

The Groundwire

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

PRESIDENT'S SOAPBOX

To Be or Net to Be

A couple of weeks ago I received a call from my friend and Elmer, Dave Allen, AK5DA, wondering if amateur radio could be applied to the recent spate of church fires in East Texas just as the Eyes and Ears program was implemented to assist with Broadway Square Mall security during the holidays. Upon reflection, and in consultation with TARC and ETECS leaders, a net that covers so many potential locations for an extended period is probably not practical. We just do not have the manpower. We could probably provide a net control station if necessary, and all of our repeaters would be available if needed. Dave's call, however, prompted me to ponder about nets.

Wikipedia defines an amateur radio net as "...an on-the-air gathering of amateur radio operators..." The complete entry at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amateur_radio_net goes on to discuss schedules, frequencies and types of nets. There are literally hundreds of nets called every day for a variety of reasons. Regardless of the band, type or topic, each net lets hams test their equipment, learn about propagation, chat with friends and develop good operating practices that may be needed in the future during emergency communications operations.

Equally important, however, is that nets have to be enjoyable. Our weekly TARC two-meter net on Monday evening is exhibiting the highest participation levels in years, recently averaging greater than 40 check-ins per week. More than seventy different hams have checked into our net over the past couple of months. It must be fun! Other regularly scheduled nets in Smith County include the ETECS training net and the Smith County ten-meter net. We also call nets for Skywarn, Beauty and the Beast bicycle race, Eyes and Ears, Tyler Jaycees Christmas parade and for just about any other reason we can come up with (pardon my dangling preposition)!

Worldwide, you can find a net for just about any occasion: Hurricane watching, county hunting, DXing, RVing, rag chewing, contesting and maritime mobiling. There are nets for MARS, SATERN, CW and IOTA. There are nets for fans of Icom, Yaesu, Collins, Drake, Heath, Hallicrafters & Ten-Tec equipment. Old Timers and Gators have nets. YLs have nets.

I have always thought that there should be a Friday night football net. What a great marriage: The religious fanaticism of Texas schoolboy football and ham radio! Game scores could be relayed far and wide. Local hams in every city and burg could take a HT to the game and report scores as they happen to a local or regional net. Scores could be posted on a website or relayed to other nets. Imagine Jim, KA5RHZ, high atop the press box at Arp's Tiger Stadium reporting scores with the roar of the crowd in the background!

Do you have any ideas for calling a net?

JANUARY HAPPENINGS

TARC Annual Skywarn® Basic Training

The January Club Meeting was devoted to the National Weather Service's (NWS) Basic Training presentation. Two NWS staffers from the Shreveport office gave a two-part, 2+ hour talk on the basic of severe weather identification and reporting. In addition to an excellent turnout by Club members, community service organizations and the general public were also well represented

The Groundwire

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

bring the total number of attendees to seventy-two. In particular, the Tyler Police Department had approximately 20 officers of various rank in attendance. Excellent publicity in the local press helped to achieve these outstanding numbers.

Visitors and New Members

TARC was pleased to welcome the following new members and visitors at the January 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
Dan Larsh	KF5CZX	Tyler	
Gary Newman	N5XPD	Tyler	
Patrick Leech	KD5UCI	Tyler	ETECS, PubSvc, Gen. VHF/UHF

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.

ARRL Audio News - Suspended

The audio news has been a staple of the Club's Monday night 2M net. However, for the time being, it has been suspended pending the League's determination of how best to distribute such content. This decision comes in the wake of the new ARRL website design. We're assured that the suspension is temporary but no definite date for resuming this service has been announced.

Monday 2M Net Participation

Check-in statistics for the latest series of TARC Monday night nets were as follows:

<u>Net Date</u>	<u>Total Checkins</u>	<u>Traffic Passed</u>
• 01-18-10	47	4
• 01-25-10	50	7
• 02-01-10	45	3
• 02-08-10	37	3

The Club's weekly two meter net is held each Monday at 8:00 PM 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

Testing for new and upgraded amateur radio licenses is conducted by Club VEs¹ 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 TARC two meter net (details above). Mac

¹ Volunteer Examiner - All amateur radio license tests are conducted by licensed volunteers.

