



JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2005

REMARCS

www.marc-radio.org

JANUARY AND FEBRUARY PROGRAMS

HOMEBREW SHOW & TELL + BPL VIDEO CHESTER CO. DEPT. OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

The January 25 club meeting program will be ham radio homebrew show & tell night. Bring something you built -- from scratch, from published plans, from a kit -- and tell us all about it. Was your project a dismal flop? Show it anyhow and we'll laugh / cry with you. The project could be a rig, an accessory, or any kind of homemade gizmo that's part of ham radio. If your item is not portable, bring in some photos to pass around the room. We also plan to show a short video about Broadband over Power Lines (BPL) from ARRL Lab supervisor **Ed Hare W1RFI**.

The February 22 program will be given by **Ed Atkins**, Director of the Chester County Department of Emergency Services. He will tell us about the county's various emergency programs and how the county 911 system works. Ed's program was scheduled for last September, but the meeting had to be cancelled owing to Hurricane Jeanne. Ed is a staunch friend of ham radio and ARES/RACES. This would be a good meeting for your friends who are not hams yet, especially if they live in Chester County and would be interested to know what the Department of Emergency Services does to make the community safer.

Looking ahead, the annual Junque Auction is on the calendar for the March meeting. **Dick K3IIN** is working on a bunch of interesting programs for the rest of the year. If you have suggestions for Amateur Radio or high-tech topics or know about particularly good speakers on such subjects, please contact him and pass the ideas along. Would you like to give a program on your favorite aspect of ham radio? Talk to Dick!

KIMBERTON FIRE COMPANY SAYS "THANK YOU"

MARC volunteers worked at the Kimberton Fire Company's annual fair last July, selling ride tickets and collecting parking donations. The event raised over \$18,000 for the fire company, according to a letter of thanks written to MARC by the fair secretary, **Karen Dobson**.

The fire company offered to forgive our fairgrounds rental fee for the 2004 MARC hamfest if we provided a certain number of volunteers for their event. That was \$900 straight to the bottom line of the MARC hamfest! The really good news is that we have been offered the same deal for 2005.

The fair is held during the last week in July. Our volunteers will be needed on July 28, 29, and 30 (that's Thursday through Saturday). The work is not hard. Ticket sellers sit in air-conditioned

(Continued on page 4)

ANOTHER GREAT HOLIDAY PARTY

MARC's annual holiday party was well-attended and featured lots of tasty food. **Steve N3ORH**'s wife **Natalie** organized the refreshments and deserves everyone's thanks. **Gene N3HG**, **Judy N3MBW**, and **Miguel KC2HMG** brought music. **Jeff WA3RIZ** and **Edie KA3NKP** brought examples of Jeff's photography -- see his web space at <http://pbase.com/netid13>. We were happy to see **Bill N3NUL** at the party. He was in a terrible car crash earlier in the year and scared the heck out of us. Other too-seldom-seen long-time club members at the event included **Marlene WA3UOC** and **Ned WQ3Z**. All in all, we had a nice mix of newer folks and old-timers, and the weather cooperated, too.

A traditional part of the MARC party is an opportunity to donate to the Nick Fund, which supports the club's humanitarian assistance to **Nick Bortnik UX0ZZ**. Nick is a Ukrainian ham whom MARC helped to come to the USA several years ago for diagnosis of a medical disorder that had baffled the underwhelming medical system in his home country. MARC uses the donations to buy medications and ship them to Nick. At the 2005 party, we collected \$90 in donations. Thanks to all who contributed.

Dennis KA3QOT shot some fun photographs at the party. E-mail him at dennisdm@earthlink.net and he'll send you the link to view them on line.

HAM RADIO AND SOUTH ASIA DISASTER

Amateur Radio has played a significant role in the response to the earthquake and tsunami in south Asia. You can find the stories on the ARRL's web site at www.arrl.org. The courage and resourcefulness of hams helped save lives in this unprecedented disaster.

LICENSE EXAMS FEBRUARY 5

The Mid-Atlantic Amateur Radio Club will offer examinations for all classes of amateur radio license on Saturday, February 5, 2005. Tests will be given in the Education Building of the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church on Montgomery Ave. at Fishers Road in Bryn Mawr, PA (across from Harcum Junior College).

YOU MUST REGISTER IN ADVANCE FOR THIS SESSION. For more information or to register, please call **Bob W3ZQN**, at 610-265-6032 or e-mail him at rjlees@aol.com. If you do not register for this session, you may find no one there to test you. Bob will also explain what documentation you are required to bring to the test session and answer any questions you may have about how MARC test sessions are administered.

The test fee for 2005 is \$14. MARC members who did not take part in a club-sponsored VE session during 2004 at club expense may take tests at this session free of charge.

