



Ham Radio Rocks!

The Mt. Vernon Amateur Radio Club

February, 2009 Newsletter

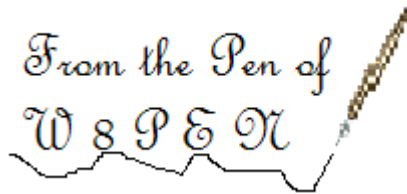


Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of each Month at 7:00 P.M. at the Knox County Chapter of the American Red Cross, 300 N. Mulberry Street, Mt. Vernon, Ohio

Local Ham Community

K8EEN Repeater: 146.790 MHz (-600 Khz With PL of 71.9 Hz)
KD8EVR Repeater: 442.100 Mhz (+5Mhz With PL of 71.9 Hz)

Sunday Night ARES Net at 9:00 P.M. on The K8EEN Repeater
Wednesday Night Social Net at 9:00 P.M. on the KD8EVR Repeater



If there was ever a meeting members should not miss, it would have been January's club meeting. It was a blast.

Club President Arlin Bradford, KD8EVR, had invited Virgil Shipley and Melissa Raines of the Mt. Vernon News to our meeting. Virgil is an old hand at covering some of our events and appears truly interested in what we do. Melissa was very impressed with our technology and knowledge of the way radio works. Perhaps they both have a future in Ham Radio.

Of course, it helped to have scheduled a demonstration of Echolink as the program for the meeting. After Arlin Bradford, KD8EVR, gave a short introduction of Echolink, Don Russell, W8PEN, gave a demonstration. First came the really short range stuff by merely connecting to Arlins computer. That was fun and showed how it worked. Then Don made a contact using his hand held radio and through the 440 Mhz Repeater to a station in Canada, proving you no longer are limited to short range when using a hand held radio.

Melissa wrote up a very nice article on us and Ham Radio for the News. It was accurate and well written. Very nice. Thanks Melissa.

Please see the article on the new Echolink system for the KD8EVR Repeater later in this Newsletter.

MVARC Club Meeting is Monday, February 9, 2009 at 7:00 P.M. in the Red Cross Annex Building, 300 North Mulberry Street, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. The program for this month is a pre-Mansfield Hamfest sale. Anyone may bring an item or two they would like to sell or trade. Reminder: Mansfield Hamfest is Sunday, February 15, 2009.

Please remember to check into the long running Sunday Night ARES net at 9:00 P.M. on the K8EEN 2-meter Repeater.

Also check out the UHF net on the KD8EVR Repeater. This net runs each Wednesday at 9:00 P.M. and is a social net. Please join us for the fun of it.

Every Wednesday at 5:00 PM, MVARC club members meet at Wendy's, 522 South Main Street, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Dinner Coordinator Dick Huggins, N8RDH, reports good turnouts for this event. Come share dinner with friends, or make new friends, by attending one or all of these events.

Join MVARC club members every second Saturday of the month for breakfast. Breakfast Coordinator Arlin Bradford, KD8EVR, reports fair turnouts for this event.

******The next Breakfast will be February 14, 2009 at 9:00 AM at Ryan's Steak House, 1515 Coshocton Ave., Mt. Vernon, Ohio.******

ComPIOments, January 2009

By Mike McCardel, KC8YLD

(This was a late arrival last month and unfortunately did not get in the January Newsletter. Meaning our Newsletter was packed, which is a good thing.... W8PEN)



THANKS TO ALL

A year ago we discussed wanting to bring more activities and programs to our meeting, to have more social opportunities to gather and talk radio and to continue our service to Knox County. We also decided to put special emphasis on our 50 year affiliation to the ARRL with our 50th anniversary being September 29, 2008. Wow, looking back it certainly looks like 2008 was a huge success. I wish I could take credit for this but it was truly a group effort. What are some of the things we did in 2008?

Wave theory at Kenyon with Terry Kloplic and Hands on Demo. Your story about how you became a ham. Catching up with members at IARC Hamfest. How to solder with a hands on demonstration. Earth Day marathon Service Support. KV8Q, Tom Hain, Contester, guest talked about his experiences with DX trip and contest activities to Prince Edward island Canada. Ham Radio Deluxe Demo by KC8YLD. New repeater and Wednesday night club net on UHF. The Tour de Cure. Wednesday night dinners and Saturday morning Breakfasts. Station Grounding by W8UMH, Don Blizzard. Visit to repeater site and discussion on how the repeater is set up and works. Great American Bicycle Adventure. Boy Scout Merit Badge Challenge service at Muskingum valley Scout Reservation (MSRV). 50th year ARRL Affiliation Party and Special Event Station. Show N Tell Night and Demo. August Sponsored Skywarn Training. K8RA, Jerry Pettenger, CW key builder. Amateur Television by WA8RMC, Art Towslee, Special Presentation. Amateur Radio Field Day at Doc's. Best score ever! Most fun I have had

It looks like new leadership and recent growth in the club membership should add a shot of energy into MVARC. I hope this is the fact. I look for 2009 being a great year.

