

W7TCK News

Capital City Amateur Radio Club

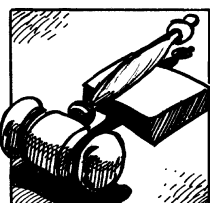
Helena, MT

John McDougall K7JM – Editor

March 2004

From The Pres...

I've thoroughly enjoyed the higher temperatures we have had over the past week.



It's given me an opportunity to do some things I needed to do outside but just didn't feel like bundling up to do. It's also given me the opportunity to do things you just can't do when it's colder (like wash the car and expect it to dry instead of turn into a large block of ice). As we have more and more pleasant days, it is an excellent time to do a "pre-summer" checkout of all of your ham radio gear to help get ready for the coming season of Ham

radio activity. Although some inspection and preparation can be done inside where it is warm, things like inspecting coax outdoors or checking your "ham radio electrical system" in your car for wear are much more pleasant when temperatures are warmer. Think of it as "spring cleaning for your radio stuff".

This past month we had our first Saturday work meeting, which was a qualified success. We kitted

up approximately 30 DF Antennas to go with the DF Antenna circuits which have been circulating among the club members for a while now. Next month we hope to be able to do the circuit boards and finish assembling the Antennas. If you missed out on this work project, you can still get a DF antenna for the \$5 kit cost.

I also should probably start to talk about the April and May work meetings. The April meeting will be dedicated to working on the Mobile Communications Unit (Club Trailer) to get it in shape for use the summer months. The May meeting will finish up anything leftover from the April meeting, but will also be our "Pre-Summer Picnic". All of these meetings will be Scheduled for the 3rd Saturday of the month. Most will start at 10:30-11:00 a.m. or so. **(Cont. PRES P.2)**



March MEETING
Monday
March 1
 Salvation Army Church
 1905 Henderson
 7:00 pm.

Board of Directors

- Pres: Forrest Christian, AC7DE
- Vice Pres: John Curry, K7EBL
- Sec.: Rich Weddle, KC7VVZ
- Newsletter Editor: John McDougall K7JM
- Training: John Geach, KS7R
- Technical: Don Heide, W7MRI
- Volunteer Exam Team Leader: John Geach, KS7R



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VE Exams
6:30 Sharp



(PRES. Cont. from P.1)

Moving onto the program for this Month's club meeting. I will be presenting a step-by step method of building your own APRS tracker. If you're unfamiliar with APRS, take a look through this newsletter, as our newsletter editor informs me that he's going to include some background information on APRS.

I think that's all for now.

73's

Forrest

AC7DE

From The Editor

Once again, I would like to thank all of you that have so graciously helped fill the pages of W7TCK News. If you have anything for the newsletter, please get it to me at least two week before the next meeting. For Sale items are always welcome as are any kind of Ham related articles.



Dues... If you are not paid up in your dues, this will be your last issue of W7TCK News. This is just one of the benefits of being a member of the CCARC.

Come to the March meeting and enjoy some discussion of APRS and trackers. You won't want to miss it.

73 and God bless to you all.

John – K7JM Editor

For Sale

Computer desk/table, 30" by 60", adjustable shelf for keyboard, \$50



17" color monitor, Gateway (Sony Vivatron), \$75

Laptop computer, Gateway Solo 1100; Windows

98, logging software, carrying case, \$400 obo

2- Dual speaker systems for computers, with wall wart power supplies, \$20 each

Bob K7HLN, 442-6118

Upcoming Events

April 17: Hamfest, Idaho Falls, ID

May 1: Great Falls ARC Swap Meet, Westgate Mall, Great Falls

June 5: Governor's Cup, Helena

June 12: ARRL June VHF QSO Party

June 19: ARRL Kid's Day

June 26: Field Day, location to be announced

July 4: Lewis & Clark Special Event Station, Missoula ARC, Fort Missoula (guest operators welcome)

July 16-18: Glacier Hamfest, Three Forks Campground, HWY. 2, west of East Glacier, MT

Sept. 25: Spokane Hamfest, University High School, Spokane Valley, WA

SO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORSE CODE**How to Avoid Frustration, Minimize the Pain And Gain Full HF Privileges**

By David G. Finley, N1IRZ

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Part 2: (continued from last month)

Note: For complete information on Morse Code training, CW operating, and more, see the author's book, Morse Code: Breaking the Barrier, published by MFJ Enterprises, Inc..

Most of what you've been told about learning Morse Code is wrong -- dead wrong. Amateur radio operators traditionally have used the slowest, most frustrating, most painful and least effective techniques possible for gaining code proficiency. It's no wonder that the 13- and 20-word-per-minute requirements for full HF access are considered a

nearly insurmountable barrier by many hams.

You can overcome that barrier. You can do it in a reasonable amount of time and with a minimum of frustration and pain. In order to do so, you must approach code training from a different perspective and use different techniques from those common among amateurs for the past half century.

It will require work. You will have to commit yourself to at least one 15-30 minute training session every day until you reach your goal. You may succeed in a month or in several months; individuals differ greatly. Without this commitment, however, you may as well not bother.

