

W7TCK News

Capital City Amateur Radio Club

May 2006



PRES SAYS...

DAVE WHITE, WA7YFF

Is it May all ready? Wasn't I just elected a couple of months ago and now Governor's Cup is all but here!

The club will be neck deep in Gov' Cupping for the remainder of this month. The race will be held Saturday, June 5th, before the June meeting! I'm sure Bob K7HLN and Tim KB7DMK, are still accepting volunteers, but you better hurry and let them know. Be sure to read Bob's article and attending this months meeting.

On the heels of the Governor's Cup Race (no pun intended) is Field Day, June 24th. This years event will be held way out at Hellgate camp ground, site A, on the far side of Canyon Ferry Lake. The place is all ours for Friday and Saturday nights. It has 12 picnic tables, a shelter (no walls), and 'facilities'. More about this next month.

The Glacier-Waterton Ham Fest is Saturday, July 15th. There is always a caravan of locals going up for the weekend. Plan on bringing up the old stuff and coming back with some new stuff.

Two Saturdays later, July 29th, will be the Elkhorn Run. If you haven't all ready, start thinking about what equipment you

will need to bring. Some aid stations will be overnights, nearly all will be walk ins, a few will be ride ins on horse or four wheelers. This is a great opportunity for us to flex our communication muscle in a difficult environment, through the trees from one canyon to the next. Should we use VHF simplex with strategically placed antennae? Should we muster up some portable cross-band mobile repeaters on specific mountain tops? Should we use 40m NVIS (Near Vertical Incident Skywave)? Should we use some combination?

This month's program will be given by Jean McPhearson. Remember those direction finder antennae we built last



(See PRES P. 2)

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Table of Contents

Pres Says.....	1
Board of Directors.....	1
ARES Notes.....	2
From The Editor.....	2
CCARC Technician Class.....	3
FOR SALE.....	3
Straight Key CW Lives!.....	3
ER Ham Gear.....	5
MRLA Website.....	5
May Meeting Monday, May 1.....	6

(Cont. from PRES P. 1)

year? Jean will let us know how to use them to help the FAA locate downed aircraft.

June and July are our most active months but the planning started back in April! Please take the time to let those in charge know that you are interested in participating. Don't wait until the week (or day!) before the event. We have a number of new members who will need some coaching. If you have been involved in the Governor's Cup, Field Day, Glacier-Waterton, or Elkhorn Run before, get involved again. It's too much fun to not share with some one else!

See you on down the coax,

Dave White WA7YFF



ARES NOTES

BOB SOLOMON, K7HLN

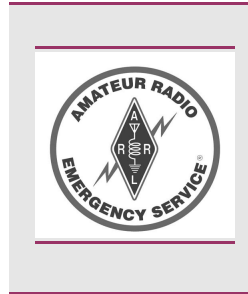
A REMINDER..

It is one month until the Governor's Cup Races, and time to recruit volunteer ham radio operators to assist with the event is running out. We only have about half of the operators signed up that we had last year. If you have not yet signed up, please contact me or Rich N7GC for registration forms, or plan to sign up at the club meeting, May 1.

The bib colors and numbering scheme will be the same as last year. There are no significant changes in the race courses and location of the aid stations. There may be a short detour on the long course just after it enters the city, but it will not materially alter the races. The first male and female runners in the Marathon, Marathon Master's, and Half Marathon each will be accompanied by a bicyclist. Those are the only bikes authorized on the course.

There will again be a physical separation of the Finish Line radio operation and Race Control. The MCU, with at least three people assigned, will be located at the Finish Line on South Park Street. They will be on the air by 0600. Race Control will be located across the street from the Civic Center at the Fish and Game Building, as it has for the last

several years. It will also be on the air at 0600. Our current plans are to use my trailer at Race Control, unless someone with a motor coach would like to volunteer their vehicle for that location.



Rich N7GC will take care of the shirt detail, as he did last year. When you sign up as a volunteer, be sure to indicate your shirt style and size so that we can get our order in early. Plan on short sleeve tee shirts and sweatshirts both being available, contrary to information I had earlier.

