sup>13</sup> QST is the house organ for the ARRL

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contests. On HF<sup>14</sup>, Don is mostly on 20 and 75 meters, regularly checking in on several 75 meter nets.

Don's ham shack is actually a "shack". Being a small, dedicated building separate from his house. He has quite a plethora of equipment and antennas, but is quick to say that it's the camaraderie and good friends he has made from being involved in the hobby that give him the most pleasure. Well said, Don! His complete ham biography and pictures of his shack and antennas are on the Club's website [here](#).

To be featured in "Members' Corner", just submit your "ham biography" (e.g. when and how you got started in amateur radio) and a photo of your shack via [e-mail](#) to [The Groundwire](#).

## THIS 'N THAT

- **[SAFETY ALERT!!](#)**

A most tragic, deadly and completely avoidable accident was [chronicled](#) on the ARRL website recently regarding the dangers of performing an antenna installation near high tension lines. Please always remember, it is literally worth our lives to keep in our frontal lobes that **lethal high voltages** exist both inside the shack in our amplifiers and outside the shack in power lines and lightning strikes. Even household outlet voltage can be lethal! No hobby is worth dying for especially when it's caused by laziness, ignorance, sloppiness, inattention or anything else that dilutes our awareness of where we are and what we're doing.

- [Amateur Radio and the Space Station](#)

Most all hams probably know that astronauts aboard the ISS<sup>15</sup> have made contacts on our frequencies in the past. There's an interesting article by NASA on the topic [here](#) for those interested. It points out, among other things, that ham radio was used aboard the Russian space station "Mir" to effect emergency communications when the "Mir" was in distress. Seems like "When all else fails ..." applies even in space!

- [All It Takes Is Money](#)

Have you, or any other ham you know, ever stood back, looked at the shack and said "I'm done. It's perfect. There's nothing left to do. It's finished." Probably not. Hams by nature seem to be ever working to improve, or at least change *something* about their shack or antenna farm. How many hams do you know of, or have heard say on the air that they just acquired *another* "back up" rig, amp, key (if they're so inclined), transmatch, power supply, etc. etc. etc.? We just never seem to be satisfied with the status quo. In this respect, perhaps only bass fishermen can top us in having more than one of some "thing", especially those things that we can't use more than one of at any given time.

Of course, sometimes it's our innate competitive nature that drives us to accumulate "things" in some sort of misguided "keeping up with the Jones" attitude. Well, now you can relax. The race is over. The prize goes to W9EVT, Mr. George Ulm of Washington Island, Wisconsin. If you doubt my choice, click [here](#) and see for yourself. Q.E.D.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> High Frequency – Generally accepted to be 2 Mhz through 30 Mhz

<sup>15</sup> International Space Station

<sup>16</sup> In Latin, Quod erat demonstrandum", literally "which was to be demonstrated"

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- Trade, Trade Lemonade<sup>17</sup>...

Hams, as much or more than any other group, love a bargain and one-to-one trading is a staple in the bargain hunting process. Swap meets, tailgating, etc. have always been favored routes to finding everything from that obscure item that's sorely needed but long out of production to that "can't live without it but can't afford a new one" whatzits that's absolutely needed to complete the shack (if that's possible).

To help in the process, several "traders' nets" are active on the bands to help an "itcher" locate a "scratcher". Some of the more active ones can be found on 3.870 Fridays at 7:30 PM; 7.245 Sundays at 10:00 AM and 3.922 Sundays at 7:30 PM, all Central times.

- Keep A "LID" On It!

Early on in my ham life, a co-conspirator and I wrote a short article for a (now defunct) ham magazine<sup>18</sup> on some operating "do's & don'ts" e.g. "Never use 100 watts when 1000 watts will do." and so forth. [This article](#) goes considerably further in suggesting operating characteristics that identify a "LID" – a somewhat anachronistic term meant to label those with what might be called "loose" operating skills and practices. While some are tongue-in-cheek, some should be taken to heart especially in non-casual operating, e.g. during emergency communications. Some "echoes" from last month's video re: "what's wrong with ham radio" that was posted on YouTube. (AG5X)

