



Come to the Club Meeting Thursday August 17th

Come out to the meeting this month at Arise Brandon Assembly of God 710 South Kings Avenue in the Annex. Things get underway at 7:30 p.m. when Scott W8UFO bangs the gavel to start things off.

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August Program: Report on the Simulated Emergency Test and Using NVIS Antennas on 40 Meters

The program this month will be a 30-minute power point presentation on the recent SET, and the hands-on experience with 40m NVIS and military "pushup" poles. This should provide some very interesting and important insights on emergency operating.

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What is Ham Radio All About?

A short while back I got into a discussion with a newly licensed ham. He had passed the Technician exam at one of our BARS test sessions, but had not been on the air. He had a two-meter hand-held but could not hit the repeater all that well with it. It was during late spring, so I brought up Field Day as a time for really getting some hands-on experience about Amateur Radio. The response I got was a surprise: "I don't really want to do all the radio stuff; I want to have ham radio for emergencies."

The question in my mind was how would he be able to function in an emergency situation if he did not know how to program or operate his radio, how to use the repeater, how to set up an antenna, or any of the many other things that go into radio communication during emergency situations? That was not the first time I had encountered that response. Those who participate in the exam sessions see a lot of people during the year at the

testing sessions. How many of those end up coming to club meetings, breakfasts, and operating events? An optimistic estimate might be 10%. What about the other 90%? Do they get the Tech license and then vanish? They might have a license and a call sign, but that's about it. It is a vicious circle: Newbies don't participate much in ham radio because they don't know much about it, because they don't participate in ham radio....

Many years ago someone pointed out to me that Ham Radio is not just a hobby, it's a lifestyle. There are many different parts to it, but there are those things that are central to ham radio activities:

- (1) The shared experience of passing THE EXAM. The experience has changed somewhat from what it was. For me in the 60-s and 70-s it was taking the train up to Chicago to the FCC office taking the exam and then scrambling to catch the train for the return trip home. I did the Extra Class exam in front of the FCC in Dallas, TX in 1984. For the hams of that era there was also sweating out the CODE TEST.
- (2) The first contact. Everyone remembers their first radio contact – especially their Novice contacts on 40 and 80 meters: the excitement and the FEAR.
- (3) The first ham station. Just about every ham has memories of the first ham station they they had on the air. It may not compare with the bells and whistles of the rig(s) sitting on the operating desk today, but those simple stations opened up the MAGIC of radio. I remember when as a W9 in southern Illinois I worked my first contact with a station out in California and then later a station in Sweden. I was amazed how a radio signal could travel all that distance to my wire dipole in the back yard and find its way into the front end of my Hallicrafters S-20-R and then the signal from my mighty 50-watt Knight T-50 could cover all that distance when I sent my reply!!
- (4) FIELD DAY. This is probably the best learning experience and the one of the most fun events in ham radio. The hands-on experience of Field Day cannot be duplicated in a license class or in a book. The human experiences of shared knowledge, hearing from the old timers about their experiences and those discussions at 3 a.m. while working CW on 40 meters are incomparable experiences. One of the operators I worked with during a Field Day decades ago had been a press operator handling press traffic on (high speed) CW on the radio circuits. He had been a landline telegrapher before that, so he was also extremely proficient in American Morse. He was on the key and I was keeping the dupe sheet (no computers). He would tell me about working the multiplex circuits on the landlines and then running the 15 KW transmitters for the long haul trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific circuits. He would talk about the times the printer circuits would not make it and they would have to go back to Morse to handle traffic. There were lots of great stories.
- (5) Specialized operating. Sooner or later hams find that one activity appeals to them more than all the other stuff. Some get bitten by the DX bug and they are always chasing that next elusive contact. Others discover they like the discipline and crisp operating of the traffic nets enjoy experiencing that sharp, quick, and succinct type of operating in which accuracy is key. Then there are those who like getting the wallpaper (operating certificates) they seek out those special event stations and special activities. The hard core guys in this group are the County Hunters. Working All Counties is a testament to dedication, perseverance, and cooperation! Ham Radio has its own rituals, awards, and rites of passage. It is much more than just a hobby.

