

- **A Hams Prayer**
- **President's Upper Side Band**
- **RFI Final wrap up.**
- **Dan Ro-manchik Blog**
-

**INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:**

Presidents Comments.	2
Upcoming Events	2
RFI Wrap up	3
Dan Ro-manchik Column	4
Club Information	8



THE KEY

ISSUES FOR 2020

MAY 2020

A HAMS PRAYER...Carl Thurston, KC9HDS

As most of you already know, we usually start our meetings with a recitation of "The Ham's Prayer." For those who don't know it or have forgotten it, here it is: "I'm a Ham, and I can transmit, if I have to, I guess." With being ordered to shelter in place as a result of COVID-19, one might change that to read: "I'm staying home, because I'm supposed to, to be safe, I guess." Not many people are good with this. It is not normal for humans to hibernate like this. We are social animals. We need to interact with others. We need to be doing things, going places, when and where we like. It just feels weird to be so isolated. But in order to remain healthy and alive we must do just that.

We don't have to like this, we do need to find a way to endure this. For many this is not easy, especially when there is little or no money coming in. For the majority of the population it has become a hardship to comply with what is necessary to curb this crisis. For many it is growing more and more difficult to put food on the table, pay the rent and to keep from going stir crazy. We as Americans are used to doing what we want, more or less. We pride ourselves with being independent. The idea of "the strong, silent type," has been the image that many like to display. Ours is a land of plenty, where no one needs to be needy, no one needs to go hungry, no one needs to be homeless, yet many have always been so. Most people have become used to having much. Often much more than

they really need. With this situation, we are forced to do with less. Oh yes, we do have a choice. We can obey the order or not. For individuals it is mostly merely a suggestion to shelter in place: to wear protective gloves and masks, to maintain an appropriate distance from others when one has to go out to the grocery store or to run other needed errands. All of this seems strange to us. It is not "normal." But with the mandatory closing of most schools, churches, factories, businesses and stores it is challenging to pursue a "normal" life.

You can look at this as a penance of sorts. A time of forced solitude. Or you can look at this as an opportunity to reflect on what is important to you, your family, your friends, your community. This is a trial, no doubt, this is a test of our resolve and our resilience. This requires patience, fortitude, and mutual respect. We are all in this together, and together we will survive this, but we need to be strong in our isolation, kind in our approach to others, helpful for those in need, and to maintain the faith that something good will come from this.

In the mean time, as Hams, we can transmit. We can't meet face to face like we used to do so often, but we can meet on the air. So many of the things that we are forced to endure now are going to be a lot easier if we just keep in touch with each other via radio. After all, we are Hams and we can transmit, if we have to, I guess. 73



Presidents Upper Side Band...By Dan Abts, AB9TS

"I encourage you to use this time to improve your antennas and get on the air."

The corona virus outbreak has had quite an effect on our ham radio club group activities. The first cancellation was the Saint Patrick's Day parade that we provide communications for every year. Storm spotter training was next but at least that could be completed via an on-line webinar. The April monthly RARC meeting was held on the air on the 146.97 repeater. Greg K9LEC gave a nice program on the interference problem he had for 15 months and how it was finally resolved. I talked about the new repeater. A number of people told me they enjoyed the net. I hope to do a net again for the May meeting but I'm not sure what the program topic will be yet.

The April La Crosse county

ARES/RACES meeting was cancelled and the May one will likely be cancelled as well. Kevin KC9ZGD the EC encourages us to take the on-line FEMA courses ICS-100, ICS-200, ICS-700 and ICS-800. I have completed the first three and will probably do the last one this week.

The club board meeting for April was also cancelled. We do keep in touch with e-mail but a number of things are on hold because businesses are closed and social distancing. It is also hard to plan not knowing how long this will last. So far the MS Walk May 30th has not been cancelled but it probably will be. I have been notified that Onalaska Community Days in June has been cancelled. I don't know what

we will do for Field Day. I guess at least each of us can operate from home, mobile or portable.

I encourage you to use this time to improve your antennas and get on the air. Try out the new Yaesu System Fusion repeater in Winona. It is the 146.835. Rick KD9GVS and I used it last Saturday in digital mode and it worked fantastic. Build a directional antenna and an offset attenuator for direction finding. Whatever you do, try to stay home and stay healthy.

