



FEEDBACK

March 2017

Your Story:

Do you have a story, humorous or otherwise about amateur radio? If so, please contact the newsletter editor (ac8ps@arrl.net) and get it published in FEEDBACK.

If you would like to place a classified ad to sell or purchase amateur radio related items, please contact the editor.

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Why are there so many Techs?

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

Recently, one of my readers asked, "Why do most people have a Technician license and not a General or Extra? Is it simply not interesting enough to get more privileges?"

This is a very interesting question, one that I've written about before. I think there are several issues at play here. In no particular order:

- * It's pretty easy to get a Tech license, so a lot of people get them just for the challenge, but really never intend to use the license.
- * Some people get a Tech license, but then find out that amateur radio isn't what they thought it was going to be.
- * Some people get a Tech license, then can't find an Elmer to help them. They lose interest and give up on ham radio.
- * Some people get a Tech license, buy an HT, and think that's all there is to amateur radio. They quickly lose interest in amateur radio, because talking on the repeaters just isn't all that interesting.
- * Some people get licenses to participate in local emergency communications or CERT organizations. There's no need for them to get anything more than a Tech license.
- * Since it's so easy to get a Tech license, even those that aren't technically inclined get them. Getting a General Class license requires a fair amount of study, and because they don't see the benefits of putting in that kind of work, they just don't bother.

I posted this question to my blog and got several interesting replies. Perhaps the most cogent was by Kenneth, W6KWF. He wrote: "The only thing General/Extra gets you is HF, which is becoming an increasingly small fraction of the possibilities of the amateur hobby. Amateurs could easily spend their whole lives moving from FM repeaters to microwave to VHF packet to EME to CERT/event support, etc, etc, without having any interest to explore what few facets of the hobby need HF privileges."

I think this is a great point. When incentive licensing was put into place in the late 1960s, HF was where the action was. Nowadays, more of the "cool stuff" is happening on VHF, UHF and microwaves. Getting additional HF privileges is not really a big deal anymore for many hams.

Yet another new license class?

Right on the heels of this discussion, the ARRL posted a news item, "ARRL Seeks Opinions Concerning Possible New Entry Level License" (<http://www.arrl.org/news/arrl-seeks-opinions-concerning-possible-new-entry-level-license>). According to this report, the ARRL Board of Directors set up an An Entry Level License Committee in September 2016.

The committee is gathering member input via an online member survey (<http://www.arrl.org/license-1>) and will make recommendations to the Board for possible rules changes to submit to the FCC. They note, "The result could mean changes to the Technician license, but it could also be an additional, but simpler, license with privileges that would give a newcomer a taste of most facets of ham radio from HF to VHF and UHF. The survey will be online until April 7, 2017.

According to the survey page, the committee is trying to address several issues, including:

- * The declining population of new hams under the age of 30.
- * A decline in the number of new licensees who actually get on the air.
- * Amateur Radio's lack of appeal for those under the age of 30, compared to other technical hobbies.
- * The increasing challenge of engaging and retaining Technician licensees.
- * A reluctance in much of the amateur community to embrace newer technologies of interest to the younger segment of the population.

Personally, I don't think that coming up with a new entry-level license class with privileges that are even more limited than the Technician Class is a bad idea, but whether or not it's successful will depend completely on the implementation. Unless the new class of license is accompanied by some kind of program that will help these new licensees really become engaged with amateur radio, then we're just creating another class of inactive licensees. I don't know exactly what this program would consist of, but without it, this effort is doomed to failure.

And, who's going to develop and run this program? The only organization that has the horsepower to make this work is the ARRL. They are going to have to step up big time. Most clubs don't have the people or resources to do it properly. If you have any thoughts on this, I urge you to contact your ARRL division director (<http://www.arrl.org/divisions>).

When he's not pondering questions about the amateur radio licensing structure, Dan blogs about amateur radio at KB6NU.Com, writes the "No Nonsense" amateur radio study guides, and teaches ham classes. You can contact him by e-mailing cwgeek@kb6nu.com.

Board Meeting 03/06/2017

Officers present: Gary N8QC, Steph W8AEZ, Jan W8JKG, Jay, N8ARR, Tom WR8G.
Others present: Kyle W8KDB.

Called to order at 17:30.

Insurance – Policy has been received. Cover pages will be scanned and then emailed to Wings Event Center as well as to Smokey for Custer.

Crossroads Hamfest – Tom has handed over the confirmation reports to others as he has a new job to work on. Steph has handled several mailings and now, due to the lateness, only phone or email confirmations will be sent.

Table reservations are coming in slowly and we are just a bit above 50% of capacity. This is worrisome although past history has shown that the last week can bring several last minute requests.

