

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE KINGS COUNTY RADIO CLUB



July 2015

"Ubiest mea?"

Volume 2, Issue 7

Next Club Meeting:

**Tuesday, August 11th, 2015 at
7:30PM**

Next Club Activities:

Next VE Session is scheduled for
July 26th, 2015 at 1 PM at New
York Methodist
Hospital

It's a bit too early to start
talking seriously about Field Day
2016, so you can come down to
the meeting and bring up ANY
subject!

Further details will be
posted on www.KC2RC.com and
www.KingsCountyRadio.com as
they develop.

Our weekly Nets meet on Sunday at 11 AM on 28.380 (10 meters) and
Tuesday at 9 PM on 146.730 PL 88.5 (2 Meters)

Field Day 2015!

Well, another field Day has come and gone. The weather this year really tested the concept of Field Day. As a consequence, our Field Day needed to be cut short on Saturday night, but like Nietzsche said "That which doesn't kill us makes us strong!" Well, no fatalities were reported so we should be stronger for Field Day 2016! When do we start planning Field Day 2016? Tomorrow? Yesterday? Check out the memorable photos later on in this Newsletter!

KCRC Sponsored Volunteer Exam Session

The Kings County Radio Club will be sponsoring another VE Exam Session! It will be held in the Executive Dining Room of The Methodist Hospital on July 26th, 2015 at 1PM. Although walk-in registrants are allowed, it would be best to contact the VE Coordinator John, WK2J, at johnsrealestate@yahoo.com to let him know that you are interested and to get any details. Remember to bring your photo ID, your \$15 in exact change, your number 2 pencils and your wits!

The Further Adventures Of The Amateur Radio Parity Act of 2015

Well, H.R. 1301 in the House of Representatives, is alive and well and in subcommittee, where laws are eventually birthed from. The Senate has their own Senate version - S 1685 (if you have forgotten your days studying how federal laws get passed, the Senate's version and the House of Representative's version are tweaked in committee until they find enough votes to hopefully pass as a unified bill). Everything is going according to plan, albeit not as quickly as some would prefer. If you haven't written to your local Representative to support this Bill, please do so now! Now that the Senate has a Bill, you can begin to contact your two Senators (you do know who they are, don't you?) and politely request their support with this Bill. The ARRL has a lot of information on this bill at: www.arrl.org/amateur-radio-parity-act. Take a look at all the information and DO SOMETHING! Be polite and act your age, but let your voice be heard on this issue. The antenna you save may be your own!

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The Kings County Radio Club is at www.KC2RC.com or
www.KingsCountyRadioClub.com

KCRC is an ARRL affiliated club (see: www.ARRL.org)

Ohio ARES Wastes A Little More Of Its Time With Self Described “Inconclusive” and “Unscientific” NVIS Antenna Day

“Ohio ARES NVIS Antenna Day on April 25 attracted participation from some 100 Buckeye State stations in an effort to determine which configurations of near-vertical incidence skywave (NVIS) antenna offer the best results. ARRL Ohio Section Emergency Coordinator Stan Broadway, N8BHL, said that while the results of the unscientific test were inconclusive, some configurations did seem superior.” That’s an exact quote!

What can I say? “Garbage in - garbage out”! Anything worth doing, is worth doing well, and with more useful results than whatever these ARES guys did one beautiful day in April (other than empty a few six packs of adult beverages...). Here’s to the UN-scientific method - SKOAL!

Tim Allen Wins The 2015 CQ Hall Of ~~Shame~~ Fame!

“The CQ Amateur Radio Hall of Fame honors those individuals whether licensed hams or not, who have made significant contributions to amateur radio; and those amateurs who have made significant contributions either to amateur radio, to their careers, or to some other aspect of life on our planet.

And you pick Tim Allen????

