



THE

FEEDBACK

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THE AMATEUR RADIO NEWSLETTER

Laurel Amateur Radio Club, Inc.

PO Box 146, Laurel, MD 20725-0146

<http://www.larcmd.org>

email: larc@larcmd.org

Upcoming Events:

Day	Date	Time	Freq	Event
Wed	05/25	1930		Monthly Meeting @ Woman's Club of Laurel
Wed	06/01	2030	147.225+	On-the-Air Net
Mon	06/06	2030	147.225+	Laurel PVRC Net
Wed	06/08	1900		Social Gathering at Tubby's
Mon	06/13	2030	147.225+	Laurel PVRC Net
Wed	06/15	2030	147.225+	On-the-Air Net
Mon	06/20	2030	147.225+	Laurel PVRC Net
Wed	06/22	1930		Monthly Meeting @ Woman's Club of Laurel
Mon	06/27	2030	147.225+	Laurel PVRC Net
Wed	06/29	2030	147.225+	On-the-Air Net
All		2100	147.540 simplex	Informal Net / Rag-Chew

Note: 147.225 PL 156.7 tone is usually off during nets.

Repeaters:

VHF: 147.225+ PL 156.7
UHF: 442.500+ PL 156.7

Simplex:

VHF: 147.540
UHF: 445.975

Next Meeting:
May 25, 2005 1930 EDT

President's Rumbblings

Another month has passed and it has been a busy one. We can put the Montpelier Festival and Main Street Festival in the book as successes. We had plenty of help and we were appreciated by both organizations for our continued support.

The job of moving out of our old shack into our new one is still progressing. We *will* be finished some day!

The next business meeting is on May 25th at the Woman's Club in Laurel at 7:30 pm. We will be discussing up coming events such as Field Day and the Forth of July. Please plan to attend - we need your input!

The VE session is / was Saturday, May 21.

See you Wednesday!

73,
Joe/ N3TZA

Main Street Festival

The City of Laurel Main Street Festival requires the most radio power of any of the events that we do and also puts us front and center of the elected officials and other movers and shakers in the community. Words can't buy the good will that we engender by volunteering our time and talents with events such as these. Not to mention that it really is an effective, subtle way to practice field operations for emergency communications. Committee members are still in awe of how smoothly everything went during the day.

I'm hoping that we will eventually get our act together and put together a book with all the detail involved in the various activities we support. But, until then, this may have to suffice for the Main Street Festival.

This year I met with the main committee four times, the last being a debrief during the week following the event and the other meetings beginning about one and a half months prior to the event, which is always the Saturday before Mother's Day. Then I met with the parade subcommittee twice before the event, picked up the trophies, put them in the Woman's Club, and helped Kay Sweitzer tag them the night before. One thing we did this year which I hope will be built upon is to put a map of the parade line up on the Laurel Board of Trade website. Many thanks to Jeff/KB3EQH who put it together for us. During the second parade subcommittee meeting, we sent a letter to all the participants advising them of their number in the parade and to look at the website to see where they should tell their participants to line up. I think that eventually this will help with some of the confusion. Next year we need to get printed instructions on where the busses should go after they drop off the participants again. This year they were directed to the train parking lot on the corner of Rt 1 North and Main Street. This caused safety problems at Rt 1 and Main Street. Next year it looks like the busses will be parked on A Street and the alley area or Rt 1 South in front of Fred Frederick's car dealership to avoid having kids crossing Rt 1.

We passed on our suggestions about decibel levels for the bands, large signs with arrows to point out the public restrooms, for some street furniture for handicapped and elderly to be able to take a breather on, and for a description of the music of the bands. We also looked at how to rearrange the

bands so that they aren't directly in front of the vendors. In addition to the first band beside our booth, another band up towards 7th St was giving problems to the organizers. Neither will be back next year. Two of the bands by our tent were last minute replacements.

