

# The Groundwire

Official Newsletter of the Tyler Amateur Radio Club - August 17th, 2017

## President's Message

What is ham radio? This question came up over lunch with some colleagues this past week. I paused before answering. It was a long pause.

At first blush, it seems like it should be an easy question to answer: "Ham radio is the use of radio frequencies to make communications between operators of licensed stations." Isn't that what it says in the FCC guide book? But that isn't quite right, is it? Part 97, Article 1, of the FCC amateur rules and regulations makes clear that amateur radio exists (a) as a voluntary, non-commercial communication service to (b) enhance international goodwill, (c) advance the radio art, and (d) to increase the reservoir within the amateur radio service of trained operators, technicians and electronic experts.

Admittedly, I had not read Part 97 since I got my Tech License so I had to pull out my copy to see what I could say to my curious friends. First, we are a voluntary service created to provide help in times of need with the understanding that, for a very small fee, we are allowed to use the airwaves of the entire earth for our enjoyment. Pretty neat, right? The trade-off is clearly in our favor no matter how we may gripe that things are less than perfect. "The air is free" takes on new meaning with regard to amateur service and, as long as

we are courteous and obey some simple rules, we have the world at the tip of our antenna.

To enhance international good will goes along with my original notion of joining the amateur radio service. As a child of the fifties, I was encouraged to have "pen pals" in far off places and to collect stamps reflecting those distant lands, some of which I would never see. The radio has shrunk our ever increasingly complex globe, and has done it in a manner that the "pen pal" approach could never match i.e. the instant gratification of real-time communications. The notion of a "pen pal" comes full circle with PSK31 (and other like modes) where you can converse with people all over the globe with your keyboard.

Radio is a great equalizer as well. It doesn't matter what your race, your religion, or your nationality happens to be. You are a ham radio operator and can enjoy the company of anyone who has taken the time and made the effort to join in the fellowship. As someone once said, "An enemy is a friend you haven't met yet." (If you know this reference, I owe you a prize!)

The last piece of the puzzle is key: To increase the reservoir of skilled operators, technicians and electronics experts. Your license is just the beginning. It permits you to learn the craft of radio in all its aspects. One starts as a journeyman, and hopefully becomes a guild master. This means having a solid understanding of the basic physics and electronics of your rig and to be able to keep it in working order. It also means being willing to bring others in to the craft and educate them not only in the fundamentals but also in the art and the humanity of the radio world. This takes work and help from your

fellow hams. Ham radio is not a solitary journey. If that was the case, why would you bother to get on the air at all?

Over the next few months, our club will have some excellent opportunities to excel at our mission:

- Gene Coldwell (WB5CTQ) has arranged for eclipse chasing on Monday, August 21st. You may avail yourselves of FLDIGI to help with measurements for the national database. Gene will say more about this at the meeting on Thursday.

- The Texas QSO party this year will be run by Terry Gimble (W5TG) and a host of others. (Wayne Hoskins (WM5Q) has declined to be the coordinator for this event.) The computers for logging will be courtesy of our own "chancellor of the exchequer", Josh Kaufman (KE5FGC). I will be providing the radios and Elaine Jackson (KF5CNN) will be our "grub master". This is a chance for everyone to get on the air and be part of the fun.

- Terry Gimble (W5TG) is also going to be the master of ceremonies for the Boy Scout's Jamboree on the Air in October (JOTA). This will be held at the Boy Scout headquarters on Fifth Street. This is a great opportunity to reach out to future amateur radio operators. Again, it isn't about the equipment - it's about the contacts.

By the way, studies conducted by the military on radio operators (manuscripts on request) showed significant fatigue after as little as 30 minutes of operating! If every club member were to attend these events and just put in just 30 minutes making contacts, it would be a real party. We'll have more on this at the September get-together.

Finally, let's make this fall a season one to remember for all TARC members and those who hopefully will be encouraged to join us. I hope to see you all this Thursday night!