Feel free to contact me with comments and suggestions at AB9TS@yahoo.com. 73 de Dan Abts AB9TS



UPCOMING EVENTS FOR MAY 2020

RARC Sunday Night 2Meter Net is held on the 146.970 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control operators for May are:

May 3...Mark, KB9OFK

May 10...Rick, KD9GVS

May 17...Kevin, KC9ZGD

May 24...David, KD9EPN

May 31...Shawn, KD9KGQ

May 5...Program Night, we will meet at 7:00 PM on the 146.970 repeater. After check ins and club news by President Dan Abts, AB9TS, the floor will be open to comments from the members.

May 19...Trustee Meeting, details to be worked out.

A FINAL RFI WRAP UP ...By Greg Miller, K9LEC

I don't mean to bore any of you with my recent RFI problem again but I did want to give a final wrap up of the issue along with giving credit to the various players involved.

First and foremost I need to thank Brian Beskee of American Transmission Company for taking the lead on this issue and never letting it drop. He was very persistent in getting to the bottom of it. It was this persistence that finally located and hired Mike Martin from RFI Services to come out and locate the problem.

Mike was very knowledgeable and educational to me. I can't thank him enough for sharing some of that knowledge and locating the source of the RFI fast and getting it corrected.

So I will explain what the issue and cure was. The new 345kv power line traveling north up Hwy 53 was creating a magnetic energy that was encompassing the street light that was located at the corner of Hwy 53 and Cty T. (See the picture below.)



This was inducing a voltage in both the pole holding the light as well as the ground wire. Because of the size difference between these 2 items a different voltage was induced. The ground wire was very close if not touching the pole so the desire to equalize the voltage between them was causing a wide band arcing. This RFI was traveling thru the service lines that travelled down to my QTH. This arcing was taking place so long that when the power company came up to correct it the ground wire broke off. That was the end of my RFI problem.

And with that I will end my saga of the RFI that invaded my QTH for better than a year.

I would recommend that you check out RFI Services web page, RFIServices.com and watch the following YouTube video to learn more about RFI problems.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jTY6Zlp6x4>

A modest proposal (for the next Extra Class question pool)

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

At our last club meeting, I was discussing the changes to the Extra Class question pool with someone, and the topic of memorizing the answers popped up. As I always do, I mentioned that many of the questions you can only get right by memorizing the answer. At that point, someone down the way piped up. “Not me,” he said, “I studied the material so that I didn’t have to memorize the answers.”



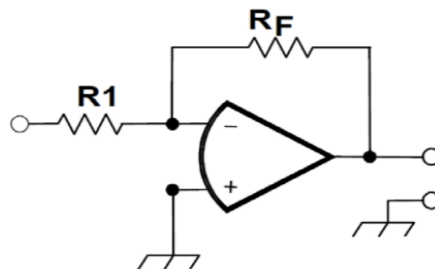
At that point, the president called the meeting to order, so I didn’t get to challenge him on that point, but that statement is just plain wrong. First of all, it’s true that some questions you can only get right by memorizing the answer. Almost all of the rules questions are that way, for example.

Secondly, there is no way to study the rest of the material in any depth and still have time to actually be an amateur radio operator. The amount of material that the Extra Class question pool covers takes an electrical engineering student four years or more to study thoroughly. And even then, some topics are bound to get short shrift.

So, we’re back to memorizing. I would say that even an “engaged” person will memorize about half the answers. I’d go even further and say that those that “study” the technical topics, don’t study it as thoroughly as a college student would.

For example, there are a dozen questions in Section E7G – Active filters and op-amp circuits: active audio filters; characteristics; basic circuit design; operational amplifiers. Despite the name, you don’t need to know how to design or build an op-amp filter. All you really need to know is that op-amps are high gain devices and if you have a circuit like the one shown below, $V_{out}/V_{in} = R_F/R_1$.

Figure E7-3



These concepts are relatively easy to learn. but there are also two questions on filter “ringing.” Honestly, you’re better off just memorizing the answers to those questions unless you have a real interest in active filters that use op amps. Wading into the mathematics isn’t all that hard, but when you consider this is only one of dozens of topics, you can see where doing any kind of in-depth study is going to take you months, if not years, to accomplish.

