
THE FEEDLINE

Volume 33, Issue 3 The Voice of the Western Illinois Amateur Radio Club

March 2009

Hello Everyone, de WM4D

As I write this I can not believe it is almost March. Time flies when you're having fun. In an earlier note I encouraged everyone to rekindle their activity in our hobby. What can you do? Some thoughts are: Volunteer to help with Field Day or the Swapfest – perhaps become a VE and assist Mike and Arlyce. They have been carrying much of the load for the Volunteer Exam program. More Volunteer Examiners would be a great help to them. It would be a good thing if more of our club members would check into the local Adams County Emergency Net on Wednesday evenings. Danny Pease, NG9R, has been named net manager and will be working on improving participation. Do come out and enjoy our programs this year and fellowship with your fellow hams. Future programs will soon be posted on the web @ www.w9awe.org.

We had an excellent program presented by Kevin Dicks at our last club meeting on the Geographic Information System. Even though I have visited the Adams County GIS website in the past, I had not explored some of the useful tools which are available. The day after the presentation I went to the website, overlaid a

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DX & Computer Horizons October 2009

by Cliff Ahrens K0CA

As I type this, the ARRL DX CW contest is in full swing. For those of us who wonder where all the DX is at the bottom of the sunspot cycle, a quick listen this weekend answers the question. Good DX is still there. We just need to listen and tune the bands. Another great chance to work a lot of DX is during the ARRL DX Phone contest March 7-8. Now here's some highlights of DX operations planned in March.

PY0F Fernando de Noronha. Look for Bill W9VA and Jim K9PPY signing PS0F from Fernando de Noronha, an island off the Eastern coast of South America from March 3-19.

VK9M Mellish Reef. AA7JV and HA7RY are planning a "low-key, simple DXpedition" to Mellish Reef from March 22 to April 6. Their callsign will be VK9GMW. They will be active on 160 and 80m. More information on their trip is at: www.vk9gmw.com. Mellish Reef is about 900 km East of Australia. QSL via HA7RY direct with \$2 U.S. for up to three cards per envelope. They prefer you do not use IRCs. They plan to upload their log to LoTW.

D4 Cape Verde Islands. Seven German hams will be on the air from the Cape Verde Islands March 11-25. Callsigns and QSL info are: D44TXQ via DL3KBQ, D44TXP via DL1COP, D44TXF via DG3KAF, D44TXR via DL2RSI, D44TXI via DH2KI, D44TXS via HB9EHQ, and D44TXO via DJ2VO.

What seems to be an annual spring ritual is the USPS postage rate increases. U.S. postage rates are going up on May 11. The first class one ounce rate will go from 42 cents to 44 cents. Post cards will be 28 cents. Rates to Canada will be 75 cents, and to Mexico will be 79 cents. Airmail to all other countries will go up to 98 cents. For more information, the announcement is at

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virtual border of my property lines, and using one of the measuring tools calculated I could place a beverage antenna from a tree just outside my garage to the Northeast corner of my property with a few feet to spare. Check it out.

www.adamscountygis.com : Click to launch the Map Viewer, click the down arrow in the "Find" drop down box at the top of the page, select Parcel by Owner to find your property, and then you can use the various tools to do a number of tasks.

Also at our last meeting we discussed this year's Field Day. A brief Kangaroo Court was held and Bill Morrison, N9UPG, was "volunteered" to be the field day chairman. This was all in good fun of course. Bill did hit the bricks the very next day in an effort to reserve one of our top three location picks for Field Day. Unfortunately, all of our preferred locations were reserved. An effort will be made this June 01 to reserve Madison Park for 2010. Hopefully, we will announce this year's field day location soon.

The annual audit of the club books was completed on February 17th and everything was found to be in order.

One last "personal note" concerning my taking pictures of local ham stations. The few people I have contacted thus far all want me to wait until their shack is "cleaned up". In some cases this really destroys the "character" of the place. It does not have to be perfect. All I want is a shot of some of our club members at their operating positions.

Lastly, Take care and hope to see you soon.

Ken, WM4D

4 FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Ken, WM4D, at 7:35pm followed by introductions. He announced that the Treasurer was out of town. There will be a report and audit at the March meeting.

