W5AMK CTARC Central Texas Amateur Radio Club

THE Wavelength NEWSLETTER

February 2013

The Central Texas Amateur Radio Club
meets the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM at the
Bell County Communications Center, 798 West Avenue O, in Belton

The Prez Says…

Priscilla Beauregard, KE5UES

The Calendar has turned to February and the hope of spring is in the air. It's Groundhog Day*!* Will we have six more weeks of winter or an early spring? Find out further in this issue of the newsletter. Of course my hyacinths are all ready blooming but we all know that February can be our worst weather month.

Beginning Wednesday, February 13th, there will be a monthly net held on 3860 KHz (+/- QRM) for all ARES members in North Texas. This is the first of regularly scheduled nets to be held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 8:30 PM. All ARES members, licensed to operate on 3860, in the NTX Section are encouraged to join in. At present the Net Control Operators are: Phil Clements-K5PC; Bill Engel-K5DHY; Les Loftin - WD5BYQ; Tim Staley-K5TGS and Bob Jones-W5BJ.

The club wishes to welcome our new members: Terry Evans – KF5OHR from Bartlett, Jan – W5GNK and Ross Gregg – W5ANW from Temple. Jan and Ross have supported many club events in the past. We are glad they decided to join the club. All three new members hold EXTRA Class licenses.

Some dates to remember for February:

February 5th Next club meeting at 7:00 PM at the Bell County Communication Center.
February 9th Bell County Skywarn training (Basic & Advance).
February 14th is Valentine Day.
February 19th is President's Day – a federal holiday, so you can expect most city, state, and government offices to be closed.

Please remember to pay your renewal dues if you haven't already. They are due now.

Let's hope the Groundhog has a great forecast for us.

- 73 de KE5UES

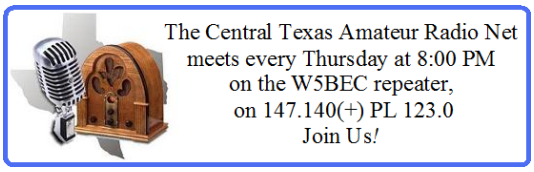
Strays

Kiss Me By Wireless

There's a wireless station down in my heart,
And it calls in my dreams all night long;
It is operating just for you and me,
And it's spanning the hills and the sea.
Your message I love the best,
The call to happiness.

Send each caress to me by wireless,
Its tenderness you can to me express;
I love to call you dear,
Across the atmosphere.
I hear your voice,
It thrills me through and through.
My lonely heart sighs for you, just for you!
Oh, radio-phone the answer "Yes!"
Kiss me by wireless.

There's a pulsating current,
Runs 'round my heart,
It's attuned with your own sweetheart mine;
Though you're far away,
We're never apart
For the radio station's my heart.
So on-the-air impress,
Our new found happiness.



February NCS & Back-Up NCS Schedule

February 7th:	February 14th:
Net Control: K6WXA	KE5UES
Back-Up: AD5SK	KE5ISN

February 21st:	February 28th:
Net Control: KE5ISN	AD5SK
Back-Up: AD5SK	W5VEX

Skywarn Training

Bell County *(Basic & Advanced Spotter Training)* Saturday, February 9th, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, at the Belton ISD Administration Building, 400 N. Wall St., in Belton.

Bosque County *(Basic Spotter Training Only)* Friday, February 1st, 7:00-9:00 PM, at the Meridian Civic Center in Meridian.

McLennan County *(Basic & Advanced Spotter Training)* Saturday, February 2nd, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, at the Emergency Services Education Center, 7601 Steinbeck Bend Road, in Waco.

YL-OM Contest

Sponsored by the Young Lady's Radio League in observance of Valentine's Day, contest period is 1400Z, 9 Feb thru 0200Z, 11 Feb on all authorized amateur frequencies. Log submissions go to KC8PKY.

For more information, please visit: http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/contestdetails.php?ref=353

How's DX?

