

Rambler

Newsletter of the
Ottawa Valley Mobile
Radio Club, Inc. (OVMRC)
Volume 43, Issue No. 10
May 1999



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Ottawa Goes "Coastal" Special Event Held at Museum by Maurice-André Vigneault, VE3VIG/VA2MA

It was hard, but we did it, and had a lot of fun! Last year, we managed to register the National Museum of Science and Technology (NMST) as a "lighthouse" in a very large Amateur Radio special event of worldwide stature. OVMRC members are familiar with the genuine lighthouse from Nova Scotia — which is fully operational, except for the power of the light bulb in the light source chamber — resting as a display on the grounds in front of the Museum.

This time, we tried to register the Museum as a "coastal station"! The event is seen as the largest Amateur Radio special event ever to take place. Usually, a special event station is a station celebrating a special occasion and transmitting from a single location. The lighthouses were on the air as individual stations, each handling their own QSLs.



Bill Bruyn, VE3JBW, operator at Coastal Station special event

For this event, however, every one of about 100 coastal stations was part of a single special event all tied in to the main hub in England, with the Radio Officers Association of Europe (ROA) handling all QSLs, with sub-stations around the world, including all continents.

Several contacts with the ROA finally got us in. The main condition was that we represent an official coastal station. Phone calls to the Coast Guard here in Ottawa informed us that the closest coastal station is at Prescott on the Saint-Lawrence Seaway, and that they did not intend to activate Amateur Radio for the special event. As Prescott is a short distance from Ottawa, the ROA accepted our request.

Industry Canada agreed to issue a special event call sign and we started looking for operators. The event took place on the weekend of April 10-11, 1999, and we hoped to have a sufficient number of Amateurs to cover the 48-hour period. Special authorization from the Museum is required whenever we operate beyond opening hours.

Ottawa goes coastal, continued on p. ⑥

Rambler

Ottawa Valley Mobile Radio Club Inc.
P.O. Box 5530, Stn. F
Ottawa, Ontario
K2C 3M1



OVMRC Executive (1998-99)

President	Doug Carswell, VE3ATY 829-7167, ve3aty@takeone.com
Vice-President	Jacques Choquette, VE3TSC 748-6597, chinook@takeone.com
Treasurer	Peter Hafichuk, VE3LBW 745-0608
Secretary	Patricia Rowan, VA3PUR 521-2014, patricia.rowan@takeone.com

Standing Committee Chairpersons

Amateur Radio Exhibit	Ernie Jury, VE3EJJ 728-3666, ve3ejj@cyberus.ca
Amateur Radio Training	Bob Shaw, VE3SUY 737-9443, lycott@fox.nstn.ca Bob Kavanagh, VE3OSZ 225-6785, ve3osz@rac.ca
Delegated Examiner Emergency Response	Bob Kavanagh, VE3OSZ (see above) Ken Halcrow, VE3SRS 837-3261, kenh@intranet.ca
Field Day	Charles Morrison, VE3TCM 228-3480
Flea Market	John Barnhardt, VE3ZOV 521-8910, ve3zov@rac.ca
Historical	Larry Wilcox, VE3WEH 747-5565, larry.wilcox@takeone.com
Membership	Tom St. Julien, VA3OFD 747-9577, tom.st.julien@takeone.com
Newsletter	Susan Mogensen, VE3MOG 833-2766, ve3mog@rac.ca
Publicity & Programs	Open
Radio Operations	Evan DeCorte, VE3DEC 722-8929, pebd@cyberus.ca
Technical	John Pope, VE3ACI 989-3629, pope@sce.carleton.ca

OVMRC Life Members

Ralph Cameron, VE3BBM	Doreen Morgan, VE3CGO
Doug Carswell, VE3ATY	Ed Morgan, VE3GX
Gerry King, VE3GK	Fred Noble, VE3BAJ
Bill Wilson, VE3NR	

Affiliated Clubs

The OVMRC is pleased to exchange newsletters with the following Amateur Radio Clubs across Canada and the United States.

