

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



# THE COMMUNICATOR THE COMMUNICATOR

**April 2018**

## **Upcoming Events**

- Apr 1 Sunday Easter
- Apr 14 Sat 8:00 am Breakfast, Denny's Pantry
- Apr 14 Sat 10:00 am Franklin County Amateur Radio Emergency Communications group, GCC Hammond Studio
- Apr 16 Mon Patriots Day, Boston Marathon
- Apr 19 Thu Shelter Drill, Smith Voc School, Northampton (ham participation tentative)
- Apr 23 Mon 6:00 pm E-Board; 7:15 pm General Meeting, GCC Hammond Studio, topic: Field Day Planning
- May 5 New England Amateur Radio Festival (NEARFEST) Deerfield, NH.
- May 5-6 New England QSO Party (NEQP)

# Secretary's Report

## E-BOARD AND PROGRAM MEETING

Monday, March 19, 2018 AT GCC, CHRIS MYERS KB1NEK

1. Discussion of schedule for technician class. 15 people have signed up. The first day of the class is Monday, March 26. The last day, on which the test will be given, is April 11. Al is still looking to finalize the schedule of who will teach each class.
2. We need information to write up obituaries for two former members who died in the last week: John Berrigan, KB1NOH and Bob Bessette, W1DKY. The Greenfield Recorder had an obituary for John, but not for Bob.
3. We now have a lot of equipment from Bob Bessette to pass on to club members or sell. It includes a fairly recent model FT-450D, which we will pass on to Jeanne Dodge. There is also a TS-440, a Ten-Tec Argosy, an Astron power supply, and numerous smaller pieces of useful equipment. This is in addition to equipment we received a couple of months ago from the estate of Harry Dunning.
4. Our storage space in the Citizens Corps shipping container is full, and the pressure is on for us to find an alternative unless the Berkshire County MRC will allow us to stay once control of the Franklin County MRC passes on to them. The date for the official change of control is June 30. Chris is supposed to ask Tracy Rogers about the state of the transfer of control. We discussed getting a table at the NEARFEST, May 4 and 5, to try to sell some of the equipment not wanted by club members.
5. Planning for Field Day will be more difficult this year because Carter will not be able to bring his RV. He is currently at the Buckley Health Center recovering from surgery. Jeanne asked if we should consider another site for Field Day. No one could suggest a better one. Al said we need another tent, or, better yet, a trailer. Chris Barnes offered to see if we can rent a suitable trailer for the weekend or for a whole week at the most. He has a hitch on his truck which could haul it to the site.
6. Al reported on problems with two of our repeaters. The 440 duplexer which we thought had been tuned up at the MTARA event a week ago, is not working properly. Also, we strongly suspect the duplexer for the Leyden 2 meter repeater is not working properly. It seems to be allowing the receiver part of the repeater to be desensitized by the transmit signal. Al has contacted Alex Rock, AB1FC, who has the skills and tools to check both duplexers. Unfortunately, the path to the tower in Leyden is still covered with a lot of snow, so is not accessible. Al says that he plans to give Alan the 440 duplexer to take to his home to work on.

After the e-board meeting adjourned, we welcomed Eric Mazur, WA1SUN, president of the Northern Berkshire Amateur Radio Club. Eric displayed a box of his micro-wave equipment and talked about how he uses it.

Then Eric began his presentation about the WIRES-X system promoted by the Yaesu company. Eric is a fan of the System Fusion introduced by Yaesu a couple of years ago, and owns several radios capable of communicating using C4FM, which is the protocol needed. He explained how a ham operator can use one of the Yaesu radios to connect into various chat rooms or nodes on the system.

Eric also explained that unlike other systems that allow repeaters to connect to the internet, he has found that he did not need an internet connection directly to the repeater on Mt. Greylock. Instead he has an appropriate radio in his shop, connected to a WIRES box, which in turn is connected to a small computer with an internet modem. He said the main advantage of having the WIRES connection in

the shop is to allow him to monitor it during the day, and reboot the computer if necessary. He explained the top of Mt. Greylock is often inaccessible, especially at this time of year.



