The Messenger

Volume XIII, Issue 10 **October 2010**

Election Time

Yes, it is BVARC election time again. The current ballot is as follow:

President: Rich Langlois W1TBR and Bruce Wood W1BRU (vote for only one)

Vice President: Jim Littlefield WN1X (unopposed)

Secretary: Jim O'Leary WA1ZDY (unopposed)

Treasurer: Bob Jones WB1P (unopposed)

Board of Governors: (Vote for three. The top three vote getters will be declared elected)

Lee Smith K1LRS
Judson Mitsock W1JMZ
Bob Beaudet W1YRC
Jack Hawkins KD1UA

Automatic members of the Board for 2010 - 2012 as specified by the BVARC Constitution:

Current President
Immediate past President
Club Trustee

Following the distribution and processing of ballots for President, Board and other offices, if more nominees are put forward on election night, someone must make a motion to instruct the Secretary to cast one vote for unopposed candidates and following that, declare that elections are closed.

The motion must be seconded and voted in the affirmative, according to Robert's Rules of Order and our Constitution.

Submitted by:

Bob Beaudet W1YRC
2010 Nominations Chairman

Rich Langlois W1TBR
Judson Mitsock W1JMZ
2010 Nominations Committee Members

BVARC Consortium

A popular belief, especially among older timers is that hams who have studied for their tickets in the past couple of dozen years didn't learn the basic knowledge that their older brethren obtained by simply preparing for their licenses. We had to understand schematics and explain how different oscillators work, the basic principles of a full wave power supply, how basic antennas worked. In the production line methods and crash courses used in preparing new hams today, students sadly do not learn what they really should know to fully enjoy their new hobby.

As a result of our desire to crank out more and more licensees, we have created situations where many new hams have no idea what a dipole is, how transmission lines operate, propagation and many other building blocks that we take for granted. A couple of BVARC members saw this as a big problem and created a plan to do something about it. This article will explain how this most useful service came about.

Most readers will correctly guess that the consortium project didn't just happen on its own or pop out of someone's head. Nor was it a long planned dream that someone finally had enough nerve to try. Like many things in history, the facts behind the project are fairly mundane and unexciting. None the less, it's probably important to document what drove us to launch this program, especially since it seems to be a win-

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ner.

Actually, the start of it came three years ago. Listening to the 146.76 repeater in Scituate over time, I noticed that several newer hams who were talking about antennas, matching networks, transmission lines, grounding methods, mobile noise remedies and dozens of other common issues were making lots of mistakes in their theory and assumptions. They didn't even understand most of the terms they were using.

So what, you might ask? They aren't engineers. They don't need to know how everything works, do they? No they don't but my expectations for someone who holds an Extra or even a General class license is that the holder has a minimal but solid understanding of the basic pieces of his/her station. I am not an engineer or technician, yet I can understand and explain the basic theory that drives my equipment.

Well, what caught my attention was how many serious errors were being made by those who were speaking in a totally confident manner to others who took it all in and believed it. They really believed what they were saying and hearing. For example, "dipole" was being used to reference many kinds of antennas, all the way from mobile collinear to long wires, Windoms, doublets and Zepps. They were all being called "dipoles". Dipole was used as being synonymous with antenna. Further, common belief was that if one were to put up one of these dipoles, it could be made to work on any band by using an antenna tuner. Not only is this quite wrong but potentially dangerous. This lack of knowledge could and eventually will get someone hurt and equipment damaged.

Three years ago, I approached my club, BVARC with the idea that we conduct classes and invite repeater users, among others, to come to them. I felt that it was the kind of service that a good club should offer. After all, isn't teaching and learning from one another a primary reason that we form a club or that one seeks to join one? I figured that we could teach newer hams the basics of antenna, grounding and propagation knowledge that they didn't understand. It would surely succeed in recruiting some new members as well. It was a great idea, a "win-win", I figured. My idea was shot down unanimously. The BVARC membership decided that inviting a high number of unknown people into our club quarters would present a serious problem. The club meets in the RI Rehabilitation Hospital and previously had problems with visitors who got us into trouble by sneaking out through the fire exit for a smoke break. That set off alarms in the hospital and nearly caused our early termination by the hospital administration. So, the club's sensitivity was certainly understandable.

