

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 MENU IS CHANGING

For those that missed the February membership meeting, there are a couple of significant changes. At the February Board of Directors meeting, the decision was made to temporarily discontinue the airing of NEWSLINE on the Saturday evening net. There was a significant financial cost to our airing NEWSLINE as we had to access it through long distance telephone service. Checking of the net records indicated our average Saturday night check-ins were about seventeen stations. NEWSLINE is available on WYPL-FM (89.3 MHz.) at 8:30 P.M. Monday evening and again at 12:30 P.M. on Tuesday afternoon. And it's FREE there!! We have a committee looking into how we might again air NEWSLINE without incurring the financial costs.

As an incentive for participation in DARC activities, the Club will be awarding 1 ticket for the November drawing for each sanctioned DARC event in which you participate for a minimum of 2 hours (or until the conclusion, if it lasts less time). To stay within the FCC guidelines regarding getting paid for operating, we have the rejoinder that you do NOT have to operate your radio during the event. You probably will...you just don't have to! Since Field Day is our "REAL BIGGIE," you get 5 tickets for a minimum of 5 hours participation. You may NOT count time operating a station in this 5 hours, again due to FCC regulations. The event coordinator is responsible for submitting a list of participants to the Board so the tickets can be dispensed.

This may be a bit early, but we need to start working on Field Day 2001. J.D., K4USN, is our FD chairman for this year, and I am calling on all of us to help him make this our best Field Day ever. It has been my experience in Delta Club, that our members don't very often volunteer, but also not very often refuse a request to help in an activity. Let's make this easy for J.D. and VOLUNTEER to help, before he has to ask! He is on the repeater quite often and his telephone number is in this issue of SPARKS on page 13.

As part of our Field Day effort, we are planning to operate a station in the CQ WPX DX (phone) contest. This is the weekend of March 24th and 25th. Terry Cox, KB4KA, has most generously offered the use of his contest station for this Club activity. In case somebody doesn't know, in addition to being DARC Vice President, Terry is President of Hickory Withe DX Club and his station is the primary contest station for that club. We will have available a contest caliber rig, KW amp and an antenna system to die for! If you want to get your feet wet in dxing and contesting, this is your chance. Check with J.D., Terry, or me if you want to participate. This club event is a training event and you can pick up some really good information and tips on HF operating.

THINK FIELD DAY!
73, Tom, K4TTA

MARCH PROGRAM

Tom Richardson, K4TTA, the club's resident antenna guru, will present the March program. As most of you know, Tom is an acknowledged expert on antennas of practically any kind, whether it be beam, dipole, yagi, vertical, or (one of K4DTT's favorite) the copper calamar. Be sure to be there for Tom's always colorful presentation. Bring your questions and we'll play "Stump the Antenna Man!"

VE CORNER

A busy week was had by all of the members of the DixieFest Committee. Anyone who attended had to have come away with the thought, feeling and impression that this was bigger and better than the two previous years. Some of the fleas were different this year but so were the dealers. ICOM, MFJ and MAE just to name a few dealers. Bigger and better prizes. WHAT MORE COULD YOU ASK??? To Win A Prize!!!!!! If you were there the chances were great (as many of our local hams can attest to).

The VE Testing sessions were also very well attended. It was advertised that the VE sessions would start at 10:00. At 9:15 there were people lined up ready to get started. We served 39 people on Saturday and 11 persons on Sunday. We administered some 58 elements with 32 new or upgraded licenses being granted, 12 new Technicians and two Techs with H/F. We even had one person who earned a CSCE at last year's DixieFest come this year to finally get the paperwork completed for his upgrade (he only had 2 days before that CSCE would have expired). No one had to worry about winning prizes while testing since we had radio contact with DixieFest, even though we were in a different building. The best part of this session, aside from the wonderful help of all the VE's that made this session so viable, is that I sent the paperwork in to the ARRL on Monday the 12th via FedEx. It arrived there on the 13th. On Valentines Day I was able to send the wonderful greeting of "I have found your new call sign on the Internet today" to all those that attended at DixieFest. THANK YOU ARRL for all the wonderful work of keying the results to the FCC so quickly and efficiently.

