

F.C.A.R.C. Inc.
P.O. Box 773
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FIRST CLASS MAIL



THE COMMUNICATOR

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May 2015

Upcoming Events

- **Club Breakfast:** Saturday May 16, 8 a.m., Denny's, Greenfield
- **Tri-State Public Safety Day:** Saturday May 16, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., GCC
- **VE License Exams:** Monday May 26, 7 p.m. Unitarian Church, Northfield
- **Club Picnic:** Saturday May 30, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., Leyden Town Pavilion

May 2015

Calendar Details

TRI-STATE PUBLIC SAFETY EVENT

Last year we set up a table with information and a working 2 meter station at this event where firefighters and other public safety groups demonstrate equipment and techniques. We will do the same this year if a few club members volunteer to help. Contact Jeanne, KB1DCQ for information or to volunteer

VE SESSION:

Our quarterly VE session is the fourth Monday in May, the 25th. That is Memorial Day, but we have had the VE session on that holiday most years and it has worked well. As usual, AI, N1AW, would like to know ahead of time how many people expect to take license exams. Walk-ins are welcome, but the session could be cancelled if nobody expresses interest in advance.

PICNIC (INCLUDING BOARD MEETING and GENERAL MEETING):

We will again have a club picnic this year. It will be at the same place as last year, the Leyden Town Pavilion next to the Leyden Elementary School (also known as the Pearl Rhodes School) at the corner of Greenfield Road and Brattleboro Road in Leyden. Directions will be posted on the website. The date will be Saturday May 30. Important - Note that the date of the picnic is a week later than the date that was announced on our activities page and the calendar published last September. We changed the date due to availability of the site and preferences not to have the event on Memorial Day weekend.

Plans (subject to change): We may have a short-range fox hunt at 11 a.m., this was popular last year. We will have an E-Board meeting at 12:30 or 1 p.m., and the picnic itself at about 1:30. Hamburgers, hot dogs, beverages and utensils will be provided, but side dishes and desserts will be potluck - bring something! During and after the picnic we will have time for a general discussion of Field Day and the annual election of officers, both coming in June. We hope to have a station similar to our Field Day Get-On-The-Air (GOTA) station set up for anyone who would like to use it. A tour to see the nearby site of the KB1BSS repeater is also a possibility.

Secretary's Report

E-BOARD AND PROGRAM MEETING MONDAY APRIL 13 AT GCC, CHRIS MYERS KB1NEK [Arial 11]

E board meeting :

Chris reported that Yaesu has not yet sent the DR-1X repeater we had ordered in late March. Shipments from Japan have been delayed, probably due to dock workers strike on the West Coast.

Bruce made a motion to do everything possible to the 2m repeater system in Leyden before ordering any more new digital mode equipment. There was an extensive debate on the motion. The main argument against it was the one of not tying our hands in advance. Some argued that it is not even clear whether the 2m repeater in

Leyden still has problems at all. Keith argued that before we touch the antenna there, we should swap the receiver for the one that Bob Dickerman repaired this winter. Chris argued that since the antenna is at least 12 years old, it is time to replace anyway, so why waste time inspecting it - just decide to replace it. Eventually Bruce's motion was defeated.

General Membership meeting:

The club meeting program was a discussion of go kits, led by Jeanne, who demonstrated her own and Belle's. Since Jeanne is a First Responder and Belle is an EMT and RN, the kits had different kinds of first aid supplies.

Bruce, KB1TLX, also led a discussion of radio Go-Kits.

There was also a discussion of the picnic in May, with details to be posted on the web site once Al confirms a date for use of the field next to the school in Leyden.

News, Activities & Articles

PHILL GRANT N1YPS: CLUB "BUILD DAY" PROPOSAL

An idea for future meetings: Phill, N1YPS has suggested a club "build-day" - getting a number of inexpensive kits and spending a couple of Saturday mornings learning how they work and building them, teaching anybody new to electronic construction how to solder if necessary. Phill's suggestion is the Pixie II, a low power 80 meter CW transceiver. This is very simple, and very cheap. It won't make you a "big gun" station on 80 meters, but with a decent antenna you might contact someone nearby or even hundreds of miles away. It may be possible to demonstrate one of these at the picnic.

VINES VS ANTENNA – VINES WIN - BOB SOLOSKO W1SRB

When I moved into my new house 2 years ago, I put up 2 wire antennas in the large oak tree out back. One antenna is essentially off-center fed (OCF) ladder line fed dipole with the center insulator suspended from a branch about 45' off the ground – this is my primary antenna. The ends of the OFC dipole both come down almost to the ground. The other antenna is an almost vertical 20m+ fan dipole, with one end of the dipole attached to the same branch of the tree. To make things easy in case I want to change modify either of these antennas, they're attached to the tree through a pair of pulleys. Thus, the plan was that I could very easily lower either antenna if needed.