OK, I got it. But regardless of the club's position, I believed that something had to be done about this basic radio training issue before someone got hurt or blew up some expensive gear. I simply couldn't simply ignore what I saw as a real problem. So, I decided to do something on my own.

I put a basic teaching program together and arranged to use the conference room in the Lincoln (RI) Public Library for two hours, one evening per week for several weeks. Why the Lincoln Library and not my own Cumberland Library or the much larger Woonsocket Library? The Lincoln Library is much easier to

find from Rt. 146 or 295 and is free to area residents.

The classes attracted 12 to 15 regular students. Over the next several weeks, I taught basic dipole theory, introduced the fan dipole, demonstrated proper grounding and illustrated how ionospheric propagation through the D, E and F layers worked. I invited hams on the repeater and many accepted. They really wanted to learn. It was a success, at least in my mind. About a dozen regulars came and told me that they learned quite a bit from the classes and were grateful. Maybe they were just being polite but I think that many actually did learn things that they hadn't learned when studying for their licenses. Of course, I did this entirely alone and totally unauthorized by BVARC. They knew about my library program, of course. It wasn't on their property or under their name, so they had nothing to do with it.

I didn't know Rich W1TBR at the time, but eventually, our paths crossed. Last year, Rich mentioned to me that he noticed much of the same need for basic knowledge in a newer crop of hams and asked if we could put something together. It was entirely independent of the previous library project, of course since he had no knowledge of the program that I ran the year before. I explained that the club had not approved my plan to conduct these classes as a club activity. As I said, Rich had recently become a BVARC member and didn't know the history. Rather than ask the club again for their blessing, he decided to conduct similar classes under his company's sponsorship, Langlois Labs and call it "The Consortium". Rich asked me to help him to put a program together and I agreed.

We met at the Patriot Diner at 65 Founders Drive, Woonsocket, RI. The Diner is directly behind the Holiday Inn Express on Rt 122, less than a mile north of the intersection of Rt. 99 and Rt. 122 and the Cumberland town line. We started in September, 2009 and I predicted that it would last two or three months at the most. I reasoned that after we teach the basic elements of antennas, grounding, propagation and a few other things, we'd be finished. This is being written in October, 2010 and we conducted our 13th session last Monday, Oct 4th. We had 27 very interested folks in attendance. We filled every seat in our designated back portion of the diner.

As an alumnus of Providence College from well back into the last century, I recall what a Dominican professor who had been a missionary in his earlier years told us about the secret to reaching someone's soul. To be successful, you must fill the stomach before you make any attempt to reach the soul. Of course, our program isn't designed to reach souls but we must gain their mental attention in order to teach radio theory. At the Patriot Diner, we never need to be concerned about teaching a room of empty stomachs. Anyone who has enjoyed one of their huge meals will understand.

Every month, we cover important basic information that we feel all hams should know. Rich and I have done most of the teaching but where special expertise is useful, we have asked consortium members to conduct the class. A good example was when Paul, KB1QYS, a new ham himself conducted an extremely interesting show & tell presentation on working other hams around the world using many of the ham satellites orbiting the earth. Neither Rich nor I had any experience or practical knowledge, so we

weren't qualified.

Following Paul's consortium program, which was truly amazing, the BVARC President who was in attendance, asked Paul if he would be willing to come to BVARC's next meeting and present his material to our members. Paul agreed and it was well received by the club. In another session, Bill KB1G presented the proper use of Anderson Power Pole connectors at one session and the basics of how to correctly use the little known features of an HF transceiver at another. These were both big hits.

Rich W1TBR, holds his undergraduate and PhD degrees in Physics and Electrical Engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, one of the most respected teaching and research universities in the world and is owner and proprietor of Langlois Labs http://langloislab.com/, a very high tech calibration and repair laboratory in Burrillville, RI. Dr. Langlois prefers to be called Rich when working with fellow Amateurs.

