

ARC-SHORTS

December 2011

Club Repeaters: 147.315 (PL 107.2), 444.6 (PL107.2), 224.82 (PL107.2), 53.13 (PL107.2), 927.6 (-25Mhz, PL107.2), and 1282.600 (PL 107.2), DSTAR 145.38Mhz, 442.060, and 1284.600

NEXT CLUB MEETING

Our next meeting is **DECEMBER 16th** at the MANGO MIKE'S RESTAURANT 4580 Duke Street, **Alexandria, VA**, 22203. We meet at 6 – 6:30 PM. This is the annual club holiday / Christmas party. Ian, our VP, has asked that we all bring a gift for the gift swap. The game is that one person picks a gift, then the next person can take that opened gift or pick something unopened. Lots of fun. Hope to have a few club awards (don't forget to send your ARC-SHORTS editor some nominations!!)

Not sure of the cost this time, but last year it was \$25 per person.

Please RSVP to one of the club officers so that we can get a good head count. Bring your YL/XYL and any friends.

November MEETING MINUTES from 11/11/11

Treasurer's Report: Checking: 314.72, Education: 2423.60, Trailer: 572.75, Share: 3364.26, Total: \$6,675.33

Committee Reports:

Training: Currently about 6 members of the current class.

ARES: New Police/Fire dispatch center opened this week behind the McDonald's on Duke & Quaker. Possibility exists for a presence for the club at the building, possibly moving the monthly meetings there. The Fire Training Center is not an option.

DSTAR: The D-STAR QSO party is this weekend.

Repeaters: The 70cm repeater is back up for now.

Webmaster: Changes: A "Donate" button, a "members only" section, new PayPal account, new RSS feed. A .htaccess hack occurred.

Old Business:

Marine Corps Marathon

New Business:

Motion to sponsor our two plaques for the VA QSO party -- passed.

Current slate of officers renominate, re-elected by acclamation.

Net Controls:

11/17/2011: Rich KA4GFY
11/24/2011: -- Thanksgiving, No Net Planned
12/01/2011: Ian N8IK
12/08/2011: Tom KJ4FUU
12/15/2011: Rick N4ASX

Program: DX video of expedition to FT5XO

Next meeting: 12/16/2011 (Christmas Party)

Marshall's letter to QST was circulated, taking them to task for an unfavorable reading of the Alexandria Times article about our field day.

Motion was made and seconded re - nominating all incumbent officers for next year. Passed.
Motion was made and seconded to amend the bylaws to remove the duties of meeting program planning from the Vice President and instead have an appointed program coordinator. Passed.
Rick N4ASX said he would be willing to do this, at least for this year.
Motion was made and seconded to budget \$250 for purchase a "new" laptop. Passed. (Slightly used Dell D410 laptop is now in the trailer loaded with the ID-1 and Packet software. Will load APRS display software before the Washington Birthday parade)

Trailer work scheduled for 10/15/2011. (more work needed!) but a 1.2Ghz whip was installed on the roof.

Reminder about the activities/planning for the Marine Corps Marathon.

Notice that Jim DeYoung and Saunders Moon have moved out of the area. We hope to hear from them on HF.

Recommendation to put our bylaws on the website.

Bob won the 50/50 drawing.

January Program

Our first program of the new year will be Mark from Vienna Wireless to talk to us about the Virginia QSO Party contest.

Each year this contest gets more popular and last year Marshall, Harry, Randy and Sandy set up an expedition to a county that had no representation and operated under the club call.

The program will give lots of feedback on last year's contest and we might want to think about another expedition this March in support of a ham deprived part of Virginia.

A LITTLE CHRISTMAS FUN

The Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the shack,

Not a sound was heard, not even an "aaaaacccccck". (packet noise for all the newbies)

The club members were nestled all snug in their shacks,

With visions of handheld charging in racks.

The catalogs were hung by the chimney with care,

With hopes the new radio would soon be there.

Out came the keyer, and out came the mic,

To work the DX so late that at night.

When up on the roof, there arose such a clatter,

I thought my tri-bander had come down with a splatter.

From out of my chair I sprang with a flash,

To see what it would cost me, in cold hard cash.

The moon on the tower and the new fallen snow,

Gave a luster of daylight to the objects below.

When what to my wondering eyes did appear?

But eight tiny (?) ARC members with pizza and beer.

And the jolly man with the key, so often evident,

I knew in an instant it must be our club president.

More rapid than Morse Code his QSOs they came,

And he whistled and shouted, and called them by name:

Now Rich! Now Harry! Now Tom and Arnal!

On Roy! On Rick, On Tim and Ian!

They had a good plan and went straight to work,

Building a new station without even a quirk.

When they finished the job, and as they disappeared from sight,

And I heard them exclaim, "MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL,

AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!!!"

