

SPARKS

Monthly Newsletter of the Tri-State Amateur Radio Society

Serving the Tri-State for over 70 years

May 2020 - Issue No. 5



The SPARKS Newsletter is published monthly by the Tri-State Amateur Radio Society as a source of information about Club activities, and general news items of interest to the Amateur Radio community.

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Complimentary issues of the SPARKS Newsletter are available to amateur radio clubs on a newsletter exchange by e-mailing your request to sparks@w9og.net.

E-mail subscriptions are provided to all regular TARS members.

News contributions and letters/emails to the editor are always welcome.

TARS regular membership is open to all licensed Amateur Radio operators for \$25.00 a year. An Associate membership is also available to those who are interested in Amateur Radio but do not currently hold a license.

Associate membership is \$25.00 a year. Student memberships are also available for \$12.50 a year.

Membership information is available at www.w9og.net

The Tri-State Amateur Radio Society meets the second Thursday of each month at the Red Cross, 29 Stockwell Rd, Evansville IN, at 7:00 p.m.

Family and visitors are always welcome to attend.

For more information, please call or email one of the TARS officers listed in this newsletter.

President's Corner

Hello again fellow Hams! I hope you all are well. I miss getting together as a club, and I hate that we had to cancel our INQP outing. Hopefully all this madness will be over soon, and we can again begin doing normal things. As we come out from under this quarantine and social distancing period and transition to normal life, we need to continue to use care and caution. Washing hands, using hand sanitizer, and basically an increased awareness of our environment and how to decrease exposure to germs, etc. COVID-19 is not the only virus or contagion – there are others including the common ol flu that could be quite serious for someone with other issues. So, as we transition to our meetings and activities, lets do so smartly respecting those around us and protecting ourselves.

Something else that I mentioned in my last article that I will cover again. What if this pandemic had been as horrible as initially predicted? It is likely that the Red Cross and other community agencies and non-profits would have been called upon to assist the large numbers of people affected. In addition to the pandemic we have had in the past few weeks a tornado hit our community, and many other tornadoes wreaking havoc in the states around us. Is our club ready to play a role when called upon? Its not a matter of IF, it is WHEN we will get the call to provide assistance- either communication assistance or some other type of assistance- to support our community. Are you ready? Are you a member of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)? I think right now is a good time to consider becoming an active member, getting, and staying ready to assist when needed. I urge ALL TARS members to become members of ARES and find out how you can be of service to our community. If you have questions about this, please get with me and we will get you answers. We have an active ARES group and need YOU to be a part of it!

73!

John N9oL

TARS members:

The Red Cross facility management has informed me that the **Red Cross facility in Evansville is closed and any meetings and functions scheduled there have been cancelled.** This is in response to the COVID-19 crisis. We will be notified when normal schedules can resume.

Until further notice please do not go to the Red Cross.

If there is an urgent need to get into the radio room please call me.

John Van Vorst, N9oL

812-305-4100 cell

PLEASE NOTE: The Red Cross Blood Center is open and everyone is encouraged to donate.

VE testing May 30th 9:00 am will be held at the Vanderburgh Co EMA Westside training center 1440 Harmony Way 47712.

Beyond the Baofeng

By Chris Lantaff KE9YK

A review of net operating procedures and common practices.

With the Covid-19 lockdown we have been holding nets every night at 8:00pm on the 146.79 repeater. First let me say I am extremely pleased with the participation we have had on the covid addition of the net net. We have had a great number of people new to the net and several newly licensed or renewed interest hams. I only hope that once the net goes back to Wed nights we still have the participation.

With that I thought it would be a good time to review some common net practices.

Not all nets operate the same but there are some good practices to follow when checking in.

The first 3 most important things, Listen, Listen and Listen!

Listen for instructions from the NCS (Net Control Station).

Listen to how the net regulars are checking in.

Listen for other stations before keying up.

When checking in, keep your transmissions brief.

You should NOT give your call and start in with comments or carrying on with a long dissertation or announcement.

YOU SHOULD give your call s-l-o-w-l-y generally followed by your name, possibly your location and if you have anything for the net. When using phonetics, **only use standard ITU phonetics**. Some people have a tendency to come up with something they think is cute or catchy for their call, but the problem is this throws off the NCS while copying the call.

This isn't a contest so space out your call and be patient. You will have several chances to get checked in to the net.

And finally, if you are not really a short time station (mobile, ht with a battery dying, cooking dinner, etc.), please do not check in as short time. The net generally won't last too long and checking in as short time serves no real purpose.

2020 State of the Hobby Survey

Greetings fellow operators!

First and foremost, I hope everyone is staying healthy out there. The COVID-19 global pandemic has, for better or worse, certainly cause a large amount of change in the world today. While I was originally hoping to release this survey mid-March, due to the pandemic response I was forced to change this up. I trust many others have had to make similar adjustments, so I hope folks understand.

