



Orange County Radio Amateurs (OCRA) Newsletter September 2007

From the Editor

Throughout any given month, we receive issues of various periodicals. I pretend to be a gardener and receive one gardening magazine. Bruce receives a few radio related magazines -- QST, CQ, and NCJ. One of the first things I do when I look at a new magazine is read the introductory article from the editor. You know the one. It poetically (well, at least in the gardening magazine) speaks to the theme for the month and gives the reader an overview of the types of articles that are included in the current issue.

For this month's OCRA newsletter, I truly wanted to have a "poetic" introduction. It would be a work of prose that would introduce the themes of the articles and weave them together. There is one minor problem. There are too many themes to attempt to be woven together. Yet again, the scope of the articles is very diverse!

As you read through this month's newsletter, you will be impressed by the diversity. Really pay attention to the different activities that are happening in OCRA. And, do one more thing -- get involved! Remember -- Get radio active!

Best regards,
Laurie - N1YXU
lbmeier@bellsouth.net

Summary of the August 13th Meeting

[Editor's note: Special thanks go to Woody Woodward, K3VSA, for taking great notes at the August meeting! Bruce, NILN, and I were out of town on vacation at the time of the meeting.]

1. Dan Eddleman reported that we had an opportunity to purchase a second power amplifier for the 70cm band and recommended that we do so. It was moved, seconded, and approved that we authorize Dan to get a second one, since the first one, which we still have not received, is so hard to obtain. These are custom made for the 70cm Amateur Band, and that evidently is a hardship for the manufacturer, which makes them for commercial service. Danny Hampton appears to have one in excellent condition which we'll try to obtain first. We would use the second amp on our other 440 machine.
2. Dan KR4UB awarded the OCRA Cup to Ken Kauffmann KR4FM in recognition for Ken's performance as Net Control during Operation Quailview several months ago. Dan also presented Ken with a CD-R of all the net traffic during the exercise so Ken can relive it any time he wants to! Photos were taken by Joe K4SAR, and a press release will be issued.
3. Dan reported that the OCRA ads for "World Radio" magazine and the "SERA Journal" should appear in their respective next issues. (Woody has seen that "World Radio" for September 2007 is in fact running our OCRA ad.)
4. The membership commissioned Chris Pope KG4CFX to once again have \$300 worth of the beautiful OCRA decal stickers made up. We've about run out of the ones we had.
5. Ten candidates appeared for the VE test session last Saturday, and all but one of them passed something. Among those upgrading to General was OCRA's own Jackie (Jacqueline) Little KD4OFG.
6. Woody had a show-and-tell book with all ten pages of the new Orange County ARES web page he has completed and recognized Dee Ramm KU4GC and Adriano Marcuz KI4OTN as HTMLers who gave time, expertise, and moral support to him while he was learning to do text markup code. (Since the meeting, Gary Pielak AI4GT ("Thanks, Gary!") assisted in getting the new pages uplinked to the server, where they're now live as of August 16th.). Once the bugs get shaken out, it will be possible to apply for membership using the online form and to submit the net control op's report online, too. Woody mentioned that once the ARES pages have been perfected, he'll rest for a week or two and then begin the daunting task of redoing the OCRA web pages!

7. Woody administered the paper test on the subject of ARES. Ten questions were based on the organizational structure of statewide NC ARES and our local ARES branch and area. This was a hard test!! High score with four (!) correct answers was Meg KI4LLL, who won a free year's subscription to "World Radio" magazine. Looks like we need a presentation or two on ARES. There was no tie. So, the second free subscription went back into the prize pool for next month.

8. There were paid up orders for about twenty personalized OCRA cups, and an order will be placed before the September meeting. It was agreed that OCRA will present a cup to Danny Hampton K4ITL, in recognition to Danny's assistance to us.

President's QRM

by Dave Snyder, W4SAR

Those of us who have chased DX and have been on the wrong side of a pile-up often wonder what it would be like to go on a "DX-pedition" and be the big one that all the others are trying to contact and get a QSL card from.

