The Illuminator

The monthly newsletter of the Carbon Amateur Radio Club

May 2004

May Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Carbon Amateur Radio Club will be held on Thursday, May 20, at 7:30 p.m. at the EMA Center in Nesquehoning. Among other things, we expect Field Day plans to be discussed. See you there!

Treasurer's Report

By John, W3MF

As of April 30, 2004:

Previous Balance	933.72
Receipts (dues)	15.00
Subtotal	948.72
Disbursements (newsletter)	5.55
Final Total	943.17

Knoppix for Amateur Radio

By Denny, W3EFI

A few of the club members have been working with an operating system called Knoppix. This is a Linux-based operating system (OS) that has some nice amateur radio programs embedded in it. One of the other nice features of Knoppix is that it comes as a LIVE CD. Meaning that if you can tell your computer to boot from the CD drive, you will be able to run Knoppix and it will not affect the OS you have installed on your computer.

Maybe I should give some background info on Linux to bring everyone up to speed. Linux was developed by Linus Torvalds and itself is based on the Unix OS. It is very powerful and customizable OS.

There are many distributions available for Linux. The one that we have been playing with is called Knoppix. Since it can be customized, some amateurs have added SSTV, PSK, RTTY, logging, code practice and other radio applications to the basic Knoppix OS. The amateur radio version of Knoppix is called Knoppix_AFU.

Listed below are some FTP sites where Knoppix_AFU can be downloaded. I'm choosing to list FTP sites since they are quicker then using a web browser to like IE or Netscape. A popular FTP program for windows is called WS_ftp. Here are the FTP sites that I recommend:

ftp://ftp.ux0.de/pub/linux/knoppix-afu

http://www.afug.uni-goettingen.de/pub/afu/knoppix_afu

Once connected to these sites, you will see a file called knoppix_afu.iso. This is the file you need to download. Be aware that this file is 730+ Meg in size. So if you are using a telephone modem, I would suggest talking to a club member that has cable or DSL Internet access. Once downloaded, you can then burn the ISO file to a CD. Most common Windows CD burning apps like Roxio and Nero will burn an ISO file. Once burned, it will convert the ISO file into a boot-able format on the CD.

Now the fun can begin. Reboot your system with the CD loaded into the CD drive. You will need to have your system look for the CD during boot. For this you will have to know how your system boots. Some can be changed in the CMOS settings; others may see a quick message for boot sequences on the screen referring to hitting a special key for boot options.

When the system begins to boot from the CD, it will present you with a command line prompt on a Knoppix splash screen. If you type the word

'knoppix' at the command line, it will continue to boot using default settings and what it can learn from your system during boot. For those having a more interest, if you hit the F2 key, it will show you some extra settings that you may pass onto the Linux kernel during the boot up sequence.

It will take a few minutes to learn the devices on your system. When it's done, you will see a screen much like Windows with icons on the screen. The more popular radio apps will be displayed right on the desktop. These applications use the sound card for the interface to the radio gear. From here, you will need to connect your sound output of the computer to the mike input on the radio gear and of course, the sound output from the radio into the Mic input on the computer.

One of the down sides, if you want to call it that, is the speed of this OS. Since it is running from the CD, it takes some time to access the CD and run the needed programs. Once the program is loaded, it should run fine. For those who have a more permanent interest in Knoppix, it can be installed on the hard drive as a stand alone OS. It takes as little as 2.2 gig of space. For practical reason, I would suggest at least 3 gig of space be allocated. I am running Knoppix on a Pentium-1 233 MHz box with 96 Meg of ram. For more information on system requirements, please visit the following web page.

http://www.knopper.net/knoppix-info/index-en.html

Knoppix is also a fully functional OS by itself. It includes everything you may need besides the amateur radio apps. It has several built in applications for word processing, Internet, music, games, etc. It is based on the Debian Linux distribution. As an added perk, it can be updated with newer applications from Debian repositories. Debian tends to be a very stable platform to use. You may even find it more flexible then some of the Windows operating systems.