Jan and Tom will make the arrangements for cash and cash boxes. Volunteer list will be circulated at the next general meeting for Friday setup, Saturday ticket sales and Saturday teardown.

Meeting refreshments – Since Arnie has reported that he can no longer handle the refreshments for general meetings, we have to pursue another source. A request was made at the general meeting and no one volunteered to take over. Jay approached the owner of Coney Island about providing the coffee if we can provide a couple of carafes. He has agreed to sell us decaf coffee on the night of the meeting. Since most officers are at Coney Island for dinner just before the meeting, hot coffee can be available for club members. Jay will search for a couple of 10 cup carafes before the next general meeting. Cookies will be purchased from Meijer's prior to each meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 18:03.

Respectfully submitted,
Jay Jarrett, N8ARR, Secretary

Meeting Minutes 02/16/2017

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Introductions

Officers present – Gary N8QC, Stephanie W8AEZ, Jan W8JKG, Tom WR8G, Jay N8ARR. 22 members in attendance total.

Secretary's report was accepted.

Treasurer's report was accepted.

Committee reports:

Hamfest 2017 – Door prizes acquired; voltmeter from Harbor Freight, DX Engineering Gift Card, Wouxon HT. Brian has ordered two Baofeng HTs which should be delivered very soon. Only 40 tables reserved at this date! Listing in this month's QST might bring more. Volunteers will be solicited at the next month's meeting.

SKYWARN – Bret reported that Battle Creek SKYWARN training will be held March 18th (!) from 10-12 at Lakeview Middle School. Kalamazoo will hold SKYWARN training the same day from 2-4 at the Portage City Hall. The Calhoun County HIAD on March 25th at the DPW building. VEs will be needed starting at 3 pm. A CERT training class will be held a week later, location and time TBD.

VE session – Next session will be on February, 23rd in Babcock Room of MUMC at 7:00. Dinner at Coney Island prior.

Field Day – Still too early to begin discussions and planning.

Trailers – Too early to begin maintenance. Need to get through Hamfest first.

MSPOTA – New location will be the Temporary Equestrian area. Dates are still May 5, 6 and 7.

Old Business:

MIS Hamfest – A receipt was received from GLARA for the \$400 donated by the club.

New Business:

Winter Field Day – The WFD was quite a success despite the problems with wind and cold. The heaters did an admirable job of keeping the contesters warm but the wind made antenna raising a bit of a problem.

They made more QSOs than they did during the summer Field Day! They even made contact in Antarctica. Congratulations to the hearty souls.

The cross link at Custer will be down for repairs/modifications from 2/22 until around the 1st of March. More information will be forthcoming about this location.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jay Jarrett N8ARR, Secretary

ARISS Moves Closer to Launching New Radio System to Space Station

03/14/2017

Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) reports it has met a major milestone and now is "one giant step" closer to flying its new interoperable radio system to the International Space Station. Eventual plans call for installing a new JVC Kenwood TM-D710GA-based radio system on the station as part of an overall approach that will allow greater interoperability between the Columbus module and the Russian Service Module.

Lou McFadin, W5DID, and Kerry Banke, N6IZW, travelled to NASA Johnson Space Center (JSC) in Houston in mid-February for preliminary testing of Banke's "breadboard" version of the ARISS multi-voltage power supply that's essential to the upgrade. They worked with JSC engineers and Electromagnetic Compatibility (EMC) Lab personnel to put the specially built power supply through its paces, checking against US and Russian space specifications for preliminary power quality and EMC tests.

With positive test results in hand, ARISS now can move on to the next step — fabrication of prototype and flight units. The JSC engineers said the ARISS breadboard power supply was the first hardware to have passed all of the space agency's tests and complimented the ARISS Team on its professional-level hardware development and design.

"I was looking to come away with what we needed to move forward," said Banke. "We achieved that." Banke also said he was impressed with the support he and McFadin received from the testing group. Key players on those teams, who are also radio amateurs, told him and McFadin that they find equipment supported by hams earns particularly good marks.

ARISS-International Chair Frank Bauer, KA3HDO, thanked Banke and McFadin for spending several days putting the unit through the rigorous battery of NASA and Russian preliminary electrical tests. McFadin credited the level of cooperation and experience within the ARISS Team for the multi-voltage power supply's high marks.

Now that testing of the breadboard unit has been completed, McFadin can purchase the necessary — and pricey — space-certified parts, to fabricate the final prototype and flight power supplies. He and Banke expressed confidence that the prototype and flight units will pass the even more rigorous final testing with flying colors.