Although licensed for 40 years, Rich's Amateur radio experience is not as extensive as his academic knowledge because until recently, he hasn't had much time to devote to his hobby. However, his technical knowledge, knowledge of circuitry, mathematics, manufacturing and test processes is far above most anyone else's in the area. He is a Professional Engineer (PE) in three states, holds Masters electrician, plumbing and welding licenses. He is also holds a contractor's license. All these trades credentials along with his academic tickets will command attention in any group. In the ARRL, he serves as Rhode Island's Technical Coordinator. My background is strong in experience. I studied finance and business management a hundred years ago at Providence College and Northeastern University. I worked my entire 42 year working career at Raytheon Co. in Massachusetts and Texas, retiring as a corporate level staffing manager in 2000. I've been an active Amateur since 1953 and am one of the founders and charter members of Blackstone Valley ARC. My passion is DX and sit at the top of the DXCC Honor Roll with all 338 current entities confirmed plus another 27 that no longer exist as countries. I also serve as the New England representative to the DX Advisory Committee and have been RI's ARRL Section Manager since 2001.

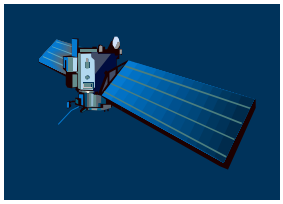
So, Rich and I make a fairly solid team; Rich has the extremely solid technical knowledge and I have the practical experience. Neither of us try to over run the other, nor do we attempt to intimidate or demean any new ham looking to learn. We are good personal friends and work quite well together. We each hold Extra class licenses and are ARRL Volunteer Examiners.

Some experienced hams have been coming to the consortium to share their knowledge and probably learn as well. How great is this? Actually, Rich W1TBR and I each genuinely feel that we learn a great deal every month about our material and how to present it in the best manner. Personally, my favorite experience is fielding the questions our participants throw at us. We usually can provide a solid answer but we need to think quickly "on our feet". It keeps us sharp. Upon getting home, after a consortium meeting, I often head for the computer and spend time looking up a question or

two from the meeting. We all learn at these meetings, whether a newbie or seasoned old goat like me.

Drop in on a class at the Patriot Diner on any first Monday of a month at about 6PM and bring an appetite. I guarantee that you will love the experience. You'll also feel pride in your club for the good work it is doing. 73,
Bob Beaudet W1YRC

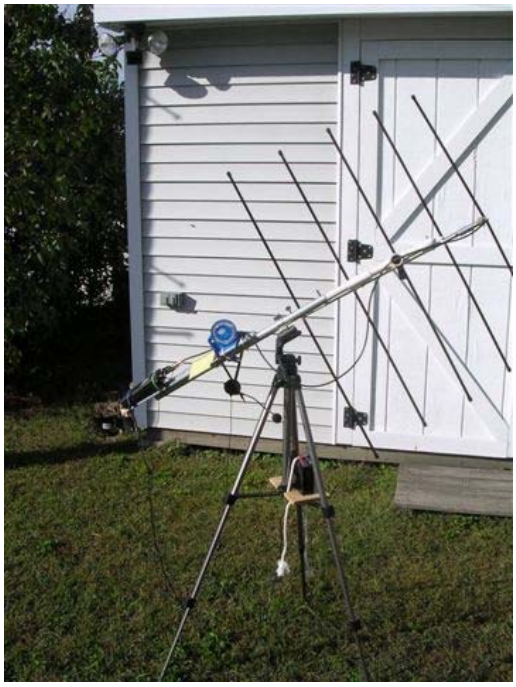
WORKING THE AMATEUR RADIO SATELLITES



My interest in amateur radio satellites began in late may of this year. I was listening to conversations on one of the more popular repeaters during my ride home from work. I was hearing some individuals commenting on which satellites they "worked". I had no idea what they were talking about, so I needed to find out.

