



The Amplifier

Tar River Amateur Radio Club

January 2005

President	Robin Keller, WA4WPD	252-459-9345
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Newsletter Editor	Les Zavadil, W4FRA	252-446-7816

WEB SITE: www.tarriverarc.org

Next Meeting

The January meeting of the Tar River Amateur Radio Club will be held Monday, January 3, at BODDIE NOELL ENTERPRISES, located at 1021 Noell Lane in Rocky Mount. The meeting will start at 7:00 p.m. Please enter the building through the main entrance. Parking is available in front of the building or in the parking lot.

2005 VE Exam Schedule

Bill, N2BT

The Tar River Amateur Radio Club, Rocky Mount, NC, will hold ARRL/VEC Amateur Radio Exams in 2005 as follows:

February 5	August 6
April 2	October 1
June 4	December 3

Exams will start at 9 a.m. and will be held at:

The Braswell Memorial Library
727 N. Grace Street (corner of Grace and
Peachtree Streets)
Rocky Mount, NC 27804

Please bring the following items when attending a testing session:

- Photo identification (drivers license)
- Social Security Number
- Original amateur radio license
- Copy of amateur radio license
- Original certificate(s) of successful completion
- Copy of certificate(s) of successful completion
- Test fee of \$14 payable to ARRL/VEC (checks preferred)

For further information visit our club web site at www.TarRiverARC.org or contact:

Bill Thomas N2BT
VE Team Coordinator
Rocky Mount, NC
(252)-442-6131

Email: N2BT@arrl.net

President's Corner

Robin, WA4WPD

It's that time again. As the new year approaches we tend to reflect upon the events of ones gone by. The Tar River Amateur Radio Club had a great year in 2004. We had great programs. A successful Field Day.

I thank Les for great Newsletters. Three cheers for Les.

I thank Fred for his superb funds management. Thanks to his efforts we have a profit EVERY month. Three cheers for Fred.

I thank every one of you who have made this past year such a great one.

Now it's time to look towards the future.

Two Thousand Five looks to be a great year. Looks like the Ham Radio community will learn the FCC's intentions on Morse requirements (Ref: www.arrl.org). January and February have some great operating events. BPL looks like it's being successfully challenged (well no success yet... but it doesn't look as bleak).

Even though the solar numbers are falling (just ask how it was during the 10meter contest) the bands have been good. Just take the opportunity to play in the lower HF bands. Maybe this will be a discussion in 2005 Field Day planning?

There are two items on the agenda for January.

First we need to set the program schedule for 2005. There have been a few suggestions. Bring more. We will entertain everything and anything. If you want to give a presentation, now is the time to volunteer. If you have a questions about any subject pertaining to amateur radio now is the time to ask.

Second we need to set in motion the steps necessary to make minor updates to our constitution. I asked for suggestions for this several meetings ago. I've gotten a few suggestions. My personal pet peeve is to create a mechanism to keep up the club's equipment. Let's try to create a positive growth environment for the future.

That's it for now. See everyone at the meeting. First Monday in January.

Weekly ARES Net

The Northern Coastal Plain ARES net, covering Nash, Edgecombe, Halifax, and Wilson counties, meets Tuesday nights at 8:30 p.m. on 145.290 MHz, 146.805 MHz, 146.745 MHz, 224.220 MHz, 444.500 MHz, 444.700 MHz, 442.125 MHz and 443.700 MHz repeaters. Check into the net, participate

in ARES training, and enjoy the informal rag-chew afterwards.

Upcoming Hamfests

Jan. 8 – Winston Salem, NC
 Feb. 5 – Charleston, SC
 Feb. 20 – Frostfest, Richmond, VA
 Feb. 26 – Elkin, NC
 Mar. 6 – Kinston, NC
 Mar, 11-12 – Charlotte, NC
 Apr. 17 – Raleigh, NC
 Apr. 29-30 – SE VHF Conference, Charlotte
 May 21 – Williamston, NC

Contests

Jan. 1:

ARRL Straight Key Night
 New Year's Snowball Contest
 HA Happy New Year Contest
 SARTG New Year RTTY Contest
 AGCW Happy New Year Contest

Jan. 8-9:

ARRL RTTY Roundup
 Kid's Day
 North American QSO Party – CW
 DARC 10-Meter Contest
 Midwinter Contest

