Feedline

The Voice of The Cary Amateur Radio Club N4NC

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CARC FEEDLINE

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The deadline for submission to the Cary Amateur Radio Club FEEDLINE newsletter is the second Thursday of the month. Information should be forwarded by e-mail to the editor at w4kaz@arrl.net.

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Vice Pres.	--open--
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Treasurer	Herb Lacey, W3HL

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Swapfest Czar: Alf Johnson, KQ4FP
Field Day Czar: --open--
Listserv admin: Will Harper, K4IWW
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Pheedline Phun Phacts

Kaz, W4KAZ

So much space, so little to say……

It should come as no shock to any CARC member that construction at the City facility used for Swapfest…..is still under way. I just gotta wonder if it will be completed before July 2004…..(Sorry, I just had to editorialize there.)

Given the current WX conditions, that's hardly surprising. I got rain at my home QTH on 24 straight days, the last of the streak being August 19th. I know your mileage may have varied, because on several of those days, the evidence of rain ended as near as four blocks away. Ever get the feeling there's a black cloud following you around?

Perhaps we will get an early cool front on 8/29, and the folks at Shelby will get a clear and cool weekend for their hamfest. I'm sure that would be welcomed by all.

So, given the nasty conditions, I have only cut on the rig once this month, to try and sneak a few QSO's into the NAQP contest. Slipping in between thunderstorms, I was able to put in about 60 minutes of decent operating(spread out over about 5 hours).

Conditions seemed poor, a situation not improved upon by my somewhat too low dipoles. 20 meter propagation seemed strange, with lots of short skip contacts….and almost no contacts into 7 land. In the evening, after about 15 QSO's on 40 meters, I pulled the plug. The static crashes on 40 meters were such that I didn't even bother connecting the 80 meter antenna. Looking forward to January.

I guess that is not too unusual for August, on the down slope of the sunspot cycle, eh?

Another one bytes the ether…..

Coming Cary ARC Events

August 28th, 2003 CARC Program
Selected segments from the ARRL's Field & Educational Services Dept. video on " Disaster Preparedness/ Public Service."

Other Area Events

Upcoming Hamfests

Shelby Hamfest—August 30, 2003 & August 31, 2003, Talk-in 146.28/88
Location : Cleveland County Fairgrounds in Shelby, North Carolina
http://shelbyhamfest.org/hamfest.htm

Virginia Beach, Va – Sept 20&21, 2003

Rock Hill South Carolina Hamfest-- October 4, 2003

Sumter South Carolina Hamfest -- October 25, 2003

Myrtle Beach South Carolina Hamfest -- November 8, 2003

BENSON -- November 16, 2003

Radio Prices Are Up

W4KAZ, Kaz

Anyone who has been waiting to buy a new piece of radio gear may have missed their best price point. Since December 2002, prices on the lower cost models of radios are up as much as 30 percent. More if you factor in some of the free bonus items that were being offered with purchases at the end of last year. This generalized statement applies to the rigs made by Japanese, although TenTec also recently raised the price of its "Jupiter" by about $75 USD.

I'm guessing these increases reflect both the current exchange rates on the yen and the recent positive turns in the economic outlook. I'd also guess the price increases are here for the duration.

Dang! I hate when that happens…..

FCC Sets New Fee Start Date

The ARRL Letter, Vol. 22, No. 30, August 1, 2003

The FCC says the new, higher Amateur Radio vanity call sign regulatory fee of $16.30 for the 10-year license term will go into effect September 9. Until then, applicants for amateur vanity call signs will continue to pay the current $14.50 fee per vanity application. The FCC expects to collect close to $160,000 from 9800 Amateur Radio vanity call sign applicants during Fiscal Year 2003. That's up by almost $30,000 and 800 applications from FY2002.

BPL

W4KAZ, Kaz

August 20th was the last day to file reply comments with the FCC on the BPL issue. This seems to me a larger issue than the various attempts to appropriate small parts of the Amateur spectrum allocation, as it seems likely that BPL, if it becomes wide-spread, will surely make the HF portion of the spectrum unusable.

If you have any doubts, there is a short video available on the ARRL website that is really worth checking out. Ed Hare, W1RFI, did a bit of mobile operation in several BPL test areas to document the problem. With a compromise, mobile set up, his simple test demonstrates the high levels of interference noise that can be expected from BPL.

Just imagine how bad it will be with a gain antenna. I think its worth your time to download and watch the video. The "fact page" link below has lots of additional info demonstrating the interference potential.