We were setting up by 0630 and had a NCS established in short order. I put the tent, chairs and tables, and signage in the Woman's Club the night before and only had to pick up a battery that we put on charge the day before. The Woman's Club was informed that we were going to do it. The Woman's Club also graciously allowed the committee to install a 30 amp outlet on the building to power the sound equipment. This year we were missing a radio to connect us with the electrician. HD/K3HDM was sorely missed, and not just for his radio. You just hate it when business trumps fun. Dennis/KT3D filled in at NCS for the day handling the usual announcements with great aplomb.

Thanks to Ken/N3RER, Ed/K3QX, and Bill/N3XL for helping with the shadowing activities. The parade line up was efficiently handled by Joe/N3TZA, Bob/K3OH, Charles/AA3WC, Kevin/WV3D, Bob/KB3HGW, Jeff/KB3EQH, Matt/N3JMK, and myself. The lineup went smoothly as it could, considering the usual last minute entries. We hooked up the repeater to the one remaining dual band antenna (after Joe checked it with the analyzer) to use for the parade. All I can say about it is that it worked. During the course of the day Toby/KB3BWR and John/N3GXA came by to join us as eyes and ears on the street. We walked near the tail end of the parade and received a second place trophy for our efforts as a community group. Next year will be even more fun as it will be an election year with lots of elected officials and wannabes jockeying for position. Tear down happened at 1600L with great dispatch.

Thanks to all who helped make this activity a success! The Main Street Festival Committee is very dependent on our support to help make an event that this year drew around 85,000 people to one street in Laurel a smooth success. The one thing this event lacked this year was two of our staunchest supporters, Pud/W3YD and Ed/KB3DVC. I think we did them proud.

73,
Jim/WI3N

Montpelier Festival

The Montpelier Mansion was originally constructed by the Snowden family and is a historic showcase for the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Close by the historic mansion is an art barn housing local artists using many different media, its hallways festooned with their art, the occasional music group (Ritchie Havens is the latest that you 60's folks should be familiar with), summertime music concerts and, finally, it's largest and most prestigious event, made possible by the Laurel Amateur Radio Club. OK, so we only play a small role in making the set up run smoothly. They keep asking us to help every year, so we must be doing something right!

We start the morning at 0800, meet with Diane Sills, the event chair, and go over our marching orders. Matt/N3JMK took his usual position with vest and red flags at the entrance on Muirkirk Road. Toby/KB3BWR positioned himself at the gate that controls the flow of vendors and parking. Dennis/KT3D and Charles/AA3WC were in charge of keeping the vendors at bay till the field became clear enough to allow them to go to their designated spots. Ed/K3QX hiked across the field to the other entrance off Montpelier Drive to deal with the crafters and vendors that came through that entrance. Kevin/WV3D (also the voice of the last fox) had one of the toughest jobs there, shadowing Diane Sills who moves like a jet plane. Fortunately, Kevin keeps in shape and only had to use the oxygen tank a few times. Jeff/KB3EQH and I, Jim/WI3N, worked the field and parked the vendors with the help of a national guardsman detailed to us. We also oversaw the placement of scouts, national guard, police, rescue, US Postal Service, the moon bounce, and a couple helicopters. It was an interesting day as the ground was pretty squishy and a number of vehicles got stuck in various places.

We were done by 1200 when it officially opened. Once we did a special event station from there and I found out that an arrow shot straight up can stick in a slate roof at the end of its flight. We also set up a booth once and had people give us radio grams that were sent out of there on CW and put on the traffic nets that evening. We have an open invitation to have a booth for whatever we want to do, and maybe next year we can be thinking about doing something to promote amateur radio. It's a fun event and our services are truly appreciated by the planning staff.

73,
Jim/WI3N

Finding the noise...

We have all experienced RFI at one time or another. RFI is about as common as any problem an amateur radio operator or SWL listener will encounter. Some sources are natural and some are man made. Everything from rusty bolts to faulty appliances can and do cause interference. Sometime appliances or equipment working as designed cause interference (BPL and other "part 15" devices come to mind). Sometimes the interference is so bad the communications is impossible. Sometimes it is just an interesting sound in the background.

