

T H E K E Y



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.



Club meetings

Tue. Sept. 2, 7 p.m., "97 Repeater Features,"
Gundersen/Lutheran in La Crosse, 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.



In October

Plan on Tremplo Wildlife Refuge Special Event station K9P, Sat. Oct. 19.

CW aerobics

Two medium to low speed CW contests are on the calendar, Labor Day Sprint and the Straight Key Party, along with the higher speed NS Sprint that happens Thursday evenings and the really higher speed North American CW Sprint on the evening of Saturday, Sept. 7. These are aerobics for the operator. You'll sweat, but it's good sweat!



RARC Club President Greg Miller, KA9FOZ, left, congratulates Steve Kelner, KB9BMX, for winning the grand door prize, a generator, at the club's swap meet Aug. 10.

Swap meet's extra treats

By John Kjos, W9RPM

The last place I expected to meet the voice of some rare DX entities turned out to be in Onalaska at the Riverland Amateur Radio Club's Swapfest. There was Rick Levandowski, WH0AI, who has operated in Kwajalein, East Kiribati, and Diego Garcia as V73AX, T32AI & VQ9A. I worked him several times and finally met him in person. You would think his home call, WH0AI, puts him in the Marianna Islands, but he lives in Independence while not globe trotting in his government job.

I was not able to attend the swapfest last year, and I was pleasantly surprised that it seems to be growing. I would think that next year they will need a bigger place, as it

was crowded at times with the space.

The Onalaska Community Center was very nice inside and there also were several tailgaters set up outside. There was no charge for tables and no admission yet there were some nice prizes, especially a generator that was won by Steve Kelner, KB9BMX.

There were several HF transceivers for sale, along with 2 meter radios. I even saw an HF mobile amplifier. Importantly, there were also buyers there. Nice!

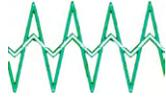
I hope that next year it is bigger yet.

Another view of the swap meet is on page 3

President's Frequency

Modulation

By Greg Miller, KA9FOZ



Thanks to everyone who came to out to our swap fest. It was a fun event thanks to all of you.

We filled all of the tables with sellers and had several tailgaters in the parking lot. We even had some surprise visitors such as ARRL section manager Gary Sorenson, W9ULK who drove up from Oxford. He set up a table and talked about the ARRL to anyone interested.

We had a dealer selling tunable coils for car or home use. I bought one and constructed a vertical with a 102" whip and attached it to my camper. Over this past week end our family went camping in Waupaca County giving me a chance to make some enjoyable contacts. I even discovered a couple of rag chew groups that I will probably check into again.

I think all had a good time at the swap meet and I look forward to helping improve on next year's.

I have noticed an increase in the number of check ins on the Sunday Night Net. It has been around 15-17 checkins weekly, up from nine-10. This is encouraging and hopefully the trend will continue.

I hope that increased activity in the hobby will bring forth some suggestions for meeting programs. This is one area that I am not very good at so I rely on anyone's help. September's meeting will be an explanation of some of the functions of the 97 repeater by Van, WA9FIO.

There may even be some other displays. Everyone is encouraged to bring along a project they have been working on or any other display. See you at the meeting.

Riverland Amateur Radio Club,
P.O. Box 621, Onalaska, Wis. 54650

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



Mark A. Smick, N9UNW, SK

Mark A. Smick, N9UNW, 70, of Galesville, formerly Onalaska, died Thursday, Aug. 15.

Smick was the Associate Dean of Public Safety Services at Western Technical College.

He was active in La Crosse County ARES/RACES, was Western Wisconsin District Emergency Coordinator and was a member of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club as well as the Mississippi River Valley Amateur Radio Association.

He was an avid outdoorsman, barber shopper and Knights of Columbus member. He volunteered for many organizations, and was a member of the city council and county board.

Survivors include his wife, Nancy; sons Douglas, Kathy and Daniel; Ariane Smick; daughters, Natalie, Mark Timms, Tammy Smick and Colleen John Santi; and nine grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents; father in law and brother in law.

Memorials may be made to the "Mark A. Smick Family Law Enforcement Scholarship" at W.T.C.