What's next for me? Well, by virtue of being president in 2008, I do get to sit on the board of directors for one year. I intend to stay active in the club, do some contesting, improve my cw speed, to mention a few things. Of course there is the "honey do list."

I am re-evaluating my PIO status. I am talking with the ARRL/VEC about making testing available at every meeting, and seeing what time I might have for

mentoring, teaching, elmering.

Thanks to my fellow officers for their support and back-up, Thank you to the trustees for supporting me and everything I have done the past two years, I look forward to joining you on the board this year. A special thanks to Doc AA8WP for his generosity and hospitality at Field day, this year, and Dick Huggins N8RDH. for hosting the 50th anniversary party.

A very special thanks to Don Russell, W8PEN, without whom nothing gets done. He has been my best supporter and co-conspirator every step of the way, his dedication to keep the repeater running, his presence at nearly every event we have done, and his editorial skills and dedication to putting out a quality newsletter month after month. He is an inspiration and his presence and support have kept the club intact, running, and in the forefront with ARRL and Knox County.

NEW TOY

I received a generous gift, from my family, for Christmas, an iPod Touch. I have never been a Mac guy, but this gadget is pretty cool. It has all the power of an iPhone except the phone part. However, I can connect to a plethora of online tools and resources as long as I have access to a wireless network. Which I do have from home and work. I can browse the Internet and read email and online documentation, play interactive games, look up callsigns, take notes, watch YouTube, listen to music, and more. It really is cool, oh I said that already. I have watched AmateurLogic episodes, paid bills, bid on ebay, browsed the net, read and SENT emails, looked up callsigns, checked my back yard weather station, created shopping lists and played games on this little gadget with a 3.5" x 2.4" screen. I know its an iPod but the only mp3 files I have on it are morse code practice and learning files. I can even use it as a flashlight. To demonstrate how far and bazaar technology has become, I can download an application that will flip a virtual quarter to help me make a decision. And it only costs 99 cents! Go figure! I think I'll save 74 cents, stick to the real quarter and go back to brushing up on my code.

FAREWELL WORLDRADIO

Armond Noble, N6WR, announced in the January 2009 issue of WorldRadio that he will cease publishing the newsprint serial. He began publishing this fine magazine in 1971. He wanted to report what hams were doing as opposed to technical articles about how to build stuff. He was refereed many articles that QST turned down because QST readers wouldn't be interested. But, he published them and was a rave success. Of all the ham magazines I get, this is one of the few I read every article in and I will surely miss it coming in the mail each month. The good news is that CQ Communications, parent company of CQ Amateur Radio, Popular Communications, and CQ VHF, has bought the rights to

WorldRadio and claim that they will continue to publish it online for free and that WorldRadio will be available to all at www.cq-amateur-radio.com. They also have agreed to replace any unpublished WorldRadio issues with issues of their magazine to fulfill the WorldRadio subscriptions that are still active. There is an elaborate plan and all kind of choices, but for example I am subscribed to WorldRadio through September of 2010. Therefore CQ Communications will add 18 issues to my CQ subscription or one of their other magazine of my choice. If one wants to receive Popular Communications or CQ VHF you must let CQ Communications know, in writing or via fax by January 5. What bothers me here is that I much preferred WorldRadio over CQ and there is no news on the CQ site about the buy out. They do have a site explaining the buy out and how your subscription will be transferred

(<http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com/WorldRadioConver.html>)

but you must type it direct. There is no link, at present, from the CQ site mentioned earlier. Farewell to WorldRadio and thank you, Armond Noble, for the excellent job you have done with it.

GETTING MY SHACK IN ORDER

My new year's resolution is to get my shack and antennas back in order. I have mostly accomplished this already. I had been sharing my shack space as spare bedrooms for my kids when they come back to visit, and with antennas falling and misbehaving I haven't been on the air from inside my house for about six months.

Well, my wife had this great idea that we could knock out a wall and open a 3 foot wide by 12 foot long closet. We then subdivided the resultant space so we now have a 11 x 12 foot bedroom and a 7 x 12 foot 'radio room'. The roof slopes at a 45 degree angle but will be sitting and desk space. I replaced and separated the circuitry in the upstairs. So where we had one circuit of ungrounded old wiring to all points upstairs we now have three circuits of brand new grounded circuitry upstairs. The radio room has three outlets that are a circuit of it's own. I drilled a 1.5" hole through the North wall put in conduit to the outside and wired it with coax and an 8 gauge ground wire. The ground wire is attached to a 10 foot solid copper rod driven completely into the ground.

