



The Hamilton Amateur Radio Club
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 Est. 1932 Inc. 1956
<http://www.hwcn.org/link/harc/>

In This Issue

From the Editor's Desk	1
Dynamic Duo-----	1
Dis & Dat -----	2
HARC Chairs-----	3
Hunt for Rechargeable Cells and a Charger -----	3
Important Points -----	4
H.A.R.C. Executive-----	5
Field Day Results -----	5
Future Speakers -----	6
Use It or Lose It -----	6
Texas Grass Fires -----	6
Mystery Solved -----	6

From the Editor's Desk

by Mardy, VE3QEE

Happy New Year and best wishes for 2006. As a new year begins it is traditional to make some new years resolutions. If you have not done so I encourage you to include your hobby

The Hamilton Amateur

The Hamilton Amateur Radio Club Newsletter 73 Years of Amateur Radio 1932-2005

as topic to consider when making resolutions.

You might consider helping another Ham. Listen on the air or when people talk at the HARC meeting. If you hear someone with a radio problem you may be able to help. Perhaps you know someone who just got one of those new handheld marvels. No doubt that person would enjoy getting together over coffee and learning how to enter the frequencies and the offset of some local repeaters, or programming some phone numbers and trying out the telephone patch, or setting the sub-audible tone so you can access a Burlington repeater. Because these skills are not easily acquired, a helpful suggestion or encouraging comment from another ham can lead to success.

You might consider getting on the air more often. According to some recent comments in this newsletter, hams feel the bands are less active than they used to be. Amateur Radio can be more than just buying and setting up equipment. After all, now that you have paid the price the rest of the hobby is free. Consider checking into one VHF net and one HF net on a regular basis. Consider making one CQ call on any band per day, just to keep yourself in practice and give someone else a chance to make a contact. Simply exchange information and put it in a log.

Those are just a couple of suggestions. I am sure you could think of lots more. If you have made a New Year's Resolution about amateur radio, and would like share the idea,

send me an e-mail and I'll put it in the next newsletter. I would also like some pictures of the Christmas Party for publication in February T H A.

In the meantime, happy hamming.

Joe, and Mary Urbanski: HAM Radio's Dynamic Duo

Joe and Mary were interviewed by Neil Galloway, VE3VNG, who wrote this "Member of the Month" feature.

The secret of a successful Field Day operation is now out – good food. That secret is right here at the HARC. Mary (VE3OGQ) and Joe (VE3OCD) Urbanski operate the world's best Field Day catering service.

The International Ham Radio Field Day exercise is designed for Hams to test their gear independently of municipal power sources. Every year, for thousands of Hams, radio activity starts at 2:00 P.M. on the last Saturday of June, and runs until 2:00PM Sunday. Hours before this, before the sun rises, Joe and Mary are on the job.

Preparations begin at least a month in advance, when they prepare and freeze Cabbage Rolls, plan menus, and purchase food. Things come to a boil when Mary and Joe arrive at the Field Day site. Before the crews wander in

Club meetings – 3rd Wednesday each month – 8 pm (except July and August)
 at Hamilton District Christian High School, 92 Glanaster Road
 corner of Rymal Road (Hwy. #53) and Glanaster Road.
 Parking on location. Complimentary refreshments.



Roger Pimm (VE3UFZ) presenting Mary (VE3OGQ) and Joe (VE3OCD) with special recognition for their work in the hospitality tent on Field Day. Picture taken at the HARC Christmas Dinner by John Kassay (VE3FDK)

to set up the stations and antennas, the M and J team have the hot coffee and home-baked muffins ready. Then Mary heads home to pick up the lunch that she and Joe prepared the night before and have kept warming in the oven.

Lunch is served at noon. Then, while Joe is cleaning up and helping with radio operations, Mary heads back home again to prepare the supper meal.

They serve supper about 5:00 P.M., and Mary returns home for a much deserved rest while Joe returns to his radio duties. Did I say rest? At home, Mary is preparing breakfast and lunch for Sunday.