That said, the time has come for the survey to be released! I wanted to ensure I could devote the proper amount of time to promoting and administering the survey before I released it. Things have calmed down a bit in my world and I'm ready to do that.

If you have not had a chance to see the results from previous surveys, they are available here:

- [2018](#)
- [2017](#)
- [2019](#)



The survey this year is 100% anonymous (which was common feedback I received) and any demographic questions are optional - this data does help me drive better analysis but is completely optional.

The survey will run from 15-MAY to 12-JUN, so 4 weeks. If there is low attendance due to world events, I may consider extending this.

As always, please subscribe to my blog for email alerts on future survey and result activities.

[>>>Take the 2020 State of the Hobby Survey here!<<<<](#)

A modest proposal

(for the next Extra Class question pool)

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

At our last club meeting, I was discussing the changes to the Extra Class question pool with someone, and the topic of memorizing the answers popped up. As I always do, I mentioned that many of the questions you can only get right by memorizing the answer. At that point, someone down the way piped up. "Not me," he said, "I studied the material so that I didn't have to memorize the answers."

At that point, the president called the meeting to order, so I didn't get to challenge him on that point, but that statement is just plain wrong. First of all, it's true that some questions you can only get right by memorizing the answer. Almost all of the rules questions are that way, for example.

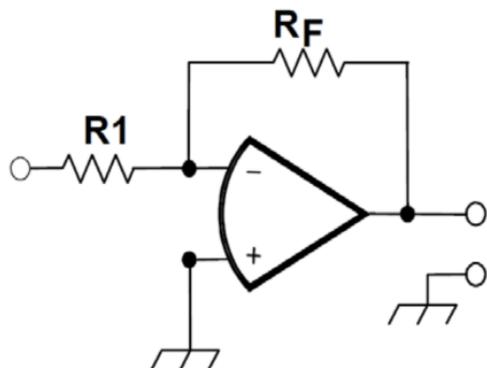
Secondly, there is no way to study the rest of the material in any depth and still have time to actually be an amateur radio operator. The amount of material that the Extra Class question pool covers takes an electrical engineering student four years or more to study thoroughly. And even then, some topics are bound to get short shrift.

So, we're back to memorizing. I would say that even an "engaged" person will memorize about half the answers. I'd go even further and say that those that "study" the technical topics, don't study it as thoroughly as a college student would.

For example, there are a dozen questions in Section E7G – Active filters and op-amp circuits: active audio filters; characteristics; basic circuit design; operational amplifiers. Despite the name, you

don't need to know how to design or build an op-amp filter. All you really need to know is that op-amps are high gain devices and if you have a circuit like the one shown below, $V_{out}/V_{in} = R_F/R_1$.

Figure E7-3



These concepts are relatively easy to learn. but there are also two questions on filter "ringing." Honestly, you're better off just memorizing the answers to those questions unless you have a real interest in active filters that use op amps. Wading into the mathematics isn't all that hard, but when you consider this is only one of dozens of topics, you can see where doing any kind of in-depth study is going to take you months, if not years, to accomplish.

A modest proposal

The end result of this approach to testing is that we have many Extra Class licensees who know about a lot of things, but not in very much depth. Perhaps that's OK. Perhaps that's just what the question pool committee of the National Council of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (NCVEC) was shooting for. If, however, we want an Extra Class license to denote that the licensee has some real technical expertise, I have a modest proposal.

Basically, my idea is that instead of testing on an incredibly wide range of topics, we test applicants on a set of basics, plus one or two particular topics. These would be topics that the person has expertise in already or enough of an interest in to study the topic in some depth.

Below are the topics that I would consider to be basic and some that I consider to be more specialized. This is, of course, not an extensive list.

- Basic questions (20 questions, everyone takes this part of the exam)
 - Safety
 - Rules and regulations
 - Electrical principles/basic circuits
- Technical Interests (Choose two, 20 questions each)
 - Antennas and transmission lines

- Radio wave propagation
- EMI/RFI
- Analog and digital design
- Digital communications and networking
- Software/software-defined radio
- Operating: contests, DXing, direction finding, etc.
- VHF/UHF

The questions in each of the technical interest question pools would be designed to really test the knowledge of the person taking the test. We'd have to figure out a way to make them difficult enough so that one couldn't just simply memorize the answer. Questions could appear in one or more technical interest test. For example, a question on VHF/UHF propagation could appear in both the Radio Wave Propagation and VHF/UHF question pools.

Having said all this, I realize that this would not be easy to implement. You'd have to first decide on the topics and then enlist experts for each of the topics and get them to come up with a list of 80 – 100 questions each.

