



THE RICHMOND HAM

Published Monthly by the Richmond Amateur Radio Club
P.O. Box 35279, Richmond, Virginia 23235



SEPTEMBER 2012

The RICHMOND AMATEUR RADIO CLUB will meet Friday, September 14, 2012, **7:00 PM**, at the **Bon Air United Methodist Church, 1645 Buford Road.**

Coming Events:

September Club Meeting, Sept 10, 7:00 PM
The Diabetes Foundation walk, Step Out to Fight Diabetes is scheduled for Saturday October 13 at Saint Mary's Hospital.

Virginia Beach Hamfest September 15, 9AM-4PM info at <http://vbhamfest.com/>

Boy Scouts of America - Jamboree on the Air (JOTA), Oct 20th, 8AM-5PM.

The Central Virginia 6 Meter SSB Net Tailgate Fest, Saturday, September 29, 2012, 8:00am to noon at the Scottish Rite parking lot on Hermitage Road.

Annual RARC Banquet Nov 9th at Nick's Roman Terrace

Club Members!

If you are not receiving your copy of the Club's monthly newsletter, please contact Richard, WA4FEH, RARC's Treasurer, at wa4feh@gmail.com or phone 743-3899.

Getting to know this month's speaker

Pamela Cooper:

Pam has been employed by Chesterfield County for 14 years. She holds an Associate Degree in Business from John Tyler Community College and has 27 years' experience in project management and marketing. She currently is Chesterfield County's Anti-Litter Program Manager.

Prior to her career with Chesterfield County, she was employed with Reynolds Metals Company for 20 years as an Administrative Assistant and Manager. Pam received three Outstanding Performance awards and the Golden Elite Circle award for increased sales growth and profits in industrial films.

Among Pam's many other accomplishments:

- Created and promoted the anti-litter campaign educational mobile unit for Chesterfield County which educates over 20,000 citizens per year ;
- Developed and manage the annual Chesterfield County Environmental Fair which educates over 6,000 citizens of

the importance of keeping Chesterfield County clean and green (received 2 Excellence in Service awards); and

- 2003 Employee of the Year Award for General Services – Waste and Resource Recovery.
-

From The Prez

As I write this column, much of the national news coverage is focused on Hurricane Isaac which is creating some havoc for the Gulf coast before it dumps a summer's worth of rain on the mid-west. Amateur radio news sites have kept us informed of the preparations that hams in the southeast United States are making to provide emergency communications assistance, if needed. Whenever I hear about hams stepping up to provide emergency communications, I recall one of the most serious disasters when amateur radio provided essential assistance.

On March 27, 1964 I had been licensed for just three years. On that fateful day the strongest earthquake in U.S. history, a magnitude 9.2, struck the Prince William Sound area of Alaska. It was known as the Good Friday Earthquake. The death toll was 131 with most of those dying due to tsunamis in Alaska and elsewhere. But for Alaska's sparse population at the time, the death toll would have been many times higher. Minor damage occurred as far away as Los Angeles and several fishing boats sank in Louisiana as a result. Water in wells in South Africa was observed moving during the quake.

The days that followed were some of the finest days for amateur radio. Even though military communications systems failed, hams relayed messages between military bases. Just about any account you read of the earthquake aftermath includes stories of amateur radio's role in providing critical communications when other methods failed. In fact, the Alaska legislature was so appreciative of the contributions of ham operators, that they passed a law that license plates for ham operators would be free. Not just no fee for the callsign plates, but totally free, if you have a mobile rig and valid ham license, a privilege that Alaska hams still enjoy today.

<http://doa.alaska.gov/dmv/plates/amradio.htm>

Many of our members are active in a variety of organizations that train and prepare for the time when we will be called upon to provide critical communications. Our D Star repeaters now offer a wide area communications capability that could not have been imagined just a few years ago. Let's remember that public service through emergency communications is one of the reasons why we are entrusted with the precious commodity of radio spectrum.

