

# **THE LISTENING POST**

**Azalea Coast Amateur Radio Club**

**P. O. Box 4044**

**Wilmington, NC 28406**

**<http://www.ac4rc.org>**

**147.18 Repeater**

**February 2010**

It was great to see everyone at the January meeting. We had a wonderful turn out and I was quite impressed during the opening of the meeting to hear of all the activity that is going on in the community by the ham radio operators. It is also quite interesting to hear of all the different parts of the hobby that people are involved in and the expertise represented by the cross section of club members. The introductions session was better than a lot of programs at club meetings. Let's work to keep the spirit of "Ham Radio Spoken Here" a part of the ACARC.

We had a very good discussion on club programs. There were many new ideas expressed that we need to try and work into programs for future club meetings and I found some of the things that I thought might be a good idea not to be so popular after all. As a result of these discussions we will be working to try and come up with good programs that as best we can represent the interests of the club members. It is clear from the broad interests expressed and the different levels of experience in the club that we will not be able to please everyone all of the time but the objective will be to try and make things interesting and informative.

The discussions relative to club activities was not quite as enlightening but in all fairness we were running out of time to really have a detailed discussion. We do have the NC QSO Party coming up, the Swapfest/Hamfest, Field Day and potentially support for the MS Walk event at Greenfield Lake in May. I am sure more opportunities will surface and I can assure you that we will be looking at ways to keep the club active during the year.

In both of these areas I want to encourage anyone with ideas to bring them forward and let's get them considered

Coming out of discussions at the past meeting, regarding some of our members that are relatively newly licensed hams, was the point that sometimes it is difficult for new hams to understand all that is being said and that it is difficult sometimes to know what or how to ask questions. In response we added a spot on the web page where questions can be asked and answers will get posted. This has already resulted in one question being asked and answered, including some off line dialogue which I think has been very helpful to the person asking the question and may have been helpful to others who saw the question and the answer. Please do not hesitate to ask questions at the meetings and through the website when they come up. Remember "Ham Radio Spoken Here" is what we are all about.

The activity on the Monday evening 2-Meter net has really picked up in the past few weeks also. It is really great to have so many stations on frequency for the net. I

know it now takes a bit longer for everyone to get an opportunity to talk but the net sessions are becoming much more interesting and valuable. We are trying to keep the net moving but we are also trying to encourage people to check in and share with other members the activities they are involved in and to keep the communications channels open. There are still many members who are not making the net. I encourage everyone to try and make most of the nets so as to help us all stay connected with each other. And in addition to 2-Meters I encourage you to keep close contact with the club website as we are spending lots of time trying to keep it up-to-date and keep useful information posted there.

Remember we have another great program lined up for the February meeting and I am looking forward to seeing a big turnout of that meeting.

**Mark your calendars for Tuesday, February 16 at 7 PM at the Cape Fear Community College North Campus!.**

**73, Charlie Vaughan K4UWH**

### **ACARC Club Meeting Minutes** **January 2010**

Azalea Coast Amateur Radio Club - January 19, 2010 - Cape Fear Community College (North Campus)

President Vaughan (K4UWH) called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM (1904 hours).

Each member was asked to talk about his past few weeks activity with amateur radio.

Many of our members have been very active lately and the discussion was high lighted by some very interesting stories about our hobby.

Jack Jacobs (WD4OIN) has been working very hard on the clubs web page. In fact the membership is encouraged to keep in touch with the club's web page ([www.ac4rc.org](http://www.ac4rc.org)) for periodic updates of important information.

Our Treasurer, Hutch Hutchinson (NK0S) gave the financial report and the club is on a good financial track going into this year. The membership is encouraged to please pay your dues by the end of the month.

Our Vice-President Don Hall (KJ4OFF) reported the Monday night rag chew net is going very well. He reported that the average check in count is around 12 to 15 per session. After the net and around 8:30 several members are going to 10 meters. Ron Cerra (KM4VX) has been coordinating that activity. Listen to the 2 meter net for the operating frequency on 10 and 6 meters.

There will be a VE test session on Saturday, February 13th at 9 AM. The location of the test session will be the Cape Fear Community College (North Campus). As per custom we will meet at K&W for breakfast at 8 AM.

The North Carolina QSO Party will be held on Sunday, February 28th. The location of this operating event will be at the Battleship. We gather at the entrance at 11:30 AM.

The Wilmington Swapfest/Hamfest is scheduled for April 10th at Battleship Park from 8 AM to 1 PM. The event is free and open to the public. There will be free coffee and donuts (while they last). There will be a raffle for a 2 meter radio as well.

The proposed budget for 2010 was submitted and approved by the membership. If any member would like to see the budget, see Hutch.

Bill Morine (N2COP) the newly elected Section Manager of North Carolina spoke about a very important piece of pending legislation that will be going before Congress later this year, The Amateur Radio Enhancement Act.