I hope you enjoy trying Knoppix for the radio apps and its other features.

73, Denny

Latest Propagation Update

By Larry, N3CR

Greetings again. As predicted, with the solar flux well below 100 and sunspots today at 47, it isn't hard to think what the bottom of the solar cycle will be like in two years or so. Do you know who the hams are in your community? You will, if all holds as it does now! The 20-meter band is rapidly becoming overcrowded. The WARC bands are finding new activity as operators look for new frequencies to try just to maintain interest in the hobby. 10 MHz and 24 MHz bands are finding a lot of low-power activity and QRP. The bands give you a bit of both the 20-meter DX band and stateside 40-meter type contacts. It also means a time to put your hand into building an antenna or two.

Today, the bands are providing a variety of contacts but certainly showing more stateside signals than DX. Europe and others can be found in the morning before noon and then a short reappearance before sundown. What can add to all this is the presence of sporadic E propagation to 1300 miles. I heard some reports of "double hop" but I do not believe Missouri to Washington State would constitute double hop. Maybe from Pennsylvania to California or Washington, but not from Missouri or Texas. The daytime F2 layer propagation is what is providing some of the DX, but with the sunspot numbers down and lower solar flux, now around 70, not many surprises. There is the late afternoon enhancement that can occur depending on temperature changes and solar conditions, which have been quiet for a short period of time. Here there have been some interesting contacts to look for.

As always, I look for activity on 2 and 6 meters, having found little to report. Europe appears to have a regular sampling with brief openings. You look at the reports and say, "Oh great, it is Germany's turn today." As I have said before, the 6-meter band is usually open in the US. Unfortunately, it is open over the ocean or deserted area where there are no hams! We are still at a good part of the solar cycle where we can see some magic when other bands are struggling. Sometimes it becomes a little unnerving when the band only opens to Florida, Missouri, or Texas, but the signals are amazing. More people have bought new rigs with all mode 6 meters on them and they

put their 10 to 100 watts on the air with simple antennas.

It is a good time to make sure all is working. Good contests are coming up like 10-meter contests, June VHF, VHF Sprints, and let's not forget Field Day — the biggest one of them all. Even if you are not a contester, it is a good time to see where your little signal may take you. I have used these contests to see where 440 MHz would get me. Yeah, I guess you are right, K3YTL and me! But I have worked stations from Scranton to Philly on 440 MHz. If they are high enough, they will hear me! The gang will be at Camelback again, you can count on that, and they are always looking for contacts. We may just hear more from the Lebanon/Lancaster this year also. I am making a couple mountain-topping antennas to get me through. With a few elements and lots of height, I should be able to work someone! Besides, the Blue Mountain makes a great reflector! I just might work Canada this time (wishful thinking!).

Give it a try and see what kind of contacts you can hook. It is fun for sure. Figure out how to improve that new antenna and take it on the road. Any nearby location is a good place to start. When in doubt, ask K3II! I am sure he can come up with some good ideas. If anything, he can make his own DX when he wants to. Until next time, 73s from Jim Thorpe, PA de Larry N3CR…Good Day.

Utility Draws "Line in the Sand" on BPL Interference Abatement

(From the ARRL Letter)

In an e-mail this week to the FCC, an electric utility testing broadband over power line (BPL) systems in the Raleigh, North Carolina, area has drawn a virtual line in the sand on how far it plans to go to mitigate interference to Amateur Radio. Responding this week to the FCC about BPL interference complaints from hams, Progress Energy Corp (PEC) told the FCC that his company has eliminated any harmful interference from its BPL trial site and now complies with FCC rules.

"It is PEC's position and interpretation of the FCC's rules with regard to 'harmful interference' that any interference that may still exist is not 'harmful' as that term is defined by the FCC's rules," Len Anthony, PEC's attorney for regulatory affairs, told James Burtle, chief of the FCC's Experimental License Branch. "This level of interference does not seriously degrade ham radio operation or transmissions or cause repeated interruptions." Some, but not all, of PEC's BPL field trials are covered by an FCC Part 5 experimental license.