The Dec. Minutes, as published in The Feedline, were moved for approval by Mike, NA9Q, and seconded by Bill, N9UPG. Motion passed.

Mike, NA9Q, chair of the repeater board, stated the work on the antenna on the Channel 7 tower is still on the agenda.

Old business:

The dinner meeting was attended by 42. Bill, N9UPG, volunteered to reserve the same room for 2010. The tentative date is 9 Jan.

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www.usps.com/prices/pricechanges.htm. It's not too early to start including the new postage rates in your QSLing.

The Rochester ARC is hosting another W0DXCC and Contest central convention on July 18, 2009 in Rochester, MN. They hope to feature a report from the K5D Desecheo DXpedition members. For more information, see <http://www.w0dxcc.com/>.

The ARRL's Century Club Awards Web log covers DXCC as well as other ARRL awards and certificate programs. It's a good source of information about updates to DXCC, the Logbook of the World (LoTW), Triple Play Award, and many others. The URL has recently changed. Check it out at:

<http://www.arrl.org/blog/Century%20Club%20Awards>

Thanks to the ARRL DX Bulletin, the Daily DX and the Ohio/Penn DX bulletin for some of the information in this month's column.

73 and good DX, Cliff K0CA

Club wants old Memorabilia

Do you have any old photographs of club members or club functions? Maybe old newsletters? Articles written by previous or current members? Or even old membership rosters. If so, please contact Todd AB9QW as the WIARC would love to borrow these items to scan for the WIARC archives. Photographs may be in digital format or more likely old style prints. If you would care to scan the photographs and forward them on, that's fine. Otherwise, if they could be borrowed for a week or so the items could be scanned and catalogued, then returned. Todd email is toddc@psba.com or call 223-4605.

For Sale

Todd (AB9QW) has Aerial Targeting material available. This is a 12" wide white material used to lie on the ground for reference points during aerial photography fly-overs. You can use this stuff to form your call letters, see the "Upcoming events" column. You will need about 40 linear feet of the material per 10 feet high letter. \$5.00/letter. Contact Todd at toddc@psba.com or 223-4605.

The class has 3 studying for Extra and 3 for Tech.

New business:

Mike, N9GXW, reported receiving a "thank you" letter from the school for our help during last year's races.

Mike, NA9Q, asked about the status of the equipment donated by an estate. Danny, NG9R, said it is still pending, awaiting the return of the executor.

The Field Day location tentatively will be in a city park. Bill, N9UPG, is chair with help from Mike, NA9Q. Mike, N9GXW, moved to reimburse Bill for up to \$50 for the park rental. Seconded by Ben, WM9DX. Motion passed.

There was discussion about keeping the roster up to date and distribution of membership cards. Ken, WM4D, will follow up.

Mike, NA9Q, stated there will be a test session at 9:30 am at the Red Cross on 7 Feb.

There will be another test 10 Mar. for those completing the class and anyone else who desires at PSB & Assoc. at 7 pm. There will be more tests 9 May & 8 Aug.

Mike, NA9Q, moved the President appoint a net manager who will ensure regular net operation. Arlyce, NB9Q, seconded. Motion passed.

At 8:40 pm it was moved for adjournment by Danny, NG9R, and seconded by Ben, WM9DX.

We adjourned.

Any errors or omissions are the responsibility of: Your Secretary, Ed, W9NTG

Dues for 2009 are Due!!

If you have not already done so, 2009 dues are due by the March meeting. Any current member not paying their dues by then will be removed from the membership roster. Dues can be paid at the club meeting or via the club mailing address; WIARC, PO Box 3231, Quincy, IL, 62305-3132. Checks should be made out to WIARC.

Dues are \$20 and a family with more than one members gets a reduced rate of \$20 for the first member and \$10 per additional family member in the same household.