ABOUT MARC

wb3joe@marc-radio.org
http://www.marc-radio.org

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

4th Tuesdays, 8 PM, Tredyffrin Township
Bldg, Wayne/Berwyn. Guests welcome.
Smoke-free. Handicapped-accessible.

BOARD MEETINGS

4th Thursdays, 7:30 PM, Paoli Hospital.
Members may attend as observers.

SYSTEMS

145.13/R, 147.06/R, 224.42/R, 445.675/R
145.13 & 147.06 linked, CTCSS 131.8 Hz
Webmaster: Steve N3ORH (610-327-8666,
smaslin@marc-radio.org)

NETS

Club Net, Sunday, 8:30 PM
Traffic net, M/W/F, 8:30 PM
All nets on linked 145.13/R & 147.06/R
Net Manager: Dick K3IIN
(610-688-0874, k3iin@arrl.net)

DUES

\$15 Full (licensed Amateurs)
\$5 Associate (unlicensed persons)
Family rate \$5 per ham after first
member pays full dues.

NEWSLETTER

REMARCS is published in the odd
months, edited by Kay N3KN
(610-993-9623, n3kn@arrl.net)

BRING A FRIEND
TO A MARC MEETING!

VOX

Welcome new member **John KB3LPE**, who earned his license shortly after joining MARC, and welcome back **Anthony AA3VZ**. **Gene N3HG** and **Judy N3MBW** added twin grandchildren to their family just as the last newsletter was distributed. **Ian KB3JAH** was Net Control for the first time on one of the Sunday club nets in December. If you'd like to try being NCS, contact **Dick K3IIN**.

Kay N3KN was a last-minute fill-in speaker at the ARRL Michigan State Convention in November when circumstances prevented the League President from attending as scheduled. **Al N3EA** says by e-mail that things are going well at his new QTH in Florida. **Carter N3AO** had a nice long phone gab with **David KA3HBK/0** while between planes in Denver last fall. David's doing well, has a nice new house, and sends 73 to the old-timers who remember when he was the kid in the club. Associate Member **Frank Bissell**, who attended club meetings accompanied by his social worker, passed away on November 8. Past member **Blake W4MSZ** became a Silent Key in mid-November; he had battled heart disease for some time.

After January 12, listen for **Leroy K2BIZ** about 10 AM on 14.223 MHz during his winter stay in Florida. **Lor W3QA** has been tapped to advise the Eastern PA Section Emergency Coordinator on digital messaging systems.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BOARD MEETING

The MARC board holds a combined November / December meeting. At their December 2 meeting, the board heard reports on future programs, future PR plans, and the final public service events of 2004. A holiday party update was also given. The WB3JOE license has been renewed by the trustee. The Kimberton Fire Company has thanked MARC for our help at their far last summer and has offered us the same deal for the fairgrounds in 2005. Meeting rooms for the membership and board meetings have been reserved for 2005. The treasury balance was \$9,995.02.

LICENSE TEST SESSION REPORT

The November 6 license test session produced 3 new Technician licensees. The Volunteer Examiners were **Bob W3ZQN**, **Bob KA3NIQ**, **Bob W3SA**, **Paul NX3Q**, **Steve KD0VA**, and **Dennis K3DS**.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ACCEPTED NOW

The MARC membership year begins March 1. Renewals for 2005 are being accepted now, and any new member who joins between now and March 1 will be credited for the 2005 membership year. A membership form is included in the electronic version of this issue, or you can download a form from the club web site. Paper renewal forms will be sent to members who get the newsletter on paper. Thanks for being a member of MARC!

CORRECTION

Oops. The last issue gave the wrong time for the roundtable ragchew net on Thursday evenings. It begins at 8:30 PM on the linked 2m repeaters. Drop in sometime and enjoy. See the related story on page 4.

MARC CALLSIGN BADGES

MARC members are eligible to purchase a club callsign badge. The club logo is stamped in gold color on a deep blue background. Your name and callsign appear in white. The badges cost just \$8. The club does not make a profit on them. If you are interested in ordering a badge, please contact **Kay N3KN**.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMUNICATIONS

Members and friends of MARC communicated for the Penn Medicine at Radnor 5-mile Radnor Run on Sunday, October 31. The weather was perfect. Our volunteers were **Bob N3JIZ**, **Bob KB3FSQ**, **Dick K3IIN**, **Steve KD0VA**, **Carter N3AO**, **Floyd KA3OXA**, **Ian KB3JAH**, **Ray KB3IGL**, and **Dennis W3AVI**. **Bob N3JIZ** was Net Control. **Bob KB3FSQ** monitored activity at the start / finish line. **Dick K3IIN** shadowed an event official. Other hams were stationed along the course to watch for emergencies and help the runners know which way to turn at confusing spots. The hams did NOT direct automobile traffic!