I still have plans for the antennas but for now I installed an HF wire and a VHF/UHF vertical. The Vertical is a Diamond x30 dual bander, that for lack of a better place for now, is on top of an 18 foot pole off the Southwest corner of my house. The HF G5RV is a better location. With the help of my daughter and my wife I hoisted and tethered, field day style, a 30 foot tower that I salvaged a couple years ago with the help of Don Russell, W8PEN. This tower is just over 100 feet north of my house. I had put a pulley at the top of the short mast to pull the wire

up but my string jumped the wheel in the pulley and the string broke as it strained my patience. At this point I could pull it all down and start over, climb a free standing tower tethered with 1/4" nylon rope or come up with a more creative solution. I rigged an old sling shot with an old fishing reel and set out to see how many shots it would take to thread the needle of the top section of the tower. I was pretty good as a kid with my slingshot, but imagine my surprise as the the sinker flew directly through the opening of choice on the very first shot. Only problem is that the singer kept on going. My monofilament broke. Off to town for some 20 pound test and home to refill the reel. Next shot was a complete miss. Third shot two sections down. The fourth shot hit the mast in the middle of the top section and ricocheted, but stayed inside the opening! I shot another line up and over the old TV antenna located on the 50 foot tower attached to the house. I attached my tie lines to the insulators, attached my coax to the balun at the base of 30 feet of ladder line and hoisted my G5RV up so that the balun is about 10 feet off the ground. Later the same day is when we had the high winds. My wind gauge measured gusts as high as 42 mph. The winds shifted the TV antenna so that my balun is only 6 feet up now, but everything else held fine. I need to get my VHF/UHF vertical higher and I want to take all the towers down refit them and back up this summer, but I think I'm good for the winter.

Hmm, time to stop writing and get on the air.

73s, EMike KC8YLD
-- E. Michael McCardel

NO CODE REQUIRED

You do not need to know Morse code to get an Amateur radio license. Learn more via www.hello-radio.org

Treasurer's Report

January 31, 2009
for Jan 1 to Jan 31, 2009

Balance on 1-1-09: \$ 2509.97

Income:
Interest: \$ 1.76
Dues: \$ 12.00

Expenses:
None

Balance on 1-31-09: \$2523.73

Designated Funds
Year 2005 Repeater Fund: \$ 701.94
Field Day Fund: \$ 133.24

Barry N8PPF

Radio-Activity

By Don Russell, W8PEN

Improvements to KD8EVR Repeater includes Echolink:



Arlin Bradford, KD8EVR and I have been busy updating the KD8EVR repeater system. Arlin has been working on improving the coverage and audio by installing a new repeater at the site. The receiver is much better and the repeater seems to have improved coverage of Knox County and surrounding areas. The audio sounds great!

At the same time, I have been busy setting up an Echolink Station to be used as an RF link to the KD8EVR Repeater. Presently, everything seems to be working and the audio sounds pretty good.

The equipment being used include a Pentium I laptop, VX-1 handheld Transceiver, and a Signal Link sound card interface.

During testing, I have made numerous contacts via Echolink on the repeater covering all the United States, Canada, and a few countries.

All are welcome to use this new Echolink system and there are a few Echolink features on this repeater system that are not being used on our 2-meter Echolink system. The reasoning is that the 2-meter repeater does not need to be tied up with local stations trying to access unknown Echolink nodes (or stations). If you know the node number of a station, you can connect to it through the 2-meter Repeater. However, you cannot connect to a random node on the 2-meter repeater system. It just ties the Repeater up for too long of a time.

The 440 Repeater, however, is ideal for a little playing around. The repeater has just a few consistent users and there is ample time for someone wishing to try connecting to random nodes. Arlin and myself are hoping that this new feature will attract a few more users. Actually, it is quite fun. Be aware though that you may need to connect and disconnect to several random nodes before you receive a reply. Just like on our repeaters, not everyone answers a station calling on echolink. Another word of warning: Connecting to random nodes and meeting new hams can be very addictive. It is way to much fun!

Here are some handy codes to remember. Entering these codes from your radio keypad performs the following operations:

Code	Result
00	Connect to a Random Node
01	Connect to a Random Link
03	Connect to a Random User
08	Echolink Status
09	Reconnect to the last Node
CXXXX	Connect to a known Node where XXXX is the Node Number.
#	Disconnect for a Station or Node.

In addition to these basic codes, there are a few speed key nodes. When connecting to these stations, one does not have to enter the "C" and Node Number. Just enter the speed key sequence:

79	K8EEN-R: Mt. Vernon, Ohio
80	K40BX-R: Hatteras Island, N.C.
82	KG8FV-R: Polk, Ohio (Ashland County)
84	W8DF-R: Battle Creek, Michigan
100:	KD8EVR: KD8EVR'S Computer

More of these speed key Nodes may be added in the future. If you find you have a favorite station to connect to just let me know and I can set up a speed key for you.

