

# Big Rapids Area Amateur Radio Club

December 2011

PO Box 343 Paris MI 49338 Pres. Jim Woolen Web Page: [www.braarc.net](http://www.braarc.net) Editor: Phil – [phildolly@power-net.net](mailto:phildolly@power-net.net)

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS PARADE

On Saturday,  
November 19<sup>th</sup>,  
several club

members gathered at the McKay's home to decorate the trailer for the Festival of Lights parade that night. Gary Atteberry, Jim Woolen, Tom Behler, Sue Behler, Mike McKay, Patricia McKay, and Jens Rick all had a part in decorating the trailer.

Our "float" was number 15 in a field of 37 entrants this year. When the parade began at 6:00 PM, we had 87 pounds of candy to give out to children. Before we made it to the last block, we were out of candy. Because the weather was so mild for this time of year, there were hundreds of children and adults lining the parade route. Once more we will increase our purchase of candy next year to hopefully not run out again.

Gary Atteberry, Sue Behler, Tom Behler, Mike McKay, Patricia McKay, Calvin McKay, Jens Rick, Jeff Sell (who pulled the trailer with his truck again) and myself participated in the

parade. Jeff Sell's daughter, who flew in from Virginia, rode in the truck with her father.

### ARES/RACES

Tom Behler, Mecosta County EC-RO is still updating the ARES and RACES list. Please let him know if you would like to participate in either of these two groups. Please consider participating in one or both of these emergency communications response groups.

### DECEMBER POTLUCK

At our Dec 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, we will have our annual Pot luck holiday dinner. Bring your favorite dish to share. As we did last year, I will buy ham and/or turkey as the provided meats. I've already bought the ham, and will probably add a breast of turkey this weekend. If you have not already signed up to come, please let me know if you are coming, if you are bringing someone with you, and what dish/dessert you are bringing to pass.

We will also be holding a "white elephant gift" silent auction to raise money for the club. The "white elephant" is a wrapped gift which can be funny or something great. So everyone can bring as many items as they like. Bidding takes place while we eat. This is a great fund raiser for our club!

## JANUARY MEETING

At our January 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, Tom Behler will present a program on Adaptive Technologies for Hams. I think this will be a very interesting and informative topic.

## PRESIDENTIAL MUSINGS

It is hard to believe that 2011 is fast approaching an end. December is just around the corner and then Christmas will be here and gone. My youngest daughter will also celebrate her 20<sup>th</sup> birthday in December. Gregory (KD8NRO) will celebrate his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday on January 5<sup>th</sup>.

Many of you probably remember that I was in Alaska in October for a site visit to review a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award applicant. This was my first site visit as a Baldrige examiner, and it was an intense experience with 12-14 hours each day spent on review of evidence. Yesterday our team leader informed us that our applicant did receive the award from the Board of Governors. Southcentral Foundation was 1 of 4 winners from a field of 69 total applicants. If you are interested, here is the link describing the accomplishments of this native Alaskan organization ([http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/baldrige\\_recipients2011.cfm](http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/baldrige_recipients2011.cfm)). After you are on this site, click on the Southcentral Foundation link.

I Hope to see you at the next club meeting on Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup> at the Big Rapids Department of Public Safety. (Ed. Note: meeting place has been changed to the Meceola Central Dispatch in Paris). It will be good food and fellowship for all.

73s,  
Jim  
K4UIH

## Club meeting minutes - November 3, 2011

1. Please sign up for net control
2. Next breakfast 11/26 at Sharon's Restaurant
3. Next club meeting will be a Potluck – Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, 7 pm at Dept. of Public Safety. Please contact Jim Woolen to volunteer a dish to pass. If you bring a non-perishable food item to the potluck it will be donated to Starburst as part of the N8PUG food drive. The Potluck is also a white elephant event – bring an interesting, non-embarrassing, gift to be given away that evening.
4. Our speakers for the evening were David Sanders and Michael Applewhite from Lake County Emergency Management. They told us about their program and asked for volunteers to come help out.
5. QSL cards were shared by some of the members.
6. Secretary's report accepted.
7. Treasurer's report accepted. Dues are coming due. Jens will look into sending out a reminder postcard to members. Also a dues payment stub will be included in the newsletter. The possibility of raising dues to \$30 was mentioned. Other ways of raising money will be investigated. These include: another celebrity serve, putting ads in the newsletter, making sure the membership pays their dues, and encouraging additional contributions to the club by the membership.
8. Repeater committee – all appears to be working fine.