My experience has been minor in comparison to most. I've had to turn off lights on a dimmer switches and get past or (or further behind) vehicles with bad ignition systems, but that about it. The challenge can be often more in the finding of the source of the RFI then fixing it. Some time ago I came across one of those "interesting sound in the background". Now I really didn't need to fix it but I became curious about the source. I had been noticing it on 147.54Mhz (FM) when the AGC would be bring up weaker signals. It was a 60Hz buzz that came and went with at about one second intervals. I tuned around and discovered that the noise was stronger on other frequencies, but never so great as to make communications difficult. I listened for it for it over time and noticed that it wasn't present all the time and didn't extend past my neighborhood. So I had a local signal that wasn't very strong and was intermittent.

For a time I just checked on it now and then but had no real interest in hunting it down. Then I returned from a foxhunt, and there it was. Ok, I'm in a foxhunt mood so now I wanted to find it. Took out my HT and played with using my body as a shield. I started with my own house and worked out from there. Rather quickly I determined that the signal was coming from across the street. Just where is hard to tell with an HT, but I took a walk anyway. The noise was strongest under the street lamp across the street. So, satisfied that I had found the source, I quit looking. The next evening I drove past the light and sure enough the noise got louder under it and died as I got a few hounded yards away. This confirmed for me that I had the culprit, at least until the noise and the light's operating schedule didn't coincide.

Now, unsure of my self, I decided to get more serious, so I pulled out the loop antenna I used in the fox hunt and wander up and down my street a bit. With the loop, the noise was not coming from the light but really near by. Now I didn't want to take the loop and wander around the neighbor's houses and get them excited, so I went back to the HT, an attenuator and my rubber duck. Then I took a stroll across the street again. After a short while the source really seemed to be imitating from a house just down from the corner streetlight. Again, I don't want to trespass so a closer look is not possible and nobody's home to ask. I'm not sure how the neighbor would respond anyway. Ok, now the location of the noise is known but the source of the noise is not.

The source of the noise would be impossible to identify with out a closer inspection of the neighbor's property. As luck would have it, the noise stopped. I had not heard or thought about it for a while, when I came across a web site mentioned in an e-mail (can't remember from whom..). The web

site of Ken Alexander, VE3HLS (<http://ve3hls.tripod.com>) has a section on RF Noise Identification. My noise source might be found there! Following the link I came to a section on appliances and noises they emit. There are recordings sent in from all over, some identified and some hoping to be identified. Reading and listening along I found an entry near the bottom of that page that is an exact match for my noise! It was just added in February!

>> **NEW - February 13, 2005** <<

Contributor: Bryan, W1BRI

Noise Source: Charger for Motorola cordless phone

Where Found: 140 to 170 MHz

Notes: "I found your RF noise web site and figure it's best to send you what I sent to the FCC and ARRL on this Motorola cordless phone battery charger that was causing interference on one of our MMRA repeaters here in New England. Since writing up the article we found another house in the repeater neighborhood that had 4 chargers, we swapped them all out with fixed ones.

I have one of the bad ones on my bench and see that the center frequency depends on the voltage and current present at the charging terminals. As the battery charges the center frequency moves across the VHF high band. The rapid sweeping is from the AC ripple from the wall transformer when loaded due to battery charging. The modulation frequency is 60Hz.

The battery charger is the cause of interference in the high VHF radio spectrum, 140 to 170MHz, and is caused only when the cordless telephone handset is placed in the charging cradle. The interference appears as a rapid swept frequency, six megahertz in width, anywhere within the VHF high band spectrum. The battery charger is the cause of several sources of interference on two meter amateur radio repeaters.

The interference is best described as a buzzing sound with an approximate one second duty cycle. The interference has been heard in several locations, two of which are the source of the interference heard on the repeater input located 2500 feet from the source at an RF level of -80dBm. Directly in front of residence that contains one of these chargers the RF level measured -40dBm. "

Now that I have my answer, do I get up the nerve to ask the neighbor if they have Motorola cordless phone? Hmmm??? Maybe later...

I recommend checking out this web site. It is, and as noise source are added, will be a great resource for hams hunting down RFI troubles.