So what's new here? By using a code training method devised by a psychologist some 60 years ago, you will progress as quickly as you possibly can, with ample reinforcement and little frustration. By understanding this method and how it builds your code proficiency, you will know why you have to spend time practicing and you'll be able to make a reasonable prediction of how long the total effort will require.

We're going to start on your road to success by throwing some time-honored ham-radio traditions onto the trash heap where they belong. These are:

Slow (5 wpm) code -- It ought to be illegal to teach anyone code at 5 wpm. Every minute spent toying with 5 wpm code is irrevocably wasted. In addition, as we'll see later, starting with slow code is a virtually-guaranteed path to frustration and quitting. Morse at 5 wpm and Morse at 15 or 20 wpm are completely different critters, and you don't want to waste time on the wrong one.

Charts, mnemonics, musical cues and other "memory aids" -- These things make you think about what you're doing while trying to copy code. That is deadly to proficient copying.

Code tapes -- In very short order, and unconsciously, you'll memorize the tape. This will lull you into false confidence in your ability. That false confidence will be quickly shattered when you hear transmitted text that you haven't memorized.

Copying QSOs off the air -- You don't know the speed of code you find on the bands, and much code on the air is pretty badly sent. All this makes it useless for training purposes.

Now that you know what you're NOT going to do, let's start examining just how you can best gain code proficiency.

The Mechanics: Just what is code training, anyhow?

Go to the shack of a veteran CW operator, or visit the CW station at a club Field Day operation. Watch people copy and send code at 30 to 35 wpm. You'll notice they're pretty relaxed about it; they're not sweating each character as it comes out of the speaker and they're not racking their brains to "figure out" what's being sent. Code has become second nature to them.

That's the key to code proficiency. Copying code must be a thought-free process. When you hear a character, you should know, without thinking, what it is. It should be a REFLEX. In fact, copying above about 10 wpm can only be done by reflex. Above that speed, thought processes are too slow to succeed.

That's why slow code is a deadly trap, and why traditional amateur methods of code training are so painful and frustrating. Most hams are told to memorize all the characters, then start building their speed. When you do it this way, you build a "lookup table" in your brain, comparing each character you hear with those in the lookup table until you find a match. This process shuts down from overload at about 10 wpm. That's why people experience a "plateau" at 10 wpm, and don't see any progress for weeks or months.

Those who finally get over that "hump" and progress beyond 10 wpm do so because, through constant practice, they have begun to copy code by reflex instead of by thought. They are the lucky ones; this 10 wpm barrier is where many folks give up out of frustration.

Code training, then, should completely bypass the

lookup-table phase and begin by building copying proficiency as a reflex. This was recognized in the 1930s by a German psychologist named Koch, who devised the most efficient method known for Morse training. It's his method, and how you can use it, that we're going to examine in detail.

(Continued in Part 3 next month)

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USING THE ARRL 7TH CALL AREA INCOMING QSL BUREAU?

Are you an amateur radio operator who is not a current user of the ARRL 7th Call Area Incoming QSL Bureau, operated under the auspices of the Willamette Valley DX Club?

The 7th Call Area QSL bureau is open to all amateurs with a '7' call (e.g., W7, K7 AK7, etc., but excluding Alaska or Hawaii calls), regardless of operator class. You do not have to be an ARRL member.

We currently have thousands of cards for hundreds of 7th call area amateurs in our deadfiles because no SASE'S [self-addressed stamped envelopes] are on file or there is no established credit with the bureau. Reasonable contact attempts are made using email addresses from QRZ and Buckmaster (and in some cases through postcards), but many of these email addresses are not current and bounce.

If you are not a current bureau user, but have had contacts with amateurs outside the US, you may have cards in our deadfiles. Due to the high costs

of mailing, most foreign amateurs accumulate and forward their cards in bulk to the ARRL HQ for redistribution or direct to the various US QSL bureaus.

To claim foreign QSL cards (including from Canada) see the instructions and forms at www.qsl.net/wvdx. No Internet capability? Follow the basic rule - keep at least two 6x9 or 5x7 SASE's on file with:

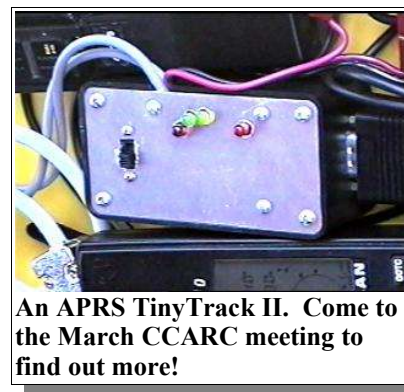
ARRL 7th Area QSL Bureau
PO Box 555
Portland, OR 97207-0555

Have Internet capability and want to know the status of your account or if you have cards in the deadfile? A list of the current bureau sorters, by alphabet letter, is at www.wvdx.org under the 'W7 QSL Bureau' button. Most volunteers have email addresses and can give you the status of your account.

Please note - ARRL rules allow for the disposal of deadfile cards 90 days after reasonable efforts have been made to contact the affected amateur. Each sorter only has limited space for storing deadfile cards.