This very important measure is needed and we as amateurs need to write Congressman McIntyre and ask that he support this piece of legislation. The club support for this effort was excellent.

The membership was asked to approve an expense measure to purchase additional QSL binders for use with the special event QSL from the club's activities. The motion was moved and seconded. The request was approved by the membership.

The membership was asked to approve an expense measure to purchase Guest Operator certificates. The motion was moved and seconded. The expense measure was approved by the membership.

The door prize for January was an ARRL Operating Manual. The lucky winner of the prize was Stephen Russ (NI4SR). Stephen donated the prize to one of our newest members. Brovo Zulu, Stephen.

There being no further business before the club, President Vaughan closed the meeting at 9:54 PM.

Respectfully Submitted  
Ed Redington - NC4ER  
Secretary

## **PROPOGATION AND CYCLE 24**

There continues to be a lot of interest in the sun-spot-cycle known as cycle 24. We have as you know been at the minimum between the end of Cycle 23 and the beginning of Cycle 24 and a lot of people equate a sun spot minimum with bad ham radio conditions and activity. Actually, that is a poor way to describe it. Ham radio conditions are just different as we move through the solar cycles and from one cycle to another. Ham radio is always great – you just have to know what to expect from the propagations gods and go with the flow. So it all depends on what you understand and what your perspective is. The past two years have been absolutely fantastic on 7 Mhz and below – very stable, low noise and great long distance propagation. Now if you have been interested in working DX on 10 meters then you probably have said ham radio is awful.

Now I am not a technical expert on solar cycles and propagation prediction, but I know enough to keep it simple and understand pretty much what to expect and where to be looking. For the past two years I have been pretty much on 10 Mhz and below – at least that is where most of my contacts have been. You can continue to count on fairly good conditions on the lower frequencies for at least another year but things are changing.

Cycle 24 is in the fairly early stages of beginning now. With the return of the sun spots, we begin to enter a period where while we see improving ionization of the upper levels of the atmosphere that support higher frequency propagation, we also see radio storms that upset the magnetic fields and cause disturbances. Some of these disturbances disrupt communications and some create some unusual short term effects. So we are entering a period when things are slowly getting better on the higher frequencies, but we are seeing along with that periodic disturbances that upset communications for short periods of time. And if you are interested in sometimes unique and unexpected propagation modes, these are happening more frequently.

I would say – don't expect anything real significant in terms of consistent improvement at the higher frequencies before around the fall equinox of 2010. By that time I suspect you will be able to count on some predictable openings even on 10 meters. In the mean time there will be spotty days. For example February 2 there were pretty good propagation conditions all the way up in frequency through 6 meters. 17 meters was

excellent with low noise and good signals. 15 had some pretty good signals both N-S and to the West with W2KJ working Hawaii running 4 watts on 15. There was some E skip on 10 and 6 meters. And all of this was coupled with good communications conditions from 160 meters up over the weekend.

So don't get tangled up in all the technical stuff. Turn those radios on and make some QSOs. If you want sure QSOs look on the lower frequencies for a while longer. If you want to experiment and look for unusual situations start high and work your way down in frequency. If your transmitter and receiver are working you will ultimately find contacts to be made on one frequency or another. If they are off you can be sure conditions are bad – you won't make any contacts.

Good Hunting – Charlie Vaughan K4UWH

### REPORT OF VOLUNTEER EXAMINER TESTING

Testing will be administered on February 16, 2010 at the Cape Fear Community College North Campus in accordance with the published schedule. The results of this testing session will be reported next week. The VE program continues to seek a few additional people willing to become volunteer examiners.

### APPROVED BUDGET FOR 2010

The club members approved a general operating budget for the year 2010. This will allow some latitude for spending in key activity areas and cut down on some of the business that would otherwise have to be conducted at club meetings.

<b>INCOME</b>	2009	<b>2010</b>
Dues	820	<b>700</b>
50/50	80	<b>60</b>
Donations	340	<b>95</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	1 240	<b>855</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Insurance	418	<b>418</b>
Memberships	40	<b>40</b>
Postage/US PS	73	<b>75</b>
Office Supplies	91	<b>100</b>
Repeater Maintenance		<b>61</b>
Battleship		<b>60</b>
Field Day		<b>61</b>
Swap Meet		<b>60</b>

<b>Total Expenses</b>	622	855
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### **GENERAL FIELD DAY PLANNING**

ACARC is planning to hold Field Day at Ogden Park again this year. Plans are sketchy at this point as the FD Committee has yet to be formed. Generally we would expect to operate in the 2A category (CW, Digital and SSB) with a GOTA and VHF station, and achieve as many of the bonus objectives as possible. If you are unsure about some of these abbreviations and the rules and objectives for Field Day, the 2010 rules are now posted on the ARRL website <http://www.arrl.org/contests/forms/fd-2010-packet.pdf>. I strongly recommend that you read through them so when we do begin to have discussions you are up-to-speed on what we are discussing. The dates are June 26 and 27 and we will most likely have a social event Saturday evening at the FD site. There will be plenty of opportunity to get a lot of people involved in this fun operating event this year. Start thinking now about where you will fit in and what you can do to contribute to the fun and club's success in this operating event.

