

AN ARRL AFFILIATED CLUB
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BRANCH SIGNALS

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BRANCH COUNTY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB, INC.

Club Repeaters: 147.300 + 100 Hz 443.300 + 123 Hz

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Dozens Upgrade

TEST SESSION RESULTS IN PILE-UP!

The recent decision by the FCC to drop the Morse code requirement from amateur testing resulted in an over-the-top test session at the Branch County Communications Center on Saturday, February 24th. The examiners were tipped off that there would be a sizeable group coming up from the Angola area where a General class had just ended. Inquiries about the testing were also received from as far away as Goshen. It was decided early on that a session should be held as close as possible to the date when the code requirement would be dropped. That way, those holding soon-to-expire

home new privileges in-
cians, twenty one new
tras. Cities represented
Bronson, Union City,
Sturgis and Charlotte in
Fremont, Bristol, Pleasant Lake, Howe, Warsaw, Goshen, and Hudson, Indiana, and Montpelier, Ohio. Assisting Larry Camp, WB8R, with the session were Tom Twite, K8CHS, Dan Sprow, KC8RYF, Bill Slade, WD8MGF, Jim Voss, W8SST, Bruce Wilson, WB8ZSK and Arnie Hayward, NS8T. This was, by far, the largest test session the County has seen since local testing was begun several years ago. The photos below show both rooms in the lower level of the Branch County Communications Center filled with applicants taking tests. (Photos courtesy of WB8R)



A FIFTY YEAR OLD BIG MAC

Michigan amateur radio operators have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in a Michigan-based special event that is likely to attract national, possibly world-wide attention. Big Mac, the Mackinac Straits Bridge, is celebrating its 50th year of operation in 2007. The celebration committee has tentatively accepted a proposal to include an amateur radio special event in the formal celebration program.

The amateur community has less than a month to develop enough of an event plan to open discussions with the celebration committee on operating hours, setup and teardown logistics, space and power requirements, on-site staffing, publicity and signage to start working with the committee when the proposal is formally adopted, probably at their 8 March meeting. Two UP clubs and a Mackinaw-area ARES group have already signed on as provisional sponsors, and the Michigan Section of the ARRL is endorsing the event.



The public event is scheduled for July 27-28 at Bridge View Park at the north end of the bridge. There will be parades, fireworks, a banquet, and exhibitors and many public-oriented activities at the park. National Public Radio will be there as parts of its Story Corps project capturing personal stories and recollections of family encounters with the bridge and its lore. The celebration committee is getting inquiries and offers of participation from all over the country and local motels have already noticed a jump in reservations.

ARRL Section Manager Dale Williams notes that "This is an outstanding opportunity for the amateur community to put on a great event that will be interesting for on-site visitors at the celebration grounds but also to show our pride in one of the very few symbols that is specifically about Michigan that is known world-wide. I want to encourage our clubs and individual members to help out with this event however they can. Even if they can't actually sign up for operating shifts or working the public information desk, help is needed with technical planning, local logistics, ideas for public exhibits, getting QSL cards and tee-shirts printed. There's a role for everyone interested."

Clubs and amateurs interested in getting involved in this unique opportunity should contact John at the Big Mac 50 Special Event Committee by phone (906 869-6621) or by email: kc8ule@arrl.net.



45 Years Ago This Month - 1962

Paul Herman, K8AXN, was presented with a plaque from the local radio amateurs by Harold Sharp, K8ZGO. Paul was named Branch County's Radio Amateur of the Year. Following the presentation a letter of appreciation was read from Dr. Donald Harris of the Branch/Hillsdale County Health Departments commending him for his work with the physically handicapped.

30 Years Ago This Month – 1977

At the end of March, ARRL dues are set to increase to \$12 per year. As of March 1st the FCC has provided for "instant upgrading". This means that any currently licensed ham who takes and passes an exam for a higher grade will walk out of the FCC office with authorization in his hand allowing him to use his new privileges. No more waiting weeks for the new ticket! Don Ayers completed a phone patch between a lady in Union City and her former exchange student who is now in college in Bogota, Columbia.

"This is an outstanding opportunity for the amateur community to put on a

great event that will be interesting for on-site visitors at the celebration grounds but also to show our pride in one of the very few symbols that is specifically about Michigan that is known world-wide."

Got The Answer?

General Exam Question No. G3C01

What is the average height of maximum ionization of the E region?