Seems to me that thousands of small milliwatt level interference generators attached to thousands of miles of unshielded wiring should put enough interference noise on the air to muck up HF reception world wide, given propagation characteristics between 10 and 30 Mc. Is this really just a domestic problem?

ARRL Story: http://www.remote.arrl.org/news/stories/2003/08/08/2/?nc=1
Video(7MB): http://216.167.96.120/BPL_Trial-small.mpg
Fact page: https://www.arrl.org/tis/info/HTML/plc/

Ham Radio Shines During Blackout

W4KAZ, Kaz

MSNBC.com ran a very positive story on Ham Radio, and the volunteers that manned Red Cross HQ, shelters and hospitals during the recent blackout in the northeast. Highlighted are the New York-Long Island hams, who were estimated to have "handled 800 to 1,000 communications from Thursday afternoon until early Friday". Also "One hospital was temporarily out of power and ARRL volunteers provided communications to ambulances until electricity was restored."

While the MSNBC story is focused on metro New York, ARRL reports on Ares activations across the blackout area. Hams staffed nets, shelters and hospitals throughout the effected areas aross the northeast from Ohio to New England.

ARRL story: http://www.remote.arrl.org/news/stories/2003/08/15/103/?nc=1

MSNBC story: http://www.msnbc.com/news/954512.asp?0si=-

A Princess and Four Lids

W4KAZ, Kaz

Here's a tale of some young folks getting interested in radio sport, with a good sense of humor about it too. I spent a bit of time tossing around QSO's in NAQP this weekend, and managed to bag only three of the Elvis' (Elvi?). I missed "Elvis", LU1FAM entirely, and although I heard "Princess", K3OOO, running a pileup, I QSY'd. When I returned to the frequency, she was gone, though I later heard her S&P'ing around the band.

So, no clean sweep of Elvi in this year's August NAQP, and Elvis has left the building. But I heard him(them?) on the radio, and he's in my log!

Thank you, very muccchhhh!

See:
The team website at: http://ke9r.com/lids_start_young/
their contest results: http://lists.contesting.com/_3830/2003-August/081020.html

2011….A great year for 10 meters?

W4KAZ, Kaz

This slipped past me somehow…but better late than never, eh? It seems some of the NASA solar scientist geeks have some interesting new ideas about the mechanics behind the 11 year sunspot cycle. This as we know is so interesting to hams for its pernicious(to low-banders) and enhancing(to 10-10'ers) effects on radio propagation. The new modeling data tells them that there actually ARE cycles of cycles… Interesting.

The gist of their current theory is that there is a wave like current at work within the sun, which causes the equator-ward drift of sunspots as each cycle progresses. This must be one humongous circulation, huh? Kinda' puts that big bloody spot on Jupiter in perspective, eh?

So, what's the point, regarding HF propagation? Well, their model indicates the cycle is actually more likely a 22 year cycle*(I'll bet its longer!..W4KAZ)*….the first half of which has a more rapid circulation, with lower sunspot numbers(the current cycle), and the second half having a slower circulation….with more sunspots(the 2011 cycle).

So, if you can wait until 2011…..10 meters might be back, like I hear tell of the fabled 1958 cycle. Of course, BPL may render that possibility moot.

See the Marshal Space Flight Center press release for the whole story at:
http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewpr.html?pid=11874

Alaskan LOWFER Beacon

W4KAZ, Kaz

Alaskan ham, Laurence Howell, KL1X, will go live with a CW beacon(call sign WD2XDW) on 137.77389 kHz beginning August 9th, under an FCC Part 5 experimental license. The experimental liense for the beacon is good through August 2005, and Howell indicates the station may be on the air only temporarily from its current location.

What's the catch? The beacon will be transmitting QRSS - really low speed CW, one dit per six seconds….

Old Callsign database

W4KAZ, Kaz

Here's a tidbit that might be of use one day. QRZ.com has available on its website the 1993 edition of its callsign database. This might ordinarily be of little use, but if you run into a ham looking for a bit of info on an older or expired callsign. They also have an article on researching old callsign info. Since I have neither an old callbook, nor an old CD of callbook data, it the only option available. (For an example, try a lookup of WB5VWK…..)

The online database can be searched by call sign, but unlike an old call book, it can also be searched by name. Searching an old call book by name, when the book is in call sign order, is tedious at the very least. Interestingly enough, the online name search results are presented in seemingly random order, but you can use the web browser's "Find" to narrow down the list. The name search looks for all names containing the character string, so a search for "John" will turn up "John Smith" as well as "Fred Johnson".

Sure is better than nothin'….and thanks to QRZ for making it available!