I listened for a while before asking questions, that was the first step. I still needed more information so I went to Google for answers about "working" amateur radio satellites. I was amazed at all I found including several videos on YouTube, so I started to read and take notes.

Luck was with me as a guest speaker was to appear during one of the consortiums held at the Patriot Diner and he was going to talk about amateur radio satellites, and this person was Paul KB1QYS. He gave an excellent presentation that really peaked my interest so I invited him to speak at one of our club meetings, and he was glad to do so.



In the meantime he gave me suggestions on a radio and antenna to get started with. I searched far and wide for the right radio and settled on a Yaseu FT-470 HT I found a list on the internet of the most popular radios for doing satellite work and the FT-470 was on the list. It had full duplex capability and Paul said that would be a good thing to have so I looked on QTH.com and found one with many extras for a good price.

Next was an antenna capable of 2m/70cm. Short story, I purchased an Elk 2m/70cm log periodic that Paul said would do the job.

I bought a compass and a device to measure the angle of the pass. I watched the videos to see how it's done. It took a while to actually hear anything until I got the hang of it, such as knowing what direction the satellite would be moving in.

Paul had me download the Orbitron satellite tracking program and then things got easier. I saw on one of the videos that someone had mounted his HT and antenna on a camera tripod. I thought that was wicked cool and I just happened to have a camera tripod downstairs that I hardly ever used. So I built my own as you can see in the picture and it works great.

Paul attended a meeting (I think it was in June) and gave another great presentation on working the FM satellites.

I made my first satellite contact in June on AO -51 with a station in Ohio. I'll never forget that day when it happened. I was so excited I ran into the house to tell my wife of my accomplishment. Since then, and as of this writ-

ing, I have made close to 150 satellite contacts in 26 states and Canada.

I also designed my own satellite paper log similar to the one we all use for HF, but themed for satellites.

I find this branch of amateur radio very exciting and rewarding; especially when someone really needs Rhode Island and sends me their QSL card in return for mine.

I encourage anyone who is looking for something new to embark on, to consider amateur radio satellites. I am more than happy to help you get started, I know you will enjoy it as much as I do. 73 *Bruce Wood W1BRU*

SEPTEMBER MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by the club president, at 1930 hours.

The minutes of last month's meeting, as they appeared in the club newsletter, were voted and accepted by all members present.

The Treasurer's report was read by our Treasurer, Bob Jones WB1P. Our balance for the month ending September 27, was $1,586.48.

Judson reported he has done more work on the club website. He is planning major updates and additional photos in the next few weeks. A substantial number of improvements have been made over the past 60 days. Considerable time and effort by Judson, with the addition of the "old time" photo's. Everyone should make it a point to check it out before the next monthly meeting, www.w1DDD.org.

A short discussion on a lighthouse visit before the winter sets in took place. A minimum of 7 or 8 people would be needed to make it a worthwhile adventure. It was determined that not enough members were available for a visit before the cold weather moves in and a trip has been postponed until next spring.

It's election time again for our club officers, be thinking about it, submit your name if you interested in a position. Election of a new slate of officers will take place at the next monthly meeting.

The next VE session will be October 30, 2010.

The BCRC consortium was voted to be a part of the BVARC and approved by unanimous vote by all members present. The consortium has been meeting on Monday and Friday evenings.

A total of 28 club members signed in at tonight's meeting. The meeting was called for adjournment at 20:45. *Jim O'Leary WA1ZDY Club Secretary*

CHARLIE'S WHISTLE

In the year 2000, the Novice class license was deemed redundant and would no longer be issued. It served for five decades as the entry level into more permanent and advanced licensing. Since 2000, the Technician class has served as our entry level license. Some who take their Tech exam never go any further up the license ladder.

In fact, some people don't seem to have any intentions to ever do so.

The Novice license originally was granted for only a year in the belief that would provide enough time to learn more advanced theory, practices and techniques to move up to one of the General ticket. It's term later was changed to a two year period but the Novice was still a limited term license. It was created to leave an easy to accomplish avenue open to attract new hams and give them a foothold in the ham world. Later, the FCC allowed VHF phone to be used by new hams. Still later, the Novice became a renewable license so that one could hold and renew a Novice license as long as he

or she lived, something that makes no sense at all.

