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WAVELENGTH

Official bulletin of
 Scarborough Amateur Radio Club, Inc.
www.ve3we.org

PARTICIPATE – LEARN – ENJOY

November 2008

Volume 2 Issue 7

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Vice-President:	Open	
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SARC Nets

28.730 Mhz
 CW 10:00 AM
 SSB 10:30 AM
 147.060 MHz (VE3RPT)
 7:30 PM
 Alternate frequency
 146.520 MHz simplex
 28.730 MHz
 SSB 7:00 PM

Everyone is invited to check in on CW before the nets start.

These are open nets. All licensed hams are welcome. Come and join us.

We also want to emphasize that 28.730 MHz is our calling frequency. Please monitor and/or call your friends. 7:00 PM is a good time.

We also have a group of EchoLink users that meets on Thursday nights at 7:30 PM. For more information about EchoLink see the October 2008 issue of Wavelength.

2009 Elections

Elections for the 2009 Board of Directors and Executive Panel will be held on December 8. All positions are open. To vote, you must be a member in good standing (dues paid by December 8). If you are interested in standing for office, or if you wish to nominate someone, please fill in the comment form at <http://ve3we.org/contact/feedback.php>.

Let's Get on the Maker Bandwagon

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

About a week ago, I got an e-mail from a ham down in Texas who had attended the Maker Faire (<http://makerfaire.com/>). "Makers" are people who love to tinker and make things. They even have their own magazine, Make (www.makezine.com).

He was amazed at the lack of any amateur radio content. He wrote, "The Maker Faire was unbelievable. Incredible stuff. Pedal powered carnival rides, robots, computer drive routers, kits. Outside of a table with a Vectronics kit, and a license manual, and a QRP book, the only radio stuff was from a pirate radio group."

I'm kind of amazed at this as well. It just goes to show how disconnected amateur radio is getting from the mainstream. These are exactly the kind of people we want to get interested in amateur radio, yet there was no one there representing us.

Ham radio needs to be at these events and get plugged into the "maker community." The Faire has not yet released attendance figures for this particular Faire, but more than 65,000 people attended the Faire held in May 2008. Dayton, with its attendance of about 20,000, looks anemic by comparison.

I blogged about this back in May (<http://kb6nu.com/why-cant-dayton-be-more-like-the-maker-faire/>). One of the things I suggested then is moving Dayton to some place like Austin. Seriously, if you were a new, young ham, where would you rather go, Dayton, OH or Austin, TX? Let's be real here.

And can there be a worse place for an event than Hara Arena? The parking lot, where they hold the flea market looks like a mine field, and it usually rains, making the flea market a wet, unpleasant experience. Is it any wonder that fewer and fewer

vendors choose to haul stuff out there? Some of us older hams might fondly reminisce about the bargain we found while traipsing around wearing a trash-bag poncho, but a story like that is not going to resonate with new hams.

Please don't get me wrong. I don't mean to badmouth the Dayton Amateur Radio Association or the Hamvention. I actually think that they do a great job, all things considered. I'm just pointing out that if ham radio wants to again be part of the mainstream, we have to get with the program. Unfortunately, that program probably won't be at the Hara Arena.

Ham radio has got to figure out how to latch onto the Maker phenomenon. At the very least, the ARRL should have a booth at the next one, and in addition to all the books and t-shirts, they need to come up with some kind of demo or display to attract makers into ham radio. I don't know what exactly, but I'm willing to start talking about it.

This phenomenon might also be a boon for clubs who hold hamfests. Just as the computer craze turned ham swaps into ham and computer swaps in the 80s, perhaps ham clubs could turn their hamfests into a combination hamfest and Maker Faire in their communities.

As I said earlier, Makers are exactly the kind of people we want in ham radio. Let's go out and get them.

When Dan's not pontificating about ham radio, you'll find him working CW on 40m, teaching ham classes, or running for the ARRL Board of Directors. Read more by going to www.kb6nu.com. Send e-mail to cwgeek@kb6nu.com.

School is in!

Ralph VE3CIW and Lambert VE3LYP are teaching basic amateur radio classes on Friday nights from 6:00 to 9:00 PM at the Don Montgomery Community Recreation Centre. Courses are free with club membership.

ARES HF EMCOMM Frequencies

Courtesy of RAC

Radio Amateurs of Canada has recently created a list of suggested frequencies and modes for use of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES). Although these pre-determined frequencies are suggested for use during a declared emergency, or a disaster declared or otherwise, other frequencies may be used if necessary.