"Shadowed"? In emergency comm-speak, a shadow is a radio operator who trots around after an official -- keeping close as a shadow and twice as quiet -- in case that official needs immediate radio communications.

Seven MARC members communicated at the Vietnam Veterans 5K Run on November 13. They were **Bob N3JIZ**, **Carter N3AO**, **Ian KB3JAH**, **Charlie KB3CO**, **Andy K3JSE**, **Josy WQ3E**, and **Roger N3VBZ**.

This even concludes the public service communications calendar for 2004.

FROM THE EDITOR'S JUNK BOX

DXpeditioners going to a Pacific island lost an amplifier -- not fallen overboard from a Zodiac or eaten by tropical creeping crud, but blown up by French airport security in Paris because they thought it was some kind of hazard. Don't they show these guys the training slide that has a picture of a human rear-end on the left-hand side and a picture of third base on the right?

But the French, you say, don't play baseball. That may explain a lot, since I believe that everything you really need to know, you can learn from baseball.

Anyway, airline travel. Gosh. I did the road warrior thing for the League last fall -- California, Michigan, Washington, DC, and twice to Connecticut. I have the greatest admiration for people whose business sends them airborne day-in, day-out. Beats me why they don't all end up in a locked ward.

What's more fun than sitting in a small commuter jet with somebody whose B.O. makes your eyes water? Or watching the people with carry-ons containing the state of Indiana laboriously mashing their bags up into the overhead bins, delaying boarding and squashing whatever went in the bins before? My poor old briefcase comes out of the bin looking like an elephant sat on it.

On the other hand, the behemoth-bag people had their clothes and tooth-brushes when they arrived. They were not snarled at by a baggage agent who insisted the bags from my flight had not gone on the carousel yet when I had watched those very bags -- minus mine -- come in and go home with their owners. After I found my suitcase in the orphan luggage area, "I hope your airline DOES go bust and you lose your job," I said pleasantly, always sympathetic with the plight of the working man. Another trip, I went to Grand Rapids via Detroit, but my luggage went to Grand Rapids via Atlanta, Miami, and Jackson, Mississippi, and was delivered to my hotel several hours after the dinner-speech event for which I needed not to stand up in the clothes I put on that morning with all the lint and wrinkles collected en route.

There was the Three Stooges Meet the Marx Brothers caper at Washington National trying to get on a plane that was actually going to take off for Philly on the night of Hurricane Jeanne -- and then thinking during the hair-raising flight through the storm that there are worse things than being stranded in an airport overnight.

There was the day I broke my toe in the security check line. Somehow I remembered I was in a public place and didn't turn the air as blue as my toe.

As one of my ARRL colleagues put it, "travel these days is so *experimental*." At least they have not put my baggage in a barrel and blown it up -- but then, it has been a while since the last time I saw Paris! -- **73, Kay N3KN**

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM YOUR CLUB?

Founded in late 1976, MARC is now in our 29th year. At the end of the 2004 membership year, we have 156 licensed members and 2 associate (unlicensed) members. By license class, we have 36 Technician and Tech+HF members, 39 Generals, 20 Advanced, and 60 Extras. All but 9 of our licensed members are on e-mail. Our membership has been around 150 plus-or-minus for many years. We lose 15 to 20 people at renewal time each year -- some have moved away, some have become Silent Keys during the year, and a few just don't renew. But we gain enough new members to keep the total steady.

So that's a snapshot of who we are. What it doesn't indicate is what we want from our general-interest ham radio club. It also doesn't indicate what we are willing to contribute to our club -- not money but volunteer effort. A healthy club needs a balance between "what I want" and "what I'll give." Please send your ideas and suggestions to one or both of the board Members-at-Large shown in the box on this page. They will make sure the board hears your input.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2005

PRESIDENT

Steve Maslin N3ORH 610-327-8666
smaslin@marc-radio.org

VICE PRESIDENT

Bart Feroe K4BF 610-367-4288
k4bf@arrl.net

SECRETARY

Dennis DeMarco KA3QOT 610-935-7954
dennisd@earthlink.net

TREASURER

Carter Craigie N3AO 610-993-9623
n3ao@arrl.net

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

Kay Craigie N3KN 610-993-9623
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PROGRAMS

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PUBLIC RELATIONS

Bob Weiss KB3FSQ 215-477-6475
kb3fsq@netcarrier.com

PUBLIC SERVICE

Bob Palin N3JIZ 610-687-4587
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TECHNICAL

Dennis Silage K3DS 610-353-4829
silage@temple.edu

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

To 9/30/2005: Gene Hoenig N3HG
610-353-3281, n3hg@arrl.net
To 9/30/2006: Bob Haase W3SA
610-293-1919, rhaase@bellatlantic.net

CALLSIGN TRUSTEES

WB3JOE: Carter Craigie N3AO
610-993-9623, n3ao@arrl.net
W3NWA: Kay Craigie N3KN
610-993-9623, n3kn@arrl.net

JOIN THE ARRL THROUGH MARC
AND EVERYBODY WINS

If you have never been an ARRL member or have not been an ARRL member for 2 years or more, you can join / rejoin the League through MARC and earn \$15 for the club treasury.