73,

George Plotkin KF5WFA

President

### Notes from the July Meeting

- By actual count, there were **49** members at the July meeting. That's **73%** of the membership! Three new members joined up continuing last month's growth. As of this writing, membership is now at **67**. Come join us this Thursday for more of the same kinds of timely, on-topic information, great fellowship and **FUN!**

- Member Bob Jackson (AG5X) gave a short presentation on antenna basics hoping to inspire others with his own zeal for them. Topics included why we need antennas, how antennas work, a few basic types of antennas and "best" antennas. His presentation included some charts that are central to understanding antennas, to wit: a chart on the electromagnetic spectrum is [here](#); a "visual" chart of what an electromagnetic wave looks like is [here](#); and GIF files of a dipole transmitting and receiving electromagnetic waves is [here](#). Bob also included some "pop quizzes" for the audience in his talk. They were fun.

- Terry Gimble (W5TG) spoke briefly on the club's developing plans to participate in the Boy Scout's Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) this October. More details to follow but members should begin planning now to not only participate but also to help set up radios, antennas, etc. and be enthusiastic spokespersons for amateur radio at this event.

- A \$25 gift card to the Texas Roadhouse restaurant was raffled off putting over \$100 in the club's coffers! If you have any items, e.g. gift cards, equipment, etc. that's surplus to your needs, please consider donating it to the club for a future raffle.
- The door prize for this meeting was a blister pack containing four new rechargeable AA batteries and a charger. Tickets that didn't win the raffle were used for the door prize drawing.
- For the second month in a row, the club acquired three new members at a club meeting. This time it was the following that joined our ranks:
  - ✓ Orbin Smith - KL7XP
  - ✓ Mark Nunley - KG5OWI
  - ✓ Stephen Lowe - KE5DTF

Welcome to the party Orbin, Mark and Stephen. Did you bring an "oar"?

- Butch Adair (WA5SLG) had the somewhat dubious honor of being this year's recipient of the Fred Farkle award. Fred (WX5FF) was/is a fictitious TARC member who was known, as one story goes, for his propensity to not always get things right. I asked around about the full history of the award - how it was started, etc. but without much success. Since anyone who knows Butch is well aware, ritualistic "screwing up" isn't on his dance card. It's safe to say that the reason for selecting future recipients will be entirely at the discretion of the current holder with reason(s) "to be announced".

## What's Coming This Month

- Gene Coldwell (WB5CTQ) will be presenting on the subject of QRP operations. Gene has extensive experience in this area of ham radio so it'll be a real treat to hear what he has to say.
- This month's raffle will be for an Alinco 2M handheld. It's a "used but not abused" model DJ-195 unit in perfect working order. It comes with a battery charger and instruction manual and is already programmed for both of the club's 2M repeaters. If you don't have a handheld, this raffle will be a great chance to get one. Of course, it could also be a great backup unit. Again, following the raffle drawing, non-winning tickets will be eligible for the door prize drawing.
- As always, there'll be reports on membership, finances, Monday Night Net and VE activity. Members need to attend meetings if only to hear these reports and stay current on the health of your club. Fully up to date information on these topics isn't available anywhere else.

## Looking Ahead ...

- Texas QSO Party (Sat. 9-23 @ 9:00AM) - The "form and function" for this year's event will be different. Instead of the usual, high-tension, "go for broke" atmosphere of a contest, the emphasis is going to be on fun and fellowship. Setup will be the morning of the event starting at 8:00 AM, again at the Tehan building at Camp Tyler. The event is open to all - family, friends, whomever you'd like to invite. Get them to come out and see what our wonderful, fascinating hobby is all about - perhaps even operate a bit. If you're new to HF operating, here's your chance to do some in a casual, "low velocity" setting. Due to the extra funding the club has received from raffle sales and donations, we're able to provide "eats". This is going to be

a great, fun-filled event! If you've never had much HF "stick time" (that's pilot talk for operating), here's your chance. Come and give it a try but be warned - it can be addictive!

- September's presentation will be on station grounding given by Dick Green (KC5CID). Those that heard Dick's talk a few years ago will be anxious to hear it again as it's packed with facts we *all* should not only be aware of but also be putting into practice to make our stations, shall we say, "less attractive" to lightning. For newcomers to the club, this is a "must see and hear".

- John Newman (N9JN) and Mark Taylor (W5MCT) will give a presentation in October on emergency communications (aka EmComm). These guys are "heavy" into this very important aspect of amateur radio and how it interfaces with first responders, etc. You won't want to miss what they have to say! This will be the last formal presentation for 2017. The November meeting will be our Thanksgiving dinner meeting (details are TBD - "to be announced") and the December meeting will be for fellowship and good will (details also TBD). In 2018 we'll once again host Skywarn classes but the dates are (guess what) TBD. When that is settled, club meeting presentations for 2018 will be announced so stay tuned.