As an example, if one wished to connect to our 2-meter Repeater, K8EEN-R, one would simple key in "79" on their radios keypad (the speed key code). Echolink will respond with: "Connecting to KB2SAI link", which is the RF link to the repeater. When Echolink establishes the connection, then Echolink will announce the fact: "Connected!".

After the connection is made, one should hear the K8EEN Repeater identify itself in the usual manner: "K8EEN REPEATER!". Now you can give a call out. I usually say something like: "This is W8PEN listening via Echolink". You will hear the 2-meter Repeater courtesy beep, and then you will hear the 440 Repeater courtesy beep. If you are luck enough to have a station come back to you, then you can carry on the QSO just like you were using the 2-meter repeater directly, only you will always hear two courtesy beeps. One belongs to the 2-meter repeater, the other belongs to the 440 repeater. You need hear both courtesy beeps before you begin a transmission; otherwise, part of your transmission will be lost.

After the QSO, one needs to disconnect Echolink from the 2- meter Repeater by pressing the # (Pound) button on the keypad. Echolink will respond: "KB2SAI DISCONNECTED".

To connect to a random Node, Link, or User, simply key in the appropriate Code (00, 01, or 03). Echolink will respond with: "Connecting to XXXXX", where XXXXX is the call sign of the station being connected to. One needs to wait until Echolink establishes the connection

and says: "CONNECTED TO XXXX".

From here on, you may get a message from the connected station, a repeater call sign and courtesy beep, or nothing at all. Nothing at all does not mean you are not connected. It just means the sys op of that link has not set up an introduction.

Follow the above procedure and announce that you are monitoring: "This is W8PEN listening via echolink". If you receive no response, try again. If nothing happens after several tries, then disconnect using the # key as in the previous example and try another random code. This will allow Echolink to try connecting to a different random link. Think of it as calling "CQ" on the HF bands. Keep doing it until you get a response, or give up. It is fun and I have actually talked to a lot of stations out there. Just be prepared to retry several times until you are successful. This is why we do not want this on our 2-meter repeater. It would tie up our main repeater for too long of a time.

Follow all the same steps from the above examples to connect to a node that you already know. Just remember to press the "C" on the keypad before entering the node number. But, be sure to enter it all in sequence without stopping: CXXXX.

Please feel free to try the Echolink system on the 440 Repeater. It is open for all to use. If anyone has any difficulties, please let me know. The Echolink is under local and remote control. I do monitor most of the time. While I cannot respond to questions when at work, I do monitor and can control a situation if need be.

Have fun and enjoy this new feature of the KD8EVR Repeater.

From the President

By Arlin Bradford, KC8YLD
MVARC Club President

Hello fellow hams. Wow, winter is definitely here. As I traveled to the Cleveland airport last Wednesday on my trip to Palm Beach, Florida for work, I received a real taste of mother nature's fury. I WAS SCARED! My flight cancelled in Columbus and I decided since Cleveland was still flying that the weather was not that bad up there yet. After I was on I-71, I realized that the weather front was just in front of me heading north. It was a complete white out from Ashland to Cleveland. 20 – 40 MPH at best. Didn't have time to play radio, my mind was focused on the white backdrop in front of me. At about the 200 mile marker, I guess, couldn't see the green signs; I found a semi truck parked in the driving lane. No lights, flares, or triangles. Due to my quick reactions and a slippery road I was able to swerve left to avoid a collision. You can always tell that



your heart is fully functional after an experience like that. What is normally a 1.5 hr trip to the airport took me 3 hours. After getting to my assigned window seat on the plane, and watching the airport maintenance crews making what seemed to be a never ending battle at clearing the runway, I had a chance to monitor their radio traffic. Using my Uniden BCD396T scanner and my Yaesu FT-60 handheld, I was able to get a handle on other people's perspective of the storm. The air boss was feverishly yelling at the crews to work faster or he would have to shut down the runways till the storm passes. The FAA air traffic controllers were holding planes in the air and allowing one plane to land every 20 minutes so as the plow trucks could clear the strip. Fear set in again as we taxied to the de-icing area. Pink antifreeze liquid being sprayed on the plane, and listening to the other passengers talking about whether this safe or not. A strong prayer and faith in the pilot and crew, we were off the ground.

Arriving in Charlotte, North Carolina, and having missed my connection to Florida due to weather. I bounced back and forth between various airlines trying to get a flight into Florida. Several flight delays and cancellations, and traveling on the airports people moving walkways, I finally arrived in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. One rental car and an hour later, I arrived in Palm Beach. Thursday morning 7am sunrise on the beach and 72 degrees. I found a brief moment of paradise. The high reached 84 degrees and a beautiful blue cloudless sky. After my meetings Thursday, I decided to fly back to Ohio. Being homesick and wanting to just relax from traveling the past 24 hours on pure adrenaline, I flew back to Cleveland. When we landed Thursday at 11:45pm, the temp was a whopping 14 degrees. What a shock to my system, 70 degrees colder. Burrrrr! I was excited to get back home to Ohio and a nice warm house.