The ARRL gives affiliated clubs a \$15 commission for signing up new and long-lapsed members. Ask treasurer **Carter N3AO** how to do it.

The League has recently resumed offering clubs a smaller commission for signing up renewal ARRL memberships. If you're a League member or have been a member within the last 2 years, you can renew or re-join the League through MARC and put a couple of bucks in the club treasury.

MARC gets free money, the ARRL gets more members, and you get both the personal benefits of League membership and the knowledge that you're helping fund the only national association that advocates for Amateur Radio at all levels of government. Everybody wins! Talk to **Carter N3AO**.

MARC SCORES WELL IN FIELD DAY 2004

In Eastern PA Section, MARC finished second in class 4A out of 4 entries with 4,288 points. Murgas ARC of Scranton/Wilkes-Barre's K3YTL operation was first with 6,396 points. They made 1,990 QSO's to our 1,532. In our friendly local rivalry with groups in Delaware County, we finished ahead of the four-club group that signed N3IP, even though they had 4 clubs to draw from and twice as many transmitters as we did.

Looking just at scores and ignoring the entry class, MARC was 11th of 58 entries from Eastern PA. Murgas's K3YTL had the top score overall in the Section. Not bad to lose our class to the group who beat everybody else, too!

Nationwide, we finished 26th out of 129 entries in class 4A. That's excellent! The top score nationally in 4A was the N7OS operation (no club name is given in the ARRL scores database but the callsign is that of Micro hams in Bellevue, WA) in Western Washington Section. Their 30 participants made over 3,500 QSO's and scored 11,172 points.

The MARC Field Day gang did a super job last year and deserve major congratulations. Field Day 2005 will be June 25-26. Put it on your calendar now.

KIMBERTON FIRE COMPANY

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booths. Donation takers stand at the entrance. Last year, the donation crews used HT's to stay in touch, which was especially nice after dark. Your non-ham family members can help, since this is not communications work. In fact, 3 of our volunteers last year were non-ham family members. Great folks!

Please put this event on your calendar now. Last year, we came way too close to running short of volunteers and losing \$900 because of it. MARC leaders had to work the phones all day long rousting out more helpers at the last minute in order to live up to our bargain.

This year, they will be working the phones again, only not at the last minute! We will publish the schedule in a future newsletter and accept sign-ups. But we won't stop there, because things happen and people have to cancel out. We will go into the 2005 event with a lot more volunteers than in 2004. Your editor worked 3 shifts in 2004. You can work one in 2005.

Two antennas met on a roof, fell in love, and got married. The ceremony wasn't much, but the reception was excellent! -- chuckle tnx Allan AA3DB

NEW MODERATORS FOR THE THURSDAY NIGHT CHIT-CHAT ROUNDTABLE

The Roundtable format introduced by **Bob W3LIA** and **Dori W3IBH** for Thursday nights is now a regular feature on the MARC repeaters. Many new hams and MARC members are joining in the fun. Now that it is established as a regular event, more Moderators are beginning to take over the net responsibilities. **Dick K3IIN** has moderated and **Dennis KA3QOT** has assumed responsibility for the first Thursday of each month. But perhaps most significantly, **John KB3FPM**, is now a Moderator. John, as most of us know, is visually impaired, but has vivid knowledge of the Philly area and railroad/trolley operations before he lost his sight. He keeps up to the moment on what's happening in the area and is still repairing model railroad cars so it's difficult to tell that he is impaired at all.

John keeps his log on audiotape, so we make some small changes to help him keep things going. As you know, we assign a seat number to all who check in. To avoid the need for John to re-wind his tape to find the call signs, he will depend on those who check in to remember the seat number he assigns. He will

therefore call the next participant by seat number rather than call sign. It's a small thing for us, but a big help to John and the pace of the roundtable. In his first go at moderating, supported by **Bob W3LIA**, he did a great job and really prompted a good discussion on motorist safety at railroad crossings.

Bob and Dori will assure that the Thursday night Roundtable continues to be fun for all and continues as a MARC net. Now that Dori (with all her graduate study needs) has assumed Friday night traffic net responsibility, we are looking for others who would like to try their hand at the Moderator seat. Anyone who has the time, talent and inclination is a candidate. Please let **Bob W3LIA** know of your interest by email at bobL@ieee.org or over the air whenever he is there. We will coordinate with **Dick K3IIN**, the MARC net manager and send the procedure documents to those that are selected.