73 Win

D-STAR Note

Our digital repeater usage continues to grow as more members acquire D-STAR radios and install D-STAR hotspots. In addition to our regular Wednesday night net on the VHF D-STAR repeater, we link that repeater to Reflector 025C at 9:00 PM on Wednesdays for the National Capital Region D-STAR net. On Sunday nights at 9:00 pm, we link the UHF repeater to Reflector 002A for the Southeast D-STAR Weather Net. Information on gateway registration and linking is on the Club website at <http://rarclub.net/repeaters/D-STAR/> or contact Jim, KJ4WLH or Win, WA4SSG, for assistance.

RARC VE News

The next VE testing session will be Saturday, November 10th at 9:00am, at the Bon Air United Methodist Church.

If you have questions about a session, please see our website, www.rarclub.net/ or contact Allan, WA3J, at 804-399-8724, or wa3j@arrl.net.

August Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: August 10, 2012

Meeting Time: 7:00 PM Called to order at 7:02 PM

Presiding Officers: Win Grant, WA4SSG, President, Pete Fundinger, AA4PF, Vice-President, Richard Arnold, WA4FEH, Treasurer and Patricia Johnson, N8WEA, Secretary

The President called the meeting to order and welcomed all.

Several announcements were made: There were several upgrades and new hams on the air: Sean Flippin, KK4JKW, is a new Technician. He is getting antennas in the air. Barbara Smith advised that while she has had her license for two years, she is just getting on the air. She asked the group for help on programming an HT she owns and after the formal meeting and program, many members provided information and tips.

The July minutes were approved and motioned to accept.

The July Treasurer's report was provided by the treasurer, Richard Arnold, WA4FEH. Richard reported that the RARC saving account has been closed due to Bank of America (BOA) change in fee policy on savings accounts. BOA is increasing monthly fees on accounts. All funds from the savings account were deposited to the RARC checking account. All expenses for the month of July were paid including \$425.00 for liability insurance for the club. The ending balance for the checking account is \$6,203.92. Members with any questions were instructed to speak to the treasurer.

An application for new membership was reviewed, seconded, voted and accepted for Sean Flippin, KK4JKW. Welcome to the club. ☺

Old Business:

- Members were advised of a morning 6 meter info net in the area.
- Joe Palsa, K3WRY, shared that he had attended the Berryville hamfest and while no major manufacturers were at the fest, the turnout was good, weather was great and everyone had a good time.
- Joe also reported that the ARES exercise for the Tidewater EOC was conducted and good results occurred from the event. Contacts were made on 2 meters, 40 and 80 meters. Joe is hoping to set up a schedule for a semi-annual or perhaps quarterly exercise for the rest of the state.
- Jim Bates, KJ4WLH, reported that while no certificates would be issued or even a pat on the back, several members had made at least one contact a day during the month of June: Lew Best, Joe Palsa, Tom Flippin, Allen Johnson, Jim Bates, Art Williams, Armand Hamel

and Win Grant. Several others made great attempts. Congratulations to all.

New business:

- Jim Bates, KJ4WLH, has volunteered to help the local BSA (Boy Scouts of America) Heart of Virginia Council with the Jamboree-on-the-Air (JOTA) scheduled for October 20, 2012. More information to follow.
- Software upgrades were made to the D Star gateway system thanks to Jim Bates. Ron Chase, Mike Owens and Win Grant made some adjustments to one of the D Star antennas.
- Bruce MacAlister, W4BRU, reported that registration for the fall Technician, General and Extra classes will start on Tuesday, September 4 2012 at the church at 7:00 pm.
- The 900 Mhz. repeater is on the air. Currently about 34 hams are using the frequency.
- The speaker for September program will be Pam Cooper with the Chesterfield County Anti- Litter Campaign.

There was no further business, so the meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m. After a brief intermission, the August program about remote radio operation was presented by Jim Bates. The program was enjoyed by all.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Johnson, N8WEA
(A special thanks to Dave Thomas for taking minutes at the August meeting).

JOTA JOTA JOTA JOTA JOTA!!!

