

DELTA AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

SPARKS Web Edition

SPARKS P.O. BOX 750482 MEMPHIS, TN 38175-0482 / VOL. 14 / FEBRUARY 2000

W 4 B S R E P E A T E R S Y S T E M
146.82, 147.36, 224.42, 443.2 & 145.03 Packet

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

With the first meeting of the year under my belt, some of the first time jitters have gone away. Being among friends certainly helped a lot. If January wasn't busy enough for me with the first board meeting and the first club meeting, I can already tell February is going to be even busier.

In this month's SPARKS, according to the by-laws of Delta Amateur Radio Club, the year's budget is presented to the membership and will be voted on at the meeting. The Board each year tries to anticipate the year's repeater, activity, and operating expenses, and offset those with anticipated membership dues and fundraising efforts. Please take time to look it over. We tried to be as thorough and frugal and practical as possible. Questions and comments are always appreciated.

Traditionally, the Board of Directors holds a brainstorming session before the January membership meeting and shares the results at the first club meeting. Due to the fact that the date of the board meetings has been changed to precede the membership meetings, the brainstorming session was moved to the end of the month. We will relay the ideas, plans, and decisions to you at the February membership meeting.

Also occurring in February is the DixieFest to be held on the 12th and 13th at the Fairgrounds. Many clubs and many hams have been working very hard for eight months to bring this idea to fruition. While everyone who has participated in the planning of this event enjoys a good hamfest, the real satisfaction comes from the fact that this hamfest has crossed club boundaries and brought hams together for a common goal. Each club is distinctive in its membership and goals and tends to exist in its own sphere most of the time. At the same time, they all share the concept of perpetuation of the hobby, communication, and community service. While Delta Amateur Radio Club is only one of the many clubs involved in this effort, we should take pride in this event and I hope to see everyone there enjoying it.

Not only do I hope to see everyone enjoying it, we need to have everyone volunteering at least a couple of hours of your time helping in some capacity, be it arranging tables or taking them down, selling tickets at the door, working in the Delta Club booth, as well as a myriad of other tasks. Listen for calls for volunteers on the net, or sign up for something at the club meeting.

Speaking of volunteers, Betsy Freeman, KD4KOM, said she would be the Hamfest Chairperson for the DixieFest and is responsible for decorating the booth and scheduling hams to be there. If you could plan to spend some time at the booth, I know she would appreciate it. Look for a sign-up sheet at the meeting, give her a call, or contact anyone on the board.

Don Cook, KJ4PO, most graciously agreed to be the Field Day Chairperson this year. While June 26 and 27 is still a long heat wave away, start thinking about where you can help out, what stations you can spend time at, plan on a great dinner Saturday evening, and mark your calendar to enjoy that weekend. It's going to be a very busy month. I hope to see you all at the club meeting and the hamfest.

73, Kathy, KE4UYU

VE CORNER

With the restructuring having been recently announced, I was not sure that we would have many people coming for the testing session held in January. Boy was I wrong. Not only did we have local hams but they even came from Missouri this past month. I knew that there were about four people scheduled to come to the session because they had contacted me either by phone or e-mail. Ten persons came and took 13 elements. Of those 13 elements 10 were passed. Some of these were taken in anticipation of the coming restructuring rules. There were two upgrades for Advanced Class and one for Tech Plus. Code elements included 20, 13, 5. I guess it goes to show that some people want their ticket "the old way" and some will gladly welcome all the changes. If it weren't for the wonderful help this team could not serve you in the way that the club has become accustomed. Thank you so much to Barry N4QW, Bill W4MJM, David KU4AS, Don KJ4PO, Jim N4ZCO, Steve N4SG, and Tom K4TTA. These fellow hams were your VE Team for the evening. A huge THANK YOU to Mike WA0WQI who helped me drag all of the large tables to the room so that we all could have a place to write on. With all that is changing in mind, may we have the testing next month in the hall upstairs so that we can have a bit more elbow room. I just received notice today, January 14th, that the new question pool is expected to be available on or about February 1st. Those waiting for this should be on the lookout.

Congratulations to:

Lawrence Anthony, W0VAM - Advanced
Robert Gill, KC0GHY - Advanced
Robin McConnell, KE4GPR - Tech Plus

Next month is the MONTH OF TESTING. There are three opportunities within a week's time: Tuesday at club meeting and the Saturday AND Sunday of the Hamfest. NOW IS THE TIME if you have been studying to try for the upcoming upgrades.