The article : http://www.qrz.com/i/pre1987.html
Searchable 1993 database:
The search: http://www.qrz.com/search1993.html

First UK-US Amateur QSOS Logged On New Band

The ARRL Letter, Vol. 22, No. 30, August 1, 2003

The first transatlantic contact between the US and the United Kingdom on their overlapping 5-MHz channel--5405 kHz (5403.5 kHz)--has been reported. Charly Harpole, K4VUD, in Florida, worked Paul Widger, G0HNW, in W Yorkshire, England on July 4--the day after the band first became available to US amateurs.

Harpole reports the QSO took place at 0345 UTC. John Easey, G4XBE, in Essex confirmed overhearing the contact. "Subsequently K4VUD and G0HNW worked a string of stations, and I worked N1WJ," said Easey, who also worked K4VUD and reported hearing NP4A/m and other stations on the US mainland. Harpole, who participated in the ARRL WA2XSY 5-MHz experimental operation, used a Yaesu FT-1000MP Mark V reprogrammed for 60 meters and running 50 W into an inverted V. In 2002, Harpole's WA2XSY signal on 5 MHz was received by Paul Gaskell, G4MWO. Harpole said several other US stations worked G0HNW and G4XBE on 60 meters on July 4 until propagation quit.

While it is legal for US hams to work UK amateurs, US hams are advised that UK operators are on the air specifically as part of propagation and equipment experiments and not for the purpose of making routine contacts.

BPL Is "Spectrum Pollution," ARRL President Says

ARRL President Jim Haynie, W5JBP, says Broadband over Power Line (BPL)--if widely deployed--would represent "spectrum pollution" on a level that is "difficult to imagine." Haynie reacted after seeing videotape and early data from recent ARRL field studies in four states where BPL is undergoing testing.

"BPL is the most crucial issue facing Amateur Radio and the one that has the most devastating potential," Haynie said. In terms of interference potential on HF and low-VHF frequencies, "nothing is on the same scale as BPL."

A form of power line carrier (PLC) technology, BPL would use existing low and medium-voltage power lines to deliver broadband services to homes and businesses. Because it uses frequencies between 2 and 80 MHz, BPL could affect HF and low-VHF amateur allocations wherever it's deployed. BPL proponents--primarily electric power utilities--already are testing BPL systems in several markets, and one reportedly is already offering the service. FCC rules already allow BPL, although industry proponents want the FCC to relax radiation limits. It's feared such a change could exacerbate BPL's interference potential.

During the ARRL forum at the West Gulf Division Convention (Austin Summerfest 2003) August 1-2 in Austin, Texas, Haynie previewed a short video highlighting a recent tour of BPL field trial sites by ARRL Lab Manager Ed Hare, W1RFI. In late July, Hare traveled to BPL trial communities in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York to take measurements over significant parts of the HF spectrum and initial readings at low-VHF. Driving a specially equipped vehicle loaded with radio gear and measurement devices, Hare said he didn't need to look long to find BPL interference. "The signals were all over," he said. "The interference found ranged from moderate to extremely strong."

The video shows the S meter of an HF transceiver holding steady in excess of S9 as the speaker emits a crackling din, which one observer described as sounding like a Geiger counter. Only the very strongest amateur signals broke through on 20 and 15 meters. Hare noted, however, that the field strengths of the various systems all were within FCC Part 15 limits for power line carrier (PLC) devices.

Each BPL system exhibited a unique sound depending upon the modulation scheme it used. While in most cases it sounded like static or pulse noise, in one city warbling "birdies" blanketed the bands at closely spaced intervals.

The ARRL already has filed a 120-page package of text and technical exhibits in response to the FCC's Notice of Inquiry in late May. The League plans to file reply comments--responses to comments already filed--by the recently extended August 20 FCC deadline.

Haynie has been doing a bit of traveling of his own, including more than two weeks in Washington so far this year dealing with the FCC and with members of Congress on BPL and other Amateur Radio-related issues.

Countering critics who suggest that the League is only using BPL as a fund-raising ploy, Haynie said the League would not be putting as much effort into attempting to quantify the BPL threat and to put a face on it if it weren't real.

"The BPL industry and their associations have told the FCC and the world that there is no interference potential from BPL systems," Haynie said. "Anyone seeing these BPL signals for megahertz after megahertz for miles along a power line should be convinced that BPL--even operating at the present FCC limits--poses a serious threat to all HF and low-VHF communications."

More information is available on the ARRL Web site <http://www.arrl.org/news/features/2003/07/08/1/>. Additional information and video clips are on the ARRL "Power Line Communications (PLC) and Amateur Radio" page <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/HTML/plc/>.