

Sparks from the Spa



A PUBLICATION OF SARATOGA COUNTY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

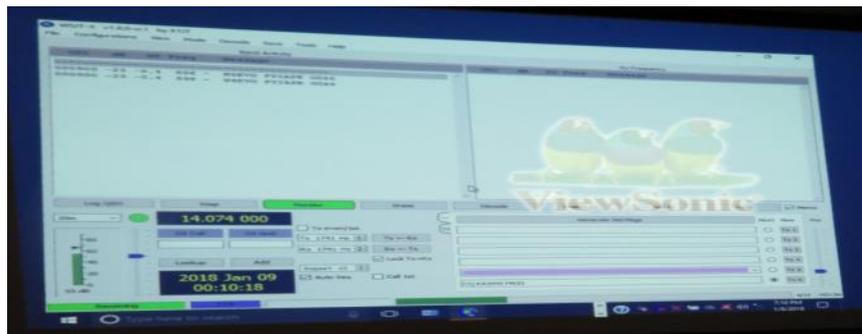
January General Meeting

Frank KA5VVI presented a program on the relatively new mode of FT8 being used now. It has taken the digital world over by storm. You can refer to the article from ARRL, which I published in last month's newsletter attesting to its popularity.

Frank brought down an entire ham shack from his home; radio, power supply, computer, projector, and even the co-ax cable. He hooked it all up to our beam on top of the 200 foot tower in the WEMS backyard. It was working great with tons of signals on 20 meters. Frank explained how to download the WSJT-X software, hook up the computer to the radio, and then ran through the configuration menu to help you set everything to your own situation.

Frank then briefly touched on the WSPR mode included in the software. It is basically a beacon mode, where stations throughout the world transmit a beacon signal using QRP levels during a 2 minute window and then listen for 8 minutes. The results of what the station hears are uploaded automatically to the WSPRnet.org website. Anyone can view a map of all the stations on, and what each station heard, and who heard them.

A very interesting program, and inspiring to try out the mode.



January Board Meeting

Present W5BN, KG2H, WA2TTP, K2ZIP

KG2H presented the treasurers' report

W5BN led a discussion concerning the ARRL's policy of requiring all their Board members to not disagree publicly with resolutions the ARRL board have passed.

WA2TTP reports that the donated equipment we received in December functions properly, and is now ready to lend out to new hams who need starter equipment.

WSPR Experience - Jim KG2H

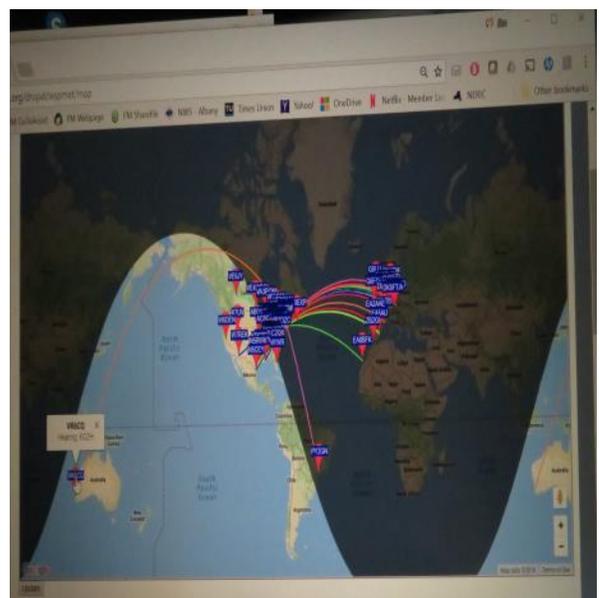
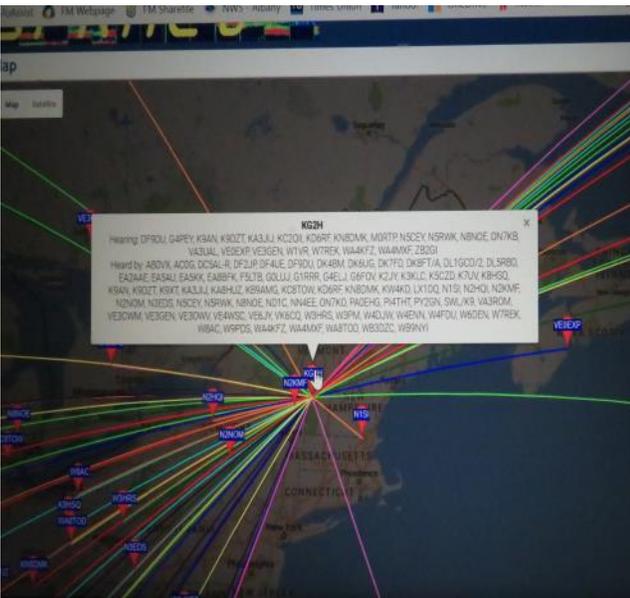
After Frank's (KA5VVI) presentation at our January meeting, I got interested in the WSPR (Weak Signal Propagation Reporter) aspect of the talk. WSPR is basically a low power beacon mode. I went home fired up to give it a try.



