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WAVELENGTH

Official bulletin of
Scarborough Amateur Radio Club, Inc.
www.ve3we.org

PARTICIPATE – LEARN – ENJOY

May 2012

Volume 6 Issue 5

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Sunday

Tuesday

Thursday

Saturday

SARC Nets

28.730 MHz
CW 10:00 AM
SSB 10:30 AM
147.060 MHz (VE3RPT)
7:30 PM
Alternate frequency
146.520 MHz simplex
28.730 MHz
SSB 7:00 PM
3.740 MHz
SSB 7:30 PM

Everyone is invited to check in on CW before the nets start.

These are open nets. All licensed hams are welcome. Come and join us.

We also want to emphasize that 28.730 MHz is our calling frequency. Please monitor and/or call your friends. 7:00 PM is a good time.



Ontario South Director's Report – May 2012

Greetings from your Southern Ontario RAC Director. I hope everyone is enjoying the spring weather and attending to those antenna projects you've been putting off!

Distracted Driving

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has listened to our concerns and in a recent notice has agreed to extend the exemption for licenced amateur radio operators from the hands-free communication devices law for another five years. Many thanks to the Distracted Driving Committee comprised of Northern Ontario RAC Director Bill Unger, VE3XT (Chair), former RAC Honourary Legal Counsel, Steve Pengelly and myself. While we are certainly happy with this outcome, RAC will continue working with the MTO to make this exemption permanent.

RAC Ontario Field Services changes

Late last year and into early this year, the RAC Committee for Restructuring Field Services in Ontario worked to develop and implement a plan for the administration of Field Services in Ontario. After a consultation period last fall, Field Services has now been changed to comprise four new Sections: Ontario North, Ontario East, Ontario South and Greater Toronto Area (GTA). In RAC bulletins published in February 2012, a call went out for nominations for new Section Managers (SM's) for these new Sections. So far we have commitments for Ontario North and Ontario East Section Managers. I am putting out another call to the RAC membership in Southern Ontario and the GTA to forward the names of individuals to take up these new SM positions. The Committee has agreed to extend the deadline until July 1 and I will be approaching the presidents of clubs in my region to spread the word. An important thing to remember is Field Services isn't just ARES. Field Services is the arm of RAC that facilitates communication between RAC and clubs and members. So please, think about this important role and consider throwing your name into the hat.

Hamfests and Fleamarkets

On April 21, my Assistant Director Stan Leschinsky VE3TW attended the Durham Region Amateur Radio Hamfest in Pickering. The event was well-attended and Stan fielded lots of questions and signed up several new RAC members. Thanks Stan for your help! Other hamfests and fleamarkets scheduled over the next few months include the Central Ontario Hamfest on Sunday, June 3 in Cambridge and the Ontario Hamfest on Saturday, July 14 in Milton. I am planning on attending both events and look forward to seeing you there!

RAC Bulletins

A reminder for any RAC member who has not yet signed up to receive timely updates from RAC, you can do so very easily. Go to the RAC website main page and click on "Subscribe to RAC Bulletins". Follow the instructions and you're good to go. The RAC Bulletin is one of several ways RAC keeps its members up-to-date with news and issues that affect radio amateurs throughout Canada.

If you have any questions or concerns please send me a message at va3wxm@rac.ca.

73,
Jeff VA3WXM
Ontario South Director, Radio Amateurs of Canada

Ham mailing lists, blogs, and podcasts

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

Whether you're a newcomer or an old-timer, the Internet is possibly the best way to learn as much as you can about amateur radio. On the Internet, you'll find many, many ham radio mailing lists, podcasts, and videos. In essence, these resources give you access to hundreds, if not thousands, of Elmers.

One mailing list that I always suggest to new hams is the HamRadioHelpGroup (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HamRadioHelpGroup>). The purpose of this group is to help "those who are interested in getting started in Amateur Radio or upgrading their license." This mailing list has a good mix of beginners and experts, and most questions are answered quickly and correctly. One thing that I really like about this group is that the moderators do a good job of keeping the discussions on track, and will squelch them when they stray off topic or threaten to turn into flame wars.

In addition to the HamRadioHelpGroup, you might also want to join a more targeted mailing list. For example, if you're interested in learning Morse Code (hint, hint), you might join the SolidCpyCW list (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SolidCpyCW/>). If you just bought a Yaesu FT-60 hand-held transceiver, you might want to join the FT-60 list (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FT-60/>). Chances are that no matter what your interest, there's probably a mailing list to discuss that interest.

I'm subscribed to a lot of amateur radio mailing lists and could probably spend most of my day just reading and replying to them. In order to get the most out of them, without them taking away from my on-air time, I only read those threads that I am really interested in, and even then, I quit reading them once they have started to drift off-topic. I also un-subscribe myself from lists that cover topics that I'm no longer interested in.

Blogs, podcasts and videos

In addition to getting on a few mailing lists, you might want to read a few blogs and subscribe to podcasts. These are also great sources of information about amateur radio. I blog about amateur radio at www.kb6nu.com, and lots of hams find it a good source of information. You can find a list of other ham radio blogs that I'd recommend on my home page.