Jan. 15-16:

North American QSO Party – Phone
 MI QRP Club January CW Sprint
 LZ Open Championship
 Hunting Lions in the Air
 HA DX Contest
 070 PSK Fest

Jan. 22-24:

ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes
 BARTG RTTY Sprint

Jan. 29-30:

CQ WW 160-Meter Contest
 REF French Contest
 UBA Contest
 UK DX RTTY Contest

EC's Column

Fred, KE4LXW

Weather Spotter Class

A WEATHER SPOTTER CLASS will be held on February 8, 2005 at the NASH COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING. Jeff Orrock of the NWS will present the program. At this time, we are planning on using the EOC meeting room in the basement/1st floor from rear.

There will be 2 classes, the first at 3-5 pm, and the second at 7-9 pm. There is NO CHARGE and

anyone interested may attend. We especially want to see AMATEUR RADIO OPERATORS attend. We are also requesting all EMS, POLICE and SHERIFF department personnel to attend.

Severe Weather Reminder

Just a reminder that should we experience severe weather in the way of icing, heavy snow along with power outages, that you should be prepared...

First take care of your personal needs and family. Then, please help use give reports from NASH and EDGEcombe COUNTIES to the NWS thru SKYWARN. Use the 146.805, 145.290 or go direct if requested to the 146.880. This means, YOU must be prepared with battery backup.

Amateur Extra Licensing Class

The Smith Chart Amateur Radio Society, K4OO announces an Amateur Extra License Class. The class begins Monday March 7, 2005, from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM and meets every Monday night through May 16. The VE test session in Smithfield is the following Saturday, May 21, 2005.

The fee for the class is \$25.00 and includes the ARRL Extra Class License Manual, 8th edition that we will be using as the text. If you already have a book, there is no charge for the class, just let me know that you want to attend but you already have the book.

The class will be held at the Knightdale Fire Station #1 at the Intersection of Poole and Clifton Roads. From the I-440 Poole Road exit, take Poole Road east approximately 4.5 miles. The station will be on your left.

Pre-registration is required for this class. I must have your class fee (\$25.00) by Feb 21, 2005 so that the training materials can be ordered. In the event that we don't have enough pre-registrations to hold the class the class fee will be refunded.

To pre-register send checks payable to:

Frank A. Lynch, W4FAL
2528 Oakes Plantation Drive
Raleigh, NC 27610-9328
919-740-3957 (Cell phone)
919-905-2934 (Work)
w4fal@arrl.net

The Smith Chart Amateur Radio Society, K4OO is an ARRL Special Service Club.

Fred Winner
NASH CO EC

VEC Fees Increase

ARRL VEC exam session application fee to change: Starting January 1, the fee charged all

applicants at ARRL VEC-coordinated Amateur Radio examination sessions will rise from \$12 to \$14. ARRL Volunteer Examiner (VE) teams may retain up to \$6 of this fee to reimburse the VE team's out-of-pocket test session-related expenses. The fee is charged to anyone applying for a new amateur license or an upgrade. It also applies to ARRL VEC-session applicants retesting on the same element after being unsuccessful (where examiners permit), or applicants seeking grandfather-credit upgrades and not taking an exam. ARRL VEC Manager Bart Jahnke, W9JJ, says that while the number of examinees has dropped in the past year--possibly due in part to the uncertainty regarding pending licensing proposals--the cost of business and expenses incurred by ARRL VEs and the ARRL VEC continues to rise. "Cost-saving measures already have included staff reduction, reduced printing and distribution charges for VE training material and exam software--both now only available via the Web--and elimination of lesser-used services," he said. The ARRL provides free FCC license renewals, address changes and other license modification services to current members. Nonmembers pay \$14 for those services.

From ARRL Letter.

The Sweepstakes Experiment

Marty, W4MY

I have just returned from a whirlwind weekend in Myrtle Beach, SC and am sitting back reflecting all that has transpired in the last two days. It was education, vacation, frustration, elation, and exhaustion; all at the same time!