Hamilton's Hams are the best fed Hams on Field Day. A typical menu features hot fresh perked coffee, cold pop, bottled water, cabbage rolls, barbequed spare ribs, ham, watermelon, potato salad, tomatoes, finger foods - carrots, pineapple, and fresh fruit cocktail. Often, for Sunday lunch, they serve bear paw hamburgs.

You may have noticed that after lunch, some of our Field Day operators are a little drowsy, now

you will understand why. If you have never participated in Field Day activities, you should consider coming out, if not for the radio fun, at least for the food!

Besides their activities at Field Day, Joe and Mary are active in other club activities and in community affairs. A few years ago they provided the coffee and snack service for our monthly meetings. Mary is also the Health and Welfare Chairperson. Joe is always on hand to help where and when needed, and he has taught CW.

Both Joe and Mary enjoy participating in their church functions. Every month they prepare hundreds of perogies for fund raising.

To take a little rest now and then, Joe and Mary both do wood carving. When the pressure gets too high, they baby-sit their grandchildren. Joe is an avid mineralogist and has a collection of micro-minerals. As the saying goes, "If you want something done now, ask the busiest person."

Never one to look back on past accomplishments, Mary says, "The past we have lived. The future we must now live."

Dis & Dat

by Bernie Granby, VE3EKY, VA3XJ

January 06

This is all about history. Isn't everything? Why? Because everything that happened is history. Got it? OK.

This day in history (Dec 23 05.) " One two three four – is it snowing where you are Mr.Thiesson? If it is telegraph back to me." These words spoken 105 years ago today, in 1900, by Canadian Reginald Fessenden were the first ever transmitted by radio. Fessenden was on Cobb Island in the middle of the Potomac River near Washington D.C. Mr Thiesson, his assistant, quickly reported back by morse code that it was snowing, and he could hear Fessenden's voice. This was the birth of radio broadcasting. (from the Toronto Sun on the 23rd of Dec. last.

Most of this also is history. Milestones of 2005; I made it through and survived it. I had help there. I got rid of the beam hating tree. You have already heard about that. I put in a separate fused line and a plug on the kitchen counter so Ruth could run the microwave, coffee maker and toaster all together without blowing a fuse. (which also turned off the kitchen radio and the digital clock.) That's not too important. Don't tell Ruth. She told me she that she never in her lifetime expected that those two things would happen. The beam hugging tree deposited about ten garbage cans of needles during its last month. I cleaned out the eaves troughs 4 times so we would be able to drain away the water the WX man was promising us. No luck when the rains came they overflowed. Later I found out the elbow was packed full of composting pine needles. Really not so bad when you think about the tornado that accompanied that storm. Yes that was the same storm that caused so much damage on the mountain.

On Dec. 11th we went on our first cruise not counting the one I went on in 1938 aboard a Cunard liner to

England in the fall of that year. No I wasn't going to war that came 12 months later. Scary at the time and ole Hitler sent me packing back home. Mom said send Bernie home on the next boat. By himself if you have to. Everyone thought war was going to break out immediately. It didn't bother me, I was eleven years old. This cruise was much different. The Radiance of the Seas took us around the western Caribbean in luxurious splendour. It was fabulous and not as expensive as you might think. You've got to try it. We had a terrific field day. I haven't seen the scores yet but I think we did well. 3A On., we slipped down one station, we were 4A forever. Will we continue shrinking until we disappear. I hope not.

I have been counting my QSO's (CW) that I can put on my entry for the CW trophy...not good..resolve to do better in '06. Have you heard a EME QSO ...heard a sat QSO or contacted someone for a DX contact using the internet? Or have you made your first HF QSO on CW? I made my first CW contact on JAN. 02 1976 with K4IZZ/W1. Lets do it in '06.

