

The Groundwire

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

PRESIDENT'S SOAPBOX

"The Medium is the Message"

While ruminating on ham radio one day I was reminded of a research paper I wrote while I was in college. The topic was how new mass media outlets affected old forms of the media... how newspapers changed when radio became popular, how radio changed when television came of age, etc. Amateur radio has been around long enough to see a number of changes in communications methodologies as well. It begs the question: " *What mediums, both old and new, are best for communications for the members of a present day amateur radio club?*"

For the sake of discussion, let's assume we have five common ways to exchange information (I know there are others, but bear with me here...):

- Amateur Radio
- Cellular & Landline Telephone
- E-mail
- Newsletter
- T.A.R.C. Website
- Forums, Blogs, etc.

If we plug these choices into a matrix and compare some of the characteristics of each mode, let's see what we discover:

	<i>Ham Radio</i>	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>E-Mail</i>	<i>Newsletter</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Forums & Blogs</i>
Immediacy of message	High	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Low
Longevity of message	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
Ease of Message Creation	Easy, Just Talk!	Easy, Just Talk!	Moderate, just type	Hard	Hard	Moderate, just type
Ease of Message Reception	High	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate
Privacy/Public Nature	Public	Private	Private	Public	Public	Public

Based on these data, the answer to the aforementioned question is "It depends!" Use the correct communications medium and you have a very good chance of getting your message through; use the

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wrong medium and you may never get your message across (sounds just like ham radio and choosing the right bands and modes, eh?).

With all the choices we have as a Club and as Club members, make sure you take proper advantage of all the alternatives.

- Telephone is the choice if immediacy & privacy are required. Spoken word messages are transient in nature.
- The T.A.R.C. website and newsletter are perfect for “durable” messages that incorporate written and graphical elements, but there is a natural “delay” in getting the message transmitted from the message creator to the editor to the recipients.
- Forums, blogs, tweets, etc., are very similar to the website and newsletter, but the message originator also creates the message in the forum. Messages can be available immediately and they remain available for recipients indefinitely. That’s great for long discussion threads.
- E-mail messages can be quite durable, and relatively private. Immediacy of messages is quite dynamic.
- Ham radio is transient. It is also very public, which is a plus if you are trying to communicate with a bunch of people at once. It is also as easy to transmit a message as any other medium, whether spoken word or textual.

Use them all to their fullest advantage! We come together as an organization because of amateur radio, so let us be sure to utilize our hobby every chance we have, whether it is rag chewing on the repeater or announcing something to sell on the Monday night net. Use every format that makes sense, but realize that RF is the glue that binds us together. Remember what communication theorist Marshall McLuhan said: “The medium is the message!”

RECENT EVENTS

- Meet and Greet Lunch

As announced at the September Club meeting by president Mark Taylor, the Club held an informal lunch time gathering at the Hickory Fare barbeque restaurant on Gentry Parkway, on Saturday, September 26th. Loosely associated with the [Texas QSO Party](#) (that date was the starting date for that event), ten members shared good fellowship and dined on some really good barbeque. Informal get-togethers such as this provide valuable venues for us to get to know each other outside more focused activities such as Club meetings and Field Day, etc. That makes them great opportunities to make new and enriched acquaintances. If you didn’t attend this event, make sure you don’t miss the next one. Both you and your Club will be the better for it.

- Visitors and New Members

T.A.R.C. was pleased to welcome the following new members and visitors at the September meeting. Club membership is open to all persons interested in amateur radio, licensed or not. Dues discounts are available for multiple members from the same family. Contact any Club officer (see below) for more information.

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Name	Call	QTH	Interests
David Peay	KC5EPK	Tyler	Satellite, 2M, 440 & HF
Joshua Green	KE5FAM	Frankston	Skywarn, ARES, RACES
Gordon Martin	WA5GM	Tyler	Unspecified
Diana Martin	KC5YOC	Tyler	Unspecified
Herbert Rainey	KE5ZRQ	Tyler	Unspecified
William Muxworthy	N5OOX	Tyler	Unspecified

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. Drawings for ham-related door prizes are frequently held at meetings. Winners must be present to win.

- Monday Net Participation

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

Date	Members	Visitors	Total	Traffic
9/14/09	33	9	42	5
9/21/09	25	13	38	2
9/28/09	33	9	42	6
10/5/09	31	7	38	4
AVGS	31	9	40	4

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](#).

