

The SPARK GAP



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NEXT MEETING

The November meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 7, 2006. You are welcome to join all who want to have dinner, ordering off the Connell's II menu, at 6:00 P.M. The meeting will follow dinner at 7:00 P.M.

OCTOBER MINUTES (Summary)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM CDT by President Bert Spangler, W9ZZI. The secretary's minutes of the September 5, 2006, meeting were read and approved. The Treasurers report, which showed a \$ 901.91 balance in the check book was read and accepted.

Old Business included a rundown of:

- future programs (November 7, 2006 APRS / GPS and December 5, 2006 PSK 31);
- a tentative date for our Tail Gate event on August 18th, 2007;
- an update on our application for Tax Exempt status;
- a new Conflict of Interest Policy;

- results of the recent FOX HUNT (Joe & Sue Eide took first place); and
- an announcement concerning the ECARC Christmas party which we have all been invited to attend.

New Business included the planning of a Red Cross "Damage Assessment" class with interested Hams from CVARC, ECARC, possibly Dunn County and others as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM and was followed by an exciting program on Radio Astronomy presented by Pete Peloquin KC9NYI. Individuals interested in additional information or volunteering at Hobbs Observatory should contact Pete. The National Weather Service was reporting a Doppler generated Tornado Warning headed East from Menomonie as the program was being presented!

AMERICAN RED CROSS

(From October 27 issue of the ARRL Letter)

ARRL PRESIDENT AIRS CONCERNS ABOUT REQUIRED RED CROSS BACKGROUND CHECKS.

ARRL President Joel Harrison, W5ZN, is urging Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and other ham radio volunteers to tread cautiously when submitting information for background checks the American Red Cross (ARC) now requires. The ARC, with which the ARRL has a Statement of Understanding (SoU) <<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/mou/redcro.html>>, this summer notified local chapters that volunteers and staff members must submit to criminal background checks by October 31. Harrison says the requirement extends to ARES volunteers

who support Red Cross disaster relief efforts. In a statement <<http://www.arrrl.org/FandES/field/RC-Background-Checks0610.pdf>> October 24, Harrison said the League recommends that anyone submitting personal information for a background check very carefully read what they are giving the ARC permission to collect.

"The Red Cross is requiring volunteers to grant permission for more than just a criminal background check," Harrison asserted. "They are also requiring permission to draw a consumer and/or investigative consumer report on the volunteer." Harrison said that could also include credit and mode-of-living checks. "The Red Cross has stated that they will not use credit reports," he noted. "Requiring that volunteers authorize the procurement of a credit report is inconsistent with this assurance." The ARC has contracted with MyBackground-Check.com LLC (MBC) to handle the on-line background checks. Prospective volunteers visit a secure, encrypted Web site <<http://www.ybackgroundcheck.com/>>, click on the ARC logo and submit name, address, Social Security number (or other acceptable government ID), telephone number, and date of birth. The Red Cross says the overall results of the background check are not shared with the ARC.

In the course of applying, prospective volunteers must agree to let MBC obtain a wide range of personal information bearing not just on criminal background and creditworthiness but, MBC says, character, general reputation [and] personal characteristics." MBC advises, "The nature and scope of this disclosure and authorization is all-encompassing . . ."

The Red Cross says its new policy is aimed at safeguarding clients, volunteers and employees alike. "Unfortunately, in this day and age it is critical that the American Red Cross and other agencies, employers and organizations

perform due diligence in researching the people who will represent them," the ARC said in a statement supplied to ARRL.

The ARC apparently has not disseminated policy specifics at the national level. The only reliable information on what the background checks will entail is that on the MBC site. Various chapter-level memoranda the ARRL has obtained contain conflicting information about the program.

ARRL Field and Educational Services Manager Dave Patton, NN1N, whose department supports the ARRL Field Organization, who is among those who believes the Red Cross stands to lose a fair number of volunteers because of the requirement -- and not necessarily just ARES volunteers.

"ARES members who are providing communications for ARC are working for ARC," Patton maintained, "and, as such, will follow their guidelines." He said the decision to go along with the new Red Cross policy is up to individual volunteers.

The SoU between the League and the ARC is ambiguous as to whether ARES members become Red Cross volunteers when supporting the ARC. While the document says "each organization retains its own identity in providing service," it further stipulates that ARES volunteers "in such cases when the operators are required to carry American Red Cross identification" must register as American Red Cross volunteers. The SoU does not address the issue of background checks, however. The SoU comes up for review in 2007.

Radio amateurs who volunteered in the wake of Hurricane Katrina last year and following 9/11 in New York City were badged through as ARC volunteers. The practice still upsets some ARES volunteers.