9. Celebrity fund raiser was a fun evening and raised \$200 for the club. More advertisement of the event would be helpful.
10. The “worked all prefixes” contest has concluded. Tom KB8TYJ and Patricia KD8GGD tied for 1<sup>st</sup> place. Patricia won the weather radio; Tom KB8TYJ won the first aid kit; Mike KD8DIB won the gift certificate to Latitudes.
11. Tom KB8TYJ provided an update on last weekend’s SET exercise. There were 8 volunteers involved – all went well.
12. Future Youth Projects will be investigated. The McKays are involved with 4H Technology Club. They are always looking for volunteers to help with the activities.
13. We need to follow up with the previous Ham-In-A-Day students to get them more familiar with the hobby.
14. Festival of Lights Parade is Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup>. Come to the McKay’s home at 10 am to help decorate the float. Donations of decorations, lights, and candy for the parade are gratefully

accepted. The parade itself starts at 6 pm (line-up between 4 and 5). Dinner at The Rock afterwards is being planned.

15. Discussion on finding a new server for our website. Peter Popovitch has been providing this service to us for several years, at no cost. Mike McKay and Dan Tuuri will investigate other options. The cost will likely be around \$200 for a two year period. The new server may provide mail forwarding and email accounts.
  16. Future meeting programs:  
 January – Tom Behler – adaptive technology  
 February – James Buttleman, Mecosta County Emergency Management
  17. 50/50 drawing won by Bruce Werner – donated the winnings to the club.
  18. No refreshments for next time --- we’ll be enjoying the potluck.
- Respectfully submitted,  
 Sue Behler, Secretary

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**Announcements:**

20701 Northland Dr., Paris, Mi 49338

Next BRAARC club meeting: Thursday at 7 p.m. at Meceola Central Dispatch, 20701 Northland Dr. in Paris. Presentation Topic: Holiday pot luck dinner. Don't forget to bring a dish to pass, white elephant gift for silent auction, and a canned/boxed good for the N8PUG Food Drive.

Emergency Committee Meeting: Thu, December 8, 7pm – 8pm  
 Osceola County EOC

Christmas - Sunday, Dec 25, 2011

Club Breakfast - Sat, December 31, 9:00am – 10:30am



BRAARC MEMBERSHIP			
APPLICANT INFORMATION			
Name:			
Call:	Class:	Phone:	
address:			
City:	State:	ZIP:	Email:
ARRL Member: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Newsletter: <input type="checkbox"/> US Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Website – minimizes postage and printing costs		
SPOUSE INFORMATION IF JOINT MEMBERSHIP			
Name:			
Call:	Class:	Email:	
LICENSED CHILDREN			
Name:	Call:	Class:	
DUES / DONATION			
<input type="checkbox"/> Member (\$25)	<input type="checkbox"/> College Student(\$12.50)	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth(free if oldest licensed family member<18 yrs)	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Club Patch ____ X \$5 each - The club patch supports the repeater systems operated by the club.			\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Donation – General Fund	<input type="checkbox"/> Repeater Committee Donation	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Committee Donation	\$
<b>Total:</b>			<b>\$</b>

Membership runs from January 1 to December 31 each year. Please submit dues by the regular February club meeting to prevent accidental removal from club roster. Mail to: **BRAARC, PO Box 343, Paris, Mi 49338**

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### Carving Out Time for Ham Radio

BY Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

On a recent episode of This Week in Tech ([www.twit.tv](http://www.twit.tv)), Leo Laporte, W6TWT, mentions ham radio, and a guest asks him how much time he is spending on the air. Leo, who just recently got his Tech license says “Zero!” and laughs.

This is not uncommon. Lots of people seem to get a ham radio license and then do very little with it. I think one reason for this is that they don’t take into account how much time the hobby really can eat up.

They get their ticket because it seems like a cool thing to do, but then they have to carve out some time to actually be a ham radio operator. Even if you don’t make any of your own gear, setting up a station takes time, and then there is the operating time, of course. Carving time out of busy schedules—and I would guess that Laporte has a pretty busy schedule being the owner of TWiT—is a challenge.

