

THE KEY



The Riverland Amateur Radio Club is a Special Service Club affiliated with the American Radio Relay League

Repeater

146.970 PL 131.8



RARC Net

The club's weekly net is 8 p.m. Sundays on the 146.970 repeater.



Programs

Tues. Aug. 5, 7 p.m.,

"Special Event Activities,"

Club meetings

Club meetings are 7 p.m., Tuesday, at Gundersen/Lutheran in La Crosse. They will be in meeting room 1 on the lower level of the clinic.

"Meeting of Elmers," advice, discussion and help is at 6 p.m. in the conference room in the Gundersen Clinic.



Inside

Calendar	2
N. American QSO Sat	2
Radio in paradise	3
Picnic & copters	4



Swapfests: Ham radio magic

The Trempealeau County Fairgrounds appeared empty that Saturday morning a few years ago. I knew there was a Ham swapfest somewhere there so I slowly drove to one of the rear buildings where, lo and behold, there were vehicles with antennas and Ham license plates. A few had open tailgates, radio gear and junk spilling forth like you'd see from a Thanksgiving cornucopia.

Bravely I proceeded into the building and found a bunch of guys winding through aisles of more gear.

There were radios, test gear, connectors, cables, and miscellaneous bits of dusty junk. It was great!

I was hooked and raced to my next Ham swapfest, at another fairgrounds, this time

in Baraboo. I could barely wait to proffer my \$5, get a raffle ticket, a donut and start stalking the next great find on one of the tables. There was a guy selling GE business HT's by the pound. *BY THE POUND!!* Someone else had remote control helicopters and there was the ever present radios.

One year at one of these fantastic expositions I bought a really nice VHF UHF radio for 30. There was a second one that I should have bought. It seems like there is always something that gets away. There always is the next time when something better is there and it's cheaper than you ever hoped.

The Riverland Amateur Radio Club's

8 a.m. - 1 p.m. Saturday, August 9

- Vendors
- Flea market
- Buy - Sell - Trade
- Tailgating
- Refreshments
- VE session 9 a.m.
- Handicap access



Swap Fest

Omni Center - 255 Riders Club Rd., Onalaska

Aug. 1- 3

EAA AirVenture special event station W9ZL,
<http://fcarc.us/?q=node/47>

**Sat. Aug. 2**

→ August UHF, 1800Z Sat. 1800Z Sunday,
www.arrl.org/august_uhf
→ 10 10 Summer Phone QSO Party, www.ten_ten.org
0001Z Aug 3, 2359Z
→ North American QSO Party, Sat. 1800Z Sun. 0600Z,
ncjweb.com

Sun. Aug. 3

→ Cedar Valley ARC Hamfest, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. <http://cvarc.rf.org>

Tue. Aug. 5

→ Riverland Amateur Radio Club meeting, "Special Event Activities," 7 p.m., Gundersen Health System, lower level meeting room 1.

Sat. Aug. 9

→ Riverland Amateur Radio Club Swap Fest, 8 a.m. 1 p.m., Omni Center, 255 Riders Club Rd., Onalaska.
→ Fall VHF Sprint 50 Mhz, Sat. 2000Z Sun. 2400Z, www.svhfs.org

Sat, Aug. 16

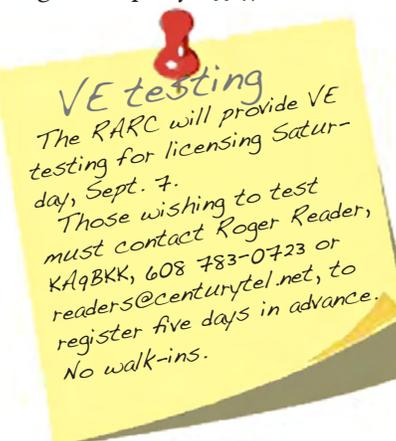
→ Int'l Lighthouse Lightship Contest, 0000Z Aug 3, 2359Z
www.illw.net/

Sun, Aug. 17

→ ARRL Rookie Roundup, 1800Z Aug 17, 2359Z, www.arrl.org/rookie_roundup

Sat. Aug. 23,

→ Circus City Swapfest, 8 a.m. noon, Badger Steam and Gas Engine Property, S3347 Sand Rd, Baraboo.