Podcasts are also a good source of information. One podcast that you might want to check out is the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast (<http://www.myamateurradio.com>). Since 2008, Jerry, KD0BIK, has been producing PARP, and currently has more than 50 different episodes online. For other podcasts, consult the list on Jerry's home page.

Finally, there are literally thousands of amateur radio videos on the net. On YouTube alone, there are approximately 32,000 of them. The American Radio Relay League has its own channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/ARRLHQ>), but perhaps the most popular amateur radio video channel is the K7AGE channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/K7AGE>). K7AGE has more than 6,200 subscribers and his videos have garnered more than 2.1 million views!

Whatever source or sources of information you select, remember to not let them take up too much of your time. Ham radio is about more than just reading, listening, or watching. It's about doing!

When he's not answering yet another e-mail, Dan blogs about ham radio at www.kb6nu.com, teaches ham classes, and ragchews on 30m and 40m CW. You can e-mail him with comments or questions at cwgeek@kb6nu.com.

CW beacon/APRS station

Rod VE3SOY has recently set up a CW beacon for the club at his QTH. It transmits at 15 wpm on 28.2653 MHz with 5 watts output. So far we have had reports from around the greater Toronto area, and as far away as Puerto Rico, Tennessee and Alabama.

Arpad VA3VAD is running an APRS station with the VE3WE callsign. Follow it at <http://aprs.fi/info/a/VE3WE>

RAC 60 metre Consultation Bulletin

As of May 12th, Industry Canada has begun the consultation process to see final approval for the use of six channels on the 60 metre band. As part of the consultation, Industry Canada is seeking input on five items. RAC feels it is important for amateur radio operators to comment on this proposal and indicate their preference for the rules governing the frequencies going forward. The five items are explained below.

Item One: Should Industry Canada allow amateur radio operators the use of five frequencies that are harmonized with the US on a no-protection, no-interference basis? These channels are 5332kHz, 5348kHz, 5358.5kHz, 5373kHz, 5405kHz. Transmissions would be limited to a 2.8Khz bandwidth centered on these frequencies.

The obvious answer to Item One is that as amateur radio operators, these additional frequencies are needed for additional emergency communication capacity and having harmonization on frequency with the US will allow for cross border operation.

Item Two: Should Industry Canada harmonize the emission modes and designators on these five channels? In the US they are limited to telephony, data, RTTY and CW.

In Item Two, IC asks if the operating modes should be the same as the US on the five harmonized channels. It was assumed prior to consultation that this was not optional but in the consultation, it appears that input will be taken on this item. However in the proposed revisions to RBR-4, these designators are in place. Unless reason is shown to not harmonize this item, it will likely be implemented.

Item Three: Should Industry Canada specify a maximum radiated power of 100 watts peak envelope power?

Again, in Item Three, IC asks if there should be harmonization on the output power on the five channels. In the US, the FCC has limited transmit power to 100 watts. In the proposed revisions to RBR-4, these designators are in place. Unless reason is shown to not harmonize this item, it will likely be implemented.

Item Four: Should Industry Canada allow Canadian amateurs access to the 5329kHz channel? Transmissions would be restricted to 2.8 kHz centered on this frequency.

In Item Four, IC asks if they should allow a sixth, Canadian only channel. Originally, RAC had requested two Canadian only channels but one was found to be un-useable. RAC recommends Canadian Amateurs support the allotment of a sixth channel.

Item Five: Should Industry Canada specify emission designators and peak power for this sixth channel? If so, what would those be?

Given that the channel referred to in Item Five is domestic only there is little need to harmonize emission types with the US. RAC recommends that as few limits as possible be placed upon the sixth channel to encourage development of domestic communications on this channel.

Those wishing to provide their comments to Industry Canada are asked to do so in the following ways:

In electronic format (WordPerfect, MS Word or PDF) sent to spectrum.engineering@ic.gc.ca . RAC requests a copy of your comments also be sent to regulatory@rac.ca so that we may track response from amateur radio operators.

In written format by mail to Manager, Mobile Systems, Industry Canada, 300 Slater Street, 19th Floor, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0C8. RAC requests that if possible, a copy of written comments be faxed to RAC at 866-660-1187 so that we may track response from amateur radio operators. Please note that Industry Canada will not accept comments by fax.

Comments on these items must be received prior to June 12th. All comments will be posted publicly on the Industry Canada website after the consultation process closes.

The Radio Amateurs of Canada has been working to obtain permanent authorization for Canadian Amateurs on the 60 metre band since 2010. This consultation process represents one of the last steps in that work. Development Licenses continue to be available for those operators who wish to have temporary use of the five frequencies identified in Item One. There is a small cost for the development license. If you wish to obtain a temporary development license, please contact your local District Office of Industry Canada.