The FCC defines as "harmful" any interference that "seriously degrades, obstructs or repeatedly interrupts a radiocommunication service operating in accordance with the Radio Regulations."

Anthony claimed that since PEC can modify its Amperion BPL system to totally eliminate interference to fixed stations, "the only impact of any kind upon ham operations is upon mobile operators." PEC concluded that since BPL interference to mobiles would be "very short lived," the company is not causing harmful interference and is in "full compliance" with FCC Part 15 rules.

ARRL North Carolina Public Information Officer Gary Pearce, KN4AQ, suggests PEC has a bit more work to do. He is among local amateurs closely monitoring BPL deployment in the test zones and cooperating with PEC and Amperion to work out any interference issues. Pearce says interference remains on the top end of 20 meters in an overhead-line field trial neighborhood where PEC recently had tweaked its system.

"Nothing had changed," he told ARRL after visiting the neighborhood in the wake of Anthony's e-mail. "They were still covering up the top end of the 20-meter band." Interference to 17 and 12 meters had been notched out, but beyond that, BPL interference persisted from 14.290 to nearly 17 MHz, he said, and "fringe" carriers still encroached some 100 kHz into the bottom of 15 meters. Interference had not been mitigated at all in neighborhoods with underground power service, he said.

Progress Energy has been operating its "Phase II" trial in three neighborhoods south of Raleigh since early January. The area, in Wake County, is largely rural or lightly settled.

No hams live in the underground-wired neighborhood, so none complained, Pearce said. The handful of BPL interference complaints eventually lodged with the FCC came from

amateurs living closer to the overhead-wired neighborhood, and some were from mobile operators.

Pearce said PEC's stance regarding mobile stations "sets a new bar" in interpreting harmful interference. "Hams have never been asked to accept that level of interference before," he said, noting that mobiles driving by a power line can hear the signal for "a mile or so."

The ARRL's BPL strategy calls for the League to seek a radiated emission limit sufficient to protect the estimated 70,000 Amateur Radio mobile stations in the US. ARRL field observations using typical amateur equipment have documented BPL interference to mobile stations located hundreds of meters from BPL interference sources.

Pearce says the North Carolina hams will respond to Progress Energy and the FCC to disagree with its interpretation of "harmful interference" and its conclusion regarding interference to mobiles.

While he maintains that controlling BPL in a small trial area like his should not be that difficult, "having BPL buzzing across all the power lines in a large city is another story entirely, and that's what we're worried about."

ARRL CEO David Sumner framed the situation another way. "If BPL emissions block weak signals that otherwise would be usable, that is harmful interference and they must remedy it," he said. "Progress Energy has as much as admitted that they can't. The only thing left for them to do is to shut their system down and get back to their basic business of supplying electrical energy."

Additional information about BPL and Amateur Radio is on the ARRL Web site http://www.arrl.org/bpl/.

FCC Proposes Wide-ranging Changes to Amateur Service Rules

(From the ARRL Letter)

The FCC has released an "omnibus" Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) that seeks comments on a wide range of proposed Amateur Service (Part 97) rule changes. The FCC also denied several petitions for rule making aimed at altering portions of the Amateur Radio regulatory landscape and ordered minor changes in Part 97. The NPRM is a result of a dozen petitions for rule making, some filed more than a year ago and a few dating back as far as 2001. Comments on the proposals put forth in WT Docket 04-140 are due by Tuesday, June 15, with reply comments by Wednesday, June 30. Among other changes, the FCC has recommended adopting the ARRL's "Novice refarming" plan http://www.arrl.org/announce/regulatory/refarm/.

"Because the ARRL petition addresses the operating privileges of all classes of licensees on these Amateur Service bands, we believe that the ARRL petition provides a basis for a comprehensive restructuring of operating privileges," the FCC said in its NPRM. "We note that, as proposed, no licensees would lose any spectrum privileges and that General, Advanced, and Amateur Extra Class licensees would gain spectrum for phone emissions, one of the most popular operating modes on the HF bands."

