

THE OVMRC RAMBLER

Volume 35, Number 3 -- March, 1992

CQ CQ CQ de VE6RCI - FROM THE TWILIGHT ZONE!

by Jeff Wilson, VE6RCI as relayed to Chas. King, VE3PDK

What a pleasant surprise to open up the bulletin board at VE3NAV on my return from a holiday in the Caribbean to find a message from our Immediate Past-President, Jeff, VE6RCI, bragging about the weather in Calgary. I could have one-upped him with a Caribbean weather report, but decided to pass on his note to the members verbatim. I hope I got it all Jeff. I had several "disconnects" in the course of downloading and finally the message got killed, but I think I got most of it. Editor.

Greetings from the tropical West! Linda and I are still waiting for winter to arrive. Today, Feb. 1st we almost set up the lawn chairs on the deck to catch some rays. Got up to about 12 degrees C. We have no snow at all in Calgary and over 45 days in a row with above normal temperatures. The temperature changes and dry air are hard to get used to. I've had three colds already and the flu. I rarely got those in Ottawa.

My new job (helping to keep our oil flowing) is keeping me very busy and looks like there will be a lot of travel. I will probably be going to Beijing, China for two weeks in late March. Don't think my HT or HF gear would be welcome, so they won't be making this trip.

I got a call today to make sure I attend the DXers interest group meet-

ing of CARA (Calgary Amateur Radio Association) next Monday so that I may have the pleasure of volunteering to coordinate Field Day! What a thrill.... Actually, it's the best way to meet a lot of "active" amateurs and new licensees in the area in a short time.

CARA is Canada's largest Amateur Radio Club (currently 388 and climbing). There are two amateur radio classes with about 65 students currently studying for their ticket. But, they don't teach Morse Code as part of the course. Big mistake. A lot of the new guys and gals are struggling to get their code to upgrade to HF privileges. I like the way OVMRC has code mixed in with theory during the classes. Seems to work well. I'll suggest this to the CARA training committee.

Because of the size of the CARA, they hold a meeting each Monday night for a different interest group. The 1st Monday of the month is for DXers, the 2nd for Digital, the 3rd for VHF/UHF and the 4th is the General Meeting. The CARA repeater, VE6RYC 146.850- is the busy repeater in Calgary. Morning and evening rush hours are usually a good time to read the mail. Quite often an interesting technical topic is discussed (lots of times over my head, Hi.), but just as often you'll hear tips on raising teenagers or what's wrong with today's education system. There is nothing in Calgary like the Rubber Boot Net, so sometimes it's hard to get a word in when there is a large gang on the repeater.

Path: !VE3JF!VE6YYC!



THE OVMRC RAMBLER

Volume 35, Number 3 - March, 1992

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RAMBLER COMMITTEE

Editor

Chas. King, VE3PDK

Contributing Editors

News & Views - Pat Brewer, VE3KJQ

Ramblings - Jerry Wells, VE3CDS

Ron Clement & Roger Rose

Circulation

Fred Haire, VE3NJP - 737-4638

Neil Herber, VE3PUE - 820-5568

Eric Still, VE3OTT - 258-4018

Kevin Still

Fred Taetz, VE3PAA - 822-0937

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NEXT MEETING OF THE OVMRC

19 March, 1992
1930 hours

National Museum of
Science and
Technology

Auditorium

CLUB CALENDAR

MARCH MEETING GUEST SPEAKER

Bob Campbell, VE3KLK
Net Manager ComsOnt Net

NETWORKING

FUTURE SPEAKERS
Solar Panels?

FUTURE EVENTS

Flea Market, 11 April
Canterbury High School

May Meeting
Honours and Awards Night

June Meeting
Elections

SOME AMATEUR RADIO NETS

POT HOLE NET - Sundays 1000 hrs. 3.760 MHz (includes Swap Net)

POT LID NET - Sundays 1100 hrs (except Jul & Aug) 3.620 MHz slow-speed CW.

CAPITAL CITY FM NET - Mondays 2000 hrs 146.94 MHz Swap Net

THE WISE OWL NET - Fridays 2000 hrs. 147.30 MHz

OVMRC CODE PHONE - 746-2065 24-hr code practice..

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is gratefully acknowledged.