Algoma ARA	Sault Ste. Marie, ON
Augusta ARA	Augusta, ME, USA
Border City ARA	Windsor, ON
Chatham-Kent ARC	Chatham, ON
Calgary ARC	Calgary, AB
Comox Valley ARC	Comox, BC
Heritage ARC	Coburg, ON
Kingston ARC	Kingston, ON
Lambton County ARC	Sarnia, ON
London ARC	London, ON
Ottawa ARC	Ottawa, ON
Pioneer ARC	Nepean, ON
Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC)	Ottawa, ON
Rideau Lakes ARC	Smiths Falls, ON
Scarborough ARC	Scarborough, ON
Sudbury ARC	Sudbury, ON
Saskatoon ARC	Saskatoon, SK
Thousand Island ARC	Brockville, ON
Truro ARC	Truro, NS
West Island ARC	Dorval, QC
Winnipeg ARC	Winnipeg, MB

Sponsors

The OVMRC gratefully acknowledges the following organizations for their support of our activities by providing them with courtesy copies of the *Rambler*:

Bytown Marine, Ottawa, ON
Kenwood Electronics Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON
TakeOne Info System, Ottawa, ON



OVMRC code phone:

Practise your CW!
737-0197



OVMRC Repeater:

147.300 MHz (+)
444.200 MHz (+)
53.030/52.030 MHz



OVMRC web page:

<www.ovmrc.on.ca/ovmrc>
Webmaster - John Rodger, VE3JR
<jrodger@takeone.com>



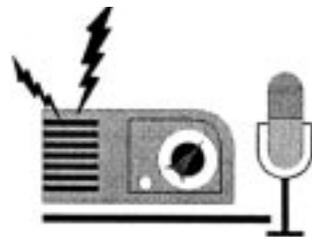
Next Meeting:

☞ May 20, 1999
Rambler Deadline:
☞ May 28, 1999

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Strays

Comments by OVMRC President,
Doug Carswell, VE3ATY



It is May and already the club's year has slipped by. As this year draws to a close, I want to express my thanks to the members of the OVMRC for providing me with an opportunity to serve in the role that I did.

I would like to thank Bob Kavanagh, VE3OSZ, for his contribution to the club as one of its instructors. Bob has indicated to me that he would be stepping down at the conclusion of this year's classes in Amateur Radio. His contribution has enabled a number of candidates to qualify as Amateurs. I am sure they all enjoyed Bob's presentations as I did when he told about the joys of working 160 metres.

Ernie, VE3EJJ, has indicated his willingness to help Bob Shaw, VE3SUY, continue in making the OVMRC's Amateur Radio course available to those who would like to join our ranks.

Thanks also to Bob Shaw who has worked as one of the course instructors along with Brice, VE3EDR. These guys have been doing this work for a number of years and let me say giving up your time every week can become onerous. Thanks to everyone on the training team.

Another person I would like to thank is Maurice-André Vigneault, VE3VIG, who did a great job organizing two significant events (Lighthouse event and IMCS special event station) during the year, in association with the Museum and the club. I believe that Maurice-André has expressed a willingness to take on the responsibility of looking after VE3JW for the coming year. I think he would make a great candidate and do an outstanding job.

I would also like to thank Len Gelfand, VE3LGZ, for his many contributions to the club, including, in particular, the financial contribution Len makes through the sale of electronic equipment manuals to the world. I understand that the total amount contributed to the club now exceeds \$1,000.

To Larry, VE3WEH, and Ken, VE3KJB, thanks for hanging tough in getting the correct criteria set out so as to ensure worthy candidates are considered for the Jerry Wells Award. It was a bit of a struggle, but all in all, a very worthwhile effort. It certainly goes a long way to ensuring that all future candidates meet appropriate and meaningful standards.

Evan, VE3DEC, has also spent a lot of time putting together suitable criteria for the purpose of filtering requests made to the club for radio communications support. Hopefully we can now avoid the conflict that we saw early in this club's year. Thank you, Evan, for the good effort.

To Pat, VA3PUR, thank you for recording the activities of the club. This support is absolutely mandatory if the club is going to succeed. Thanks also to Peter, VE3LBW, who ventured into the world of book-keeping and kept us on the financial rails. Peter's March report indicated that we would probably make money this year or at least not exceed the approved budget.