The ARRL referenced its Novice refarming proposal in its recent Petition for Rule Making, RM-10867 http://gullfoss2.fcc.gov/prod/ecfs/retrieve.cgi?native_or_pdf=pdf&id_document=6516083735, which, along with three other petitions (see "FCC Invites Comments on Amateur Radio Restructuring Plans," http://www.arrl.org/news/stories/2004/03/24/2/) remains open for comment until April 23.

The FCC also has proposed essentially eliminating its rules prohibiting manufacture or marketing of Amateur Radio Service power amplifiers capable of operating between 24 and 35 MHz. Originally put on the books in 1978 to keep high-powered amateur amplifiers out of the hands of CBers, the rules now "impose unnecessary restrictions on manufacturers of Amateur Radio equipment and are inconsistent with the experimental nature of the Amateur Service," the FCC said.

The FCC additionally proposed a rule change that would make Kenwood's Sky Command system legal for operation within the US. The proposed amendment to §97.201(b) of the rules would permit auxiliary operation on 2 meters above 144.5 MHz — with the exception of the satellite subband 145.8 to 146.0 MHz — in addition to frequency segments

already authorized. The Sky Command system permits the user to operate certain Kenwood equipment remotely via a VHF/UHF handheld transceiver.

In response to an ARRL petition, the FCC proposed extending the bands available for spread spectrum experimentation and use to include 222-225 MHz. On its own initiative, it also recommended including 6 and 2 meters as well. Current rules limit SS emissions to frequencies above 420 MHz.

Among other changes, the FCC also proposed to prohibit acceptance of more than one application per applicant per vanity call sign; permit retransmission of communications between a manned spacecraft and its associated Earth stations, including the International Space Station; allow current amateurs to designate a specific Amateur Radio club to acquire their call sign in memoriam; eliminate §97.509(a) of the rules, which requires a public announcement of volunteer examiner test locations and times; and add to §97.505(a) to provide Element 1 (5 WPM Morse) credit to any applicant holding a Technician license granted after February 14, 1991, and who can document having passed a telegraphy examination element.

The Commission ordered some changes in Part 97 without requesting comment. It ordered, among others, the revision of the definition of an "amateur operator" in §97.3(a)(1) to reflect that entry in the FCC Universal Licensing System (ULS), not a license document, determines whether a person is an Amateur Radio operator.

The FCC also adopted a technical change — in line with a recent amendment to the international Radio Regulations — to specify that the mean power of any spurious emission from a new amateur station transmitter or amplifier operating below 30 MHz be at least 43 dB below the mean power of the fundamental emission, 3 dB greater than the current requirement.

The FCC turned down a petition would have established distinct CW and phone segments in the 160-meter band. Although a majority of commenters supported the proposal, the Commission said the current voluntary band plan "adequately accommodates the operating interests of all licensees who use the 160-meter band because it was based on input from those who use this spectrum."

Among several others, the FCC turned down petitions that would have imposed restrictions on the time, length or transmission frequencies of bulletins or informational transmissions directed at the amateur community. Also denied was an ARRL request to add to the special event call sign system certain call sign blocks that designate territories and possessions that have no specified mailing addresses. The FCC suggested using self-assigned indicators instead.

The FCC Notice of Proposed Rule Making http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-04-79A1.doc in WT Docket 04-140 is available on the FCC Web site.

As soon as the document has been posted, comments on the NPRM may be filed via the FCC Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/ecfs/. Click on "Submit a filing." To view filed comments, click on "Search for filed comments." In either case enter the NPRM number in the "Proceeding" field as "04-140" (without the quotation marks).