His achievement would seem to be that he passed the same test recently passed by a five year old (who may have received less assistance with his achievement than Mr. Allen). If you want to show appreciation for the exposure “Last Man Standing” has given to Ham Radio (this season on a freeze frame the image of a QST cover was somewhat visible) then give it to the Production Producer, John Amodeo NN6JA, not a guy that didn’t even want his license publicized. What happens if one of the Kardashian clan or Justin Bieber get a Tech license - will they be CQ Hall of Fame inductees for 2016 too!

Geezzz guys.

Tim Allen... Really?!?

A Great Quote From This Month’s CQ Magazine

Just to prove there is no love lost between CQ Magazine and this Editor, here’s a great line from a column in their July issue:

“Seniority seems to be important among hams, especially on CW, where the average age is dead.” (New Q-Codes to Get the Conversation Rolling” pp 26-31, July 2015)

Who said good writing is dead!

Minutes of the July 2015 KCRC Meeting,

July 14th, 2015

The monthly meeting was called to order by our President, Howard N2GOT.

Treasury Report—Our Treasurer reported that we presently have \$1,221.91 in our Club treasury. We have one new Club member, Jeremy (call sign not yet assigned).

2 Meter Net—Richard KA2KDQ reported that we are getting an average of 6 check-ins each week.

10 Meter Net—Long distance check-ins continue to be diminished due to poor propagation. Presently we are averaging 10 check-ins each week.

Old Business—Our next club sponsored VE session is scheduled for July 26th, 2015.

2015 Field Day was discussed. Unusual flooding conditions caused the club to limit our Field Day activities to the first day. Previous Field Days would indicate that this flooding was a freak occurrence, and next year's Field Day will continue to be held at Floyd Bennett Field.

Our club's presence at the upcoming *National Nite Out* was discussed.

Our club needs volunteers to help finish securing the run of coaxial cable for our Repeater.

New Business—We have \$138 saved for our Repeater equipment.

A letter of thanks will be sent to Herb and Renee Asherman, thanking them for their donation to KCRC from the proceeds of Chaverim Big Apple Chapter. The amount will be recorded when we receive it.

Our annual fall Picnic was discussed and tentatively scheduled for September 27th, 2015.

Howard K2IGS has scheduled his talk on Shortwave Listening for the September Club meeting.

Roy AC2GS submitted an Excel file listing all new Amateur Radio license holders in New York City during the past 9 months, which can be sorted by borough, as well as date that their license was awarded. AC2GS also offered a template letter to be sent to the selected new Amateur Radio Operators. All that would be required is for the Executive Board to select the exact selection criteria and run a mail merge on both files. Then it would just be a matter of stuffing the envelopes. The Executive board voted to follow through with the Membership Drive mailing as soon as a volunteer to do the mail merging and envelope stuffing could be found.

...and with that, the July session of the KCRC meeting was called to a close.

And now for...

A Message From Our President

Hello fellow members,

We're already more than halfway through July with another Field Day behind us. Hopefully all this humidity and rain will be a distant memory soon.

I'd like to thank all our fellow members and visitors who assisted us with our setup and our unscheduled Saturday evening evacuation due to heavy rain, winds and possible lightning. You guys did an outstanding job! Situations like this always test our mettle and ability to overcome adverse conditions.

The 2015 Field Day was just that. Bad weather and challenging propagation conditions on the bands. It was just too dangerous to do an overnight operation once we got a look at the weather coming up the coast. There was also wide spread flooding at Floyd Bennett Field.

We've got to look for a safer field day location for next year if the weather is going to be stormy and nasty again. I have a feeling that 2015 was a rare anomaly that does not happen on a field day weekend too often for an entire field day. I'm hoping for a calmer and drier field day for 2016.

Mitch N2RGA will be submitting our scores to the ARRL soon.

Our excursion to the Sussex County Hamfest on July 12th was a lot of fun and somewhat successful. Thanks to the proceeds of Anthony WW2W/SK's equipment we're still continuing to raise needed funds for our repeater system and are on our way to making some key improvements to the system. Our next major purchase(s) will be for a much needed controller and an amplifier/preamp. A heart felt thank you to all the friends and members that helped us out and kept us company at our seller's table.

