

The Groundwire

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

PRESIDENT'S SOAPBOX

Call To Service

Although still a couple of months away, it is not too early to talk about the upcoming election of Club officers and, in a broader sense, serving the Club.

Club officers are elected each May to serve one year terms as Board of Trustees (the board) members. The board meets regularly to attend to all the usual board stuff e.g. ensuring the financial, legal and operational well-being of the TARC. Club trustee Clif Sherrod, KD5UCY, is heading up our efforts to organize this year's election process and establish the slate of candidates. I'm fairly certain that some incumbents will not be running for office again, so we definitely need some Club members to step up and put their names in the hat. So, if you feel led to serve in a board member capacity, please let Clif know.

Serving as a Club officer is important - very important. However, there are other TARC "jobs" that make the Club operate effectively, and some of these jobs may be more vital to the club's well-being than any of the elected positions. Here are a few of our present volunteer positions:

- Bob and Elaine Jackson, AG5X and KF5CNN respectively, are co-editors of the TARC newsletter, "The Groundwire." Since not every Club member attends every Club meeting, the newsletter is the only means the Club has to broadly communicate with its membership to keep them apprised of activities and to promote continued interest to head off attrition of membership. They work hard to make the newsletter interesting as well as informative.
- Misty Stevenson, KE5RIT, organizes all of the snack and food preparations for Club meetings and special events. Hospitality, camaraderie and fellowship between members is an important part of TARC membership. Going back as far as "cave man" days, food has been an important catalyst for making that happen. Without Misty's efforts, Club activities would doubtless be far less enjoyable.
- Paul Paulsen, K5PFP, heads up this year's Field Day activities. Field Day is THE event that can demonstrate to the general public just how important and effective amateur radio can be to the public in times of emergency. It therefore behooves us that they see us at our best in the spirit of "When all else fails ...". Paul's natural leadership will see to it that such is the case.
- Gaylen Gage, KD5KIZ, maintains the Club web site. The Internet has been so tightly integrated into all our lives that it's sometimes hard to remember when that wasn't so. Because of that, it's now the "go to" place for the vast majority of the general public to get information about most anything, including ham radio. It's so very important, then, for our Club to have the right Internet "face" on when they come looking for us. Gaylen silently makes sure of that.

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These are just some of the ways members could choose to serve their Club. There are innumerable other opportunities as well. For example:

- Volunteer to provide a presentation for a club meeting.
- Help Misty take a breather from being "Club Grub Mistress" after Zoe is born
- Commit to write a short article each month for *The Groundwire*¹.
- Accept an ad hoc committee or project assignment if asked. Or better yet, suggest a project that would improve our Club and then head up that effort.

The Board of Trustees can't do it all. Thankfully we have a small cadre of volunteers who work tirelessly for everyone's benefit. The more members that get involved, the stronger we grow as a club. How much better could things be if even more people lend a hand ... if YOU lend a hand?

FEBRUARY HAPPENINGS

TARC Chili Cook-Off Results

This year's edition of the Club's annual "Rolaid Roundup"² saw more than 30 TARC members and guests sample five entries in the chili cook-off. The Club provided plates, utensils, etc. and several others brought sides of corn bread (Misty Stevenson - KE5RIT), homemade bread (Sonya Wilkinson - KC5BNU), crackers, drinks and vegetables with dip. Tasters were asked to vote for first, second and third place with each first place vote counting for three points, second place votes, two points and third place votes one point each. When all of the tasting was done and the scores computed, the results were as follows:

Place	Name	Call	Points
1 st	Elaine Jackson	KF5CNN	37
2 nd	Janet Taylor	N5JOT	34
3 rd	Mark Taylor	W5MCT	23

Elaine allowed that her secret ingredients included Shiner Boch beer and chocolate. However she didn't state what proportions of each were used. Her strategy for success included preparing her chili the day before the contest so that all the ingredients had more time to meld together. Apparently it all worked very well for her. Very nice prizes were awarded in each place.

Visitors and New Members

TARC was pleased to welcome the following **new members** and visitors at the February meeting. Club membership is open to all persons interested in amateur radio, licensed or not.

¹ Your editors' favorite suggestion!

² Unofficial - Merely your editors' suggestion for a name

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Contact any Club officer (see below) for more information.