Calendar

- CWops CW Open, CW, from Aug. 31, 0000Z.
- Labor Day Sprint, CW, from Sep 2, 2300Z to Sep 3, 0300Z.

Tue. Sept. 2

- Riverland Amateur Radio Club meeting, 7 p.m., Gundersen clinic, lower level meeting room 1. "97 repeater features."

Sat, Sept. 7

- MVARA Mobile Antenna Shoot out, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Gundersen Clinic, Onalaska Campus.
- North American Sprint, CW, from Sept. 8, 0000Z to Sept. 8, 0400Z.
- NS Weekly Sprint, CW, Every Thursday evening local.
- Straight Key Party, CW, from Sept. 7, 1300Z to Sept. 7, 1600Z.

Sun. Sept. 22

- Wisconsin Antique Radio Club, 8 a.m. - 11 a.m., The Terminal, 5917 S. Howell Ave., Milwaukee.





New ARRL Wisconsin Section Manager Gary Sorenson, W9ULK, left, chats with Ken Spittler, N0JP, at the RARC swap meet Aug. 10.

Club's event a very good swap meet

By Carl Thurston, KC9HDS

This year's amateur radio swap meet was a resounding success! It took a huge effort on the part of a few to pull this event together.

Thanks to the fine organization of our event chairman Greg Miller, KA9FOZ, the few who helped were enough. The event went very smoothly with many tables full of items both radio and computer related for sale. This year we had people come from as far away as Stevens Point, Kendall, and Winona, to sell and to buy. The sellers had a wide selection of items to offer for sale or swap, every thing from the smallest component to HF rigs and entire antenna systems. The variety and scope of the available items was much greater than in past years.

This year's swap meet was so large that about half of the sellers had to set up outside. Maybe next year we can find a larger venue that will allow all of the sellers to occupy one space together.

The consensus is that eBay has killed

off the swap meets, but that wasn't evident at our swap meet.

The event also featured refreshments of various kinds including donuts, cookies, coffee and soda. There were plentiful door prizes given away every half hour with the main door prize awarded at 11. There were an assortment of small tools, components, and a desk top computer given to the luck ticket holders. The main prize was a Coleman iKW generator.

Beyond the refreshments, the door prizes and the items for sale or swap, there was the camaraderie that was evident where ever you looked. As I sat by my table and chatted and listened to the attendees, I was pleased to note that there was a conviviality that took place that created a special atmosphere that is both enjoyable and impossible to artificially create. The kind of good humor that was spontaneously generated was both enjoyable and welcome.

There was a very close, familiar, and yet

relaxed aura that is rarely seen. Even if there wasn't anything for sale, it would still have been a success from the stand point of the fellowship that persisted that day.

I wasn't able to get together much to sell *ed. note: Carl has many excuses* so my contribution was mainly logistical support, I made the coffee, iced down the soda and put up the banners outside of the Onalaska Community Center where the event was held. There was a certain amount of good natured kidding about my lack of items for sale. Those who have either seen or heard of the huge horde of stuff that fills the storage spaces at my QTH were somewhat disappointed by the thin fair that I offered this year. As it turned out, I was lucky to make to the swap meet at all, let alone to be able to drag a substantial amount of my goodies along for sale. Maybe things will work out better next year.

It was an enjoyable time and I look forward to it next year.

VE testing for licensing

The next VE testing for licensing by the RARC will be 9 a.m. Sat. Sept. 7, at the American Red Cross office, 2927 Losey Blvd. S., La Crosse. The required ARRL fee remains 15.

Those wishing to test must contact Roger Reader, KA9BKK, 608 783 0723 or readers@centurytel.net, to register five days in advance. No walk-ins.

Operating tip

Work a contest one month before the real contest. The Sun rotates once every 27 days, so work a contest the month before the one you really want to concentrate on to experience the propagation you will have later.