G3SWH and G3RTE will be active as **H44KW** 18-28 February on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. They will be on 80-10 meters CW only. QSL direct.

K6PV will activate Santa Catalina Island in the NA-066 IOTA group, February 20-24.

They will be on 20 through 80 meters SSB. QSL direct with an s.a.s.e.

DCØKK is active in Sri Lanka through the 9th of March as **4S7KKG**. His activity is on the HF Bands CW & Digital modes. QSL via his home call.

ZS7V will be active from the South African National Antarctic Exploration base through February of next year, on the HF bands. QSL via ZS1HF.

A French team of amateurs will be active from Uganda 6-18 February on the HF bands as **5X8C**. QSL via F1NGP.

G7COD will be on the air as **8Q7AK** from Embudu Island in the Maldives for three weeks in February. He's expected to be operating on 30, 17 and 12 meters using CW and SSB. QSL via his home call.

AA9A will be active from Antigua Island February 10th to the 20th as **V24A**. His operation will include the 2013 ARRL DX CW Contest. No bands or modes mentioned. QSL via his home call.

A group of British hams will be active as **XRØYG** from Easter Island, 13 - 21 February. QSL via G3TXF.

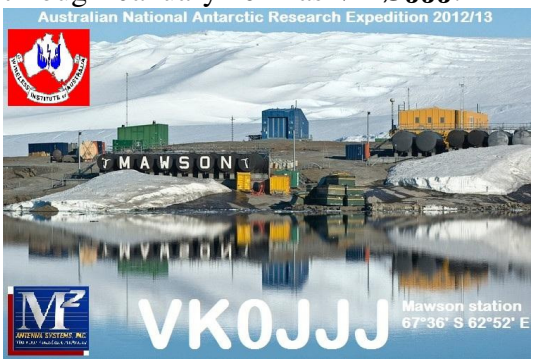
H44RK will be active from Upolu Island**,** Samoa through the 1st of March as **5WØRK**. QSL via NR6M.

AA4NC will be operational from Montserrat February 12th to the 20th as **VP2ME**. QSL this station electronically using Logbook of the World.

A group of German amateurs will be active as **XV2DLH** from Vietnam, 15 - 26 February on the HF bands. QSL via DK8ZZ.

F6ITD will be on the air **stroke FG** from Guadeloupe and two other islands between February 1st and March 25th. He will be using SSB and the Digital modes during his stay. QSL via his home call.

VK6JJJ will be active from Mawson station, Antarctica, February 2013 through January 2014 as **VKØJJJ**.



He will be active on 160-6 m SSB and digital modes. QSL via VK3ZAZ.

An international team will be on the air from Burundi between February 14th and the 23rd with four stations using the call **9U4U**. Activity will be on 160 through 10 meters using CW, SSB and RTTY. QSL via MØURX.

DJ9KH will be active from Tongatapu Island as **A31WH** and from Vavau Island as **A31WH/P** February 20th through March 3rd. QSL via his home call.

An Early Spring Predicted

Punxsutawney Phil

Gobbler's Knob, Pennsylvania…

The calendar has turned to February and the hope of spring is in the air. It's Groundhog Day***!***

Pre-dawn fireworks lit up the early morning sky in Punxsutawney, signaling the gathering crowds that what they came to see and hear; the most celebrated weather forecast of the year; was soon to be forth coming.

At just about 7:25 AM, Punxsutawney Phil – *Seer of Seers, Sage of Sages, Prognosticator of Prognosticators, Weather Prophet Extraordinaire, National Treasure and most photo-graphed Pennsylvanian* – emerged from his winter sleep, then, speaking to his select group of human handlers, known as the "Inner Circle" in Groundhogese, Punxsutawney Phil indicated that he did not see his shadow, and made the prediction of an early spring. The Inner Circle then translated Phil's words for the world to hear.

Groundhog Day on February 2nd, is a way to have a little fun at mid-winter, but generally climate records and statistics tell us that winter isn't over yet.