HF CONTESTING 101 by KA4GFY and N4ASX

Many new hams are not “into” contesting for a number of reasons. One of the most common is limited antennas for HF and low power radios. Don’t let this stop you! While competing with the big guns on their level is out of the question because you don’t have the power or the big antenna, you have to develop superior operating skills to know how and when to answer a station when they call CQ. It is one of those times when the bands will have many stations that are looking for a contact and not a long rag chew. If you’re not sure what to talk about, a contest is a great way to collect those contacts and check out both your station’s capabilities and sharpen your skills.

The most common technique for little pistols is “Search and Pounce.” The big guns tend to park on a frequency and stay there. So, the little pistols move from station to station trying to work as many as they can. Just remember to stay within the privileges of your license. But don’t rule out parking on a frequency yourself. Just be prepared for the possible onslaught. If you are a little overwhelmed, search and pounce is very effective.

First, listen to the operating style of the station. Does the operator answer the very first station, or one of the later ones to call? Not only does that give you a chance to figure out when to call, but it allows you a chance to hear what the station’s exchange will be. All contests have a specific exchange. If you have the other station’s exchange ahead of time, you don’t have to ask for repeats. It will save time and you won’t look like a rookie. Check the contest sponsor’s website or their magazine for the contest rules. The exchange should be in there somewhere.

Chances are there is a huge pileup calling all at once, particularly if it’s juicy DX. Nobody can make anything out of that. Once you figure out the operator’s routine, drop your call into the fracas. The FCC is very adamant that you use your entire call. I heard that from the former

special counsel for enforcement at the FCC while at a hamfest several years ago. Despite that, you will hear many people using just their suffix as a quick way to get the attention of the station calling CQ. It sounds counterintuitive, but using your whole call works better. Very often, the operator will get part of a call and will say something like “the station ending in Fox Yankee” or “the KA4.” There could be another station with the same letters in the call, but now the field is narrowed down to something more manageable. That’s your cue. Repeat your call again using the proper phonetics. Stay away from the cutesy phonetics. Believe me, not everybody will appreciate or understand “Gone Fishing Yesterday.” They work fine in casual QSOs.

While we are talking about identifying, many DX stations will be working contacts in rapid fire succession without identifying. Their licensing authority may allow that, but it’s frustrating because you don’t know who it is. In a break in the action, simply key the mike and say “Your call?” Believe it or not, the DX station usually hears it and realizes they have been negligent in identifying. This is very effective most of the time.

Contesting offers little pistols a BIG PLUS. During normal operations, DX stations will be called by many, many DX hunters. But in a DX contest, all of us are DX chasers and the pile ups can be smaller. Further, many DX entities are put on the air by DXpeditions and your chances are much better at getting that rare one. In some cases, this may be the ONLY way these rare entities are heard. If you are an ARRL member, subscribe to the weekly email DX and contesting updates.

If you are not ready for the “big time” of the DX contests or ARRL Sweepstakes, try a state QSO party. Most states have them, with Virginia’s in March. Maryland does theirs in August. They are generally low-key affairs, so there is little pressure to sound like a big gun.

The bottom line is high power or a super sized beam antenna are not always going to net the contacts. A poor operator running a kilowatt and a six element beam is just the loudest poor operator on the band. They will eventually be calling CQ to the frogs and crickets because everybody else is avoiding them. There are DXCC Honor Roll members who did it running QRP while the poor operator is still trying to finish Worked All States because nobody wants to talk to them. Remember, it’s all about operating technique. That’s where being a good operator gets the QSOs.

73,
Rich, KA4GFY

Rick Bunn, N4ASX, put together a few suggestions for contesting:

- 1 – Courtesy is required of all of us. It is not CB and you can take your turn and make the contact.
- 2 – If you can hear them then there is a very good chance that you can work them. Most of us run the standard 100 watts into a no gain antenna. Antenna gain is a function not only your antenna but of your antenna and the other stations antenna. So, if the other station is running a beam then you have a better chance. If you can hear the station then his antenna is pointed in your direction.

- 3 – Some tricks and tips include getting an idea of how the target station operates. If the target is rapid fire, jump in with the same speed. Sometimes you can tailgate. Tailgating is waiting for all the fast keyers to call and then drop your call in at the end.
- 4 – For stateside contests, you can hunt or you can sit on one frequency and call CQ contest.
- 5 – Make sure your station is properly set up. Don't over drive the microphone. Yelling into the mic will not give you a better signal, but it will distort your signal. You really, really want to be clearly understood.
- 6 – Drop your call only, but remember that you must also make contact by sending the other stations call sign so you and the other station know that you have made the contact.
- 7 – Headphones can help if your hearing is not 100% (and who over 50 has 100% hearing?)
- 8 – Pick the band for the conditions. On a DX contest try 20 meters. For the a QSO party you may want to try the lower bands.
- 9 – Stick to STANDARD ITU phonetics. I use November 4 Alpha Sierra X-ray, Some DX stations will hear Sugar or Nancy better (older standard), Try to stay constant so as not to confuse the DX station.
- 10 – English is the standard language, but remember that many DX stations have limited English, so try to be clear.