First, the Myth: I've always had this idea that contesting (or operating in general) is best when I am on the receiving end of a run where stations are falling over themselves to work ME! I hope I'm not the only one! Anyway, since I don't have wheelbarrows full of money to spend on joining an exotic dxpedition, I thought (and now here's the myth) that all one had to do is travel to a "rare" sweepstakes location here is the good old USA and that would satisfy the appetite for that elusive pileup. After all, how many times have I been one of those mediocre signals in a pile seeking Northern Territories, Idaho, North Dakota, or Rhode Island for that final section in Sweepstakes? Lots of times.

The Twisted Logic: I did some research and looked at past results from Sweepstakes in years gone by. Twenty-Eight logs were submitted last year from North Carolina contesters. Seventy-three had participated from Virginia. There were only seven from Delaware, the state with the fewest hams. Then I

checked South Carolina. Seven. Huh? Only seven? I guess there aren't many contesters in the state to our south. I have always had trouble getting SC section in the past; maybe my pileup was there?

Darn the Torpedoes, Full Speed Ahead: OK, we're going to South Carolina for Sweepstakes Phone. Where can I get an antenna high in the air and be fairly comfortable (I didn't want to operate from a picnic table in a public park, hi!) I thought putting a small antenna on the balcony of a top floor room in high rise hotel. Combine that with the ocean, just the ticket! Myrtle Beach is that kind of place, and the XYL won't object to going there! Perfect plan. After all, height is the most important aspect in an antenna and even a small compromise antenna would be awesome on the 18th floor! Not!

The Reality: I knew the antenna had to be small. A lot of good things have been said about the W3FF Buddipole, so I built one and tested it. I acquired a Hamstick for 75 along the way and all was set. Both are good all purpose antennas, and I got good reports from casually operating with them. But they are severely compromised in the efficiency department simply because their small size. This didn't matter, I thought, after all height and location (See Twisted Logic above) was the great equalizer! The result? I had a signal that was strong enough to successfully interfere with my competition and make the station I was calling ask for a repeat of the other guy. I could not sustain a run for any length of time because shifting propagation caused QRM to "bump" me. I received strong stations that sometimes simply didn't answer me even with no one else calling them. Each and every QSO (with some exceptions) was an exercise of great effort. Long CQ's went with no answer. When I finely would work one, they would say, gratefully, "Thanks for SC, needed that one last year, you're my third one, glad to see you guys out this year." Urrrrgh! That was just great! I was getting the revelation on my Twisted Logic. To add insult to injury, I too needed SC section for my score. I found one who was running a big pileup, massive pileup, MY PILEUP, a pileup I was never able to break into. I missed only 9 sections, SC was one of them.

The Glass is Half Full: The Poindexter Hotel was right on the ocean and had some good quality time with my XYL at sunrise when there were no signals on any band. She was a real trooper, taking care of my creature comforts and pretending not to be disappointed at getting a room with the balcony facing the street (west) and not one facing the ocean. She also said it was no problem getting the \$45 room, as the \$117 room

was much more than we needed. Almost every one of the 425 guys (and a few gals) I worked expressed gladness, relief and great appreciation for working SC. Some, you could just tell in their voice, others expressed it to me, and a few were even beside themselves with joy. It was fun being on the receiving end of all that. I had two brief runs (less than an hour) on 15 meters; I may have been spotted once. I'm guessing the multiplier hunters from the big stations were working the other SC stations I mentioned. Bottom line, I got 60,064 points, 71 sections, and worked the entire allotted 24 hours (out of 30). If there were sweep credits for receiving, I had a "receive" sweep, just couldn't break the piles for a Q.

Post Mortem: I've had a better score working casually from home in North Carolina where NC Q's are a dime a dozen. What I have learned from this experience is that contests are brutal. Compromise antennas that, under ordinary circumstances, are entirely satisfactory don't bode well in contests. No height or seemingly "rare" location will make up for this deficiency. And the lower the frequency, the worst this is. If ten meters had been open, maybe I would have had a different result. The semi-rare stations running good pileups (MS, WY, ND, MB) all had BOOMING signals. Twice, when I worked a Q I got the comment, "nice signal" how did that happen? Most of the time I would get beat out by a station, then, as I was listening waiting my turn, the running station would tell that caller, "please repeat all, I can barely copy you!?" Sheesh, was my signal that weak? Running stations had good signals, period. Signal and technique were really the most important aspects of success; location was only a minor enhancement in contesting, not the great equalizer I had hoped. I have a new respect to the QRP contesters, it must take a lot of patience. That is what I learned.