A few years ago the folks at CQ Magazine published the list of 65 Great Things About Ham Radio. Here is their list:

1. It works when nothing else does
2. It makes you part of a worldwide community
3. The opportunity to help neighbors by providing public service and emergency communications
4. Some of the nicest people you'll ever meet
5. Some of the smartest people you'll ever meet
6. Some of the most interesting people you'll ever meet
7. Some of the most generous people you'll ever meet (along with some of the cheapest!)
8. Lifelong friendships
9. Friends around the world (including those you haven't met yet)
10. The opportunity to go interesting places you might not otherwise go to
11. The opportunity to do interesting things you might not otherwise get to do
12. The opportunity to expand your knowledge of geography
13. The opportunity to expand your knowledge of earth and space science
14. Practical uses for high school math
15. Practical uses for high school physics
16. A good way to practice a foreign language
17. A good way to keep in touch with faraway friends and relatives
18. A good way to get driving directions when visiting someplace new (with or without GPS)
19. A good way to find the best places to eat when visiting someplace new (with or without GPS)
20. Finding "non-touristy" off-the-beaten-path places to stay, eat, visit, etc.
21. A good way to learn about virtually any topic
22. A good way to bridge the generation gap
23. A good way to keep tabs on elderly/infirm people
24. People named Joe (Walsh, Rudi, Taylor)
25. How many of your non-ham friends have actually talked to someone in some remote place such as Cape Verde or the Seychelles?
26. How many of your non-ham friends might have talked to an astronaut aboard the space station?
27. How many of your non-ham neighbors might have a satellite uplink station in their basements—or in the palms of their hands?
28. How many of your non-ham neighbors might have a TV studio in their garage?
29. What other hobby group has designed, built, and had launched its own fleet of communication satellites?
30. Where else can you play with meteors?
31. Moonbounce
32. Informal way to improve technical skills
33. Informal way to improve communication skills
34. Introduces a variety of career paths
35. Offers unparalleled opportunities for career networking
36. Opportunities for competition in contesting and foxhunting
37. A good way to collect really cool postcards from around the world (despite the growth of electronic confirmations)
38. Nearly endless variety of different things to do, on and off the air
39. Hamfests
40. Dayton
41. Field Day
42. Working DX

43. Being DX
44. DXpeditions
45. Contesting
46. Award-chasing
47. Double-hop sporadic-E
48. Worldwide DX on 6 meters (once or twice every 11 years)
[The current extended sunspot minimum has shown that mechanisms other than F2 propagation can offer intercontinental DX on the "magic band" at any point in the solar cycle.]
49. Tropospheric ducting
50. Gray-line propagation
51. TEP, chordal hops, etc.
52. Getting through on CW when nothing else will
53. Unexpected band openings
54. Building your own gear
55. Using gear you've built yourself
56. Operating QRP from some remote location
57. Experimenting with antennas
58. Working DX while mobile or while hiking
59. Experimenting with new modes and new technology
60. The opportunity to help build an internet that doesn't rely on the internet
61. DXing on your HT via IRLP and Echolink
62. Contributing to scientific knowledge about propagation
63. Keeping track of other people's GPS units via APRS
64. Ham radio balloon launches to the edge of space, and as always...
65. Reading CQ!

Permission is hereby granted to reprint this list in amateur radio club newsletters, provided credit is given to CQ magazine. You can find this and more stuff on the CQ website, <http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com>.

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That wraps it up for this month. Be glad you're a ham and have fun with radio!!

-73-

Mark
WB9UJS

Keep in Mind Our Weekly Nets and Bulletins

Monday 8 p.m. The Two Meter Net 147.765 - 147.165 MHz Hosted by Doris Haskell WB9VDT

Tuesday 7 p.m. 6-meter Roundtable 50.200 MHz USB followed at 8 p.m. with the 10 Meter Roundtable 28.365 MHz USB

Send us your articles AND PICTURES! We do much more in the digital format! I would like to have pictures of BARS members and their ham shacks!

Remember to check out the BARS website:

brandonhamradio.org