- Another one of TARC's "world famous" workshops is in the planning stages. Early ideas have focused on a "team approach" to building BITX40 transceivers. "Dynamic Duo" teams of two (one of which must be a licensed TARC member) would be given a kit to assemble. Fear not, beginners. As usual, Elmers will be on hand to ensure success. Once all kits have been completed and shown to be in working order, they'd be offered for sale first to workshop participants then to club members at large. Any unsold radios would go in to the club's inventory for later disposition. These are

terrific QRP radios perfectly suited for digital mode operations like PSK31, etc.

Usual assembly time for one of these radios is about an hour but a full day (probably a Saturday) would be scheduled to help keep a casual, fun atmosphere. Lunch and snacks would be provided. Some soldering is required to complete the kit but it's kept to a bare minimum. Mostly it's dealing with screws and nuts, etc. No date has been set. Much will depend on how much interest is shown. There are enough kits and materials for only 6-8 teams so it'd be a good idea to start talking with your ham buddies and [getting your team's names on the list](#).

### Members' Corner

This space has been added for inputs from the general membership. Op Ed pieces, operating experiences, bragging rights, etc., just about anything a member might want to share with the rest of us could go here. Submittals are to be addressed to [The Groundwire](#) and be in plain text or MS Word "doc" or "docx" format.

### Buy/Sell/Trade

This will be a place for members to post items in one of these categories. If you're looking to make such a transaction, send the information to me by the Wednesday before the club meeting week and it'll be posted here. Of course, neither the club nor I take any responsibility for such transactions. To get things started ...

- From Bob Jackson (AG5X) - For sale: [Mosley Mini-33A tribander](#) (\$544 new - asking \$425) and a [HyGain CD-45II rotor](#) (\$430 new - asking \$345) for sale. Both are less than two years old, both excellent in condition "with papers". This is the gear that I used to complete both the [DXCC Honor Roll](#) and the [CQ WAZ](#) operating awards. Serious [inquiries](#) only, please.

### Kudos

- Did you know that TARC turned 30 this year? It's true! The original articles of incorporation were signed on January 23rd, 1987. Senior Elmer Butch Adair (WA5SLG) was one of the original three signers. Happy Birthday TARC!

- A big East Texas "shout out" to Gene Coldwell (WB5CTQ) for giving our club's website a makeover. It's now something each of us can be proud of both for its looks but also for content and functionality (i.e. usability and easy navigation). Well done, Gene, and thanks from all of us!

- July's raffle item, a \$25 gift card to Texas Roadhouse, was donated by George and Rachel Plotkin (KF5WFA & KF5WLC). I know first-hand that these two wonderful people are constantly working "behind the scenes" for our club. We all owe them our gratitude and appreciation. Thanks, guys!

If you know of a member that needs "kudo recognition", please send the info along to me [here](#) for the newsletter

## Reminders

- Club Dues - The club's fiscal year runs from June 1st through May 31st. Membership dues for the 2017-2018 fiscal year are now due. Full annual membership is \$25.00 and additional family members are \$12.50. Quarterly prorating of dues will begin in September.

- Hams & Eggs - The club's informal breakfast fellowship is held circa 7:30 AM on the fourth Saturday of each month at "Happy's" restaurant, 2202 East Fifth Street in Tyler. Everyone's welcome. At the last H&E event on July 22nd, there were 20 happy, hungry diners that enjoyed lots of fellowship and good eats. It was really terrific to also see the family members and friends join in the fun as well. Let's keep that ball rolling this month on Saturday, the 26th!

- Tech Net - Butch Adair (WA5SLG) hosts an open technical discussion net on the club's 146.96 repeater (136.5/Neg) on Thursday nights (other than the first and third ones) at 7:00 PM. Topics are what check-ins bring with them plus what Shop Night was or will be next. All are welcome.

- Shop Night - Michael Fowler (W5FOW) is the host for this hands-on activity held on the evening of the first Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM. The location is 418 South Broadway "around back" (signs will point the way). It's a cordial opportunity to get up close and personal with some of the technical aspects of our hobby you may want to investigate or understand better. Mike has made the determination to align his event with the presentations made at club meetings.

