

DELTA AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

SPARKS Web Edition

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W 4 B S R E P E A T E R S Y S T E M

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PRESIDENT'S PAGE

The November meeting was WOW! in case you missed it. I think we had a record number of members present Tuesday night and even had a ham from Maine, Pricilla Clark, KB1EJW, visiting our club. And I know we had a record number of tickets sold in one evening, with many thanks going to Steve Feltman, KC4ZOV, President of Delta Club in 1994 and 1995. Due to his booming voice, his commanding presence, and threat not to shut up until \$1000 in tickets was sold, we covered our expenses for the Icom 706MKIIG all band rig as our Grand Prize, and all the other prizes as well.

We also elected the 2001 Board of Directors. I want to thank the Nominating committee, Tommy Thompson, KD4TJO, Bill Covington, KC4SXTI, and Paul Cline, WMSQ, for putting together the slate of officers. Congratulations go to Tom Richardson, K4TTA, as President, Terry Cox, KB4KA, as Vice President, Whit Crowley, KD4LTR, as Treasurer, Ben Troughton, KU4AW, as Secretary, Ken Gregg, K4DIT, as Director of Publications, Freddy Bratton, KF4ZGI, as Director of Training, Gary Blinckmann, WA2JQC, as Director of Programs, and Arlene Cline, AA5GX, as Director of Meetings and Special Events.

As outgoing President, I want to thank all of you who helped me out this year. I wouldn't dare try to list you all. I would miss too many. But I couldn't have done it without you. Being President was much harder and took more time than I ever imagined. I hope I did my job well and I thank you for showing me the trust to do it and having the faith that I could.

The November meeting is where the President gets to honor a few special members of Delta Club for their special contributions. For those who could not attend, I want to tell you about these special people.

The Presidential Citation is an award that is presented to someone for going the extra mile unasked for. Steve Campbell, KF4LUR, fit the bill this year. Steve doesn't come to many meetings and he arrives late when he does make a meeting. He has 4 children, has a job that doesn't always permit him regular hours, and is very active in his church. But he also enjoys amateur radio enough to pitch in when he can. He stopped by our Field Day site, very, very late in the evening, around midnight or so, after an already full day, just to see what was happening, spend a little time and then go home. He saw we were having some difficulty with a downed antenna and mast at the CW station, and pitched in without hesitation, staying till the job was done. It took about four hours, but with some help (see the paragraph below), he got the CW station back on the air.

Newcomer of the Year goes to someone new in the hobby or new to the club, who, in spite of his "newness" has been very active. I awarded David Smith, KF4PEY, the Newcomer of the Year Award. David is one of these hams you can count on to show up at just about every event. He was one of the Delta Club members to help with the set-up at DixieFest this year. When it became apparent the security DixieFest had arranged wasn't going to appear on Saturday, David volunteered to stay the night to safeguard everyone's equipment and merchandise. He helped out at Field Day, where he again spent the night on Friday to make sure no one tampered with the tower trailer. He helped Steve, KF4LUR, in his repairs to the antenna and mast Saturday night. He worked at the Memphis in May special event, and he helped at the ScoutBase 2000. He helped pull the antenna down when Tim Morrow, AB4NH, needed to repair a cold solder joint. He and Tommy, KD4TJO, were instrumental in helping a stranded motorist find a hotel and get his car fixed. He just seems to be around when you need help.

Ham of the Year goes to the ham who has been a member for a bit longer than the "Newcomer" and made a considerable contribution to the club throughout this year. Joan Thorne, KN4PM.

Joan received the ham of the year award last year for her four years as Volunteer Examiner Liaison. I'm giving it to her again this year for the outstanding way she handled her responsibilities this year. As if conducting testing sessions and making sure paperwork is processed in a timely and correct manner is not difficult enough, this year the license restructuring added an unpredictable situation to her responsibilities. Joan, in her characteristic manner, provided the one steady source of order, information, and solutions in the chaos that ensued after the announcement of the restructuring. If she didn't have an answer to a question, she used her resources to get one. She had the foresight to have enough tests at each session, arranged for enough VE's to assist her, was available for additional testing times when asked. In short, she managed to keep a calm handle on a situation that could have been chaotic. She doesn't act as VE Liaison for just club members. There were frequent times when she had people from Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, testing. She tested well over 300 people this year, and each person coming to a testing session gets their impression of the club through Joan and her VE's. It is for her dedication and professionalism exhibited, and its reflection on our club, that she has earned Ham of the Year.