Well, like most of us, I can't afford the time or expenses to mount an expedition to an exotic locale. However, there is a low budget way to do it. If you have hankering to go to the shore for vacation and the spot you are vacationing on happens to be an island, check the Radio Society of Great Britain's website for the "Islands on the Air" program or "IOTA". This program has thousands of islands throughout the world registered, and there are many hams throughout the world who are "Island Chasers" who eagerly chase after these islands.

I vacation every August on Chincoteague Island, which is on the Atlantic side of the Eastern Shore of Virginia. It turns out that Chincoteague is listed by IOTA as part of the "Virginia Island Group" registry number is NA-083. I decided to post an activation of this island on the IOTA website. Almost immediately a Japanese operator e-mailed me and told me very few Japanese operators had that island and they would be looking for me. As it turns out, Chincoteague, which is the only populated island of the group, has very little amateur radio activity.

I raised a G5RV antenna in the trees at the cottage we were renting and set up my Kenwood TS440S. Joe, K4SAR, visited us for a couple of days, and we did try calling on 20 meters SSB, with no luck. I later set up the station for PSK31 and that mode worked its magic! I set up a CQ beacon mentioning the IOTA designation and was delighted to have DX stations actually calling back to me. First station to call back was UT5ZN, the Ukraine. Then, it was followed in rapid order by calls from St. Lucia, Uruguay, Cuba, and the Netherlands. Over the next few nights, I added Poland, Germany, Brazil, Argentina, the Azores. The best contact I made was VP6TD, "Tom" on Pitcairn Island in the Pacific who was eager to speak with me and asked about the island I was on. Regrettably, I did not read any Asian stations. So, I had to disappoint the JA operators looking for me.

I also worked numerous USA stations, many of whom thanked me for not only activating an island, but also activating a County and grid square that was not common. I had two QSL cards already waiting for me on my return home, and a few more have trickled in. It was a lot of fun. I will print up special QSL cards for this and future returns to Chincoteague.

It turns out one opportunity I missed was that on the middle weekend of my trip there was a "Lighthouses on the Air" program worldwide. Operators were working from lighthouses throughout the world. Visible and only a half mile from the cottage is the Assateague Island Lighthouse, which was not activated. I will be contacting the manager of the local wildlife refuge to seek permission to activate the lighthouse in 2008 and operate a field day style station from its base. I'll let you all know how that works out. In ham radio, sometimes you have to make your own adventure.

OCRA Member Profiles

By Woody Woodward, K3VSA

Hello, and welcome back! After these many months, we're here once again interviewing another OCRA member. This month's interview is with Chris Lawless, KG4HNC, who graciously submitted to this inquisition. Next month's intended victim is Lenore Ramm, KF4PAB.

Member Name: Chris Lawless
Callsign: KG4HNC
Birthday: May 1, 1965

K3VSA: Chris, why don't we begin with how you got involved in Amateur Radio?

KG4HNC: Ham radio... Well, I was always interested in radios as a kid. I had the chance to play with 2-way radios some when I was a teletype repairman in the Marine Corps, and I messed around with CB radios a little after I got out. One of my neighbors, a guy named Mark, was a ham radio operator, and I got interested in that. I bought a copy of "Now You're Talking" at Radio Shack and got my license on May 2nd 2000, right after my birthday.

K3VSA: So you maintained those old mechanical teletype machines, the ones with all those gears and the oil and stuff?

KG4HNC: Yeah, those were the ones!

K3VSA: And I think you recently upgraded your license to General, right?

KG4HNC: Yeah, I passed my General. I have to work on remembering all those math formulas before I try the Extra exam, though.

K3VSA: What's your favorite part of Amateur Radio?

KG4HNC: I like making stuff, like making antennas. I built three of them, a 2 Meter antenna for foxhunting, a 10 Meter dipole and a five band antenna from an article in "QST."