We will have more information as we get closer to race day. Because the event takes place before the June club

meeting, be sure to check the Tuesday night CCARC net and the club web site for updates. We will try to have the race assignment information available at Hardees on Saturday mornings. There will be other printed information that you will need for the race, as well.

We look forward to another successful event and the continued recognition of CCARC as a Supporting Sponsor of the event.

de Bob K7HLN

FROM THE EDITOR

JOHN MCDUGALL, K7JM



Thank you for reading another edition of W7TCK News. And a BIG thank you to all who contribute to this column.

Get ready for a busy Ham filled Summer. As Dave mentioned in his presidential article, there exists many activities for you to be involved with this summer. Governor's Cup is currently on our heels. If you haven't

signed up to volunteer with the Governor's Cup, you must do so soon. Please, come to the May meeting as we will be discussing vitally important details of our "mission". If you have not volunteered in the past, please don't be afraid or feel intimidated. It is a fun time and there are a lot of others that will show you the ropes. Be sure to be at the May Meeting.

On the home front, by the time you read this newsletter, I should have new carpet in my new family room. As many of our readers know, this is an on-going project, which a new future ham shack is involved. Once a few strings are tied up after the carpet comes in, I should be able to start the next phase. There have been a few readers that suggested that I will never have a Ham Shack and they will have to see to believe. Ahaa, thou doubting Thomas, wait and see and believe!

See you at the May meeting.

73 and God bless to you all,

John – K7JM, Editor



CCARC TECHNICIAN CLASS

JOHN GEACH, KS7R

This year's CCARC Technician License instruction course has come to a successful completion. Fourteen students attended the nine weeks of classes at the National Guard Air Training Facility located at the Helena Regional Airport. Five students who successfully passed their Technician License exams on March 13th were Doug Semple KE7GYG, Sheena Wilson KE7GYZ, Matthew Roddewig KE7GZA, Pamela LaFountaine KE7GZB and Tony Partlow KE7GZC. Tony now has the new vanity call of K7TJP.

Congratulations to all these great students for becoming "Helena's Newest Hams". Several of the other students are studying to take their exams soon. When you hear one of these new Hams on the air, say Hello and welcome them to the great hobby we all enjoy!

The outstanding success of this year's class was due to the exceptional teaching abilities of the CCARC instructors, Bob Solomon K7HLN, CI Jones WU7R, John McDougall K7JM, Tim Sowa KB7DMK, Forrest Christian AC7DE and Dave White WA7YFF. Each teacher brought his own teaching style to the classes which made the course more interesting and fun for the students and the other teachers alike.

Karen Semple who was instrumental in getting her CERT students interested in Amateur Radio and

arranging for the National Guard facilities, says she has a number of students interested in taking our next course, possibly this fall.

John Geach, KS7R



FOR SALE

YAMAHA SUPER QUIET GENERATORS,
WILL SELL EITHER ONE:

3000 watt electric start, 120 volt AC, 12 volt DC for battery charging, weighs approx. 150 lbs., \$1800

2400 watt, manual start, 120 volt AC, 12 volt DC for battery charging, dust cover, weighs approx. 75 lbs., \$1250

Contact Bob K7HLN 442-6118



STRAIGHT KEY CW LIVES!

WALT FAIR, JR., W5ALT

(Editor' Note: Think CW is dead? It is alive and quite well. Many Hams find that it is as exciting and enjoyable as it has ever been. This is an exciting *K9YA Telegraph* reprint. Several club members are already SKCC members. Are YOU?)

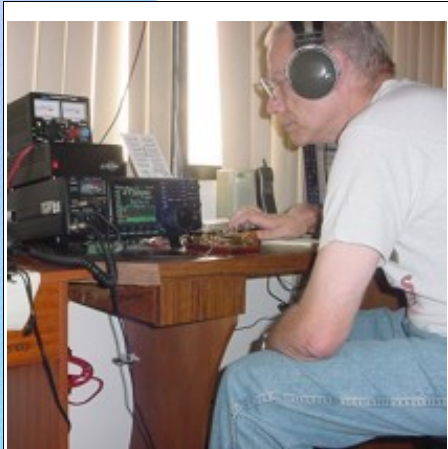
I sat down in my chair and reflected a moment as I powered up the rig, checked my tuner settings and arranged my pencil, logbook and trusty CW key in front of me on the desk. Outside some people were reveling in some sort of celebration, some a little tipsy, others tired from dancing. Across the street was a cozy gathering, people obviously enjoying the company of close family and dear friends. Inside, not only in my shack, but also in other places known only to the practitioners, there was a quieter celebration—hundreds of Radio Amateurs quietly clicking away with ancient straight keys, practicing an art that some people keep saying will one day go away.