We don't want to dispose of any cards that might be yours, so please, always keep at least one SASE on file with the bureau.

Thanks,
Ken, K7IFG, Manager
ARRL 7th Call Area Incoming QSL Bureau



An APRS TinyTrack II. Come to the March CCARC meeting to find out more!

Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES)

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

ARES, the Amateur Radio Emergency Service, is a voluntary noncommercial service, particularly with respect to assisting in providing emergency and public service communications. Under Federal regulations, amateur radio public service communications are furnished without material compensation of any kind. This communications service should be considered for activation to facilitate auxiliary emergency communications and/or to augment existing Lewis and Clark County Incident Command System (ICS) communications.



Lewis and Clark County ARES is a field organization of ARRL, the national association for Amateur Radio. ARES members are Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensed amateur radio operators who volunteer personal time, skill, and equipment to serve in the public interest.

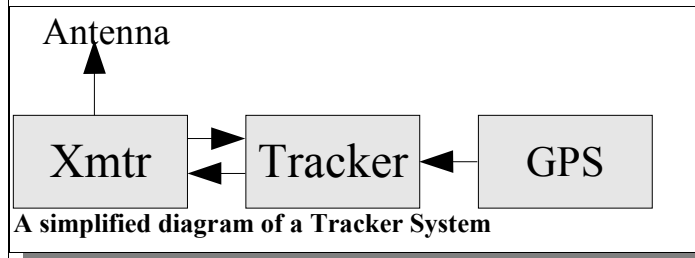
To activate ARES for emergency or public service communications, contact one of the first two individuals listed below. If they cannot be reached, then contact one of the other Assistant Emergency Coordinators (AEC) to obtain an amateur radio communication response.

- Bob Solomon K7HLN Emergency Coordinator,
442-6118 (h)
- John Curry K7EBL Asst. Emergency
Coordinator, 443-5799 (h), 442-8870 (w)
- Forrest Christian AB7UW Asst. Emergency
Coordinator, 449-9593 (h), 443-3347 (w),
459-1067 (cell)
- Cliff Smith KC7QLM Asst. Emergency
Coordinator, 227-6923 (h), 431-4258 (cell)
- Dan Stinson KC7KKH Asst. Emergency
Coordinator, 443-1578 (h), 841-4011 (w),
459-3470 (cell)
- Rich Weddle KC7VVZ Asst. Emergency
Coordinator, 443-3056 (h)

- Lincoln area:
- Tish Cockerham KC7WBM Asst. Emergency
Coordinator, 362-4810 (h)
 - Bill Kornec KC7CIS Asst. Emergency
Coordinator, 362-4521 (h)
 - Jerry Webster KJ7TR Asst. Emergency
Coordinator, 362-4685 (h)

An Easy APRS Tracker

APRS (Automatic Packet Reporting System) has swept the country. An APRS station is very easy to set up and putting together a APRS tracker is almost as easy. What is an APRS tracker? A tracker consists of a 2 meter radio, a GPS unit, and small interface device that connects the two. The tracker then transmits its location (longitude and latitude) along with some other information (elevation), to other APRS stations. APRS stations have the ability to map this received information on a computer screen, thus showing exactly where the tracker is at any moment.



The tracker can be in a vehicle, a back pack, on a runner, on a horse, a dog, a plane, a weather balloon or a host of other places. Here is one example of a simple and inexpensive tracker. The heart of this tracker is the TinyTrack II. (See photo on back page of this newsletter.) The latest version of the TinyTrack is III. The TinyTrack plugs into the radio's mic and headphone jacks. Then a GPS is plugged into the other end of the TinyTrack. The TinyTrack takes the GPS information and translates it into Packet format to be transmitted by the radio. This is a highly simplified explanation of what goes on with a tracker. Come to the March CCARC meeting for a demonstration of trackers and learn some more details on their operations. They are simple and they are FUN. John K7JM

The W7TCK Newsletter is published by the Capital City Amateur Radio Club.

P.O. Box 1112
Helena, MT 59624

CCARC Web Page: www.w7tck.org
Editor's E-Mail: jdmcdougall@juno.com

CCARC Regular meetings are at 7:00 pm on the first non-holiday Monday of each month at the Salvation Army Church 1905 Henderson.

The CCARC Volunteer Exam Team conducts sessions at 6:30 pm in Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sep, Nov, and at special times as announced.

W7MRI Repeater: 147.82 (-offset)

Net every Tuesday at 7:30 pm local time on the 147.82 (-offset) repeater.



The Newsletter Editor's complete APRS Tracker in a kids crayon box. The GPS is on the left, the TinyTracker II is in the middle and the 2 meter transceiver is on the right.

Return Address: Newsletter Editor
Capital City Amateur Radio Club
3841 Gradestake St.
East Helena, MT 59635

e-mail: jdmcdougall@juno.com

All expressions of opinions and all statements of supposed facts are published on the authority of the author and are not to be regarded as expressing the view of CCARC.

Biscuits and Gravy

Come to Hardee's on Saturday. Every Saturday morning between 9:30 and 11:00, as many as twenty hams show up for "EYEBALL" QSOs.

COME JOIN THE FUN!

First Class Mail