Ramblings

Jerry Wells, VE3CDS



MARCH, that time of year when the weather and spring are very much on our minds. This March is no exception; we have had more snow this year than we have had in the last several years. The Club's radio course, which is held on Tuesdays, have been literally deluged with bad weather. We seemed to have snow, rain and freezing rain on every Tuesday since December. This explains the extension of the course into March. Ah well, it makes good chatter on the air when talking to southern stations.

Switching from the weather to things more relevant to amateur radio, here is the latest on our Amateur Radio Course. We are now at the 12 wpm point in the code practice sessions and several of the students are getting very close to 100 percent copy. Several others are a bit behind the lead group, but are closing the gap quite well. I am sure that all of the students who are striving for at least the 5 wpm level will make it OK. On the theory side, we are in the final stages, and I foresee little trouble for the majority of the students. The practical sessions have gone over very well. The most recent one on installing coax connectors was very well received, thanks to an outstanding presentation by Jim, VE3JPC. He showed us all a few tricks of the trade.

Our last Club meeting was most entertaining. I was really impressed with the turn-out; there were over a hundred in attendance and no one was disappointed. The talk by

Harold McFarlane, VE3BPM, on antennas and towers was not only informative, it was entertaining. Brice Wightman, VE3EDR, and his video of his Caribbean trip last year, with other local hams as crew members, left many of us quite envious. Thanks to both Harold and Brice for an excellent program.

There has been considerable comment and discussion on the subject of WARC-92. I received several calls from Club members lamenting the fact that the Canadian DOC delegation did not include a representative of the radio amateurs of Canada. As many of you are aware there have been bulletins and articles published by CRRL and CARF explaining the reason for the absence of a representative from the amateur community. It is indeed unfortunate that Canadian amateurs cannot agree on something as simple as a delegate to an international conference. The rationalization and excuses are many and varied as to why we (I refer to all radio amateurs in Canada) are not represented at WARC-92. There is one ray of hope in all this petty wrangling. Wiser heads do prevail as is evident by the report in the CARF Bulletin of 20 February. It explains how this deplorable situation developed and proposes a positive outlook. The Editor says, "*We must not end on a negative note! WARC-92 will soon be history. The creation of a single national organization is long overdue. We must devote all our energies to the problems of the real world and most certainly not spin our wheels over is-*

sues which could divide us for years to come."

Looking ahead to the warmer days of spring, arrangements for the Flea Market are well under way. Ken, VE3KJB has things just humming. There will be the usual raffle for a 2-metre rig and tickets are now available from members of the Executive or from Ken. Remember the date. Canterbury High School, 11 April.

Time to start thinking about Field Day and Club elections to be held in June. Give both these items a bit of your time and help to maintain the momentum of growth and success that this Club has enjoyed over the past years. At the present time, there are 266 members on our data base made up of 189 regular members 6 life members and 54 associate members.

The last item for your attention is the need for Club members to participate in the presentation of the radio course. Each year we have seen increased involvement on the part of Club members and it is working well. Next year we would like to see more participation in the presentation of lectures and practical sessions to the students. If you have a particular interest in some aspect of the required or desired theory and practice let us know. Doug, VE3ATY will be glad to hear from you. Involvement can be as little as a single lecture or demonstration on a topic of value to the students. Someone helped you; pass it on.

Secretary's Minutes



OVMRC General Meeting
Feb 29, 1992

1) **Call to Order.** President Jerry, VE3CDS called the meeting to order at 19:35 hours and welcomed all in attendance.

2) **Presentation by Bryce, VE3EDR.** Bryce narrated a video of his trip last spring to the Bahamas. Crew members included such noted sailors as Ian Kennedy, VE3SXN; Paul Cooper, VE3JLP; Robert Herr, VE3SXJ; Richard Adams, VE3EIT; and Laurence Hugh Bradley, VE3CRX. Ports of call such as Freeport and Nassau were visited. Locals demonstrated the fine art of making conch salad, a favourite of the islands and of Bryce and his crew. A special segment of the video captured QSO's with their Ottawa link, Ken VE3KJB, who maintained regular contacts. A highlight of the video was seeing the other end of the contact made last year by Jeff VE3RCI (now VE6RCI) during a club meeting during which Gerry VE3GK's TS-850SAT was being demonstrated. The video was very therapeutic for those of us with cabin fever after an Ottawa winter.

