Big Rapids Area Amateur Radio Club

April 2014

PO Box 343 Paris MI   49338   Pres. Jim Woolen   Web Page: www.braarc.net   Editor: Phil – phildolly@power-net.net

Presidents Message

The last two President's Messages have been quite personal in nature partly so that you could get to know me better and partly because I am feeling quite nostalgic at this age. This month's message is about my 56 years as an amateur radio operator.

My venture into ham radio began at age 14 in 1958 when I passed the Novice class license exam at the local FCC office in Savannah, Georgia. My first antenna was a 40 meter doublet that was only 15 or so feet off the ground. A Novice Class license was restricted to Morse Code (CW) transmission, which is how I made many contacts all over the world using that doublet. No it should have not worked on 20 meters, but it did even without an antenna tuner.

Since I "love" talking on the air, I passed my General Class license exam three months after receiving my Novice ticket. This exam was taken at that same FCC field office (they no longer exist that's why we have the Volunteer Examiners). During the next seven years while living at home with my parents, I built transmitters and assembled several Heathkit amateur radio kits and test equipment. I also

was a part-time radio announcer at two local radio stations while attending college classes.

When I moved to Atlanta, Georgia in January 1966, I did not do as much with ham radio because of a multitude of factors. But, when I moved to New Jersey in March 1968 to work on a missile project at Bell Labs, I obtained a secondary station license as WA2HDC. My station consisted of Heathkit transmitter, a Hammarlund receiver, and a vertical in the back yard at ground level. I worked stations from all over the world!

When I returned to Atlanta in March 1970, I was now a computer programmer for my employer and continued making contacts with my equipment at the new home. I returned back to Savannah in 1974, and continued making contacts with new equipment (Tempo 2020 transceiver) and a vertical mounted on a pole at the end of the house. This was also the time 2 meter repeaters were being deployed by clubs, and I became very active on these repeaters and in a local radio club.

When I moved back to Atlanta in 1983, my station was set up again in the master bedroom (not really a good place for ham equipment). I also used a multi-band vertical for my antenna. Moving to West Virginia in 1991, my hobby continued. When we moved to Tennessee in 1995, I again set up my station. Moving back to Atlanta in 1997, it was challenging to operate with restrictive covenants in our subdivision. However, there is always an attic mounted antenna (smile) that works pretty well.

Moving to Michigan in 2002 I became active in 2/440 meters, but have not erected an antenna for HF as of this date. My goal is to do that when we finally have warm weather. I am hoping Jeff Herndon will keep on my back until I complete this unfinished project.

As the late Paul Harvey would say in his famous radio broadcasts – "now for the rest of the story…"

March's meeting was fairly well attended, and the presentation on Delos Blodgett (1825-1908) by Roger Elkins was very informative and generated a lot of questions. Roger dressed up in period clothing and was in Delos Blodgett's character. Phil presented a short technical brief on fractal antennas.

Please volunteer to conduct a net as it is not hard and it is a lot of fun. The two meter net is every Tuesday at 9 PM and the 440 net is every Sunday at 7:30 PM. The script (preamble) for conducting the net is on the BRAARC Web site. Also, one can be provided in print, if needed.

Gregory and I will be attending the ARRL National Convention in Hartford, Connecticut in July. In addition to convention activities, we will tour League headquarters and the W1AW station. This convention celebrates the 100th birthday of ARRL.

Don't miss the opportunity to eat breakfast with fellow hams on March 29th at Sharon's Restaurant in Rogers Heights. Due to a scheduling conflict, I will not get to see all of you at our April 3rd monthly meeting! We have a great program planned with a presentation on digital communications. Vice President Mike McKay will be officiating this meeting in my absence.

May God bless and watch over each of you.

73s,
Jim
K4UIH

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March 2014 Radio Club Meeting – Delcy, KC8HVR

Club Nets – Sign up – After signed up goes on website

Breakfast: March 29th at Sharon's Country Restaurant

Next Meeting: April 3rd @ 7 p.m.