The Marconi Award is for technical excellence. Ken Gregg, K4DIT, has been our Director of Publications this year and has graciously volunteered to resume his duties for another year. Ken keeps a fairly low profile. He gets on the radio occasionally. You can say he does more listening than talking. And he doesn't toot his own horn. The newest mode of transmission in HF has been PSK31. Ken, along with Tom, K4TTA, did a program explaining the technology. He's acted as an elmer to many hams wanting to get into this newest niche of Ham Radio. He's taken calls from many hams, I know because Ben's been one of them, to help in troubleshooting any problems they may have. But it is in asking him questions and talking to him that you find he is an invaluable source of information. Take the time to ask him. It is for his promotion of PSK31 that he has earned this award.

The Bob Youngblood Award was established last year at Ben Troughton's suggestion to honor the memory of Bob Youngblood, N4WAL. Bob became a silent key in May of 1998, thus missing his first meeting in ten years, even after he and his wife Carol moved to Jackson, TN. He was a constant presence at the community service events, Field Days, special events, was supportive of the hobby, and always had a positive outlook.

I awarded Tommy Thompson, KD4TJO, this award because of his constant dedication to the hobby and devotion to the club for more than seven years as an amateur radio operator. When I starting coming to DARC meetings in 1995, Steve Feltman, KC4ZOV, was in his second term as President and Tommy was already in his second year on the Board. He has been on the Board as Treasurer, Secretary, Vice President, President, Past President, Director of Publications, and Secretary once again. 'Com' ent, that's seven years on the board. While I can't say he's never missed a meeting in all those years, he has been a solid contributing member of this club for as many years. He's participated in many of the special events, the Field Days, the JOTA's. When he's not participating in them, he's running them. He, for many years, has sat out at Shelby Farms early on Sunday morning to reserve the site for our Annual Picnic. He's been our liaison for community service events, such as MIM Triathlon, the Memphis Marathon, Thanksgiving Turkey Trot, March of Dimes Walk-a-thon. He's been a Traffic and Information net control. He's presented a program on building a J-pole. He's built our web site from scratch and made it what it is today. He's hauled the tower trailer to various locations many times, and hauled the Autozone smoker to two FD's (ask him about one of those trips). He's been on the Repeater Committee for many years, and was absolutely pivotal in relocating the 82 repeater and antenna to its new site on the WFTY tower. He gets involved in directional finding when there has been suspected harmful interference. He's served on committees whenever asked. In general, if you ask Tommy if he would help out, he will say yes, and somehow manage to get it done.

He promotes the amateur radio hobby in other ways as well. Tommy is the Director for Skywarn, a program that trains spotters and responders to assist the weather service with ground level observation during severe weather events, and provides an early warning system of pending severe weather to hams in outlying counties. He is also involved in DixieFest, now a multi-club sponsored hamfest in the MidSouth.

He epitomizes the long term commitment and dedication to amateur radio that we are striving to perpetuate in the Bob Youngblood Award.

73, Kathy, KE4UYU

VE CORNER

The VE Team does not hold a testing session during the Delta Club November meeting. The reason for this is that most of us are members of the club and like to participate in the voting and awards/certificate events. I was very honored this year to be awarded the Ham of the Year award voted by the Board of Directors. It is with great humility that I accept this award, because, without the rest of the teams efforts, I alone would not be able to offer this service to the ham community. You as a Club support our efforts to the nth degree. Thank you everyone.