There were questions at the meeting concerning how to get proof of pre-1987 Technician licensing. The FCC says to send any requests for verification in writing to FCC, 1270 Fairfield Road, Attention: Amateur Section, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325. The request must include your name, address, telephone number, date of birth, call sign issued prior to March 21, 1987, and when the Technician License was granted (if the exact date is not known then the approximate date or time frame is acceptable). Please include any information that may be helpful in researching the request although it is not necessary to include details such as where the test was given nor who administered it. These requests will take time as will be on microfilm. Do not expect an overnight response. Those that bring an old call book to support your request will need a photocopy of the page and, probably, some proof that that is actually your old call, something that has that address attached with your name on it. The only thing that I can think of is an old tax form, old check stub, or an old bill of some sort.

Hoping to keep you informed and up to date.

Till next month 73, Joan KN4PM ARRL VE Liaison

PLEASE COPY NUMBER 2 ROUTINE

If you missed the January meeting, you missed one of the most informative programs we've had recently, GREAT JOB, Alex! Check into the nightly DARC Traffic and Information Net for further details on all of traffic handling. Better yet, check the handout that you got at the meeting and try originating a message (you'll have to check into the net to do this!!!). Admittedly, a good bit of the current NTS traffic is simple and could be handled via mail or a quick telephone call - that is UNTIL WE GET CAUGHT IN AN EMERGENCY/ DISASTER SITUATION. This is when the community - our friends, neighbors, and colleagues - will be looking to US, the amateur radio community, to provide communications. Are YOU going to be ready?

I'd like to welcome Robin, KE4GPR, as our Friday night NCS. Robin had some really good practice in this regard when he coordinated the siren checking last year. Current NCS are WA4MJM on Sundays, KG4CMA on Mondays, KB4NS on Tuesdays, AB4NH on Wednesdays, KE4IVM on Thursdays, KE4GPR on Fridays, and Mr. Newline himself, KU4AS on Saturdays.

Congrats to the several folks who have recently upgraded. For what it's worth, my recommendation is to upgrade as far as you can before the new question pool comes out. We know what the current question pool is; we can only speculate as to what it will be. Odds are, however, that the exams are NOT going to get any easier, especially with the new CW requirement. Thanks to our VE Liaison, KN4PM, for all the effort to keep us up to date on the new restructuring.

Several folks signed up for training classes at the January meeting and I hope to have at least a General Class Theory Class up and running by the time you get this.

UPGRADE TRAINING TIP OF THE MONTH: When trying to learn new material, ACTIVE PRACTICE is always more efficient than PASSIVE PRACTICE. Passive practice could be reading (and re-reading) the study materials and trying to memorize what you need in order to pass the test. Active practice, on the other hand, would be taking some practice tests ­ LOTS of practice tests ­ while you are studying the materials. Don't overlook the AA9PW link on the DARC webpage; it's an excellent training resource.

73 de K4TTA

GET A COPY OF SPARKS BY EMAIL!

How? Send an empty email to: k4dit@arrl.net with a subject line of: SUBSCRIBE SPARKS

February Meeting ­ DX

CQ, CQ, CQ--KF4ZGJ Calling CQ and Standing BY!

What an exciting time in the life of newly privileged amateur to be able to get on some HF frequencies and call that first CQ and hope to hear from someone in another country or better yet, another continent. I think the most exciting time in my short HF history was the first contact from another continent. "Exactly where is that?????"----drag out the Radio Amateur's World Atlas and look at the country, identify the call sign and let your mind flow. What DX Zone is that in? Better yet what is a DX Zone? All I want to do is talk to them!

There are many of us who are fairly new to HF privileges and haven't had the opportunity to learn the "ins and outs" of proper DX'ing. We want to talk to someone from afar but we want to learn the proper and professional way and also the most likely way for us to make a DX contact. The new restructuring is going to give DX privileges to several in our Delta Club roster by April 15th. Some of you have already passed the written General, already having 5wpm as a Tech Plus and had some 10 meter and of course 6 meter privileges. Some of you are at the verge of passing 5wpm and then the written and soon "the world is the limit".

The February meeting will be hosted by Terry Cox KB4KA. Terry is a well known Delta Club DX'er. In addition to being a very active member of our Delta Club, he also is a member of the Hickory Withe DX Club. Terry has recently moved to Fishersville and is in the process of constructing a "big time" DX station. You need a golf cart to ride the length of his 10 meter monoband antenna. KB4KA will speak to our club on the "art" of DX'ing.