Back in those days there were lots of Hams on 40 meters right here in Hamilton. I met a lot of the club members on CW at 3 watts. That's how I met SYL VE3CEC, who lived up on Garth. He told me he flew DC3s all over the world for oil exploration and mining companies. I remember he said when he was flying up near the north pole he used to QSO the Russians over the pole using a long wire out the bottom of the ole Gooney Bird, into the slip stream. Syl is gone now. I bought an SWR bridge from his estate and had it for years until I sold it a few years ago to Gerald VA3GMJ, and now he's gone too. Its getting tough to make a contact these days. The sunspot cycle and the lack of hams. IT can only get better. I did get lucky in Dec. working the Netherland Antilles. This contact was at about 40 WPM. Very difficult for me. I discovered at that speed I couldn't tell the difference between a 1 and a two. He was PJ2/OH1VR. I wrkd CO6WD the same day. His QSL

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manager is W0SA. Hope ole Bush doesn't hear about this.

You may remember the meeting when John VE3EJ showed us the DVD of the South Sandwich Island expedition of 2002. Well I decided to send for that DVD for my Son Scott VE3EKX. My constant FD companion. I've seen it four times now and its thrilling to say the least. The disc was ordered through W0TT The Missouri Guy. It was not expensive and came postage paid from Singapore where one of the operators who were on that trip along with John and some 10 others lives. Well catch this if all goes according to plan John will be at our Jan '06 meeting. I hope it happens. In the meantime I'm laying in more supplies of treats and coffee for the break. Im hoping Scott and two of my Grandsons can make it. I understand John is on call and sometimes gets last minute assignments otherwise he will be here for the meeting with another great DVD of his latest Dxpediton. See you there.

It looks like we will have a big session for ham exams this month. This is encouraging. There is hope for the hobby yet.

Well folks thats all about dis for now. Lets get out there on the air...lets build something for homebrew night. May is not far off you know and FD will be right around the corner.

73,88 as fits de....Ben
Bernie..VE3EKY

.o0o.

The Hunt For Rechargeable Cells and a Charger

A Saga and A Mini Equipment Review by John Hudak, VE3CXB

I own a Yaesu FT-60 dual band HT. It comes standard with a 7.2V 1400mAh NiMH (Nickle Metal Hydride) battery pack. After I got it I noticed in the accessories list a battery holder for 6 alkaline cells. I'm sure other HT manufacturers also offer an accessory battery holder so this may be of interest to others.

When I first got this holder I, of course, tried out some regular alkaline cells in it. Fine and dandy, but they didn't seem to last very long. So ... I got on the Yaesu FT-60 newsgroup and asked if anyone else had tried NiMH cells in the accessory pack. Needless to say many of the group members came back with a resounding "yes" to my question. So off I went on my quest to hunt down NiMH cells and a charger.

What I found was that there were a quite a number of chargers out there for NiMH cells. These cells and chargers are for sale everywhere, or so it seems. However, all of these chargers would only hold 4 cells at a time. I wanted something that would charge 6 cells at once. Now of course I could have charged 4 cells, and then charged the remaining ones separately, but I didn't like this idea. First of all it means having to go through two charging cycles to charge up one complete battery pack of 6 cells. Also I didn't like the idea of the first 4 cells discharging themselves while I charged up the remaining two. Probably not a big deal you say, and it probably isn't. NiMH cells are known for having a higher self-discharge rate than other rechargeables like NiCad's. That is, just sitting on the shelf doing nothing NiMH cells will lose voltage at a higher rate than other types of cells. Maybe I'm just being a fussy budget, but I still wanted to charge all 6 cells at once, so I kept on with my quest. Needless to say I got on the internet to see what was out there in the way of 6 cell chargers. Not much as it turns out. I had even considered building my own charger using one of the Dallas Semiconductor Maxim charger IC's which would probably have given me quite a sophisticated charger. Nah, there had to be a simpler solution out there. Yes there is a charger sold in the ham radio shops which would take more than 4 cells. However on one of the ham radio equipment review web sites it got some negative comments. Besides, this particular charger seemed overly expensive. Nope, at times I can be a cheapskate so I still carried on with my quest.