I see things like this all the time. At one ham radio club meeting that I attended, the club vice president asked, "OK, here's the question of the month. How many of you actually got on the air in the past month." Less than half of those in attendance raised their hands. Geez, I thought to myself, why do they even bother to come to meetings if they don't get on the air?

#### Making time for ham radio

So, if you're a busy person, how do you make time for ham radio? Well, being the Internet geek that I am, I Googled, "making time for things you love." I got a lot of links to sites that talked about work-life balance and some new-age blogs, but none of them offered much in the way of concrete advice.

Then, I Googled "make time for hobbies" and right off the bat, I found two good articles—7 Creative Ways to Make Time For Your Creative Hobby!

(<http://www.exploringwomanhood.com/homelife/hobbies/maketime.htm>) and 5 Ways to Make Time for Your Hobby (<http://o5.com/5-ways-to-make-time-for-your-hobby/>). Both articles offered very similar advice. Here are four points that both made:

1. Schedule it. Set aside a specific time during which you're going to do ham radio. Don't let that time get pre-empted.
2. Designate a place in your home for ham radio. Having to set up your radios or dig out your tools every time you want to operate or build something is not much fun and wastes a lot of time. Having a "shack" and a workspace designated for your projects will let you spend more time on the fun stuff.
3. Partner up. Arranging to work with another ham will make it harder to blow off ham radio for some other activity. Besides, it's a lot of fun to do things with other hams. If you're a newly licensed ham, find an Elmer. There really are plenty around who would be willing to help you.
4. Create a project plan. Setting up an amateur radio station is no small feat. Breaking it down into smaller chunks will make it seem more doable, and you'll get a feeling of accomplishment when you meet your in-between goals.

There's so much to learn and do in amateur radio that it can seem quite overwhelming. I think that's one reason why so many Techs never really get into the hobby and why some experienced hams drift away. I think if you follow the advice above, though, you'll not only find the time to pursue amateur radio, but get a lot more out of it.

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When he's not down in his shack, working with a friend on yet another amateur radio project, Dan writes amateur radio study guides. You can find them on his website at [www.kb6nu.com/tech-manual](http://www.kb6nu.com/tech-manual). Make some time to e-mail him at [cwgeek@kb6nu.com](mailto:cwgeek@kb6nu.com).

## You Can Enjoy Contests Even If You're Not a Contester

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

I often talk to guys who say that they're not contesters. Some even go so far as to say that they hate contests. I'm really not a contester, either, but I do enjoy operating them from time to time. There are several ways to enjoy amateur radio contests even if you're not a "contester."

This weekend, for example, the CQ World-Wide (CQWW) SSB DX contest was being held. As usual for a Saturday morning, I was down at WA2HOM ([www.wa2hom.org](http://www.wa2hom.org)), our club station at the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum ([www.aahom.org](http://www.aahom.org)). Now, the museum is only open from 10am - 5pm on Saturdays, so there's no way I'm going to score very highly in the contest, but I still decided to participate.

What I did was take advantage of the contest activity to add countries to our DXCC list. Over two hours of operation, I managed to make 63 contacts, including at least five new countries. The new countries that I added to our log included Iceland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, the Cayman Islands, and Madeira Island.

None of these is rare DX, but for whatever reason, we hadn't worked them before. Now, we have. In addition, some of the big contesters will travel to exotic locales and operate from places that normally have no or few ham radio operators. Contests are good opportunities to get those countries in your log.

Operating in a contest is also a good test of your radio and antennas. It's true that contest signal reports are basically meaningless, but if DX stations regularly hear you on your first or second call, then chances are your antennas are working well. If they're continually asking for repeats or never hear you at all, it's a good bet that you need to do some antenna work.

Working a contest can also improve your operating skills. In a CW contest, for example, the good ops are generally operating at 25+ words per minute. That's OK, though, because it forces you to copy that fast, and because you know what the exchange format is, you pretty much know what characters to expect. Try it sometime. You'll be surprised at how fast you can copy during a contest and how much your CW speed improves.