The Groundwire

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

McGraw, AE5FH, is the Contact VE. You can [e-mail](#) him or call him at 903-839-7916 for more information.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The FCC has announced that a new question pool for Technician Class testing has been approved and will become effective on July 1, 2010. Anyone now studying to take the Technician test with the currently available test preparation materials should do so by June 30, 2010. After that date, newer study materials will be required to be fully prepared. The last scheduled test date by the Tyler VE Group using the current question pool is June 13th.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Beauty and the Beast Bicycle Race

This year's edition of the race will be held on March 20th. The start and finish lines will be the Kiepersol Estates (winery) at 5165 FM 2493E in Bullard, TX. The racers will start off at 9:00 AM while TARC volunteers are requested to be there by 8:00 AM to get set up. As in years past, TARC support will be critical to the safety and success of the race and all TARC members are encouraged to make a strong effort to participate. Aside from the fixed base net control operators, all others will need a vehicle, preferably a pickup truck, and a high-power mobile radio as hand-held radios will not be powerful enough to maintain the necessary contact through the repeater (presently planned to be the Club's 147.000 machine). Interested parties should contact [Art Sharp](#), K5LXK for further information.

TARC Annual Chili Cook-off

The February Club meeting will be the venue for this event. Last year there were seven entries and this year, with the continued growth in the Club's membership rolls being outstanding, there should be even more. This event is an excellent opportunity for all members, but especially newer members to experience some great fellowship as well as have a chance to sample several local chili recipes and vote on the best. Prizes will be awarded and Tums/Roloids provided. Members who are not going to participate in the cook-off are encouraged to bring desserts, milk (to cool the "heat" of some of the entrants), sodas, etc. The Club will be providing bowls, crackers, utensils, etc.

Drakes on the Lake

The Cherokee County ARC has announced the 6th annual "Drakes on the Lake" K5JVL special event station operation for Saturday, April 24th. Scheduled times are 1500Z through 0500Z on Sunday the 25th. Currently planned frequencies +/- QRM are 3.875, 7.275, 14.275 and 21.375 MHz. Operations, both CW and sideband will be from the RV campgrounds located on Lake Jacksonville using only vintage Drake radios. A certificate of contact will be available via a 9x12 SASE to Brad Law, 840 Henderson Street, Jacksonville, 75766. Talk-in to the operations point will be on the Club's 146.800 repeater (136.5 PL).

The Groundwire

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

Monthly Club Meeting

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

- March 18th – Fox Hunting Presentation by John Arnold W5CUD ???
- April 15th – Nominations for new officers; Preliminary Field Day Planning – Paul Paulsen K5FPF will chair our 2010 Field Day efforts.
- May 20th - Election of new officers and annual dinner.

TECH TALK

This portion of the newsletter provides a venue for technical topics 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!

Low-Band Receiving Antenna

A separate wire receiving antenna for 40M and down is a common fixture among many hams who have the space to erect them and take advantage of their sharp directivity and low noise characteristics. The so-called "**beverage**" antenna is one popular choice, the "**Windom**" being another.. To be truly effective, such antennas require a lot of space as they're commonly full, or even multiple wavelengths in length. This makes erecting one for 160M a bit of a challenge for residential neighborhood QTHs. A good attempt at solving that dilemma has been proposed by Gary Breed (K9AY) in the terminated loop concept. Gary's solution for 160M requires only a circular area just 30 feet in diameter. A full discussion of his approach can be found [here](#). It might make an interesting project to see how his design could be scaled down for higher bands.

On Vertical Antenna Ground Systems

Getting the most performance from a vertical antenna can be a challenge, especially if the beast is ground-mounted (like here at Editorville). One component that can make or break such a system is the radial fiend under the antenna. Your editor and his Co-Pilot are almost "over-read" on the subject. Nonetheless, one of the better serial we've come across has appeared over the last several months in the ARRL publication [QEX](#)². The series of articles we refer to were submitted by Rudy Severns (N6LF) and can be found on his website [here](#). They comprise seven separate articles in PDF format and may be downloaded free of charge.

The "Other Groundwire"

It's fortuitous that our Club's newsletter is called "The Groundwire" because there's likely no more important aspect to building a good station than having a sufficient ground system extant.

² Billed as a "forum for communications experimenters", it depends entirely on the submissions of members on a broad range of topics related to amateur radio.

The Groundwire

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

There's lots of material on the Web regarding same. One good example can be found [here](#). The commercial firm of Industrial Communication Engineers, Ltd. Has several freebie technical publications (TP) of interest to ham operators on [this](#) page. In particular, TPs 11, 31, 35, 36, 42, 60 and 80 seem most appropriate. All are short, a couple of pages or so, and are meant to provide basic information only.

MEMBERS' CORNER

Bob Sanford - KC5SMC

Like many of his peers, Bob Sanford became interested in ham radio while building various Heathkit projects, having graduated to that level from "two cans and string". He went through the "CB era" and did some VHF-FM marine operating with his First Class Radiotelephone permit. Bob's wife, Charlotte is also a ham operator (KC5BKC). You can read his full story and see his "shack shots" [here](#).