The club will be hosting another VE session on Sunday, July 26th. A big thanks to the VE team and the time they take of their Sunday afternoons to make this possible. If you know of anyone interested in assisting us for future sessions, please contact John WK2J , Eddie W2DEV or myself.

I also want to thank Roy AC2GS for his splendid job in putting together the club's newsletter. Please consider submitting an article, pictures or anything else that you feel would add something positive and informative to our newsletter.

See everyone in August!

73,

Howard N2GOT

De Olde KCRG Photo Album

(stolen from the pages of Facebook)



Tommy KB2GTO Surveying the beauty that is Floyd Bennett Field!



Frank WB2BXO prepared for the worse!



Bits and pieces of the Field Day crew waiting to get a chance at the Mic!



ARRL Section Manager, Jim W2KFV offering some words of wisdom to our own Juan KC2QNK

Your First Radio?

Eeny, meeny, miny, moe?

(So, Now What - Part 2)

No, not your first radio receiver. You probably have one (or more) of those by now. We're talking about something that will let you get on the air - TO TRANSMIT! Yup, we're talking transceivers here!

Say your budget is really tight? That maybe in five or six years you might be able to save up for that \$14,000 transceiver that you heard some putz on 40 meters brag about, especially if you skip some meals and send the kids to a Community College?

Fella, ya gotta crawl before you can bungee jump off of a cliff (or something like that...).

Let's talk Handi-Talkies (HT). No doubt if you've met other hams you will eventually see some dude with a half a dozen HTs hanging rather precariously from a straining belt round their waist. HT's - one of the favorite toys, eh, tools, for a Ham!

You can go in two directions when looking for an Amateur Radio HT. You can look towards China, or you can look towards Japan. That's where they are ALL made these days and each nation has a decidedly different philosophy to these items. Japanese HT's (from the usual suspects, Kenwood, Yaesu and Icom) are sturdy and solid and usually feature great user friendly front ends that make "*field programming*" relatively painless. They are very nice tools and you will pay serious change for them (as high as \$600, not counting accessories). Pick up any Ham Radio catalog (you can find a list of retailers on www.kingscountyradioclub.com/roys-place/roys-links/) or the manufacturer's own web sites, to read about their specifications - how much memory, how many bands, how many features, the incompatible brand specific digital voice mode of the week that they offer, the display and general user friendly features - they are all listed there (their power outputs are all usually equivalent - 5 watts). The Chinese manufacturers defy anything I ever learned in College Economics courses. Like that Crazy Eddie's ad of yore - "they're almost giving them away!" There are simply too many manufacturers, or fewer than I imagine, but they operate under multiple names and create more names for themselves every year. There is Wouxon, and TYT, and Baofeng and many more! Each of these manufacturers, in turn, seem to come out with new models or new firmware releases (updating your own firmware with many of those models are problematic to say the least) monthly. They are small and light, with mediocre displays, and a cheaper build quality than the Japanese models. Many lack a full set of input entry push buttons and even those that have them are a pain in *** to *field program*. They are decidedly user unfriendly at times. So why mention them? Why, they are below cheap - they ARE almost giving them away! You can pick up a 5

watt dual band HT from Baofeng for \$30 and the shipping is free, and it isn't like the bad old days with cameras, when you got a great deal and then the salesman would remove EVERY accessory packed in the box and told you all that necessary stuff would cost extra! For \$30 you get almost everything you could possibly need. Most people would recommend a third party antenna, the one provided by Baofeng will work, but a decent third party antenna will work better (make sure the connectors are compatible). As I've written, these Chinese HT's shouldn't be considered *field programmable*, so you're REALLY going to need a programming cable. They are all Yaesu programming cable clones and not all of them are created equal. The cheapest cables that can be bought from the same people selling those Baofengs are usually pirated versions of Prolific brand USB converter chips. If you want to play Russian Roulette, be my guest. If you are still using Windows XP you might get lucky and it might actually work. Prolific got wise to this long ago and since the pirates don't bother writing their own drivers, Prolific releases drivers for Windows 7 and 8.x which just don't work for the pirated chip. They don't announce why they won't work, they just won't work. For something like \$15+ you can get a programming cable with an authentic FTDI chip that will work on just about any Windows based machine.