Your VE Team for the DixieFest this year was: Arlene, AA5GX, Ben, KU4AW, Ben, AF4TV, Bill, WA4MJM, Eloise, AF4TW, Francis, WA4ZYN, George, W4FP, J.D., K4USN, Paul, WM5Q, and Andrew Cline (non ham). And this isn't the end. The Team returned on the 13th at Delta Club for yet another testing session. We had one person take two exams and receive his CSCE for Technician. With the holiday of the 19th (Presidents Day) his call sign has yet to appear on the internet as of this writing.

February is almost gone - basketball season is over at the school - and Lent and Easter are fast approaching. Spring Break will be here soon and everyone will flock to Florida or one of the warmer spots in the country -----However -- your VE Team will be back in full force on March 13th at 5:30 P.M. for registration with testing at 6:00. See you then.

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

CQ CQ CQ FIELD DAY 2001

Field Day is an annual event conducted on the fourth full weekend of June, where amateur radio operators take their gear into the field, use portable power, and try to make as many contacts, using as many modes of operation as possible. This year's Field Day event is scheduled to take place at Freeman Park, located in Bartlett, on the weekend of June 23-24, 2001. This is a perfect opportunity to show our friends and neighbors the hobby that we've all come to enjoy so immensely. I'd like to thank the following Delta Club members who have volunteered to serve on this year's Field Day Committee. Tom Richardson/K4TTA will serve as our Phone Captain, Ken Gregg/K4DIT as CW Captain, David Campbell/KD4NOQ & Paul Lemieux/KG4GYV as VHF/UHF Captains, and last but not least, Freddy Bratton/KF4ZGJ as our Publicity Rep-resentative for the event.

Over the next few months the committee and I will do our best to make this one of the club's best events ever. Please help us in our efforts by volunteering your time as an operator or assisting in setup and tear down.
J.D. Brown/K4USN
Field Day Chairman

ELECTRONIC QSL's, REALITY OR FICTION?

Several recent events are bringing the possibility of electronic QSLs to the forefront. First, some history. As you know, a QSL card confirming a contact with another ham is considered the final courtesy of that contact. I do not know the exact reason QSLs were first used, but I suspect it was pretty much the same as today: the need to prove a contact had actually happened, especially over distances that were continually increasing back then. A QSL card was the "evidence" after the fact that a contact had actually been made, and recorded the specifics of that contact. As attempts at contacting specific localities were formalized via DXCC, WAS, WAZ, etc., the QSL card fulfilled the need for "proof of contact". Besides, it was nice to learn more about the people and places you had contacted via the additional information found on the QSL cards. QSL cards also allowed one to reminisce about a contact long after the radio signals had faded away.

Today, we have the possibility of increased expense in QSL card exchanges just as more hams gain HF privileges. It's true hams trade QSLs for VHF and UHF contacts, but most of these contacts are made within the same country. Increased postage rates hurt for these QSLs, but the rate increases for international postage rates are a real killer for HF QSL exchanges. Recent US postage rate increases have added \$.20 to the previous rate of \$.60 for international airmail. In most cases US hams also pay for the return postage from foreign countries. Rates there have increased even more than in the US, often requiring two "green stamps" instead of one! Several methods have been developed over the years to lessen QSL mailing costs. They include inbound and outbound QSL bureaus, QSL managers, etc. Increased postage rates are causing the operators of these methods to increase their rates as well.

So why not replace the mailed postcard type of QSL with an electronically delivered one? Certainly the technology is available via the Internet. Several groups have initiated electronic QSL programs, and have different methods of assuring they are valid. I won't get into these various methods, but the killer right now is that they are NOT ACCEPTED for any award program that requires a QSL verification of a contact. The ARRL has stated they are investigating potential methods of electronic QSL verification that will maintain the integrity required for the DXCC program. Presently, acceptable QSL cards must have some type of signature or approval stamp that could be easy to duplicate on electronic cards.

One possibility for electronic approval would not involve QSL cards at all. This scenario would have the ARRL, or some other trusted entity, maintaining a database of contacts as submitted by groups and individuals under pre-approved passwords. An individual could then submit his/her log of contacts to be compared to those in the database. Matches would automatically be computed and a confirmation list generated for the individuals. In my opinion this would decrease the enjoyment of making those contacts with far away places, as the benefits of QSL cards would be eliminated along with the associated costs. We must also assume there will be a cost associated with the database idea. So we may be just trading one cost for another, while losing the enjoyment provided by physical QSL cards.