This has been a very busy year for the team. One of the reasons is the wonderful training seminars offered by Tom K4TTA. Another reason for the increase was the restructuring of the Ham License Classes. With the restructuring came along new question pools, new paperwork, and a whole lot of the Ham Community. This year we have offered 23 testing sessions. Of those 23, 17 sessions had participants from many states - not just the Memphis area. We held 3 session in February (all in one week - Hamfest), 2 in March, April, June and July. We helped 329 persons take 295 radio element exams. Of those 295 elements, 212 were passes with 176 upgrades earned. We have gained 55 new Technician Class Hams this year, 66 General Class Hams (31 of them were upgrades due to the new structuring, that is, they were licensed prior to April 1987) and 52 new Extra Class Hams. We also had 3 people earn the Advanced Class license before it went into "antiquaille" along with the Novice Class license. Just as a reminder - anyone holding those licenses will continue to have their same privileges so long as they continue to RENEW the license on time. Of the new general and extra class hams, 61 of them took their exams prior to the April 15th change date which means they tested at a prior session either with this team or some other team in the United States. Remember that a CSCE is only good for 365 days and may be used at ANY testing session (CAVEC may be used at ARRL session etc.) An interesting note for me, and maybe for you too, is that the Tuesday before Hamfest we had 35 people take 43 elements, while at Hamfest (Saturday session) we had 44 people take 50 elements. The two sessions were almost equal. In order to compare this year with past I have gone back and compared some figures. I took this position as VE Liaison in May of 1996. Those figures are as follows:

Year	Sessions	Persons Testing	Elements Taken
1996	7	47	96
1997	12	76	133
1998	10	29	51
1999	13	69	118
2000	17	329	295

And Now For The Important News:

December is the last month that this ARRL VE Team will be offering multiple choice CW exams. Starting in January we will be changing to fill in the blank. This was a recommendation to be phased in by all teams by July 1, 2001. You will still have two ways to pass the test (1) by answering 7 out of 10 questions correctly (spelling counts - only write the way the answer was sent - if it is misspelled then misspell) or (2) with a character count of at least 25 characters copied correctly on a one-minute-solid copy review. The VE Teams will be once again getting new exams by July with a character speed between 13 and 15 WPM spacing to be 5 wpm. The audio note frequency will be in the range of 700 to 1000 Hz. The NCVEC team years, and was absolutely pivotal in relocating the 82 repeater and antenna to its new site on the WFTY tower. He gets involved in directional finding when there has been suspected harmful interference. He's served on committees whenever asked. In general, if you ask Tommy if he would help out, he will say yes, and somehow manage to get it done.

Questions about the question pools will also arise. The first pool to change will be the Extra Class but not until June 30, 2002. The technician class will change on June 30, 2003 with the general class to follow the next year on June 30, 2004. The update of the Extra Class question pool will be completed by the end of 2001 for implementation of the following year.

There is no date as of this writing as to when the new testing fee will go into effect. Until further notice it will remain at the \$6.50 for my testing session. Be on notice though that the new fee may be as high as \$10.00 BE WISE, BE SMART, TEST EARLY.

Those that are waiting for the new VE Manual - it is at the printers (32,000 copies). If you are on the waiting list as a prospective VE it will be sent to you, and to those that are present VEs in late December (the printer expects a 3 week turnaround).

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve this community and to the wonderful, and very faithful help of the VE volunteers. Remember the changes that are coming and that Hamfest is just around the corner.

See you in December, 73

Joan KN4PM
Delta Division ARRL VE Liaison
kd4pm@arrl.net

DECEMBER MEETING

"What Are Those Knobs and What Do They Do?" We will have a brief teaching session on HF rigs and the purpose and use of the "knobs". Many of you will be getting HF rigs for Christmas or will use your Christmas stash to buy one to treat yourself. A little prior understanding of the basic knobs and their basic functions will go a long way. It won't be in depth or very long but very informative. An in depth session will be held later as a part of a training opportunity.