3. **Presentation by Harold MacFarlane VE3BPM.** Harold and his son Tom, drove in from Battersea to answer numerous questions on antenna and tower installations which have haunted a lot of us. Harold brought along several displays and some literature. Questions varied from how to keep birds from perching on your antenna to how to lower the SWR on an older TA33Jr. Harold's vast experience benefitted many and he was kept busy with questions long after the meeting adjourned. The presentation was moderated by Keith, VE3SVQ.

4. **Visitors.** The following visitors were welcomed to the meeting: Mike Pilon, VE3BUP; Jack Russell, VE3TTX; Roger Belanger; VE3KKR; and Wil Warren, VE3XMT. New members were VE3TQX; Elie Zaydan, VE3EKZ; Andr) Pilon, VE3CLW; Wil Warren, VE3XMT, and Jack Russell, VE3TTX. Welcome.

5. **CARF Bulletin #3, Feb 15, 1992.** Dan, VE3EBI read the highlights of the latest CARF bulletin. A request was made to provide information on all known nets. The infor-

mation will be included in a list of Canadian nets. Contact Roy Kerr VE3ALK.

6. **Request by Mike VE3BUP, OARC.** Mike advised us that the OARC is contemplating an amateur radio display during the Tulip Festival, May 14-18. Several scenarios were proposed. However, all needed volunteers to be carried out. If you are interested in helping please contact Mike as soon as possible.

7. **Door Prizes.** An ARRL Antenna Handbook, thanks to Harold MacFarlane, VE3BPM, was won by Marc Joly, one of the students on the OVMRC Radio Course. An OVMRC license plate frame was won by John, VE3NJ, who is now looking for a car to put it on. The February issue of CQ magazine was won by Ken, VE3KJB, thanks to Ed, VE2RDZ.

8. **Adjournment.** After a full evening the meeting was adjourned at 21:35 hours followed by coffee, cookies and conversation.

(Minutes taken by Larry VE3WLN and edited by Ted VE3KEH)

DEFENCE OF AMATEUR RADIO FUND NEWS

CARF News Service Bulletin 04-92 of 1 March, 1992

"DARF (*sic*) FUND NEWS - CARF has been informed by the DARF Fund trustees that donors may have their money returned if requested before July 1, 1992 by writing to:

Defence of Amateur Radio Fund Trust,
c/o Tim Ellam VE6SH,
107 Strathearn Rise, S.W.,
Calgary, Alberta T3H 1R5

The request must be in writing and contain the date and the amount of the donation. Those monies not refunded to donors or paid out as Canada's share of overall IARU WARC-92 expenses will be held in-trust to meet the anticipated cost of Canada's obligations for a future WARC.

CARF has learned that WARC-95 will concentrate on the HF frequency allocations (below 30 MHz.) This WARC will be an extremely crucial event for the defence of world-wide amateur radio HF bands."

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM HERE AND THERE



by Pat Brewer, VE3KJQ

This column is a monthly review of news and information from club bulletins across Canada. This month we start on the east coast.

The **Halifax Amateur Radio Club Reflector** has a new editor and a much expanded format this month. They have gone from about four pages up to twelve. During the March school break the club will be involved in a fun day for students on the museum ship C.S.S. Acadia. Besides operating the museum station, the club will be holding a "Fun with Morse Code" session one afternoon. A club "Ham" breakfast in January attracted 100 people and was a smashing success. The amateur radio course graduated 25 of 27 students at the February 4th exam. Amateurs in the Waverley Ground Search and Rescue Team are involved in research into leading edge search and rescue technology. They are working on the design and testing of portable Global Positioning (satellite) System handheld receivers and portable computers. This technology would give searchers position information to within 25 meters and would send the information to a map on the computer screen either locally or at the control centre.

Here in Ottawa the **Pioneer ARC TelePARC** echoes a concern expressed by the Halifax club and our own club, namely how to inform members that a meeting (or course) night has been cancelled due to bad weather. Editor Bill VE3EKA suggests using the VE3TEL repeater. In

Halifax they use the club phone number or the club repeater. We have both available and are looking into the idea. There is also a reprint of an article from "73 Amateur Radio Today" on using surplus cable TV hardline (which has VERY low loss) for amateur use. The short ends can be obtained, for the asking, from cable companies. Anything under 500 ft is usually considered a "short end". The problem is that it is 75 ohms, but 50 ohm matching transformers are available from ZD Engineering in Findlay OH for about \$30.