With so many of us with fairly new privileges and many more to have new privileges shortly, this is a well timed treat! Those of you that are "old timers" at this art, take one of us "neophytes" under your wing and lend us a hand at getting to know the bands better. It will be a joy to you and the "newbie" and a real plus for our great hobby. Is Antarctica on your mind? With this program and a little bit of luck, who knows!

Good DX'ing! Freddy, KF4ZGJ

Amateur Restructuring is Here Three License Classes, One Code Speed

NEWINGTON, CT, Dec 30, 1999-- Amateur Radio will get a new look in the new millennium. The FCC today issued its long-awaited Report and Order in the 1998 Biennial Regulatory Review of Part 97--more commonly known as "license restructuring." The bottom line is that starting April 15, 2000, there will be three license classes--Technician, General, and Amateur Extra--and a single Morse code requirement--5 WPM. "We believe that an individual's ability to demonstrate increased Morse code proficiency is not necessarily indicative of that individual's ability to contribute to the advancement of the radio art," the FCC said. Besides drastically streamlining the Amateur Radio licensing process, the FCC said its actions would "eliminate unnecessary requirements that may discourage or limit individuals from becoming trained operators, technicians, and electronic experts." Although no new Novice and Advanced licenses will be issued after the effective date of the Report and Order, the FCC does not plan to automatically upgrade any existing license privileges. The ARRL had proposed a one-time across-the-board upgrading of current Novice and Tech Plus licensees to General class, but the FCC declined to adopt the idea. This means that current licensees will retain their current operating privileges, including access to various modes and subbands, and will be able to renew their licenses indefinitely. Starting April 15, 2000, individuals who qualified for the Technician class license prior to March 21, 1987, will be able to upgrade to General class by providing documentary proof to a Volunteer Examiner Coordinator, paying an application fee, and completing FCC Form 605. The FCC's decision not to automatically upgrade Novice and Tech Plus licensees means the current Novice/Tech Plus HF subbands will remain and not be "reformed" to higher class licensees as the ARRL had proposed. The FCC said it did not reform these subbands because there was "no consensus" within the amateur community as to what to do with them. As it had proposed earlier, the FCC decided to lump Technician and Tech Plus licensees into a single licensee database, all designated as "Technician" licensees. Those who can document having passed the 5 WPM Morse code examination will continue to have the current Tech Plus HF privileges. "If documentation is needed to verify whether a licensee has passed a telegraphy examination, we may request the documentation from that licensee or the VECs," the FCC said. In addition to reducing the number of license classes from six to three and eliminating the 20 and 13 WPM code tests, the FCC also will reduce the number of written examination elements from five to three, authorize Advanced class hams to prepare and administer General class examinations, and eliminate Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) station licenses. RACES will remain, however. "After review of the record, we conclude that we should eliminate RACES station licenses because RACES station licenses are unnecessary for amateur stations and amateur service licenses to provide emergency communications," the FCC said. Under the new licensing scheme, there will be four examination elements. Element 1 will be the 5 WPM Morse code exam. Element 2 will be a 35-question written test to obtain a Technician license; Element 3 will be a 35-question written test to obtain a General license, and Element 4 will be a 50-question written test for the Amateur Extra license. The FCC has left it in the hands of the National Conference of VECs Question Pool Committee to determine the specific mix and makeup of written examination questions. Current Amateur Radio study materials remain valid at least until the new rules become effective in April. The FCC's new licensing plan means someone will be able to become a ham by passing a single 35-question written examination. The plan also simplifies and shortens the upgrade path from the ground floor through Amateur Extra--especially since amateurs will only have to pass one Morse code test. Elimination of the 13 and 20 WPM Morse requirements also means an end to physician certification waivers for applicants claiming an inability to pass the Morse code examination due to physical handicap. The effective date provides a window of upgrade opportunity for current Advanced licensees. Between now and April 15, current Advanced holders may take the existing Element 4B, a 40-question test, giving them credit for having passed the current Extra written examination. Likewise, holders of a Certificate of Successful Completion of Examination (CSCE) for Elements 3B or 4B dated on or after April 17, 1999, will be able to qualify for General or Amateur Extra respectively when the new rules go into effect on April 15, 2000. The FCC disagreed with the League's suggestion that it undertake a restructuring of operating privileges along with licensing restructuring. "We believe that in light of ongoing discussions concerning implementation of new and more modern communications technologies within the amateur service community, we should accord the amateur service community an opportunity to complete such discussions and possibly reach a consensus regarding implementation of new technologies before we undertake a comprehensive restructuring of the amateur service operating privileges and frequencies," the FCC said in its Report and Order. In its amendments to Part 97, the FCC's Report and Order refers to a "Club Station Call Sign Administrator," something that does not exist under the current rules and which was not explained in the R&O itself. An FCC spokesperson said the Commission plans to issue a Public Notice soon to explain the program and to solicit qualified entities to serve as call sign administrators for club station applications. A copy of the entire Report and Order (FCC 99-412) is available at http://www.arrl.org/announce/regulatory_w99-143ro.pdf or at http://www.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/1999/db991230/fcc-99412.txt

Reprinted from the ARRL Letter Distribution List.