So, you have an HT, you have a programming cable and you have a list of Repeater frequencies thanks to "The Hitchhiker's Guide To New York Repeaters" (see: www.kingscountyradioclub.com/roys-place/original-articles/). How do you get those frequencies into your new HT?

Manufacturers often supply a copy of their programming software either on a mini-CD or a web link. It is relatively easy to "Google". Then there is Chirp, a very nice piece of freeware that many Hams use and love (see: chirp.danplanet.com/projects/chirp/wiki/Home). For the best software you'll have to pay for it. RT Systems (www.rtsystemsinc.com) has a complete line of software and programming cables. If you purchase software for different radios you can use the same frequency list file to program all of them. It'll cost you - it depends on how valuable your time is to you.

There aren't that many different numbers you need to know to program for a given Repeater - its output frequency, i.e. 146.730 MHz, its "offset", like -600KHz, and its PL (private line) tone, like 88.5 Hz. If you've followed this example, you've programmed one of your memory slots for KC2RC's Club Repeater! See, that wasn't so hard!

Now take it out to play! Outside is better than inside, higher is better than lower, out of a car is better than inside a car. Consider getting a magnetic mount antenna from a reputable manufacturer (like Diamond or Comet) for improving your car based communications (and more than a few Hams place their mag-mount onto their air conditioners and get better signals than with their HT's directly attached antenna while operating at home).

Now, before I send you out to go have fun, a few precautionary words. This is just the beginning of this exciting adventure. A Chinese HT is an inexpensive and easy way to "*stick your big toe into the water*". Okay, so your big toe will get wet - ain't the same as learning how to swim like a fish! An HT is, at best, cracking *the door* just a bit open - being able to look through a crack in the opening can be interesting, but swinging the door wide open and barreling through the door to the other side *is much more fun!*

So, don't settle for a puny little HT and a group of local Repeaters. The sky is literally not the limit (have I mentioned *Moon Bounce* yet?). Your Technician license lets you talk on part of the 10 Meter HF phone band, and there's always morse code otherwise known as CW (Continuous Wave). Techs have CW access on 10, 15, 40 and 80 meters! Don't get complacent or eventually you'll tire of *just HTs* and wander away from this hobby without really discovering what it's all about. It would be as if you heard about something called *ice cream*, but all you could first find were fish flavored ice cream. If you would have stopped at that you would never of found the joys of Vanilla and Chocolate, and Pistachio, and Cookies and Cream, and... (you get the idea). Ya gonna need something a bit more powerful than an HT one of these days. We'll get to that in a future part of this series..

Now, go out and have some fun!

-The Editor- (The Editor can be reached at TheEditor@KC2RC.com)



Don't EVER let this happen to YOU!

Drip Meter? Whats dat?

A tale of the forgotten, undervalued yet useful (Grid) Dip Meter.

Perhaps you have seen one sitting forlornly on a table at a Hamfest with a perpetually diminishing price label - it may have never found an interested buyer, but why?

They are, as a group, less shiny than most, more recent, test devices. They offer very little in the way of flashing LEDs or digital displays - they are often characteristically odd shaped with, of all things, an analog meter at the bottom and some big dial taking up much of its front. They were very popular once upon a time, but now the only place that still makes them is MFJ (MFJ-201). You can still find all kinds of versions on eBay any day in the year. But, what do they actually do?



