



# BVARC BEACON



Newsletter of the Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club  
AMATEUR RADIO FOR SOUTHWEST HOUSTON AND FORT  
BEND COUNTY

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AUGUST 2020

VOLUME 44 ISSUE 8

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## BVARC AUGUST GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

For Thursday, August 13th, 2020, there will be an online ZOOM meeting. The venue announcement will be on the website and email reflector. Our guest presenter will be Riley Hollingsworth K4ZDH, who will be discussing the ARRL Volunteer Monitor Program. Don't know Mr. Hollingsworth? Check out:

<https://www.qrz.com/db/k4zdh>

We won't be having IN PERSON meetings for at least another month or two. Club Business meetings will be held over ZOOM, and Club meetings will not be held in person (Facilities are closed) but we are arranging a streaming meetings on ZOOM.



## JULY VE - FCC TESTING SESSIONS RESULTS

Bayland Community Center has re-opened and we're continuing to conduct testing sessions there. They have imposed a restricted headcount, which limits the amount of people in the test room. For the Saturday's July 18th test session(s): We had 6 candidates and conducted 7 tests.

### New Licensees:

Leow, C. (General)

Busch, M. (Technician)

Altman, G. (Technician)

### Upgrades

KE4DRF (General)

KG4NDS (Extra)

KI5JMN (Extra)

Congratulations to all!

A great thank you to the other VEs in attendance – K5IZO and K5LJ.

The next BVARC test session is Saturday August 1, at 10:30 (we think).

When times are normal, examination sessions are held each month, usually on the same day as the Saturday BVARC Board meeting. These sessions are at the Bayland Park Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St., Houston TX 77074

Details for candidates are found at [www.bvarc.org/home/amateur-license/](http://www.bvarc.org/home/amateur-license/)

Call Mark Janzer, K5MGJ at (832) 875-0526 or eMail: [k5mgj@yahoo.com](mailto:k5mgj@yahoo.com) to pre-register.



Editor's Note: Because of the nature and amount of the content of this edition, some random placements and other liberties were taken to make it all fit.

## The Prez Says

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 virus is still with us. More and more people around us are getting infected. I now have neighbors that are infected but luckily, they do not have very bad symptoms. Hopefully everyone that does get the virus, will not suffer the horrible issues that have affected many people in the US. As of today, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Houston area has had over 1300 new COVID cases today. The only good report is the number of deaths is dropping, possibly due to the increase of people wearing masks taking social distancing more seriously. Hopefully this trend continues and makes the overall numbers to start dropping. Again, we are still a long way away from being virus free in the community and the “new normal” will be around for several more months.

This month’s Zoom meeting on August 13<sup>th</sup> will be a real treat. Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH, will have a presentation on the new ARRL Volunteer Monitoring Program. I know Riley is excited about this program and will have a lot of information on how it works and what it will do to help amateur radio. So, get ready for the presentation.

We have several great programs lined up for September through December so keep listening to the various NETs, newsletter, web site and W5RH’s weekly e-mail blast. Also don’t forget elections are coming up in November. There will be more on that in the September newsletter.

The club reached a milestone this last weekend – 252 club members! The last time the club has had that many members was in the mid 1990’s. It has been a long hard road to grow from the low of 85 members in 2001 to the 252 we have now. I want to thank everyone that has helped on making the club the largest one in Houston and one of the largest in Texas. Thanks again to everyone that has made this milestone possible.

If you are not aware, the following Hamfest’s have been cancelled: Texas City, Austin Summerfest and, Belton Tailgate/Swap meet. So, it may be a while before anyone can satisfy their scavenging and equipment buying. This may be a good time to bring back an on-the-air swap meet. If anyone is interested in this, please let me know.

Field Day is over and from what I have heard, it was a great turnout with many of you working toward a common cause. We should have the totals for next month’s newsletter so stay tuned. Hopefully we will be able to have the Quad Club Field day next year so keep your fingers crossed.

So, wear your mask, keep social distancing in mind and keep those hands washed.



I know everyone is interesting in building a kit. See if you can copy this!

# **The Radio Hotel** – The Amazing Depths of Radio and.....Dedicating yourself to your hobby by Rick W5RH

Consider “Radio” as the 20,000 ft. view of the technology. And, as you get lower and lower in altitude the intricacies of the technology start to appear and expand in all the areas of technology that are required for “Radio” to exist -- antennas, passive and active electronic devices, designing, building, software, etc.

