

Hamfest Calendar

Feb 2-3 Jackson MS
Feb 9-11 Orlando FL
Feb 24 LaPorte IN
Mar 10 Terre Haute IN
Mar 11 Sterling IL
Apr 14 TCARC Auction

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VE Exams

24 Feb 2007 W5YI/VEC
Richland Community College
1:00 PM Salon 2

25-Feb-2007 VCARA ARRL/VEC
1:30 PM (Walk-ins allowed)
JOSH D KITTLE (217)431-9472
VCARA CLUBHOUSE
HARRISON PARK WEST ADDITION
TAKE WEST WILLIAM ST TO WOODBURY HILL RD
DANVILLE, IL 61832

10-Mar-2007 WVARA HAMFEST
11:00AM (Walk-ins allowed)ARRL/VEC
D STEVEN SHORTER (812)232-4788
WABASH VALLEY FAIRGROUNDS
3901 S US HIGHWAY 41TERRE HAUTE, IN

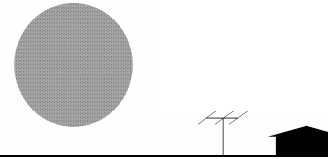
15-Apr-2007 TWIN CITY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
1:00 PM (Walk-ins allowed) ARRL/VEC
DEBRA J FLIGOR (217)244-4446
UNIV OF IL FIRE SERVICE INST
11 GERTY DR CHAMPAIGN, IL 61820

Twin City Amateur Radio Club

Champaign-Urbana, Illinois

February 2007

Milt Forsberg K9QZI, Editor



Meeting February 13

Our next meeting of the Twin City Amateur Radio Club is Tuesday, February 13, at the UI Fire Institute at 7:00 p.m.

We have an outstanding program arranged for this meeting. Ethan Miller, K8GU, a Graduate Student at the UI, will make a presentation on his studies of the Ionosphere. This should be a fascinating evening and we look forward to an introduction to the Ionosphere.

To get to the Fire Institute, go south on First Street from the Assembly Hall to the UI Credit Union - that is Gerty. Go West on Gerty to the end of the street. You will be in the Fire Institute parking lot. We are in one of the classrooms inside.

The Board meets the Thursday prior to the club meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the UI Fire Institute. Please note that this is a change from our past board meeting locations. All members are welcome to attend.

TCARC Auction is April 14 – Mark your calendars now! It is the same place as last year, the Windsor Road Christian Church. Doors open at 11, the auction starts at 1 pm.

2007 Dues

Thanks to everyone who paid their dues. Several still are unpaid. Please send your check if you are not current for 2007. We need everyone's support.

Morse Code Dropped It's Official!

On January 24, the Federal Register carried the announcement of the FCC dropping the code requirement for testing for all Amateur Radio licenses. This means that February 23 is the effective date of the rule. Anyone holding a non-expired CSCE for General or Extra Class may upgrade starting then merely by presenting the CSCE at a VE Exam Session and completing the FCC forms. The normal \$14 exam fee is still required. Operating privileges for Technicians will change that day to permit all Technicians to operate all frequencies previously restricted to Technicians With Code. No license change is necessary for this.

TCARC Officers and Board Members

President Bob Minton WA9KGU 352-4859
Vice President Ralph Cox W9PGE 396-5111
Secretary Wayne Hamilton AB9FJ 384-4310
Treasurer Milt Forsberg K9QZI 352-5075

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Ben Fisher K9BF 351-7655

VE Coordinator

Debbie Fligor N9DN 244-4446

Website

www.qsl.net/w9seh

Good Connections

By Pat Curtin, N9GOC

It helps to be well connected, and as some may have gathered from conversations on the 444.100 machine, I am sometimes far from being well connected. One such example of a poor connection occurred on my recent trip (early January 2007) to California and beyond. While my wife was driving through a gorgeous mountain pass, not too far from Alamogordo, New Mexico, an unbelievable gust of wind pushed through the pass and sent the antenna and its mag mount flying off the car. Luckily there was not another car in sight, so my wife slammed on the brakes, put the car into reverse, and backed up. I, of course, was in a daze, having not much of a clue as to what had just happened. I'm a bit slow on the uptake. But just about the same time Donna stopped the car and got out to find the antenna, I was up to speed on what had happened, and I got out to help.

As one might imagine, I was almost no help at all. She was risking life and limb to pick up the parts. Meanwhile, I was thinking about all the contacts I would not be making. After only a few seconds she proudly handed me the parts and said. "I think that is everything." My fingers traced along the bent stinger. There was at least a forty-five degree bend between the whip and the rest of the antenna. Small chunks of fiberglass were missing from the lower part of the Outbacker. The magnet was splintered in many pieces but was somehow held together by its magnetism. On one side of the mount was a small hole where the coax cable had once been connected. It was a disaster. I thought as I looked up and said, "Where's the little rubber boot that was wrapped around the bottom of the magnet?" "How should I know?", she said. "I've collected all these parts out here in the middle of no where and you're worried about a little rubber boot?" I must have had a look on my face that indicated I was indeed very worried about that little rubber boot. After all, I thought, it wasn't my little rubber boot. It belonged to KA9IBS.