### **2010 ACTIVITY CALENDAR**

**Each Monday Evening – 8 PM local – 146.18 Repeater - - ACARC Local Net**

**HAM FEAST – Typically Saturday Mornings 8AM K&W on Oleander (NK0S)**

**Friday Noon Lunch Bunch – As announced – Contact NC4ER for current week**

#### **February**

13<sup>th</sup> VE Test Session <http://www.ac4rc.org>

16<sup>th</sup> Club Meeting – Program: Video program on Spark Gap Communications (NC4ER)

20 – 21<sup>st</sup> ARRL International DX Contest CW

<http://www.arrl.org/contests/rules/2010/intldx.html>

26<sup>th</sup> Russian PSK Contest

26<sup>th</sup> CQ 160 Meter SSB Contest

27<sup>th</sup> Mississippi QSO Party

27<sup>th</sup> North America RTTY QSO Party

28<sup>th</sup> NC QSO Party <http://www.w4nc.com/2010ncqsoparty.html>

28<sup>th</sup> NC QSO Party ACARC Activity from Battleship USS NC (AG4PA, WD4OIN)

#### **March**

6 – 7<sup>th</sup> ARRL International DX Contest SSB

<http://www.arrl.org/contests/rules/2010/intldx.html>

7<sup>th</sup> DARC 10 Meter Digital Contest

13 -14<sup>th</sup> Charlotte Hamfest <http://www.w4bfb.org/hamfest2010/hamfest.html>

13<sup>th</sup> EA PSK 31 Contest  
13<sup>th</sup> Idaho QSO Party  
14<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin QSO Party  
16<sup>th</sup> **Club Meeting – Program: N3FJP Computer Logging (K4UWH)**  
20<sup>th</sup> 10-10 International Mobile Contest

#### March

20<sup>th</sup> Oklahoma QSO Party  
20<sup>th</sup> Virginia QSO Party

#### April

3<sup>rd</sup> Raleigh Hamfest <http://rars.org/hamfest/>  
10<sup>th</sup> Azalea Festival Weekend  
10<sup>th</sup> **Azalea Coast Hamfest at the Battleship USS NC (NC4ER)**  
20<sup>th</sup> **Club Meeting -**

#### May

18<sup>th</sup> **Club Meeting -**

#### June

13 – 14<sup>th</sup> ARRL June VHF QSO Party  
15<sup>th</sup> **Club Meeting –**  
26 – 27<sup>th</sup> ACARC Field Day <http://www.arrl.org/contests/forms/fd-2010-packet.pdf>

### **CLUB VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

As you can see we are making a lot of progress in getting the ACARC program going for 2010. We still need a number of key volunteers to fill in some of the key roles that need attention at this time and of course we will need more help as the year unfolds. Some of the things we need now are as follows:

**Newsletter Editor**

**Field Day Chairperson**

**Anyone interested in presenting a club program**

So if any of this looks like something that you would be interested in please come forward and let the officers know of your interests. Remember, the club will only be as good as we make it.

### **DUES**

We still have a few members from last year that have not rejoined for 2010. Please get your dues in ASAP as we would like to continue to have you active in the club. The more people we have, the more we can accomplish.

## CLUB MEETING

The next club meeting is February 16, 2010 at the Cape Fear Community College North Campus – 7 PM. The room is typically on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor but ask security. ***BE SURE TO PRINT A PARKING PASS FOR YOUR CAR, FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS AND PLACE IT IN CLEAR VIEW ON YOUR DASHBOARD.*** Just As we did at the last meeting, we will have introductions and while we want to know your Name and Call Sign, please come prepared to mention something about your ham radio activities in the last month. The monthly meetings are becoming a place where “Ham Radio is Spoken”. So this is the place to let people know what you are doing and get your questions answered. No one gets a free pass so come prepared. **Looking forward to seeing all of you there.**

## ACARC Swap Meet

Don't lose sight of the date for the ACARC Swap Meet here in Wilmington. The word is getting out and is being received well. We will need a great turn-out by our club members to support this effort. The prizes for the raffle are increasing and anyone who would like to donate a prize may do so. The following are currently in the raffle:

- ICOM IC-220H VHF Transceiver (Donated by the Azalea Coast ARC)
- ARRL Frequency Chart (Donated by Linda, KD4TXY)
- ARRL Grid Locator for North America (Donated by Linda, KD4TXY)
- ARRL World Grid Locator Atlas (Donated by Linda, KD4TXY)
- ARRL Hints & Kinks For the Radio Amateur (Donated by Linda, KD4TXY)
- ARRL Software Library for Hams CD-ROM (Ver. 3.0) (Donated by Linda, KD4TXY)

73,

Charlie K4UWH