



THE AARC BEACON

A monthly publication of the Albemarle Amateur Radio Club

VOLUME 2011, No. 9

SEPTEMBER 2011

Selected as 2011 Dayton Hamvention "Ham Club of the Year"

AARC SCORES NATIONAL PUBLICITY

The American Radio Relay League has featured the Albemarle Amateur Radio Club's Cruise-In on the home page of their website www.arrl.org. The lengthy article tells the whole story of the first annual Virginia Ham Radio Cruise-In as told by Jim (K4JEC).

The story ends with yet another offer to supply a "How-to-do-it-Kit" to anyone interested in staging one of their own just by dropping an email to k4jec@arrl.net. Since the story appeared, the mails have started rolling in again. When the article appeared in QST, Jim's email box filled with requests which were sent all over the US from California to New England.

In the current batch, Geoff Haines (N1GY) wrote, "I read with great interest about your "cruise-in" on the ARRL web site. What a great idea! Please email me the information so that we can begin to plan our own "cruise-in" in the near future. Our club, The Manatee Amateur Radio Club Inc. is growing (up to about 75 members so far) and the local area is full of retired hams and new hams who have entered the hobby from the Emergency Communications side of things like CERT. I think this idea would work down here in West Central Florida as there are about 4,000 hams within a 50 mile radius of Bradenton, Florida, our home town."

Mark Brueggemann (K5LXP)

of Albuquerque, NM wrote, "Saw your offer for "How-to-do-it-Kit" for your Cruise In event. Could you please send me the info? Thanks."

In another email, "Thank you Jim. That is a great presentation. I'm forwarding it to our club officers and hope it sparks their imagination. I can see this type of event really catching on. 73 and may the solar flux rise! Jim (WB6BET). Who was it who said the west coast leads the east coast in trends and what's fashionable?"

John B Hughlett, Floyd, VA wrote, "Your mobile contest just came to my attention. I will be ready in April. N4WRT check it out at QRZ.Com." He has a picture of his mobile installation on QRZ. So, we have our first official registration for April, 2012.

The above is just a quick sampling of what came in from the first 24 hours of the posting. Before closing, Mark Brueggemann just sent a second email stating, "I think this would add a nice side activity/attraction to just about any ham gathering or event. I suggested it to the ARRL Division Convention organizers to try it for our convention a few weeks ago but they seem to think they know what to do that's better (which in this case, was nothing...). I'm involved with two hamfests

here in Albuquerque and plan on setting aside an area for the guys to show off what they have. Many guys have quite nice mobile installations and I think it's a wasted opportunity not to showcase that. Thanks for making your outline available." Mark (K5LXP).

AARC Meeting

August 9, 2011

Board Meeting

There was no board meeting at the August Picnic and Auction.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Call to Order -- The meeting was called to order by President, K4JEC at 6 p.m. K4JEC welcomed everyone and called Bob and Sharon Blodinger to the front for the presentation of their Honorary Membership Awards.

There were 42 members and guests present. Aside from the Blodingers, our guests included Marge Thomas from the 911 Center and Albemarle County Police Chief Steve (KD4ZPF) Sellers.

K4JEC invited everyone to partake of the food and drink and adjourned the meeting for the picnic.

There were no reports given and no business transacted. **Adjournment** -- The picnic/auction was completed at 8:10 p.m. when everything was cleaned up and everyone left.

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Harry W2HD in his "shack"

Editors Request:

As you may already know, this is my "first edition" as your new editor. Therefore, I welcome your comments, suggestions, likes and dislikes, and of course always welcome articles and inclusions you would like to share with the Membership.

Please forward emails to w4mbw@arrl.net.

73 and "thank you"

DX NOTES - SEPTEMBER 2011

With summer nearly over, HF propagation should start to improve . . . with opportunities to work more DX. Nonetheless, August was a good DX month with the new DXCC country of South Sudan on the air as STOR for the first time . . . so it was a new one for everybody and the pileups were big. Many club members worked them, even with dipole antennas on the upper bands. Of note, the QSL manager is taking Direct and Bureau QSL cards, but also is using an on-line QSL service called OQRS whereby those who worked

them can submit QSL data on a form and use PayPal or Credit Card with a Min \$5 donation to request a card Direct – all on-line. Since most DX stations want return postage – IRC or a min of \$2 – and US postage is 98 cents plus envelopes and a QSL card, etc, OQRS is a good deal. Many of the DX managers also QSL on Logbook of the World (LoTW) electronically very quickly and also send a QSL card. I use this system whenever available and have had excellent (100%) QSL response, and also usually send more than

the min donation to help with DXpedition cost.