A Dip Meter was originally termed a Grid Dip Meter because the meter showed when the vacuum tube's (yup, this was around long before solid state electronics) grid current "dipped" down when the gizmo was "coupled" to a resonant circuit! Long ago, they swapped the vacuum tube for a transistor, so the "Grid" part is now an anachronism.

A Dip Meter is, basically, a tunable variable oscillator with a frequency determining coil exposed on top, where it can be inductively coupled to any resonant circuit you wish to test. Each coil has its frequency range and the better ones have a wider selection of working frequencies. When you have it coupled to a resonant circuit, as your Dip Meter's variable oscillator gets closer and closer to the resonant test circuit, the meter will show that the resonant circuit is transferring the energy from your Dip Meter and the meter will be deflected to a lesser extent!

So, you have an inexpensive device that will be able to tell you if your equipment is resonant where you were hoping for it to be. How do you know if your antenna is “resonant” at the frequency you want to use it on, to transmit on? Nope, an SWR meter or even an Antenna Analyzer/Vector Network Analyzer will only give you its complex impedance value. They can’t directly test for a resonant frequency! That’s a very useful ability, especially at the low low price that used ones are going for, but it doesn’t stop there!

You can use a Dip Meter to find the value of an unknown capacitor, or inductor, or the “Q” factor of a given inductor, the resonant frequency of a given LC circuit (like many antenna’s trap circuits), and even figure out what frequencies those old crystals were designed for!

So what’s *the catch*? Well, a Dip Meter is not a very accurate device. The tunable variable oscillator, at best, gives you only a rough approximation of what frequency it is *really* set for. If you need to have a more accurate frequency setting, you can always compare your Dip Meter’s frequency output to your much more accurate receiver (but keep in mind that the Dip Meter’s frequency can *wander* over time).

In order to do any test you have to *couple* it in some way. The most usual method is inductive coupling which is done by positioning the Dip Meter’s exposed coil parallel and close to the inductor in the resonant circuit being tested. But what if there isn’t an obvious inductor? Well, then you can try *capacitive* coupling by positioning the Dip Meter’s coil at a right angle to the test circuit’s leads (the dip will be less pronounced, but it will still *dip* to a degree). Then there’s the trick of *link* coupling. His method is done with a two foot length of coax with one or two turns of each end of the coax from the circuit under test, to the Dip Meter. Specific instructions on how to make adjustments depend on the model that you are using and although the instruction booklet might be long gone, they are probably still available somewhere on the Internet!

The easiest first time use is to find the resonant frequency of an LC circuit. Place your inductor parallel to the LC circuit inductor and spin the variable oscillator frequency knob while watching for a *dip* in the meter reading. When you get an idea of where that *dip* occurs, move the inductor a little bit away from the LC circuit’s own inductor. This means that you are not *loading* the circuit as much or shifting its resonant frequency. The amount of *dip* will diminish, but it should still be noticeable. Either read the frequency off the Dip Meter, or find it by zero beating your receiver.

How do you find the value of an unknown inductor? For this you will need a few capacitors with known capacitance. A few fixed capacitors with 5, 20, 100 and 200µF should be sufficient. Place the inductor and capacitor in parallel, in a resonant circuit and use your Dip Meter as you did before to find the *dip* at its resonant frequency, then plug your numbers into the following equation:

$$L = \frac{1}{4\pi^2 f^2 C}$$

Where

$\pi \approx 3.14159$

F is the frequency in MHz

C is capacitance in μF , and

L is inductance in μH

Plug in the numbers and out will come a good approximation of your mystery inductor's inductance. Keep in mind that at different frequencies an inductor's measured inductance might shift a little due to its distributed capacitance as well as other factors, so the best frequency to use is one near to the frequency that your circuit will eventually be used in.