Until the ARRL finds a solution they can be happy with, I suspect we all will have to accept the burden of increased costs in obtaining our QSL cards. At the same time, we can still enjoy receiving picture QSLs that provide so much color and information about those exotic locations we've been able to contact. The main point is don't accept any electronic QSL card as a replacement for a "real" QSL if you expect to use that contact in an award program.
If you have any questions concerning QSL cards, bureaus, QSL routes and methods, give me a call. I won't have all the answers, but together we can probably find them.

73, Terry, KB4KA

SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE!

We'd all like to do that, right? Here's a tip that will deliver on that promise: If you're an ARRL member (and if you're not, why not?) go directly to the ARRL web site: <http://www.arrl.org> and take advantage of the FREE email forwarding service for your email address! I recently heard two hams on the repeater trying to exchange email addresses. The first had an ARRL forwarding address like this: k4dit@arrl.net. The other had a complicated, almost unpronounceable combination of letters and characters. After a couple of tries, the second ham gave up, telling the first ham that he would email him his address. When asked why he didn't have an ARRL address, the second ham replied that he didn't want another mailbox to check. After hearing this exchange, it became clear to me that not everyone understands how the ARRL email forwarding system works. It's really very simple. There is nothing additional for you to check when you check your mail. It automatically redirects any mail sent to you@call@arrl.net to your regular mailbox. When you go to the ARRL site "Members" page and set your forwarding instructions up, all you do is specify your "real" email address, which is the mailbox you normally check (Like: MyLongUglyMailAddr@SomeISP.net). From that point on, whenever anyone sends mail to you at you@call@arrl.net (such as: k4dit@arrl.net), it will automatically show up in your "real" mailbox at: MyLongUglyMailAddr@SomeISP.net! Simple, huh? And did I mention that it's FREE?

73,
Ken, K4DIT

PROGRAMS

I would like to thank Bruce KG4HLZ for his program on Amateur TV at the February meeting. I found it very interesting. It may not be a branch of Ham radio that I will pursue in the future, but it was enlightening to hear of this facet of our hobby. I know he spent some time preparing his program, as do all the people who put on a program. Our club is blessed with a wide variety of people who are willing to share their knowledge. I would like to ask the members of the DARC to respect all the speakers that are sharing their knowledge and their experience. If you are not interested in what they have to say, please sit quietly so that other members may hear. I would also like to ask the Board to think about closing the kitchen during our programs and not allowing anyone in there. Conversations not pertaining to the program should be carried on outside. Thanks again to Bruce and everyone who puts on a program this year.

Bob, KF4NDH

Editor's Note: Bob makes a very good point here. Let's all try to be more considerate of our neighbors and of the speaker. During the meeting, if you have the need for a conversation that cannot wait, take it outside!

Ken, K4DIT

PACKET UPDATE

Timewave Technology has come out with a DSP filter for which includes new digital mode filtering. The DSP-599zx has a noise reduction filter for voice, a notch for CW, Binaural CW, along with standard filter types. The unit also has a sound card interface and an TX/RX interface for use with PSK31. The DSP-599zx also has a special filter mode developed for PSK31. This is the latest and greatest from Timewave. If you are looking for an external DSP filter for all modes including the newest digital tones along with a PSK31 interface built in check out the DSP-599zx from Timewave. Their web address is <http://www.timewave.com>.

James Butler, KB4LJV

AMATEUR HARDWARE UPDATE

Many of us operate CW using different rigs or paddle keys. There seems to be no standard for their hookup to keys or paddle inputs to radios. The plug size can be 1/4" or 1/8" stereo plugs. The wiring of the DIT and DAH paddles to these plugs can be two ways. This makes swapping paddles to different radios and electronic keys a real hassle. Even if the plug matches the paddles can be wired backwards making operation impossible. This month's project is the CW PADDLE ADAPTER. It is a small interface box that allows operation with both different plug sizes and allows you to swap the wiring for the DIT and DAH paddles by just flipping a switch. The unit is easy to build and sure comes in handy when you swap paddles and keys. The unit consists of a small box, stereo jacks and a double pole double throw switch. I will have the CW PADDLE ADAPTER 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 aa5gx@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 386-6166 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@midssouth.rr.com (1,8,13)

WA2IQC (Gen) Gary Blinkmann 794-5289 garybljn@midssouth.rr.com (1,7,10,14)

WA4MJM (Extra) Bill Hancock 853-7192 billwa4mjm@aol.com (1,2,8, emergency communications, ARES,MARS)

WM5Q (Extra) Paul Cline 385-0995 wm5q@arrl.net (7,8,10,14, RF safety, spread spectrum, trouble shooting, soldering, electromagnetic compatibility, CFR47 rules/regs.)