On the air again

By Carl Thurston, KC9HDS

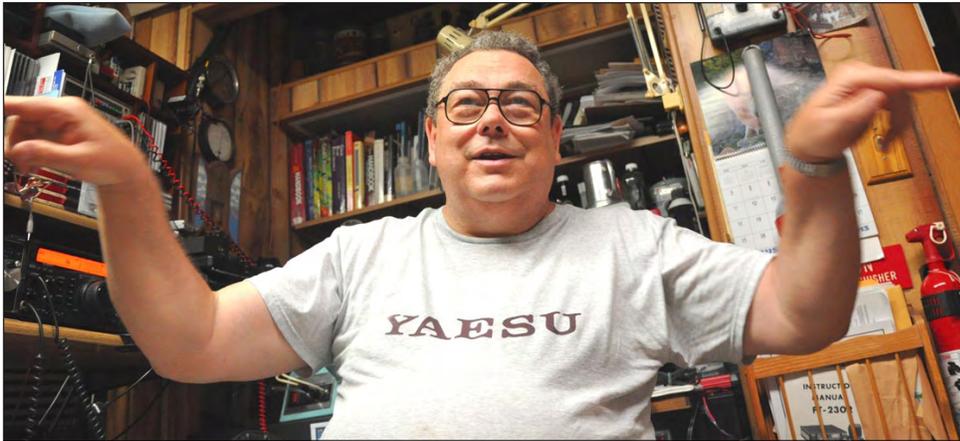
Some months ago, as I was preparing to retire from the work a day world of gainful employment, I made some rather rash, if not totally naive, statements about what I had planned to do once my time became my own. One of the wonderful things about growing older is that as time goes by, so does your memory. At the

risk of either repeating or misquoting myself, I will attempt to restate the list of tasks that I had decided to do after retirement. The list was fairly long as I recall, but I can not remember much that was on that list, so I'll improvise a new one. All this has been done with the best of intentions, and we all know about what road is paved with such things. Anyway, here goes:

This list is not in any particular order of either importance or preference.

The big one that immediately springs to my mind is the famous "I will now clean out the garage!" Promise. I know that many of you gentle readers have had to put up with mystic and manifold descriptions of the things that either are in my garage, that can still be put in there, or more likely the things that will not now fit in it. This leads to the next question: what can be done with what is still in there? Can it be moved without causing severe bodily harm to anyone foolish enough to try and extricate any thing from it that might be worth while? Is it really worth the effort, time and pains that would result.

Oh yes, I know that there are a lot of people who would say, "get a dumpster and tip the garage up and empty every thing from it into it!" My own naivete is nothing compared that of those with such notions. It would be almost as easy to remove the snows from Mount Kilimanjaro than it would to accomplish



this task. It would be enough to thaw out a frozen snow leopard, I'm sure.

That task has been put on hold for now, although there has been some interest in the computer collection housed there and that might cause the glacier on Quincy St. to melt.

There were a number of smaller tasks of basic maintenance around my QTH that needed doing and suffice it to say that most of those have been cleared from the list. I won't bother to list them here as they were fairly simple and direct jobs that most home owners have to deal with on a regular basis.

The one big thing, the really, really big thing that I did get accomplished, is that after about two years of working without a decent, substantial antenna system for HF, I have finally beaten off the Gremlins that were keeping my Butternut and Mystery Antennas from functioning as intended. Numerous Hams offered to help me with this task,

but I just was never able to coordinate with any of them to face this Herculean task so I put it off and put it off citing one reason or another for not dealing with this job. In the winter, it was too cold, in the summer,

it was too hot, in the spring, it was too windy, etc... Well finally I had enough and decided to go at it myself, no matter what the weather was like! For those of you who have never wrestled with a Butternut antenna, It takes a lot to man handle one of them on your own. It looks simple; Its only about 26 feet long, all aluminum, and fairly light. Wrong! It is really 13' longer than that with the counterpoise kit and a 12 foot mast. When I disconnected it from the steel brace that holds it in place, it went from a nice straight, vertical antenna to a wild and rangy, extremely wobbly piece of under cooked pasta. I did manage to get it onto the ground without causing injury to either it of myself. That was the easy part. Well not really, the easy part was the actually mechanical repair of it. Putting it back up was where things got real interesting. First off, it originally had a rather flimsy 12 foot aluminum mast at its base. When I attempted to set it back in place, that 12 foot mast nearly bent in half! Luckily I had a 15' steel tube mast that I used instead. The task was only slightly easier, but it was doable and now it is done and I'm back on the air.

The Mystery antenna was easily repaired and reset.

Now I have two antennas that work 6 through 80 meters, and the heck with the Gremlins. For now anyway.