PACKET UPDATE

Many amateurs are switching over to the new switching power supplies. The units combine small size and low weight and generate lots of amps for our equipment. Unfortunately the switcher generates noise up and down the band. If you happen to end up on a frequency that the noise from the switching supply is on it can be a pain. Alinco has just come out with a new switching power supply. It has 5 to 15 volts adjustable at up to 30 amps. The unit also has multiple outlet terminals. The main advantage of the Alinco is that the switcher frequency is adjustable from the front panel which allows you to get rid of the noise if it shows up on the frequency you are using. If you need a new switching power supply for the shack, check out the new DM-330MV from Alinco.

James Butler, KB4JLV

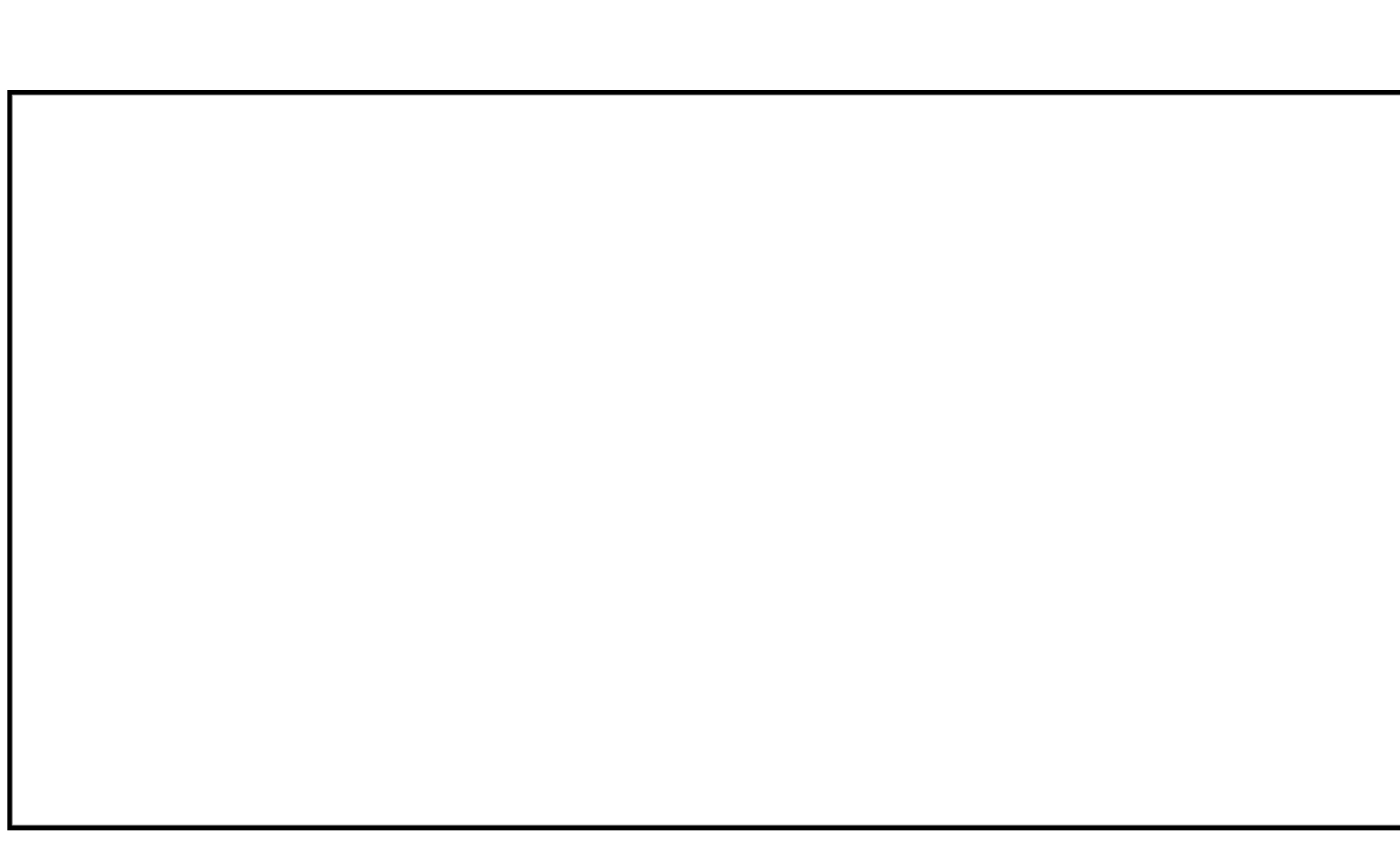
AMATEUR HARDWARE UPDATE

Many times while working on radios and support equipment we use our soldering irons. Soldering creates fumes which are not good if you breathe them in, or if they get in your eyes. Manufacturers have come up with solution for this problem. They sell a small fan to suck up the fumes and direct them away from you while you are soldering. These range in price from \$40.00 to over \$100.00 depending on where you buy them. This month's project is the SOLDER FAN, which will keep the fumes away from your face while doing close solder work. The unit consists of a surplus computer fan available for two to four dollars. The fan is mounted on a wooden block to hold it in place while it is running. The only other part is a power cord to plug it in. The unit works well and stops you from getting fumes in your face.

I will have the SOLDER FAN at the meeting to show and answer questions on for those who wish to build up their own units.

SEE YOU AT THE MEETING

James Butler, KB4JLV



Secretary's Report January 19, 2000

So far January has been a great month for Delta Club when it comes to membership renewals. So far we have had about half of the 1999 members renew their dues for 2000.

Traditionally Delta Club gives a "grace period" to renew your memberships before repeater privileges and newsletters are stopped. Your 1999 membership officially expired on Dec. 31, 1999. The board has determined that the date for the grace period to end will be February 25th allowing the weekend for repeater managers to turn off PIN numbers, speed dials and reprogram autopatch codes. New repeater instructions will be published in the March issue of SPARKS, which will only be mailed to current 2000 members. If you're not sure whether you have renewed or not, please look at the mailing label on your last SPARKS newsletter. It has the "Current year" listed on it as well as your PIN number.

