

Chicago FM Club Squelch Tale - August 2001

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THE PRESIDENT COMMENTS

The last few weeks have really been a challenge for many of us. The heat and humidity have really taken their toll on all of us, but there's another challenge just 7 weeks away. That's right you guessed it, Radio Expo 2001.

The first Wednesday in September will be our last Radio Expo meeting; it seems just like yesterday we began planning for it. Here's where all the planning comes into play. The major things, like the contract for the fair grounds, table layout, and a number of other things are all taken care of. It's you the members turn to do your share. We will need people through out the hamfest for set up, take down, watching the gate, security for the buildings, and running various errands. So spare some time for the club, give us a call on the Ham Help Line (773-262-6773).

Please be advised that due to the untimely death of Art (AD9O) there will be a special election for the office of Vice President this month. Nominations will be accepted till August 8, 2001. Please attend this important meeting and cast your vote.

I hope the summer has been a fun one for all of you and I'm looking forward to seeing you all at our next General Meeting.

73 de Phil, N9PA

MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting of The Chicago FM Club will be held at 8:00 PM in the Edgebrook Field House which is located at 6100 N. Central Avenue. The entrance is on the west side of the street between Cauldwell and Elston Avenues. Just so you won't get confused, the address on the entrance is 5900 N. Central. As always, CFMC's general meetings are held the third Wednesday of the month which will make this meeting date August 15th. Again, there will be a special election for the vacant office of Vice President at this meeting. As usual, our Refreshment Chairman Howard, N9KTW will have coffee and donuts available after the meeting. See you at the meeting and don't forget to bring a friend!

Silent Keys

Peggy Pearson, KD9ZG member of CFMC and XYL of Bob, KD9ZH

Harry Forgan, N9HTV a long time member of CFMC.

Betty Reich, K9QV (ex WD9GQV)

Let us pray to our God for them for they will be remembered and missed.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Membership Renewals

The following CFMC members renewed during the month of July;

KB9AJM N9ALE WB9CAN N9FA W9GI N9HNQ WW9K KF9MY K9OHT KB9RAP N9TQA W9TUD K9YWF

The following former members chose not to renew;

KB9JDV KD9ZH WA9ZBW WD9DVV

New Member

The Officers and Board of Directors of the Chicago FM Club would like to welcome the following new member voted in at the July General Meeting;

K9EH Kermit Turner

JULY BOARD MEETING

The July Board meeting of the Chicago FM Club was held at the Menu Restaurant. Those in attendance were;

N9PA K9FFY WA9KXZ WA9FTS KA9HHH N9KTW KG9MC KA9R KU9Z W9EG ARLINE

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

Secretary K9FFY

The minutes of the May Board meeting as printed in Squelch Tale were accepted with no corrections or additions.

Treasurer WA9KXZ

Gerry passed out his report (look elsewhere in Squelch Tale) and discussed some of the items. We are running a deficit due to the expenses of Radio Expo.

Technical

The phone line on the 440 MHz repeater is still not in working order. It will be looked into.

New Business

With the passing of Art, AD9O, there is an opening on the Board of Directors. The Board nominated Gerry Spearman, W9EG, for the position of Vice President. The nominations will remain open through the business portion of the July general meeting. The election of Vice President of the Chicago FM Club will be held at the August General Meeting.

A discussion was held about creating an ongoing Scholarship Fund with the ARRL in memory of all of our CFMC member who are "Silent Keys". In further Board actions:

Howard, N9KTW, was made Trustee of the repeater.

We are in search of someone to be Technical Chairman. If you have an interest in helping out, please let Phil, N9PA know.

The rest of the evening was devoted to Radio Expo business.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.

HELP WANTED

NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

WILL TRAIN

The Chicago FM Club is looking for a few good men and women to be trained as slave labor for this year's Radio Expo. The pay is lousy but the benefits are worse. No kidding, now is your chance to help out on a Club project that we all benefit from. If you don't know by now, ALL the nice new toys, the receive site packages, new antennas, receivers, pre-amps, etc etc come directly from the monies that the Club generates from Radio Expo! If you would just donate an hour or two to the weekend of Radio Expo '01 to help out, then when the new equipment works great, you can say that you were part of that.

We need help setting up Thursday and Friday , and during the days of Radio Expo. On Sunday after Expo is over and tear-down begins, more help is needed. The really disgusting work such as garbage removal and cleaning of the washroom facilities will be handled by the fair ground people.

The Expo Workers Dinner held later in the year is but one way the Club can show its appreciation for all the hard work that goes into Expo. If you can help out in any small or large way, PLEASE give us a call and place your name on our list of workers. The Ham-Help Line phone number is 773-262-6773

DZV'S DITS AND BITS by Tim, WD9DZV

W9DXCC convention set for September: The 49th Annual W9DXCC convention will be September 14 and 15 at the Holiday Inn, Rolling Meadows, Illinois.

