Las Vegas Radio Amateur Club

Volume 1, Issue 1 Newsletter Date February 2010

Las Vegas Radio Amateur Club
PO Box 27342
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

We operate the K7UGE repeaters on 146.940 (PL 100.0) and 448.500 (PL 100.0) as well as the QST machine on 146.730.

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The next meeting is on Tuesday, February 16, 2010, at the Salvation Army Building 2900 Palomino Lane, Las Vegas

President's Message

Grab a beverage and please take the time to read the following:

Well, another year has come and gone and here we are planning our next Speedway fundraiser for the LVRAC and the activities the money raised from the Speedway will be used to support. In this first President's message, I will discuss the Silent Key program, Newsletter, activity of the 2010 board, plans for the coming year – including meeting events, how the Speedway operates and why we need it, and a call for member action. First, I will provide some detail on what has been happening since I took office.

The Silent Key program has had its share of problems; those problems have caused stress in the program and those who have, and currently are, administering it. There have been people who started in the board with good intention and due to circumstances stemming out of the Silent Key program in some connection, have chosen to vacate their positions or pass it on to another.

Recently, our Vice-President has also decided to resign due to personal reasons, but I can tell you that being busy with his personal business and having to put in overtime to pick up the slack of lack of volunteers has added a great amount of stress, so I agree with his decision. Is there another in this club who wants to take on this responsibility? If so, contact me directly. In addition, the board has acquired another storage unit so as to migrate all club and Silent Key material to one unit; this endeavor is still in progress. A special thank you goes to Dave Moss who took on the position of Newsletter Editor. It is greatly appreciated.

More importantly, some 2010 past and present board members have put in a great many hours and have had little acknowledgement, other than from their peer board members, for their sacrifice of time and energy to get things done for the Silent Key program. Again, thank you.
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Winter Field Day

Several of us went to Majestic Park for Winter Field Day. The visit allowed use to see the park and try out the facilities, practice setting up equipment such as antennas, radios, and generators, and generally having fun. Jay KE7EGO, Denny KE7WOD, Arnie WA2SOE, Dave WD6CZY, and Judy WD6DCD setup equipment and made on-the-air contacts. Several other hams joined us to partake in the exercise.

Secretary Report

As of yet we, have no secretary. just a brief rehash of our January meeting;

The meeting was called to order by our VP Ron, KE7FCO. We were informed that Arnie was in the hospital due to illness.

We discussed up-coming events including the speedway. We also had a discussion regarding the location of June's Field Day. The question on Field Day was to determine if we should use Sunset Park or choose a City Park. There will be future discussions on this.

The treasure report was approved and after a brief break, we had our monthly raffle.

If you would like to be the club secretary, please let Arnie or Ron know.

Treasurer Report

LVRAC Monthly Reconciliation of

Income and Expenses 2010

Balance at the end of December:		$4,147.96
Income Deposited for January:		$665.00
Expenses for January:		$877.16
Balance at the end of January:		$3,935.80

Ham radio: A fading hobby … until emergencies hit

Originally in the Orlando Sentinel January 22, 2010. http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/weather/os-amateur-radio-20100203,0,3256144.story

At the National Weather Service, meteorologists are surrounded by some of the most up-to-date technology, which they use to track weather systems and dangerous storms.

But when the computers go down, forecasters may have to depend on hundreds of Central Florida hobbyists who use a method widely perceived to be decidedly less technologically advanced: amateur radio.

"Each individual county has one or more individual ham groups that can provide backup communications," said Scott Spratt, warning-coordination meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Melbourne. "We have about 20 groups we interact with."

Amateur, or ham, radio is a method of using wireless-radio communications devices to talk with other radio operators using frequencies set aside by the Federal Communications Commission.

The technology became popular in the early part of the past century as radio technology was developing. As early as 1914, hams were communicating nationwide, according to the American Radio Relay League, a national ham-radio group. Hams are required to take tests and are licensed by the FCC.

In the Orlando area, hundreds of hobbyists speak to other hams near and far for fun, while others, such as law-enforcement and emergency-services personnel, use the technology as part of their jobs. About 17 groups of ham-radio enthusiasts are in the region, including chapters in The Villages and Daytona Beach.

Contrary to popular belief, they're not socially awkward shut-ins without access to cell phones and more current technology. Hams are police officers, engineers, city officials, teachers and even young students who just enjoy radio.

They're also able to help during natural disasters in other parts of the world.

In the wake of the devastating Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti, hams in Florida, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Puerto Rico and other nearby locations rallied to listen for emergency communications from the devastated island nation.

A group of hams coordinated the collection and transport of supplies for a school in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, entirely by amateur radio on Jan. 30, according to Dan Fisher of the Platinum Coast Amateur Radio Society.

Hams also gather each year at an event called Hamcation. Self-billed as the premier amateur-radio event in the Southeast, it comes to the Central Florida Fairgrounds for three days beginning Feb. 12.

The equipment doesn't take up much room, and the hobby can be relatively inexpensive.

