The ESS Bulletin
Pete Gellert W2WSS Memorial Net
April 2023

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Net Control Stations

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
WB2GTG	WA2YOW	KA2GJV	W2RBA	AB2WB	W2ITT	WI2G

MARCH ROSTER

Call	Name	Location	Pts	Call	Name	Location	Pts
AB2WB	Pat	Ithaca	16	WI2G	Anne	Elma	16
K2EAG	Matt	Amherst	6	K1SEI	Tage	Killingworth CT	28
K2NPN	Phil	Marcy	8	WB2GTG	Bill	Easton PA	29
KA2GJV	Bruce	Fulton	4	WB2U	Vic	Gaithersburg MD	20
N2PEZ	Reiner	Elmira	18	K3YAK	David	Mendham NJ	2
N2TQT	Colin	Brooklyn	19	K3ZYK	Bill	Penn Run PA	18
N7RMP	Ralph	Kingston	23	WA3JXW	Dudley	Reading PA	7
W2ITT	Rob	Huntington	15	K4ZXM	Don	Hanover VA	15
W2LC	Scott	Baldwinsville	3	W4VLL	Vic	Narrows VA	1
W2RBA	Joe	Mount Vision	29	VE3DCX	Jim	Coe Hill ON	3
W2XS	John	Northport	22	VE3FAS	Phil	Shelburne ON	31
WA2WMJ	J. B.	Walden	30	VE3MVM	Mary	Shelburne ON	9
WA2YOW	C. J.	Staten Island	4	VE3NUL	Rich	Toronto	7
WB2OCA	Jim	Yorktown Heights	4				

March totals: QNI 387, per session 12.5 (Feb 12.4); QSP 61, per session 2.0 (Feb 2.3). Boy, what a difference an hour makes! ESS has been very much in daylight since Daylight Shifting Time kicked in a few weeks ago; it's nice not tripping over tree roots on the way to the barn in the evening, but 6 pm propagation has become the annual challenge. Ask another station to call the net if you're the net control; if you're checked in and hear someone the NCS doesn't, follow the Golden Rule and say something! K1NN, N2TQT and N2PEZ have advised us of their 40-meter capability, and 7110 kHz (plus or minus QRM) is our alternate frequency on that band. The solar flux is now higher than it's been in a while, though, so 80-meter QNB (albeit time-consuming) is still doable. Our deepest sympathy is with W1ALI in the loss of her husband Tony, W1ZMB. Thunderstorm season is, alas, again with us; keep an eye on the weather, and blitzortung.org has a time-coded regional lightning map at http://www.blitzortung.org/en/live_lightning_maps.php?map=33. Disconnect if you need to, even if you're running the net! It's good practice for net-controlling (which isn't difficult at all) to copy along with the NCS; if they have to leave for any reason, you can continue the net seamlessly. Even if you haven't been copying along, it's pretty quick work to ask everyone to check in (and list their traffic) again. Almost a welcome a sign of spring as the robins is the first batch of net certificates; this month's recipients, with thanks for their support are W2RBA, WB2GTG, VE3FAS, WA2WMJ AND K1SEI (special thanks to Tage for picking up two Fridays while W2ITT was on the left coast). The sole requirement for a net certificate on card stock by postal mail remains 80 points in a calendar year; you earn a point every time you check in, with a bonus point for running the net (scheduled or substitute). A couple of checkins a week are all it takes!
Birthdays: April—KT2D 4. **May**—None, as far as I know; additions and corrections, however, are always welcome!

Fills

One hallmark of a good (not necessarily "experienced") traffic handler is how they request, and provide, fills. We had a nice little solar flare the other day, followed by a G4 geomagnetic storm which still seems to be winding down. (When the bands stink and you want to know why, NOAA's—the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—Space Weather Prediction Center has a detailed radio-dashboard page at https://www.swpc.noaa.gov/communities/radio-communications; if you're primarily interested in the K index, which measures geomagnetic disturbance—geomagnetic storms--the SWPC has a dedicated page at https://www.swpc.noaa.gov/products/planetary-k-index#. The SWPC's easier-to-read Canadian counterpart is at https://spaceweather.gc.ca/forecast-prevision/cond-en.php.) The nets must go on (as we know) but conditions were pretty bad, with fill requests aplenty. Here's how to do it!

If you need fills for any reason when copying a message, the cardinal rule is to admit that you need them. Although it's possible to make an educated guess of what you *thought* you heard through a static crash or QRM, that is a slippery slope best avoided; Lew (N5MEA) sent a message with the phrase PHONY EXPRESS many years ago, and it came out the receiving end as—you guessed it—PONY EXPRESS. In the immortal words of *The Odd Couple*'s Felix Ungar, "When you ASSUME, you make an ASS out of U and ME".

There are two ways of managing the need for one or more fills. Some traffic-handlers, myself included, generally prefer to ask for fills after the message is sent (and before the QSL, although occasionally a station will roger a message and then ask for fills; we live in an imperfect world); a quick squiggle under the questionable part(s) is easy to see. The asking-for-fills menu is short—WA (word after), WB (word before), BN ___ ES ___ (between ___ and ___), AB (all before), CFM (confirm) and AA (all after). Unlike the AA separator between the lines of an address, the "all after" AA is sent as separate letters. Avoid sending QSL or R after individual fills, because the sending station may think you're rogering the entire message. And if you're asked a question which requires a yes-or-no answer, send C (yes—spell it out if conditions are poor) or N (no—once only, to avoid confusion with C). R is sometimes heard as a synonym for C, but it really only means "I received what you sent" and is a handy synonym (when copying a string of messages in good conditions) for QSL.

Many (if not most) traffic-handlers now use transceivers with full break-in capability, and some send QSK (or FAST VOX if they have semi-break-in) to indicate that they prefer to be interrupted immediately with a string of dits if a fill is needed. A QSK op will then send the last word, or portion of a word, copied. You can then repeat the last word or portion and continue with the message, or (and this is a real treat for the ears) just continue where the sender left off; the latter is less confusing, if you can manage it. The sending station sends the word ABOUT; you break them, send ABOU (or just U, the last letter you copied), and they continue with T and the rest of the message. It's elegant (and good spacing practice).

Check the check!

Before sending that eagerly-awaited QSL or R (or key tap; long-acquainted traffic partners may also omit rogering individual messages in a string when conditions warrant, preferring one QSL at the end), make sure your word count matches the message check--the number in the preamble between the station of origin and the place of origin. ARL or RRC as part of the check indicates that the text includes an ARRL (or RRI) numbered radiogram text. The number in such a check is still the word count; the individual radiogram text, such as ARL (or RRC) FORTY SIX ("Greetings on your birthday and best wishes for many more to come"), will be spelled out in the body of the message.

Sometimes your word count doesn't match the check in the preamble; that's a bummer, but easily fixed. QTB asks the sending station to repeat the first letter (or number) of each word group in the text, from BT— after the address--to BT—before the signature. When you hear a letter that doesn't match the first letter of the word you copied, mark the place with a squiggle or break the sender and request your fill with WA or BN. With less-than-great summer conditions beginning, we'll have plenty of opportunity to hone our skills!

Sweet, springy April (despite the mud!) 73 Anne