K3VSA: Now, you built a radio, too, didn't you? An Elecraft K2, wasn't it?

KG4HNC: Yeah, I built a K2.

K3VSA: How did it turn out?

KG4HNC: Well, we used it at Field Day this year. It took about a month to put it together. I worked on it maybe a couple of hours at a time. It could get hard with the two dogs wrestling with each other under the table while I was trying to work on it, but after I was through, there were only two mistakes. Easy mistakes to make. I soldered a resistor to the wrong location, and there was one component that I forgot to install. I went back through the assembly listing and found I forgot to make a check mark in that box, and that's how I knew about the missing part. The instructions were good, and you check sections of the radio as you go along. And I had Steve Jackson KZ1X look at it after I finished with it.

K3VSA: Well, I think you did fine. A K2 is a pretty daunting first kit to build, in my opinion.

KG4HNC: It wasn't hard. The next project is the power amp for the K2. I also have an 80 Meter PSK31 kit I built.

K3VSA: Is that the one called the "warbler?"

KG4HNC: Yeah, I think I might need some help getting that one on the air, though.

K3VSA: Well, you might get Dave Snyder W4SAR to help. I think he's the club's official PSK31 guy.

KG4HNC: I think I'd like to have a K1 and maybe one of those new K3s, too.

K3VSA: Oh, yeah! Who wouldn't want a K3? Well, tell us a little bit about your other two family members?

KG4HNC: (smiling) Prince is a pure bred border collie from Kansas. He's not a certified rescue dog yet, but he will be. I'm sure he'd do fine if he had to work in a real emergency. He does great in training exercises. My other dog is Jules, and she's a sweetie. I got her to be a companion for Prince, but both of them would really rather play with human beings.

K3VSA: So you do rescue work as your other avocation?

KG4HNC: Scuba diving and Search-and-Rescue. Joe Simpson K4SAR and I are both in the Central NC SAR group.

K3VSA: Well, I know all that keeps you busy. You keep your plate full, and we don't see you at Bojangles often on Saturdays. Well, thanks again for allowing yourself to be interviewed, Chris.

KG4HNC: Oh, you're welcome!

Half of Our Webpages Have Been Updated...

By Woody Woodward, K3VSA

Just in case you've been on vacation on some distant planet, I'll tell you that we now have a newly updated Orange County ARES webpage. To view it, go to:

<http://www.qsl.net/w4ez>

The previous webpages were probably cutting edge when they were first posted, but that was maybe seven years ago, if not longer. As Gary Pielak AI4GT said when I mentioned that I was thinking about doing updates, "Go for it! Jeez, that code out there now is old enough to vote!" Well, the old pages were looking a bit shopworn. I had sort of been hoping that someone in the club with a strong acumen with HTML would take it upon him or herself to do this, but no go. After a while, it dawned on me (me: "I'm a little slow on the uptake some times." you: "Oh, you think?") that there are three groups of people in the club: those who have the skills, those with the time, and those with the money. Those of you who know me well will already gather that I'm in the middle group, with the time. CERTAINLY not with the money, and CERTAINLY not with very much inherent skill.

Adriano Marcuz KI4OTN, who in a former incarnation was an Internet Service Provider, spent many long (and ultimately futile) hours attempting to teach me how to use Dreamweaver. But it was hopeless to try to instruct a simpleton in anything but the simple. I decided I'd have to actually get into the belly of the beast and learn how to code in HTML itself.

Thus I began my journey to "master" HTML with the single most important step of deciding to do it. At one of our Bojangles breakfast meetings, I told Dee Ramm KU3GC about my plans, and he asked me what I knew already about HTML. All I knew was that HTML documents began with "HTML" in between greater than and less than marks, and that the documents had heads and bodies. And Dee said, "Well, that's a good start," and he spent five or ten minutes showing me how to do basic HTML coding, like hot links to other web pages and to pictures. In a couple of days, I had sent him my first crude HTML document, which he uploaded onto his personal Duke U website. Basically, it ran, and he said, "You're on your way!"