Boy Scouts of America - Jamboree on the Air (JOTA)

When Scouts want to meet young people from another country, they usually think of attending a World Jamboree. But few people realize that each year more than half a million Scouts and Guides "get together" over the airwaves for the annual Jamboree-on-the-Air (JOTA). The World Scout Bureau reported that the 2010 JOTA had just over 700,000 Scout participants from nearly 6,000 amateur radio

stations! Modern technology offers Scouts the exciting opportunity to make friends in other countries without leaving home. JOTA is an annual event in which Boy and Girl Scouts and Guides from all over the world speak to each other by means of Amateur (ham) Radio. Scouting experiences are exchanged and ideas are shared via radio waves. Since 1958 when the first Jamboree-on-the-Air was held, millions of Scouts have met each other through this event. Many contacts made during JOTA have resulted in pen pals and links between Scout troops that have lasted many years. With no restrictions on age or on the number of participants, and at little or no expense, JOTA allows Scouts to contact each other by ham radio. The radio stations are operated by licensed amateur radio operators. Many Scouts and leaders hold licenses and have their own stations, but the majority participate in JOTA through stations operated by local radio clubs and individual radio amateurs. Some operators use television or computer-linked communications.

I am looking for any volunteers to come and participate. Stay as long or little as you wish. If you'd like to bring your own station, great! If you are interested in any further details, please contact me!

2012 JOTA details:

Where: Still undecided

When: October 20th from 8:00am until 5:00pm

Who: Anybody who wants to participate!

Contact Info: Jim Bates, KJ4WLH,
jl Bates4@gmail.com or (804) 592-1068

FCC Releases Congressionally Mandated Study on Amateur Radio

On August 20 -- in response to a Spring 2012 Congressional directive -- the Federal Communications Commission [released its findings](#) on the *Uses and Capabilities of Amateur Radio Service Communications in Emergencies and Disaster Relief: Report to Congress Pursuant to Section 6414 of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012.*

This report contains the FCC's "review of the importance of emergency Amateur Radio Service communications relating to disasters, severe weather and other threats to lives and

property in the United States; and recommendations for enhancements in the voluntary deployment of Amateur Radio operators in disaster and emergency communications and disaster relief efforts; and recommendations for improved integration of Amateur Radio operators in the planning and furtherance of initiatives of the federal government." It also required "that the study identify impediments to enhanced Amateur Radio Service communications and provide recommendations regarding the removal of such impediments."

"There are many positive things included in the FCC report to Congress," said ARRL Regulatory Information Manager Dan Henderson, N1ND. "We are pleased that the Commission highlighted the existing Amateur Radio infrastructure to provide disaster and time-critical communications. They also recognized the flexibility of the Amateur Service in working with federal, state, local and tribal emergency service agencies to supplement existing communications. The affirmation of the value that Amateur Radio brings to the communities across the country is underscored by the suggestion that 'DHS work with state, local, and tribal authorities so they may develop disaster area access or credentialing policies for trained amateur operators, including a means for documenting their qualifications...'"

While the FCC did hold Amateur Radio in a positive light in its discussion of emergency Amateur Radio Service communications, the FCC report was not as favorable in the portion of the study that addressed impediments to enhanced Amateur Radio Service communications. In the comments provided to the FCC as they prepared the study, the ARRL -- as well as numerous individuals -- cited the proliferation of specific land-use restrictions, such as deed restrictions and homeowners associations covenants, that prohibit the erection of even modest Amateur Radio antennas.

The ARRL cited that such restrictions now apply to tens of millions of homes and condominiums. In communities across every state, these restrictions make finding suitable living arrangements that would also allow amateurs to participate effectively in providing support communications nearly impossible to find. The FCC disagreed with that assessment stating "...our review of the record does not

indicate that amateur operators are unable to find homes that are not subject to such restrictions. Therefore, at this time, we do not see a compelling reason for the Commission to revisit its previous determinations that preemption should not be expanded to CC&Rs."

You can read the entire article at <http://www.arrrl.org/news/fcc-releases-congressionally-mandated-study-on-amateur-radio>.

Club Info...

- RARC meets on the second Friday of each month at 7:00 PM, at the Bon Air United Methodist Church, 1645 Buford Road.
- We offer 10-week license prep classes in September and March with exams following.
- Members provide VE testing sessions on odd-months during the year.