Treasurer report: Accepted

Emergency Communications:

ARES – RACES: Net 1st Wednesday of the month. Next quarterly meeting March 20th - 7 pm

Skywarn Training: Sat. April 26th 10 am – Noon @ West Campus Community Center

Communication events: Girl Scouts April 12th at DPS

Repeater status: 2 meter – ok replacement repeater is stilled be worked on hopefully this summer it will be ready to go
                                        440 meter – ok echolink is still running with raspberry pie
                                        6 meter – needs work

Website: turned off forums due to spammers, not a lot people posting. Says it is in maintenance mode. Rest of site still accessible.

Discussion:
Girl Scout communications event: April 12th need volunteers to help with stations and setting up. Will be at the Public Safety Building. Can start setting up at noon and event starts at 1 pm.

Amateur Radio Leadership Workshop

Program: Presentation about Delos A Blodgett 1825-1908 by Roger Elkins

First leading citizen in Osceola County, Names known by Dox, Doc
1848 started lumber career in Muskegon worked his was up river to Hersey reached what is known named Tom and Doc Creek. Sent over 600,000 logs down
the Muskegon River. Started with a team of oxen and then switched to Percherons.
The farm land he eventually owned was 2000+ acres. There is a stone marker on
2 mile road in Osceola County marking the 1st School House. 1880 attended the Republican Convention. 1892 split up the 7,200,000 between his children. Had
Homes in Florida, on Mackinac Island, Grand Rapids, and in Hersey. Helped with the building materials to build the church in Hersey and the named the campground in Hersey Blodgett Landing. Evart Fairgrounds is on Blodgett property.

Tech Corner: Phil - Fractal UHF Antenna, 4 element

Refreshments for March: Shila

50/50: Jens

April Agenda: Kits - 2m pre-amp, logic probe to program digital circuit, voice changer need to decide which one to do.

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BREAKFAST – MAR 29, 9AM
Sharon's Restaurant, Rogers Heights

Roger Elkins was invited to present an abbreviated history of lumber baron Delos Blodgett. Delos was born in 1825 and in 1848 started work at a lumber company in Muskegon, Michigan. He advanced rapidly through the company and decided form a partnership with Thomas Stimpson and start their own lumbering operations up the Muskegon River. This operation was started where the Muskegon River meets the stream now called the Doc and Tom (named for the partners).

Delos founded the city of Hersey in 1850. He would buy land, cut the timber, sell the logs, and then sell the land. Typically he would buy land for about $2 per acre and sell it for $4-6 per acre. He employed 600 men on average.

Realizing a need for horses to assist in the lumbering operations, he purchased Percherons from France and began a horse breeding operation. A working team at this time was worth $500-$700. Delos had houses in Hersey, Grand Rapids, and three on Mackinaw Island.

He became a delegate to the National Republican Convention in 1880. He amassed a fortune valued at $7,000,000,000 in today's money value. He and his family were very philanthropic and donated to many religious organizations. They also established many medical facilities including Blodgett Hospital in Grand Rapids.

Roger was a licensed amateur radio operator in 1961 with the call WN8AEO. He graduated from Morley Stanwood High School and Ferris State College. He taught math and science at Reed City High School. Upon retirement he moved on to become Evart City Manager and more recently County Commissioner for Osceola County.

Submitted by Dan, WA8AEN

ARRL membership: Is 25% asking too much?

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

In the March 2014 issue of QST, ARRL CEO Harold Kramer, WJ1B, makes a big deal of the fact that ARRL membership is now up to 162,200 members and is growing at a rate of about 1% per year. After patting the ARRL on the back about this, WJ1B launches into a discussion of the different programs that WJ1B feels have contributed to the membership growth.