We will also have a question and answer period involving those who have brought us programs this past year. If you have questions on PSK31, antennas, satellite, traffic, DX'ing etc. we will be able to answer questions that may have popped up on any of these or any other technical question you may have. We have a wealth of learned amateurs in our great club and they love helping those of us who are newer to the hobby. Bring your questions to the meeting.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Delta Club for letting me be the Program Director this past year. I have strived to have informative programs for the breadth of the amateur hobby. Some say that there are ones that were too technical or of too limited interest. The amateur hobby involves a broad band of opportunities for us to play with our radios. I tried to appeal to the depth of those opportunities. Not every aspect of your hobby is for every amateur but we need to be aware of it and have a basic knowledge of it. I hope that these programs have added some interest and knowledge where there might have been little or none. My goal was to interest and educate in facets of our hobby that were there for us to participate in but many of us had no idea where to start to get help. I hope at least some small part of that goal has been realized and I thank the membership for its support of me during this past year. It has been a great opportunity for me. Thank you all!!!!!!

73, Freddy, KF4ZGI

READY FOR A NEW DIGITAL MODE? TRY MFSK

Now that everyone's a PSK31 expert, it's time to try something new (or maybe it's old according to some of the documentation I've read on it). I've been seeing quite a bit lately about the MFSK mode (Multi - Frequency Shift Keying). Below are a couple of links that explain it. The first one has some free software called "Stream", which is similar to Djazpin, one of the popular PSK31 programs. I've downloaded it and have it operational, although I've not made a contact with it yet. It also can be used for PSK31. It will function with most computers, sound cards, and rig interfaces such as the popular RIGblaster. The biggest problems facing very long distance (DX) communication on HF are generally selective fading and ionospheric modulation of the signal, rather than sensitivity, and the PSK modes do not handle these problems very well. MFSK was specifically designed to address such problems and proponents are reporting excellent long-range low-power contacts. Give it a try and let me know what you think! I'll report further on it once I've made a few contacts.

Try these Internet links for free software and more information on this mode:

<http://jz8blbysonline.it/>
<http://www.qsl.net/z1lbpu/MFSK/INDEX.html>

73, Ken, K4DIT

QRP/CW/MOBILE? SURELY YOU JEST!

No joke intended, as I did just that on a recent road trip. With the MFJ-9120B Integrated QRP CW Station and an Iron Horse mag-mounted 20 meter antenna, I was able to work everything I could hear with a whopping 4 watts! And I could hear plenty - Colorado, Florida, Ohio, Indiana, and Ontario, Canada, to name a few. Once I got to my destination, I set the antenna on top of an aluminum carport cover and made several contacts during the November CQWW DX contest. Two contacts were especially surprising to me - Finland and Sweden! I had to keep reminding myself that I was only running 4 watts, and almost did not even try the DX stations, thinking that they would never hear me, but hear me they did, both coming back immediately when I called!

The 9120 is actually three separate components, the 9020 20 meter CW transceiver, the 971 antenna tuner, and the 4114 power pack, all bolted together into what I call my "Tower-of-Power". The transceiver is factory set for maximum power output and requires no tuning. The antenna tuner is a mini version of MFJ's other tuners. The power pack contains clips for 12-D-Cell batteries and has a charging circuit for Ni-Cad's. I equipped mine with Metal-Hydride's. At first, I thought that the antenna tuner would be overkill but, with a QRP station it is critical to get every available watt at the antenna. MFJ also makes versions of the transceiver for other bands, including 10, 30, and 40 meters. I also have a 9040 - the 40 meter version and am going to mount it atop the 9020.

All and all, this is an impressive showing for such a small, relatively inexpensive, easily portable rig. I'm already thinking about how I can run it beachside on my next vacation! More on that later.

73, Ken Gregg, K4DIT

PET HAM CARE AND FEEDING FOR BEGINNERS!

Pets hams are so intelligent they often seem human, but they can be difficult to raise. Only someone with great patience should attempt it. In case you do, here is a guide to the basics:

LIVING AREA - A pet ham needs a private nest area, an entire room where it will not be disturbed. Your pet ham will spend many happy hours alone there with its treasures - boxes, wires, bits of metal, glass, plastic, paper, etc., that it will bring home whenever it ventures out. You will want to encourage your pet ham to confine its activity to this room to prevent the entire house from being subjected to noise, clutter, and the boring of holes in the walls.