Contact the Red Cross (toll-free 800-507-3960) with any questions regarding the background check program.

INTERESTING ARTICLE

Geophysical Institute

Many hams, especially those who chase dx, are interested in sunspots and how they relate to radio propagation. There is a very interesting web site maintained by the Geophysical Institute of the University of Alaska at Fairbanks that has a lot of information about the subject. Their motto is "Turning observation into information, from the center of the earth to the center of the sun." There's a lot of information to help you learn more about atmospheric sciences, and also a lot of observational data available on the site. They deal not only with atmospheric sciences, but also with seismology, space physics and aeronomy, volcanology and other areas of science.

One of the more interesting things they provide is their "Aurora Alert" service. You can list your e-mail address with them and they will send you an e-mail message alerting you to predicted aurora displays in your area. If this interests you, take a look at: <http://www.gi.alaska.edu/#>

FCC R&O . . .

FCC "OMNIBUS" REPORT AND ORDER CONTAINS PLUSES, MINUSES AND ERRORS. (From October 20 issue of the ARRL Letter)

The FCC's recent Report and Order (R&O) in WT Docket 04-140 seems to offer something for just about every sector of the Amateur Radio community, but it's not without shortcomings. Most appear to be unintended consequences stemming from the FCC's arguably

too-generous allocation of 75 meter phone spectrum to Amateur Extra class licensees. The FCC indicated it was only doing what the ham radio community said it wanted.

"Indeed, a number of commenters argue that the NPRM (Notice of Proposed Rule Making) proposal to increase the amount of spectrum permitted for voice communications would still not meet the demand for voice communication in the HF bands, particularly in the 80 meter band," the FCC said in the R&O released October 10. Several radio amateurs filing comments justified extending the phone allocation further into the CW band, the FCC continued, citing their arguments that the CW band is "grossly underused and represents a huge waste in spectrum."

Once the new rules go into effect, the 75 meter phone band will span 3800 to 4000 kHz for Generals, 3700 to 4000 kHz for Advanced-class licensees (ARRL had requested 3750 to 4000 kHz), and 3600 to 4000 kHz for Amateur Extras (ARRL had requested 3725 to 4000 kHz). Far more modest phone expansions were the rule for 40 and 15 meters, the other affected bands.

But the ample 75 meter Amateur Extra class phone allocation not only effectively reduces the amount of 80-meter spectrum available for CW, RTTY and data, it actually eliminates Advanced and General class access on any mode to certain segments where they now have privileges. Sensitive to fallout from the "incentive licensing" debacle of the late 1960s, the FCC in the past has indicated it wouldn't let that kind of thing happen again.

In the runup to the April 2000 license restructuring, the FCC assured that any pending changes would not take away any incumbent licensee's privileges, and it carefully avoided doing so in its restructuring R&O. In applauding the ARRL's "refarming" proposal in this

docket's NPRM, the FCC pointed out that "as proposed, no licensees would lose any spectrum privileges." Nonetheless that's just what happened: Generals lose 150 kHz of CW/data spectrum on 80 meters but gain 50 kHz of phone spectrum on 75. They also lose 25 kHz of CW/data spectrum on 40 meters but gain 50 kHz of phone privileges on that band. Factoring in another 25 kHz of phone spectrum on 15 meters that's an overall gain of 125 kHz of phone spectrum offset by an overall loss of 175 kHz of CW/data spectrum -- or a net loss of 50 kHz in spectrum privileges.

Advanced licensees also lose 150 kHz of CW/data spectrum on 80 meters but gain 75 kHz of phone spectrum on 75. They also lose 25 kHz of CW/data spectrum on 40 meters but gain 25 kHz of phone spectrum there. That's an overall loss of 175 kHz of CW/data spectrum offset by an overall gain of 100 kHz of phone spectrum (25 kHz less than Generals). The net loss in Advanced privileges works out to 75 kHz (25 kHz greater than Generals).

The new rules are "nothing but net" for Novice and Tech Plus (Technician with Element 1 credit) licensees. These licensees take home a whopping 250 kHz of additional CW spectrum (CW/data on 10 meters).

The R&O contains several apparent mistakes, too. For example, in §97.301(d) the 80 meter row should read 3.525-3.600 MHz for all three ITU regions. In §97.305(c), the frequencies in the first line for 40 meters should read 7.000-7.100 MHz. The FCC will fix these errors when the "official" R&O text appears in the Federal Register later this fall.

Other corrections may prove more troublesome. Creating a humongous 75 meter phone band for Extras effectively, but apparently inadvertently, deleted the only 80 meter segment where automatically controlled

digital stations may operate -- 3620 to 3635 kHz. The new rules no longer permit RTTY and data there, however.