Let's take another look at the numbers, though. As the editorial points out, 10,300 ARRL members are international members, meaning that 151,900 U.S. hams are ARRL members. Another article in the March issue, "New Licenses," notes that the total number of licensed radio amateurs at the end of 2013 was 717,201. If you do the math, you'll find that only slightly more than one in five licensed radio amateurs are ARRL members. I personally don't think that's so hot, and it's certainly not worthy of all the self-congratulation going on in this editorial.

The licensing article also points out that "the amateur radio population in the US grew by slightly more than 1 percent last year." That being the case, ARRL membership has grown at about the same rate. If all the programs noted in WJ1B's editorial were so effective, wouldn't you expect membership growth to be at least 2%?

I've said this before, and I'll say it again. I think the ARRL should set a goal to enroll at least 25% of licensed radio amateur as members. I think that this is achievable, and it seems to me that any group calling itself "the national organization for amateur radio" should have at least one in four amateur radio licensees as part of its membership.

What do you think? Is reaching 25% asking too much? If you think I'm right, please reach out to your ARRL division director and tell him so. More members would mean that the ARRL could deliver more services and have more clout in Washington. That sounds like a good thing to me.

When he's not worrying about ARRL membership, Dan, KB6NU enjoys working CW on the HF bands, teaching amateur radio classes, and building kits.

For more information about his operating activities and his "No-Nonsense" series of amateur radio license study guides, go to KB6NU.Com or e-mail cwgeek@kb6nu.com.

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The following article appeared in the March 12, 2014 edition of the Handiham World Weekly News Letter. It was written by Pat Tice, Handiham Coordinator. It should give us all good food for thought as we work to combine ham radio with exciting and rapidly-changing developments in today's computer technology.

Tom Behler: KB8TYJ

Thinking about ham radio computing

We've come a long way in ham radio computing since this early "personal electronic computer", the model Minivac 601, appeared in the 1968 Allied Radio catalog. Amateur Radio has always been fertile ground for trying new stuff, building things, and sometimes even pushing the envelope on technology in general!

Since the ham shack computer is a well-accepted piece of "gear" these days, we need to sit down and have a talk about what works. I don't want to launch a kerfuffle over operating systems. Some of you will prefer Windows, some will like Mac OS, and a few will snap their suspenders and stroke their beards while proclaiming some version of Linux to be their choice. I get that. I've tried all of them at one time or another. But the fact of the matter is that what we think we know about ham radio computing might be, well… wrong.

Let's start with Linux. The days of suspender-snapping bearded guys toiling on server farms as the only Linux users are behind us. Raspberry Pi computing is here and is opening up new Linux possibilities in the mainstream "maker" community. Ham radio "maker" enthusiasts are rolling up their sleeves and designing new hardware and software to control amateur radio gear. Check out the Raspberry connect.com list of packages. From rig control to logging to studying code, there are projects out there. If you use Linux on a desktop machine, you might consider Shackbox.net as a source of over 150 applications for ham radio. It's actually a Linux distribution, based on the popular Ubuntu as a source of over 150 applications for ham radio. Best of all, there is a live CD, which means you can try it out without installing anything. The Shackbox project is supported by donations. One consideration in operating systems is always whether there is an accommodation for blind users. Linux distributions are particularly good about this, and you can check out a long list of screenreaders sorted by name and find out which operating systems they will work in by going to Wikipedia. A Linux-specific screenreader is the free and open-source SUSE-Blinux.

The go-to source for things Mac in ham radio is Mac Ham Radio. Blind Mac users already know about the built-in screenreader VoiceOver, so there is no need to elaborate on that. The real question is whether the Mac OS can hold its own in the ham shack. Is there enough ham radio software to make the cut? The answer depends on what you want to do. There are rig control and digital software packages, as well as some cross-platform programs like Chirp for setting up the memories in many models of radios. It is still not clear to me whether the VoiceOver screenreader can make programs like Chirp accessible.