- Ten Meter Net - Wayne Hoskins (WM5Q) is the emcee for this weekly informal gathering that has no standing agenda. The planned meeting frequency is 28.365 MHz (+/-) at 8:00 PM each Sunday night.

All are welcome. Butch Adair (WA55LG) usually brings a few questions out of the current *General* and *Extra* class license exams for check-ins to ponder, perhaps answer and always discuss. This is a great way for new Technicians to get some early exposure to what's next and for current *Generals* and *Extras* to refresh their knowledge on topics we should all have at least a handshake acquaintance with.

- *VE Testing* - Testing for new and upgraded amateur radio licenses is conducted by local area VEs on the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 PM at the American Red Cross building located at 320 East Rieck Road in Tyler. Any schedule changes will be announced on the club's Monday night two meter net. Butch Adair (WA5SLG) is the contact for VE testing information. You can e-mail him or call him at 903-561-6099. Butch reports that the August 13th testing opportunity had the following results:

- Four new Technicians
  - David Domain
  - Edwin Maddox
  - Pete Mendolia
  - Dwight Nunley
- Two upgrades to *General*
  - Bobby Mooring - KG5SRE
  - Mark Nunley - KG5OWI
- One upgrade to *Extra*
  - Joseph Cameron - KG5KOG

Congratulations to these new/upgraded amateurs!

- Monthly Club Meeting - The Tyler Amateur Radio Club meets every third Thursday of the month at the Shiloh Road Church of Christ, corner of Shiloh Road and Paluxy. Call to order is always at 7:00PM. It's always best to be there a bit sooner to enjoy the always congenial fellowship. Friends and family are always welcome to attend. Cookies, snacks, crackers, brownies, pies, cakes, drinks, etc. are only available if members bring them.

- TARC Website - Our club's website is the "[go to](#)" place for lots of information about us: Who we are, what we do, will do and have done as well as a bunch of useful links. Put a note on your calendar to visit it often.

### Closing Notes

#### "A Tough Piece of Meat"

At least once in their life, most everyone has had the "cheap steak" experience. A piece of meat so tough that the more it was chewed on, the bigger it got. Amateur radio can be a lot like that.

I began "chewing" on ham radio as a Novice in the early 70's. Even being limited to Morse code, low power and just a few frequencies to use, the more "chewing" I did (operating, learning, sharing, etc.), the bigger, more expansive the hobby seemed to get. It was the syndrome of "the more I learned, the less I knew." The advent of computers, particularly the palm-sized ones, and their impact on our hobby has further broadened the "window of excitement" available to us today. It's doubtful that anyone is capable of literally taking it all in, but we can still strive to be diverse in our knowledge and practice of our hobby.

In my presentation on antennas last month, I suggested that we look on our operating licenses in a broader sense i.e. more as "licenses to learn" and not just as some badge of achievement. If we allow ourselves to get isolated in some relatively small niche of the hobby, e.g. repeater usage, checking into nets, etc., it would be analogous to ignoring the 200+ cable channels we have access to and just watching just one or two. Both postures are most likely to have a similar result: boredom!

As a vaccine against a slow ham radio "death", I suggest taking a "shot" at doing something, anything, to get out of your ham radio comfort zone. Learn Morse code (CW) at just 5 words/minute. Talk to Roy Sherow (WJ5Z) about how many 5-WPM stations he routinely hears and works. Build an antenna for a band you've never used; try operating late at night; work on achieving some operating awards - there's hundreds of them out there - both US and foreign. If you're more technically inclined, build a piece of test equipment. If you're not, just build a field strength meter and run some pattern experiments on your antenna. Look at your receiver's block diagram and learn how just one of the "blocks" works. The "vaccine" possibilities are endless - just look online. There's lots out there but none of it will help if YOU don't take some action.

Our hobby is the type that demands we move forward and keep on learning or we'll surely hit the slippery slope of boredom. If that happens, the promise of adventure that was yearned for while striving to achieve a license will surely fade away. Not moving forward leads to one becoming a single-band, single-mode "appliance operator" capable of little more than using the power switch. Eventually, they'll be asking themselves why they bothered with ham radio in the first place and the

collective hobby of ours will be the lesser for it. Please don't let that happen to you!

I look forward to seeing each of you at our club meeting this Thursday! Come early and bring some cookies, snacks or drinks. If you don't bring 'em, there may not be any!

73 for now,

Bob Jackson - AG5X

Editor