The President at Work in Florida

While I was in Florida, I made several attempts to make HAM contacts on the 2-meter and 70cm repeaters to no avail. I used my ARRL pocket repeater directory to try and locate a number of repeaters. I received several weather reports and time of days, but no QSO's. I realize that during the business hours of 9-5, most of America works. I could not believe that there was not one ham monitoring the airwaves. I know from working the MVARC K8EEN repeater, that there are a number of people that are monitoring and ever eager to answer the call of a traveling ham. My hats off to you!

As I write this, I look forward to retiring to my ham shack and start tuning in the world. Maybe make a HF contact or even a simplex vhf contact. I know that when it's cold outside, a nice warm radio, cup of hot chocolate and a warm brownie will keep me at my shack for hours. Stay warm, stay tuned in and be ever ready to answer the call.

Arlin Bradford, KD8EVR
Club President

MVARC

Mt. Vernon Amateur Radio Club Minutes for the January 12, 2009 Meeting.



By Jeff Butz, N8SMT

Attendees:

1	Don Blizzard	W8UMH
2	Arlin Bradford	KD8EVR
3	Don Bunner	KB8QPO
4	Barry Butz	N8PPF
5	Ruben Clark	KB2SAI
6	Jeff Butz	N8SMT
7	Tom Evans	KD8HSA
8	Larry Helzer, DVM	AA8WP
9	Mike McCardel	KC8YLD
10	Don Russell	W8PEN
11	Tony Spiegel	KC8UR
12	Steve Barr	KD8GRM
13	Dan Crowthers	KB8QPO
14	Virgil Shipley	MV News
15	Melissa Raines	MV News
16	Austin Godber	KD7NMS

President Bradford formally called the business meeting to order at 7:21 P.M.

The minutes were read and approved by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report: , Barry Butz, N8PPF

Interest Income:	16.48
Dues:	135.00
Donation:	10.00
Expenditure:	18.90
<u>Speaker Expense:</u>	<u>25.00</u>
Total:	2509.97

We have two Certificates of Deposit in the amount of \$768.00 and \$542.00 that come due at the end of the month. Barry said he needed direction on how long to renew them. Don Russell made a motion to renew the CD's for one year. It was seconded by Don Bunner. The motion passed by voice vote.

Old Business:

1) Knox County Fire Chiefs Association

At last month's meeting Arlin Bradford discussed becoming affiliated with the Knox County Fire Chiefs Association in order to help them raise money for smoke detectors. This month Arlin advised that the Knox County Fire Chiefs Association have partnered with the Salvation Army so it is no longer necessary for us to partner: However the Knox County Fire Chiefs Association would like to explore growing a relationship with us.

2) 501 Non-Profit organization

Barry Butz advised that we are OK with the IRS but that he believes that we are out of date with the State of Ohio and that it should be reviewed. He turned the matter over to Jeff Butz, the club secretary, to handle. Mike McCardel moved to make whatever expenditures are necessary to accomplish our registration of Incorporation with the State of Ohio. The motion was seconded by Larry Helzer and approved by voice vote.

3) Hospital Radio

Arlin Bradford reported that he didn't know if the Hospital had received it yet. It has been ordered. He will check into its status.

EC Report: Ruben Clark, KB2SAI.

Ruben said he attended the last Local Emergency Planning Committee meeting and filled out an application to join. There is a functional drill planned for the County this year that he hopes we will be involved in but he can't

give us any details at this time.

New Business:

Arlin advised that he was exploring possibilities of applying for grants from the United Way or the EMA/Homeland Security. A general discussion was had and Dan Crowthers made a motion to table the subject for the time being. The motion was seconded by Barry Butz and it was passed by voice vote.

Additional Old Business:

There was a general discussion about being able to give license tests at our discretion at club meetings. Mike McCardel advised he is still investigating the details.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 P.M.

Class Projects

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

I have been teaching a General Class license class for the past five years. The first year, I had five students, the next year 35! This year, I have only five again. Not being a pedagogical genius, it never really occurred to me until last year to give my General Class students a project to work on while we slogged through the material. Last year, some of them built little QRP kits. Not only was that fun, it was educational. Some of them had never even soldered before! Since last year's project worked out so well, I am asking this year's students to do some kind of project, but one that they choose themselves.

Here's the short list that I came up with:

- Build a kit like my students did last year.
- Build a 2m beam. At our first meeting, one of the guys noted that while he could hear a repeater about 30 miles away from his QTH, he wasn't able to hit it with the 5/8-wavelength vertical he was using. I suggest that he build a Cheap Yagi (<http://www.fredspinner.com/W0FMS/CheapYagi/vjbcy.html>). * Download some antenna simulation software and analyze a dipole or vertical antenna. MM-ANA (<http://mmhamsoft.amateur-radio.ca/mmana/index.htm>) is free and looks to be a pretty good program.
- Learn Morse Code. Being the CW geek that I am, how could I not suggest this?