ARRL RF Safety Committee Chairman Greg Lapin, N9GL, will discuss "RF Safely and Your Linear," and ARRL Central Division Dick Isely, W9GIG, and Vice-Director Howie Huntington, K9KM will lead the ARRL Forum, which will include former 9-Lander Dave Patton, NT1N, who is among those at HQ involved with the ARRL Logbook of the World project. Jim O'Connell, W9WU, will represent the ARRL DX Advisory Committee. Of course, there will be DXCC card checking. More details and registration is available at the W9DXCC Web site, <<http://www.qth.com/w9dxcc>> or via e-mail from Bill Smith, W9VA <w9va@aol.com>.

DX news e-mail address: A new e-mail address has been established for amateurs to submit DX news for the W1AW DX bulletin. The e-mail address is dx-news@arrl.org.

LOGBOOK OF THE WORLD

Fast on the heels of approval of the "Logbook of the World" by the ARRL Board of Directors, software design to support the electronic contact-verification program is continuing apace. ARRL Membership Services Manager and LOTW Project Manager, Wayne Mills, N7NG, said the ARRL hopes soon to make LOTW software modules available to vendors for incorporation into their logging programs. These modules are being developed as part of the Trusted QSL open-source project headed by Darryl Wagoner, WA1GON. (More information about the Trusted QSL project can be found at "sourceforge.net/projects/trustedqsl")

"We have been in touch with 15 or so developers of popular logging software," Mills said. "We're also looking at providing a basic, do-it-yourself program to get contact data to ARRL."

At the heart of the Logbook of the World concept is a huge repository of log data provided by operators, from individual DXers and contesters to major DXpeditions, and maintained by ARRL. Mills says the system will benefit big and little guns alike by providing quick QSO credit for awards offered by ARRL, and, it's hoped, for awards offered by other organizations as well.

Once it becomes available, which could be as early as the middle of next year, Logbook of the World will accept authenticated data directly from computerized logs via the Internet. "This is an e-mail based system that uses easy-to-obtain digital signatures for authentication," Mills said. "Once you get your digital certificate, a few keystrokes will do the trick."

Mills said the program envisions user access to the LOTW "confirmed database" so an operator can see what "matches" turn up, such as confirmation of new DXCC entities, states or grid squares. "We'll also publish a list of logs that have been submitted," he said, adding that operators may access the LOTW database once they've uploaded their own log data.

Heading up software development is ARRL Electronic Publications Manager Jon Bloom, KE3Z, along with Web Applications Developer, Mark Simcik, WA1VVB. Software specifications already have been established. Advising the project are Darryl Wagoner, WA1GON, Dick Green, WC1M and Ted Demopoulos, KR1G. ARRL staffer and well-known contester and DXer Dave Patton, NT1N, who conducted the original electronic QSL project study, is also assisting.

Mills said that he hopes to be able to announce a specific inauguration date for Logbook of the World within a few months, as the software design progresses.

GLASS OF MILK

Somebody left half a glass of milk next to the keyboard.

The Optimist: The glass is half full.

Pessimist: The glass is half empty.

Futurist: The milk's in the wrong half of the glass.

Pascal programmers: Well, what type of milk is it?

C Programmers: No thanks; I drink straight from the jug.

Assembly programmers: No thanks; I drink straight from the cow.

Basic programmers: No thanks; I'm still nursing.

Fuzzy logic guys: I may or may not have drunk some part of that milk.

Prolog programmers: I know I drank it — just don't ask me how.

Non-procedural language programmers: I drank it when nobody was looking.

UI designers: What's that crap in my glass?

Pentium users: I drank Glass * .49999999 . . . but don't hold me to that.

Windows users: Where's my straw?

Mac users: Where's my pump?

UNIX users: Nahh . . . too easy.

Shareware game author: That glass is free; the next one you have to pay for.

Security consultant: Where'd the rest of the milk go?

CIA: What makes you think that's milk?

NSA: We know what it really is.

Copy protection crazies: Somebody drank half my milk and didn't pay for it!

Free Software Foundation: That milk is the cow's contribution to all mankind!

Schroedinger: That damned cat got into the milk again!

Bill Gates: Not enough market share to be Microsoft Milk.

Apple Computer: You guys really oughta be drinking Perrier.

IBM: Rent the glass from us and we'll fill it with something we know is good for you.

IRS: Thanks for getting your milk withholding correct this year.

National news media: Hey, we wanted OJ!

IS YOUR STATION SAFE FROM LIGHTNING?