FCC Okays RF Identification Tags at 433.5 to 434.5 MHz

(From the ARRL Letter)

The FCC has adopted a somewhat limited version of its earlier proposal to permit deployment of RF Identification (RFID) tags in a segment of the 70-cm band at much greater duty cycles than current Part 15 rules permit for such devices and at higher field strengths. Among other applications, RFID tags are used to track shipments and packing containers. A Third Report and Order (R&O) in ET Docket 01-278 http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-04-98A1.doc released this week follows a 2000 petition by SAVI Technology to revise FCC Part 15 rules to accommodate such devices in the vicinity of 433 MHz. The ARRL has consistently opposed the proposal, but FCC just as unfailingly has tried to accommodate it. FCC Office of Engineering and Technology (OET) Chief Ed

Thomas said RFIDs provide important public benefits.

"This item is designed to increase homeland security at ports, rail yards and warehouses," Thomas told the FCC open meeting. "It will foster the development of more powerful and advanced RFID systems that can identify the contents of shipping containers and determine whether tampering has occurred during shipment." Thomas said the devices also would increase efficiency in shipping operations and inventory control.

ARRL General Counsel Chris Imlay, W3KD, said SAVI has been raising the issue of homeland security in association with this proceeding for several months now. "This is the first time the FCC has acknowledged the argument," Imlay said, "but it helps the Commission justify the complete abandonment of its periodic radiator rules, and helps justify its abandonment of its custodial role of a natural resource."

In requesting Commission adoption, OET's Hugh van Tuyl provided the broad strokes of the Part 15 rule changes, which, he said, would apply specifically to commercial shipping containers "in commercial and industrial areas." In certain cases, he asserted, current Part 15 requirements aimed at preventing interference to licensed services "may unnecessarily constrain the operational range of RFID systems as well as the speed and quantity of data that can be transmitted."

The Third R&O not only would increase the maximum radiated field strength permitted for such devices but their maximum permissible transmission period as well — from one second to one minute. "While the maximum [emission] level would be greater than currently allowed," van Tuyl said, "it would still be only one-half of the level permitted for devices such as garage door openers, which also operate in this band." The longer authorized transmission period would allow an RFID to transmit the contents of an entire shipping container, he pointed out.

"We therefore believe there will be no significant increase in the potential for interference to authorized services," van Tuyl concluded.

The FCC made peace with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) on the RFID tag issue. In 2002, the NTIA — citing the likelihood of interference to critical government radars- expressed "grave concerns" about the proposal to permit deployment of the RFIDs.

The Third R&O reflects certain accommodations that SAVI had offered in response to the 2002 NTIA study. It limits the operating band for such RFID tags to 433.5 to 434.5 MHz, instead of the 425 to 435 MHz SAVI originally wanted. It further would prohibit operation of RFID tag systems within 40 km (about 25 miles) of five government radar sites. Manufacturers of 433 MHz RFID systems would have to register the locations of their system base stations to assist in resolving interference complaints.

Since SAVI first approached the FCC in 2000, ARRL has maintained that the RFID tags the company proposed represented a significant source of potential interference to sensitive receivers. Operating near-continuous duty Part 15 in the vicinity of 433 MHz "is fundamentally incompatible with incumbent amateur operation," the ARRL told the FCC.

More than 130 amateurs filed comments in opposition to SAVI Technology's RFID tags proposal, and most supported the ARRL's position that the proposed rules were flawed and should not be adopted.



ARRL Propagation Forecast Bulletin

Propagation Forecast Bulletin 18 ARLP018
From Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA
Ft Wayne, IN April 30, 2004
To all radio amateurs

Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA, is filling in this week for Tad Cook, K7RA. Tad had some windstorm damage at his QTH from a fallen tree, and at the time of this writing he is without electricity and phone service.

This report covers the period Friday, April 23 through Thursday, April 29.

Solar activity was at moderate levels at the beginning of the period, with several M1 and M2

class flares. Solar activity decreased to low levels in the latter half of the reporting period. Solar activity is forecast to be low for the next several days.

Geophysical activity ranged from quite to active levels during the reporting period due to several isolated active periods occurring at high latitudes. The geomagnetic field is expected to be at an active level on Friday, and return to quiet to unsettled levels on Saturday and Sunday.

The VOACAP and W6ELProp tutorials mentioned in last week's bulletin are intended to be introductory-level discussions of these readily available software packages. Both of the tutorials show how to download the software and set up the options. A sample prediction is run in each, and the outputs are discussed.