A beginning ham can buy all the necessary equipment — including a power source and receiver-transmitter — for about $150, said Jim Stout, a salesman at Amateur Electronic Supply in Orlando, which sells ham-radio equipment. But some hams estimate they have spent thousands of dollars on equipment through the years — especially because many are longtime hobbyists.

"A lot of old-timers tended to get involved when they were youngsters," Fisher said.

Many took high-school classes that required them to learn about ham radio, while others learned about it in extracurricular groups.

Amateur radio operator Dick jansson (KD1K), technical adviser for the American Radio Relay League and a member of the Orange County Com-munications Auxiliary, uses his transceiver to talk to other hams for fun and to communicate in emer-gencies. (RICARDO RA-MIREZ BUXEDA, OR-LANDO SENTINEL / January 22, 2010)

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The LVRAC was formed in April of 1961, and is the oldest HAM radio club in Las Vegas. It began in Jerry Mann's kitchen (W7VYC later N7CAH now SK). The first meeting was held as a picnic at Mt. Charleston, 150 people attended.

In the early days of the LVRAC the club was contacted by Joe Wells, then the head of the Thunderbird Hotel, who wanted to establish a ham station in the hotel. He offered to purchase the equipment and provide a room in which to build a station. He bought a full Collins Radio S-line system (the finest equipment made at the time), Hy-Gain beam antennas and all the necessary accessories to equip a fully functional station. A glass windowed room, completely visible, to the hotel's patrons, was built to house the station. All LVRAC members had station access key cards and could operate the station at any time. Club meetings were held at the hotel. The Thunderbird is on our bulletin as a symbol of the club's early affiliation with the Thunderbird Hotel more than a third of a century ago

http://www.lvrac.org/

Ham radio: A fading hobby … until emergencies hit Continued

Also, some veterans brought the practice — and Morse code, which no longer is required for ham radio — home with them after returning from the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of World War II.

Enthusiasts say that the fun of the hobby is in reaching out to people all over the world and talking with them, using technology that some liken to an oral Internet chat. During the day, users can speak with people within the United States. At night, their reach is virtually unlimited. Users in Central Florida routinely talk with people on other continents and beyond.

"We've talked to ships at sea; we've talked to pilots flying across the U.S.," Fisher said.

Even astronauts, all of whom are required to learn ham radio, get involved.

"When those guys are in space and have the time and get bored to tears, they get on the frequency and start chatting to us down here," said Stephanie Phillips, a ham in Titusville.

Astronauts on the International Space Station even speak with ham-radio groups in schools in a bid to increase interest in science and math.

Despite the excitement of speaking to people in faraway places, attracting new hams isn't easy. People who don't know about ham radio often think it's old-fashioned technology and don't see much use for it.

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"We wish we could encourage more people to get involved," said Gil Chapin of the Orange County Communications Auxiliary, a volunteer group that assists county agencies with communications during disasters. "We're always looking for new recruits, and it's not your grandfather's amateur radio anymore."

Although the death of ham radio has been forecast many times, Chapin thinks the advent of the cell phone — which allows people to speak across long distances at low cost — has done more to tamp down enthusiasm about ham radio than anything else.

But during a natural disaster, cell phones and other communications may not work when ham radio still will. Witness the aftermath of the Haitian earthquake.

That's why hams think their hobby will never die.

A ham-radio operator was responsible for restoring communications between a National Weather Service in Louisiana and the National Hurricane Center in Miami during Hurricane Katrina.

Hams also have helped ships stranded at sea, and traditionally head for Red Cross shelters during hurricanes to serve as backup communicators in case other methods fail.

"If a hurricane came and caused significant damage and toppled our antennas and towers, we have a simple wire antenna we have available," said Spratt of the National Weather Service. "We'll string that wire antenna up between the two tallest points we can find and operate the radio, and we would have ham-radio communication."

Hams also can send information to meteorologists and emergency responders to let them know about conditions on the ground and at shelters during dangerous weather.

For the past 11 years, the National Weather Service has acknowledged its ham operators with Skywarn Recognition Day. Skywarn is a program involving nearly 300,000 volunteers with communications devices such as ham radios that serve as severe-weather spotters and can send information back to weather-service offices.

They're especially useful to the local weather-service office during hurricane season, Spratt said, but even though hurricane season is over, the service still sees some use for hams before the next season begins in June.

"Based on what we're expecting for the El Nino tornado season," Spratt said, "we can't emphasize enough how important backup communication is in times of disaster."

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HAM-SPEAK

Here are some terms you might hear used on amateur radio:

Alligator: A transmitter that can send farther than it can receive.

Candy store: A store that sells ham-radio equipment.

Elmer: An experienced ham who lends his or her help to newbies.

Ragchewing: Talking on the air.

Splatter: Interference from nearby frequencies.

Ticket: Amateur-radio license.

Twisted pair: Telephone.

Wilco: Will comply.

YL: Young lady, generally used to refer to any female ham.