Take an antenna, for instance, (do you think I would choose another technology to talk about? NOT!) ...in radio, an antenna is not just a piece of wire, or element, it is a piece of conducting metal that is used to promote radiation of RF. Reduce your altitude further and you will understand that an antenna is a transducer, taking a varying voltage at RF frequencies and converting them to electromagnetic radiation and launching this radiation into the natural world. Most Hams stop at this level. (See the “Impedance of Space” – BVARC newsletter page 8, August 2018 -- <http://www.bvarc.org/newsletter/201808.pdf>)

Lower your altitude more and you will be inside the metal being used for the antenna. The metal is made up of atoms, many, many of them. These atoms have electrons and being conductive, they have “free” electrons that are influenced by the varying voltage charge being fed to the antenna wire. However, this might be too low a level for even the most science/physics-oriented Ham. This is certainly not a necessary fact of metal to understand, but it is a nice to know. Down at this level there is some guidance – see ARRL’s book “Antenna Physics: An Introduction” by Robert J. Zavrel, Jr, W7SX. Not sure you want to go any lower, but if so, as Dr. Richard Feynman always said, “it all comes down to quantum physics”.

You can stay up at the 20K or the 10K level and utilize the technology to put together a station to communicate in many of the modes. And that is perfectly fine and acceptable. Or you can continue to delve into the depths of any of the areas of technology that make up ham radio. No one is stopping you, but all of us are very interested in what you find and what you do. We all wish you well. How dedicated you are to the particular technical aspect is the determination of your limits of study or experimentation.

I remember being told of a fellow in the UK. He worked a regular job, but at night he went into his basement and made and painted metal soldiers. For years he did this and when he passed, they found thousands of soldiers arranged in armies of the different time periods i.e. Napoleon, Roman, WW1, etc. Boy, you talk about dedication. (I wonder if he ever took a night off to visit the local pub.) Those English folks were like that. Dedicated to the task and undaunted in their endeavor.

Whatever altitude you choose to cruise at, make the most of it. Challenge yourself and challenge others by asking questions and keeping them informed of your activity. Whether your Q’s come from HF or VHF or phone or CW or FT-8 or JT-64 in an EME QSO and no matter how intense your action, no matter how much you dedicate yourself to the hobby, please, remember to always have fun.

Enjoy your hobby. 73...Rick – W5RH

*The purpose of **The Radio Hotel** is to give you a practical kickstart into exploring the workings of antenna systems Google the buzz words and find out what they mean. Read up on antenna system theory to see how it all works together. You will be glad you did.*

# Cutting Through the Static – A Column for Newbies

JP Pritchard, K5JPP

## My Old Kit Bag

I came by my interest in electronics through my father. He was, as we used to say, a “jack of all trades,” though his actual trade was a printer. He just loved anything science, including chemistry, astronomy and even developed his own photography, and I stood by hands on as he rewired parts of the house I grew up in, and fixed radios and televisions.

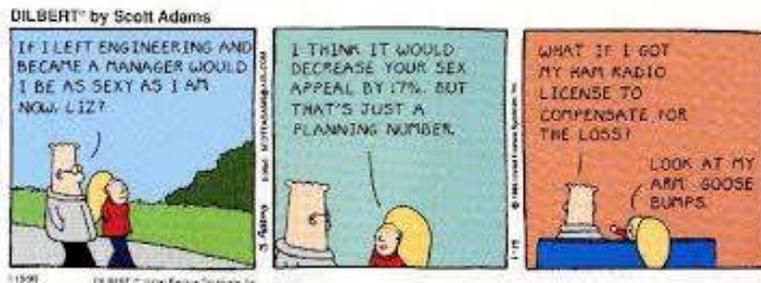
I got my first real learning experience in electronics one Christmas when I received a Heathkit 6 transistor radio, powered by 6 D cells. It even came with a nice leather case.

My dad sat with me, night after night, entrusting the tools to my “tween age” hands, letting me follow the clear instructions Heathkit was famous for. I quickly learned how to solder secured each component into its proper place (no printed circuit boards) on an aluminum chassis. I used that radio for many years.

There are hundreds, probably thousands of electronic kits available for electronics enthusiasts these days. Some are simple and some are extremely complex and probably unsuitable for a newcomer to kit building.

Those in search of a fun learning experience should not hesitate to order a kit to build, but I would like to suggest to newbies a wonderful but simple kit that will allow you to grow your understanding of radio and even simple programming.