Important points

Executive Meetings

HARC Executive committee meets each month, except July and August, at Mohawk College in room E031B. All members are invited to attend and participate. The meetings are on the Tuesday following the club General Meeting each month.

VE3NCF [146.760- & 444.075+]

HARC operates VE3NCF repeater, located atop the Niagara Escarpment. It's open for use by all Amateurs. Special features are a privilege of membership.

Nets

HARC "check-in net" is held every Tuesday evening, except July and August, at 7:30pm. HARC "swap net" follows at 8pm. The ARES net is held on Thursdays at 8:00pm. All contacts are welcome.

Examinations

Amateur radio licence examinations are conducted the second Wednesday each month, except July and August. Contact the voluntary examiners to make an appointment. Each test \$5.

Membership Information

Club membership, including all privileges, is \$25 per person, per year, Sept 1 to Aug 31. Additional membership, for immediate family living in the same home, is \$1 per person. One newsletter sent to each address.

The Hamilton Amateur

The Hamilton Amateur is published ten times each year (not in July or August). Deadline for article submission is the *last Saturday* of the month for the next month's issue. Preferred format is .txt file. Articles will be checked for spelling and grammar, but the author is responsible for the factual content. E-mail submissions to Mardy, VE3QEE < ve3qee@rac.ca >

I finally did find one charger out there in internet-land which seems to fit the bill. It's a Ray-O-Vac PS-3. Now, where to find one here in Canada in our area. I called all over, including the specialty battery stores

in Hamilton. No luck. They didn't even know what I was talking about. Finally I found a battery store tucked away in a strip mall in Burlington that carried these chargers. Price was around \$45.00 so I bought the charger and 6 no-name 2300mAH NiMH cells. Off I go home to do some charging.

Got home, put the cells in the charger and waited for them to do their thing. After charging these cells over night (when you buy them they're pretty much depleted so the initial charge will take more time) I noticed one of the cells was not taking a charge. I checked it with my multimeter and sure enough, after an overnight charge it was still reading only about 0.5 volts. Back to the store in Burlington to exchange it. Charged the cell up, put the battery pack together and - great. The battery pack would not go into my HT. I took out the no-name cells, and with my trusty micrometer I measured their diameter compared to other AA cells I had on hand. They were bigger by just about 50 thousandths of an inch. Not much, but enough that they prevented me from getting the pack in the HT. Back onto the Yaesu newsgroup for help. It was suggested that I use Energizer 2300mAH cells, which are known for sure to fit. Back out on my quest to find Energizer 2300mAH AA cells. Do you think I could find them anywhere? Finally I found some tucked way in the back of the toy section of one of our local department stores. Got them home, charged them up, put them in the HT. BINGO - the battery pack with these cells fit just fine and the radio worked.

What a difference these higher capacity cells make. The original NiMH pack that came with my HT was rated at 1400mAH. These new cells have almost another 1000mAH extra capacity. More talk time, more available listening time.

Were the cells cheap? No. They can be anywhere from \$3 to \$5 a piece, depending on where you buy them. Were they worth it? Yes. Even using the cheapest non-rechargeable AA cells I could find, in the long run I

save by using these NiMH cells, given that they are claimed to be good for 1000 charge/discharge cycles. I don't think this is a guarantee but just an indication of how many charge cycles you can "more or less" get out of these cells. Even if they don't last for 1000 cycles it will still be worth it from a cost point of view. I wound up getting a second set of 6 cells from that dark corner in that store's toy department. Now I have three complete battery packs on hand, ready for any emergency.