We thank Industry Canada and all respondents for their continued work to see the completion of the process to obtain permanent authorization. If you require help sending comments to Industry Canada or have additional questions for RAC on this or any other regulatory matter, please email regulatory@rac.ca

Bill Gade, VE4WO Regulatory Affairs Officer - Radio Amateurs of Canada

Dayton Hamvention 2012: Another great ham radio experience

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

My Dayton experience started at 3:45 am Thursday morning. That's when I had to get up so that I could make it to the Fairborn Holiday Inn in time for the first session of this year's Four Days in May (FDIM) conference. FDIM is a one-day conference put on by the QRP Amateur Radio Club International (<http://qrparci.org/>) and is a great way to start the "Dayton experience."

This year, we were treated to six very fine presentations. They included talks on using microcontrollers for various projects, software-defined radio, VHF and UHF for QRPers, homebrewing with "hollow state" devices (more commonly known as tubes), using open-source electronic design tools, and operating pedestrian mobile. The two talks that I enjoyed the most were "Hollow State (Theratron) Homebrewing" by Grayson, TA2ZGE/KJ7UM and "Leveraging Free and Open Source Tools in Homebrewing" by Jason, NT7S.

Friday morning, I got up early again, so that I could make the 7:30am bus to the Hamvention. We arrived about 8:00 am, just as the gates were opening. The first thing that I did was to head to the FAR

Circuits tent, which is—as the name implies—at the far end of the flea market. There, I made my first purchases, a board to make a regenerative receiver and one to make an audio breakout box.

The rest of the day was a combination of wandering the aisles of the outdoor flea market, fighting the crowds inside the arena, attending seminars, and meeting people that I know. By the time, 4:30 pm rolled around, I was pretty hot and tired. Temperatures topped 80 degrees, and on the blacktop surface of the flea market, temperatures were undoubtedly higher. I was happy to get on the bus and head back to the hotel.

Saturday, was pretty much the same story, except it was even hotter. The temperature almost hit 90 degrees. I didn't bring any sunscreen, either, so I got a little rosy.

I ran into some people that I knew that had just come down for the day, or perhaps that I'd missed the day before. One guy I ran into at the Ohio Repeater Council booth, pulled out his new Elecraft KX-3 and gave me a quick demo. It's actually quite a cool, little radio. I'm still saving up for a K-3, though.

Around noon, I went to the food court for a slice of pizza and a glass of beer. Seating is catch as catch can, so I shared a table with several other hams. This is great because you get to meet all kinds of different people.

This year, an older gentleman sat down next to me with his beer. We got to chatting, and as it turned out, this was his 55th straight year attending the Dayton Hamvention! He started going before it was even held at Hara Arena, and even after they moved to Hara, they didn't use the entire facility as they do now. I'm really glad that I got to speak with him.

So, what did you buy?

I didn't really go down to Dayton with much of a shopping list. In addition to the PC boards, I did pick up a bunch of other little stuff including some strain reliefs, more clamp-on ferrite cores, a paddle pad from Vibroplex (\$1) to keep the paddle down at the club station from sliding around, and some tube sockets! One of the vendors there had a box of tube sockets that they were selling for a quarter apiece or five for a dollar. I picked out five and paid the lady, and as I was walking away, I decided that they were such a good deal that I went back and bought five more.

My biggest purchase was NT7S's OpenBeacon QRSS transmitter (www.etherkit.com). It cost me \$40. It looks like a very nice kit, and I'm hoping to be on 30m QRSS shortly with it. The nice thing about this transmitter is that it has a microcontroller that lets it transmit DFCW and Hellschreiber, in addition to CW. It should be fun to both build and operate.

Too rich for my blood

In other news, both Kenwood and FlexRadio both introduced new radios at Dayton. Perhaps the most buzz was around the Kenwood TS-990. All they were showing was a prototype under a Plexiglass cover. In addition to being incredibly expensive, the radio is huge! I heard someone joke that to produce this radio, Kenwood is going to have to corner the market on buttons and knobs. If you've seen the photo in QST (which was allegedly produced with Photoshop), you'll know what I mean.

The other radio with a bit of buzz is the new FlexRadio FLEX-6000. For the past couple of weeks, the FlexRadio website was proclaiming that this radio was going to be a game changer. Perhaps it is, but at \$6,000+, this radio is out of my league, and too expensive for the majority of radio amateurs. That being the case, I really don't know what all the buzz is about.

I'm sure that the TS-990 and the FLEX-6000 are both great radios, but I think that the law of diminishing returns applies here. At some point, are you really getting \$6,000 or \$12,000 of fun out of the radio? I don't think that I would.

Well, that's it. Another Dayton Hamvention is in the bag. It was a lot of fun, and I'm already looking forward to next year. I've already contacted one of the forum organizers about adding an adult education forum. I think that's something that's both needed and would be popular. I'll just have to make sure to leave enough time to hit the flea market and grab some more tube sockets or coax or whatever.

When he's not tromping around flea markets, or attending conferences, Dan, KB6NU, writes books about ham radio. His latest, 21 Things to Do After You Get Your Amateur Radio License, is available as an e-book from Amazon, Barnes&Noble, or from his website, <http://www.kb6nu.com/>. You can e-mail him with comments, questions, compliments, or brickbats at cwgeek@kb6nu.com.