I wanted to give my students a bigger choice, so I asked the readers of my blog for more suggestions: Kenneth, W6KWF, replied, "Hands down the most useful and most successful projects I've built have been 2m J-poles. I've built both the 1/2-in. copper tubing and TV line

variants, and use both as my primary antennas. The TV line one is nice because I live in an apartment, so when I need a good antenna, I tie a magnet to the top of it and stick it to my upstairs neighbor's balcony. It's a very forgiving antenna." Zeke also like the idea of building J-pole antennas. "You didn't mention the age group/groups you are working with," he said, "but have you thought about a hands-on project such as a j-pole for 2 or 6 meters. It would give them an opportunity to feel the pride that follows an involved project. Furthermore, the J-pole is a pretty good antenna." John N8ZYA, said, "I like the [idea of learning CW]. it's like learning to play the guitar or piano. A skill that can be used your entire lifetime!" Robert suggested, "How about building a 20 meter delta loop? I am very inexperienced when it comes to antenna building, but a friend suggested this for working DX on 20 meters and it worked out really well. In fact, my first contact on it was Spain!" I would love to offer my students even more choices. If you have a suggestion, please e-mail it to me at cwgeek@kb6nu.com. Thanks!

Need to Know Morse Code Diminishes?

By Don Russell, W8PEN

There has been a lot of hype about a new CW decoder program called CW Skimmer. Claims are being made that it will make using the old human ear as a decoder obsolete. DX'ers and Contesters are worried about this program creating an unfair advantage for those that are using it.

Personally, I have no problem taken advantage of software that helps me contest better. I draw the line at packet clusters and spots simply because I like to be the one searching for new stations and do not wish to be spoon fed contacts. However, a program that will copy Morse Code better than the human ear sounds too good to be true. So, of course I downloaded the trial version from:

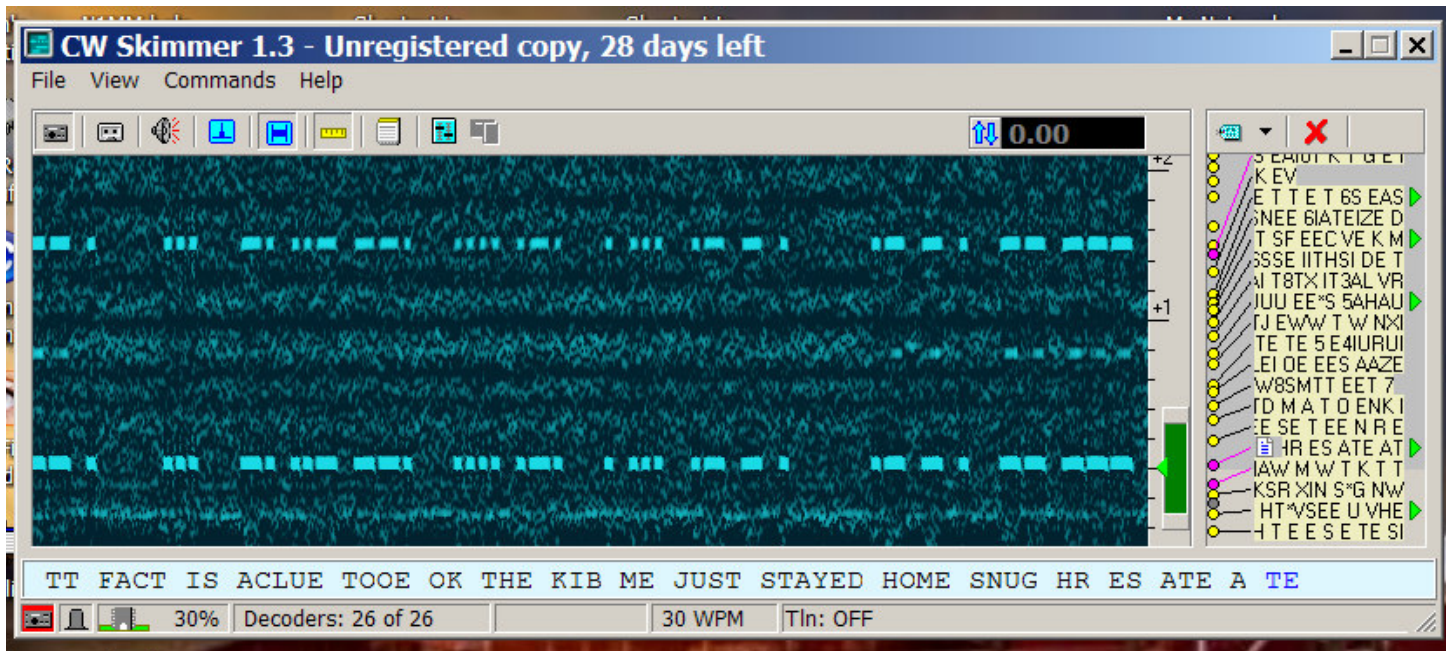
<http://www.dxatlas.com/CwSkimmer/>

After downloading the program, one may wish to visit:

<http://www.dxatlas.com/CwSkimmer/Files/Skimmerintro.pdf>

For a tutorial on how to set up and use this program.