The ARISS radio gear onboard the ISS is aging. A February supply vehicle carried a new Ericsson 2-meter handheld radio to replace one that failed a few months ago, disrupting ARISS activities. The VHF radio in the Columbus module was used for school group contacts and for Amateur Radio packet, which was temporarily shifted to UHF after the VHF radio failure. The newly arrived Ericsson radio will replace the Ericsson UHF radio supporting APRS packet and some school contacts, but Bauer made it clear last month that the new Ericsson transceiver is an interim measure.

To help support final fabrication and flight tests of the ARISS interoperable radio system, visit the ARISS website. Contributions are tax deductible. Those contributing at least \$100 will receive an ARISS Challenge Coin.

Children Tangled in Dipole After Special Event Station Becomes Pokéstop

By K5KAC, on the scene

VERMILION, OREGON – The Vermilion City Amateur Radio Club awoke early yesterday morning to the cries of local children tangled in their 80m dipole.

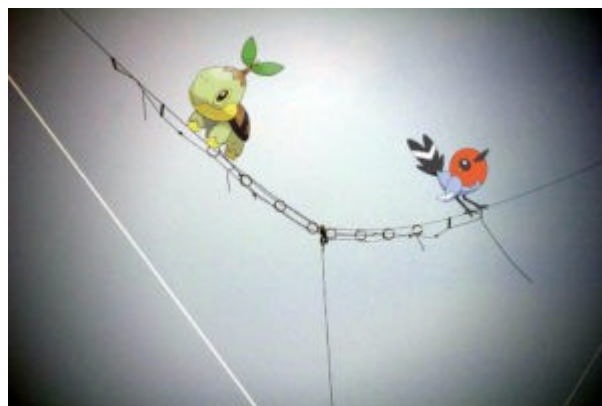
“From far away I could see the screens of their iPhones glowing as they called out for help in getting untangled. It was the loudest racket I've ever heard,” said Ash Allman, who lead the effort in freeing the kids.

The children were caught in the dipole after the S.S. Anne Park and Marina was named a Pokéstop in the popular mobile game Pokémon GO. A Pokéstop is an area, typically a landmark or park, where Pokémon Trainers can converge to get prizes and set lures to attract rare Pokémon characters. A player must

physically visit these locations to collect the rewards.

“We were all set up to work into the night, but the band conditions went south so we decided to get some rest,” lamented Misty Brock, the event organizer. “It wasn't until morning that we found about a dozen kids wrapped up in the legs of the dipole.”

At press time, the special event station had been forced to cease operation due to lack of participation, with one member finding a high-level Charmander character in his tent and the rest wandering the nearby tree line looking for a Clefairy.



What else would you need?



SOUTHERN MICHIGAN AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY FEEDBACK

S.M.A.R.S. W8DF Club Repeaters

- 2M Repeater 146.66MHz, -600KHz offset, CTCSS 94.8Hz
- 2M DStar 146.79MHz, -600KHz offset
- 70cm Repeater 443.95MHz, +5MHz offset, CTCSS 94.8Hz
- 1.25M Repeater 224.24MHz, -1.6MHz offset
- APRS Digipeater/Igate, 144.39MHz

70cm & 1.25 meter repeaters are linked, and also available via echolink.

Other Repeaters

- 2M Repeater 147.12MHz, +600KHz offset, CTCSS 186.2Hz
- 70cm Repeater 442.35MHz, +5MHz offset, CTCSS 94.8Hz

<p>Club Meeting 3rd Thursday of every month Maple United Methodist Church 342 Capital Avenue NE Battle Creek, MI 49017</p>	<p>SKYWARN Coffee 1st Saturday of every month Immediately after Siren Test Coney Island, N.E. Capital Battle Creek, MI</p>	<p>BLB Luncheon 1st Thursday of every month Coney Island, N.E. Capital Battle Creek, MI</p>	<p>SMARS Breakfast 2nd Saturday of every month Coney Island, N.E. Capital Battle Creek, MI</p>
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<p>SMARS Nets: Monday—Friday 11:30 AM, 146.66 Sunday Evening 8:00 PM, 146.66 Monday 8:00 PM, 224.24 / 443.95 Wednesday 7:00 PM, 224.24 / 443.95 Wednesday 8:00 PM, 28.365 Saturday 8:00 PM, 224.24 / 443.95 Other Nets: Skywarn Net: Tuesday 7:00 PM, 147.12</p> <p><i>Please see page 3 for offsets and CTCSS tones</i></p>	<p>Upcoming Events: Club Meeting: Apr. 20th @ 7:30pm BLB Luncheon: Apr. 2nd @ 11:30am Board Meeting: Apr. 4th @ 5:30pm Coney Island Cafe, 962 Capital Ave. NE SMARS Breakfast: Apr. 8th @ 8:30am Crossroads Hamfest: Mar. 18th, 8am-noon Wings Stadium Annex, Kalamazoo, MI</p>
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