Please let us know of your interest. **73! -- Bob W3LIA and Dori W3IBH**

MARC MEMBERS IGNORE IDIOTS

WB3JOE trustee **Carter N3AO** has commended MARC net operators for ignoring malicious interference (keying down, burping, etc.) during our nets.

When morons don't achieve their goal of disrupting communications and getting people to rant and rave at them, they have no fun and will eventually go away.

Never comment on what appears to be deliberate interference. Anything you say just encourages the trouble-makers. Ignoring them altogether is the only good choice.

SOME REGIONAL HAMFESTS

Hamfests are great social events and also provide financial support to local Amateur Radio clubs. Please support our neighbor clubs by attending their hamfests as well as our annual MARC hamfest.

April 2-3 -- Greater Baltimore Hamboree & Computerfest / ARRL Maryland State Convention - Timonium, MD (www.gbhc.org)

May 1 -- Warminster ARC hamfest - Wrightstown, PA (www.k3dn.org)

July 10 -- MARC hamfest - Kimberton, PA

For a constantly-updated calendar of hamfests around the country, go to the ARRL's hamfest page at www.arrl.org/hamfests.html. By the way, Dayton (May 20-22) is an ARRL National Convention this year. If you've never been to Dayton, you should go at least once in your ham radio life. It's an amazing event.

MARC MEMBER HELPS PIONEER NEW DIGITAL PROTOCOL

The Sound Card Amateur Message Protocol -- SCAMP -- is not just a concept any more. On-the-air testing of the digital communication protocol began in late 2004, and the first transcontinental communication using SCAMP occurred on December 4. On the eastern end of the first QSO was Lor W3QA, MARC member and Radio Officer for Chester County ARES/RACES.

SCAMP is designed to eliminate the need for expensive external hardware for passing e-mail traffic on relatively narrow-bandwidth channels. Rick Muething KN6KB prepared a presentation on SCAMP for the 2004 ARRL-TAPR Digital Communications Conference. "SCAMP is an example of what is now possible with sound card, computer and software technology using cooperative amateur efforts," he says. "SCAMP and similar programs offer low-cost alternatives to dedicated or proprietary hardware."

SCAMP is intended for transmitting messages -- text with binary attachments -- via 2-kHz bandwidth HF and VHF voice channels. The program is compatible with Winlink 2000. According to Muething, SCAMP offers a moderate-throughput, error-free protocol that works using conventional sound cards and modestly-powered computers.

A dozen hams began initial on-air testing on HF and VHF using the alpha version of a Windows-based SCAMP client called PaLink SCD that Muething and Vic Poor W5SMM developed. The first successful transcontinental exchange of Amateur Radio e-mail messages using SCAMP took place December 4 on 20m between Mike Burton N6KZB in Temecula, California, and Lor W3QA in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Both stations ran 70W. [info tnx ARRL, W3QA]

PSK SOFTWARE UPDATE RELEASED

For PSK31 / PSK63 enthusiasts, DigiPan 2.0 is now available for download at www.digipan.net.

The DigiPan web site says, "All stations on the waterfall are now simultaneously decoded, and the callsign and text of each station is continuously shown on a separate multichannel display. CQ calls are instantly highlighted in color, and color alerts for any other two strings of text are also available. Since the callsign and text of each station is already known, instead of clicking on a signal to identify and contact a station, just clicking on the text or callsign of the desired station will transfer it to the active Receive area for a contact."

The download file is 700k. If you would like the file but don't have a high-speed Internet connection, your editor will be happy to put the file on a CD-ROM and give it to you. It is perfectly legal to do this, since the program is freeware.