- German Team Takes High-Speed CW Crown

I'm a CW guy – well, sort of. I passed my Extra Class exam when 20 wpm proficiency was still required (1978) and I still enjoy the mode. I never got much past that speed with any sort of reliability and have always admired the 50+ wpm rag-chewing speed demons that, back then, could be found with regularity at the bottom edges of the bands. It wasn't until this year, however, that I discovered the IARU<sup>19</sup> High Speed Telegraphy World Championships. This year's contest was won by a German team with the (calculated equivalent) astonishing speed of 168 wpm<sup>20</sup>. You can read about it [here](#). (AG5X)

- For Physically Challenged Hams

If you know a handicapped ham, you might suggest that they visit [this](#) website. It's a website dedicated to help make their enjoyment of the hobby more enjoyable. (KC5IIS)

## ITEMS FOR SALE

- Yaesu FT-100 HF, VHF, UHF radio with separation kit.
- ATAS-100 auto tune antenna covers 40 meters through UHF.

More information on these items can be found on the Club's website [here](#).

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<sup>17</sup> An old nursery rhyme that ends with "you can't go back once the trade is made."

<sup>18</sup> "Ham Radio Horizons"

<sup>19</sup> International Amateur Radio Union – The worldwide governing body for amateur radio

<sup>20</sup> Words Per Minute. A "word" is generally accepted to be a group of five letters.

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Members with items that they'd like to sell (or swap) can be listed on the Club's website by [e-mailing](#) a full description of them along with price (or swap) targets to the Club's webmaster Gaylen Gage (KD5KIZ).

## 2009 - 2010 TARC OFFICERS

President	Mark Taylor	W5MCT	<a href="mailto:Taylor.mark.c@gmail.com">Taylor.mark.c@gmail.com</a>
Vice President	Art Sharp	K5LXK	<a href="mailto:Drsars08@gmail.com">Drsars08@gmail.com</a>
Secretary/Treasurer	Alan Luce	KE5RFR	<a href="mailto:txlflash@aol.com">txlflash@aol.com</a>
At Large/Net Control Chairman	Don Simonton	K5LOW	<a href="mailto:K5low@arrl.net">K5low@arrl.net</a>
At Large	Clif Sherrod	KD5UCY	<a href="mailto:clifanshirley@yahoo.com">clifanshirley@yahoo.com</a>

Anyone interested in joining the Tyler Amateur Radio Club, licensed or not, may contact any of the above Club officers for more information.

## SOME USEFUL LINKS

Content	Link
Tyler Amateur Radio Club	<a href="http://www.tylerarc.org">www.tylerarc.org</a>
Ham License Practice Tests	<a href="http://www.grz.com/p/testing.pl">www.grz.com/p/testing.pl</a>
Contest Information	<a href="http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/">www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/</a> <a href="http://www.arrl.org/contests/#corral">http://www.arrl.org/contests/#corral</a>
Hamfest Information	<a href="http://www.arrl.org/hamfests.html">http://www.arrl.org/hamfests.html</a>
Good repeater protocol instruction	<a href="http://www.hamuniverse.com/repeater">http://www.hamuniverse.com/repeater</a>

## CNN DESK

**Member contributions** to the newsletter are not only encouraged but **are really, truly needed** or it will rapidly become news-**less**. All Club members are of equal standing, and therefore of equal responsibility, and all have something of value to share. Accordingly, each member should consider him/herself responsible to be an **active** contributor to their Club's newsletter. We'll accept inputs in any form or fashion, e.g. text, web links or preferably a combination of both, with [e-mail](#) being the preferred method. Whatever means is chosen, we need submissions to be in our hands by at least the Monday before publication.

***Come to the Club meeting, wear your badge, bring a visitor and something<sup>21</sup> to share!***

73 to all,

Bob – AG5X & Elaine – KF5CNN  
[Co-Editors](#)

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<sup>i</sup> One ham activity that is held annually and is a lot of fun is field day. (actually a weekend). Hams go to some outdoor area (perhaps a city park, perhaps a mountain peak) and operate their equipment on emergency power that is not connected to the city power system. Temporary antennas are installed for the event. Hams spend the weekend making as many contacts on as many bands as they can. The purpose of field day is to give the hams experience in setting up a station in the "field" and operating while using emergency power and antennas.

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<sup>21</sup> News, announcement, joke, suggestion, problem, solution, idea, experience, etc. ... or even snacks!