So, on to some upcoming DX stations of interest:

3D2R – Rotuma Isl will be on 27 Sep for about 10 days with a big team of ops, and will be on 160-2M using all modes. QSL info will be on QRZ.com.

PJ5/6 – St. Eustatius and Saba Islands will be on from Saba 4-9 Sep. This will be a holiday-style op mostly on CW, but also some SSB. Call will be PJ6/K9VV and PJ6/NP2X; QSL via K5WW.

9N0MD – Nepal will be on 13-25 Nov. See web site <http://www.mdxc.org/nepal2011/> for details.

HK0NA – Malpelo Isl is being planned for late Jan 2012 by a large team of 16 operators. See web site for details, <http://hk0na.com/> Other DX info can be found in the ARRL weekly DX bulletins, QST's DX column and CQ Magazines DX section.

Good luck and see you in the pileups.

73, Alan K9MBQ

PRESIDENTS LETTER

Living is learning and it is said that when you stop learning, you stop living.

That is what I love about this hobby. There is always something else to learn and challenge you. Add to that trying to serve the club as a leader and you have an unending challenge that will keep you living a very long time.

I would like to enumerate what I have learned so far.

Leadership responsibility does not begin or end with our monthly meetings. Actually, the monthly meetings only serve to set the pace of our responsibilities for the next month and beyond. Much of our leadership responsibilities begin at the end of the monthly meetings and it is what we do between meetings that really exercise those responsibilities. Our

club is the best in the nation because we are blessed with such strong leadership in all of our elected and appointed positions. Being president of such a strong leadership group is a wonderful and very gratifying experience. I feel truly blessed and thank you for the honor! All of this is being said to lead up to the following request.

During our next monthly meeting, your presence is sincerely solicited because we will all vote to confer Life Membership upon a most deserving member of the club. The board has approved the presentation of the name of Dave Damon (K4DND) for approval by the general membership to become a member of the ranks of our Life Members. This is the highest honor the club can confer upon a member "who has rendered notable

service" to amateur radio and/or the club. While most of you realize much of what Dave has contributed in time, talent and enthusiasm over the years, no one but the person who is attempting to fill his shoes as president can possibly now it all. Almost every day I learn of something else I should be doing because Dave always did it when he was president and the list almost never ends. While I have not had a personal experience with most of those who came before him as life members, I can truly recommend this name as one that is very deserving of the honor. Serving as his vice president for two years, I learned a whole lot of what Dave did and was doing as your president and even before being elected to that office. I urge each and every one of you who can possibly make it to attend this meet-

ing, vote to confer the honor and help celebrate the selection afterward. I would like to invite all the life members who can make it to join me on the platform for the presentation following the vote. Am I being presumptuous? I don't think so because I can't imagine anyone voting against the motion.

Beyond this, the September meeting business should be brief and leave more time for visiting and for the presentation of the Four Square Antenna System by Alan Swinger (K9MBQ).

See you all back at the NRAO after a month away for the picnic/auction in Darden Towe Park's pavilion!

Jim K4JEC

GLEN SAGE 'S INTERESTING ARTICLE

The August 2011 edition of the SERA Repeater Journal just arrived in the mail, and this issue has an interesting and timely article by Glen Sage W4GHS. Glen was our former VA Section Manager, and has extensive experience and interest in providing emergency communications. I thought that Glen's comments should reach a wider audience and so asked Glen for permission to reprint his article in the AARC Beacon. Glen agreed as did John Ghormley KJ4UFG the Editor of the Repeater Journal.

Here is Glen's article... and just consider the relevance of his comments in light of the overload of the cell phone infrastructure resulting from the recent Mineral earthquake, the extent of areas suffering power loss during the passing of Hurricane Irene, and so on and so on.

AMATEUR RADIO EMCOMM, A RELIC OF THE PAST OR A VITAL NECESSITY FOR THE FUTURE?

By Glen Sage, W4GHS

Following the events of 9/11 and Katrina, there has been increased recognition of the importance of dependable emergency communications following a major disaster. The government has poured huge sums of money into assuring that observed weakness in communications would be addressed. The current buzz words are "redundancy" and "interoperability". This has brought about the establish-

ment of back up systems followed by back up to the back up communications systems. Sales staff from commercial communications equipment companies has worked hard at convincing those with "buying power" in agencies that the equipment they are selling will provide a fail safe system for normal and emergency communications.