Name	Call	QTH	Interests
Ken Kinman	KE5JYW	Holly Lake	
Larry Elmer	NO1E	Rockwall	
Forest Rathbun	KF5ARZ	Tyler	ETECS, Antennas, HF, VHF
John Freeman	KC5JDR	Tyler	ETECS, Antennas, HF, VHF
Frank Desmond	N5ORP	Lindale	Nets, HF, VHF, DXCC

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 2M Net Participation

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

Net Date	Net Control	Check Ins	Traffic
02-15-10	AG5X	41	3
02-22-01	KF5CNN	39	6
03-01-10	K5LXK	43	2
03-08-10	KC5SMC	49	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 Results

Congratulations to the following **newly licensed** / upgraded amateur radio operators!

Testing Date	Name	QTH	Class	Call
02-13-10	Larry Hazelton	Tyler	General	KF5EZD
	Lyle Mains	Tyler	General	KE5ZCG
	Kenneth Kinman	Holly Lake Rch	General	KE5JYW

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.

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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 Saturday, March 20th. 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).

The start and finish lines will be the KE Bushman's Winery and Celebration Center at 5165 FM 2493E in Bullard, TX about 2 miles south of CR344 (aka Bullard's new overpass) on Hwy 69. It's a large, white building on the east side of the highway. 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. Interested parties should contact [Art Sharp](#), K5LXK for further information. Don't forget that daylight saving time will be in effect by that date¹.

Longview Doins'

On April 3rd from about 7:00 AM until the last person leaves, the Longview ARC will hold a tailgate "show, tell and sell" in the Red Cross building parking lot. No fees or other charges just fun, camaraderie and maybe some good bargains as well. Talk-in will be on 147.34, positive shift and 136.5 PL. For further information contact Michael Wuench (N5MOK) [here](#).

Jacksonville Doins'

The Cherokee County ARC has announced the 6th annual K5JVL special event station operation "Drakes on the Lake" 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).

¹ DST starts on Sunday, March 14th

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Monthly Club Meetings

The TARC meeting primary agendas for the next few months are as follows:

- March 18th – Guest Speaker on VLF¹ Communications
- April 15th – Nominations for new officers and preliminary Field Day preparations
- May 20th - Election of new officers and annual dinner.

ARCOS Cook Out & Swap Meet

The Amateur Radio Club of Shreveport (ARCOS) will hold its ninth annual 1-day cookout cum swap meet on May 1, 2010 from 9 AM to 3 PM – rain or shine. The meeting place will be in the Cypress Black Bayou Recreation Park. That locale is about eight miles north of I-20 out of Bossier City, LA. Their contact point for full details is Kelly Spencer (KD5S), 930 N Lake St, Waskom, TX 75692-8504 or (903) 687-2899 or kd5s@arrl.net.

Ham-Com 2010

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

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!

On Vertical Antenna Systems²

As reported in last month's *Groundwire*, one of the better series of articles (seven all told) relating to vertical antennas we've come across (and therefore bears repeating) has appeared over the last several months in the ARRL publication *QEX*³. Authored by Rudy Severns (N6LF). Those articles can be found on his website [here](#). There in PDF format and may be downloaded free of charge. More recently, Rudy summarized the whole series in the March issue of *QST* magazine. Nonetheless, your editors heartedly recommend you get and read the entire series for the necessary detail to really understand what Rudy's research has yielded.

¹ Very Low Frequency – Antennas at these frequencies can be a mile or more in length

² This entry concludes the discussion of vertical antennas in the newsletter.

³ 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.

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If the technical depth of Rudy's articles is a bit much, we also found a similar, but less "mathematical" collection of articles on the Bencher¹ website [here](#). The relevant documents are at the bottom of the page under "Articles" (2) and "Tech Notes" (5). Lest we seem brand-biased, there is also a good, if slightly biased article by the SteppIR folks [here](#) and another on the DX Engineering site [here](#) that's especially poignant regarding radial systems. The author, WB2WIK, makes the point that a non-transmated² 1:1 VSWR on a ground-mounted vertical is NOT necessarily a good thing - even though it's sometimes hard to avoid. The physics applies to other antenna systems as well.

For a final note, we refer those hams interested in HF verticals to consider purchasing the [performance data](#) monograph on several popular commercial verticals published by Champion Radio Products. Its copyright is year 2000 so some of the more recent products may not be included. We liked the fact that their testing protocol was applied consistently and carried out in concert with each manufacturer's recommendations. Your mileage may vary.

Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons

First debuted over the radio Blue Network on October 12, 1937, this program became one of radio's longest running shows. It didn't leave the air until April 19, 1955 after TV had become an established medium. It was well past its half-life before your editor began listening to it, but it's still recalled with fondness. [Caution - bumpy segue ahead!]

When our radios go on the fritz³, it's not the operator that's lost, it's usually RF. One of the best ways to find lost RF is with a signal tracer. Even though many if not most of us have been relegated to "appliance operator" status due to the complexity of modern, solid-state equipment, the basic "building blocks" of our rigs remain the same e.g. rectification, detection, IF, amplification, mixing, etc. Further, if we squint a bit and look at most tubes (aka "valves" in early terminology), we'll see that, functionally, they have a lot in common with today's transistors and ICs. Given modern test equipment, repair of a transistorized rig would follow many of the same steps as the repair of a tube rig, include signal tracing.

To get a good introduction to signal tracing, if for general knowledge purposes if not repair work, your editors recommend the easy reading text "Servicing by Signal Tracing" by John Rider⁴. This 360 page work first published in 1939 takes the reader on a very well sequenced and very well explained tour of the subject. Even if one has never even seen a vacuum tube in operation, they'll come away with a far better understanding of their "appliance". It's available for download purchase on the net [here](#) for \$5.00 - a bargain.

¹ Bencher is a manufacturer of various ham radio items including the "Butternut" line of antennas.

² They are **not** "antenna tuners"; they're RF transformers that have **no effect** on antenna resonance.

³ Fritz - A highly technical term meaning "To enter some undefined state of inoperability". Not to be confused with "Puttin' on the Ritz" which another matter altogether.

⁴ Mr. Rider is also the author of many publications on radio and TV repair.

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Let's Go Tubing!

No, not at Schlitterbahn, not at Splash Kingdom, not even at Austin's Town Lake. We're talking "valves" here. Those (usually glass) thingies found in old timey radios that glow in the dark when activated. Yes, the fact is that even in these times of solid state kilowatt amps, tubes are very much alive and well though primarily in the audio world. Nonetheless, sooner or later, many hams will find themselves in need of some data for a tube whose filaments have glowed red for the last time and gone dark (sniff). Your editors have several old tube manuals and substitution guides, but alas, they're not always helpful. Not to worry, we have "The 'Net".

When the "... not always helpful ..." syndrome occurred recently, a couple of Google searches and subsequent link trails led us to [this](#) page. While the links there are focused on audio applications, the tube data is comprehensive and trans-application. To save you the considerable time we spent trying out all the links (they ARE different even most of them look the same), our assessment is that the first two will very likely fill most voids in tube data you may already have.

MEMBERS' CORNER

Ed Wilkinson – N1EW

Ed's dad, a radar missile technician in the Army and stationed in Germany at the time, wanted him to learn more about electronics so he bought Ed a KnightKit "Star Roamer" short wave radio kit. That was in 1967. Three years later after returning to the states, Ed joined the millions who found out what CB Radio was all about. Years passed, airplanes and girls became a distraction, Ed got older and was working as a charter pilot. In 1990 while browsing a ham radio store in Jackson, MS, the "bug" bit him so hard he bought a (Kenwood) radio right then and there before he'd even taken his first ham license test. Undeterred, he became N5YIH and eventually N1EW (N5EW wasn't available). You can read Ed's delightful 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

Come and Get 'Em'

Robert Freeman (K5SOG), a past member of TARC, has a 65' tower and various antennas he's willing to *give* to anyone who will come and take them down and haul them off. Be advised, this is a guyed tower of considerable height and taking it down is no job for a beginner or inexperienced person to attempt. Bob can be reached at (903) 245-1459 or at 9109 FM 344E, Tyler, 75703.

¹ This announcement was made at the February TARC meeting. These items may have been claimed by now.

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Parts & Parcels

If you order some parts, you'll get a parcel (usually). One of the collateral ham activities going on at Editorsville is the (modest) collection and restoration of tube-type (non-military) communications receivers. When found, it's usual to find that these 40 - 50+ year old "boat anchors" need some parts replaced. Some of the more difficult items to find are OEM¹ or OEM-like knobs. We've found one good resource at [this place](#). Of course, there's lots of other parts houses for old radios, but they tend to be more oriented towards wooden cabinet "consumer" radio brands like Philco, Emerson, Crosley and others in that ilk. For old, tube military gear, [this site](#) is a good place to start. There's some information but the "juicy" side is a section of links to other similarly oriented sites. This is a treasure trove for those that like such things.