Thanks also to my Vice President, who stepped in when I could not chair certain meetings. I often used Jacques, VE3TSC, as my sounding board for various ideas. His articulation of another point of view and a number of astute observations were very helpful.

Lastly, I would like to thank Susan, VE3MOG, for her contribution for putting together our newsletter. Quite frankly the *Rambler* is the one item that keeps all members of the club in touch with the affairs of the OVMRC. Without a good editor, the club can quickly shrink in size as its membership loses contact with each other and the club's proceedings.

When I took on this job, I indicated that I would only work in this capacity for one year. For the next few years I expect to be busy pursuing other interests. So to all club members, I want to wish you success and thanks again. ✦

Minutes

April 15, 1999 general meeting
taken by Patricia Rowan, VA3PUR



Our meeting opened by a welcome offered by Jacques Choquette, VE3TSC, Vice-President. Our guests were Frank Ryan, VE3SX; Denis, VE3ZPU; and Clare, VE3NPC.

The first announcement concerned the makeup of the Nominating Committee and the volunteers are: Tom St. Julien, VA3OFD; Larry Wilcox, VE3WEH, Dan Doctor, VE3XDD; and Ken Barry, VE3KJB.

This was Home Brew Night, and our one and only presenter was Ernie Jury, VE3EJJ. He made a presentation of Emergency Power Sources. The first was an auxiliary battery for emergency service consisting of a tube with 6 "D" cells. The second adapted a power tool battery as a power source.

Bob Shaw, VE3SUY, made a few suggestions.

Ken, VE3KJB, asked if anyone had information regarding the conversion of CB antennas to use with a 2-metre rig.

My resignation was announced as I am moving to the Cornwall area for the foreseeable future. A volunteer was requested to fill the secretarial post until someone else can be nominated.

Len Gelfand, VE3LGZ, answered questions about the upcoming glider rides and mentioned that Larry Wilcox, VE3WEH, was also available for information.

Clare, VE3NPC, said a few words about the 13 cm bandwidth changes and also spoke about his experiences with various antennas.

Tom, VA3OFD, won the 50/50 draw of \$26.00. There was no door prize and no coffee, so we gathered for a few minutes of talk before dispersing. A good time was had by all. ♣

PSK31 Gets Rave Reviews

Border City ARC and ARRL Letter

Getting tired of the "same ol' same ol'" on HF? From the father of AMTOR, Peter G3PLX, comes PSK31, a "live QSO" keyboard-to-keyboard mode that occupies a narrow bandwidth and offers terrific performance even under weak signal conditions.

PSK31 is not new – it's been around for years – but no one noticed until free software, found on the web, was developed that works with a computer sound card. Suddenly, PSK31 has become the latest HF fad. Some hams claim that it outperforms all other modes for weak signal work, even CW. Indeed, PSK31 signals are easy to overlook on the bands. Most activity is concentrated on 14.07015 and at 3.58015. Elsewhere, it is on 21.070 and 7.03515.

Your HF transceiver should be very stable. The connections between the radio and computer card are very straightforward. Several versions of the software are available as zipped files. The latest includes tuning aids that make finding and tuning signals easier. Some even allow computer control of your rig! The "official" PSK31 site is <aintel.bi.ehu.es/psk31.html>. The site has lots of information, along with .wav files, to help you know for what you should listen. Links to other sites include more PSK31, DSP info and the sale of an interface kit. While some effort was required to have this new mode function properly, initial results were quite good. ♣

Next Club Meeting

Date: Thursday, May 20, 1999

Time: 7:30 p.m. sharp!

Place: Museum of Science & Technology

Featured Topic: Graduation Night

Coffee and refreshments will be served.

Bunny Hunt Proves Challenging

by Larry Wilcox, VE3WEH

Three vehicles participated in the Spring Bunny Hunt held on Sunday, March 28. The winners (pictured here) were: Mike, VE3FFK (left), and Keith, VA3KPP. They traveled a total distance of 59.6 km and found the Bunnies' hiding spot at 12:18 pm. Mike, in his usual style, not wanting to be lose out to other close-by hunters, came running across the snow-covered park and tagged the Bunnies!