73,

Kevin/WV3D

Change of Venue

A frequent topic of discussion for the last few months at the LARC Social Gathering (sometimes called the dinner meeting) has been the establishment where we meet. Any number of local restaurants and watering holes have been mentioned but it has not gone much beyond the talk stage. However, at the last dinner the President, Joe/N3TZA, said we try Tubby's if nobody objected. There were no objections so we will be meeting at Tubby's on June 8 at 7:00 p.m. Take MD 198 west from Laurel, cross over I-95 and continue past all of the stop lights. Tubby's will be on the left right at the Prince George's and Montgomery county line. See you there!

THE LAUREL AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Officers:	President:	Joe Craven	N3TZA	301-776-6398	n3tza@rcn.com
	Vice-President:	Kevin Craven	WV3D	301-498-2805	kevinc@erols.com
	Secretary:	Ed Herbrechtsmeier	K3QX	301-871-2698	k3qx@arrl.net
	Treasurer:	Dennis Fitzgerald	KT3D	301-459-1247	dennis@dkf-naf.com
	VEC Chairman:	Diane Zimmerman	AA3OF	301-937-0394	aa3of@arrl.net
	Member at Large:	Dan Blasberg	KA8YPY	301-345-7381	ka8ypy@arrl.net
	Past President:	Jim Cross	WI3N	301-725-6829	jcross3@juno.com

Other LARC Positions and Contacts:

FAR Representative:	Dan Blasberg	KA8YPY	301-345-7381	ka8ypy@arrl.net
PVRC Representative:	Bill Smith	N3XL	301-805-4211	n3xl@arrl.net
LARC VE Testing:	John Creel	WB3GXW	301-572-5124	wb3gxw@arrl.net
AutoCall Reporter:	Mona Singleton	NY7P	240-632-1492	mss@md.net
T-MARC/D-MARC Rep:	OPEN			
Public Information Officer:	Jeff Epstein	KB3EQH	301-317-0650	jeffreye@pobox.com
Youth Programs:	Mark Doore	K3RAM	301-572-2385	k3ram@arrl.net
Education and Training:	OPEN			
Technical Specialist:	Kevin Arber	W3DAD	301-725-0038	w3dad@amsat.org
ARES/RACES Coordinators:	Jim Cross	WI3N	301-725-6829	jcross3@juno.com
Official Emergency Station:	Pat Gormley	KK3F	301-864-4694	kk3f@arrl.net
Official Bulletin Station:	John Creel	WB3GXW	301-572-5124	wb3gxw@arrl.net
Official Bulletin Station:	Al Brown	KZ3AB	301-490-3188	kz3ab@arrl.net
Official Relay Station:	Pat Gormley	KK3F	301-864-4694	kk3f@arrl.net

LARC Special Interest Groups and Mentors:

Antennas:	Kevin Arber	W3DAD	301-725-0038	w3dad@amsat.org
Packet Radio/APRS:	Mark Doore	K3RAM	301-572-2385	k3ram@arrl.net
Repeaters:	John Creel	WB3GXW	301-572-5124	wb3gxw@arrl.net

ARRL Field Organization:

Atlantic Division Director:	Bernie Fuller	N3EFN	814-763-1529	n3efn@arrl.org
Atlantic Division Vice Director:	William C. Edgar	N3LLR	814-362-1250	n3llr@arrl.org
MDC Section Manager:	Tom Abernethy	W3TOM	301-292-6263	w3tom@arrl.org
MDC Emergency Coord:	Mike Carr	WA1QAA	410-799-0403	bamcc@erols.com
Affiliated Club Coordinator:	Tony Young	WA3YLO	301-262-1917	tonyy@juno.com
MDC Section Bulletin Manager	Al Brown	KZ3AB	301-490-3188	kz3ab@arrl.net

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Editor: Ed Herbrechtsmeier/K3QX



**Ed Herbrechtsmeier
14314 Blackmon Dr
Rockville, MD 20853-2142**

**«M_2First_Name» «M_3Last_Name»
«M_4Address»
«M_5City», «M_6State» «M_7Zip»**