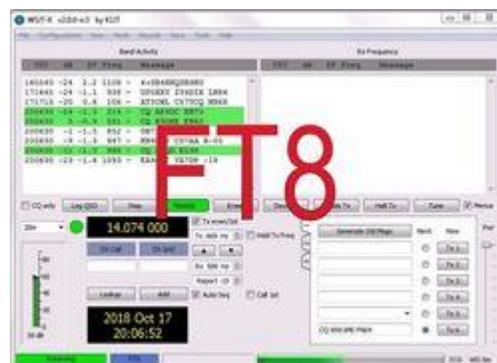
I realize that this has very little chance of being adopted, but it's interesting to think about, no? And, we have four years to do this, so it could be possible.

=====

Dan Romanchik, KB6NU, is the author of the KB6NU amateur radio blog (KB6NU.Com), the "No Nonsense" amateur radio license study guides (KB6NU.Com/study-guides/), and often appears on the ICQPodcast (icqpodcast.com). When he's not thinking up ways to make the lives of the NCVEC question pool committee more difficult, he likes to build stuff and operate CW on the HF bands.

Choosing FTx Transmit and Receive Frequencies in Crowded Contest Bands

Here's how to pick FT-mode transmit and receive frequencies in crowded contest bands. First, pick an audio offset frequency greater than 500 Hz, but less than the suggested frequency intervals (e.g., 2 kHz). In crowded band conditions, the "base" transmit frequencies for FT4 or FT8 are suggested to be at 2 kHz intervals.



For example, some stations may set their radio's frequency to 14.130 MHz, while others are at 14.132 or 14.134 MHz. Under these conditions, it makes sense to choose a transmit frequency offset

greater than 500 Hz, but less than 2 kHz.

Here's the reasoning: If the CQing station chooses 14.130.0 with an offset of 2.4 kHz, then a listening station's radio tuned to 14.132.0 will "see" that station at 400 Hz. Many radios have audio passbands of between 500 Hz and 3,000 Hz. Frequencies outside that range are not received as well. A reduced sensitivity at 400 Hz can make the difference in decoding successfully.

The station *answering* the CQ (radio at 14.132.0 MHz) should likely pick a frequency at or near the CQ frequency, since the operator doesn't know whether the CQing station's frequency is at 14.130 or 14.132. If the receiving station chooses, say, 1.5 kHz, this would be at 14.133.5. A CQing station set to 14.130 may not be decoding all the way to 3.5 kHz from the radio's offset frequency.

-- Thanks to The ARRL Contest Update

FYI

The CWops' [CW Academy](#) (CWA) offers free, remote Morse code classes at four separate levels -- beginner through advanced, running from not knowing the code at all to reaching 25 WPM. CWops also provides a CWops Test ([CWT](#)), an hour-long event every Wednesday at 1300 and 1900 UTC, and Thursdays at 0300 UTC.



-- Thanks to The ARRL Contest Update

Tri-State Emergency Net

8:00 p.m. Wednesday nights on 146.79 pl 88.5

If you haven't checked into the Tri-State Emergency Net, please take a few minutes at 8:00 p.m. Wednesday evenings on 146.79 and get updated on what is happening, the latest club information, calendar of upcoming events, topics of general interest and from time to time good old-fashioned rag chewing.

Net Operator schedule

We are currently running the net every night at 8pm due to the Covid-19 Lockdown. This net will run till the end of May and will be reevaluated at that time.

May

6	KC9UVG
13	N9QVQ
20	KB9YWQ
27	WB9KQF

June

3	KE9YK
10	KC9TYA
17	KC9UVG
24	N9QVQ

If you would like to be a Net Control Operator for the Wednesday Night Net or learn how to run a SKYWARN net.

Contact: [Chris Lantaff KE9YK](#).



The SKYWARN Spotter classes for spring have all been completed but the NWS is currently offering MiniCourses.

You can check out the current listing at this link:

<https://www.weather.gov/pah/NWSMiniCourses>

VE Testing

2020 schedule

ATTENTION!!!

The MAY 30th testing session will be at the Westside EMA Training Center (WEMA) 1440 Harmony Way.



~~Apr 25~~, May 30, Jun 27, Jul 25,

Aug 29, Sep 26, Dec 5

All examinations will be administered at the American Red Cross, Evansville Chapter, located at 29 S. Stockwell Road, Evansville Indiana 47714. **Examinations will start at 9:00 AM Central time.**

We have no pre-registration, and examinations are administered on a walk-in basis.

All the details can be found at:

<http://w9og.net/ve-testing>

Or for more info contact:

[John VanVorst N9OL](#) c: 812.305.4100



Reminder the current Extra class (Element 4) **Question Pool** is valid until **June 30, 2020**. After that date you will need to update your study material.

For Sale

Kenwood TS-520s transceiver with the DG-5 digital display and Astatic D-104 microphone.