I found some "HTML for Dummies" books at the thrift stores for a couple bucks and began coding in earnest. After several weeks of writing code and dealing with phantom problems caused by my ignorance of how computers work, it was done. At long last, the monkey had stopped typing random gobbledygoop and produced a little Shakespeare!

So, as Grandpa Grape in VeggieTales might ask in his affected New Jersey accent, "Whatja loin?" I learned that being a ham is a journey and none of us should ever be satisfied with where we are but should always aspire toward personal development. We're all lids at the beginning. The only bad lids are those who think they already know everything but really don't even know that they're lids. I learned that it's OK to ask for help. God helps the humble, but the haughty go down to destruction. I learned that there are wonderful, patient people who hold ham tickets, and they're more than willing to allocate their valuable, limited time to help someone new. A lot of these teachers are in our club, and I'm grateful to every one who provided encouragement to me while I was struggling with this project.

Our revised ARES website now sports an online application and an online net control reporting form. It has a news page to keep you informed of what's happening with ARES (that page has already been updated twice this week with new information), and there's an alerts page (still in the formative stage) which will hopefully allow you at a glance to see the status of weather, homeland security, amber alerts, etc. There is a Q and A page to explain to visitors the need for ARES. Another page has a list of scheduled area emergency nets and their frequencies. In all, there are ten distinct web pages on the new OC ARES website.

So, what's next? Well, the "lesser Satan," the ARES site, has been subdued. Time to move on to the OCRA site, and we're already at work on that. What will it be like? I can't say for certain, but I think it will be wonderful. It will be inspiring, and tasteful, and educational and fun. It will have original artwork created by some of our own OCRA members, and it will be fashioned to be appealing to members and visitors alike. More than anything else, it will be a journey. Man, I love this club!

Casual QSOs - Calling and Responding to a CQ

By Bruce Meier, N1LN (aka NC4KW)

The most important standard for any type of QSO - whether casual rag chewing, DX, or contesting - is to follow radio etiquette. That can be stated another way - listen. After you listen - listen again. You want to make sure that the frequency you are about to transmit on is not occupied by another QSO. If this is one of your first QSOs, you also might want to just tune around on the band to hear other stations having a QSO to get some OJT.

NOTE: Throughout this article, DE and K are for CW. The words in (), following DE or K, are for SSB.

Calling CQ:

After you get your logging software up and running (more on that in potential future articles) and your radio tuned up, on the clear frequency, you are ready to go. As part of good etiquette, it is a great habit to make your first transmission be "QRL". If you are on SSB, you can transmit: "Is this frequency in use?" <delay a couple seconds> "Is this frequency in use? - from N1LN, November 1 London November" If CW, you would send QRL? <delay> QRL de N1LN K. If nobody responds, you are good to go with calling CQ.

When you call CQ, the typical method is to send or say: CQ CQ de (this is) N1LN N1LN K (say nothing if SSB). You may decide to send this twice in a row. Suggestion - don't over CQ. If someone hears you calling and you keep calling - they just might leave. If you don't get a response, call again. When someone responds, they might respond in many ways, but I will only discuss two.

1. N1YXU: The person calling might ONLY send their call once or twice.
2. N1LN de (this is) N1YXU N1YXU K (over): This is the most accepted way, but if you are being called by a DX'er or a contester, you might only get their call.

When you respond, you should send or say: N1YXU de (this is) N1LN Tnx (thanks) for the call. Then, you can send the other stations RST, your QTH, and your name. Then, send it back to them. N1YXU de (this is) N1LN K (over). They will probably respond with the same information. After that, it is up to you and the person you are having a QSO with to determine what to talk about. Have fun - take your time - don't talk on and on - send control back to them in a reasonable time. Over time and by listening to other QSOs, you will get very comfortable with casual QSOs.