I ask that if you have not yet renewed your dues for 2000, please put that at the top of your "important things to do" list. A very important issue is the number of newsletters the club mails out. We must mail a minimum of 200 newsletters to qualify for the bulk mail postage rates. We have been mailing in the neighborhood of 250 newsletters each month for a cost of around \$32.00. If we should drop to only 199 newsletters and had to mail them First Class postage, it would cost the club \$65.67 to mail. The difference in cost each month is just about equal to your membership dues. A great time to renew will be at the Delta Club booth at DixieFest on February 12-13.

We would like to welcome one new member to the club, voted on and approved at the January board meeting. This is Larry Boyd, KB4GFT who is an employee at the National Weather Service here in Memphis. Be sure and welcome Larry when you hear him on one of our repeaters. Also, we have had a number of new member applications this month as well as former members that have been away for a while and are re-applying for membership. We're excited about this but more on those next month.

73,

Tommy, KD4TJO
Secretary

The ARRL Letter, Vol 19, No 2

QUESTION POOL COMMITTEE EYES FEB 1 RELEASE DATE

A revised Amateur Radio question pool that reflects the April 15, 2000, restructuring rules could be out by February 1. Chairman Ray Adams, W4CPA, of the National Conference of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators' Question Pool Committee says the QPC is in "band aid" mode right now and will try to get "something usable into public domain for all three of the new written pools by February 1 or very shortly thereafter." Adams says that a Technician class syllabus already has been drafted and approved. The various QPC members have been keeping in touch by telephone and e-mail since the FCC announced the restructuring rules December 30. "We will go back over the newly configured pools, refining them and updating in a methodical manner with the order to be decided by the NCVEC when next in session," Adams said this week. He said the revised question pool will follow the established format. After April 15, 2000, the FCC will only issue Technician, General, and Amateur Extra class licenses. Novice and Advanced licensees will retain current operating privileges and may renew indefinitely. Applicants desiring HF privileges will only have to pass a 5 WPM Morse code test. Current Amateur Radio study materials remain valid at least until the new rules become effective in April. The new licensing regime has four examination elements: Element 1, the 5 WPM Morse code test; Element 2, a 35-question Technician test; Element 3, a 35-question General test, and Element 4, a 50-question Amateur Extra test. Frequently Asked Questions on restructuring are available at <http://www.arrl.org/new/restructuring/faq.html>. A copy of the entire Report and Order (FCC 99-412) is available at http://www.arrl.org/announce/regulatory_w99-143ro.pdf or at http://www.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/1999/db991230/fcc-99412.txt.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONFUSION FOLLOW IN FCC'S WAKE