This HF rig works excellent and is in great condition. The DG-5 digital display takes a few minutes to warm up but works fine after that. Of course the DG-5 is not needed to use the rig- the dial on the radio is sufficient. I am asking slightly less than what I have in this equipment. \$350.

John Van Vorst, N9OL@arrl.net



Vanderburgh Co. ARES/RACES

All Vanderburgh Co ARES/RACES in person meetings are canceled until this COVID-19 emergency has passed. We may try using ZOOM for meetings and are actively planning to participate in a Nationwide Red Cross drill May 30.



Chris Lantaff KE9YK
Vanderburgh Co RACES Officer
in82races@gmail.com c: 812.453.1972

HAMFEST Calendar

The 2020 Indianapolis Hamfest that was scheduled on July 10 - 11, 2020 has been canceled due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

This was also the location for the ARRL - Indiana Section Convention. An announcement will be made in the near future on the new site for the Indiana Section convention.

2020 Indiana Hamfest Schedule:
Updated May 12, 2020

August 8 – Angola Hamfest
Gateway Community Church – Angola, IN

August 15 - East Central Indiana Hamfest
Randolph County Fairgrounds - Winchester, IN

October 17 – Hamtober Fest
Lynnville, IN

<http://hamtoberfest.com/>

November 7, 2020 - Hoosier Hills Hamfest
Lawrence County 4H Fairgrounds - Bedford, IN
just off of US-50, west of SR-37

<http://www.w9qyq.org/hamfest>

ARRL Central Division Convention

November 14 - 15, 2020 – Ft Wayne Hamfest & Computer Expo
Allen Co War Memorial Coliseum
Ft. Wayne, IN

<http://www.acarts.com/hfmain.htm>

November 28 - Wabash Valley ARA Turkey Fest
Clay Co. Fairgrounds - Brazil, IN

www.w9uuu.org

Search the ARRL hamfest calendar for upcoming hamfests :

<http://www.arrl.org/hamfests/search>

May Birthdays !!!

Michael Brewster	KC9BUH	29th
Danielle Day	KC9YIL	26th
Rick Neukam	KD9MY	19 th

Secretary Report

The secretary reports were attached as separate attachments with this SPARKS mailing.

Dave Sandine KC9UVG

Treasurer Report

Budget:

March 2020 (prepared 4/1/2020)

Opening Balance: \$6,651.70

Receipts:

Memberships \$12.50

Total Receipts --->> \$12.50

Expenditures:

Pd Chris Lantaff KE9YK for awards materials,

W9OG and Hamtoberfest web hosting (\$151.21)

Lynnville Hamtoberfest reservation (\$375.00)

Total Expenditures--->> (\$526.21)

Ending Balance \$6,137.99

Red Cross Account \$1,283.82

Your input is important

Sparks is **YOUR** information source for club activities and local Amateur radio information.

In each issue we ask for submissions from club members. Tell us about your station, projects you have made or are making, anything interesting the TARS membership might be interested in.

Submission deadline is the 25th of the month.

Most any document format is acceptable.

Photos or graphics of your subject are welcome.

Send your article to: sparks@w9og.net

Looking Ahead

2020

MUSEUM SHIPS WEEKEND June

ARRL Kids Day June

Field Day June 27, 28

13 Colonies Special Event July

National Night Out first Tuesday of August

International Lighthouse and Lightship Weekend (ILLW) third full weekend of August

TARS PICNIC Sep 12

Route 66 Special Event September

Jamboree-on-the-Air third full weekend in October

TARS 3rd annual Hamtober Fest Oct 17th 2020

SKYWARN Recognition Day, Dec

2021

Straight Key Night Jan

TARS AUCTION January

ARRL Kids Day Jan

Winter Field Day January

TARS Banquet Feb 6th

INQP 2021

Total Solar Eclipse North America April 8, 2024

TARS is an [ARRL](#) affiliated club

ARRL [Indiana Section](#)

Section Manager: **Jimmy Merry KC9RPX**

kc9rpx@arrl.net

TARS mailing address:

TARS

P.O. Box 4521

Evansville, IN 47724



Don't forget to check out our web page www.w9og.net

Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TARSw9og>

TARS E-mail: info@w9og.net

2020 Club Officers - Board members

President [John VanVorst N9QL](#)

Vice President [Max Wilkinson KD9ABT](#)

Treasurer [Jeff Holt AA9WJ](#)

Secretary [Dave Sandine KC9UVG](#)

Board of Directors

[Rick Jackson K9EXY](#) (2019-2020)

[Dennis Martin WA2USA](#) (2019-2020)

[Mike Townsend W9KXP](#) (2019-2020)

[Herb Alvey KB9MZH](#) (2020-2021)

[Don Land KB9YWQ](#) (2020-2021)

[Chris Matthews N9JCA](#) (2020-2021)

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