The Bunnies – Larry, VE3WEH, and Susan, VE3MOG – were hiding in the parking lot at Kaladar Park, a few blocks off of Heron Road. The spot chosen by Susan proved to be a tough one to locate because of its location and limited street access. As a result, an additional 30 minutes of hunting time was granted by the Bunnies.

Close to a school play yard, however, the location was an excellent opportunity



to educate a number of young local residents about Amateur Radio and this variation of hide-and-seek using radios and antennae.



The boys, aged 7-11, had fun talking to the foxes on the radio, asking questions and keeping an eye out for suspicious-looking vehicles.

Everyone had an enjoyable time and nice lunch together after the hunt at a local spot. It was a beautiful day to be out hunting Bunnies! ❖

Bid Farewell to Farrell, VE7RD

RAC Bulletin, May 10, 1999

On Saturday, May 29, 1999, a special dinner will be hosted at the Emergency Preparedness College in Arnprior, to honour RAC Past President Farrell Hopwood, VE7RD.

A limited number of dinner tickets are available on a first-come basis at \$25 each. Those interested in attending should book through the RAC office by May 21 at 613-244-4367. ❖

Former Amateur Charged with Interference

Industry Canada

On December 22, 1998, Christopher Watson of Peterborough, (a former Radio Amateur), entered guilty pleas to two counts:

1) On or between September 23, 1998 and April 27, 1998, in the city of Peterborough and elsewhere in Ontario, did unlawfully and without legal excuse, interfere with radio communications by interfering with link repeater systems contrary to the provisions of the Radio Communications Act and thus commit an offence under said Act.

2) Between January 1, 1998 and April 27, 1998, in the same geographical area, did unlawfully and without legal excuse send false and fraudulent messages and calls on the radio communications system of the Ministry of Transport again contrary to the Radio Communications Act and thereby committed an offence.

He was fined \$500 and given three years' probation. This probation includes that he keep the peace and be of good behaviour and not possess any radio apparatus that can transmit messages, tones or any communications except by ordinary telephones (the latter not including cellular). Any radio equipment he possessed has been forfeited to the Crown. ❖

Ottawa goes coastal, continued from p. ①

Coastal stations have been in operation since Marconi set up the first one in the UK, circa 1898. The Radio Officers and the personnel staffing the stations have dedicated their efforts towards the safety of life at sea. After the Titanic disaster, International Law required all sea-going vessels of a certain tonnage to stand watch on the Morse code distress frequencies.

This requirement was lifted effective February 1, 1999, in favor of a satellite-based distress system, the GMDSS. Therefore, the coast stations are no longer required in their present form and are scheduled to start closure around June 1999.

In order to pay homage to the many who have served over the past 100 years and to bid farewell to the closing stations, an International Amateur Radio Special Event was arranged. Here in Ottawa, we have been planning since August 1998, when the event was announced on the Internet.

On Saturday, April 10, the VE3JW station was opened at 8:00 a.m. and on air as "CF3QRT". Four other Canadian coast stations were participating: Halifax as CF1QRT, Québec City as CF2QRT, Vancouver as CF7QRT and St. John's as VO1N, all special event call signs.

The first contact was with the Ilfracombe coast station in the UK – a very fitting opening as the contact was conducted on CW. A short time later, we heard the Whitehall coast station up frequency. Our task was not to chase coastal stations but to be available to all calling stations trying to contact 10 of our official stations in order to claim the Special Event Award certificate.

Another fitting happening was when Bill, VE3JBW, came in to operate the station. Bill is one of those radio persons whom we were honouring. He worked at the PCH Scheveningen coastal station in Holland in 1947, the VAZ station in Goose Bay in 1956, and

the VCC station in Québec City in 1958. He also worked on ships from 1949 to 1955: the *SS Polyphemus*, *Arundo*, *Baarn*, *LoenerKerk*, *Maasland*, *Gaasterkerk* and *Nestor*. We were quite pleased to have him with us.

We were also pleased to welcome Phil Davidson, a Museum visitor, who operated at the CFH station in Halifax in 1948 and 1951.

During the two days, we managed a total 228 contacts and accommodated many visitors who wanted to talk on the radio with our contacts. We had prepared a special event "certificate of contact" for those visitors. One little boy of 7 had us laughing with his remarks on the air. We had been talking about the *Titanic* disaster and he said to his contact in Calgary, "I have seen more disaster than you have seen in all your life!!"