It didn't take long after setting this program up that I decided CW Skimmer is best suited if you are using your computer to control the radio. The radio I was using was not connected to the computer so I had to do it the old way. At present, I was more interested in how well the program decoded Morse Code than its seemingly



unlimited supply of options and flexibility.

Beware: CW Skimmer ran fine on my laptop with Windows XP on it. I have been unsuccessful in getting it to run on my laptop with Vista. Same old story with Vista.....

Upon running the program, one will see a screen with a waterfall typical of other digital modes such as psk31, however, this waterfall is horizontal instead of Vertical. See the picture.

Notice that the waterfall is fast enough that you can actually decode the information by sight. This program will decode any CW signal in its pass band, up to 700 stations in a 3-Ghz pass band!

How does it decode? I would say it has the best decoder of several decoders I have looked at over the years. I have tried CW GET, which is supposed to be one of the best. I have also tried the CW mode on Ham Radio Deluxe. It was bad..... Really bad! Needed very strong signals to produce a good copy. That is a mystery because the other digital modes on Ham Radio Deluxe seem to work fantastic. With the CW Skimmer, even very weak signals are decoded accurate enough to carry on a QSO even if one had no copy skills at all. As with most Morse Code decoders though, a sloppy fist or varying code speed does not decode well at all on the CW Simmer.

Since I had a contest on the agenda, I set up CW Skimmer to decode whatever was on my transmit frequency. It did okay on the fairly weak to strong signals. Signals in the noise or just barely above the noise did not decode very well.

On thing I do not like about this program is the limited

area for decoded text. Unless I am missing something, decoded text appears to the right of the waterfall (it can be setup for callsign only, or text) and at the bottom of the screen with only one line for a selected station.

My conclusion is that this is a pretty good program that may indeed help during a DX session or even a contest. In either event, one still needs to be able to copy Morse Code if just to ensure accuracy during such sessions. Someone who does not know Morse Code can set this program up and use a keyboard that generates Morse Code and do fairly well with it. A normal QSO is not as demanding as a DX or Contest contact. You can usually fill in the blanks if some characters are not decoded correctly. As I say though, the limited space for decoded text may be a problem. One thing I found is if you point your mouse a the text, then you do get everything in a bubble. That may be the way to go.

There are many features to this program that I have not had time to check out. The only way to know if this program is right for you is to download it and see. The \$75 registration fee seems high, but it does have the best CW decoder in the market today.

**LAURA L. SMITH
NAMED TO AMATEUR
RADIO
ENFORCEMENT ROLE**
From the ARRL Letter, January 30,
2009

Laura L. Smith of Pennsylvania has been named by the FCC to fill the vacancy created when Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH,



retired in 2008 as Special Counsel for the Spectrum Enforcement Division of the FCC's Enforcement Bureau. Hollingsworth served in that position for more than 10 years as the FCC's enforcement watchdog over the Amateur Radio Service <<http://www.arrl.org/news/stories/2008/07/03/10198>>.

A 1990 graduate of the Pepperdine University School of Law, Smith began her legal career with the FCC, working in the Mass Media Bureau and Wireless Telecommunications Bureau. She also served as Deputy Division Chief of the Public Safety and Private Wireless Division. Smith is currently licensed to practice in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In 1998, Smith left the FCC to become Executive Director of Governmental Affairs for the Industrial Telecommunications Association (ITA) <<http://www.ita-relay.com/default.htm>>, now Enterprise Wireless Alliance. In that role, she monitored FCC and legislative proceedings and participated in all regulatory proceedings relevant to the private wireless industry. In 2001, Smith became ITA's President and Chief Executive Officer. While in that position, she was instrumental in the formation of the Consensus Group, a group of public safety and private wireless entities responsible for drafting the "Consensus Plan," a proposed resolution for interference in the 800 MHz band; this was adopted by the FCC in 2004.

Smith returns to the FCC after serving Of Counsel with the Maryland law firm of Shulman Rogers. While there, she dealt with telecommunications matters and provided counsel to numerous entities in the private radio and public safety communities. Smith has served as an industry consultant and written columns for a variety of trade publications including "Mobile Radio Technology Magazine" and "The Private Wireless Magazine."