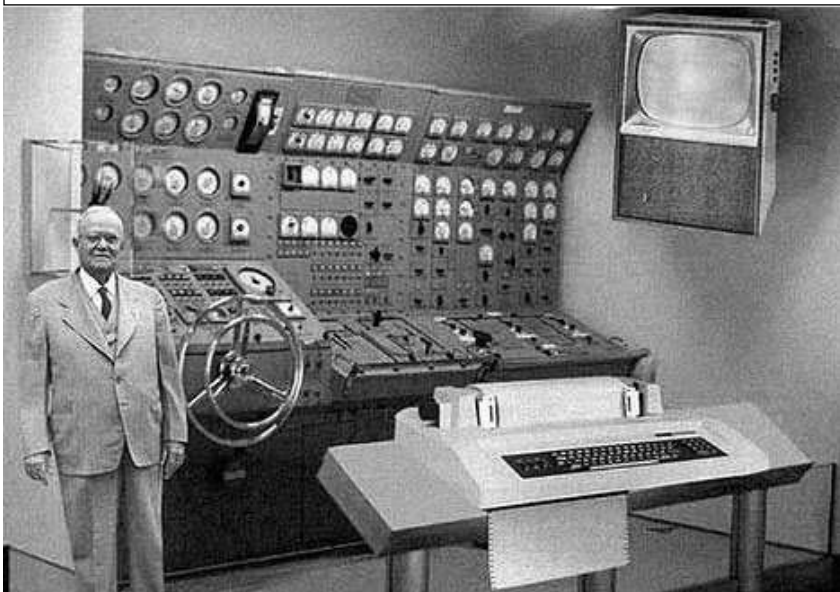
SAGGING DOLLAR DUNKS DXERS

DXers who send dollars for return postage should note that the value of the dollar versus the Euro has dropped horrendously. At this writing, it costs \$1.31 to buy 1 Euro. A few years ago, it cost about 98 cents. Ouch.

If we send a QSL card to Germany and expect a direct reply, we must now send more than \$2 to cover the €1.55 airmail postage back to the USA. \$2 will still suffice for the €1.25 postage from Austria, and \$1 will be enough for most other countries that use the Euro currency.

A reasonably up to date web site for postage rates from other countries to the USA is at www.atms.ch/rates/. For currency conversion help, so you send enough but not too much, check out www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi.

*And I thought my five-pound laptop was too bulky!
Clipping from 1954 tnx Andy Oppel N6AJ0*



Scientists from the RAND Corporation have created this model to demonstrate how a "Home Computer" could look like in the year 2004. However the needed technology will not be economically feasible for the average home. Also the scientists readily admit that the computer will require not yet invented technology to actually work, but 50 years from now scientific progress is expected to solve these problems. With teletype interface and the Fortran language, the computer will be easy to use.

SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITIONS FOR STUDENT AMATEURS

Hams who will be pursuing their education beyond high school should be aware of two major scholarship competitions open only to licensed amateurs.

One is the ARRL Foundation scholarship program. The deadline for applications is February 1, 2005. Go to www.arrl.org/arrl/scholgen.html for details on this program.

The other is the Foundation for Amateur Radio scholarship competition. Additional information and an application form is available by sending a letter or QSL card postmarked prior to April 30, 2005, to FAR Scholarships, PO Box 831, Riverdale, MD 20738.

Although most of these scholarships are modest amounts of money, everything helps when you are financing higher education.

Also, be aware that the ARRL Foundation and Foundation for Amateur Radio scholarships are generally not restricted to applicants just out of high school. Older hams who are seeking an additional degree or attending a post-secondary school for the first time may also qualify for the awards. Check it out!

SUGGESTIONS ON GETTING READY TO BE A NET CONTROL STATION

By Kay Craigie N3KN

Having some experience as a Net Control Station (NCS) in a directed net is a valuable asset if you want to be ready to take part in emergency communications. MARC has three kinds of nets: the traffic nets, the Sunday club net, and the Thursday roundtable nets. Although some of the guidance applies to any directed net, this discussion is specifically about the traffic nets.

What's a "directed" net? It's a net in which there is an NCS who is in charge. Stations are expected to follow the NCS's instructions. They are not supposed to check in, leave the net, call other stations, ask questions, or interject comments without the NCS's permission. It's like raising your hand in a meeting for the chairperson to call on you. This maintains the net discipline and ensures that the session will be able to do its job. The job might be passing formal message traffic in an emergency or friendly discussion of a topic, but whatever the job may be, it cannot get done if the net turns into a free-for-all.

Every directed net has its own customary way of doing things. That's the first thing to be aware of as you get ready to volunteer as an NCS. How it's done on some other nets you may have listened to or participated in may not be the way it's done on the net you are interested in now. Huffing, "Well! We did it this way or that way on the Spud Chucker's Net back home in Idaho!" does not get you off on the right foot . . . unless your right foot is customarily parked in your mouth!

Consequently, the first thing to do is to listen to the net, check in to the net, and pay close attention to how this net is operated.

Pay attention, for example, to the order of things. Who is asked to check in first? On a traffic net, it's probably stations with Emergency or Priority traffic, then stations with other traffic, then stations with or without traffic. Does the net have a comments round, or is it closed after the traffic is passed? Listen for typical jargon. Listen for pacing. A skilled NCS keeps the net moving along at a comfortable pace, neither dawdling and blithering nor rushing people along as though he or she has a train to catch.

If you'd like to be an NCS someday, start becoming familiar with the names and callsigns of people who usually check in to the nets. Some people make up a written "cheat sheet" or "pony" of names and callsigns to refer to as they take check-in's. Others find they become dependent on the pony and never actually *learn* people's names and callsigns. Do what works for you, but if you use a pony, make it your goal to get to the point where you don't need it any more. You want to be able to run the net from your car in a parking lot with nothing more than your radio gear, a pencil, and a piece of paper.