While Phil's proponents maintain that his predictions are 100 percent accurate, the U.S. National Climatic Data Center has estimated that Phil is only correct about 40 percent of the time. The NCDC reached their conclusion by taking Phil's predictions and comparing them with average temperatures in February and March. In many years when Phil predicted six more weeks of winter weather, February and March turned out to be warmer than average.

Climatologically speaking, the three coldest months of the year are December, January and February. So winter still has a bit to go before the vernal equinox on Wednesday, March 20th, which will kick off the first official day of spring.

But to obsess over the accuracy of Phil's predictions is to miss the point; it's more about having fun.

To really experience Groundhog Day you have to believe. To quote George Michael: *"You gotta have faith."*

When he's not predicting the weather, Phil lives in a climate-controlled home at the Punxsutawney Library where he is cared for by members of the Inner Circle. His yearly Groundhog Day predictions are even entered into the U.S. Congressional Record.

Tuning-In

All Aboard!

♫ Lend an ear and listen to my version, of a really solid Tennessee excursion… Pardon me boy, is that the Chattanooga Choo-Choo? ♫

Each day, roughly two-thirds of the 80-100 daily trains that cross the Southwest on the **Burlington Northern-Santa Fe** transcontinental main line are double-stack container trains and piggyback trains moving between the eastern gateways of Chicago, Kansas City, Memphis, Fort Worth, and the California terminals.

The Railroads operate on 96 channels in the VHF band between 159.810 and 161.565 MHz. There are also some UHF operations, but these are mainly used for end-of-train telemetry data, also known as 'EOTD'.

These UHF telemetry frequencies can be found between 452.3250-452.96875 MHz & 457.3250 -457.96875 MHz.

While the BNSF utilizes many frequencies along its varied lines, this covers only those used within the Central Texas Region.

Road Channels: *(All are Simplex Frequencies)*

160.560	160.650	160.935	161.415	161.385

Mobile Telephone Channels: *(Each is a Repeater Out-Put Frequency)*

160.260	160.425	160.620	160.665	161.130	161.310

Temple Yard:

161.070	Repeater	West Side, Track 13
160.650	Repeater	East Side, Track 13
160.875	Repeater	Car & Mechanical Department
161.085	Simplex	Crew Vans

Misc: *(Each are Simplex Frequencies)*

161.205	Railroad Police (Nationwide)
161.010	Maintenance
161.430	Maintenance
161.220	HazMat Response
131.050	BNSF Aircraft

♫ You leave the Pennsylvania station at a quarter to four, read a magazine and then you're in Baltimore. Dinner in the diner, nothing could be finer, than to have your ham 'n eggs in Carolina… ♫

Amtrak's *Texas Eagle* is equipped with bi-level Superliner passenger cars and is a 1,306-mile passenger train route operated by Amtrak in the central and western United States. You can stretch out in a coach seat or snuggle into a sleeping compartment, enjoy a meal in the Dining Car, head over to the lounge for scenery by day or movies by night.

These trains run daily between Chicago, Illinois, San Antonio and continue to Los Angeles, California three days a week as part of the *Sunset Limited*. Last year the *Texas Eagle* carried nearly 300,000 passengers along its routes.

Amtrak trains use the local road channel of the hosting railroad for primary train operations, in addition to the following frequencies:

Road Channels: *(Some road frequencies are shared with the BNSF)*

160.410 160.440 160.470 160.560 160.650 160.740

Misc Services:

160.455 Misc. Unspecified
452.900 Terminal Services
161.325 Maintenance

♫ *When you hear the whistle blowin' eight-to-the-bar, then you know that Chattanooga's not very far. Shovel all the coal in; got to keep it rollin'…* ♫

The **Union Pacific Railroad** is the largest railroad network in the United States. Union Pacific operates more than 8,000 locomotives on 31,900 miles of track across 23 states in the central and western United States, west of Chicago and New Orleans.