FCC EXAMS EVERY MONTH on the SECOND SATURDAY. For January and all odd-numbered months: Bon Air United Methodist Church, 9 AM. Call coordinator, Allan Johnson, WA3J, 399-8724, or visit <http://www.rarclub.net/>.

For February and all even-numbered months, FCC test sessions are provided by the RAVE group. Coordinator, Pat Wilson, W4PW (932-9424) has information on his website <http://w4pw.org>.

RARC has the first D-STAR digital repeater in the area. 147.255 (+) and 443.7125 (+). We now have the gateway tied into the worldwide D-STAR network.

The Club sponsors several radio nets each week. Join in for the informative discussions and fun.

Sunday	7:00 PM	50.135	USB
	7:30 PM	52.525	FM
Wednesday	7:00 PM	28.475	USB
	8:00 PM	147.255	D-STAR Repeater
	8:15 PM	145.730	Packet

- Join the Richmond Amateur Radio Club. You don't have to have a ham license, just have a genuine interest in the hobby.

Annual Dues are:

80 and over	\$0
Age 12 and under	\$5.00
Age 13 to 18	\$10.00
Regular Membership	\$15.00

- Lots of information about the Club and our activities is available on our website, www.rarclub.net. Check it out!

Newsletter Articles

Thanks to a few of the club members for making my job easier than it might be. They (Bruce & Jim) have sent me articles or links to articles that they think might be of interest to the club members. I'm sure that many of you have also come across interesting radio related articles (or maybe not radio related articles) that would be great in the newsletter. If you do, please don't hesitate to send them along to me. (armand.hamel@comcast.net or 804-454-0564). There is an awful lot of information out there. Don't want to let the really interesting ones to get away! Thanks, Armand

The Amateur Amateur: *Some Aggravation Required

By Gary Hoffman, KB0H
Contributing QST Editor

Amateur Radio has been around for more than 100 years. It has added many new techniques and modes of operating since the early days. And while new methods and equipment are constantly being developed, the hobby never really abandons anything. This means that newly licensed hams find themselves faced with a dazzling array of specialized fields that they can pursue.

One that has drawn my interest is the broad field of digital communications. I've played around with several modes, had a lot of fun and done some really cool stuff. But there is a downside: Digital modes have caused me more distress than you can imagine. When they work, they are wonderful. But frequently they *don't* work, and I'm left wondering why. What's happened this time?

You cannot imagine the hours I've wasted moving cables around, changing port settings, rebooting, cycling power and doing "hard resets" (don't ask). I've spent much more time analyzing and debugging digital problems than I have actually operating in digital modes. My stress levels are up, my hair is all but gone and I've put on more than a few pounds stuffing my face with comfort food -- all because of an unending series of digital disasters.

So, what the blazes is wrong?

What a Drag It Is Getting Old

Here's my guess. One group of people manufactures very nice computers. Another group of people makes pretty spiffy radios. They aren't the same people. They never got together and said, "Okay, let's build these devices so that they can interact." So the two gizmos simply have no way to talk to each other. It was some very clever Amateur Radio operators who figured out how to get them to do that. They came up with TNCs (Terminal Node Controllers).

I salute those hams and praise them for their innovations. But, let's face it, that introduced a third group of people to the equation. And though the radio manufacturers, computer manufacturers and builders of the interfaces were very smart people, chaos theory (also known as Murphy's Law) cannot be denied.

The point is, there are three components, and the communications between them are never quite perfect. They are prone to go wonky. Sometimes the messages will get through, sometimes they won't.

That's my theory, anyway.

Hey! You! Get Off of My Cloud!

Since the computers, radios, and TNCs are made by different companies, there is also no ideal instruction manual telling you how to connect them. The cables, connectors and settings will vary from configuration to configuration. But if there were such a manual, somewhere near the beginning it should have an asterisk guiding you to a footnote that says --

*Some Aggravation Required

That's because once you've finally obtained the right cables with the correct plugs, and gotten everything connected, it won't work.

At least, it didn't for me.

That's when the real aggravation started. Not only did I have to install the application software, I almost always had to change some system setting in my computer. And if that wasn't daunting enough, I also had to program the TNC. I understand computers to a degree, but TNC language was something totally alien to me (stop chortling if you use a sound card interface -- I know you had problems, as well).