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Capital City
Amateur Radio
Club

Prelude

The clock in the shack showed 2345z as I turned on the rig, checked the connector for my trusty straight key, limbered up my arm with a few strings of



Author YV1-W5ALT on SKCC

VVV VVV VVV into the dummy load, and then switched to my short dipole. Tuning across the 40-meter band, I heard the normal South American SSB stations, then what sounded like someone using RTTY, a Pactor station rasping at odd intervals, nothing unusual. Venturing down into the “forbidden frequencies,” I found a few fellows clipping

along in CW at a blistering pace. How wonderful it must be to be conversant at that speed, to me, it sounded like magic, magic I couldn't fully decipher.

Venture

So, as the clock slowly advanced, I moved back up to the Novice band where I knew someone would be listening and happy to exchange reports or chew the rag at a speed more comfortable to my ears and easier on my wrist; a safety zone where my mistakes would be ignored as easily as I ignored the mistakes of others, figuring they were probably as nervous and embarrassed as I was. Sure enough, as dusk came, a tentative CQ CQ CQ crept out of the noise, and then another, then another, until the Novice band was alive with signals I could copy in between the foreign broadcast stations.

Success

Sometime later I had run across a new friend I didn't even know a few hours ago. How long had we been chatting? The clock said 45 minutes, but that couldn't be. Maybe I had written the time down wrong in my logbook? Then, with horror, I realized I actually had a thought while listening to the CW coming through my headphones, and I didn't even miss a word!

TNX INFO OM--ITS VY NICE TO MEET U--MY XYL IS FROM THERE--BTW THE RIG HR IS HB--KEY IS J38 J38--IM STILL LEARNING HOW TO USE IT HI HI--BTU, droned out of my headphones as the signal pierced the noise level. In

between writing down the letters, I suddenly had the thought that inside of a few minutes I had copied the equivalent of several scores of words, a feat I once thought would be impossible. “Why that would be enough to easily pass the 13-wpm code test, maybe even the 20-wpm test!” I said to myself, while making a note to try the W1AW CW Qualifying Run. And to think I had hated CW for so long.

Joys—Yesterday & Today

Now, the reader might wonder if I'm waxing nostalgic, for surely those sorts of experiences were quite common when I first got my Novice license in 1970 and sent out a tentative CQ CQ CQ DE WN5CLS with sweating hands, and then didn't know what to do when someone actually answered and I finally recognized my call! In fact, my Novice logbook still has the notation of my CQ with no answer. Only I, and some other unknown Ham who called me in September 1970, know that I really did get an answer to the CQ. And only I know that I instantly froze and couldn't move my hand to answer back until it was too late, then had to wait until my heart stopped pounding to work up enough nerve to try again. I still clearly remember the mixture of excitement that someone was actually answering me, mixed with the anxiety of not knowing what to do next.

Certainly, every evening the Novice bands came alive with hesitating Novices finding new friends, dodging the 40m SWBC stations, struggling to copy just a little faster, and occasionally tuning through the lower frequencies longing to work DX and wondering what the high class operators chatted about in their forbidden spectrum. Most of us remember the time when someone casually mentioned we should upgrade, because they had been sending along at 15-wpm and we didn't even realize it!

A Novel Concept

Every once in a while there is an idea that is so fundamental, so obvious, that it only occurs to a few, or maybe just to one person. In the middle of the 20th century, such an idea occurred to someone, or to some group, and the Novice Class license was created. That single stroke of brilliance served as the doorway for thousands of entries into the wonderful, magical world of Amateur Radio. Fortunately, I was one who entered through that door.