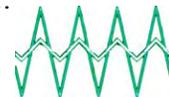


Something to do Saturday

Fire up your Morsemaking muscles and jump into the North American QSO Party's CW edition this Saturday. It's a friendly name and state exchange, you can work everybody on all bands, and the power limit is 100 watts. While you're at it, pick up some DX, too, as the Worked All Europe contest will be going on at the same time!

President's Frequency Modulation

By Greg Miller, KA9FOZ



The state of our club is strong and getting stronger. I can report that with certainty because of signs that I can see beyond just numbers. What it takes to sustain this type of club is no different than what it takes to sustain membership in all clubs. It requires that initial excitement to get into the hobby and then

that longer range goal to keep that excitement at a certain level. On Saturday Aug. 9, we will be holding our annual Swapfest at the Onalaska Omni Center. This is a great opportunity to introduce a new or young potential ham to the hobby or to rekindle that lost excitement you had in your early days of ham radio. I have a couple of interests, or call them hobbies, that I lose a little excitement in and what it takes is a car show or model steam engine show to bring me back to working on it. That is why our club has been pushing for more activities throughout the year to help keep that level of enjoyment up. Some things we do wrong and some things we do right. It takes a club of various talents to pull this off and keep it going. I get suggestions from time to time on activities and fun things to do and I welcome even more. We will try and do what sounds good and is feasible. Keep the suggestions coming and by all means make it to the Swapfest. You never know what you might go home with that rekindles that long lost flame. Who knows it might not even be ham related because that happens too.

Riverland Amateur Radio Club

P.O. Box 621
Onalaska, Wis. 54650



President Greg Miller, KA9FOZ
Vice president..... Van Elston, WA9FIO
Treasurer..... Tom O'Brien, WB9BJQ
Secretary..... Carl Thurston, KC9HDS
Newsletter editor.. Bob Seaquist, KC9IWE
Address correspondence regarding the club to Tom O'Brien, WB9BJQ, wb9bjq@charter.net

This newsletter is sent by e mail to current and past RARC members and others. If you wish to change your address or subscription, e mail KC9IWE@arrl.net

Rum punch and 5 watts

Radio in paradise is QRP 'holiday style'

By Bob Seaquist, KC9IWE

When the big boys have a DXpedition they fundraise for months, hire a ship, load shipping containers with tons of gear and then brave storm seas to get to some battered south seas atoll. Me? I let my wife save and budget, make airline reservations, find a villa and then I tuck a little gear into my carry-on and off I go.

In my case the "DXpedition" was a family vacation to St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands. We had gone there before and loved its picture postcard looks, pure white beaches, crystal clear water, shady palm trees and rum punch. Thanks to millionaire Laurence Rockefeller, he bought the island and then gave it to the U.S. Park Service. Visitors enjoy a relatively uncrowded and undeveloped piece of paradise.

There were few plans except, of course, for some snorkeling, sipping rum punch and a little radio operation. The rest of the family did not do the latter.

This was a very light weight venture with the radio and gear weighing in, at most, at about four pounds. Small as it was, the TSA did pull my bag aside and swabbed the radio for explosives. On the return home they again pulled the bag aside, swabbed the radio but found my expensive and valuable Leatherman tool, left mistakenly in the bag. I no longer have that tool. Look for it on the TSA auction site.

Operations were, as they say, "holiday style" meaning the radio went on about the time the family went to bed and all other activities ceased. I hooked a 20m Endfed wire over a tree branch and sat on the deck outside my bedroom. Though I could have used the radio's batteries I selected my tiny power supply and happily sat in the dark hunting for stations. It was not easy, not because of my low power out (five watts) but because of the high noise "in." Our villa's

illumination was compact fluorescent bulbs CFL which seemed to be very, very noisy. In fact when I turned off the bulb lighting the deck the radio when from wall to wall static to jam packed stations!