The list is available from <http://www.rac.ca/fieldorg/racaresfreqs.htm>

For more information about RAC ARES, visit <http://www.rac.ca/fieldorg/racares.htm>

For information about ARES activities in the Toronto area go to <http://ares.meskes.ca/>

D-STAR at TFMCS

The Toronto FM Communications Society, owner of VE3RPT, has recently added a D-STAR repeater. It is not currently part of the VE3RPT link system, but the D-STAR gateway is available so users can connect to the world. More details about the new repeater are available from <http://tfmcs.com/6901/12232.html>

For those not familiar with D-STAR here is a brief description from Wikipedia (full article at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D-STAR>):

D-STAR (Digital Smart Technologies for Amateur Radio) is a digital voice and data protocol specification developed as the result of research by the Japan Amateur Radio League to investigate digital technologies for amateur radio. While there are other digital on-air technologies being used by amateurs that have come from other services, D-Star is one of the first on-air standards to be widely deployed and sold by a major radio manufacturer that is designed specifically for amateur service use.

D-Star compatible radios are available on VHF and UHF and microwave amateur radio bands. In addition to the over-the-air protocol, D-Star also provides specifications for network connectivity, enabling D-Star radios to be connected to the Internet or other networks and provisions for routing data streams of voice or packet data via amateur radio callsigns.

The first manufacturer to offer D-Star compatible radios is Icom, and no other amateur radio equipment manufacturer has chosen to include D-Star technology in their radios, yet. Kenwood re-brands an Icom radio and distributes it in Japan only.

TFMCS is asking amateurs who are interested in supporting their implementation of D-STAR to purchase D-STAR compatible equipment from Radio World. If you do, please mention that you will be using it with VE3RPT, and email va3mw@tfmcs.com to let TFMCS know what you bought.

DX News

QST de W1AW
DX Bulletin 47 ARLD047
From ARRL Headquarters
Newington CT November 13, 2008
To all radio amateurs

This week's bulletin was made possible with information provided by NC1L, VU2PTT, the OPDX Bulletin, DXNL, 425 DX News, The Daily DX, Contest Corral from QST and the ARRL Contest Calendar and WA7BNM web sites. Thanks to all.

MADAGASCAR, 5R. Eric, F6ICX, will be QRV as 5R8IC from Boraha Island, IOTA AF-090, from November 18 to December 14. Activity will be on 30 to 10 meters using CW and SSB. QSL to home call.

SENEGAL, 6W. During his time in Western Africa, Peter, HA3AUI will be QRV as 6W2SC from November 15 to March 31, 2009. Activity will be on 160 to 10 meters using mostly digital modes, but with some CW and SSB as well. QSL direct to home call.

WEST MALAYSIA, 9M2. Rich, PA0RRS will be QRV as 9M2MRS from Penang, IOTA AS-015,

from November 17 to February 6, 2009. QSL to home call.

MOZAMBIQUE, C9. Igor, UY5LW is QRV as C91LW until December 2. Activity is on 160 to 10 meters using CW, SSB and various digital modes. This includes an entry in the upcoming CQ WW CW contest as a single band entry. QSL to home call.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA, E7. Special event station E760DPR is active until December 31 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Radio Club Trebinje. QSL via E73DPR.

ENGLAND, G. Special event station GB70RAF is QRV from Shaftesbury, Dorset until December 11 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Royal Air Force Amateur Radio Society. Activity is on 80 to 10 meters using CW and SSB. QSL via bureau.

SAN ANDRES AND PROVIDENCIA, HK0. Operators AA7JV, HA7RY, HA8MT and HK3JJH will be QRV as 5K0T and HK0/HK3JJH from Serrana Bank and Roncador Cays, IOTA NA-133, from November 18 to 21. Activity will be on 160 to 6 meters. QSL 5K0T via HA7RY and HK0/HK3JJH via operators' instructions.

GUINEA BISSAU, J5. During his time in Western Africa, Peter, HA3AUI will be QRV as J5UAP from November 15 to March 31, 2009. Activity will be on 160 to 10 meters using mostly digital modes, but with some CW and SSB as well. QSL direct to home call.

ANTARCTICA. Alex, RV1ZC is QRV as R1ANC from the Russian Vostok base. Activity is on several HF bands using CW, SSB and various digital modes. QSL via RN1ON.