Not only does NOBARC have a system fusion repeater on Mt. Greylock, but it is linked, by internet, to another such repeater in Great Barrington. He said it might be good if some day our club set up a similar internet connection.

As an aside, Eric mentioned that his club has installed a power amplifier on Mt. Greylock, to allow higher power even at continuous duty cycle. This is something we have discussed but not yet acted on.

## Emergency Communications Group

Saturday, March 17, after the monthly club breakfast, a group of us met at the Hammond Studio at GCC. In preparation for two upcoming shelter drills, we practiced setting up a cross-band repeater, and an external temporary antenna.

The cross-band repeater was a Yaesu FT8900 mounted in a car parked near the building. It is a dual band radio. One channel was set to 450.05 MHz, simplex with no tones. The other channel was set to 147.435, also simplex with no tones. One of us used an HT on the UHF frequency and another used an HT on the VHF frequency. For this test the transmission was easy. In other situations, where communications has to take place from a larger building, made with lots of structural steel, and operating away from windows or doors, it is often hard to get a signal to the outside world. Using UHF from such a location is usually good enough to get to the area around the building where a repeater radio can be set up in a parked car. The output of the repeater radio can either be simplex, as in Saturday's test, or duplex to a standard repeater.

Whenever a cross-band repeater is used, the operator has to announce clearly that it requires all users to wait five seconds or so before transmitting, in order to give the repeater radio a chance to change over from one input to the other. The repeater radio also must be sent to low or low-medium power, since it is likely to be operating at a higher duty cycle than normal.

The other project was to set up a three band antenna on a fiberglass mast, then test its usefulness for communications to Mt. Greylock repeaters. The challenge was to get over the hill right next to the meeting location at GCC. The antenna worked fine for analog transmissions on 2m and 6m, but gave us interrupted reception on 2m digital. We then took down the three band vertical and replaced it with a 10 element beam. Even this resulted in some dropped reception until we tweaked it properly.



Monday night we put the mast and beam back up to use for the demonstration of System Fusion digital transmissions via the Greylock 2m repeater.

April 19, some club members will take part in a shelter drill at the Smith Vocational School in Northampton. Then sometime in May or possibly early June, we will take part in a drill at the Turners Falls High School. We anticipate the kinds of problems operating inside a large building with steel framework where tactics such as cross-banding or working to improvise a connection to an outdoor antenna will be needed

## [News, Activities & Articles](#)

### **From XYL to Amateur Extra by Rebecca Addison, K1BKY**

I went from XYL to Amateur Extra in less than a six months. Some people have asked how I did it. The short answer is that I did my homework.

For the Technician's license I used the following-

-The free 2 week class offered by the class. (They charged only \$15 for the exam).

-A free app on my phone. I used Ham Test Prep. I used it every day at least once/day sometimes more.

-Hamexamonline.com

-Hamstudy.org

-I read the ARRL book! This worked well with the class too because for the class they expected us to read certain chapters before each class. It kept me on track but was a challenge. - I actually bought the book in June but the class kept me on track to get the reading done.

ARRL book- <http://www.arrl.org/shop/ARRL-Ham-Radio-License-Manual-3rd-Edition/>

The tests are pass/fail. I didn't get the best score in the class but I did well enough to pass it after I finished the class.

The next test was only three weeks away. I didn't have a class to go to but I had lots of support. For the General I used the same websites and app as before and the ARRL book-

<http://www.arrl.org/shop/ARRL-s-General-Q-and-A-5th-Edition/>

Once the FCC posted the upgrade I applied for my vanity sign which I got on December 27th. The next step of course was to study for the Amateur Extra.

For the Amateur Extra Hamexamonline.com wants money. I dropped that website quickly. I had a hard time with the ARRL book- <http://www.arrl.org/shop/ARRL-Extra-Class-License-Manual-11th-Edition/>

I asked for recommendations from some of my Twitter followers and bought

The No Nonsense book-

[https://smile.amazon.com/gp/product/1530908671/ref=oh\\_aui\\_detailpage\\_o09\\_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://smile.amazon.com/gp/product/1530908671/ref=oh_aui_detailpage_o09_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1)

And Gordo's book- Gordo's book-

The two books are very different.