I was always interested in QRP as I "grew up" in my ham radio life, so it seemed something worth a shot. I dusted off an old Elecraft K2 to see what I could accomplish. Now this is a radio I built from a kit. While I do have the computer serial interface built into it, that is not necessary to operate on WSPR, as you can easily tune any radio manually to the required frequency. What I did need, and I already had was a way to get the audio into and out of the radio for the computer to work with. The problem was easily solved, by dusting off another piece of equipment which I had not used in a while, a Signalink USB box. I had previously made cables for a Kenwood TS690, and since I wired the Elecraft to use my Kenwood mike I was all set for the grand test.

I set the rig to the 40 meter band, hooked up my vertical wire antenna, set the power down to 2 watts, and waited to see what I could do. I got on the air a little after 4 PM (just a little before local sunset). Look at the accompanying pictures to get a feel for the experience. The map you see shows the sunrise / sunset terminator line.

Pay attention to the little red line following the terminator and see where it ends. VK6CQ at the South West side of Australia copied my 2 watts!! Now bear in mind, that WSPR mode is not meant for 2 way communications, but it is an indicator or what you could do with the FT8 mode, or other digital modes. Give it a try from your station, I think you would be amazed at what your station can do.



Stations Heard By and Hearing KG2H

Winter Field Day 2018 via W2BEW

Our friends at the Warren County Amateur Radio Club activated the ARRL headquarters station for the Winter Field Day event. Here is a link to a You Tube video the WCRC club made to commemorate the event.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvbBjevsDsc>

March Swapfest

Don't forget that our March meeting is our annual Swapfest, held at the Saratoga County Cooperative Extension building at 50 West High Street, in Ballston Spa. The date is Saturday March 10, and the doors will open around 8 AM and we wrap things up around 11 AM. The cost of admission is the ever popular FREE. Come on over, if you have something you want to part with, or something you're looking to get, you might find it here.

An Amateur Radio test session will be held at noon after the room is put back in order from the Swapfest.

Remember, this means that there will NOT be a regular meeting at the Wilton EMS building in March.

Test Session Requirements. Jim KG2H

If you are going to take a test session for either a new or upgraded ham license, here are a few things you MUST bring along.

- A copy of your current FCC license. We need to attach the license copy to the paperwork when you upgrade. If you are unlicensed, you have a few options. The FCC form 605 requires either a FRN or a SSN. You can obtain a FRN in just a few minutes before the exam session by visiting www.wireless.FCC.gov/ULS You simply apply for the FRN on line, and you will have it with you when you come to the test session.
- Another form of ID, a driver's license is great, or any other form of ID. If you don't have a driver's license, (perhaps you are too young for the DMV) the ARRL suggests something as simple as a library card, or even a piece of mail addressed to you at your residence.
- A pen and pencil (with a good eraser). The pen is for filling out the FCC form 605, and the pencil is to fill out the bubble answer sheet.
- The proper testing fee. Currently it is \$15.
- Your WITS. It is not a hard exam, so don't get too anxious about it.

Please arrive at least 15 minutes before the exam start time in order to fill out the paperwork, and for the VE's (Volunteer Examiners) to review it.

Another thing to bear in mind, is that for many of the testing sessions, the VE will have alternate versions of the various exam elements available for you to try a retake of the exam. If you do desire to take an alternate version, we must charge you an additional testing fee. If you DO NOT NEED to take any alternate versions, you may take the next higher level of exam for NO additional costs. For example, if you take and pass the Technician exam, you may take the General exam if you so desire, and there will be no additional fees. I have witnessed a few people who have come into the session unlicensed, and walk away with the Extra Class license.

World Radio Day Set for February 13th courtesy EGARA newsletter

World Radio Day on February 13th will seek to raise awareness about the importance of radio in all forms. As part of the observance, special event station 4UOR will be active on HF by CW / SSB from Vienna International Center. Austria from February 13 to 20.

Organizers want radio to be recognized as a low cost medium, specifically suited to reach remote communities and vulnerable people. It offers a platform to intervene in the public debate, irrespective of people's educational level. Furthermore, radio has a strong and specific role in emergency communication and disaster relief.

There is also a changing face to radio services which, in the present times of media convergence, are taking up new technological forms, such as broadband, mobiles and tablets. However, it is said that up to a billion people still do not have access to radio today.

On November 3, 2011, the 36th General Conference of UNESCO approved the creation of the World Day of Radio. The initial idea came from the Spanish Academy of Radio four years ago, and the Permanent Delegation of Spain to UNESCO formally present the proposal to UNESCO's Executive Board for approval.

from the East Greenbush newsletter

Radio Waves—February 2018 Brian NJ1F

It is the start of the New Year which means that there are several HF contests that are opportunities for stateside stations to be in demand. Don't let the lack of sun spots keep you from getting on the air and working new Countries, States, Counties or Grid Squares. I will tell you about something the ARRL is doing this year that involves grid square later on.