At the encouragement of federal government agencies the cell phone industry has put a huge effort into "hardening" their sites and towers, especially in areas that are located in sites prone to potential major disasters. This has included the installation of much larger battery capacity and the creation of portable towers that can quickly be moved into place upon the loss of the primary towers. So where does this leave hams that are preparing to support both government and non-government agencies along with the general public in times of disasters?

Some high ranking Emcomm officials have predicted the end of a need for Amateur Radio as communications responders in communications emergencies and disasters. Several years ago at the Dayton Hamvention, I was speaking to an Amateur Radio field services official and he stated. "The time will come when people will no longer enter Amateur Radio with the intention of providing emergency communications. They will become hams due to a love for the other aspects of the hobby." This is due to agencies having their own systems that are

capable of handling the challenges of major disasters and Amateur Radio will no longer be needed.

This view is not shared by many of those that head government agencies. Recently in the "Forum on Earthquake Communications Preparedness", Craig Fugate the Administrator of FEMA stated that "When everything else fails, Amateur Radio is our last line of defense." He also stated that "I think that a strong Amateur Radio community is needed to be plugged into these plans." Fugate went on to say that communications have failed in the past and will fail in the future. This was the rationale for the presence of Amateur Radio. The administrator of FEMA went on to explain that earthquakes are unique in the massiveness of destruction of infrastructure including communications. This indicates that FEMA officials are not of the mindset that Amateur Radio is not a viable asset for the future of emergency communications.

So, what is so unique about the role of Amateur Radio? There are a number of things, one being that our repeaters, antennas and other hardware are subject to failure as is agency "Part 90" equipment. The difference is that we don't need to wait for a commercial technician to get around to us to repair the damage. Following Hurricane Katrina, three of us hams from Virginia, arrived at Hattiesburg, MS after receiving our assignment at the staging area in Montgomery AL. We were the first Ama-

teur Radio Emcomm to arrive there from outside the community. The local hams had already been involved in restoring repeaters and antenna systems along with the linking system between a number of area repeaters. Much of the agency infrastructure was still down in this area. This repaired system allowed us dependable Amateur Radio Communications over the area that was being serviced by the local Red Cross chapter.

In most areas we have many times the repeater options that local agencies have available. If we suffer less than total destructions of our repeaters in a given area we can shift to a system that is available. Hams can position a mobile cross-band repeater station at a high location to substitute for a repeater until a repeater can be put back into service. We also have the option of changing over to HF and using 10 or 6 meters for local coverage. We then have all the other HF bands to provide for needed long haul traffic.

Another advantage of Amateur Radio as a backup system in emergencies is that our personnel bring with them a wide array of other skills. Before our departure from Hattiesburg, several hams worked at wiring an Intranet so that internal communications could take place inside the Red Cross chapter house between

GLEN SAGE ARTICLE; CONT. FROM PAGE 3

their computers. While working the most recent Johnstown PA flood, I had come to the area with an assignment of crisis counselor. The shelter that I was working in was the Walnut Grove Church of the Brethren in Johnstown and they had no communications. I set up a VHF station and passed a number of pieces of traffic to care for shelter needs and continued to work at my primary duties.

In recent years the role of emergency communicator has evolved into roles that support assignments in addition to the communications role. It is not unusual to arrive and the agency that you have been assigned to serve has limited understanding as to how they might use you to serve the mission of that agency. In urgent times agency staff is preoccupied with handling the mandates that demand their attention. Unless there is zero communications, they may not have given a lot of thought as to how they might use the resource of the hams. When working Katrina we were handling traffic between the large local shelter, the chapter house and the food preparation area. I noticed the lack of communications between Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs) with each other, the chapter house and the food preparation and loading area. I talked with the Red Cross Chapter Executive and asked if it would be helpful if we assigned communicators to the ERVs and

key areas that needed to communicate with the ERVs. The executive said that she would love to have hams fill that role but the ERVs only had two seats up front and a "Jump seat" in the back of the ERV and they needed 3 people to handle the feeding when they arrived at a feeding site. She asked if the hams would be willing to serve as a communicator and a feeding assistant. When she was told that we would do that, the demand for our services exploded and we had to call for additional hams to support the new assignments. Once the hams were assigned to an ERV, you could not get them to leave the assignment. The personal contact with those that were impacted by the disaster was very fulfilling to the communicators.