"Where do you live?" we asked.

"In Montréal," came the response, referring to the ice storm when he had to go and live in another house.

Propagation was fair to good and allowed us to reach around the world. We heard greetings in many languages:

Shalom!, Imshala!, God Bless!, Au revoir! Auf widersehen!, Do svidanya!, Adios!, etc., everyone sharing this special moment in such goodwill.

The last contact was with Ernie, VE3EJJ, who had returned home after his Museum shift and wanted to log our special call sign. We gave him a big "59+" and then CF3QRT went QRT.

We want to thank the NMST and its Special Event Coordinator, Paula, who is always available to help us in these events. Thanks, also, to the willing Amateurs who helped make this event fun and successful: those already mentioned above and Larry, VE3WEH; Jake, VA3TQX; Ian, VE3MUD; and Colin, VA3CSG. Hope to see or hear you all at the next event! ❖



Museum visitor invited to operate CF3QRT

Operating Manual is first of its kind in Canada

RAC Bulletin, September 14, 1998

RAC is proud to present the new 200-page *RAC Operating Manual*. Edited by Doug Leach, VE3XK, this is a complete survival guide with sections covering all aspects of Amateur Radio operation in Canada, including:

The Amateur Radio Service — the national and international perspective;

Licensing — the Canadian structure and how it works;

Privileges and Restrictions — what you can and can't do;

Operating the Amateur Radio Station — procedures and hints;

Amateur Radio Station Equipment — what you need to know;

Specialized Communications — the digital modes, television, satellites;

Propagation — what to expect on the HF, VHF, and UHF bands.

The *RAC Operating Manual* is available in the Ottawa area at Bytown Marine, 5 Corvus Ct., Nepean, 723-8424 (see business card below).

For more information, visit the RAC web site at:

<www.rac.ca>. ❖



Bytown Marine Limited
5 Corvus Court
Ottawa, ON K2E 7Z4
Tel: (613) 723-8424
Fax: (613) 723-0212

Graham R.G. Walker (VE3GGW)
Retail Sales & Service Manager, Communications
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RAC President Resigns

OVMRC Member, Doug Leach, VE3XK,
becomes Acting President
RAC Bulletin, April 30, 1999

Patrick Doherty, VE3PD, of Thunder Bay, has resigned as President of Radio Amateurs of Canada after four months in office. No reason was given. He succeeded long-time President J. Farrell Hopwood, VE7RD, on January 1. Like all other RAC Executive Officers and Directors, the RAC President is an unpaid volunteer.

Under the RAC Constitution, First Vice-President Doug Leach, VE3XK, is serving as Acting President until a new President can be elected by the RAC Board of Directors.

During his four months in office, Mr. Doherty brought about major changes in the operation and management of the organization. RAC, like many other national organizations, was faced with decreasing membership and falling revenues in 1998. Mr. Doherty drastically cut RAC expenses to balance the budget for 1999.

The Canadian Amateur was cut to six issues per year from the previous 11 and a downsizing and realignment of head office staff and rented office space along with other cost-cutting measures have reduced operating expenses. Following a significant loss in 1998, the financial situation is turning around. RAC membership is reportedly growing again after a low at year-end.

President Doherty also reorganized the RAC executive team to deal with other changes in the Amateur Radio environment. He brought onboard Treasurer John Watson, VE3GTX, also of Thunder Bay (who has also since resigned) and a new Vice-President for Industrial Liaison, Don Rowed, VE3KII. Vice-President Tim Ellam, VE6SH, took on the new position of Vice-President of Regulatory Affairs, and Ottawa lawyer Tim Ray, VE3XV, took on the task of RAC Honourary Counsel. RAC Secretary Joe MacPherson, VE1CH, also resigned effective April 30. No replacement had been named at press time. ❖

It's a Small World, After All

by Maurice-André Vigneault, VE3VIG/VA2MA

I went on a holiday to a faraway place and by chance I met a Radio Amateur. He introduced me into his home and led me into his radio shack. What an opportunity for an eyeball QSO and a reality check!