- A. 45 Miles
- B. 70 Miles
- C. 200 Miles
- D. 1200 Miles

HAMFEST CALENDAR

Saturday, March 10th

WVARA Hamfest and Computer Expo
 Wabash Valley Fairgrounds
 Terra Haute, Indiana
<http://W9UUU.org>

Saturday, March 17th

Michigan Crossroads Hamfest
 Marshall High School
 Marshall, Michigan
<http://www.w8df.com>

Sunday, March 18th

Hamfest and Computer Fair
 Lucas County Recreation Center
 Maumee, Ohio
<http://www.tmrahamradio.org>

Sunday, March 31st

Columbus Amateur Radio Club
 4-H Fairgrounds
 Columbus, Indiana
<http://www.qsl.net/carc>

PURCHASE RADIO SIGNS OFF



For many years, one of my favorite stops anytime I was near Ann Arbor, was Purchase Radio. It was one of those unique places where past and present came together. Roy Purchase opened the store in 1930 and after several moves ended up next to the railroad tracks on Hoover Street in 1957. Roy stocked the shelves with electronic parts from the most common to many of the hard to find. It was also a great place to find most any test equipment you might need. There were always a number of vintage rigs with names like Hammarlund, Hallicrafters, Eico and many others lining the shelves in the front of the store. Not to mention the racks of 'old' ham radio magazines dating back to the 1940's. You'd find a couple of army surplus type rigs on the shelf most times. Invariably, there were always one or two other hams hanging around at the front counter talking with Roy and other hams who worked in the store. If memory serves me, Roy had a part in designing the electrolytic capacitor. Internet competition was one of the main reasons for the store's recent closing.

VEC TEST SESSIONS

March 3rd

Emergency Operations Center
 Cassopolis, MI
Upgrades only—call ahead
 (574) 855-1907

March 10th

No walk-ins
 Maumee Fire Station #2
 Maumee, OH

American Red Cross
 Lansing, MI

Jackson District Library
 Jackson, MI

Preregister only or call (743) 663-4625
 American Red Cross
 Pittsfield Township, MI

Glenwood Methodist Church
 Wyandotte, MI

March 13th

Emergency Operations Center
 Howell, MI

March 17th

No walk-ins
 Archbold Police Department
 Archbold, OH

Mott Community College
 Flint, MI

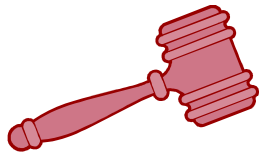
March 24th

Witch's Hat Depot
 South Lyon, MI

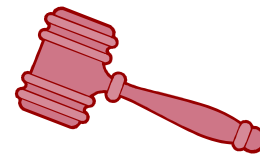
March 28th

Starke County Public Library
 Knox, IN

For details on any of the above session visit:
www.arrl.org



FOR SALE



Stowaway 4 post, 105 amp hour, deep cycle battery. Approx 2 years old.

Battery Companion 1.5 amp automatic maintainer battery charger.

Includes plastic battery box for storage.



\$30

Contact Arnie Hayward, NS8T

278-8507



Extended hours and additional personnel added to address deluge

ARRL VEC "SNOWED UNDER"

NEWINGTON, CT, Feb 28, 2007 -- The avalanche of Amateur Radio license and license upgrade applications prompted by the FCC's elimination of Morse code as a licensing requirement is well under way with no end in sight. ARRL VEC Manager Maria Somma, AB1FM, reports that paperwork from upward of 450 Amateur Radio exam sessions held since the new rules went into effect February 23 has arrived so far this week. The ARRL VEC, which typically receives paperwork from about 70 sessions each day, has had to add personnel and schedule extended hours to keep up with the workload.

"We've been seeing some of the largest brand-new Technician sessions ever," Somma said. "These examination sessions are huge, and a ton of new Technician license applications has been coming in -- sometimes 60 or 70 at a clip." Somma says license upgrade traffic also has been brisk, and, with some 650 examination sessions already on the calendar for March and more arriving daily, it doesn't look like the pace will slacken anytime soon.

Details, Details

ARRL VEC personnel must go through "every single piece of paper" that arrives from an examination session, Somma explained. Before keying application data directly to the FCC's licensee database, the staff must make sure that session paperwork is in order, each application is filled out correctly and signed and any element credit is attached. If an applicant took an exam element, ARRL VEC must ensure that the test questions came from the correct question pool and that the applicant indeed passed. She said it typically takes up to 90 seconds for staff members to key in an application for a new licensee, but only about 30 seconds in the case of a license upgrade.