[Ghttps://smile.amazon.com/gp/product/094505386X/ref=oh\\_aui\\_detailpage\\_o00\\_s00?](https://smile.amazon.com/gp/product/094505386X/ref=oh_aui_detailpage_o00_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1)

[ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://smile.amazon.com/gp/product/094505386X/ref=oh_aui_detailpage_o00_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1)ordo's book is basically the 712 question pool. If you aren't into the websites or the apps or you just prefer paper this is a great resource. The No Nonsense book is more explanatory. The questions are all there but they are in the text. Like the ARRL book they are harder to pull out. You'll probably learn more though. I mostly used Gordo's book after I had read the No Nonsense book.

I studied for the A.E. in January and February but failed the test miserably at the end of February. I realized right away that I had not read Gordo's book thoroughly and I hadn't seen the whole question pool. I went back to Hamstudy.org and went through ALL of the flash cards until I had seen every single question. I did round after round of practice tests and about 2 weeks later I passed the test when another club offered the exam at a hamfest.

So my advice to anyone looking to get licensed or upgrade his/her license is to READ the books, use the apps and websites, and practice, practice, practice.

## **It is with great sadness that we note the losses to our club and community.**

**John Berrigan KB1NOH, SK**  
AI, N1AW

John Berrigan passed away on March 15th. He was 84. He is survived by Barbara, KB1NOI. John grew up in the Boston area and graduated from Boston College. He later earned an MBA from the University of Michigan. He worked in New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut before retiring to Greenfield.

John and Barbara were among the first to join the Franklin County Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT) in 2005. Several years later, John was elected president of CERT. John and Barbara both received their amateur radio licenses through classes and exams conducted by FCARC. John was active in club activities and was for a time a member of the E-Board.

John and Barbara's most notable response to an emergency situation came during the ice storm of December, 2008, which left many towns in northern Franklin and Worcester counties without power for days. The Berrigans volunteered to drive to Heath to set up emergency communications, using ham radio gear, at the Heath Community Center. They had to drive over back roads still covered with downed branches and whole trees. At one or two places they had to stop the car and get out to push debris aside so they could drive on. They spent the night at the Community Center, sleeping on the floor. At the time, both had barely recovered from knee or hip surgery.

John was an avid reader of the New York Times, interested in finance, travel, the arts, and history. He

enjoyed camping, woodworking, yardwork and working in the garden, and learned how to sail in his 60s.

An obituary was published in the Greenfield Recorder on March 17th. No funeral services are planned. A private family celebration will be held in his honor.

## **Bob Bisette W1DKY, SK**

AI, N1AW

Bob Bisette, W1DKY passed away at age 101. A full obituary has not been published yet, just this in the Recorder on March 16: "SHELBURNE FALLS - Robert Francis Bessette, 101, of 34 Main St. died Wednesday (3-14-18) at home. A graveside service will be held in Arms Cemetery at a later date."

Although not very often present at FCARC activities, Bob was a loyal member and supporter of the club. He had severe hearing loss which made it difficult for him to follow what was going on in a noisy meeting. I got to sit next to him at the FCARC holiday potluck two years ago. Bob had a lot to say about old days of ham radio (before I was born). Because of his hearing problem it wasn't much of a two-way conversation, but I enjoyed it.

Other than that holiday party he only came to one club meeting in the ten years or so that I have been a member - The one meeting I know of that he did attend was a DIY show-and-tell we held several years ago. Bob was a kit-builder and he had several small gadgets to show off. We were invited to take away all his ham stuff after he died and we found dozens of little kits - one tube QRP radios, regenerative receivers, keyers, QRP tuners, all sorts of stuff. Mostly they were complete but there were several for which he had inventoried all the parts and scotch-taped them to a sheet of paper with labels, as he prepared to build. He obviously had more than one project in progress.