In the mid fifties, the heyday of the newly created Novice license, new hams were learning how to send code smoothly and how to use CW abbreviations correctly. A very popular QST article at the time, "Your Novice Accent –and What to Do About It" was written by Keith S. Williams W6DTY in November, 1956. These were the days when new hams always started out using low power on CW. Therefore, whether they preferred CW or not, they were encouraged to learn proper operating methods.

Charlie became a ham in the early 50s, just about the time that the new license grades were introduced by the FCC. His preference gravitated to CW immediately for a number of reasons. Even as a young boy, he could see the ability of CW to get through under marginal or crowded band conditions and frankly, CW was just a lot more fun than talking into a microphone.

Charlie highly recommends that you read the article mentioned above. You may pull up copies of the article from any of the many other sites that carry it as a feature, but the more complete one seems to be http://kb6nu.com/your-novice-accent/. The single part of the fifty plus year old article that pulls hardest on Charlie's shirt tail is the one that addresses poor sending. Including an actual copy of it here is appropriate because it illustrates an issue today that is just as needy of correction as it was in 1956. Sloppy sending is the one in most need of improvement among those who still use a key. Admittedly, many so called CW operators in contests or Dxpeditions use keyboard or other automated sending (and copying) and don't even own a key. This QST article was written well before these automated tools became available.

(*with full attribution to the November, 1956 QST*)

Sloppy Sending

To get the most out of operating CW, it's a good idea to practice sending properly. No one enjoys working an operator with a sloppy fist. No one expects you to be perfect, but poorly sent code is a real horror to copy.

Pay special attention to the spacing between characters and between words. I would rather copy code with proper spacing and some errors than code that is error-free, but where the letters and words are all run together.

Some operators go on for years blithely unaware that their fists are bad. In fact, they may even fancy themselves as artists on the key. They get huffy if anyone suggests that they are not 100% readable. They suggest that the receiving operators need a little practice. If you are one of those boys, you are probably a hopeless case. However, if you know that your sending leaves something to be desired, and you are sincerely interested in developing a good readable fist you can stop worrying. It's simple.

Just practice sending–no, not on the air. Rig yourself a code practice oscillator and send to yourself. Many modern transceivers even have a practice mode that you can use. The ideal manual fist is one that sounds like a tape transmitter. Don't laugh! It's a skill that's easy to acquire. Of course, to begin with, you must know how good code sounds. The simplest way is to turn on your receiver and tune in a commercial tape circuit and listen. Tune around, find a station sending press or other traffic and just sit and listen. You don't have to be able to copy it solid. Maybe you can copy only seven words a minute and the commercial is sending at 20 or 25. No matter. Don't worry about what he's sending, just pay attention to how it's sent. Listen to the individual letters; get the feel of his rhythm and spacing. Then adjust your key, get comfortable, and send to yourself. Try to make your hand-keyed letters sound like the tape-sent letters.

Send from a newspaper or book and pay attention to spacing between words and letters as well as to the shape of each individual letter. At first it may seem an impossible task but you'll be surprised how rapidly your sending improves. Sure it's a lot of work, but you weren't born with a telegraph key in your hand and you have to learn. You don't write a

"SOME OPERATORS GO ON FOR YEARS BLITHELY UNAWARE THAT THEIR FISTS ARE BAD."

letter in such an illegible scrawl that it can't be read (or do you?), so why transmit a botched-up mess of dots and dashes to some poor wretch on 40 meters who is trying to read it.

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Charlie knows some in his club for which the QST author could have been writing this article for by name. The problem is that these same individuals are the last to believe that they're guilty of poor sending. Often, they cannot copy very well either and refuse to admit it. What can anyone do? Charlie has calmly and privately spoken to the club's couple of operators who could use improvement but so far it hasn't changed anything.