How do you find the value of an unknown capacitor? For this you will need a few fixed inductors with known values. The use a very slightly modified equation that can be derived from the first one:

$$C = \frac{1}{4\pi^2 f^2 L}$$

Where

π is still approximately 3.14159

F is the frequency in MHz

C is capacitance in μF , and

L is inductance in μH

Unfortunately the nature of a Dip Meter and the inductors that can be used limits these tests to capacitance of less than 1000pF in value.

Another thing you can measure with a Dip Meter is an inductor's "Q" factor. What is a "Q" factor? Well, that could be a subject for an entire article all by itself, but one of its many definitions is related to its bandwidth - the higher its "Q" the narrower its bandwidth. The way to get an idea of your inductor's "Q" in your resonant circuit is to find its resonant frequency which will be F, i.e. where its *dip* is the greatest. Now tune your Dip Meter to a higher frequency where the *dip* is reduced by 30% and call that F_1 , then tune the Dip Meter to lower frequency where it is *dip* is again reduced by 30% and call that F_2 . Plug it into the equation:

$$Q = \frac{F}{F_1 - F_2}$$

As long as you use something like a mica capacitor with a "Q" in the range of 1,200 the ultimate "Q" of the resonant circuit should be primarily determined by the "Q" of the inductor.

You can take an old crystal and connect a few turns of wire at its base and use that to inductively couple your Dip Meter and find out what frequency it is resonant at.

In a pinch, you can even use your Dip Meter as a poor man's signal source to troubleshoot your receiver. It won't be anywhere as good as an RF frequency generator, but it certainly will be cheaper!

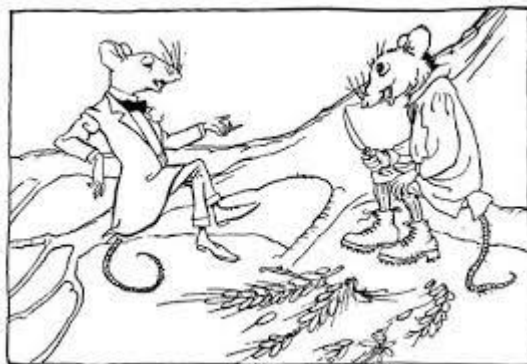
In addition to new and used MFJ models, you will find Heathkits, and Eico's and Millen's brand models on eBay.

Try to get one that still works and HAVE FUN exploring!

-The Editor- (The Editor can be reached at TheEditor@KC2RC.com)

Closing statements (from the Editor):

Time For A Reader's Poll?



We got Readers Pa????

I've been thinkin' maybe we need a Reader's Poll, or somethin' to kick up some interest? The way your Editor goes about writing is usually an idea just *pops* into my mind, or I hear a question on the air, or read it in an email, or hear about it on the olde *land line* and I think "Gee, that would make an interesting idea for an article". Sometimes it fizzles out when it gets too complicated (I'm still trying to figure out a simple way to deal with Smith Charts), or there is a dearth of information available on the chosen topic. Ultimately, I maintain a short list of articles *in the queue* for later publication. Here is a short list of what's sitting around waiting to be published:

- 1) FM Repeater Etiquette For The 21st Century—Part of the "So, Now What" Series—A few *do's and don't's* for the local Repeaters.
- 2) Two Meters - Off The Beaten Path - Part of the "So, Now What? Series" - A discourse on the band plan on 2 Meters.
- 3) 70 Centimeters - Farther Off The Beaten Path - Part of the "So, Now What? Series" Another discourse onto the 70 centimeter band plan.
- 4) As Simple As Simplex - A discussion of the difference between the idea of Simplex and Duplex, and how it means different things to different people!
- 5) In Search Of Your Second Radio - Part of the "So, Now What?" series - A discourse on the subject of what a new Tech should look for in their second radio.