But the specific things mentioned at the beginning of this article didn't happen in 1970, nor any time in

the last century. And it wasn't the annual Straight Key Night on New Years Day, either. They happened in 2006 and the celebration outside wasn't New Years, but Mardi Gras (Carnaval). There were no 6L6 or 6146 rigs warming the room with their glow, no knife switch to go from transmit to receive, and no new Novice licensees. The logbook wasn't a pad of paper, but a notebook computer and the rig had a full color digital display with a spectrum scope and digital signal processing. The truth is that, in 2006, whether through pure luck or stroke of genius, a group of Hams stumbled onto a fundamental idea: The Straight Key Century Club.

SKCC is Born

The Straight Key Century Club (SKCC) is really quite simple in concept. Seeing that many people enjoyed participating in the annual Straight Key Night (SKN), why not make it a year-round activity? And why not offer a certificate for 100 QSOs using a straight key with SKCC members? And, since everyone is using straight keys, why not invite all the people who hesitate to try CW on the air because their speed is low or they lack confidence? Thus, in early 2006, the idea was born and thanks to hard work by Tom, KC9ECI; Melinda, KI4CIA; and Gordon, N6WK, it didn't just stay an idea, but was acted upon and implemented.

SKCC already boasts around 1,700 members and several have already earned their Centurion certificates for working 100 other SKCC members. There are members in all 50 states and several foreign countries and SKCC WAS has been earned for working all states with a mechanical key. The Yahoo SKCC Group and the SKCC Forum have discussions of the best rigs for CW, the fine aspects of various hand keys and bugs, talk of antennas and QRP and schedules to meet on the air with other hams, new and old, who share the same love for the art of CW.

The idea behind SKCC is particularly simple: Enjoy the annual ARRL SKN all year-round. The only rules are to use a mechanical key (straight key, bug, sideswiper, but no electronic keyers) and to have fun on the air. If that sounds interesting to you or someone you know, whether new or old to CW, rag chewer or certificate chaser, you need to find out about the SKCC. Whether you want to meet others taking their first trembling steps into the world of CW, want to improve your CW operating or are an old timer who wants to encourage CW, SKCC is probably for you.

If, in 2006, you tune through the old Novice bands and hear activity, it's not just nostalgia and it's not your imagination. There really are a group of hams, new and old, CW experts and novices, working the world at comfortable straight key speeds, making new friends and trying to perfect the art of manual CW.

Details and recommended frequencies are on the group's web site at www.skccgroup.com and also on the Yahoo group "skcc." Long live CW!

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ER HAM GEAR

BOB, K7HLN

There has been concern about the status of the ham radio VHF antenna and cable following the remodeling of the St. Peter's Hospital Emergency Department. I recently had a conversation with the Director of the Ambulance Service concerning the equipment. He told me that when the ER radio gear was moved into the new area, the 2 meter cable was moved with it. It is coiled in the ceiling as it was before, and is accessible by moving a ceiling tile above the emergency room radio. The antenna was not moved during the construction.

de Bob K7HLN

MRLA WEBSITE

We have set up a new site for the Montana Repeater Link Association information.

It can be found at <http://www.wr7mt.org>

MRLA Secretary,

Jim Fuller



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CCARC Regular meetings are at 7:00 pm on the first non-holiday Monday of each month at the Salvation Army Church 1905 Henderson.

VE exams are offered monthly, just prior to the regular CCARC meeting, but on an appointment only basis. If no appointments are made, VE exams will not be scheduled for that month. Those wishing to take an exam should contact John Geach, KS7R, 442-7107 at least two days prior to the CCARC meeting to schedule an exam.

W7MRI Repeater: 147.82 (-offset)
Net every Tuesday at 7:30 pm local time on the 147.82 (-offset) repeater.

**MAY 2006
MEETING MONDAY,
MAY 1
Salvation Army Church
1905 Henderson
7:00 PM**



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All expressions of opinions and all statements of supposed facts are published on the authority of the authors and are not to be regarded as expressing the view of CCARC.

Biscuits and Gravy

**Come to Hardee's on Saturday. Every Saturday morning between 9:00 and 11:00, as many as twenty hams show up for "EYEBALL" QSOs.
9:00 CW&Tech Talk, 10:00 Ham Fellowship**

COME JOIN THE FUN!

First Class Mail