- VE Testing Results

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

9-13-09	Daniel Larsh	Tyler	Technician	KD5ZSJ
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VE testing is normally conducted 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 schedule changes will be announced on the T.A.R.C. 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

- Monthly Club Meeting

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

- October 15th – State & Local Emergency Preparedness Plans (N9JN)

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- November 19th – Thanksgiving Pot Luck Feast – Please sign up early for the dish you're going to provide by visiting this web site. (Misty Stevenson KE5RIT)
- December 17th – Christmas Social & Gift Exchange
- Auction

Members who have some usable but “excess” ham-related items they're willing to donate to the Club should bring them to the October meeting. There'll be an auction of those items at the meeting with the Club benefitting from the proceeds. This will be an “experimental event” that could evolve into a regular, perhaps annual fund raiser for the Club.

TECH TALK

This portion of the newsletter provides a venue for technical items of interest to hams in general and Club members in particular. Broad topics such as antennas, feed lines, connectors, baluns, RFI, 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. Detail and depth is along the lines of the ARRL's “Hints & Kinks” rather than a comprehensive tutorial. There is a wealth of resources for the latter but personal experience is often the best teacher for the former. Here's an opportunity to “e-Elmer” each other – use it!

- A Low Cost Two Meter Band Antenna

The CC&R restrictions where we live require a some amount of “stealth” technology to be applied to our “antenna farm”. For two meter band capability, we chose a DIY approach that would work well with the dense growth of pine trees just outside our back fence. Browsing the web, we discovered the “Slim Jim” antenna. We found this version made from 450 ohm twin lead to fit our needs. It's definitely cost-effective, very easy to construct and easy tune to whatever frequency is desired within the band just by adjusting the feed point. Ours hangs ~30 feet up in a pine tree and shows no signs of deterioration for being there for almost a year. Other articles about the Slim Jim indicate that 300 ohm TV lead-in also works well for lower power levels. We only run ~5 watts, but the durability of the heavier 450 ohm line appealed to us.

Versions of this antenna for any frequency that are made from flexible materials are obviously highly portable and therefore well-suited to Field Day and other similar remote operations. We didn't find any reliable performance statistics for it, but ours works well enough to successfully work into most of the area repeaters from our Whitehouse QTH. (Editors)

- “Heavy” Antenna Webinar

When it comes to antennas (When doesn't it?), most of us have to be content to put up what we can, where we can and, generally, as high as we can with little regard for the surrounding terrain. Serious (with a capital “S”) contesters and DX-ers aren't content to leave it at that. For those (ostensibly Type A) hams, the ARRL offers a program called “High Frequency Terrain Assessment”, or just HFTA for short. This is a video of a webinar recently conducted by a guru in the efficient use of the HFTA program. It's quite long (~two hours) and gets technically quite deep into the subject. If you've got some time to burn and want to better understand why “higher” isn't always “better”, give it a look. This first minute or so is just audio but it's actually a PowerPoint® presentation. (Editors)

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Submissions to Tech Talk can be sent via [e-mail](#) with the subject "Tech Talk" or by USPS to the Club's PO box addressed to [The Groundwire](#). Don't forget to cite any copywrited references. Submissions will be credited to the submitter.

MEMBERS' CORNER

- [Gaylen Gage](#)

Gaylen has been interested in ham radio since the age of 10 when a crystal radio kit and a simple wire antenna got him hooked. The increasing responsibilities of growing into adulthood, school, military, marriage, kids, etc., kept him from getting licensed until the year 2000. He's been involved with T.A.R.C. and E.T.E.C.S.¹ since then. Gaylen is the Smith County liaison officer for RACES and works closely with county fire marshals during wide-spread emergency situations.

Gaylen has an extensive lineup of equipment in his shack for both HF and VFH that he uses for general ham activities as well as to support his emergency communications work. Gaylen says he doesn't participate in contests or rag chews much, but he does check into some HF nets for continuing practice and verification of his operating capabilities. Gaylen is the webmaster for the Club's [website](#). His complete ham biography and a picture of his shack can be found [here](#).

To be featured in "Members' Corner", just submit your "ham biography" (see Gaylen's example at the above link for content and limit your text to 500 words or less) and a photo of your shack via [e-mail](#) with the subject "Members' Corner" or by USPS to the Club's PO box addressed to [The Groundwire](#). We can only publish one per month so submissions will be used in the order they are received. New members are especially encouraged to participate.