So, you bought a new rig and it's sitting on a wooden table, still in the box. What are the chances of it being destroyed? "None," you say, huh? Well, by gosh you're right. So now you remove it from the box and admire it sitting on the table. Still no chance of it becoming part of the path, right? Absolutely! Next, after checking the manual, you hook up an antenna, and plug it into the AC, or a power supply that is plugged in. Now your nice new rig is part of a possible path. Whether the path be "cloud to antenna, to feed line, to radio to AC ground" (or the reverse). Anyway, leave it that way, and you are inviting trouble.

For peace of mind you can pull the plug from the AC. If you are in the basement you can drop the cord/plug onto the cement floor. So now you have reduced the potential path by having a half inch gap between the plug prong and the grounded (?) cement floor. Will it jump that half inch? Did it jump between your antenna and the cloud?

Okay, so you put the cord up on the table, but in the meantime you had put the rotator control box on the wooden table, and plugged it in. How much distance between that control box and the rig? Not nearly as far as it is between the cloud and your antenna, right? Is there a light, or clock near the rig that is still plugged in?

But wait, why not just remove the antenna from the rig? Very good thinking, but that plug still better be pulled, and no ground left attached either! Why? Please study these possible paths.

Cloud to antenna, to rotator, to wire, to control box, to 6 inch gap, to rig, to ground; or; Cloud to AC mains, to house wiring, to clock, to 6 inch gap, to rig, to ground. If you are using a metal desk instead of a wooden table, then those 6 inch gaps become much less, depending on whether there are rubber feet on the various items mentioned. Of course, if you are not in the basement then you can pull all the plugs and just drop 'em on the floor.

That ground that you insist an having attached to your rig, etc., is (1) to keep you from getting electrocuted should there be problem with a breakdown between the AC mains and any part of your operating hardware that you might touch, and (2) to improve the transfer of RF from the rig to the ether. If you want to leave it on there to enhance that path that I have been talking about, then you're on your own.

If you take a direct hit from that terrible lightning, then there isn't much to worry about. You will probably lose the TV, microwave, stereo, telephones, refrigerators, and maybe the whole house. Remember, the direct hit may be several blocks away, but, it's those fingers (like tentacles) from the main bolt that we are to be concerned with. There may be hundreds of them so our chances of getting hit with one of those is hundreds to one of taking the direct hit. The only ground in my shack is tied to a panel with SO-239 coax connectors on it. When I pull the power, I transfer the coax cables from the coax switch to that panel. There is also an AC receptacle on that panel, with all pins grounded. It isn't for power, it's for the rotator control box cord to plug into.

Remember, the important concern is the path, and keeping you and your equipment out of it. (txs to State Of The ARTS for this article)

ARRL LEAGUE LINES

Novice Spectrum Survey Draws Heave Response

As of this week, more than 1700 ARRL members have expressed their opinions on possible ways to optimize use of the present Novice and Technician Plus allocations on 80, 40, 15 and 10 meters. Survey results ultimately might form the basis of an ARRL petition for rule making before the FCC, and members still have an opportunity to participate. A copy of the Novice Spectrum Study survey remains available to members on the ARRL Web site. <http://www.arrl.org/members_

Spectrum Study Survey remains available to members on the ARRL web site, <<http://www.arrl.org/members-only/NoviceSurvey.html>>. Members may complete and submit the survey only once.

Appointed by President Jim Haynie, W5JBP, the Novice Spectrum Study Committee is chaired by ARRL International Affairs Vice President Rod Stafford, W6ROD. The panel wants to determine what changes, if any, might be needed now that the FCC no longer issues new Novice licenses. The membership survey is part of the Board's mandate to the committee. A final report is due at the annual meeting next January.

In addition to the survey responses tallied, several dozen more comments were filed by members and nonmembers alike via e-mail to <novicesurvey@arrl.org>. "The written comments for the most part have been thoughtful and reasoned and are highly appreciated by the committee," said Dave Patton, NT1N, who's Headquarters staff liaison for the panel.

Patton urged those who have not yet done so to fill out a survey. "Please make sure to read the entire text of the survey to help understand some of the assumptions made by the committee regarding what questions to ask and what band segments and modes to offer as predefined options."

Generally speaking, the committee's predefined options propose retaining Extra class CW subbands on the affected bands, setting aside expanded CW reserves for all license classes except Technicians who have not passed Element 1, and dividing the remaining spectrum into expanded phone segments for General, Advanced and Extra class operators.

Many have offered separate opinions on the process. "Although I operate and prefer CW over phone, I welcome the expansion of the phone bands for Extra class operations, especially on 75 meters," one member wrote. "And I am glad to see that Extra class CW bands remain in place."

Other comments recommended no change or expansion in privileges for Novice or Technician Plus operators on the affected bands, an option that the survey provides. Not all commenters were happy. "By handing Novices significant amounts of additional bandwidth 'free of charge' you remove one of the key motivators to upgrading, namely access to additional bandwidth!" one said about the predefined choices.