I’ve heard some long-time hams scoff at the value of a uBitx (pronounced “microbitx) HF transceiver kit because it comes with a completed circuit board. But a newcomer will get great experience turning the board into a finished and functioning HF SSB and CW transceiver. You can buy it with or without a “cabinet.” Without allows you to improvise an enclosure and is also good experience as you solder controls in place and mount connectors. There is some soldering to do, and though simple, will teach you a few valuable things about the process. The enclosure you can buy with it is handsome and functional and well worth the extra bucks if you want to go that way.



Here’s the thing about the uBitx HF transceiver. There are countless articles and suggestions available online to expand the functionality of this little 10-watt QRP unit, especially its digital control system. If you understand micro-controller programming, you can make all kinds of changes. There are even ways suggested online to add additional amenities like an s-meter, an ALC, a large

touch screen that expands your control of the unit, and a way to add a pan-adapter. This kit helped to give me a much sharper understanding of radio electronics and logic circuitry, and gave me a refresher course in soldering, hence my enthusiastic endorsement of this product.

If this kit doesn’t light your fire, looking for something else is its own adventure. You might consider building an oscillator to help facilitate your CW education, or at some point, when you have a little more experience, and perhaps a larger bank account, you might tackle an Elecraft K3S kit, and anything in between.

Start by doing a Google Search for Ham Radio Kits. First stop, the ARRL kits page, featuring a few offerings that are perfect for learning about electronics. But your Google search will lead you far and wide. Your biggest challenge will be to narrow the search for a kit that seems right for you. If you’re looking for kits to build test gear for your hamshack, a friend suggests heckkits.com. And yes, Heathkit has been revived. Check it out at [www.Heathkit.com](http://www.Heathkit.com)

# The Feed Point

(BVARC Member Stories: How We Got Here)  
This Month's Featured Ham Michael Ewer, K2MPP

I remember the day quite well. I had finished my high school classes and got on the train to head home to Queens on that day in Fall of 1957. Sitting opposite me was a student with books from our school, so we talked awhile and I discovered he was an amateur radio operator. I had learned some of the Morse code while in the Boy Scouts, but now I was sitting on the subway with someone who had a real license. His name was Michael. We agreed to ride home on those days when we finished classes at the same time, and some days later he invited me to his home to see his amateur station; his license call sign was K2ODB. He made contacts that day I visited him, and he even allowed me to speak to an amateur in another state. I was hooked.

Michael told me that as a general class ham he could proctor my first license exam, but friend or not, he would cut no slack -- five words per minute in code, accurate for at least one whole minute, and pass the written. I went to his home on school holiday; it was Lincoln's birthday, Tuesday February 11, 1958, and he administered my first amateur radio exam. Some days later I got a note from the Federal Communications Commission with my first amateur license; I was now KN2MPP,

Eventually I passed the more challenging written exam for the technician class license -- at that time the same question pool as the General class. But as a Technician we could avoid the 13 words per minute code proficiency. Alas, I never showed much talent for Morse code. I never owned a rig during those years. I put my amateur license away for another day, but moonlighted as a "radio engineer," after passing my FCC first-class radiotelephone license, keeping it up as it morphed to a General Radiotelephone certificate that I still have.

I renewed my ham license and kept my call sign during my time as a college student and later as a medical student. But still, I had never been on the air as a ham radio operator. In 1972 I became the ship's doctor on the very ship that ultimately was used in the television series "The Love Boat."



We had a group of Norwegian radio officers who handled communications, still using Morse code. They worked with me, allowing me to copy traffic notices sent from the Norwegian coastal stations, and I gradually got my speed. I called the Los Angeles FCC office and told them of my dilemma—the MV Island Princess docked at 5:00 AM on Saturday mornings, left at 5:00 PM the same day. I asked the FCC how to upgrade my license. He asked the ship operator if I was really ready, and believe it or not, the FCC agreed to open up for me on a Saturday morning. I went in and passed 13-word per code test. I was now, for the first time a General class Ham. I had been licensed for more than 15 years, but still had never been on the air as an independent operator.

Finally, after being a ham for nearly 60 years I broke down and bought a transceiver and a vertical antenna, attended a few BVARC meetings and am now thoroughly hooked, mostly because of an experienced ham who showed me the ropes. N5DTT Jim helped so very much in the beginning, W5RH told me where to install my vertical, and K5IZO spent hours helping me get it tuned. And there are lots of others on my gratitude list.