If none of the above reasons convince you, and you're still a bit apprehensive about jumping into one of the bigger contests, let me suggest that you try one of the smaller contests. State QSO parties, for example, are a lot more laid back than say the ARRL Sweepstakes. The CW speeds are a lot lower and the phone contacts are a lot less intense. You may even learn something about a particular state's geography. You will for sure learn a lot of county names.

It's all about having fun. And you can have fun in a contest, even if you don't have the time or the equipment to be competitive.

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When not worrying about the proper county code for Goochland County, Virginia, Dan blogs about ham radio at [www.kb6nu.com](http://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](mailto:cwgeek@kb6nu.com).

## Ham Radio Lives



Fresno, Calif. – [iPhone](#), beware?

The newest trend in American communication isn't another smartphone from Apple or Google but one of the elder statesmen of communication: Ham radio licenses are at an all time high, with over 700,000 licenses in the [United States](#), according to the [Federal Communications Commission](#).

Ham radio first took the nation by storm nearly a hundred years ago. Last month the FCC logged 700,314 licenses, with nearly 40,000 new ones in the last five years. Compare that with 2005 when only 662,600 people hammed it up and you'll see why the [American Radio Relay League](#) -- the authority on all things ham -- is calling it a "golden age."

"Over the last five years we've had 20-25,000 new hams a year," Allen Pitts, a spokesman for the group, told FoxNews.com.

The unusual slang term -- a "ham" is more properly known as an amateur radio operator -- described a poor operator when the first wireless operators started out in the early 1900s. At that time, government and coastal ships would have to compete with amateurs for signal time, because stations all battled for the same radio wavelength. Frustrated commercial operators called the amateurs "hams" and complained that they jammed up the signal.

People like John Pritchett have used the slang term ever since.

"It takes an inquisitive mind that wants the challenge to speak with the rest of the world," Pritchett told FoxNews.com. "I meet a lot of people as a result amateur radio. It's a fascinating experience to meet somebody who you've talked to for years -- when you finally meet them and go, wow, that's you."

Pritchett has been a ham for over 35 years. He sits in his ham shack slowly turning the dial on his amateur radio and listening attentively for a voice through the high radio frequency. But he's not looking for aliens: Pritchett is dialing in to make contact with someone around the world.

"W6JWK, This is John in Fresno, California," he says.

Pritchett can communicate with people around the globe or even astronauts in space by talking through his microphone or using Morse code.

With more people joining the hobby, local ham radio businesses are growing as well. [Amateur Electronics Supply](#) in Las Vegas sells everything to do with ham radios, from transceivers, amplifiers and antennas to handhelds.

"We have clientele from all walks of life," manager Luke Rohn told FoxNews.com. "We have church groups who are interested in ham radio for a viable source of communication in times of natural disaster. We have young kids that find ham radio interesting. Maybe they've heard about it through their father and grandfather and it's a lot of fun for them."

According to the American Radio Relay League, retirees and emergency groups are among the main reasons for the nearly 30,000 new hams that pick up the hobby each year.

Ham is a boon for safety as well as a fun pastime: When normal communications methods fail and cellphone towers are jammed, ham radios will still work and can help out in disaster situations, because they don't require towers to relay the signal.

"Amateur radio came into play very much during the major earthquake in the Bay Area in 1989. The only thing I had was a little handheld radio. Nothing else worked, telephones didn't work, cellphones didn't work, amateur radio just kept right on working," Pritchett said.

Looking to ham it up a bit with some friends? Try a fox hunt -- the radio equivalent of ham-to-ham combat. In a fox hunt, local amateur radio clubs search for a transmitter (called the fox) using their homemade antennas.

"The fox hunting is really fun -- the thrill of the chase, the competition of being the first to find the transmitter," said Rob Mavis, president of the [Clovis Amateur Radio Pioneers](#) club in Clovis, Calif.

Ham radio is inexpensive fun, as well: All you need is a couple hundred bucks to get started and a FCC license -- which is free, but requires a \$10 to \$12 fee to cover expenses.

So join the latest craze -- no iPhone app required.

Contributed by Don, WA4FRJ

## Festival of Lights Parade

The BRAARC again constructed a float and participated in the parade. There was a good turn out to man the float and the crowds along the streets were greater than ever.



**December 2011**  
**PO Box 343 Paris MI 49338**