If this article were written today, the author might not be directing attention to CW prosigns and smooth sending. He's be addressing the CBer accent that prevails among newer operators. Phrases made popular on channel radio have infiltrated ham bands and cannot avoid the attention of hams like Charlie. The are hundreds of examples but just a few might include:

- "you've got W1XYZ here" instead of this is W1XYZ.
- "what's your personal?" instead of what's your name.
- "you're giving me S20 here" instead of your signal is S9 plus 20 here.
- "throw out my call" instead of transmit my call.

dozens of other different phrases that suggest the origin of the operator's training.

In these current times, the principle feeder system to Amateur radio is the world of CB.

It's rare indeed to find a ham minted since 1995 that wasn't a CBer prior to joining our ranks. That's a fact. An updated article is needed, similar to the Novice Accent one from 1956, but aimed at losing the CB accent.

Our dear friend, Charlie is one of the most patient "Elmers" alive. Yet, he will admit that he finds hearing those CB expressions on our ham bands to be distracting. Being as old a ham as he is, he can vividly remember that the Friendly Candy Company gave our perfectly good 11 meter band to the growing gaggle of CB users who were whining over being relegated to the 465 MHz band and needed better coverage that limited low power HF service would provide. History has documented the total circus that followed.

It took 50 years but one could argue that Amateurs were repaid for the loss of their 11 meter band when the World Administrative Radio Conference of 1979 allocated 100 kHz in the 12 meter band. Twelve meters exhibits completely similar propagation characteristics to 11 and hams like Charlie will tell you that he is quite pleased with that return. The 1979 WARC allocation even gave Amateurs some "interest" on the loan, so to speak. In the allocation, hams received a shared low power 50 kHz allocation in the 30 meter band and a full privilege 100 kHz allocation in the 17 meter band. DXers around the world love the 17 meter band since it exhibits much of the same characteristics as the 20 meter band with the bonus of exciting long skip characteristics of higher frequencies such as the 15 meter band.

Charlie is quick to remind those newer members in his club that we aren't granted these allocations by the world conferences simply because the world's diplomats love us or they're rewarding us for our good looks or personality. No, all Amateurs receive these negotiated benefits after tough negotiations by our representatives, the ARRL. Even though fewer than half of all hams are members of the ARRL, they receive benefits negotiated by them.

At club meetings, Charlie takes opportunities like this to advise these newer hams that they should consider supporting the organizations that supports them. There's no free lunch in ham radio and with spectrum allocations being sold for seven and eight figure amounts, we should realize the value of all the bands that we have and fight to protect them.

At the next meeting of his club, Charlie raised this topic for discussion and found that most
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members were not aware of the history of 11 and 12 meters nor realized that their manner of speaking might be labeling them unfavorably. The president asked Charlie if he would be willing to conduct a class to inform interested members how to lose their Accents. Charlie chuckled and agreed. He said, "I wasn't looking for another job but I'm glad to help. I might even bring a code oscillator to the class and go over the original material from 1956." The president pointed out that many new hams didn't know the code and couldn't benefit from it. Charlie replied with a twinkle in his eye, "They don't know the code at the start of class but they might at the end".

Becoming the best Amateur that you can should be everyone's goal. The A-1 Operator's Club http://www.arrl.org/a-1-op recognizes operators who have attained that level. Good luck to all and have fun. Try to become an A-1 Operator. *Bob Beaudet W1YRC*

WANTED:

ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER

The Messenger

A monthly publication of:
Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club, Inc.
Dave St. Onge (W1HW) Trustee
154 Patton Road
Woonsocket, RI 02895

QRN from the Editor

Lately, I have been messing around with JT65A on HF. If you recall, this is a narrow bandwidth digital mode that is really nice for QRP and even QRPp communication. The program I have been using is called JT65A-HF and was written by W4JQZ. It is easy to use and should work with just about any digital interface that can handle PSK31.

Please try to make the October 25th club meeting. We will be holding elections for the club officers and board of governor. 73! *Jim WN1X*

NEXT MONTHLY MEETING

25 October - 7:30 PM

Landmark Rehabilitation Hospital

Route 146A

Woonsocket, RI