Since the 20m+ fan dipole never seemed to get out, I decided to raise the lower end so that it would approximate a horizontal dipole. But to do that, I had to raise and move the end of the short leg of the OCF dipole to get it out of the way. I was able to raise the ends of both antennas easily, attaching them to other trees in my back yard, and tightened them to raise them as far as possible. However, when I tried my OCF dipole, it wouldn't tune at all on 80m (but tuned fine on all other bands). I surmised that in pulling the short end of the OFC dipole tight, something may have broken, or twisted enough that the impedance of this antenna on 80m was significantly change. So the next step was to pull down the center insulator of this antenna to try to see what happened. I loosened the ropes but pulling as hard as I could I couldn't move the antenna either up or down. Since it's hard to see what's happening in a tree 45 feet up, I got out my



trustworthy telephoto lens and recorded the accompanying photo. As you can see, the vines won.

PS – By somewhat loosening the short end of the OFC dipole to relieve the stress on the center insulator, I was eventually able to get the OFC to tune on 80m... and now the 20m+ fan dipole works amazingly well.

FIELD DAY IS COMING

The ARRL Field Day is always the fourth full weekend in June, this year on June 27th and 28th. This is always a big day for our club. We camp out at the Poets Seat Tower in Greenfield's Rocky Mountain Park and we try to keep a CW (Morse Code), and SSB (voice) station on the air for 24 hours, using emergency power and hastily erected antennas. We try to contact as many similar operations all over the US and Canada as possible. We also operate a Get On The Air (GOTA) station where anyone can participate (with guidance from a licensed operator if not yet licensed at all or for the privileges required for the mode and frequency used). If you want a taste of ham radio or if you want a taste of a new aspect of ham radio, please join us. For more information go to <http://www.arrl.org/field-day>.

COMMUNICATOR EDITOR NEEDED!!!!

Bob Solosko has been editing the Communicator for several years now. But he is out of the country as this issue has been in preparation. Material for this issue was collected by Rich, KB1NOX, and the final edit and publication was done by Al, N1AW. But we are looking for someone willing to take over editorship on a more permanent basis. Please contact Al at n1aw@arrl.net if you are willing to give it a try.

PICTURES FROM THE GO-KIT PRESENTATION:



What Would You Do? By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

For the past three or four years, I've been threatening to buy a new radio to replace my ICOM IC-746PRO. The IC-746PRO is a great rig, though, and I've had trouble pulling the trigger on a \$3k – \$5k or more purchase. The radio that I've had my eye on is the Elecraft K3. Without a doubt the K3 is a better rig than the 746PRO, and it's certainly worth the price that Elecraft is asking. The question I keep asking myself, though, is, "Am I going to have \$5,000 more fun with a K3?"

To put it another way, the question is, assuming that I have a \$5,000 budget to spend on amateur radio gear over the next year or two or three, what's the best way to spend it? How can I maximize my purchases so that I have the most fun?

At this point, I think that I've decided not to buy that new rig and instead buy equipment that will help me make my own rigs. Some of the items that I have my eye on include:

- * Aoyue 968A+ SMD Digital Hot Air Rework Station (I have actually already purchased this unit.)
- * Rigol DS1102E 100MHz, Dual Channel, 1 GSa/s Digital Oscilloscope
- * Rigol DSA815-TG Spectrum Analyzer
- * A more professional workbench to replace the folding table that I'm currently using.
- * Peaberry SDR V2 Kit
- * More keys! I'd love to get a fancy Begali or N3ZN paddle, and the other day someone told me about the UR5CDX keys, which look like great deals.

Even if I purchased everything on this list, I'll have spent less than \$5,000.

One consequence of going this route is that I'll have less time for operating. I'm betting (hoping?) that the extra time spent on tinkering will be just as much fun, or even more fun than I'm having now.

It also means that I'll be going to Dayton with a much different mindset than I have the past couple of years. Instead of spending my time configuring the perfect K3 in my head, I'll be looking for kits and scouring the flea market looking for parts.

I may be overthinking this, but like most amateurs, I have a limited budget to spend on amateur radio. That being the case, making conscious decisions about how to spend that money should help me have more fun with ham radio, and that's the goal, isn't it?

What do you think? Is this the right way to go, or am I going to regret this decision? If you've made a similar decision, I'd love to hear from you.

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When not making crucial decisions about his amateur radio career, you'll find KB6NU working on updates to his "No Nonsense" study guides, teaching one-day Tech classes, or blogging about amateur radio at www.kb6nu.com.

THE COMMUNICATOR is an informational publication for members of the Franklin County Amateur Radio Club. Officers: President: Al Woodhull, N1AW (n1aw@arrl.net), Vice President: Ron Niswander, K8HSF (reniswander@gmail.com), Treasurer: Howard Field, N1LUP (howfield@comcast.net), Secretary: Chris Myers, KB1NEK (cmyers1@verizon.net), Director: Belle Dyer, KB1NOG (bdyer58@mtdata.com), Director: Bruce Fuller KB1TLX, perkinsdowns@yahoo.com. This is your newsletter! Amateur radio information of general interest, club member project descriptions and doings, radio applications to other activities, corrections, or suggestions are all welcome. Individual submissions make for variety! We need more writers! We also need a new editor! For the time being send submissions to Al Woodhull at n1aw@arrl.net.