That's when the hair-tearing and the teeth-gnashing and the screaming, "What now!!?" began. My system wouldn't transmit. Or sometimes it wouldn't receive. Often the digital application program wouldn't do anything at all. Not having a triple-degree in computers, radios and TNCology, I was doomed to run into trouble right away.

I had to tweak this and adjust that and spend many, many hours on the Internet searching for support groups. I scoured the Web hunting for messages about other people having the same problems. Even when I found people who had almost identical configurations that did work, it usually didn't help. That's because they had a slightly different version of Windows, or Linux, or a different EPROM in their TNCs, or even another brand of USB-to-DB9 connector. Yes, it could be that subtle.

Paint It Black

So, what was the final solution? I haven't found it yet. I despair of ever finding it. It's probably not a problem so much as its many problems. Every now and then, I'll figure out some quirk in the system, but it never solves all of the difficulties.

The worst thing is that sometimes it will all work. There are days, even weeks, when absolutely everything is humming along. *Winlink* will send and receive mail like a charm. APRS (Automatic Packet Reporting System) will cheerfully perform every feature in its menu. Slow Scan TV will give me brilliant pictures.

During these trouble-free times I am so suspicious, so anxious that it's all going to fail,

that I actually go out of my way to break something.

Okay, that does sound a little nuts. But what I'm trying to do is find some setting, some plug, some kink in the system that will give me the symptoms I get when things don't work. Is it the programming in the TNC? Let's try changing it. Does it have something to do with the connections? Let's switch USB ports.

That doesn't accomplish anything, naturally. I have to try very hard to get anything not to work. Every component seems terribly robust. The software is very forgiving. Everything works like a charm.

Until the next day, of course, when nothing at all will work.

The Nature of My Game

I know I should expect some difficulties regardless of what new thing I try. Digital modes just seem to have more of them than I'd anticipated. There's probably proportionality constant having to do with the complexity of a system and the amount of aggravation required to make it work. If so, I'm glad I didn't attempt anything more complicated.

But I'll keep plugging away at digital modes. They can be fun, and they're certainly useful in emergency communications.

Truthfully, though, I'm just plain stubborn.

And the latest wrinkle? People are coming to me for advice on getting computers and radios talking to each other.

What a weird turn of events.

Editor's note: ARRL member Gary Hoffman, KB0H, lives in Florissant, Missouri. A ham since 1995, Hoffman says his column's name -- "The Amateur Amateur" -- suggests the explorations of a rank amateur, not those of an experienced or knowledgeable ham. His wife, Nancy, is NONJ.

Reprinted with the kind permission of the ARRL Web.

The SWAP SHOP

Club members may list their wares in the newsletter. Send descriptive information to Armand at wa1uqo@arrl.net, or call me at 804-454-0564. The Swap Shop is presented in the newsletter as a benefit to our members. RARC takes no responsibility for items sold or traded in this newsletter. The ad will appear three times unless extended. Interested parties will contact you directly. **You must be an RARC member to place an ad.**

For Sale: Kenwood TK-981 FM transceivers for 900 MHz, used in good condition, bench checked, 15 watt, preprogrammed for local and national simplex and repeater frequencies. Includes microphone, power cord and mounting bracket. These are being made available at cost to promote local activity, price \$125. Get yours now and join us on simplex or the soon-to-be announced repeater. Also available, 30 watt capable transceivers for \$145, trade-ins taken. Contact Dave Meier, N4MW, n4mw@msn.com

Wanted: I am looking for three back issues of Electric Radio magazine. The December 2001 through February 2002 issues. Volumes 51 through 53. Would like to borrow them if possible for a short time. Armand, wa1uqo@arrl.net, or (804) 454-0564.

Thought for the Day

Good judgment comes from bad experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.

73 de:

Win Grant	WA4SSG	PRESIDENT	(804) 272-9695	wa4ssg(at)arrl.net
Pete Fundinger	AA4PF	VICE-PRESIDENT	(804) 639-5573	aa4pf(at)verizon.net
Patricia Johnson	N8WEA	SECRETARY		
Richard Arnold	WA4FEH	TREASURER		