These frequencies for the Union Pacific have been found to be active in the McLennan County area and points west of Waco.

160.605 Mobile Telephone
160.775 Mobile Telephone
160.950 Maintenance
160.410 Unspecified
160.800 Unspecified

Road Channels:

160.470 160.320 160.515 160.830 160.560

With the advent of the new FCC Part 90 VHF narrow-banding mandate, the country's railroads have acquired several new 'splinter' frequencies. If you own a scanning VHF receiver, you might want to try searching between 160.2225 and 161.5575 MHz for other various railroad comm's.

♫ *So Chattanooga Choo-Choo, won't you choo-choo me home.* ♫

The Opus of Coffee and Amateur Radio

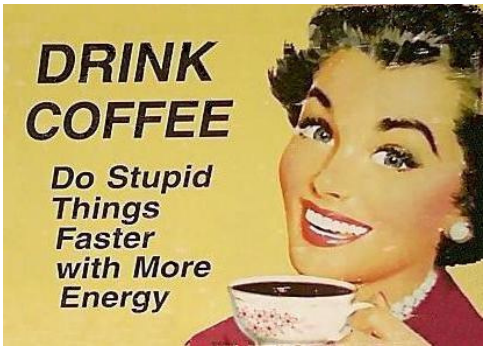
Eric P. Nichols, KL7AJ

Hams drink coffee. Lots of it. It is the potion of life that powers us through contest weekends and late night construction projects. If, as a new ham, you don't drink coffee yet – you will.

You're going to be spending a lot of time in your ham shack and coffee is an integral ingredient in Amateur Radio contesting, as well as general operating and Elmering. It actually has many varied uses around the ham shack. Of course, its primary purpose is keeping you awake; this function comes in two forms:

Drinking it.

Accidentally spilling it on your loins.



Method 1 is more long term; whilst Method 2 is more immediately effective. Both are employed frequently by most hams, however.

There are less traditional uses for coffee, as well. Coffee makes a great writing fluid, when you've misplaced your pen or pencil. It's a fairly effective adhesive, especially if you're one of those who anoints one's brew with large quantities of sugar and cream. You can soak your logbook in coffee to give it that aged appearance. This is especially useful if you're a young whippersnapper, and want to give the impression that you've been in the hobby a long time.

You can make a laser out of coffee (or even tea or wine). Of course, it's not the most efficient laser in the universe, but it gives you something to experiment with when the propagation is in the toilet.

The debate rages over which is preferable, having all your coffee making / drinking paraphernalia in the shack or in the kitchen. Since the only exercise most hams get these days is commuting to the coffeepot, it's probably best to have it as far from the ham shack as feasible, so as to make the trip as strenuous as humanly possible.

Now, for those readers "across the pond" who still possess a modicum of common sense, the following may come as a shock to your system(s). We Americans need to be told that hot coffee is – well – hot. Our government tells us we should know this ahead of time. We have warnings on microwave ovens that inform us that materials emerging thence might be hot, as well.

For our British friends, most of the references to coffee can be replaced with tea with little modification, except with regards to soldering flux. Tea does not generally thicken with age.

Now, although most hams occasionally need to be reminded that it's probably not a good idea to climb a tower during a lightning storm, most of us do not need to be told that hot coffee might be hot.

In fact, some of us more experienced Radio Amateurs actually heat up our coffee for the express purpose of making it hot.

Be that as it may, coffee can be a hazardous substance in several ways. Like wet swimming trunks, coffee is a good conductor of electricity. If you accidentally spill a flagon of it on a high voltage power supply, you are likely to witness considerable hissing and fizzing. If a part of your person happens to be in contact with the aforementioned spilled coffee, you yourself might also do some hissing and fizzing. So, it's a good idea to always keep your coffee at a lower altitude than any electronic device you're working on.