Sunspots are coming back. DX contests bring out both good and bad ops. Some good ops will listen for the weak stations and will use a variety of methods to give them a chance. One is to use split. Split is transmitting on one frequency and listening in a band of frequencies. Common would be RG8AU on 14.195 and listening up 10 to 15KHz. Most radios have two VFOs so can pick a transmit frequency somewhere in the listening range and as the DX station runs up and down the range you have a better chance to work them.

While most contest stations rack up contacts a very fast rate, you don't have to work that fast. As a rule if you hear them well, then they will hear you.

The WPX contests can be interesting if you have a new call. DX stations will have worked the W's and K's but a KI or KJ will give them a multiplier so they will be looking for you!

Contesting will tell you a great deal about the capabilities of your station.

The ARRL DX contest has a great following and many DX stations will be set up in rare places just for the contest.

Use a computer program to do your logging. Paper is hard to check for duplicates and harder to send in a report.

Why do we have contests? The reason is to get some activities on the band. This is true of the VHF/UHF band in particular.

EVENTS IN DECEMBER

Up Coming Events

Club programs planned for 2012

January – VA QSO party – Mark is our speaker this year and while the program does not change a great deal, its good to get an idea of what goes on with the contest and it sometimes sparks some interesting club activities for the contest. Last year, Marshall and some others put a rare Virginia county “on the air” . Not a bad idea again this year and maybe we can do something here in the city as well.

Other programs

Tim – KT4MV has a good program on aviation communications

Dennis – W4PWF will be asked to come to a meeting and talk about the latest and greatest on-goings at ARRL.

AMSAT and AMRAD have been asked to provide a program

The City Emergency Services Management has some new leadership and I have asked them to visit and talk about the emergency plan and how we can best help them when needed. They have also moved into their new EOC and we are trying to get space either in the new EOC or the old EOC for a club station. Remember that we have gear to make a great station.

I have also asked our D-Star folks to come up with a D-Star 201 program. The D-Star 23cm radio is very expensive but provides us with some interesting capabilities and more of us have the radio. In addition, there are now kits that allow for cheaper D-Star operation.

If you have a topic that you would like to learn more about and it relates to our hobby, let N4ASX know and we can hunt down a speaker.

The next public service event for the club will be the Washington’s Birthday Parade and the 10K race. We will use the trailer and D-Star, but the majority of the event will be on 2 meter handhelds. If your not working on that holiday, please volunteer. The club budgets funds for the pizza or burger party after the event.

HAMFESTS and CONTESTS

Contests –

Dec 10 -11 ARRL 10 Meter Contest - This is one anybody can operate. Much of the activity will be in the Technician Class area of 28.300 to 28.500 MHz. The exchange is a signal report and your state.

Dec 17 - Radio Amateurs Canada Winter Contest – The exchange is a signal report and for those of us outside Canada, a serial number. VE stations will send a signal report and their Province.

Dec 18 - ARRL Rookie Roundup. This is the CW portion. The exchange is both calls, name, check and your state.

Jan 1 – ARRL Straight Key Night. Not really a contest, but an opportunity to practice your CW skills with a straight key. Instead of sending an RST signal report, send “ur SKN is...” to clue other operators on what’s going on.

Hamfests –

Richmond Frostfest – February 5, 2011 - Richmond Raceway Complex, 600 East Laburnum Avenue, Richmond, VA 23222-2253

Vienna Winterfest - **Sunday, February 26, 2012** - Northern Virginia Community College Annandale Campus (club will have a few tables, come out and socialize)

Public Service events –

Washington’s Birthday 10K race – Saturday, February 19th 2011

Washington’s Birthday Parade - Monday, February 21, 2011

President’s Corner

This has been another great year for the Alexandria Radio Club. We started off the year with a public service event, the George Washington Birthday Parade, did a mini DX-expedition to Buckingham county for the Virginia QSO party, had a spring Fox Hunt activity, followed by a great Field Day event at Ben Brenham park (placing 22nd nationwide of all 5A stations), went into a standby basis for ARES activation due to Hurricane Irene, had our first ever Newbies on the Air (NOTA) event, participated once again in the Marine Corps Marathon, and finished the year off with our annual Holiday party.

During the year, we saw the number of licensed amateur operators nationwide pass the 700,000 mark, of which 40,000 were new licensees in just the past five years (see <http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2011/11/17/radio-days-are-back-ham-radio-licenses-at-all-time-high/>) -- not too bad for an activity that has been going strong for over a century!

As we close out 2011, I would like to thank all ARC members for all the contributions that they have made this past year in creating a fun and challenging environment for club activities, and look forward to what we as a club can do in 2012. May everyone have a safe and happy Holiday season, and I look forward to hearing you on the air in 2012!

73

Marshall

Social Events

Monday Night Half Price Burgers – There is a group that gets together at Shooter McGee’s (Duke and Paxton Streets) on Monday evenings at 6:15 PM. A good burger and soft drink runs about \$9.00.