Bob was really was doing well right up until the end. He lived on his own in his house. Just a few days before he passed away he asked Howard to come over and explicitly told Howard that he wanted all his ham gear to go to the club. Among his belongings we collected after his death was the latest ARRL Handbook, a hardbound 2018 edition, which I know was not published until October or November last year. I have to call anyone who would buy such a big and expensive technical reference book at age 101 an optimist.

## **New Columns for our Communicator!!!**

We will now have an ongoing column highlighting Community Service possibilities-our club and other options. We will also have a Elmer/Elvira Corner-a place to ask for help and to offer information. The third new column is Resources-please send in any resources you have found that you think others could find helpful. **These will be ongoing spaces in the newsletter.**

### **Elmer/Elvira Corner**

This is a new section for folks who have a question/concern/need some help. Send in what you need help with and this will be a place to see if someone can help. Also, if you have learned/figured out/had some help with something that you think could help others, send it along.

Definition below comes from this site.... <http://www.w6ek.org/elmerhelp.html>

What's an Elmer? An Elmer is a mentor, a guide, a guru that offers help or assistance to Hams and will-be hams to help them along in this fine, fun hobby. Maybe explaining something, assisting with a new radio, passing along experiences, or helping with antennas.

Another Elmer site: <http://www.hamuniverse.com/elmer.html>  
Also see ARRL re: Elmer award <http://www.arrl.org/elmer-award>

## Resources!!!

This is another new ongoing space in the newsletter.  
What resources to you think could be helpful to others? Where do you get supplies? If you have suggestions, please send them in.  
Newcomers Round Table Net on first and third Mondays 7:30 to 8:45 pm Sept to June on 2 meters 146.91 Mt Greylock

**YLRL** is an organization for women with amateur radio licenses and like radio itself, extends to women all over the world. On this website you can learn about the organization, acknowledge our fore-mothers, purchase items to show your pride and connection, find out the latest information about contests and special events, and stay updated on happenings with our members.  
<http://www.ylrl.org/>

### Courage Kenny Handiham Program

Handiham.org: Amateur Radio & Assistive Technology for People with Disabilities:  
<https://www.handiham.org/drupal2/>

## Late news, two events of interest in early May:

### ***NEARFEST is the New England Amateur Radio Festival:***

NEAR-Fest is held twice annually, spring and fall, rain or shine, at the Deerfield Fairgrounds, Deerfield NH beginning on Friday at 0900 and ending Saturday at 1500 hours. This is probably the largest Hamfest in New England. NEAR-Fest XXIII will take place on May 4 & 5, 2018. For more information see <http://www.near-fest.com/>

### ***Tom Frenaye, K1KI, ARRL New England Division Director wrote on April 1st:***

I'd appreciate your help in publicizing the upcoming **New England QSO Party** on May 5th and 6th. The QSO Party is 20 hours long overall, in two sections with a civilized break for sleep Saturday night. It goes from 4pm Saturday until 1am Sunday, then 9am Sunday until 8pm Sunday. Operate on CW, SSB and digital modes on 80-40-20-15-10 meters. For each QSO you'll give your callsign, a signal report and your county/state Top scorers can earn a plaque and everyone who makes 25 QSOs and sends in a log will get a certificate. More info: <http://www.neqp.org/rules.html>

*All the news that fits, we print!*

**THE COMMUNICATOR** is an informational publication for members of the Franklin County Amateur Radio Club. Officers: President: Al Woodhull, N1AW ([n1aw@arrl.net](mailto:n1aw@arrl.net)), Vice President: Joe Henefield, KB1WVO ([joehenefield@comcast.net](mailto:joehenefield@comcast.net)), Treasurer: Howard Field, N1LUP ([howfield@comcast.net](mailto:howfield@comcast.net)), Secretary: Chris Myers, KB1NEK ([camyers1@verizon.net](mailto:camyers1@verizon.net)), Director: Belle Dyer, KB1NOG ([bdyer58@mtdata.com](mailto:bdyer58@mtdata.com)), Director: Ron Niswander, K8HSF ([reniswander@gmail.com](mailto:reniswander@gmail.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! Send submissions to: Jeanne A. Dodge, KC1DCQ ([j.anndodge@gmail.com](mailto:j.anndodge@gmail.com)).*