CENTRAL KIRIBATI, T31. Toshi, JA8BMK will be QRV as T31DX from Canton Island from November 16 to 26. Activity will be on 160 to 10 meters using CW and SSB. QSL direct to home call.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, TL. Padre, TL8PRV has been active on 20 meters around 0630z. QSL via IN3EYY.

INDIA, VU. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Indian scientist

Jagadish Chandra Bose, known as the father of radio communication in India, look for special call AU2JCB to be active from November 15 to December 8. Activity will be on all bands and modes. QSL direct via VU2SMN.

ASCENSION ISLAND, ZD8. Ernie, W1MRQ is QRV as ZD8B until late December. He is active on 2 meters EME. QSL via K1CA.

OPERATIONS APPROVED FOR DXCC CREDIT. The following operations are approved for DXCC credit: Lakshadweep Islands, VU7SJ, 2008 operation; Sable Island, CY0X, 2008 operation.

Propagation Forecast

QST de W1AW
Propagation Forecast Bulletin 47 ARLP047
From Tad Cook, K7RA
Seattle, WA November 14, 2008
To all radio amateurs

We soon may be talking about a day or two without sunspots as the norm, perhaps when looking at a preceding month -- quite the opposite of noting the few days with sunspots. It seems like a long time ago because of the long strings of spotless days. We saw eight days in a row with visible sunspots around mid-October, followed by another eight days around the start of November, then after just three days of no spots. By the end of today -- Friday, November 14 -- we may see five straight days, possibly followed by more.

We have to look at last year to find long periods without spotless days. From June 25, 2007 until July 19, 2007, there were 25 days with sunspots that were continuously visible. From April 25, 2007 until May 23, 2007, there were 29 days with spots; from December 30, 2006 until February 10, 2007, there were 43 days with spots. This makes January 2007 the last time we observed a calendar month with no spotless days.

Why are sunspots important? They correlate with a reflective or refracting ionosphere. Here is a nice picture from University of Iowa illustrating the earth with ionosphere:

<http://www.ihr.uiowa.edu/projects/schumann/images/IonosphereLayers.gif>

Another one, from G4NSJ, shows a very basic diagram of a shortwave radio signal traveling a great distance via the ionosphere:

<http://www.g4nsj.co.uk/images/wave.jpg>

There are variations influenced by time of day, season and location, but generally the higher the sunspot number, the higher the frequency that can be used for communication. This is important, because when you double the frequency you are operating on (for instance, from 20 to 10 meters), the relative size of your antenna can be cut in half to still have the same efficiency. So, with enough solar activity, you could communicate around the world on 10 meters with a highly efficient directional antenna that is much smaller and easier to construct than an equally efficient 20 meter antenna. At the higher frequencies, there is also less absorption of higher frequency shortwave signals.

There is a critical number called MUF (Maximum Usable Frequency) that can be calculated based on the factors mentioned above: time of day, time of the year, the two locations trying to communicate and the level of solar activity. For radio waves at a frequency above the MUF, they can just pass on through the ionosphere, never to be heard again.

For calculating conditions based on these factors, check the reference to the same W6ELprop program mentioned in last week's Propagation Forecast Bulletin ARLP046 at, <http://mysite.verizon.net/k9la/id9.html>. Check out the other references on the same K9LA web page, which are excellent.

The ARRL SSB Sweepstakes Contest is this weekend. With the recent sunspot activity, conditions should be better on 15 meters than they would be without sunspots. For example: California to Ohio. If there had been no sunspots leading up to the contest weekend, 15 meters looks rough, but could open from 1800-1930z,

perhaps as early as 1600 to as late as 2100z. But with recent sunspots, a great opening from 1630-2100z is likely and could start an hour earlier and end 30 minutes to an hour later.

Over that path and over this weekend, with no sunspots the MUF would rise above 20 MHz at 1730-2000z, peaking around 20.6 MHz at 1830z. But with sunspots over a few days, the MUF is likely to go above 21 MHz from 1630-2100z, peaking at 23.7 MHz around 1830z.

On 20 meters with no sunspots, the path looks good 1430-1530z and 1800-1830z. With sunspots 20 meters looks good 1430-1500z, and excellent 1600-2000z.

40 meters is good over the path day and night, sunspots or none. Strongest signals are from when the Sun sets around 0047z in California to within the hour after the Sun rises in Ohio around 1219z.