To be featured in "Members' Corner", 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

Where You At?

Your Editor recently had the opportunity to dig through his "archives" of ham radio publications, logs, copies of articles, etc. only to discover that all the recent changes in call signs, DXCC designations, etc. have left the reference materials woefully out of date. Undaunted, he immediately went to the mother lode of all things true and false (aka the Internet) and with only minor fumbling around came upon [this](#) site. It's essentially a storehouse of maps and data of worldwide ham-related information such as which prefix goes with which part of a particular country (handy for DXers), IOTA³ stuff, CQ and IARU zones, etc. etc. etc. There are also freebie programs one can download to produce said maps on one's on PC. Isn't it interesting how prevalent it is that hams around the world are so willing to share what they know and do with fellow hams - all free of charge. Is there any other hobby whose practitioners are so uniformly generous?

Ham-Com 2010

This major ham event will be held in Plano, TX on June 11-12 at the Plano Centre - same as last year. Tickets will go on sale March 1st with a \$1.00 discount if purchased before May 30th. Full details can be found [here](#).

Wall-Wart Removers

It seems that most every "accessory" in the Editorsville shack is powered by a "wall-wart" - those little encapsulated plug-in transformers that reduce mains voltages to some low (usually DC) voltage to power a keyer or pilot light or ... To make matters worse, the little buggers are so shaped that putting them into a wall outlet or power strip is almost guaranteed to cover up and

³ Islands on the Air

The Groundwire

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

make inaccessible the next outlet in line. **Not anymore!!** The folks at MusicMall.com (of all places) sells what they bill as wall-wart “removers”. A more accurate word might be “displacers” but that’s beside the point. Said “removers” are actually A/C Y-cord adapters as can be seen [here](#). They’re sold in three-packs for under \$20 plus shipping. If you’ve got A/C outlets “blocked” by one “warts”, this may be the solution to your problems.

JUST FOR FUN

Ham Radio Trivia

QRZ.com is a well-known and respected website for all sorts of things, most often as a reliable Call sign database. However, there’s more “under the hood” than that, lots more. One of your editor’s favorite pages is [here](#). Anyone who’s been a Ham for even a short period of time knows that Amateur radio is a rich and rewarding hobby with a fascinating history. Ham radio has been around since the very dawn of wireless communications and has continually progressed along with technology. Whether it’s old spark gap operations or satellites and computers, there has always been a strong association with amateur radio and new technology.

The trivia questions that start on that page (there’s 1151 questions in all) contain some of the more interesting and sometimes remarkable facts about our hobby, how it got here and where it’s going. Why not try out a few questions and test your skill? You’ll probably learn something that you didn’t know before.

How Would You React?

Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says, "I've lost my electron." The other says, "Are you sure?" The first replies "Yes, I'm positive." (Personally, I got a charge out of that one!)

ITEMS FOR SALE

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). A list and description of items currently for sale can be found on the Club’s website [here](#).

2009 - 2010 TARC OFFICERS

President	Mark Taylor	W5MCT	Taylor.mark.c@gmail.com
Vice President	Art Sharp	K5LXK	Drsars08@gmail.com
Secretary/Treasurer	Alan Luce	KE5RFR	txlaflash@aol.com
At Large/Net Control Chair	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.

The Groundwire

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

SOME USEFUL LINKS

Content	Link
Tyler Amateur Radio Club	www.tylerarc.org
Ham License Practice Tests	www.qrz.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 Study Materials for all Hams	http://www.hamuniverse.com/

CNN DESK

One of the pieces of traffic on a recent TARC Monday night net was regarding the “Hams for Breakfast” gathering in Edom. It seems that there is some interest in re-starting that second-Saturday tradition since, apparently, participation had fallen off recently. Perhaps that’s been the case for some others as well. Both myself and Bob have been interested in such events but Edom is just too far away from our Whitehouse QTH – about 40 miles. We’re wondering if there’s any interest in a similar event a bit closer in. Suggestions anyone?

On a separate note, readers may notice that this edition of the newsletter is somewhat shorter than usual – content-wise. The lack of membership inputs is the reason – there’s been none outside of the Members’ Corner. Club newsletters, The Groundwire included, are what the members make it. Food for thought.

Come to the Club meeting, wear your badge, bring a visitor and something⁴to share!

73 to all,

Bob – AG5X & Elaine – KF5CNN
Co-Editors

⁴ News, announcement, joke, suggestion, problem, solution, idea, experience, etc. ... or even snacks!