THIS 'N THAT

This portion of the newsletter serves as a venue for miscellaneous items of general interest.

- [Antenna Restrictions](#) – If you're at all interested or concerned about amateur radio operators being able to provide communications support during times of emergency, or just oppressive antenna restrictions in general, you should ask your Representative to support H.R. 2160. The full text of the bill can be read [here](#). (Alan Luce - KE5RFR)
- [Managing A Very Large Hamfest](#) – The two links below are a documentary video of the New England Amateur Radio "NEAR-Fest V" Hamfest event last May. We thought it interesting due to the size of the event and the robust way it was administered. [Part 1](#) is 10:00 minutes long; [part 2](#) is 9:32 minutes long. Perhaps some of our local hamfest organizers could take some pointers from these guys. (Editors)
- [What's "Wrong" with Ham Radio](#) – The producer of the above NEAR-Fest video, [K1OIK](#), has also posted a YouTube [video](#) about what he thinks is "wrong" with ham radio. While we think he makes a few rational observations, noting his QTH (and the second opening graphic), we can't help but wonder if perhaps he belongs to that group of hams whose members don't like to see change. Your mileage may vary. (Editors)

¹ East Texas Emergency Communications Services

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- A Rebuttal – As response to K1OIK, another YouTube [video](#) was posted by a young U.K. ham Dominic Smith, [MOBLF](#). Therein, he tries to respond to some of the points made by K1OIK. We think he does pretty well in some ways but misses rather badly on others. Again, your mileage may vary. (Editors)

Note: The last two video links are provided for potential entertainment value only. The views presented therein do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Editors.

- New Leadership Inside E.T.E.C.S.

John Newman (N9JN) has announced that T.A.R.C. members Mark Taylor (W5MCT) and Don Simonton (K5LOW) will be assuming leadership roles within E.T.E.C.S.. This change has been wrought by Bob Samford's (KC5SMC) stepping down from his long-held responsibilities. Be sure and give Bob your thanks for all his past support and to Mark and Don for taking up the slack to make sure E.T.E.C.S. continues to perform its vital functions during local East Texas emergencies. (Editors)

- 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. (Carl Moss KC5IIS)

If you have a general interest, ham-related item that you feel the membership would hear about, you can submit it via [e-mail](#) with the subject "This 'N That" or by USPS to the Club's PO box addressed to The Groundwire. Don't forget to cite copywrited references as necessary. Submissions will be credited to the submitter.

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](#).

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.

2009 - 2010 T.A.R.C. OFFICERS

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

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

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SOME USEFUL LINKS

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

EDITORS' COMMENTARY

On behalf of all Club members, we wholeheartedly thank Alan Luce - KE5RFR for all his time and hard work spent over the last years as newsletter editor. Increasing personal and business demands on his time and energies finally required him to request relief from that responsibility. **Thank you, Alan!**

For ourselves, we also say a special **“Thank you, Gaylen Gage!”** for his invaluable assistance in getting us “settled in” as the newsletter co-editors. Gaylen worked steadily with us over several days from getting the necessary changes made to the website, to dealing with a changed protocol for newsletter distribution, to providing a much appreciated direct member contribution to our first issue of The Groundwire, i.e. his profile in Members' Corner.

We also want to say that we feel very privileged to have this opportunity to serve our Club. We're firm believers that the more you put into an organization, the more you're likely to get out of it, usually many times over. There's always opportunity if not *responsibility* for all members to contribute some “extra effort” support in whatever ways they can, i.e. beyond paying dues and attending meetings.

This first issue of the newsletter under our tutelage is still a “work in progress”. We actively solicit member inputs, comments, suggestions about what you like and don't like, what needs to be added or dropped, and we'll do our best to respond, taking into account that we know we can't please everyone. Further, **member contributions** to the newsletter are not only encouraged but **are actually required** or it will rapidly become news-less. Accordingly, each member should consider him/herself to be an active freelance reporter to this organ.

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. We will be distributing the newsletter a week before the regularly scheduled Club meeting, i.e. usually on the second Thursday of the month. As before, it will also be posted to the Club's website.

Come to the Club meeting, bring a visitor, wear your badge and bring something¹ to share!

73 to all,

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

¹ News, announcement, joke, suggestion, problem, solution, idea, experience, etc. ... or even food.