- 6) Is RF Skin Deep? - A discussion of what *RF Skin Effect* means.
- 7) Morse Key Porn - Some nice photos of some Morse code keys that I have purchased or at one time or another wished to purchase.
- 8) Overstating Precision - An article that explains what precision and accuracy really is and how many Hams assume greater precision than is warranted.
- 9) The Care and Feeding Of Jammers - An article discussing what can be done and can't be done to deal with the *jammer problem*.
- 10) Software Defined Radio - an article that describes the many aspects and models of Software Defined Radios - a type of radio that may define the future of radio technology!
- 11) What's All The Noise About? - An article discussing all the different types of noise we Hams have to deal with on the Amateur bands and what knobs on our receiver might help to lessen them.
- 12) You're Four-Three Actual! - A proposal of how to deal with the discrepancy between the more often announced "5 by 9" signal report and what the actual, the more accurate signal report is.

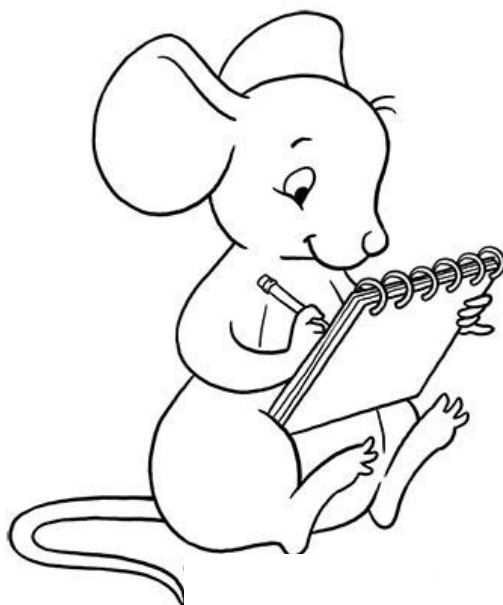
Okay? Any actual opinions about what subject might interest anyone out there? Any suggestions regarding which should be sped up on its path to becoming published, or any opinions of a subject that should be humanely suffocated and thereby taken out of its misery in its crib?

Any opinions at all?

Anything?

Bueller? Bueller?

-The Editor-



The opinions expressed here are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the positions of The Executive Board of The Kings County Radio Club.

All original graphics and articles © 2015TheEditor, Ltd (all "unoriginal graphics" should be considered a "homage" to more artistic people than myself, or people with more free time). If you wish, I would be more than happy to share the enormous bankroll I am given each month to produce these little masterpieces with those I've borrowed from...

The Club Net That Couldn't Transmit Straight?

It has come to your [cranky] Editor's attention that many people that are kind enough to check into our weekly 10 Meter Club Net (many friends of the Club that aren't members), consider its designated frequency as a rough estimate. We have people who transmit a hundred cycles high, others that transmit a hundred cycles low. Some think that Brooklyn to Brooklyn QSOs are DX and require their processors to be set to maximum, along with all the distortion that such settings bring! Others sound like they are talking in their cars inside a car wash with the windows open and others sound like a hurricane fan, that you often see in movie scenes, is running an inch away from their microphone. Some people think that the weekly net is a great opportunity to test out an old radio that they fished out of a junk pile. Could youz guyz consider testing your equipment *before the weekly net* on a one-to-one QSO earlier in the week and try to use radios that actually work for the weekly net? What the hell, throw it on a frequency meter every so often! I hear loads of HF Nets where this type of activity comes across very professionally.

You have to consider that curious *passerby* listeners will leave our weekly club net with some assumptions of our club, based upon the quality of the transmissions. I realize that we can't do much with the strength or propagation of the transmissions, but the rest of it is open to different methods of improvement.

I don't expect "extended SSB", but guys, the sound of your transmission speaks to how seriously you take our "Amateur" title. I am sure that you can find many discerning ears out there that will offer you an opportunity to tweak your transmissions so that they do not sound as though a frightened squirrel is trapped inside your radio or your microphone is lodged deep within some body cavity? Perhaps you can offer to help *the next guy*?

Let's "*up all of our games*"? Eh, folks? Let's help each other out?

-The [Cranky] Editor -