When I was deployed for communications during Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in 2008, I was called on to serve a number of roles in addition to that of communicator. I worked with the Virginia Baptist Mission Board which is an arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Baptist are licensed for a number of business band frequencies and have many handheld radios to keep in touch during their feeding, chainsaw, laundry, water purification and other relief operations. After shutting down the ham station each evening, I collected all the Baptist HTs and charged their batteries for the next day. In peak

feeding times, when traffic would back up 4 blocks to receive their "clamshell" meals, I would assist with traffic direction and at times on the serving line. I also constructed a quarter-wave antenna for the 155 MHz range to use at the base that allowed the expanding of their HT coverage.

While working in Hurricane Gustav in Raton Rouge Louisiana, the Baptist had brought a satellite system (BGAN) that allowed for the transmission of voice and data. This system performed flawlessly in non-disaster test. A need came up to use this system for sending a photo and text to the state capital of Louisiana. They tried to connect with BGAN for hours and finally came and asked if we could handle the transmission. I feel that bandwidth on the satellite system had been taken by other users. I got on HF Winlink with Pactor III and transmitted the photo and text to its destination in less than four minutes. We are not only needed when communications infrastructure is down but also when they have become overloaded due to high volume demands.

Our roles in communications may be different than what it was in 2001 but it is no less important. We will need to continue to adapt and change but our communications will continue to be vital perhaps in ways that we have not envisioned in the past.

**NEXT AARC
GENERAL
MEMBERSHIP
MEETING WILL BE
HELD ON TUESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 13
2011 STARTING AT
7:30 PM AT THE
NRAO (NATIONAL
RADIO ASTRONOMY
OBSERVATORY)
520 EDMONT
ROAD,
CHARLOTTESVILLE,
VIRGINIA**

**BOD MEETING @
7:00 PM**



**September AARC
Meeting special treat:**

**Four Square Antenna
System by Alan
Swinger (K9MBQ).**

**Come and see how
Alan does it...is it
phased lines, is it
Wilkerson Power Di-
viders, is it Magic?
Come and join us on
September 13th and
see for yourself!**

VICE PRESIDENT COMMENTS

I'm told this is the Information Age. A time when technology lets us see and hear all over the world. Data abounds! Computers gather it from all aspects of life, collate it, process it, digest it and whatever else they do to the almost unimaginable number of bits of data we call information. But I wonder – is it information or is most of it just *noise*?

At the store the other day I saw a hard disk drive for a personal computer that stores two TERABYTES of information. That's two trillion bytes of data. A far cry from the ten megabytes I used in my first computer. That's 200,000 times more memory! And yet, I still do the same things on my new computer that I did on the old one – type a letter, do my taxes, send an e-mail note. I may be a little more efficient nowadays, but not 200,000 times more!

I keep reminding myself not to confuse data with information. Even though we have lots and lots of data at our fingertips, that doesn't mean we can make better sense of it. I think a lot of folks fall into the trap of thinking the more data, the better. After all, more is better, right?

Just the other day I was in my kitchen at home pondering this issue, when the earth started to shake. Quickly I set about gathering more data. (It's an Engineering thing...) Running outside, scanning the horizon for black helicopters, I was overwhelmed by data. The grass was still green, the sun was

shining, the thousand other little bits of data I collected boggled my mind, but I still didn't know what happened. It wasn't until my wife texted me with "Did you feel the earthquake?" that I made *information* out of the data.

Later I heard that many communication systems were jammed or broken by the massive amount of calls folks made to find out what was happening. Here was a case of "more is NOT better".

Most of the time we deal with little bits of data and can successfully turn them into information. A single phone call or text message is usually easy to comprehend. Talking to a single person in a crowded room when no one else is talking is pretty easy. But what about when they ALL start talking? Even if you gave everyone in the room a cell phone, without any rules, it would be difficult to make any sense. But we're different – we understand communication rules – we are Communicators.

I think the most important aspect of our foray into Amateur Radio is to hone and then practice our skills at making information out of data. Sometimes a lot of the data we gather is just noise. We practice at making sense out of the data many ways. Sometimes we establish net discipline to make sure that only one person talks at a time. We use codes and other language constructs to make our meanings unambiguous. We distill and summarize our communications (at least some of us do) to maximize

the efficiency of data transfer. So is it any wonder when cell phone systems get overloaded, text messages pile up endlessly and thousands of voices shout to get heard, that Amateur Radio still works?