The one I can't thank, as I don't have any information about him, is the guy at the Los Angeles FCC office who came in on his day off to give me my exam. But isn't that what ham radio is all about? Finally, after more than 60 years, I am learning this. Oh yes, and the guy from high school, we are still in touch, we have remained in contact all these years, but he has a new call sign N3DEI. Still licensed, really delighted to hear from me all about BVARC and what a great joy it has been for me these last few years.

Editor's Note: JP, K5JPP, BVARC At Large Director, has initiated soliciting members to tell us their ham radio story – how they got interested in amateur radio, where the hobby has taken them, etc. . The above article, by Michael, K5MPP, is the first. Hopefully members will respond with articles in the forthcoming months. Get with JP to coordinate this. His contact info in on the website.



## BVARC Rag Chew Net

Below is the BVARC Rag Chew Net check-in information:

06/24/20, K5LKJ(NCS), K2MPP, K5JPP, K5LJ, W5TKZ, W5GR, W5RH, WA5ANF (T), AA5OA (Ft. Smith, AR)(T), KB7QL (Rustin, LA), KF5PHA, W5VOM/5 (RCS), KI5HOV. (13 Check-Ins)

Solar Cycle 24: SFI = 67, SN = 0, A = 4, K = 1 / Band Rpt: Fair

07/01/20, K5LKJ (NCS), W5TKZ, W5ALW, K5LJ, W5VOM/5 (RCS), KB7QL (Rustin, LA), W5RH, AA0ST (Dickinson), WB4KTF (Austin), KD5FBA, WA5ANF (T), KL7AX (Katy), N5VCX. (13 Check-Ins)

Solar Cycle 24: SFI = 68, SN = 0, A = 4, K = 1 / Band Rpt: Fair

07/08/20, K5LKJ (NCS), K2MPP, K5IZO/5 (Jasper), W5TOM, K5LJ, WB4KTF (Austin), W5VOM, KI5HC (League City), KB7QL (Rustin, LA), K5TNL (Spring), W5TKZ, K5HEC, AA0ST (Dickinson), KG5WDF, K5JPP. (12 Check-Ins)

Solar Cycle 24: SFI = 68, SN = 0, A = 4, K = 0 / Band Rpt: Good

07/15/20, K5LKJ (NCS), K2MPP, K5JPP, N5VCX, W5TKZ, W1BG (Katy), K5LJ, K5TNL (Spring), K5HEC, KB7QL (Rustin, LA), W5ALW, K5IZO, KL7AX (Katy), AA0ST (Dickinson). (14) Check-Ins)

Solar Cycle 24: SFI = 68, SN = 0, A = 11, K = 2 / Band Rpt: Fair

(M) = mobile (P) = Portable (R) = Relay (RCS) = remote controlled station (T) = telephone check-in

Net conditions have been fair to good this month. Fire up the rig and hear what others are doing and share in their experiences. Come join in the conversation each Wednesday evening. Regards. John K5LKJ



### Hamfests

(typically within 200 miles of Houston)

Hamfest info for the next few months. More information at:

<http://www.arrl.org/hamfests.html#listing>

#### 08/7-8/2020 Austin Summerfest

Austin, TX  
CANCELLED

#### Belton Ham Expo – Fall 2020

Belton, TX  
CANCELLED

#### 10/17/2020 - South Texas Hamfest & Electronics Expo

Location: Sinton, TX

Type: ARRL Hamfest

Sponsor: South Texas Hamfest Association

Website: <https://southtexashamfest.org/>

## TESTING BY VARIOUS AREA CLUBS

**BVARC** – [www.bvarc.org](http://www.bvarc.org)

**Testing** – Typically on the Saturday before the second Thursday, at 10:30am at the Bayland Park Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St., Houston, contact Mark Janzer, [k5mgj@yahoo.com](mailto:k5mgj@yahoo.com)

**KATY ARS** - [www.katyars.com](http://www.katyars.com)

**Testing** - Typically on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month at 9:30am at the Westlake VFD, 19636 Saums Rd. Houston, contact Gerald Doucet, [testinginfo@katyars.com](mailto:testinginfo@katyars.com)

**OAK FOREST ARC** - <http://www.ofarc.org/>

**Testing** – Typically, the 4th Saturday of the month at 6:00pm, location TBD, contact Mark Landress, [wb5ann@arrl.net](mailto:wb5ann@arrl.net)