Also, take notes during the nets. What traffic has been listed, by whom? Where are the messages going? Who has offered to take the messages? What is the status of each message (passed, spoken for but not passed, not spoken for)? Who is liaison to a higher net? Try to guess what the NCS will do next: pass traffic, take more check-in's, call for comments?

Every NCS must keep a running record of who is checked in, what the traffic's status is, who has already made comments, etc.

Some NCS's like to use a form for keeping track of the net, while others are just as happy to use a piece of ordinary paper. MARC has a form that our NCS's can use if they want to.

Some things you'll notice that many good NCS's do:

1. At the end, they thank the group for checking in, handling traffic, etc.
2. They keep order. The NCS is not a drill sergeant but isn't in a loosey-goosey rag-chew, either. If someone obviously doesn't know how to behave in a directed net, the NCS has to politely regain control of the situation.
3. They simply ask for the names and/or callsigns of check-ins whom they don't know or have drawn a blank on. Elaborate apologies and excuses are not necessary.
4. If the net has a comments round, the NCS makes a very brief remark responding to each person's comments. This lets people know that their comments are not going in one ear and out the other. If possible, the NCS works in a transition to the next station being called on for comments. Some examples:

KB3XYZ: "Today I worked Brazil for the first time and got an envelope of QSL cards from the bureau."

NCS: "At the rate you're going, Mary, you'll have DXCC in no time. Be sure to tell us when you get the QSL from Brazil. Moving on to KA3ZZZ, what have you been doing on the air lately, John?"

KB3QQ: "This was one of those days I should have stayed in bed. The refrigerator conked out and my kid wants to get his nose pierced."

NCS: "That would drive anybody around the bend, Larry. Better luck tomorrow. Next on the list for comments is WB3AAA. Elaine, I hope your day was better than Larry's."

Every MARC NCS develops his or her own personal style, which is a good thing in non-emergency nets like ours. When you move into an NCS slot on an emergency-preparedness net (ARES/RACES, NTS, etc.), however, you may find that expressions of personality, humor, informal comments, and so on, are not accepted practice. As mentioned before, listen carefully to the net and conform your operation to its customs and the instructions of the Net Manager.

Being an NCS is not difficult. Stations in the net are not out there thinking you're a moron if you slip up now and then. Being an NCS is a great way to get to know your fellow club members, so it makes club membership more interesting for you.

We are always looking for volunteers, because the regular NCS gang sometimes need temporary substitutes, and sometimes they have to step down altogether because of other obligations. You can do this! Contact Net Manager **Dick K3IIN** (610-688-0874, k3iin@arrl.net) to talk about it.

2005 is MARC's 29th year of service, education, and fun through Amateur Radio.

FCC ACCTS ON PHILLY-AREA CORDLESS PHONE COMPLAINT

The ARRL reports that the FCC responded in November to a complaint from our neighbors the Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club about interference on 2 meters from a high-powered cordless telephone. FCC Special Counsel Riley Hollingsworth forwarded information from the club to the FCC Philadelphia District Office on November 22.

The club claimed that the cordless telephone system was causing interference on its repeater's 146.080 MHz input frequency. On November 27, an agent from the Philadelphia District Office investigated the complaint and determined that a resident of Glassboro, New Jersey, was operating a "Senao High Quality Cordless Telephone," model SN-358. The base unit appeared to operate on 146.080 MHz, while the handset appeared to operate on 228.960 MHz (specifications listed on Senao's Web site indicate the model SN-358 handset operates on 268 and the base on 394 MHz).

During an on-site inspection, the telephone's owner voluntarily surrendered the unit to the FCC agent. The telephone owner asserted that he had purchased the system, which reportedly did not display an FCC certification notice, from an eBay advertiser. The FCC's Philadelphia District Office is investigating the matter further. "Certification" is what was formerly called "type acceptance."

OPERATING FUN

One way to avoid mid-winter cabin fever is to get on the air and play radio! The HF bands are not in very good shape at this point in the sunspot cycle, but that's no reason not to put some signals out there. If HF really stinks, try VHF. Some of the competitive operating events in January and February include . . .

- 070 Club PSKFest - January 15
- North American QSO Party (SSB) - January 15-16
- ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes - January 22-24
- CQ 160m Contest (CW) - January 29-30
- Delaware QSO Party - February 5-7
- ARRL International DX Contest (CW) - February 19-20

A huge calendar of contests is posted on WA7BNM's Web page at www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/index.html. If you like to work QRP, ask **Carter N3AO** about low-power operating events.

Another kind of operating fun is working special event stations. The major ham radio magazines have calendars of these stations in every issue. Special event stations operate to commemorate or celebrate something such as a holiday, a historical date, or a local festival.