For contemporary hardware, including many of the items ham use regularly, [Mouser](#) and [Digi-Key](#) are two of the major players with enormous inventories. For small parts in small quantities, [this site](#) is a good place to start.

Who's That Knocking?

Or, in hamspeak, QRZ? Most everyone knows that [QRZ.com](#) is a go-to place for current call sign information. If that's as far as you've looked, you're missing out on some of their other fine offerings, among them - [forums](#). One of our favorites is the online swap meet. We use it to track down radios for our collection (see above) but like that enormous auction site on the west coast, "caveat emptor²" applies to this place as well. Another place to look for used ham gear is [Craig's List](#). Look under "electronics" and search on "ham radio" will usually get results.

JUST FOR FUN

Food For Thought

- If 4 out of 5 people SUFFER from diarrhea, does that mean the fifth one ENJOYS it?
- If people from Poland are called Poles, why aren't people from Holland called Holes?³
- If it's true that we are here to help others, then what exactly are the others here for?
- Whatever happened to Preparation A through G?
- OK, if Jacksonville Jaguars are known as the 'Jags' and Tampa Bay Buccaneers are known as the 'Bucs,' what does that make Tennessee Titans?
- Have you noticed that when you put 'The' and 'IRS' together it spells 'THEIRS'?⁴

And finally, there was the person who sent ten different puns to a group of his friends, with the hope that at least one of the puns would make them laugh. No pun in ten did.

¹ Original equipment manufacture

² Latin - roughly translated meaning "buyer beware".

³ First heard from Fozzie Bear on Sesame Street - "Wocka! Wocka! Wocka!"

⁴ The present administration has found a new source for taxes - it's called "take home pay".

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ITEMS FOR SALE

From Longview, Jim Rogers (N5VGQ) allows that their club has a quantity of 40' steel push-up poles for sale for \$50 each. These make excellent dipole holders and can even be used for lightweight beams. Contact Jim at (903) 235-5347 for more information.

TARC members with items that they'd like to sell (or swap) can have them 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.

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

Mark really hit the nail on the head with his message this month. It's an old adage that in all organizations, professional as well as volunteer, 90% of the leadership usually comes from only 10% of the membership. Why is that? One reason is because that 10% has a passion about their organization, what it stands for and what it does. Ham radio clubs are no different.

So, let's stop and think for a minute! Why do the other 90% bother to belong, then? Simple. It's because they have a passion as well. The problem is, for whatever reasons (real or imagined), they have a reluctance to publically exhibit their passion. Does this sound like *you*? If so, it's

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time for you to do some honest reflection on your motives for *not* being more involved with TARC, especially if you have no involvement other than (occasionally) coming to Club meetings or checking into the Monday night nets. Those are good things to do, but they're *passive*. What your Club needs is your *active* support. What could you do that would take you so far out of your "comfort zone" that you'd sooner have a root canal without anesthetic. *That's* what you should step up and volunteer for. You'll be much the better for it and so will *your* Club!

As a related suggestion, we'd remind everyone that club newsletters, *The Groundwire* included, are (or should be) what the *members* make it. As editors, our primary job is just to put it together - to "package" it. Think about a city newspaper. Does its editor write it? Of course not. He just sees to it that what the reporters submit gets (in his mind) properly "packaged". So, all you "Groundwire Reporters" (i.e. *all* TARC members), you've been getting a pass for missing your deadlines for too long. It's time to make your commitment to *your* Club to *contribute* to its well-being by becoming an active *reporter*, not just a reader. (You do at least read it, don't you?)

There's no real trick to writing a piece for the newsletter. Write it the same way you would tell a story to an interested friend. Take a moment and think for a bit about what you've recently read, seen, heard or done that other members might like to know about or could learn from your experience? Good! Now write a byline piece for the April *Groundwire* and [send](#) it to us. If you need pictures to illustrate some points, they can be accommodated so send them along as well. Everybody deserves their "15 minutes of fame", even if it's just in a club newsletter. Carpe diem!

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

73 to all,

Bob - AG5X & Elaine - KF5CNN

[Co-Editors](#)

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