Windows computers offer the most ham radio versatility, simply because most ham radio software is written for Windows. There is no real native screenreader for Windows, which means that blind users are on their own when it comes to accessibility. The built-in Narrator is enough to get started, but it will not satisfy anyone who really needs a full-featured screenreader. If you check the Wikipedia list of screenreaders, you will find that there are some free options. The popular full-featured screenreader Window-Eyes™ by G. W. Micro may be available to Windows users if they have the right version of Microsoft Office™.

I like to give people advice about ham shack computing by first finding out from them what their needs are. Do they want to do simple things like logging and callsign lookup? Is rig control a priority? Do they want to put their station on their home computer network to control it from another location on the property or even via the internet? Do they only use a computer for setting up memories in a handheld radio?

You might be surprised at how little thought some operators have put into this! Ham radio may even be an afterthought in their computer choices, which is how they end up with a system that works great for web browsing, working at home, email and social networking, or gaming… but not necessarily for ham radio.

I'm an advocate for a dedicated ham shack computer. That way, you can just let the kitchen computer be for YouTube and recipes. There doesn't seem to be any real argument against this, since computers - let's call them devices - are cheaper than ever and easy to connect to a wireless network or home LAN. Forget about "one size fits all", because it doesn't. You can have ham radio apps on various devices, the most popular one being Echolink, and still need a dedicated shack PC for integrated rig control and logging. The modest outlay to get what really works for you will be well worth it, especially if you want to be competitive in activities like contesting. For example, given the fact that computer logging is the de facto standard in contesting, it pays to research the available software and find out what other contesters recommend.

My choice for a shack computer is a Windows PC, hands-down. It will run more ham radio software than anything else, and I already know how to use Windows. These are personal preferences, and I realize that it is probably a happy accident for me that I moved into the DOS and later the Windows world early on. I'm not so sure I'd be as easily convinced had I began life in the Linux or Mac worlds, but here's the thing: You need to figure out what you want to do with the ham shack computer or device. The worst thing to do is to get a device and then start thinking about how you can figure out workarounds to make it perform ham radio tasks as an afterthought. Some amateur radio operators have multiple ham shack computing devices, a strategy that allows for customization that will make for efficient operation on specific tasks. Remember, one of the premises we are going on is that computing is more affordable now than at any time in history. We no longer have to make the family computer serve every function, because we can afford to set up task-specific devices that are easily networked.

Now, let's head for the US Inflation Calculator because I want to illustrate how true this is. Remember that Allied Minivac 601 computer from 1968? It was exactly the kind of computer that an experimenter would want - and I'm sure it attracted the attention of many ham radio operators back in the day. Well, get this: Put the year 1968 and the $95 dollar price in the inflation calculator and you find out that in today's dollars that simple home experimental computer would cost a jaw-dropping $638.56! For comparison, today a Raspberry Pi model B can be found on Amazon for $39, and it is a virtual supercomputer compared to the 1968 Minivac.

So stop fretting about making a device you use for general computing and web browsing into a ham shack computer. Sit down and think about what kind of tasks you need to accomplish in the ham shack. Make a list, then prioritize the list, assigning each task a number. Rig control, check. Logging, check. Callsign lookup, check. Experimental ham radio projects, check. IRLP node, check. There's lot's to do in the typical ham shack, so you may need more than one device or computer!

For Handiham World, I'm...

Patrick Tice, WA0TDA
Courage Kenny Handiham Coordinator

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FCC TO REINSTATE MORSE CODE TEST
"It was a big mistake eliminating the Morse Code test," admits FCC official

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

Washington, D.C. – April 1, 2014 - Today, the Federal Communications Commission (Commission or FCC) approved Report and Order 14-987af which reinstates the Morse Code test for General Class and Amateur Extra Class licensees. "It was a big mistake eliminating the Morse Code test," admits Dotty Dasher, the FCC's director

of examinations. "We now realize that being able to send and receive Morse Code is an essential skill for radio amateurs. As they say, it really does get through when other modes can't."