"Special" is a fairly elastic concept. You get special event stations connected to sensible things like Pearl Harbor Day, Route 66, Scout jamborees, and state fairs, but you also find them commemorating some rather out-there stuff like turnip greens festivals, hollering contests, and nudist conventions.

This is why working special event stations and sending off for the special QSL cards or certificates can be so much fun. Just when you think Americans have gotten way too serious and grim, they put a ham station on the air from a pie-eating contest.

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CAN BECOME HAMS WITH HELP FROM HANDIHAM

The Handiham program was established in 1967 in the Rochester, MN, area to help people with disabilities earn their ham radio licenses. The program soon outgrew its local status and became a distance learning program for people all over the country.

Prospective hams join the program all the time, some with disabilities so severe that they had not even considered ham radio until they heard of Handiham. Handiham staff can connect new members with other services they need to enjoy Amateur Radio more completely.

Handiham offers an on-line audio license training course to help blind people study for their tickets -- Technician, General, and Extra. Operating skills are also taught in an on-line course.

If you know someone with special needs who wants to become a ham, visit the Handiham web site together and plan how to turn the interest into a license. The URL is www.handiham.org. Or you can call 1-866-426-3442. As you plan your 2005 tax strategy, be aware that donations to Handiham are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law and your own tax situation.

2004 TRAFFIC NET AWARDS

MARC Traffic Net award certificates will be presented to 34 members and friends of the club who sent and/or received at least one radiogram on the MARC nets in 2004. The awards are endorsed for each month in which the operator sent/received at least one formal message.

Overall, traffic activity was down somewhat from 2003, when 37 certificates were awarded. Very few brand-new people joined the list of MARC traffic-handlers. Since the goal of the program has been to encourage new people to learn to handle traffic as well as to recognize those who already participated, the certificate program will not be continued in 2005.

The 2004 award recipients are shown in the box below. Those marked with a • symbol sent and received a message in all 12 months of 2004. **Bob W3ZQN** and **Bill KN3EUF** missed the perfect 12 by just a smidge. But you know what, it really isn't about adding up numbers. It's about building our skills in case we need them in an emergency. It's about serving the public.

Congratulations to everyone who earned a certificate. You're prepared to contribute valuable message-handling skills to your county's ARES/RACES group.

Dana AA3QN	Miguel KC2HMG	Ed W3BNR
Dennis K3DS	Bill KN3EUF	Dori W3IBH
Dick K3IIN •	Jean N2VQA	Bob W3LIA
Andy K3JSE	Carter N3AO •	Cliff W3NNL •
Susan K3SUE	Raymond N3ESS	Dave W3QMR
Bart K4BF	Gene N3HG	Bob W3SA
Steve KB2RTZ	Reg N3KAS	Bob W3ZQN
Bob KB3FSQ	Leland N3LJB	Gene WB2UVB
Ray KB3IGL	Mike N3VJN	Ned WQ3Z
Ian KB3JAH	Ted NT3J	Bob WR3K
Mike KB3JFO	Mike W2YYY	
Ed KB3JGU	Al W3AHR	

MEMBERSHIP FORM

The membership year begins March 1. We do not accept more than one year's dues at a time. Please send your check payable to MARC to Mid-Atlantic ARC, PO Box 2154, Southeastern, PA 19399-2154.

NAME		CALLSIGN	
ADDRESS			
CITY		STATE	ZIP + 4
TELEPHONE		OK to publish phone?	
E-MAIL ADDRESS		OK to publish e-mail?	
Newsletter delivery via: E-mail <input type="checkbox"/> Download from Web <input type="checkbox"/> Paper mail <input type="checkbox"/> (Please see note below.)			
License Class:		ARRL Member?	
Please compute amount due:			
Full member (licensed ham) @ \$15		\$	
Family member (licensed ham, after 1 st member pays full dues) @ \$5		\$	
Associate member (unlicensed person) @ \$5		\$	
TOTAL DUE WITH THIS FORM		\$	

Newsletter delivery note:

There are two forms of electronic newsletter delivery.

- (1) Newsletters can be provided as e-mail file attachments. To receive the newsletter this way, members need an e-mail provider which allows file attachments. The file size is typically less than 200k.
- (2) The newsletter is posted on the web, and members are sent an e-mail notice that the issue is ready to be downloaded at the member's convenience.

For either option, members must have the Adobe Acrobat Reader software version 5 or later (comes with many software packages and available as free download from www.adobe.com). Members are encouraged to choose electronic delivery, because it saves the club a great deal of money on printing and postage, reduces the editor's volunteer work load, and gets the newsletter to you faster. The e-mail version looks exactly like the paper version and can be printed on paper or read on the screen. If you would like to try a sample electronic copy before making your choice, please make a note in the space below, and the editor will contact you to arrange it.