EXPENSES - Keeping a pet ham is expensive, but, unlike most pets, a pet ham can be trained to work outside the home for a few hours each day. It may even bring in enough to offset its expenses.

FEEDING - A well behaved pet ham will eat with the family occasionally, but it usually will feel more comfortable and secure taking its meals in the nest room. You must be sure your pet ham is well supplied with food and drink during the long periods it spends alone there, even if it does not beg or whine.

OBEDIENCE TRAINING - A pet ham can be trained to perform simple tricks, the easiest being "Sit" and "Speak." Do not be alarmed if it practices them for hours at a time in its nest room.

HEALTH PROBLEMS - The pet ham typically suffers lower back pain and minor throat irritations from too much sitting and speaking, but health maintenance costs tend to be minimal.

TRAVEL - Your pet ham will gladly travel with your family by car or even by air, if allowed to bring along certain familiar items from the nest room. Most pet hams enjoy trips to places where they can meet pet hams from other families.

BREEDING - If you plan to breed your pet ham, you should do so as soon as possible after your get it. As a pet ham matures, it becomes increasingly reluctant to engage in activities not associated with its nest room collection.

Contributed by Joan, KN4PM
Written by Brian, KC7OC

NOVEMBER MEETING GRAND PRIZE WINNER!

Ben Troughton, KU4AW, was the happy winner of the Grand Prize at the November meeting - an ICOM 706MKIIG. Congratulations Ben! Thanks to Memphis Amateur Electronics for, as always, providing the prizes at a substantial discount. This allows us to have more prizes than we would otherwise.

PACKET UPDATE

Farallon Electronics has come out with a new TNC for the amateur market. The name of the controller is the PTC-1Ic. The TNC is a multimode controller that supports Factor I, Factor II, RTTY, AMTOR, CW, FAX, SSTV, and the newest mode PSK31. The unit does all the decoding and encoding using a Motorola based DSP. The PTC-1Ic operates at baud rates up to 1200 Baud. The front panel has LED indicators for mode, send, speed, and error. The unit also has a full bar graph LED system to allow the signal to be tuned in. If you are looking for a new multimode to do PSK31 check out the PTC-1Ic. The web address is www.yachtwire.com

James Butler
KB4LJV

AMATEUR HARDWARE UPDATE

Most amateurs run some type of radio gear in the car. The proper installation of this equipment is needed for efficient operation. The best method of power hookup to reduce electrical noise and insure proper power to the radio is a power connection directly to the battery. This means you have to remember to turn off the radio to prevent the battery from running down. This month's project is the AUTOMATIC RADIO POWER SWITCH. The circuit allows for direct connection to the battery and radio power controlled by the ignition switch. In the normal position the rig power is removed when the key is turned off. This prevents battery discharge. The power is restored when the vehicle is used again. The circuit is made from a high current 12 VDC, relay and high current switch. The high current switch lets you bypass the auto on/off feature and give continuous power from the battery to the radio for operation while parked with the engine off. The circuit is easy to build and comes in useful for battery protection.

I will have the AUTOMATIC RADIO POWER SWITCH 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
KB4LJV

THE W4BS ELMER SHACK

Please feel free to contact any of our ELMERS to help you enhance your amateur skills. Anyone wishing to be added to the Elmer list please contact Arlene at AS5G@aol.com or 385-0995.