A modest proposal

The end result of this approach to testing is that we have many Extra Class licensees who know about a lot of things, but not in very much depth. Perhaps that's OK. Perhaps that's just what the question pool committee of the National Council of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (NCVEC) was shooting for. If, however, we want an Extra Class license to denote that the licensee has some real technical expertise, I have a modest proposal.

Basically, my idea is that instead of testing on an incredibly wide range of topics, we test applicants on a set of basics, plus one or two particular topics. These would be topics that the person has expertise in already or enough of an interest in to study the topic in some depth.

Below are the topics that I would consider to be basic and some that I consider to be more specialized. This is, of course, not an extensive list.

Basic questions (20 questions, everyone takes this part of the exam)

- Safety

- Rules and regulations

- Electrical principles/basic circuits

Technical Interests (Choose two, 20 questions each)

- Antennas and transmission lines

- Radio wave propagation

- EMI/RFI

- Analog and digital design

- Digital communications and networking

- Software/software-defined radio

- Operating: contests, DXing, direction finding, etc.

- VHF/UHF

The questions in each of the technical interest question pools would be designed to really test the knowledge of the person taking the test. We'd have to figure out a way to make them difficult enough so that one couldn't just simply memorize the answer. Questions could appear in one or more technical interest test. For example, a question on VHF/UHF propagation could appear in both the Radio Wave Propagation and VHF/UHF question pools.

Having said all this, I realize that this would not be easy to implement. You'd have to first decide on the topics and then enlist experts for each of the topics and get them to come up with a list of 80 – 100 questions each.

I realize that this has very little chance of being adopted, but it's interesting to think about, no? And, we have four years to do this, so it could be possible.

=====

Dan Romanchik, KB6NU, is the author of the KB6NU amateur radio blog (KB6NU.Com), the "No Nonsense" amateur radio license study guides (KB6NU.Com/study-guides/), and often appears on the ICQPodcast (icqpodcast.com). When he's not thinking up ways to make the lives of the NCVEC question pool committee more difficult, he likes to build stuff and operate CW on the HF bands.

CLUB INFORMATION



Riverland Amateur Radio Club

PO Box 621

Onalaska, WI 54650

The Key is published monthly and e-mailed to members and friends of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club by the 28th of each month.

The newsletter focuses on news, announcements and activities of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club. It may also consist of news and information of interest to the Amateur Radio community as a whole. Guest editorials and articles related to Amateur Radio are welcome.

Address any correspondence or anything that should be included in the newsletter to: Greg Miller at KA9FOZ@gmail.com.

The Riverland Amateur Radio Club maintains a website at rarc.qth.com. More information about the club can be found there as well as past copies of The Key.

RARC also maintains a Facebook page where members add information and share their Amateur Radio adventures. Please friend us at Riverland Amateur Radio Club—RARC.

RARC maintains a repeater that is located on the WXOW television tower above LaCrescent, MN. 146.970 pl 131.8.

RARC holds a weekly 2meter net on Sundays at 8:00 PM on the 146.970 repeater.

Trustee Meeting is held the 3rd Monday of the month at Perkins Restaurant, 9428 State Road 16, Onalaska, WI 54650 at 5:30 PM, all club members are welcome.

Program evening is held the 1st Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM, Elmer session at 6:30 PM at 401 West Avenue in LaCrosse.

Below are listed your RARC 2020 Board of Trustees and contact information.

President.....Dan Abts, AB9TS Email...ab9ts@yahoo.com

Vice-President.....David Peters, KB9EWG Email...kb9ewg@gmail.com

Secretary.....Rick Kolter, KD9GVS Email...rckolter@gmail.com

Treasurer.....Drew Neve, AB9NE Email...ab9ne@yahoo.com

Trustee.....Carl Thurston, KC9HDS Email...kc9hds@gmail.com

Trustee.....Bill Wood, KE9XQ Email...ke9xq@charter.net

Repeater Trustee...Shawn Hicks, KD9KGQ Email...eistim68@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor.....Greg Miller, K9LEC Email...ka9foz@gmail.com