The Ray-O-Vac PS-3 charger will charge 8 AAA or AA cells, 4 C cells, 4 D cells, or one 9V battery. Or you can mix up types of cells. What's nice is that this charger has 4 charging "bays". The bays will each hold 2 AAA or AA cells, or one C or D cell. There is a separate set of snaps for a 9V battery. You charge pairs of cells, instead of having to completely fill up the charger with cells. In other words you could, for example, do 4 AA cells plus 2 C cells at the same time. When you first plug the charger in it will detect how many bays have cells in them and will switch itself to only charge those bays. Above each bay is a red LED which comes on when the charger is first plugged in. The LED will remain lit only above those bays that have cells in them. When the cells are fully charged the individual bay will go into trickle mode, and the corresponding LED will go out. The PS-3 will charge NiMH, NiCad's, and rechargeable alkalines. Pretty good, I thought. I assume it has one of the dedicated Maxim type charger IC's inside, as it seems to know what type of cell it is charging and then automatically sets the proper charge rate and trickle charge conditions. I did call Ray-O-Vac to ask what was inside but the person on the other end of the line didn't have a clue. If there is a drawback it is that this is not a fast charger. Unlike a fast charger it will definitely take more than 2 hours to charge your cells. On the plus side the cells do not heat up as much as they would on a fast charger. At no time did the cells get too hot to the touch, which means their temp remained under 50 deg. C. Also it is not exactly a "light" charger. It does weigh a bit, and it's size is about 3.5"

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wide by 2.5" high by 8.5" long. It does have a removable power cord. The PS-3 appears to be well made and so far in the several months I've had it I've had no problems (knock on wood).

So, there you have it. The saga of finding a charger for my HT battery pack. I'm quite happy with my purchase, but I did find out that it's not always a good idea to buy the cheaper no-name cells. I was quite surprised that it was the size of the el-cheapo cells that would be a problem in the end. However the cheap NiMH's are now residing in other devices like my mini flashlight, TV remotes, etc., so they weren't a total loss.

More and more, higher capacity NiMH cells have become available. Cells with a capacity of 2500mAh are now commonly on sale. This is

much higher than the NiMH battery packs that seem to come stock with most manufacturer's HT's, and cheaper if you figure it out over the long run. If your HT will accept an accessory battery pack like mine does, it may be worth looking into getting additional cells and a decent charger.

Usual Disclaimer: Of course I have no connection with Ray-O-Vac or the battery store in Burlington. As this charger seems to be uncommon it might be of use to others to know of it's existence.

Field day Results 2005

The field day results are finally out for June 2005. Here are the results, summarized by David Bruton, VE3DWJ our Field Day Co-ordinator.

This report was delayed pending the official results which are published in QST Magazine.

Field day 2005 had 2,212 entries. QSO's received by all stations numbered 1.2 million. Total participants were 33,078. This total included all veneers.

VE3DC station 3A (3 stations and emergency power) scored 3,442 points on 955 contacts plus bonus points and finished second of all Canadian stations in the 3A classification. VE7BAR finished ahead of us.

Our group had fewer operators than last year. Sickness or the weather conditions prevented more members from helping. Those of us, who remember how very hot and humid the day was, remember how the weather took its toll on us. We lost our cool, when things went wrong not once but twice. As time approached starting hour and after a great lunch members felt better and were ready to operate the radios.

This year we had a GOTA (get on the air) station. It consisted of the first graduates of CERV (community emergency response volunteers) who

passed their basic course and some even got their Morse code. They were very enthusiastic about talking to other hams in many parts of Canada and USA, Thanks to Lorraine Al and Gerry for their instruction and guidance in bringing new people into amateur radio.

As to many others who were not mentioned I thank you for your help making field day 2005 a success.

Remember June 24/25 2006 is Field day weekend.

Future Speakers

On Wednesday, January 18th we welcome John Sluymer, VE3EJ, for a return engagement to tell us about his recent DX Expedition to the Kerguelen Islands located in the sub-antarctic region of the Indian Ocean.

John was one of twelve operators, on this month long DXpedition. His talk will be illustrated with a video depicting highlights of the trip. Once again, the group hired the vessel Braveheart to get to their remote location.