For those interested in a more in-depth look at VOACAP, check out "What Is VOACAP Trying to Tell Me?" by N6BV and "VOACAP Quick Guide" by OH6BG — both of these are on the ARRL Technical Information Service propagation page at, http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/propagation.html.

As Cycle 23 continues its descent (the smoothed sunspot number for May is predicted to be around 35 — a far cry from the peak of 121 in April 2000), 10-meter aficionados are becoming more and more dejected. On the other hand, 160-meter aficionados are perking up as solar minimum approaches.

If you're interested in 160-meter propagation and are going to Dayton, check out the Topband Dinner on Friday night (contact George, W8UVZ, via email at, w8uvz@voyager.net for more information). Eric, K3NA, will give a program about the 3B9C 160-meter QSOs.

The numbers for this week will be in next week's Propagation Forecast Bulletin.



ARRL DX Bulletin

DX Bulletin 17 ARLD017
From ARRL Headquarters
Newington CT April 29, 2004

To all radio amateurs

This week's bulletin was made possible with information provided by the OPDX Bulletin, The Daily DX, 425DXnews, DXNL, WA7BNM and Contest Corral from QST. Thanks to all.

MALDIVES, 8Q. Tadao, JA1WPX will be QRV as 8Q7WP from May 4 to 9. He plans to be active on 40 to 10 meters using CW, SSB and RTTY. He may also try some 80 meters and PSK31 as well. QSL to home call.

EAST MALAYSIA, 9M6. Maurizio, IZ1CRR and others will be active as 9M8PSB from Pulau Satang Besar Island, IOTA OC-165. He will also participate in the ARI DX contest as 9M8/IZ1CRR. QSL both calls via IZ1CRR.

TAIWAN, BV. Chung, BX4AF has been QRV using RTTY on 20 meters around 1700z. QSL direct.

CHINA, BY. A Group of BG4 hams from the Jiangsu DX Club will be QRV as BI4Q from Cheniushan Island, IOTA AS-135, from May 1 to 3. They will be active on 40 to 10 meters using CW and SSB on the usual IOTA frequencies. QSL via BG4RQP.

MARQUESAS ISLANDS, FO. A group of amateurs from Japan are QRV as FO0/JI1JKW and FO0/JI1WTF from Hiva Oa, IOTA OC-027, until May 2. Activity will be on 160 to 6 meters using CW, SSB and RTTY. A 6-meter beacon is set up on 50110 kHz. QSL to home calls.

SOUTH SHETLAND ISLANDS. HF0POL has been QRV on 30 meters around 1900 and 2330z. QSL via SP2GOW. Meanwhile, Voytek, SP5QF is active as HF0QF from the Henryk Arctowski Base on King George Island. He is here until the end of 2004. QSL via SP7IWA.

SOUTH KOREAN, HL. Look for DS4NYE and another operator to be active using special call sign D70LW from Soack Island, IOTA AS-060, until May 2. Activity is on all HF bands and modes. QSL via operators' instructions.

ITALY, I. Luigi, IV3KAS will be QRV as II3L as a Single Op entry in the ARI DX contest. QSL to home call.

GUAM, KH2. Nao, JK1FNL will be QRV as NA8O/KH2 from May 5 to 9. QSL direct to JK1FNL.

SOUTH ORKNEY ISLANDS. Dr. Martin, LU5DO is on assignment at the Orcadas Base on Laurie Island. He will be QRV from club station LU1ZA through March 2005. QSL via LU4DXU.

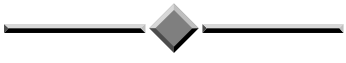
BULGARIA, LZ. Special event station LZ04KM will be active on all bands and modes from May 1 to 31 to celebrate St. Cyril and Methodius' Day. QSL via LZ1BFR.