I had spent a lot of time preparing for this trip and I paid a lot of money to realize it; airfare, hotel room, meals, local transportation. However, it was a great pleasure and I still savour it today.

Setting off for South Africa

At home, in Ottawa, I also spent some money for a great pleasurable hobby, setting up radios and antennas and numerous paraphernalia. It allows me to “visit” far away places, as this QSO I had with John in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Upon hearing my call on the 20 m band, John clicked the QRZ web page and knew my name and address.

I had provided a resumé, for QRZ, along with a QSL photo card and he was immediately informed of my career, my hobbies and my travels. He saw my rig and antenna setup.

I've got a bearing on you now

John knew Ottawa from previous visits, so, with the help of APRS, a worldwide system of positioning, he could pinpoint my QTH on an elaborate map of Ottawa as he picked my coordinates from my beacon through Universal APRS.

I did the same at my end and found out a lot about John just using his call sign on the web. He surprised me though, when he told me that it was cloudy in Ottawa, quite windy and the temperature was minus 5 degrees Celsius. “We were having a QSO in reverse!” He had clicked on the international weather page.

With the help of this “instant info” we found some

common interest that we discussed for a while. John also did a lot of travelling and we exchanged news and views on special places that we had visited or live at for extended periods.



Then, he told me what he thought on the subject that controversial Lowell Green had been airing on the local Ottawa radio this particular morning. It was easy enough for him to just click on the WWW site.

See you, see me

John wanted to show me a new gizmo he had just installed in his shack and asked me if I had video conferencing facility. I hooked up to his address. We were able to see each other and our individual setups. As I was watching John explaining his new gizmo to me on 20 m from his radio operating position, I wondered: “How much closer to an eyeball QSO can you come?”



Tour the world

Why not let cyber communications enhance your radio enjoyment as you tour the world? There are no terrorists, no airplane crashes, no airports and no hotel hassles!



Sites quoted

QRZ: www.qrz.com

APRS: web.usna.navy.mil/~bruniga/aprs.html

WX: weather.ec.gc.ca/current.html

Radio: www.comfm.cm/sites/rdirect/indexa.html ♣

New Multiplier for RAC Contests!

RAC Bulletin, February 28, 1999

The new Canadian Territory of Nunavut, VYØ, came into effect on April 1, 1999. Nunavut will become a separate multiplier in the two RAC Contests, commencing with the RAC Canada Day Contest on July 1, 1999. ♣

Yesteryear

A look at *Ramblers* past,
by Larry Wilcox, VE3WEH



As promised last month, we bring you excerpts from “In Defence of QN” by Charles King, VE3PDK, from the January 1989 issue of the *Rambler*. With the new group of Amateurs graduating from the OVMRC Amateur Radio Course, it is very appropriate to cover this subject in more detail.

Charles wrote an informative article which will be of interest to the graduates. “Q” signals were developed to make radio communications more efficient by increasing both speed and accuracy in transmitting information. Codes were developed by telegraphers and radio operators over the years dating back to 1840 as telegraphy became the reliable means of communication.

Codes cut costs

Charles notes that the RST System gives an accurate description of signal readability, strength and tone. The number codes “73” and its partner “88” are used to convey warm regards on terminating a contact and came from the Western Union series of numbered phrases used to save time and money on the telegraph system. In those days, one word on the transatlantic cable cost \$5.00!

The development of codes was not left entirely to the commercial and military operators. Amateurs got into the act with a series of QN signals for exclusive use on CW radio nets.

Know your QN signals for net use!

It was clever of them to select “N” for their net series. They were equally clever when they assigned the third letter of each QN to make most of them a mnemonic for the intended message, for examples, QNI for “Checking In on the Net” or QNA for “ANSWER in a prearranged order.”

The 26 codes ranging from A to Z are easy to remember and recognize on CW. Unlike other Q signals that are sometimes used in voice communication, the

“QN” series is reserved exclusively for Amateur use on CW nets. There is a list of QN signals published in the RAC Operating Manual.

Advice offered

Charles ends his article with advice “Do not to use QN signals on phone nets,” and “QN signals need not be followed by a question mark, even though the meaning may be interrogatory.”