Our scheduled speaker in February will be Steve Parsons from Radioworld, who is coming to show us the newest and latest amateur radio gear.

Don't forget to enter a project for Homebrew Night in May. Anything you construct since the previous Homebrew qualifies. For more information contact Casey

Use It or Lose It

Canadian Amateurs to Lose 220-222 MHz reported in The-American Radio Relay League's ARRL Letter

Barring an outpouring of "compelling arguments to the contrary," Industry Canada will reallocate the 220-222 MHz portion of 220-225 MHz from the Canadian amateur service to the mobile and fixed services. Under the provisional reallocation, which will take effect January 25, the amateur service will be allocated the 219-220 MHz subband on a secondary basis.

Additionally, the amateur service may be permitted use of 220-222 MHz "in exceptional circumstances on a secondary basis to assist in disaster relief efforts."

Hams Aid Fight Against Texas Grass Fires

The weekly ARRL Newsletter, is an internet bulletin. Almost every week there is a story about HAMs establishing an emergency communication link following a natural disaster that shuts down a commercial communication system. It is surprising how many times a year the Amateur Radio Service is called upon to provide help. Amateur Radio is not an insignificant resource! Here is a typical example, reprinted with permission from The-American Radio Relay League's ARRL Letter. -ed.

Amateur Radio Emergency Service and other Amateur Radio operators from the West Texas Section, and especially the Abilene vicinity, were called to assist with communications during the last week of 2005 when the wildfires struck Cross Plains, Texas, in the southeastern portion of neighboring Callahan County.

"There was no cell service because the connection to the cell tower was burned," said Bill Shaw, KJ5DX, the ARRL Emergency Coordinator in nearby Taylor County. "There was one landline phone working at the church where the Cross Plains Red Cross shelter was set up."

Amateur Radio operators established communication via UHF and VHF radios between the Cross Plains Shelter, Brownwood Red Cross Shelter, and Abilene Red Cross headquarters. A team of 14 radio amateurs was on hand during this emergency.

"We kept up 24 hour communications for Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday until noon via ham radio," Shaw explained. "The fire started as a grass fire about noontime on December 27, and quickly escalated into a raging

wildfire that was fed by 45 mph winds."

Unfortunately, the fire quickly spread toward town about 3 miles away, and it burned the area that is about 4 to 6 miles east-west and 2 to 3 miles north-south in size.

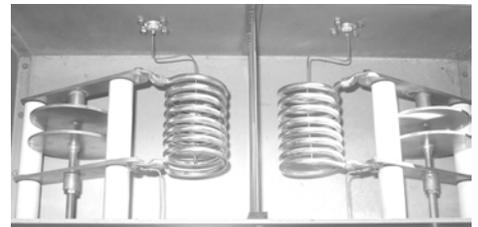
"About 31 fire departments fought fires until about 5:00 the next morning," Shaw said. As a result of this fire, almost 8,000 acres burned, 152 homes were damaged, and that represents 25 to 30 per cent of the homes in Cross Plains. Over a hundred of those homes were completely destroyed.

Wildfires have also been burning in drought-stricken Oklahoma and New Mexico.

Mystery Solved

by Mardy, VE3QEE

This rack mount high power filter, purchased at a recent flea market, came with no information.



Don, (VE3VZ/VE3OCY), suggested the following method to evaluate the filter's response. Put a dummy load on the output of the filter, and an SWR meter on the input. Connect a transmitter to the input of the SWR meter and proceed to test by injecting a series of low power signals. By watching the SWR you can tell when a signal is being passed or blocked. If the signal is passed by the filter the SWR will drop and the signal will be converted to heat in the dummy load. If the signal is blocked by the filter the SWR will be high. Stepping through a series of frequencies, you can determine the response. I tried this method and found that the filter passes a narrow band between 445.0 and 445.5 MHz.

Thanks for the tip, Don.