Among the growing stack of incoming paperwork February 28 was a package from a session held in the Bahamas for 56 US citizens -- more than likely retirees and members of the cruising and sailing communities in the Caribbean. Somma said it included applications for 12 new Technician licensees. The rest were upgrades. *(From the ARRL website)*

Next Club Meeting - Tuesday, March 20th

Program: Annual Skywarn Training presented by the National Weather Service. Note that this month's gathering will be in the basement of Dobson Insurance located at 55 West Chicago Street in Coldwater. Park behind the building and enter by the door framed in stones on the southwest corner of the building. (Do not use the double doors)



Thanks, and a tip of the hat!

This month's kudos go to the team of Volunteer Examiners who completed the daunting task of testing and processing the dozens of applicants at the testing session on the 24th. Thanks, guys!

BRANCH COUNTY A.R.C.

Meeting Every Third Tuesday
Branch County Communications Center
At The Branch County Airport
7:00 P.M.



WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.BRANCHCOUNTYARC.COM

**JOIN US ON THE WEEKLY TWO METER NET
TUESDAYS AT 7:00 P.M. ON 147.300**

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

I have to confess that about half-way through the VEC session we hosted this past week I was beginning to feel overwhelmed. We knew the session would be well attended from emails and phone calls we had received in the days preceding the session. Those of you who are Volunteer Examiners know that most sessions have a moment or two where things get a tad confusing. However, when test results started to stack up on my end of the table and got to be 8 or 10 deep it was a bit unnerving. As it turned out, we got everyone

tested, processed and out of the place within a reasonable time. There was no complaining, whining or throwing of rotten fruit. Everyone was very patient and appreciative and thanked us on the way out with their appropriate upgrade certificate in hand. Well, I finally did get the stack of tests all squared away and my fellow VEs were able to complete the paperwork before there was an uprising. All in all it was a very rewarding experience and I'd like to invite you to consider becoming a VE yourself. It's very easy to do—open book

test and all that. We'd love to have you join us at the next session.

Here we are, just a couple weeks from possible severe weather. Hardly seems possible! Even if you don't intend to help with Skywarn spotting you might consider attending the training session this month. The information that is offered will help you to know when to be concerned about approaching weather, not to mention how to be prepared to ride it out. Hope to see you there!

Jim Voss, W8SST



Website Of The Month

<http://www.hfradio.org/wb8rcr/>

*This month's link will allow you to download **QSL Maker**, a free program which will generate custom QSL cards. Check it out!*



Coordinator's Corner



Even if it doesn't much look like it outside, spring is on the way. March 1st is the official opening of severe weather season and marks the beginning of our training and activity cycle for the upcoming warmer months. We have a lot of activities planned and I think that we will all improve our skills.

I have three excellent Assistant EC's who are dedicated and hard working and will help me to make sure that we are on top of weather related items and able to provide information to our members, their families and the members of our community.

Brad McConn, K8BPD will probably be most visible as our Skywarn coordinator. Brad is very knowledgeable and dedicated and I look forward to his leadership.

Bill Slade, WD8MGF is our ARES/RACES Net Manager and we will see the results of his guidance on our nets.

Last but not least, Andrew Glenn, KD8AGZ is our Liaison to the National Traffic System. His task is to make sure that we have a smooth interface to the rest of the world for written record traffic.

None of these jobs is easy, but all are worthwhile and necessary to make sure that we can operate effectively in an emergency. These three gentlemen and I recently met to discuss training plans for our group. We are excited about the opportunity and look forward to having as many individuals helping out as possible.

The training schedule is as follows:

- Ω March 10 Advanced Skywarn Training, Elkhart, IN
- Ω March 20 Severe Weather Spotter training presented by Pat Murphy from the North Webster office of the NWS. 7:00 PM in the basement meeting room of Dobson Insurance, 55 W. Chicago St. in Coldwater.
- Ω March 24 ARES/RACES training to be held at 10:00 AM at the 911 center in Coldwater. At this training session, we will teach you how to put what you learned at on March 10 and 20th to use. We will also be taking photos for ARES and RACES ID cards.

By the way, the RACES requirements that were discussed at the February meeting were incorrect. The following are the correct requirements in order to hold a MSP RACES ID card:

- Ω Valid Amateur Radio License.
- Ω Background Check: Criminal Sexual Conduct and Criminal History
- Ω Skywarn Training: to be retaken a minimum of every two years.
- Ω NIMS IS-100 and IS-700 (new requirement as of this year)

I hope that everyone will take the severe weather season seriously and apply yourselves to improving your emergency operating skills for the benefit of your families and community.

73,

Larry Camp, WB8R

Emergency Coordinator/RACES Radio Officer

278-0406 wb8r@arrl.net