So you new graduates, if you want to hear more QN signals, tune into 3.620 MHz and check-in to the Pot Lid Slow Speed CW Net on Sunday mornings at 1100 hrs local time. Let’s give the net controller, Ed Morgan, VE3GX, a pileup!

Remembering Dr. Maurice Haycock, VE3LC

The January 1989 *Rambler* also contained a memorial from Bill Wilson, VE3NR, to Dr. Maurice Haycock, VE3LC, who became a Silent Key December 23, 1989 at the age 88.

Dr. Haycock was an active Radio Amateur, painter, lecturer and researcher who spent much of his time on geological exploration in Canada’s Arctic.

He used his skills as an Amateur to rehabilitate some aircraft radio equipment and called for emergency help to rescue a research team when an aircraft was damaged and unable to take off to bring them home.

Time to welcome the new graduates

Just a reminder to come out to the General Meeting, May 20, 1999 and you can meet all of the new graduates. What they need most at this time is your encouragement and some volunteer mentors to assist them getting operational in Amateur Radio.

You could invite them to your station or go to their home to help them with their station set-up or just chat with them on the air and make them feel welcome. ❖

Potpourri

Sampling of news and comments from sources across Canada and around the world, compiled by Jacques Choquette, VE3TSC



Through its web site, SWATCH was planning on accepting text/voice messages to transmit from satellite to the earth between 145.8-146.0 MHz. Using Amateur Radio frequencies for commercial purposes, however, is against the law. Due to a significant number of Amateur Radio complaints, this plan has been cancelled and SWATCH has donated its batteries to MIR! (KC2AEI)

To participate in SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence), soon-to-be-released software will enable home PCs to perform digital signal processing on data collected by radio astronomy observatories. The software runs as a background screen saver, analyzing the downloaded data when the PC is not in use. (MSNBC)

The Amateur Radio Research and Development Corporation (AMRAD) has received an Experimental licence to conduct tests in Northern Virginia on the frequency 136.75 kHz using the call sign, WA2XTF. AMRAD is expecting to gain experience in anticipation that the FCC might allocate the low-frequency (LF) band 135.7 -137.8 kHz to the Amateur Radio service in the United States. (AMRAD)

At the end of March, a Russian rocket was to launch a worldwide Amateur Position Reporting System satellite that would feed the worldwide linked APRS system. The satellite was bumped by the State Department, however, one week prior to launcher integration. New government restrictions on technology exports have put a crimp on the launch of small, Amateur-built satellites using non-U.S. launchers. Boeing did not want to risk delays by resubmitting its paperwork for the addition of the tiny Amateur microsat. (AMSAT)

NASA has given \$90,000 to be used to support the space qualification testing of Amateur Radio hardware bound for the International Space Station. SAREX is sponsored by the ARRL, AMSAT and

NASA and is a prime mover is organizing ARISS, the Amateur Radio International Space Station. (ARRL)

The expedition commander of the first International Space Station crew is now a ham radio operator. U.S. astronaut William G. Shepherd, after passing the Technician exam, was issued the call sign, KD5GSL. Once the station is habitable, Shepherd will join Russian cosmonauts Yuri Gidzenko and Sergei Krikalev on board the ISS. (SAREX)

HTs as weapons? Under investigation is that of a radio which may have been the cause of death of a NY man engaged in drug transactions. A police officer had thrown his radio at the man who was fleeing on his bike. He later died from a skull fracture. (Monitoring Times, February 1999).

We can now track orbiting objects (MIR, shuttle, satellites) with the Satellite Tracking function at liftoff.msfc.nasa.gov/realtime/jtrack.

Iridium is the world's first satellite-based phone system, enabling customers to make calls from anywhere in the world (except from inside buildings or forests). Having signed up only a mere 7,000+ satellite phone customers, the company's CEO has resigned. (Ham Radio Online)

The Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB) has agreed to discuss with their radio regulatory agency their licensing future. Due to the likely withdrawal of the Morse requirement for HF access at a future World Radio Conference, other countries will also find it hard to argue for retaining Morse competence.

Indeed, some countries have already or are considering reducing this requirement to nominal levels. For it to continue to attract the younger generation, Amateur Radio should be seen as a progressive, exciting and forward-looking hobby. (Radio Society of Great Britain). ♣