Questions, comments, and some confusion have been the order of the day since the FCC finally dropped the other shoe on Amateur Radio restructuring on December 30. The FCC's momentous action--reducing the number of license classes to three and establishing 5 WPM as the sole Morse code examination element--has, at least for now, polarized the Amateur Radio community. It also promises to change the complexion of Amateur Radio as it enters the new millennium. More than half of those responding to an informal poll on the ARRL Web site indicate they plan to upgrade during 2000. Demand for study materials in the past week suggests many amateurs will be hitting the books in the coming weeks. After April 15, 2000, the FCC will only issue Technician, General, and Amateur Extra class licenses. Novice and Advanced licensees will retain current operating privileges and may renew indefinitely. The FCC's new licensing scheme simplifies and shortens the upgrade path from the ground floor through Amateur Extra. Applicants will only have to pass one Morse code test, and there are fewer written examinations and total questions. "This is the best news I've heard since bread and butter!" exclaimed Jimmy Stewart, WD9FHY, who said he's been trying unsuccessfully for years to boost his code proficiency. On the other side were some who asserted that the revised requirements would contribute to a further decline of Amateur Radio and open the doors to "riff-raff." The ARRL Board of Directors is expected to review the FCC Report and Order and discuss its implications when it meets January 21-22 in Memphis. In a significant step, the FCC has left it in the hands of the National Conference of VECs Question Pool Committee to determine the specific mix and makeup of written examination questions. Current Amateur Radio study materials remain valid at least until the new rules become effective in April.

CONTEST CALENDAR

Here are some of the contests coming up in the next few weeks...

North American Sprint, phone
Sponsored by the National Contest Journal

SSB 0000Z-0400Z Feb 6 (local time, Feb 5)
CW is 0000Z-0400Z Feb 13 (local time, Feb 12)

Sprints are separate, 80, 40, 20 only.
See the Web site at <http://www.vramp.net/~ncj/>.

School Club Roundup. See the Web site at <http://www.arrl.org/contests/announcements/scr.html>

YL-OM Contest
Sponsored by YLRL

Ph: 1400Z Feb 5 to 0200Z Feb 7,
CW: 1400Z, Feb 12 to 0200Z, Feb 14.
See the web site at <http://www.qsl.net/~yvl/ylcnst.html>.

Winter Fireside SSB Sprint
Sponsored by QRP ARCI

2000Z to 2400Z Feb 13, SSB, 160 80 40 20 15 10 meters.

WorldWide RTTY WPX Contest
Sponsored by CQ Magazine and The New RTTY Journal

0000Z Feb 12 to 2400Z Feb 13.

Novice Round-Up
Sponsored by FISTS CW Club

CW only, 0000Z Feb 12 to 2400Z Feb 13. <http://www.fists.org/~fists/novice.html>.

ARRL International DX Contest
See the web site at <http://www.arrl.org/contests/announcements/intdx.html>

For more information on these and other contests in February, please visit the ARRL contest page on the internet at: www.arrl.org/contests/months/feb.html

FEBRUARY 8

CLUB MEETING

7365 HWY. 70

BARTLETT, TN

MEETING STARTS AT 7:00 PM

The February program will cover DX operations
presented by
Terry Cox, KB4KA

VE TESTING:

Don't forget the monthly Volunteer Examiner testing session. Registration begins at 5:30p.m. and testing begins promptly at 6:00p.m. Please remember to bring two forms of identification the original and copies of any existing licenses or CSCE's you might have. Please be on time for registration, as you will not be allowed to enter the testing session after 6:00 p.m., so our volunteer VE team can finish in time to attend the club meeting. Call Joan Thorne 366-9722, if special testing arrangements are required.

W4BS REPEATER SYSTEM

146.82 net 8:00 PM

147.36 tone = 107.2

(BACK ON THE AIR AT A TEMPORARY LOCATION)

224.42 1.25 m reprt

443.20 packet / 107.2

145.03 packet / bbs

Other Important Contacts

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Membership Chairpersons
Ben Barth, KF4GNC
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eloiseb@aol.com

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