**NORTHWEST ARS** - <http://www.w5nc.net/>

**Testing** – Typically the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month at 8am, location Klein VFD Admin. Bldg, behind Klein FD Station 4, 16810 Squyres Rd., Spring, contact Ron Matusek, [ronm1@att.net](mailto:ronm1@att.net) or [vec@w5nc.net](mailto:vec@w5nc.net)

**Harris County Emergency Management (HCOHSEM)**

**Testing** - Typically the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4th Tuesday of the month at 7:00pm, Transtar 6922 Katy Rd., Houston, contact Franz Laugerman, [franzlaugerman@sbcglobal.net](mailto:franzlaugerman@sbcglobal.net)



## MINUTES

### *Board of Directors Meeting, Saturday, July 11, 2020 Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club*

Editor's Note: As this issue goes to press, the regular minutes are not available.  
We thank Jeff Greer, W5JEF, BVARC Corresponding Secretary, for a copy of his notes.

A quorum was established and the meeting called to order at 9:09 a.m.

Dave gave the Treasurer's Report.

244 current members. Daphne to get limited debit card for newsletter expenses. We had 4x \$15 donations in addition to 3 new memberships and 6 renewals.

Treasurer's report was voted upon and accepted.

Jeff gave the Corresponding Secretary's report.

The recording of the last general membership meeting was provided to Rick and Eddie. If Mike gets approval from the presenter, Jeff will post to YouTube. Jeff has not been by the mailbox in the last week; will go next week.

Old Business:

Museum Ships - unable to work physically at the site due to COVID-19 closure of facilities.

Field Day - Rick Hiller is compiling information for presentations and awards.

No face to face ice cream social this year due to COVID-19.

Riley Hollingsworth to give next general membership meeting presentation; last meeting/presentation was very good/well received.

Scott Medbury suggested a Parks on the Air (POTA) presentation for a future meeting

Dave working a civil air patrol presentation for Oct/Nov meeting.

New Business:

Michael Monseur would like the club to get rid of the \$700-\$750/yr storage locker expense. The locker currently holds:

-a \$500 wire antenna that sees little use

-containers for use with ice cream social and chili supper meetings

-an old vertical antenna (with problems)

-first aid kit

-cords/cables

-coax

Michael suggested that much of this stuff could be purchased every year and we'd still spend less than we're spending on the storage locker.

A discussion followed about other property owned by the club, and which club member had that property.

Rick Hiller asked that, if anyone wants anything published in his Monday BVARC Blast emails, they get him that information on the Sunday prior to the email at the latest.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:42 a.m.

# BRAZOS VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

This newsletter, the BVARC BEACON, is a monthly publication of the Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club. For a full listing of officers and information about BVARC, please go to [www.bvarc.org](http://www.bvarc.org). Detailed information will be published in the BEACON every 3 or 4 months. Similarly, the "Eating Schedule" will be published every 3 or 4 months unless there is a change.

General membership dues are \$25.00 per year, with student dues \$10.00 per year, additional family members \$5.00 per member per year.

Club meetings are normally held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Imperial Park Sugarland Recreation Center at 234 Matlage Way, Sugar Land TX, 77478. Check the above website for any possible changes.

**BVARC** amateur radio testing has resumed. It takes place typically on the Saturday before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 10:30 AM. Location: Bayland Park Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet, Houston, 77074. BEFORE GOING, please check the BVARC website for any changes.

A Public Service Net is held each Monday at 8 p.m. on the 146.94 (minus offset, PL 167.9 tone) repeater.

A rag chew net is held each Wednesday at 7 p.m. on 3910 KHz +/- 3 KHz.

To obtain information about joining **BVARC** or its activities, see the BVARC website: [www.bvarc.org](http://www.bvarc.org)

Other contacts include:

President:, Mike Hardwick, N5VCX, [n5vcx@att.net](mailto:n5vcx@att.net)

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JP Pritchard, K5JPP, [jppnews@comcast.net](mailto:jppnews@comcast.net); Esther Pritchard, [elop@comcast.net](mailto:elop@comcast.net)

**NOTE: Officers, advertising rates, default activities and eating schedule are on the website.  
They will only be published in the Newsletter every few months.**

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**AUGUST 2020**

**BRAZOS VALLEY  
AMATEUR RADIO CLUB**

**P.O. BOX 2997**

**SUGAR LAND, TX 77487-2997**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS POSTAGE

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August 13 Virtual Monthly Meeting via Zoom. See the meeting notice citing the details.



*If your mailing label is  
highlighted in color, it's time  
to renew your membership!*