In addition, the FCC accommodated the inclusion of images in data transmissions by defining a range of image emission types as "data" and limiting them to 500 Hz bandwidth in the RTTY/data sub-bands. Unfortunately, it did so in a way that also limits J2D emissions -- data sent by modulating an SSB transmitter -- to 500 Hz bandwidth.

HUMOR

Flyers and spectators----Enjoy!

In his book, "Sled Driver", SR-71 Blackbird pilot Brian Shul writes:

"I'll always remember a certain radio exchange that occurred one day as Walt (my back-seater) and I were screaming across Southern California 13 miles high. We were monitoring various radio transmissions from other aircraft as we entered Los Angeles airspace. Though they didn't really control us, they did monitor our movement across their scope.

I heard a Cessna ask for a readout of its ground speed. "90 knots" Center replied. Moments later, a Twin Beech required the same. "120 knots," Center answered. We weren't the only ones proud of our ground speed that day as almost instantly an F-18 smugly transmitted, "Ah, Center, Dusty 52 requests ground speed readout." There was a slight pause, then the response, "525 knots on the ground, Dusty." Another silent pause. As I was thinking to myself how ripe a situation this was, I heard a familiar click of a radio transmission coming from my back-eater. It was at that precise moment I realized Walt and I had become a real crew, for we were both thinking in unison. "Center, Aspen 20, you got a ground speed readout

for us?" There was a longer than normal pause. . . . "Aspen, I show 1,742 knots" (That's about 2004.658 mph for those who don't know). No further inquiries were heard on that frequency.

In another famous SR-71 story, Los Angeles Center reported receiving a request for clearance to FL 600 (60,000ft). The incredulous controller, with some disdain in his voice, asked, "How do you plan to get up to 60,000 feet? The pilot (obviously a sled driver), responded, "We don't plan to go up to it; we plan to go down to it." He was cleared.

The pilot was sitting in his seat and pulled out a .38 revolver. He placed it on top of the instrument panel, and then asked the navigator, "Do you know what I use this for?" The navigator replied timidly, "No, what's it for?" The pilot responded, "I use this on navigators who get me lost!" The navigator proceeded to pull out a .45 and place it on his chart table. The pilot asked, "What's that for?" "To be honest sir," the navigator replied, "I'll know we're lost before you will."

When Hillary Clinton visited Iraq last month the Army Blackhawk helicopter used to transport the Senator was given the call sign "broomstick one". And they say the Army has no sense of humor!

Tower: "Delta 351, you have traffic at 10'clock, 6 miles!" Delta 351: "Give us another hint! We have digital watches!"

One day the pilot of a Cherokee 180 was told by the tower to hold short of the runway while a MD80 landed. The MD80 landed, rolled out, turned around, and taxied back past the Cherokee. Some quick-witted comedian in the MD80 crew got on the radio and said, "What a cute little plane. Did you make it all by yourself?" Our hero the Cherokee pilot, not about to let the insult go by, came back with: "I made it out of MD80 parts. An-

other landing like that and I'll have enough parts for another one."

There's a story about the military pilot calling for a priority landing because his single-engine jet fighter was running "a bit peaked." Air Traffic Control told the fighter jock that he was number two behind a B-52 that had one engine shut down. "Ah," the pilot remarked, "the dreaded seven-engine approach."

A student became lost during a solo cross-country flight. While attempting to locate the aircraft on radar, ATC asked, "What was your last known position?" Student: "When I was number one for takeoff."

Taxiing down the tarmac, the 757 abruptly stopped, turned around and returned to the gate. After an hour-long wait, it finally took off. A concerned passenger asked the flight attendant, "What was the problem?" "The pilot was bothered by a noise he heard in the engine," explained the flight attendant, "and it took us a while to find a new pilot."

"Flight 2341, for noise abatement turn right 45 degrees." "But Center, we are at 35,000 feet. How much noise can we make up here?" "Sir, have you ever heard the noise a 747 makes when it hits a 727?"

NETS/FREQS/TIMES

- Badger Weather Net 3.985 - 0600
- Badger Emergency Net 3.985 - Noon
- Wisconsin Side Band Net 3.985 - 1715/1730
- ARES/RACES 3.977.5 - Sun - 1800

AREA REPEATERS

Albertville (link)	442.800	110.9
Albertville	444.350	110.9
Chippewa Falls	147.375	110.9
Eau Claire	146.91	110.9
Eau Claire	147.24	110.9

Eau Claire	443.300	110.9
Holcombe	145.47	110.9
Holcombe (link)	147.345	136.5
Holcombe	444.525	110.9
Menomonie	146.61	110.9
Osseo	145.33	110.9
Osseo	444.200	110.9

CVARC OFFICERS

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