Jeff Hartley, N8II of Shepherdstown, West Virginia wrote to us last week about the CQ Worldwide DX Phone Contest, October 25-26.

Jeff wrote, "I operated the CQWW single band on 15M and the band was poor compared to most years, probably about the same as in 2007. The skip zone was long enough that I didn't work several active northern Caribbean countries until mid-afternoon Sunday. There appeared to be sporadic E to VE1/VY2 and VE3 Saturday morning and to VP5/VP9/C6 on Sunday. The closest F2 contact to my south was KP2M. There was decent propagation to very southern EU both days. I caught VU7SJ (loud) about the same time as the Es around 1400Z Saturday and VU2PAI (weak) called in Sunday around 1600Z for my best polar opening DX."

He continues, "It was possible to work about 30 zones on 15M from the USA. From 1245-1355Z Sunday there was a big opening with S9+ EU signals about as far as Lithuania. 3 Russians UA3 and UA6 were worked and one UR. 5R8FU was loud Sunday afternoon with a huge pile-up; all of Africa was workable, but zones 34 (missed), 36, 37 and 39 were pretty rare. Best Pacific DX was AH0 around 23Z Sunday."

He goes on to say, "40M and 30M seem to be staying open to EU quite late (after my sunset

30M, thru 0200Z 40M) some days which is encouraging."

Owen Duffy, VK1OD of Ainslie, near Canberra in Southeast Australia, sent in a link to a chart he made of spotless days around the solar cycle transition. See it at, <http://www.vk1od.net/solar/spotless.htm>. Also check out the rest of his site at, <http://www.vk1od.net/>.

If you would like to make a comment or have a tip for our readers, email the author at, k7ra@arrl.net.

For more information concerning radio propagation, see the ARRL Technical Information Service web page at,

<http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/propagation.html>.

For a detailed explanation of the numbers used in this bulletin, see <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/k9la-prop.html>. An archive of past propagation bulletins is at <http://www.arrl.org/wlaw/prop/>.

Monthly propagation charts between four USA regions and twelve overseas locations are at <http://www.arrl.org/qst/propcharts/>.

Instructions for starting or ending email distribution of this bulletin are at <http://www.arrl.org/wlaw.html#email>.

Sunspot numbers for November 6 through 12 were 11, 0, 0, 0, 16, 18, and 21 with a mean of 9.4. 10.7 cm flux was 68.6, 67.8, 68.3, 68.4, 69.3, 71.4, and 70.9 with a mean of 69.2. Estimated planetary A indices were 1, 8, 14, 12, 3, 1 and 2 with a mean of 5.9. Estimated mid-latitude A indices were 0, 7, 11, 10, 3, 1 and 4 with a mean of 5.1.

Upcoming Contests

CQWW CW Contest, from Saturday, November 29 at 0000 UTC to Sunday, November 30 at 2359 UTC. Details at <http://www.cqww.com/>

ARRL 160 Meter CW Contest, from Friday, December 5 at 2200 UTC to Sunday, December 7 at 1600 UTC. Full details and rules at <http://www.arrl.org/contests/rules/2008/160-meters.html>

ARRL 10 Meter Contest (phone/CW) on the second full weekend of December, from Saturday, December 13 at 0000 UTC to Sunday, December 14 at 2359 UTC. Full details and rules at <http://www.arrl.org/contests/rules/2008/10-meters.html>

RAC Winter contest, on Saturday, December 27 from 0000 to 2359 UTC. Details at <http://www.rac.ca/service/contesting/>

Club Events

November 24 - Club meeting

December 8 - Elections

All positions on the Board of Directors and Executive Panel are open. To vote, you must be a member in good standing (dues paid by December 8). If you are interested in running, or if you wish to nominate someone, please fill in the comment form at

<http://ve3we.org/contact/feedback.php> .

Please note that if you intend to nominate someone, you must have that person's permission first.

December 15 - Christmas party

This year we've decided to move our Christmas party to the week following the elections. Guests are welcome. Hope to see you there.

Space Shuttle Endeavour

Space Shuttle Endeavour launched on Friday, November 14 to deliver equipment to the International Space Station to enable larger crews to reside aboard the complex. Audio from the shuttle is available on the Echolink *NASA* conference. Video and audio are available from NASA TV.

http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/shuttle/shuttlemissions/sts126/index.html