When you operate QRP it usually is pretty useless to call "CQ" especially when you operate phone so I listened for strong stations and tried to snag them. My call sign is, well, pretty dumb sounding; when it's tagged with the somewhat exotic "portable kilo papa two" Virgin Islands it's a magnet. I rarely uttered that twice when the other guy would come back sounding really interested. I would hear them doing a string of calls and signal reports but when they'd get to me and my Caribbean call they would chat. It was great! Working very casually I talked with Hams in Finland, Russia, Germany, Canary Islands and several US States working 5w SSB. Most of the time I got good, solid, honest signal reports too. The radio was apparently good enough that some operators expressed surprise when I said I was QRP.

One afternoon of operating at a hotel in Charlotte Amalie, St Thomas, had much less noise. The hotel was next to a bay so maybe there was the "saltwater amplifier" effect which was not found 750' above the water at the villa.

The principal disappointment was in



a new 10 20 40m endfed that would not tune. Not even close despite the radio's exceptional tuner.

Once at home, even with prompting from the owner of the antenna maker, LNR Precision, it would not tune. They are sending me a new one, an example of their really great customer service.

Equipment

Elecraft KX3, mic, power cord, Sony headphones, 20' coax, appropriate connectors, Gamma HPS-1a Hybrid power supply, LNR Precision 20m endfed, LNR Precision 10-20-40m Trail Friendly endfed, pencil, paper and HamLog on the iPhone. Oh.... a length of parachute cord to pull the antenna over a branch.

Club picnic

Helicopters, steak and rain are deja vu for club

By Carl Thurston, KC9HDS

It was almost like deja vu all over again having the club picnic so soon after Field Day. In some of the past years we had combined Field Day and the picnic. It was noted, however, that some of the members who don't usually participate in Field Day, really wanted to have a picnic, so this year we separated the two events. The fact that this event was also close to the July 4th holiday weekend probably didn't help the turn out. The result was the same members who came to Field Day were the ones who came to the picnic. There were a lot of members who had other commitments that precluded their presence at this year's picnic but most of those members were also unable to make it to Field Day for similar reasons.

The idea of having two separate events is a good one, but maybe we had the two events too close together. It might be a good idea to spread them out a bit so that this sort of thing won't happen again. Don't get me wrong, this year's picnic was very successful, the turn out was large and the food was good, plus the tri copter demonstration was very interesting.

The event was held at Veteran's Memorial Park in West Salem. There was a slight mix up as to the start time of the diner that was only a minor problem, otherwise everything went fairly smoothly and everyone seemed to be having a good time. Tom O'Brien, WB9BJQ, acquired the steaks, as he has in past years, from North Country Steak Buffet which is run by his son and daughter. Beverages, and dinner ware were furnished by the club, and everyone brought a dish to pass. A wide variety of salads, hot dishes, and baked goods were consumed by an eager crowd of club members and their families.



Carl Thurston, KC9HDS, photos

The planning for this event was rather sketchy. Bill Wood, KE9XQ, who reserved the shelter house, had another commitment elsewhere, so the rest of the logistics for the picnic was a bit up in the air. In the true spirit of self reliance, several club members came together to do what needed to be done to ensure a successful picnic. Kevin Holcomb, KC9ZGD, brought his Weber kettle to grill the steaks, I was pressed into cooking the steaks, Greg Miller, KA9FOZ, brought the beverages, Roger Reader, KA9BKK, brought the desserts, and everyone who came brought a dish to pass. The result was a fine repast that didn't cause any one member to be over burdened with the labor of the meal.

It did rain, and the wind did blow a bit, but no one seemed to mind as we were snug in the shelter house. By the time that everyone was finished eating, the weather cleared and Dave Abts and his friend Nathan

put on an impressive display of how a tri copter works, complete with special onboard camera that wirelessly linked back to a set of wearable glasses that enabled one to see where the tri copter was headed. It usually is directed via a GPS unit, but for some reason it didn't function for the demonstration but it was impressive none the less. It was apparent to those present that this is an up and coming technology that can have many uses.

After the tri copter demonstration, there was little else to do other than to clean things up and go home satisfied that another fun event had transpired. Many expressed their thanks to the organizer of the event, the ones who did the work, and said that they look forward to future club picnics. Well at least this event was mostly Gremlin free, except for the finicky GPS unit on the tri copter, but that was of such small consequence that it was hardly noticed.

Again, thanks to all who made this event possible so that we can do it all over again next year.