Donna's eyes began to dart back and forth. She was scanning the miles and miles of emptiness before us. Suddenly she took off running. When she was about one hundred yards from the car, she stopped, picked something up, and came running back to me. "Here's your silly boot" she said. "Let's get going."

Later that day I spoke with Earl (W9CGZ) on the phone. Together we came up with a plan to get me back on the air. Earl said he would order a new mag mount and have it sent to Dean's house. Dean (KG6QR), one of the long-standing members of the "Illini Net", was one of the people I intended to visit on our vacation. The idea of sending a new mount to Dean's seemed like a good plan. Later that day, during the "Illini Net", the members of the group talked about my dilemma. One member, Bob (KA6LSL) pointed out one small problem. "What if the Outbacker is broken?" He said. "Getting a new mount wouldn't do any good." He was correct of course. The plans were modified. Bob told Earl that he would make the 80-mile drive from Yuma to Quartzsite, Arizona, and meet us as we passed through on our way to California. He would analyze the antenna and let Earl know if it made sense to order the new mount. Donna and I met Bob in a parking lot on the outskirts of Quartzsite. He straightened the stainless steel whip. Then he threaded the antenna on to a mount on his pick up truck, and began to analyze its performance. After a while he declared, "It's good to go. I'll let Earl know that the antenna works and he can order the new mount." The three of us talked for a time, and then we were on our way.

Our vacation to California was interrupted by a vacation to Hawaii. We spent six days on Maui visiting with yet another "Illini Net" member. Jack (W1TEC), and his wife Mari Beth were our hosts. They showed us everything in a very short time. We saw a baby whale that weighted fifteen thousand pounds. It was only a few days old. We saw a volcano and looked down into its crater. We saw beautiful beaches with people surfing. And, for some reason, we didn't think too much about the Illini Net.

However, while I suffered in eighty-five degree temperatures, others worked to get me back on the air. The new antenna mount arrived at Dean's and he put the antenna and the mount together and had it ready to go when Donna and I arrived at his house. Dean's son Carl (KE6FOA) helped me trim the Outbacker for best SWR and then we were set for the long trip home.

I won't bore you with details of a perilous trip through one of the biggest ice storms we have seen in years. But I will report that at one point in time, not too far from Abilene Texas, the new mount and its old antenna were covered with almost an inch of ice. To my amazement, during the time the Outbacker was encased in ice, its performance was outstanding. Maybe we just had good band conditions. The ham radio part of the trip would not have been possible unless there were all kinds of good connections. Earl and Dean and Bob and Carl worked together to keep me on the air. Many other hams, particularly those who check into the "Displaced Peorians Net" (14.24750mhz) kept track of us along the way. They offered encouragement and advice and they literally got us through the rest of the trip. Donna and I would like to thank all the amateur radio operators who helped us. Without a doubt, they were the good connections.

2 Meter FM Challenge

On Sunday, January 28, the 2 Meter FM Challenge happened from 8 to 9 pm, using 2 meter simplex frequencies. Everyone participating had a great time! 3 rovers appeared, driving from town to town, giving all the other operators multipliers for points. Each town counted as a multiplier, so rovers could be contacted each time they entered another town. Participants scored a point for each contact with a different station in each location. This means that fixed stations could contact each other only one time, but rovers were considered a new station in each town they traveled. Rovers have their own scoring system, giving them multipliers for the towns they visited.

The rovers were KC9JVY, Adam, W9SZ, Zack, and KF8ZN, Mike. KC9DUU was the driver for Adam, but only Adam operated the radio. By heading in different directions, they provided everyone with at least a dozen towns that would not have been in the contest. Towns such as Mayview, Flatville, Dillsburg, and Penfield were included. At least two dozen amateurs participated. It was a lot of activity crammed into a small portion of the band in one short hour. The contacts seemed to congregate on only a few frequencies. Possibly more contacts could have been made had everyone spread out a little. We did hear from towns like Danville, Tilton and Clinton. Operators used everything from 100-watt stations, antennas up 400 feet, to an HT supposedly in the basement. The power and type of radio determined categories so the high power stations didn't compete for points against lower power or HTs. Logs must be submitted to Zack, W9SZ, no later than 11:59 pm on Monday February 12, 2007. For all the rules and scoring details, go to the TCARC web page at www.qsl.net/w9seh or the K9CU web page at www.qsl.net/k9cu. The web pages are running again. Unfortunately, the qsl.net system was down over the weekend.

We thank everyone for participating. The rovers get a big thanks as they made the contest much more exciting!

Last Morse Code Exam for TCARC

Our TCARC VE Team held an exam session on January 21. 6 upgraded or earned a new license. Mark Joseph, KC9DUU, passed the Morse Code Exam for upgrade. He has the honor of being the last person to take the code test with the TCARC team. Congratulations Mark!

Next TCARC VE Exam April 15

Our next exam session is Sunday, April 15. We discussed holding a special session for upgrades, but there are several sessions in our area already scheduled close to the rule change date, so we will only hold our regular session in April.