The **Ottawa ARC Groundwave** has an article on using handhelds in cold weather, written by "Wise Owl" Mike VE3FFK. Mike has found that "nicads don't work especially well in the cold, so ... bring a lot of them". The liquid crystal display may freeze up, but this won't harm it. Static electricity can play havoc with the CPU. Finally, when you come indoors, a cold radio will attract condensation and its resulting problems. Keeping the radio warm can help avoid most of these problems.

On to the **Kingston** club and the **Kingston Amateur News**. Club membership is 73. An average of 20 people are coming to the Saturday breakfasts at the Truck Stop. The January meeting speaker had a number of stories about famous Kingston Pen inmates such as "Red Ryan" and "The Boyd Gang".

Next we have the **SARCommunicator of the Sudbury ARC**. There is a new repeater in Parry Sound on 144.89/145.49. It is known as the Playland Repeater. Here is a good quote, "Start doing what is necessary, then what's possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible". The February meeting speaker was to be from Bell Canada, talking about the Pronav, a pocket satellite location system. It is said to be accurate to within three feet.

The **London ARC** bulletin has an article on the discone antenna. This antenna is very broadband and is vertically polarized. With today's dual band 2M/70CM radios this antenna has some real advantages. It is also useful on the out of ham band frequencies that these radios can receive. Older versions of the ARRL Handbook have plans, and Radio Shack, Icom, Diamond, and Heathkit (yes, they have resurfaced) offer discones.

The **Border City Radio Club** members have a real advantage living in Windsor, so close to the US border. There are a number of large nearby hamfests stateside including Dayton. There is another good quote in the bulletin, "Due to the current financial restraints the light at the end of the tunnel will be turned off until further notice".

The **Saskatoon ARC SARC Feedline** has also gone through a recent *News & Views*p. 6

upgrading including the addition of advertising. The club is planning to meet with last year's ham class to discuss organizing self-learning upgrading of licenses. Robin VE5RE wrote an article about being a "whitecaner" or blind operator. Robin doesn't use the term himself. He says, "I must say that amateur radio allows me to see you as you see me. I like that! So now you know why a whitecaner, like myself, enjoys the hobby of amateur radio". There aren't that many

amateurs in Saskatchewan. As a result about 60 members or two thirds of the club have two letter calls.

Finally we have *Key Klir*, the bulletin of the **Calgary Amateur Radio Association**, and the new home of Jeff VE6RCI (ex VE3RCI). The DX group is considering setting up two way code practice on 80 metres to help new hams to upgrade. We have had this available for years in Ottawa on the Pot Lid Net, Sunday mornings

at 11:00 on 3.620 MHz. Ron VE6MD is selling his tri-bander and tower, and is including the house and 20 acres. He says it is a great place for an antenna farm and the noise is less than 1/2 "S" unit. Here is another quote for you, "Before giving someone a piece of your mind, make sure that you will be able to survive on that which will remain".

See you next month.

DO YOU MAKE THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS? A technical tip from

Pat Brewer, VE3KJQ

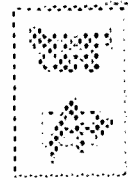
One problem in public service operation is that you never know where you will be operating or what power will be available. In addition to carrying an extra battery for my handheld, I have found it helpful to standardize my antenna and power cable connections for all my radios.

All of the power connectors are two conductor Molex type (Radio Shack number 274-8001). These are polarized to prevent connection errors and are made from nylon so that they don't break easily. The radios all have female Molex connectors on the end of their power cables. The power connection to the car battery has a male Molex connector on it for quick disconnection. My home power supply also has a male connector on it. In addition I made a ten foot extension cord with Molex connectors on both ends. Finally I have a cable with a lighter plug on one end and a male Molex connector on the other. This gives me a quick way to change between various power situations. You might also wish to have a short cable with a male

Molex connector on one end and pig tails or spade connectors on the other end. Its nice to have a spare plug-in power supply to take with you too. Just make sure you wire all the cables correctly, and that the current requirements of your radio don't exceed the current limitations of the connector.