SLOVAK REPUBLIC, OM. Zsolt, HA6PS and Laci, HA6NL are QRV as OM/homecall/p from Ruzsina until May 3. They will participate in the AGCW QRP contest as OM/HA5RT/p and in the ARI DX contest as OM/HA6PS/p. QSL to home calls.

GREECE, SV. Mike, GW3UOF will be QRV as SV8/GW3UOF/p from Kavos, Corfu, IOTA EU-052, from May 3 to 17. QSL to home call.

TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS, VP5. Conny, DL1DA is QRV as VP5/DL1DA until May 9. Activity is on 40 to 10 meters using CW and RTTY. QSL to home call.

THIS WEEKEND ON THE RADIO. The New England QSO Party, The 2 GHz and Up World-Wide Club Contest, European Union 2004 Contest, IPA Contest, MARAC County Hunters CW Contest, 10-10 International Spring CW/Digital Contest, AGCW QRP/QRP Party, Microwave Spring Sprint, Indiana QSO Party and the ARI International DX Contest will certainly keep contesters busy this weekend. The North American Spring Meteor Scatter Rally runs from May 1 to 10. Please see May QST, pages 98 and 99 and the ARRL and WA7BNM contest websites for details.



Past The Equinox

By Paul Dunphy, VE1DX

CQ DX CQ DX CQ DX PSE DX
I call and call CQ DX with nary a response
Once March has past and conditions drop
It's time to lay another 50 radials on top

A few days ago, one of the local QRPers was up the hill, both enlightened with the prospect of the spring season, and at the same time disillusioned at the prospect of poorer conditions now that we had passed the spring equinox. "I've come to ask your advice, to draw upon your experience as a true blue DXer, and I'm sure you can help me."

We were warmed by his words, but still a bit cautious. Many times we had started a discussion with one of the QRPers on a friendly note, only to find it ended on rather harsh terms if he didn't agree with us. For while we are always willing to give our best advice, Locals often come with pre-answered questions.

"Tell me," he said, grasping our hand firmly and staring at us with his beady little eyes, "What's the deal with DXers? We start out being amazed with the ability to talk to other amateurs all over the world, and within a short time we only worry about our DXCC totals. Fellows I've met at Dayton, and even at the local DX club, transform from really nice guys to ogres on the air. They tramp all over everyone, police the DX frequencies, join DX nets or blast those that do! And then when they come back to the clubs, they are their normal selves. Sure, they wear little badges with their DXCC totals, and some even have an Honor Roll pin stuck on their hats, but they are back to their normal Elmer-like personalities. It doesn't make sense."

Although we're sure we had the answer, we did not try to respond to the question straight out. "You have to understand," we replied, "that there is no pleasure in life as great as DXing. Absolutely nothing. And once the initial glow of working a hundred countries or so has worn off; once the magic of hearing someone in Europe or Asia come back to your CQ call is normal, DXing becomes war! It is your nearness to DXCC #1 Honor Roll that counts. And the closer you get, the more importance one places on one's standings. While it may be all robins and roses at the DX club, or even at Dayton, beating out W3LPL or even VE1DX on the air is all that matters. Understand?"

"Yes, I think I understand," he replied slowly, finally letting go of our hand and walking back toward the end of the veranda, "But why such vehemence on the air? Is one country more or less that important?

Or for that matter, those that have almost all of them worked seem to be even worse, bellowing for hours just for a band country or to get on a list to work a new prefix!" He took a deep breath, and diverted for a moment. "And speaking of lists, don't you despise them? Why would any self-respecting DXer be caught on a list?"

We held up our hand and cut him off, "The topic of lists has been a sore point ever since the Golden Days of DXing began, and maybe eons before. If lists irritate you, avoid them. If they help you, use them with a clean conscience. Now, back to the question of why true blue DXers seeming unruly and aggressive on the air, OK?"

The QRPer was happy to drop the list question and get back on topic. "OK, lists or no lists, what is the answer?" We took a short moment to consider this for we were starting to think we'd answered a day's quota of questions. How does one explain such things to one who may not be ready to understand? We relented and replied with a single word, "Posterity." He blinked, shook his head and parroted back at us, "Posterity?"