No license class would lose privileges under any of the proposed refarming schemes. The Committee has suggested that Novice/Tech Plus CW band restrictions on 80, 40, 15 and 10 meters be changed to match those of the General class CW/RTTY/data band segments, with the caveat that Novice/Tech Plus operators only run CW on 80, 40, and 15 at up to 200 W. Novices already may operate RTTY and data on 10 meters. Novice refarming also would restore full privileges to higher-class operators in the 80, 40, and 15-meter Novice bands, where all license classes are limited to 200 W output.

ARRL Petitions For NewEW 60-Meter Amateur Band

A petition filed this week by the ARRL could result in a new high-frequency band for US amateurs. The ARRL has asked the FCC to allocate 5.250 to 5.400 MHz to the Amateur Service on a domestic (US-only), secondary basis.

The League told the FCC that the new 60-meter band would aid emergency communication activities by filling a "propagation gap" between 80 and 40 meters. "There are times on certain paths when a frequency in the 80-meter band is too low, and a frequency in the 40-meter band is too high for reliable ionospheric propagation," the ARRL said in its petition. The ARRL said the propagation gap can hamper communication between the US and the Caribbean during severe weather emergencies.

The ARRL Board of Directors approved the proposal at its July 20-21 meeting. The FCC has not yet invited public comments on the petition. Even if the petition finds favor with the FCC, it's likely to be several years before the new band actually becomes available.

As proposed by the ARRL, amateurs General class and higher would be permitted to operate phone, CW, data, image and RTTY on the new band running maximum authorized power. No mode-specific subbands were proposed.

The ARRL said a new 150-kHz allocation at 5 MHz also could relieve substantial overcrowding that periodically occurs on 80 and 40. If the new band is approved, hams would have to avoid interfering with, and accept interference from, current occupants of the spectrum, as they already do on 30 meters. The band 5.250 to 5.450 MHz now is allocated to Fixed and Mobile services on a co-primary basis in all three ITU regions.

The ARRL's petition cites the success of the League's WA2XSY experimental operation in the 60-meter band, carried out since 1999, which confirmed its communication reliability.

"An amateur allocation in this band would improve the Amateur Service's already exemplary record of providing emergency

An amateur allocation in this band would improve the Amateur Service's already exemplary record of providing emergency communications during natural disasters when even modern communications systems typically fail," the ARRL concluded. A copy of the ARRL petition is available on the ARRL Web site, <<http://www.arrl.org/announce/regulatory/5MHz>>.

AO-40 UPDATE

AO-40's transponders are back on the air, following an orbital shift that put the Amateur Radio satellite into an orbit that AMSAT says should be good for many years to come. Transponders have 435 MHz and 1.2 GHz uplinks and a 2.4 GHz "S band" downlink.

The transponders have been off since late May, when preparations began to shift AO-40's orbit at perigee. That operation was completed earlier this month, and ground controllers have been readjusting the spacecraft's attitude since then.

Ground controller Stacey Mills, W4SM, said the transponders would operate from orbital positions MA 10 through MA 99. Uplink frequencies (without taking Doppler into account) are 435.495-435.780 MHz and 1269.211-1269.496 MHz, and the downlink passband is 2401.210-2401.495 MHz. The transponders are inverting, so a downward change in uplink frequency results in an upward frequency shift in the downlink.

Mills emphasized that earthbound ops should not use any more uplink power than necessary. He also noted that the transponders could be switched off to accommodate additional testing.

AMSAT Awards Manager Bruce Paige, KK5DO, in Houston, was among the first stations to get on AO-40 after the transponders were reactivated. "It sounds awesome," Paige said. "I am transmitting with 25 watts up, and it sounds great!" In addition to some domestic contacts, he and his daughter, Mahana, W5BTS, worked EA8/DJ9PC in the Canary Islands.

Michael Mims, K4IZN, in Alabama says he's on AO-40 with a discarded TV satellite dish and a "bean can" feed horn. His downconverter is a modified Drake 2880 with no preamplifier. "This is going to be a good bird!" he declared.

Although AO-40's attitude still is not optimal at this point, ground controllers had to suspend operations to adjust it after an onboard sensor lost its view of the sun. Without data from the sun sensor, ground controllers cannot be certain of the satellite's attitude.

Mills said now that the ground team has "a very good fix" on the spacecraft, they'll do nothing to change its attitude for several weeks, while the solar angle decreases. Once the sensor regains its view of the sun, efforts to adjust the spacecraft's attitude will resume, so that AO-40's antennas are pointing toward Earth.

Mills said ground controllers will use the interim period to see if they can re-calculate the so-called "mystery effect" that had been impacting AO-40 at perigee under its former orbit.

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