All of my mobile antennas are magnetic mount so that they can be moved from one car to another (or to any metal surface). For my VHF and UHF antennas I have added PL-259 type to BNC adaptors so that all connections to the mobile radios are done with a simple twist. All handheld radios use BNC type connectors, so this increases flexibility there too.

With these connectors and a quick-release radio mount in my car I maintain the maximum flexibility in where and how I use my radios.



by Ron Clement (VE3Hopeful) & Roger Rose (VE3Hopeful)

Just a few more weeks and we will all have our own callsign! Some of us already passed the basic qualifications and got their callsign already. However, they are staying on to try and improve their qualification. For the rest of us, it will come shortly. We will be AMATEUR RADIO OPERATORS!

Now that we have crammed the building blocks in our memory cells, it is time to expand on this knowledge and attempt some of those projects Doug has been telling us about. We can try building our own SWR bridge for example. Being an amateur radio operator does not just mean talking on the different radio frequencies. It also means that as amateurs we can experiment to our heart's content with the different modes of communication. There are many different means of communicating (RTTY, SSTV & FSTV, Packet, Voice and of course the ever popular morse code).

We were told, a short while ago, that it was now going to get easier. "It is all downhill from here" said Doug. Well we hope that this hill is really long. Speaking of building blocks earlier, we are into block diagrams these days. We are told that we have to memorize them. Gee, they sure don't look the same as when we in kindergarden. Input and output, transformer, rectifier, filter and regulator - now, what is this thing? This thing-a-ma-jig follows the what-you-ma-call-it. Oh well, I'm sure it will get sorted out in the end.

We are now at 12 and 12 with the morse code. Jerry is sending code at 12 w.p.m. with character speed 12. All it means is that we are having more problems copying code. Well Brice, how is the class doing? Are we on schedule? The general comment from the class is that we are all happy that the class has been

extended an extra four weeks. I hope that everyone is taking advantage of the code phone and/or super morse.

Pat gave us more rules and regulations. He also told us to remember the "Q" codes, and here we thought that the only code we had to learn was morse.

Before we forget, one suggestion we have for future courses - schedule them on any evenings but Tuesday's. Can you believe this? Tuesday's are reserved for bad weather... or is it just our imagination?

We attended another great club meeting (Feb) and picked up a few pointers on putting up a tower. Of course, who can forget Brice's video of his trip at sea... and he didn't provide us with barf bags! Talk about waves. We also participated in a great lab session. The dozen or so of us that showed up at the museum worked on making some co-axial connectors.

(IMI Con't)

Thanks to Jim (VE3NJ- I think) for a super demonstration. Anybody wants coax cables done? - its time for the students to practice.

Back in class, many students missing due to bad weather. We covered transmission lines and antennas. We have to start reviewing this material pretty soon.

The OVMRC class of 91 is almost complete. We only have a few more weeks of actual classroom time and then the instructors will present us with the famous DOC Amateur Radio exam. Of course, we will all be succesfull in obtaining our ham ticket. We know it. We will all have VE3??? and then we will talk on the radio and have fun right? Well you're wrong.

Remember the word **AMATEUR**. We will all be amateur radio operators and as amateurs we will be experimenting in the radio field. We will experiment with antennas and other good stuff in the radio world. Can you see the light at the end of the tunnel? Maybe next time we talk to you, we will proudly post our callsign for all to see. Good luck to everybody.

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THE GREAT OVMRC FLEA MARKET

by Ken Barry, VE3KJB

Would you like to see a demonstration of Packet Radio or fast scan TV? Would you like to shop for a new or used transceiver or other amateur gear? Would you like to have your call sign put on your favourite T-shirt? Do you need a new or used computer or maybe some software?

Well, come to the Great OVMRC Flea Market on April 11, 1992, all these items will be on sale at the Canterbury High School starting at 9 a.m. on that date. Admission is FREE, so it won't cost you anything to have a look. Those of you who have items to sell and would like to rent a table should do so as soon as possible. There are already 27 tables reserved

and it's "first come first served." Tables go for \$8.00 for private vendors, and \$20.00 for commercial vendors.