K4DIT (Gen) Ken Gregg 853-7384 k4dit@arrl.net (4,6,8,11)

W4GMM (Extra) Ham Hilliard 372-2337 bamh@bellsouth.net (All categories)

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...

ARRL International DX Contest, phone, March 3-4, see December 2000 QST, page 110.

North American Sprint, sponsored by NCJ, 0000-0400Z Mar 11 (local time, Mar 10); 80, 40, 20 only. <http://www.ncjweb.com/>

Wisconsin QSO Party, sponsored by the West Allis RAC, 1800Z Mar 11 until 0100Z Mar 12. CW and phone. 80 40 20 15 10 6 2 meters. <http://www.warac.org/>

CLARA and Family HF Contest, phone and CW, sponsored by the Canadian Ladies ARA, from 1700Z Mar 13 until 1700Z Mar 14. 80 40 20 15 10 meters. archibal@pubnix.net.

Virginia QSO Party, sponsored by the Sterling Park ARC, 1800Z Mar 17 to 0200Z Mar 19. www.qsl.net/sterling/

CQ WW WPX Contest, phone, sponsored by CQ Magazine, from 0000Z Mar 24 until 2400Z Mar 25 <http://ourworld.comuserve.com/homepages/n8bjk/>.

SPECIAL EVENTS:
Port St. Lucie, FL: PSLARA, K4RSL, 1700-2100Z Mar 1 to Mar 10, commemorating the arrival of the New York Mets baseball team to Port St. Lucie for their spring and summer training. 14.050 14.230 21.230 28.350. Certificate. Dr Maurice I. Sasson, W2JAJ, 8590 Florence Dr, Port St. Lucie, FL 34952.

Macon, GA: Macon Amateur Radio Club, W4BKM, 1500-2200Z Mar 17, during the 19th annual Cherry Blossom Festival. 14240 21335 28390. Certificate. Macon ARC, PO Box 4862, Macon, GA 31208.

Mount Holly, NJ: NWS-Phi SKYWARN Association, WX2PHI, 1500-2100Z Mar 18, promoting the beginning of Hazardous Weather Week in Pennsylvania. 7.273 14.273 28.373. Certificate. John Holmes, WX3W, WX2PHI Special Event, 126A Worman Rd, Bath, PA 18014-9099.

New Port Richey, FL: Gulf Coast Amateur Radio Club, K4C, 1230Z Mar 22 to 2000Z Apr 1, 2001, for the 79th annual Chasco Fiesta in New Port Richey, Florida. 7240 14250 21365 28400. Certificate. Gulf Coast Amateur Radio Club, Chasco Fiesta, PO Box 595, New Port Richey, FL 34656-0595.

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

March 13 CLUB MEETING

7365 HWY. 70

BARTLETT, TN

MEETING STARTS AT 7:00 PM

The Month's program will about

Antennas! Antennas! Antennas!
By Mr. Antenna himself, Tom, K4TTA

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 John 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 rept

443.20 patch, 107.2

145.03 packet / bbs

Other Important Contacts

VE Liaison
Joan Thorne, KN4PM
joant@mcsm.net

Membership Chairpersons
Ben Barth, AF4TV
Eloise Barth, AF4TW
eloiseb@aol.com

Field Day Co-Chairs:
J.D. Brown, K4USN
386-9950, 386-9950
k4usn@arrl.net

Paul Cline, WM5Q
385-0995
aa5gx@aol.com

2001 Board of Directors

E-Mail Us...

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Terry Cox.....Vice President.....tacox@concentric.net

Ben Troughton.....Secretary.....bktrough@bellsouth.net

Whit Crowley.....Treasurer.....wcrowley@magibox.net

Freddy Bratton.....Dir. of Training.....fbratton@pycos.com

Ken Gregg.....Dir. of Publications.....k4dit@arrl.net

Gary Blinkman.....Dir. of Programs.....garyb@midssouth.rr.com

Arlene Cline.....Dir. of Meetings & Special Events.....aa5gx@aol.com

Bill Hancock.....Repeater Trustee.....billwa4mjm@aol.com

Kathy Troughton.....Past President.....ktrou@nb.utmem.edu