While higher band conditions are down during this phase of the sun spot cycle, the low bands have been awesome. I am writing this on Saturday morning January 27, 2018. I did spend a couple of hours on operating the CQWW 160 CW contest last night. I have to admit that conditions were outstanding on "Top Band". With 100 watts and a simple inverted L, I was able to work many stations across the pond. When I tuned across RW2F his signal was as loud as the station I had just worked in Michigan and with one call he was in the log. This is truly the season for the low bands 160, 80, 60, 40 and 30 meters. Yea there are a couple of even lower bands 2200, 630 meters for those who really want a challenge. During the winter months these bands are less impacted by atmospheric noise from thunderstorms. Plus with the lack of sunlight on the North Pole allows for polar paths to exist almost 24 hours a day. This will soon change as we approach spring so get on and have some fun on the low bands.

I mentioned the ARRL has a yearlong operating event for 2018 called the international grid chase. The purpose is to encourage getting on the air and working as many "Grid Squares" as possible. It is not a contest, but the ARRL does have a leader board which automatically keeps track of your Grid Square totals as long as you are using LOTW and have set your stations grid square in the Tqsl program. Complete details are at <http://www.arrl.org/international-grid-chase-2018>

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Saratoga County is located at a Grid Square corner so depending on where you are operating from you can be in any of the following Grid Squares FN32, FN33, FN22 or FN23. So not sure which Grid Square you live in? One place you can check is your listing in the www.grz.com database which automatically calculated your Grid Square based on your mailing address. Another way is to download an app for your smartphone which will use its GPS to calculate your Grid Square.

In the next few days a group of Hams from around the world will be activating one of the remotest islands on the Earth called Bouvet Island as 3Y0Z. This DXpedition has been in planning for many years and involves a lot of preparation and money to stage. The group at the time of my writing is about 2/3 of the way to the island. They hope to be active for about 14 days and to work as many as possible on all HF bands modes and even EME. They will be doing FT-8 as well. Please read their operating tips and recommended practices on their website <https://www.bouvetdx.org/>. As I mentioned before this is an extremely expensive DXpedition so you may want to make a donation especially if you have a QSO with them!

February contests include CQWPX RTTY which is the RTTY version of the popular WPX contest, which happens on February 10 thru 11. The great thing is that the WPX contest is that you can work both stateside or DX and the multipliers are prefixes. **CONTEST EXCHANGE:** RST report plus a progressive contact serial number starting with 001 for the first contact. Complete rules are at <http://www.cqwpxrty.com/rules.htm>

A great opportunity to work some new countries is the ARRL DX contests. The DX stations cannot work each other like in the CQWW contests, so they have to work US! The ARRL International DX CW happens February 17 thru 18 and the SSB happens March 3 thru 4. The contest exchange for us is our state and the DX uses the transmitter power. Complete rules are at <http://www.arrl.org/arrl-dx>

See you on the bands!

Dues Received Jim KG2H

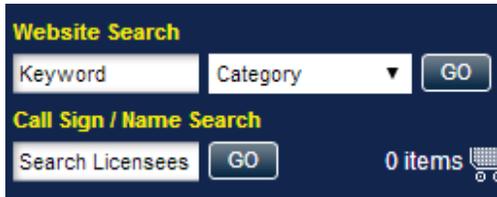
Thank you all, we received dues in January from the following members:

K2QY, K2ZIP, KA2BIX, KA2CZI, KA5VVI, KB2STR, KC2ODL, KD2LVP, KD2MPZ, KD2MYR, KF7ISY, KG2H, KR6FH, N2EKQ, N2OKA, N2SSL, NA2Q, NJ1F, NR2T, NY2MC, W1NXB, W2MRD.

Remember, our membership is the calendar year, so we are once again reminding you about this. I previously e-mailed to each one on our mailing list a listing of the information I had, including the last year that I received dues. The response has been great, with a few replies correcting the information I had.

If you would like, you may either mail me your dues, or please give them to me at the swapfest on March 10.

Have you checked the expiration date on your license? It's very easy to do. One way to do it is to go to WWW.ARRL.ORG, and just fill in your call sign in the search box on their home page. You do not need to be a member of ARRL to use this service.



K2DLL repeater system:
Corinth NY
147.000 MHz +600KHz 91.5 Hz CTCSS encode/decode
448.225 MHz -5.00 MHz 91.5 CTCSS encode/decode

Providence NY
147.240 MHz 91.5 Hz CTCSS encode/decode.
147.360 MHz +600 Hz (add 91.5 Hz to connect to the NYS Network

Middleburgh NY
448.925 PL 107.2 WA2TTP-R Steve's Repeater is linked to ours via UHF



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Please be sure to visit our webpage for any late breaking news or newsletter archives.

WWW.K2DLL.ORG

Got News or information you would like to get published? How about your own projects or other things you think would be of interest to Club Members? How about (GASP), a letter to the editor? Contact us at our email address :

SparksFromTheSpa@gmail.com

Upcoming program note

We are looking for input from the membership as to what YOU would like to hear. Program suggestions are always welcome. Please let any of the Board Members know of you ideas.

Thanks