

Orange County Radio Amateurs (OCRA) Newsletter
August 2008

From the Editor

You're probably wondering if I am going to mention "Ride the Waves" again this month. Well, yes, I am. In fact, I predict that when you finish reading this newsletter, you will feel inspired to "Ride the Waves" yourself.

You will read about the results of OCRA Field Day 2008. You will learn about a club project that is being initiated through feedback from you and other members of the club. You'll understand how critical we all are in our repeater etiquette to newcomers.

"Riding the Waves" is a theme throughout the newsletter. Hop on board – you'll enjoy the ride!

As usual, I will end my newsletter introduction by asking you to get comfortable and to take time to read through your club's newsletter. Until next month....

Best regards,
Laurie - N1YXU
lbmeier@bellsouth.net

Summary of the July Meeting

The July OCRA meeting was held on Monday, July 14. Summaries of the discussion topics are shown below:

- 1 Our Field Day Czar, Dave (W4SAR), gave a debriefing on the OCRA 2008 Field Day. As you will see later in this newsletter, we can all be very proud of the effort of everyone involved in this year's event. Band captains also gave updates on the activities of their stations. Everyone's input and recommendations will be incorporated into next year's activities.
- 2 If anyone has digital pictures from Field Day, please be sure to send them to Woody (K3VSA) for posting on the OCRA website.
- 3 Special thanks to Dee (KU4GC) and MK (W4MKR) for all their work in supplying and cooking food at the Field Day site. Overall, \$44 were cleared from contributions for the food against the cost. And, a record number of bottles of water were consumed due to the VERY hot conditions during Field Day.
- 4 The members present at the meeting voted overwhelmingly to investigate the possibilities of participating in the Winter Field Day activity, which may be scheduled for late January. More information to follow.
- 5 Woody (K3VSA) has put together and sent a welcome letter to new hams in the area. We had an opportunity to read the letter. Woody – Thank you for your time and efforts on a job very well done!
- 6 The OCRA Cup was passed by Steve (KZ1X) to Karen (KD4YJZ) for her continual support and contributions to the OCRA club over the past (approximate) 15 years. Karen – Sincere congratulations!
- 7 As you'll read in the President's QRM, one of our esteemed members recently celebrated a significant birthday. Be sure to go to the OCRA website and check out the picture of this member, his wife, and the wonderful birthday cake he was able to enjoy.
- 8 Steve (KZ1X) introduced the topic of a club project. You will read more about this idea in this newsletter.
- 9 The paper contest took a new spin (pun absolutely intended) in July. OCRA had its own, abbreviated version of the TV show, "Wheel of Fortune". Our lovely hostess was Karen, KD4YJZ. The official score keeper was Gerry, KD4YJV. Two teams participated in the contest. The first team was Dee (KU4GC) and Bruce (N1LN). The winning team included Patrick (KJ4EWX) and John (W4PAH). And, yes, you guessed it – the winning prizes were subscriptions to "World Radio"!
- 10 The next volunteer exam (VE) session will be August 9 at 10:00am at Sunrise Church. Anyone who will be taking a test needs to bring a copy and the original of his/her license as well as identification and the exam fee of \$14, payable in cash or check to ARRL VEC. If you need further information or directions, please contact Dave (W4SAR). Note: The new Extra class exams went into effect last month, and our materials have been updated accordingly.
- 11 IOTA Activation - Immediately after the VE Session, Dave (W4SAR) and Karen (KD4YJZ) leave for two weeks (August 9-23) to spend on Chincoteague Island, Virginia. Dave will register an activation with the Islands On The Air program. Chincoteague has an IOTA registration of NA 083. It is in Accomac County, Virginia, and the Maidenhead Grid designation is FM27jn. Primarily, he will work PSK31 and SSB on the 20 meter band, possibly working SSB on the 6-meter band as well. He is more likely to be on the radio on rainy days! Anyone working him will get a beautiful QSL card.

The August OCRA meeting will be held on Monday, August 11, at the Sunrise Church beginning at 7:30 pm. The weekly Orange County ARES net meets on Saturdays at 9:30 am local on the W4UNC repeater [442.150MHz with a PL tone of 131.8Hz]. All licensed amateur radio operators are invited and encouraged to check in.

The President's QRM

by Woody Woodward, K3VSA

Well, it's been anything but the proverbial "quiet week in Lake Wobegon". Lisa and I were tied up in that "Music Man" presentation for almost a solid month (and thanks, by the way, for attending, Joe Simpson, Dave Belt, et al., we hope you enjoyed it). Then, I had my credit card stolen and had to go 'round and 'round with various disinterested organizations over that. (The thief seemed to have an affinity for high-priced Apple Computer equipment.) I'm still trying to get one of my vehicles ready for inspection against its will. Finally, on Saturday, August 2nd, my mother, who was 93 and lived in Baltimore where I grew up, passed away after a lengthy series of geriatric medical issues.

THANK GOODNESS FOR AMATEUR RADIO! That might be a strange thing to say, considering all the challenges that have come my way, but it's really true. Having a supportive group of people to talk with on the air means a great deal to me, as I suppose it would to anybody. It's wonderful to have people with whom to share my drive time to work every morning. (And if you're out and about weekdays between 0615L and 0645L, feel free to check in to our informal "Turkey Trot" net.) They always cheer me up regardless of what life threw at me the day before.