In a dimly-lit workshop, it's easy to mistake rosin soldering flux, (a pasty, dark brown, mildly toxic substance), from Ham Radio coffee (another pasty, dark-brown mildly toxic substance). The best indication that you've been dipping your soldering iron into your coffee rather than into the vat of soldering flux is that coffee usually works better for cleaning the slag off the soldering tip. After several such inadvertent dousings, however, you may find the coffee takes on a curious, tangy character. Although this is likely to be a marked improvement over what you've normally been drinking, this can have deleterious health effects, and should be avoided whenever possible.

(Note: This is not a suitable method for reheating your coffee, as convenient as it may be. Invest in a good "official" coffee warmer. You'll be glad you did).

Jeeves, from QST, February 1952

Now, for those of us who are indeed deemed incapable of safely handling hot liquids, there is a relatively newfangled alternative, i.e., cold, canned "energy drinks." Most of these can be partaken with little chance of scalding yourself. They come with all kinds of Generation X, Y, or Z-sounding names. Rock Star, Kick My Butt, Cordless Bungee Jumper, and the like. Now despite the "balls-to-the-wall" (forgive my Romanian) sounding names of these drinks, the truth is, these are wimpy alternatives to good old fashioned ham radio coffee sludge. Ask any contester. In addition, these drinks lack the multi-tasking capabilities of genuine coffee.

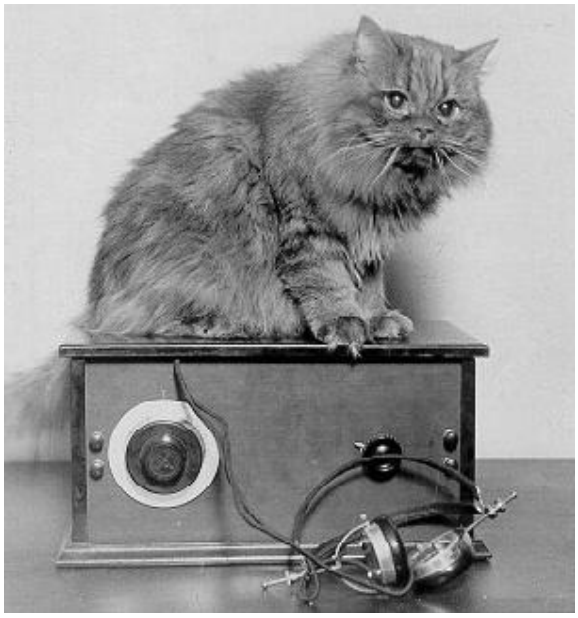
Our advice is to learn how to safely and properly handle coffee.

Strays

Geoff Schecht-NQ7A, went poking around in a local Goodwill outlet and found this near pristine Heathkit HR-10B 5-band amateur radio receiver for a lousy five bucks.

Since he was on his motorcycle, the next problem was how to get it home… one woman's cloth belt, a bathrobe sash and a couple of shoelaces from an old set of Converse sneakers… and problem solved!

The Heathkit HR-10B was made from 1967 to 1975 and was the companion to Heathkit's DX-60B transmitter. Geoff now hopes to locate a Collins KWM-2A transceiver at another thrift store to go with it.



In this past December issue of the Wavelength, we featured a picture of *Red Shadows II*, winner of the 1918 Empire Cat Show and this radio as the First Place Grand Prize.

The question was then posed if anyone could identify what kind of radio it was. I suppose the answer was staring us in the face, but it was **Robert Shoemaker - KE5WVC**, who identified the radio for what it is…

A *Cat's Whisker* crystal receiving set. This kind of broadcast receiving radio was popular at the turn of the 20th Century as it only needed a handful of parts, a long-wire antenna and it did not require a power source.

More information on the *Cat's Whisker* can be found at: http://www.radio-electronics.com/info/radio_history/radiohist/cats-whisker-crystal-detector.php as well as the 1950's version from the Cub Scout Manual at: http://bizarrelabs.com/crystal.htm .

Valentine's Day is Thursday, February 14th – don't forget that Someone Special in your life and QSL.