K4TTA (Extra) Tom Richardson 386-6268 k4tta@arrl.net (1,3,4,6,8,9,13,14)

KA4BLL (Gen) Ned Savage 363-9607 nsavage@juno.com (1,5,8,14, MARS, ARES/RACES, net control, traffic handling, emergency service)

KB4LJV (Extra) James Butler 294-2540 (2,7,9,11,13,14)

KD4NOQ (Adv) David Campbell 388-6166 kd4noq@juno.com (1,2,3,5,9,10,14, slow scan TV, ATV minor)

KU4AW (Extra) Ben Troughton 372-8031 bktrough@mem.quik.com (2,4,8)

N9ACQ (Extra) Bill Kuechler 368-0532 wkuechl1@midsouth.rr.com (1,8,13)

WA2IQC (Gen) Gary Blinckmann 794-5289 garyblin@midsouth.rr.com (1,7,10,14)

WA4MQM (Extra) Bill Hancock 853-7192 billwad4mjn@aol.com (1,2,8, emergency communications, ARES,MARS)

WMSQ (Extra) Paul Cline 385-0995 wm5q@arrl.net (7,8,10,14, RF safety, spread spectrum, trouble shooting, soldering, electromagnetic compatibility, CFR47 rules/reg.s)

K4DIT (Gen) Ken Gregg 853-7384 kd4dit@arrl.net (4,6,8,11)

Codes:
1. Antennas
2. APRS
3. Contesting
4. CW Operating
5. Direction Finding(fox hunting)
6. DXing
7. Experimenting/Circuits/etc.
8. HF Phone
9. Packet
10. Repeater Operation
11. QRP
12. Satellite
13. RTTY
14. VHF

CONTEST CALENDAR

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

QRP ARCI Holiday Spirits Homebrew Sprint, CW, sponsored by QRP ARCI, 2000-2400Z December 3. CW only. www.qrparki.org

9th Annual TARA RTTY Sprint sponsored by The Boring Amateur Radio Club, 1500Z Dec 3 to 0200Z Dec 3. www.n2ly.org/

Decs 5 Activity 3.5 MHz CW Contest, 1800Z Dec 2 until 1800Z Dec 3. 80 meters only, 3,510 -3,500.

ARRL 10-Meter Contest. 0000-2400Z December 9-10, 2000. See QST, page 97.

28 MHz SWL Contest 2000, runs concurrent with the ARRL 10-Meter Contest, 0000-2400Z December 9-10, 2000. www.chez.com/swlcontest

Croatian DX Contest, sponsored by Hrvatski Radiomaterski Savez, 1400 UTC Dec 16 to 1400 UTC Dec 17. CW only.

OK CW RTTY Contest, sponsored by Czech Amateur club, RTTY, 0000-2400Z Dec 16. www.mlp.cz/eng/dxcontest.htm.

RAC Winter Contest, sponsored by Radio Amateurs of Canada, 0000-2400Z Dec 30. www.rac.ca/CANWIN.htm.

Stew Perry Topband Distance Challenge, sponsored by The Boring Amateur Radio Club, 1500Z Dec 30 until 1500Z Dec 31. zap.com/k7rat/stew.html

ARRL Straight Key Night, 24-hour period UTC (from 7 PM EDT Dec 31 until 7 PM EST Jan 1).

WIAW Qualifying Runs are 10 PM EST, Friday, December 8, and 9 AM EST Wednesday, December 27. The K6YR West Coast Qualifying Run will be at 9 PM PST on Wednesday, December 6 (10-40 WPM). Check the WIAW schedule for details.

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

December 12 CLUB MEETING

7365 HWY. 70

BARTLETT, TN

MEETING STARTS AT 7:00 PM

**The December program will about....
What are those knobs and what do they do? Plus,
an open floor for questions on all other programs
for the year.**

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

224.42 1.25 m reptr

443.20 patch, 107.2

145.03 packet / bbs

Other Important Contacts

VE Liaison Membership Chairpersons
Joan Thorne, KN4PM Ben Barth, AF4TV
737-5795 Eloise Barth, AF4TW
joan@mem.net dmsieb@aol.com

2000 Board of Directors

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Melinda Thompson.....Vice President.....melindat@mem.net

Tommy Thompson.....Secretary.....kd4jp@arrl.net

Bob Holford.....Treasurer.....k4tdh@bellsouth.net

Tom Richardson.....Dir. of Training.....k4tta@arrl.net

Ken Gregg.....Dir. of Publications.....kd4it@arrl.net

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Bill Hancock.....Repeater Trustee.....billwad4mjn@aol.com