In an October 2008 letter to then-FCC Chairman Kevin Martin, ARRL President Joel Harrison, W5ZN, urged Martin to name a successor to Hollingsworth: "The appointment of a replacement Special Counsel in this position is of critical importance to the Amateur Radio Service, as the delay in finalizing the appointment stands to undermine in very short order an exceptionally successful and low-cost program of enforcement in the Amateur Service."

Calling the FCC's Amateur Radio enforcement program "spectacularly successful," Harrison reminded Martin of the "long period in the late 1980s and 1990s during which the Commission was essentially uninvolved in enforcement in the Amateur Service. The Amateur Service, consisting of some 680,000 licensees of the Commission, is in essence a self-regulating service; however, due to the shared frequency allocations in the Service and the long distance propagation of amateur communications, a very few rule violators can cause severe disruption in the Service. On the other hand, even a minimal Commission presence has a very strong deterrent value."

When Hollingsworth was appointed as Special Counsel for Amateur Radio Enforcement, Harrison said that Hollingsworth "established a visible presence in the Service and very quickly, and with very little investment of Commission resources, using little more than the awareness of an enforcement presence, created strong deterrence against rule violations."

Upon learning of Smith's move to the Amateur Radio enforcement role, Harrison remarked that he was "very pleased to see the Commission move forward with the hiring

of a new Special Counsel responsible for enforcement of the Amateur Radio Service rules. Ever since Riley Hollingsworth announced his retirement, we have met with the Enforcement Chief numerous times and corresponded with FCC Chairman Martin to ensure this position remains intact at FCC. The Commission acknowledges the self-regulating environment we maintain, but also understands that we need their assistance occasionally to resolve a few situations. They have continually reassured us that this is an important matter for them, and Ms Smith's hiring confirms that."

ARRL Expands Member Access to QST Archive:

ARRL is pleased to announce that online access to the QST archive <<http://www.arrl.org/members-only/qstsearch.html>> will be expanded. Beginning February 1, 2009, ARRL members will be able to search and view QST -- from December 1915 through December 2005 right from their computer. With an additional year -- 2005 -- added to the viewable archive, this valuable benefit is available to all ARRL members.

As an added benefit, ARRL Diamond Club members at the Brass level and above -- as well as ARRL Maxim Society members -- will be able to get images from the entire QST archive, right up through December 2008, an additional three years <<http://www.arrl.org/diamondclub>>.

According to ARRL Chief Development Officer Mary Hobart, K1MMH, this is the first new benefit that has been added to the Diamond Club since the Diamond Terrace opened in 2007. "Given the popularity of the QST online archive," Hobart said, "I hope that Diamond Club members and the Maxim Society members will enjoy exclusive access to the most recent four years of QST with our appreciation for their generosity. Perhaps the expanded QST viewable archive will inspire other ARRL members to participate in the Diamond Club and enjoy the other benefits available to Diamond Club members, as well."

The online archive was first introduced to members in fall 2008, providing PDF copies of articles from the huge QST archive, from December 1915 through December 2004. Since then, thousands of members have enjoyed searching, viewing and printing their favorite articles, projects and more. The membership benefit is a service of the ARRL Technical Information Service (TIS) <<http://www.arrl.org/tis/>>.

Access to the archive is free for ARRL members. QST is the official journal of ARRL, the national association for Amateur Radio. An interest in Amateur Radio is the only essential qualification of membership. ARRL membership is \$39 per year in the US. For a complete list of membership benefits and dues, please visit the ARRL Membership Web page <<http://www.arrl.org/join>>.



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The ARRL letter is a weekly e-mail publication by the ARRL. You may read the entire ARRL letter by visiting the ARRL Web page at <http://www.arrl.org/>. **Other News** from: <http://ky4ky.com/fyi.htm>.

The ARES E-Letter is an e-mail digest of news and information of interest to active members of the ARRL Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES). Past issues of The ARES E-Letter are available at <http://www.arrl.org/ares-el/>. Issues are posted to this page after publication.

Project OSCAR is a monthly column written for Newsletter Editors. Columns will appear as space permits. You may download all the columns yourself at: <http://www.projectoscar.net/beacon.php>

Members are encouraged to send articles pertaining to ham radio, with an emphasis on local activities, equipment reviews, and personal experience to w8pen@arrl.net or Don Russell, W8PEN, 815 Brookwood Road, Mt. Vernon, Ohio 43050

Membership Form

Club dues run from Jan. 1 until Dec. 31 and are collected during the last quarter of the year. You can mail in the dues to the address below or bring them to a meeting. Dues are prorated for new members at the time of application. Visit our Web Page at www.mvarc.net

Dues Schedule: \$12 regular

\$10 for second member in the same family, for those over 65 yrs. of age, and for those living outside Knox County

Mt. Vernon Amateur Radio Club, P.O. Box 372, Mt. Vernon, OH 43050

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Members are entitled to a free MVARC E-Mail address. Would you like one? No _____ Yes _____

If yes please enter password _____