"Yes! Posterity! Think about it. In 20, 30 or at most 50 years we'll all be silent keys. And what will we leave behind? The usual materialistic things like money, real estate and maybe a rig and a tower. But our DXCC totals are what are important! When true blue DXers get on the air, they believe their legacy will live on... and of what they will be remembered for. Their DXCC totals, of course!" We we're thinking we had laid things out and had headed the Local in the right direction, but there was this blank stare on his face.

"Huh?" The QRPer recovered and sputtered out." What good are DXCC totals to a silent key?" We took a deep breath and replied, knowing QRPers are never satisfied with a simple answer. "Son, its one of the Mysteries of DXing, one of the Eternal Enigmas of the Ages. DXers believe they will be remembered for their DXCC totals and nothing else. Word has it that VE1DX has a headstone already with 'DXCC totals XXX countries chiseled on it. And when he finally becomes a silent key, he has instructed his executors to have the XXX replaced with 340 or 350 or whatever his total is at the time."

"But who goes through cemeteries looking at headstones for DXCC totals?" the QRPer asked slowly. "Who keeps track of your DXCC totals once you're dead?"

We looked at him intently and responded with two words, "No one." We were going to leave it at that, but then we added, "And no one keeps track of your DXCC totals while you're alive, either, except yourself." The QRPer thought about this for a moment and then asked, "I can't argue with that, but why do the Big Guns still keep bellowing to get just one more?"

We shrugged and replied, "Who knows? Maybe they know something we don't." The QRPer looked at us and he began to shuffle off down the hill. It wasn't clear if we'd answered the question, but we'd given him something to ponder. Pondering is good for QRPers.

Maybe we were even considering our own position on the matter... until we noticed a 160-meter spot for Alaska on the cluster! The heck with posterity or anything else! DX IS! And KL7 on top band didn't come around very often. We tuned for smoke and began sending our call. It would be a new one! There will always be those Eternal Enigmas known only to the Deserving, and if we attempted to bring up yet another abstract DX concept, it would be bound to revive confusion. So we simply hit the key with our call once again, waiting and knowing that sooner or later the KL7 would hear us.



Helpful Hints

Avoid being wheel-clamped by jacking your car up, removing the wheels and locking them safely in the trunk until you return.



Shallow Thoughts

Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of the bottle?

Carbon Amateur Radio Club – 2003-2004 Officers

President: Anthony "Goody" Good, K3NG, goody@fast.net
Vice President: Rob Roomberg, KB3BYT, roomberg@ptd.net
Secretary: Darryl Gibson, N2DIY, n2diy@losch.net
Treasurer: John Schreibmaier, W3MF, w3mf@ptd.net
W3HA Callsign Trustee: John Bednar, K3CT, k3ct@fast.net
W3HA Repeater Trustee: John Bednar, K3CT, k3ct@fast.net
Public Information Officer: Lisa Kelley, ldkelley@voicenet.com

Directors

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Bruce Fritz, KB3DZN (DC), bruce56@ptd.net
Darryl Gibson, N2DIY, n2diy@losch.net
Todd Deem, KB3IKX, kb3ikx@localnet.com

Services

W3HA Repeater: 147.255 MHz + PL 131.8

CARC Website: http:/www.learnmorsecode.com/carc/
Webmaster: Rob, KB3BYT roomberg@ptd.net

CARC Email Reflector: see www.qth.net CarbonARC list for details

Emergency Power Equipment Trustees: Lisa and Bill Kelley, KA3UKL, ldkelley@voicenet.com

CARC Membership Information

Regular Membership is $15.00, which includes autopatch privileges.

All amateur radio operators are invited to join the CARC ARES / RACES net held 21:00 local time every Wednesday on the W3HA repeater at 147.255 MHz + offset, PL 131.8. Any amateur radio operator or anyone with an interest in ham radio is welcome to attend our monthly meetings which occur the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM at the Carbon County EMA Center on Route 93 in Nesquehoning.

Carbon Amateur Radio Club
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