Not only will new applicants have to take the test, but General Class licensees who have never passed a code test will have one year to pass a 5-wpm code test. Similarly, Amateur Extra class licensees that never passed a code test will have one year to pass a 13-wpm test. Those amateurs that fail to pass the test will face revocation of their operating privileges. Materials for administering the examinations will be distributed to Volunteer Examiner Coordinators by the end of April, so that they can begin the testing on May 1, 2014.

"This isn't going to be one of those silly multiple-choice type tests," noted Dasher. "We're going to be sending five-character random code groups, just like we did in the old days. And, applicants will have to prove that they can send, too, using a poorly adjusted straight key."

Technician Class licensees will not be required to take a Morse Code test, nor will a test be required for new applicants. "We discussed it," said Dasher, "but decided that since most Techs can't even figure out how to program their HTs, requiring them to learn Morse Code seemed like cruel and unusual punishment."

When asked what other actions we might see from the FCC, Dasher hinted that in the future applicants taking the written exam may be required to draw circuit diagrams, such as Colpitts oscillators and diode ring mixers, once again. "We're beginning to think that if an applicant passes an amateur radio license exam it should mean that he or she actually knows something," she said.

For further information, contact James X. Shorts, Assistant Liaison to the Deputy Chief of Public Relations for the FCC at (202) 555-1212 or jim.shorts@fcc.gov. For more news and information about the FCC, please visit www.fcc.gov.

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Dan, KB6NU, is the author of the "No-Nonsense" amateur radio study guides and a leading amateur radio blogger. You can find his study guides by going to his blog at www.kb6nu.com. You can contact Dan by e-mail at cwgeek@kb6nu.com, or, after you pass the test, by CW. Look for him at the bottom of just about any HF band

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Last Month's Technical Question:

The "Q" of a coil is the ratio of:

a. E_L to X_L d. X_C to R
b. X to C   e. X_L to R_L
c. R_L to R_C

ANS: e. X_L to R_L

This Month's Technical Question:

An LC tank circuit is resonant at 1250 Hz. If the capacitive reactance is 100Ω, what is the inductance of the coil?

a. 1 Henry   b. 0.01 Henry   c. 0.08 Henry
d. 0.62 Henry   e. 0.325 Henry

Richard Allan Osborne
(May 23, 1945 - March 22, 2014)

Reverend Richard Allan Osborne, age 68, went to be with his Lord Saturday, March 22, 2014 after a valiant battle with pancreatic cancer. He pastored in Illinois, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Indiana, and Southern Michigan. After serving at the Reed City Church of the Nazarene for 14 ½ years, he retired and continued to minister at Eagle Village, a residential facility for troubled youth. Through the years he had a special part in the countless family's lives in the church and community as he performed weddings, baby baptisms and dedications and listened to those who were struggling with life.

He loved riding his Honda Gold Wing motorcycle, playing golf, meeting friends at the coffee shop, being involved in ham radio and growing roses. His greatest love was his relationship with his heavenly Father, his wife and family, his church congregation, as well as his friends in the community.

Richard is survived by his wife of 47 years, Patricia, his daughter Laura (Todd) Norton, sister-in-law Carolyn Osborne, brother-in-law Dan (Kim) Baldwin and sister-in-law Shirley (Lloyd) Kordick, and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his father O.L. Osborne and mother Virginia Osborne, brothers Charles and Ken Osborne, and sister Lois (Bob) Hannah.

Funeral services will be 1:00 p.m. Wednesday, March 26, 2014 at the Reed City Church of the Nazarene with Rev. Chris DeMott officiating. Burial will be at Oakdale Cemetery in Hersey. Memorial contributions may be made in his name to the Reed City Church of the Nazarene Youth Fund. Visitation with the family will be from 2-4 & 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, March 25, 2014 at the Reed City Church of the Nazarene.

Solution to Last Month's Puzzle