Responding to a CQ:

While you are listening around the band in either mode, CW or SSB, you just might hear someone calling CQ. It might sound just like what I have written in the above. It might not. No matter, when you hear a station calling CQ, you can give them a call.

CAUTION: If you hear a station from either the US or Canada and they are calling CQ DX, DON'T CALL THEM. They are ONLY looking for foreign Hams to respond. Responding to them is a good way to get some negative comments sent your way. Also, it is not in keeping with good ham radio etiquette.

So, for this example, just assume you hear a station calling CQ. The station is calling: CQ CQ de (this is) W8ABC W8ABC CQ CQ de (this is) W8ABC W8ABC K (over). When you call them, you can use either method listed above, but I would suggest using example #2. DON'T call and call - keep the response short and sweet.

W8ABC de (this is) N1LN K (over). If they don't copy you, they will ask for a repeat. This time make it a bit longer. W8ABC de (this is) N1LN N1LN K (over). They just might have interference on their end. They will probably exchange similar information as you did above. The QSO will take its own shape based on what you and the other station want to talk about.

Finishing a QSO:

When you are done or when the other station decides to terminate a QSO, you will probably hear things like “thanks for the QSO” or “best 73” (73s is incorrect) or “best DX” or “hope to work you again”. Bottom line – it does not really matter. The call exchange is the same – W8ABC de (this is) N1LN K (over).

With that “K”, that ends this article. Yes, over time you will get your own short cuts and hopefully, expand your “good” operating habits. Get out there – make some Qs. Practice. This is the easy stuff. Next month, we will look into making DX QSOs and working DXpeditions.

A Second Chance to Not Miss the Boat

By Woody Woodward, K3VSA

Over the past several weeks, I've seen the following items grace my monitor: (1). On the PIO Forum, some hams are complaining that the FCC is not levying kilo dollar fines on truck stops for first offence violations selling "export" 10 Meter transceivers. (2). Other hams are suggesting that we licensed amateurs ought to be camping out on 10 Meters so that it won't be the desolate band it is now, and there would thus be more legals than intruders. (3). The ARRL has set a goal of attracting 30,000 new hams a year. Am I the only one who sees an opportunity going begging in all of this?

SOAP BOX ON And while I'm at it, let me be frank and say that I believe that we hams helped to create this mess in the first place. Yes, I know we detest having our bands usurped, but do we have to seem so elitist in how we handle it? Do we have to be perceived as arrogant and haughty and chase off the very people we might ought to be recruiting into the fold?

Now, don't misunderstand me. I absolutely do not condone the illegal use of the electromagnetic spectrum. My Amateur Radio license is a wonderful, awesome gift that I'd do nothing to jeopardize. I cannot advocate QSOs with intruders. But it seems to me that any group of people who would want to operate a radio badly enough to risk being fined and/or having their equipment confiscated would be a group of people who might be interested in knowing that it's now easier than ever to become a legal, licensed Amateur Radio Operator. ***SOAP BOX OFF***

It has been suggested that hams visit truck stops and warn the proprietors that we'll snitch to the FCC that they're selling illegal radios. Would it not be better to approach these businesses and ask if they'd be interested in some brochures explaining that Morse Code is no longer a license requirement? Would it not be great fun to set up a table outside a truck stop one Saturday afternoon and demonstrate modern Amateur Radio equipment to some long haul truckers? Maybe let them chat over one of our VHF/UHF repeaters and demonstrate IRLP to them? These people go to every county or parish in every state of the union. Wouldn't that be a boon to the county hunters among us? Long haul truckers have traditionally been known for their public service. So have we hams. Wouldn't we be a good fit?

Shouldn't we now extend the hand of fellowship to this community? We missed the boat years ago when it was leaving port. We were enraged that our old 11 Meter band was "stolen" from us to create the Citizens Band. If my history is correct, 11 Meters was never an internationally recognized allocation for Amateur Radio anyway. Well, the boat of opportunity is docked here once more. Let's not miss it again!

OCRA Officers

Dave Snyder, W4SAR - President
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