Let's continue to show that Amateur Radio is still there "when all else fails". Keep those batteries charged and HTs handy, because you never know when Mother Nature is going to play the next 'rock and roll' tune.

73 Greg N4PGS

AARC Club Repeaters

146.760 (-) 151.4 Hz Tone

146.925 (-) 151.4 Hz Tone

146.895 (-) 151.4 Hz Tone

224.760 (-) No Tone

444.000 (+) 151.4 Hz Tone

444.250 (+) 151.4 Hz Tone

License Exam

The AARC's volunteer examiners will be offering a license examination session on Saturday, September 10, starting at 9:00 AM sharp at the NRAO (National Radio Astronomy Observatory), 520 Edgemont Road in Charlottesville.

Examinations will be offered for all class licenses. Questions should be directed to Mark Gorkinsky (W A 1 A) a t mgch@mac.com.

Please see page 7 for a printable check list of what you need to bring to your VE Exam...Please be on time.

GOOD LUCK !!!

AARC Club Nets

Monday-Night Information Net:

The Information net is held every Monday night at 7:00 PM local time on the 146.760 repeater. Your regular net control, W2HD, brings you news from the ARRL Bulletin and W2PVY provides the Amateur Radio newslines in real audio format.

Northern-Piedmont Emergency Net:

The Northern-Piedmont Emergency Net meets every Thursday evening at 8:00 PM on the 146.76 repeater. The NPEN is a directed net with rotating net-control intended to assist local amateurs with building emergency operating capabilities.

Northern-Piedmont Emergency Digital Net:

A net digital format Emergency Net session is being tried on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 PM on the 146.895 repeater. Lots of fun and we are learning as we go.



The Beacon Mission

The official newsletter of the Albemarle Amateur Radio Club, Inc. will strive to communicate with, enlighten, and entertain the members of the club in strict compliance with the official word of the club as set forth in the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws as administered by the officers and directors who constitute the Board of Directors. The newsletter shall be published monthly on or before the 1st day of the month of issue. The deadline for submissions shall be the 25th of the month preceding the month of publication. The primary role of the publication shall be to promote upcoming activities, report past activities and accomplishments of the club and its members, carry the minutes of the preceding month's Board Meeting and General Membership Meeting, include an official club calendar of the month, as well as, become a recorded history of the club by the archival of all past issues as paper copies contained within a single notebook for each year of publication.

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Marty Wangberg W4MBW.....Newsletter Editor

Bob Dorsey.....Newsletter Editor Emeritus



AARC 2011 Elected Leadership

ON EXAM DAY BRING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

1. A legal photo ID (driver's license, passport).
2. When no photo ID is available, two forms of identification must be presented:
 - a. non-photo ID/driver's license (some states still have them)
 - b. birth certificate (must have the appropriate seal)
 - c. social security card
 - d. library card
 - e. utility bill, bank statement or other business correspondence that specifically names the person; or a postmarked envelope addressed to the person at his or her current mailing address as it appears on the Form 605.
3. Students may bring any of the above items and/or a school ID, minor's work permit, report card, or a legal guardian may present a photo ID.
4. Bring your Social Security Number (SSN) or your FCC issued Federal Registration Number (FRN). VEC's are required by FCC to submit either your SSN or your FRN number with your license application form. If you prefer not to give your SSN, then you may use your FCC issued FRN, if you have one. For instructions on how to register your SSN with the FCC and receive a FRN, visit the [FCC's FAQ page](#) and the [FCC's registration instructions page](#).
5. If applicable, bring the original and a photocopy of your current Amateur Radio license and any Certificates of Successful Completion of Examination (CSCE) you may hold from previous exam sessions. The photocopy(s) will not be returned.
6. Two number two pencils with erasers and a pen.
7. A calculator with the memory erased and formulas cleared is allowed. You may not bring any written notes or calculations into the exam session. Slide rules and logarithmic tables are acceptable, as long as they're free of notes and formulas. Cell phone must be silenced or turned off during the exam session and the phones' calculator function may not be used. In addition, iPhones, iPads, Androids, smartphones, Blackberry devices and all similar electronic devices with a calculator capability, may NOT be used.
8. Bring a check, a money order or cash to cover the exam session fee(s). Check the ARRL VEC's current [exam fee](#).