SOURCE: Sentinel research

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Who are the people who put in the effort? Jim Bilan, Chris Heyde, Dennie Little, and Ron Grahmm. If I left someone out, I apologize and if you gently remind me, I will be sure to mention you. I must now make an important decision regarding the Silent Key program. Due to lack of members at large not volunteering to assist the board, after the current Silent Key estate is closed, I will terminate the Silent Key program within the LVRAC unless a minimum of six club members outside of the board step up to the plate and volunteer to help out. If you can help out, please contact me directly. Now, I'll talk about future plans for the club.

I am looking forward to having a mini-Field Day for the club to test generators, radio gear, antennas, and lay of the land at another site. This is also a good opportunity for new members and new hams to learn new skills. More importantly, though, it is an opportunity for members to simply get together for some good old hamming. I look forward to a spring and autumn mini-Field Day as well as a club picnic for members, their significant others, and offspring; heck, bring a friend or two and introduce them to the members and ham radio.

I am also looking forward to changing the face of the meetings by incorporating more ham radio related activities such as radio programming sessions where each of us, with specific knowledge of a brand or model of radio, help another ham learn how to program their radio or building parties where the members get together and each builds a project; since we would all be building the same project, members can help one another learn, or improve, a skill set. Those who volunteer at the Speedway fundraiser will have their parts, or most of the cost – depending on how much, paid for by the club. I am also planning on exploring options for location and upgrade of our UHF repeater.

Speaking of the Speedway, without you, the members, helping out one or more days, we cannot operate the Speedway stand effectively, or at all. If that should happen, we could lose our place to continue operating stand B-9, which is one of the MOST profitable stands in the Speedway, or perhaps permanently. Should that happen, there will be no money for the events planned and no money to maintain or upgrade our repeaters. At some point, if there continues to be no support, the club will not have replacement funds other than membership dues.

So, for those who are new to the club and those who are not familiar with the operations of the Speedway and what volunteers do there, allow me to explain; we, the volunteers / stand workers, sell beer, soda, water, cocktails, nachos w/cheese, hot dogs, and candy. We provide a condiment table and manage our own finances with a stand banker. The stand manager orchestrates the stand along with the banker. Behind the four people selling products, is the hot dog cooker, a nacho prep area along with a hot cheese delivery machine or pre-packaged cheese bags. There are typically a couple of volunteers behind the four people selling the product. Those people prepare the hot dogs and nacho trays as they are called out by those selling the products. When beer, soda, water, or other cold product needs to be restocked up front, there are one to two volunteers who bring product from a large walk-in freezer immediately behind the food prep area for the nachos and hot dogs. Those volunteers also keep track of the product in the freezer in an attempt to keep us continually stocked as much as possible. That information is passed on to the stand manager who orders more products. Each volunteer who sells our food and drink stock has a cash drawer. They have a price chart so they know what to charge the patrons and any time they have large bills, they are collected by the stand banker who regularly checks the cash drawers to collect excess and large denomination bills or traveler's checks. The stand banker maintains a temporary bank account and regularly calls the finance dept. to have security pick up deposits to reduce the amount of money kept in the stand and also so it is easier to maintain. The banker and stand manager also maintain paperwork that tracks the money and inventory.

As you might realize at this point, this is truly no small operation; rather, it is a big money maker and requires responsible and reliable volunteers to pull it off. Because each volunteer has a specific duty, it makes it much easier to manage and each person understands their position. We, the stand organizers, recognize the sacrifice made in the way of energy, time, and family, so we provide each volunteer with $10 Speedway dollars. More are available to purchase at $0.60 per dollar, reduced cost. We will also provide lanyards and a custom LVRAC hat. Those who work two or more days will also receive, after the event, a custom made pullover shirt with their name and call sign. Those who work all three days will receive a $20 gift card or certificate of their choice (you tell us what

card/cert to buy for you). When it is all done we will also have an informal hot dog and hamburger social only for the volunteers and their significant others who sacrificed time without their loved ones.

I strongly encourage new members, particularly young ones eighteen and up, and those who have not volunteered at the Speedway before, to step up to the plate. The club needs you now. Simply waiting on the sidelines and expecting the same people year after year to pick up the slack is not the way to support YOUR club! Yes, volunteering at the Speedway can be tiring and you will be busy, but you will also have fun; imagine a bunch of people shouting and banging on counter tops every time we get a tip, or swapping radio news or tips and tricks about something you learned. By the way, we also provide regular and diet soda, as well as water and snacks for the volunteers. The more people who volunteer, the more breaks that can be taken; hence, you can step out and watch parts of the race.

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS! Don't wait until the last minute. We have to provide Levy, the vendor who manages our stand and provides the goods we sell for them, the number of volunteers and some will need to attend a 2-hour alcohol compliance training session in two weeks. Please add your name to our list of volunteers. You will be benefiting yourself and this club, allowing it to provide more for you. There is a signup form on the LVRAC Website at www.lvrac.org. I remind you, without you, the members, volunteering to keep the Speedway fundraising events alive, we will no longer have a viable income source to maintain repeaters, fund Field Days, provide other outings and building parties, etc. Please, volunteer your time to the Speedway. If there is something further you need to know, contact me.

Thank you in advance for your dedication to this club.

73s,
Arnie, WA2SOE
President, LVRAC