There are 3 demonstrations of fast-scan TV; one at 9:45am, one at 10:45am, and one at 11:45am. They last 30 minutes and involve Norm Hall cruising around town with a video camera, taking pictures of different things and transmitting them to a TV receiver manned by Bill Westbrook at the Flea Market. Plan on having your lunch there at our restaurant area run by that famous gourmet cook Sue Carswell, VE3SLC. Take time to meet other amateurs and have an eye-ball. See you at the biggest and best Flea Market event of the year.

Membership Mumblings

de VE3PUE Neil Herber

Whew! At the last meeting, people were joining up as fast as I could relieve them of \$15. Our guest register is looking pretty feeble these days because just about everyone who comes as a guest joins up at the end of the meeting.

Enormous numbers notwithstanding (is this a politically correct term?), I would like to extend a warm OVMRC welcome to the following new members listed in the order in which they joined:

Al Barnes (VE3GHE),
Gord Abry (VE3TVY),
Doug Yerxa (VE3GFX),
David Yerxa,
Jack Russell (VE3TTX),
Wil Warren (VE3XMT),
André Pilon (VE3CLW),
Elie Zaydan (VE3EKZ),
Jake Guertin (VE2TQX),
Doug Burrill (VE3CDC),
and Suzanne Juneau.

Suzanne actually came to the meeting at her father's behest. They are both sailors, and he wanted Suzanne to find out about Brice's maritime antics. She was so impressed by what she saw that she joined the club. (I was so impressed by what I saw that I got sea sick). Suzanne hopes to get her license so that she can use HF when she's at sea. So for all you sailing hams, here's someone who's eager to learn and join your watery ranks.

In addition to having millions of members, the OVMRC exchanges bulletins with 19 affiliate organizations. The West Island Amateur Radio Club is our newest affiliate organization. Greetings to them and all their members.

The Fear of Success

Is the OVMRC in danger of becoming a victim of its own success? Will a huge membership mean impersonal

meetings where you get lost in the crowd? Should we limit the numbers so that we don't run into this problem? Should we split into two smaller clubs, or into special interest groups?

The answer to these questions is, of course, it depends.

The club is an incorporated body with bylaws that govern how it is run (If you need a copy of the bylaws, just ask any of the executive.) The bylaws also set down the objects of the club, which I would paraphrase as follows:

- 1) Get people interested in amateur radio, especially mobile.
- 2) Socialize.
- 3) Provide emergency services when needed.
- 4) Foster good will among amateurs.

In my opinion, the larger the membership, the greater the opportunity we have to meet these objects. So from the bylaw point of view, we're on the right track. But what about the questions raised above?

Will you get lost in the crowd? Well, maybe for a little while. But at least you don't have to look at the same set of ugly faces at each meeting. New ugly faces are joining all the time! However, there is a real danger that new members will be very lost, since they don't know any of the ugly faces.

So here is a challenge to all current members: Can you make it a point to find one (1) (yes just one) new member at each meeting and get to know them a little? Remember, these people probably haven't heard your story about the day that the lightning strike blew the cover off your old tube rig and it kept on working.

Should we limit the number of members in the club? No. Never. Absolutely

not. Why would we? How would we? What would it get us? We are supposed to be increasing the awareness and interest in amateur radio. We certainly can't do that if we have to ask prospective members to put their interest on hold until we have an opening in the elite ranks of the OVMRC.

Should we split into two smaller clubs? Again, no, for all the same reasons. One thing that we should do is have special interest groups within the club. A quick check of the bylaws shows that the committee structure it describes fits the bill perfectly.

Currently there are committees that address themselves to membership, training, historical records, the Rambler, the fleamarket, public relations, the Museum's amateur radio display, technical matters, radio operations and field day. About the only things that are missing are packet, fast scan TV and satellite operation.

So if you have a special interest that is covered by an existing committee, join it. If there is no existing committee, form it! Once again, your friendly executive can show you how.

Here is another challenge to members: how about a committee that is dedicated to helping out new hams? It could have a net on VE3TWO or meetings at the Museum or both. It could discuss operations and equipment from a beginner's point of view. Lots of new hams = lots of questions. Let's help them out

So in summary, for the OVMRC, the bigger the better. If you are a thin-skinned whiner who wants to complain about the lack of good seating due to too many new members, see me at the next meeting. I will be sure to give your concerns the attention they deserve.