Speaking of radio companionship, did you know that our 442.150MHz machine is getting a reputation as a repeater where the regulars are almost always glad to answer a callsign that's thrown out? We're becoming a sort of oasis of friendliness, and we're hearing a lot of callsigns from all over the region, and they're mostly getting answered by good natured OCRA members who are anxious to extend the hand of ham fellowship to somebody new. It's a good reputation to have! And you can be a part of it, easily. When you hear people speak their callsigns, take a second to answer, even if you're busy and only have time to say you heard them and wanted to say, "Hi and hope to talk to you again sometime at greater length." I guarantee that, if you do this, it won't be long before you'll almost always be able to have a lively QSO on our repeater.

Thanks to all those who assisted in the ARES Adopt-A-Highway trash pickup recently. We had a good, enthusiastic crowd and got finished in record time! And congratulations to Dewey (WA4AHR), who recently celebrated his 70th birthday. Sorry I won't be in town to participate in the VE test session next Saturday, as I'm given to understand that one of the people who visited us at Field Day 2008 will be there to test for Technician and General. I do hope to see you all at the August OCRA meeting on Monday, the 11th. Until then,

Final Report on OCRA Field Day 2008

by Dave Snyder, W4SAR

Field Day Coordinator

The Results for Field Day 2008 were submitted via the ARRL Website on Sunday, June 27, the day before the deadline. I also e-mailed the supporting documents for our bonus point claims on the same day. I want to thank everyone for an excellent job cleaning up their logs. Very few dupes were found, and I only had to look up a couple of uncertain callsigns or ARRL sections. What follows is the summary for QSO points by mode and band, followed by bonus points claimed, as broken down by the summary function of the WR9R logging program. QSOs are 2 points each in CW or Digital Modes, and 1 point each in a voice mode. Our multiplier is 5X for using no commercial power and 5 Watts maximum output.

Again, my thanks to all of you for an awesome effort. I will not be present at the next OCRA meeting but will be pleased to start work on next year's Field Day. The top of the list, in my opinion, is how to better support the GOTA station. We need to get them opportunities for a lot of activity and make it fun.

OCRA Club Project (?)

by Steve Jackson, KZ1X

At the last OCRA meeting I mentioned a possible club project. This would be where we created a device of some type that club members would find to be a useful station accessory and one they could build themselves.

I have a supply of surplus parts, and depending on what we decide to make ... maybe some of them can be re-purposed to this task, saving some cost to members since I would donate these parts to the effort.

It has been nearly 14 years since our last club project. Time to get back on the track!

Whatever the project, it needs to be affordable so it can be popular, it needs to be useful, it needs to be well-engineered, and it needs to be something that a near-beginner could assemble with limited help. Piece of cake!

A request was made last month for people to offer ideas for this project, to see what a consensus might be for what is useful. So far, I have had only a small number of suggestions ... and among them, there isn't any consensus at all! (Well, at least they are all antennas.)

There are a few ways we can go with this idea now, so progress can be made. One idea, which this newsletter article will help with, is to get more suggestions submitted. That could help arrive at some common need that is not yet defined. Please do send me e-mail <kz1x@yahoo.com> if you have a specific need or desire for a station accessory. In fact, don't limit your message to one idea. Make a whole list and rank them from most-needed on down.

Another and perhaps more useful way to go is for me to SUGGEST a project. So, for a real example, here goes: how about a "unicall" ?

OK, fair question, what IS a "unicall" ?

Well, to be simple, it is an addressable receiver. From a certain standpoint, it is very similar to the two-tone voice pagers we have had for some years, but which all but 3 or 4 have quit working. The term 'unicall' comes from 'unicast' which means "just you and nobody else" and 'call' which means, um, "call."

Functionally, it is a box that sits on a shelf, on top of the fridge, or whatever, and plugs in. It has a power-on LED indicator, a speaker, a pushbutton, and a switch, and that's all. Inside is a receiver (yes, just a receiver, no transmitter) that is tuned to the 442.15 repeater, and also a special tone decoder that turns on the speaker when your private tones are picked up. The switch allows you to turn the speaker on without waiting for the tones, and the pushbutton allows you to reset the speaker when it has been activated. That is it. It is very much like a voice pager, except this one is not portable.

The reason somebody might want one of these is simple: how many times have you wanted to get a hold of somebody on the radio, or you were waiting to hear from somebody, but for whatever reason, having the handheld nearby was not practical? Just punch a few digits on your handheld, and let the repeater 'page' your other party!

OK, that is just one project idea. Another might be a long-term float charger for all those handy gel-cell batteries that Dee makes available to members. Still another might be a resonant speaker, for budding CW fans. Perhaps a wattmeter? A portable Morse iambic key? Or, how about a nice 24 hour station clock?

I hope this short article perks people's interest up and gets me some feedback about interest in a project, and on what your needs are. We have a fall and winter building season ahead of us, and there's never been a ham who didn't need some sort of gizmo in the shack. An OCRA project would fill a need, and also give people the chance to make something for themselves, something useful and unique, while perhaps learning a little more about practical electronics.

2008 OCRA Officers and Board Members

Officers:

Woody Woodward, K3VSA – President
Ken Kauffmann, KR4FM – Vice President
Dan Eddleman, KR4UB - Treasurer
Laurie Meier, N1YXU - Secretary

Board Members:

Justin Heinecke, KD4CPM, One year term remaining
Gary Pielak, AI4GT, One year term remaining
Robert Little, N4ZAK, Two year term remaining
Brian McLamb, KI4YSZ, Two year term remaining