Stupid Ham Tricks

de VE3PUE Neil Herber, B.S. (Bachelor of Stupidity)

Stupidity

Judging by the comments that we have received, people seemed to enjoy the column we wrote in the last issue (the top five stupidest repeater practices). Well, roger roger, we're glad you enjoyed it, glad you enjoyed it.

Unfortunately, it appears that the top five has just scratched the surface of a huge reservoir of stupidity. I have received several suggestions (most are printable) for the next top five. But rather than fall into the David Letterman trap of having a top 5 list in each issue, I thought that I should just talk about ham stupidity in general.

Now don't get me wrong, hams aren't any stupider (on average) than anyone else. It's just that we broadcast our stupidity for the whole universe to hear. Right this instant, an advanced culture on another planet far out in the void is puzzling over a 2-meter transmission they intercepted on their VLB antenna array. "Zork, what do you think 'destinated' means?" asked Bilfors, rotating his five eyestalks towards Zork. Zork shrugged the things on him that would be equivalent to shoulders. "Beats me, I'm still working on queue tea aitch!"

The definition of stupid in my Funk & Wagnalls that I like the best is number 3: "marked by, or resulting from, lack of understanding, reason, or wit". Mind you, definition number 4 is pretty good: "tedious, dull, boring". Take your pick.

Ham stupidity (or HS) is generally harmless and is usually quite amusing. However, there are instances where HS propagates from one ham to another. In pseudo-legal terms the stupider infects the stupidee. The problem here is that the stupidee believes what he has been told and will undoubtedly pass it on to yet another stupidee.

For Example ...

Recently, while scanning the local repeaters, I heard two guys (who shall remain nameless) discussing batteries. The newer ham was asking the older ham about Ni-Cds versus alkalines. The older ham talked at great length (and completely in error) about the different kinds of acids used in each type of cell. He also gave some doubtful advice about recharging various types of cells – including those not intended for recharging.

For those of us who thought you didn't need to know chemistry to be a ham, here is a quick refresher.

Substances are either acids, bases or neutral. Pure water is neutral. Acid rain is neutral water containing substances (mostly carbon, sulphur and nitrogen oxides) that react with it to form acids. Alkaline batteries and Ni-Cds contain alkalis (bases). An alkaline (I wonder how they got that name?) battery that contains any acid is probably a dead battery, since when you combine acids and bases (in the right proportions) they neutralize each other. That is why some governments dump lime into lakes to reverse their acidification – the lime (an alkali or base) neutralizes the acid in the lake.

But back to ham radio. Why can't I recharge any type of battery? Because not all chemical reactions are reversible (try unburning a piece of wood) and not all of the reactions that produce electricity can be reversed by supplying electricity.

A primary cell (like an alkaline cell) is designed to produce electricity once and be discarded. Secondary cells (like car batteries and Ni-Cds) have reversible reactions, and they are built with a bit of extra gloop to allow for occasional overcharging.

By the way, car batteries are lead-acid cells, so they do contain acid in fairly nasty concentration. Make sure to keep alkalis (like the bags of lime you are taking to the lake) away from them unless you are trying to neutralize them.

If you would like to neutralize your HS on the subject of Ni-Cd batteries, I would highly recommend the article by Ken Stuart (W3VVN) in the February, 1992 edition of QST.

Just to round out the battery topic, remember that different types of cells have different terminal voltages. A new alkaline cell is 1.5v, while a fully charged Ni-Cd is 1.25v. If you load up your handytalky with alkalines, you usually get higher output power than with Ni-Cds.

Even More HS

Are you one of the many hams that announces on the air "Yeah roger, well we are here." My question is, where else could you be? Wherever you are, you are there (or here if you are here).

And speaking of here and there, Ed VE3VLF has suggested to me that the single most overused repeater word is "there". Well there Ed, we're not sure, we're not sure. I think "roger" gets that award. (By the way it is okay to say roger, Roger when you are talking to Roger.)

Special note for new hams: Don't be shy about asking for help with any aspect of amateur radio. There are no stupid questions, just stupid answers. For example, "where are you?" is not a stupid question, but "I'm here" sure is a stupid answer. So enjoy, participate and talk. But watch out for HS. Because if you don't, then we will, yeah roger, we will.