Top Ten Signs you are on a road you shouldn't be on

- 1) Only signs say "Township Maintenance Ends" and "Open Range Livestock"
- 2) Ruts are dated....1926
- 3) All the houses you pass have only 4WD pickups in the driveways
- 4) The only driver you meet stops and asks you for directions
- 5) People in the last house you passed stood and watched you with their hats removed.
- 6) Deer in the road don't move because they've never seen a car before.
- 7) Sign on the lane you passed says, "Don't nobody live here, and Don't Ask!!"
- 8) Mailboxes have hitching posts
- 9) Only tracks in the road are hoofprints
- 10) Graffiti on the tree trunk says, "Osama was here"



"Year of the State QSO Party" update:

A whole bunch of state QSO parties are "water under the bridge". Vermont, Delaware, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi and North Carolina. Participation was pretty good in some (MN and NC), fair in others (LA and MS), and pretty pitiful in others (DE and VT).

There were quite a few HI and AK stations on for ARRL DX as well. Check the ARRL web for rules for this year-long event.

Digital Television in Quincy, part 3 de K2PEY

Changes after February 17, 2009 shown below:

Quincy	KHQA	4.89	same	7-1,2	7	174-180
Quincy	WGEM	3.55	same	10-1,2,3	10	192-198

There is a "low power" analog translator station broadcasting on channel 18, W18CJ, licensed to Three Angels Broadcasting Network, Inc. Based on FCC data their antenna appears to be on the WTJR tower. FCC rules allow W18CJ to continue broadcasting in analog after February 17.

Low cost digital converters began to come available in January 2008. I ordered my first \$40. coupon from the Government then. It arrived in late March. Two days before it arrived, Walmart had a large supply of converter boxes. I delayed a day in trying to buy a converter and found their supply depleted. Neither Radio Shack nor Best Buy had any, either. Apparently ZIP code 62301 mailings were made en masse.

I purchased the RCA DTA800 Digital TV Converter Box (with coupon about \$10.) and the RCA Performance Series Indoor Antenna (\$8.97). It's all you need to be receiving digital TV signals in Quincy with an older analog TV set. Indoor reception in a second floor bedroom was very good for all stations. The converter box comes complete with a remote control, RF coaxial cable (box to TV), Quick Start Guide and User Manual.



The two photos above show the converter box in operation. The small antenna is connected to the From Antenna type F connector on the rear of the box. Also on the rear is an Output to TV type F connector which goes to the TV using the supplied cable. I set the converter box to output the analog signal on channel 4 by means of a small switch on the rear (ch3 or ch4). The TV was tuned to receive on the same channel (ch4 in my case). From then on all channel selection is done with the remote control supplied with converter. Follow the instructions in the User Manual for initial setup of the converter box.

The picture on the left has a signal strength page selected from the menu. It permits rotating the antenna for strongest reception. At 72%, as shown, the received signal is an estimated 33 dB (more than 1000 times) above the digital threshold. The picture on the right, courtesy of KHQA-DT, shows optional information available about the program. The program information is sent along with TV picture using Program and System Information Protocol (PSIP).



The photo above shows the rear of the converter and the antenna. The loop is used for reception of UHF signals and the adjustable dipole is used for VHF reception. There is a high pass/low pass circuit inside the antenna base for multiplexing the two antennas to a common output. In addition to an RF output (ch 4), the converter also provides demodulated audio and video. It can be very useful in allowing the old VCR to record new digital programs.

Limitation: The RCA DTA800 does not provide a bypass function. In order to receive analog over-the-air signals such as Quincy channel 18 (W18CJ), it is necessary to manually change the cables. If bypass is important in your application, find another converter, such as the Zenith DTT901. The WGEM website lists 14 converters.

When connection is required to a really old analog set which has no type F coaxial antenna connection on the rear, only 300 ohm screw terminals, it will be necessary to purchase a 300 ohm/75 ohm balun.

Antenna Requirement Summary

Antenna selection is the most difficult decision because of the many associated variables such as: distance from the TV transmitter, elevation, blockage due hills or buildings, local interference. The only sure approach is to conduct a test before making a final setup. Here are some suggestions related to the Quincy area:

Within 10 miles of the TV transmitters: a small indoor antenna will likely be satisfactory.

10 to 20 miles out: Try the small indoor antenna first, but expect that a small outdoor antenna at say 15 ft. may be needed (remember, higher is always better).

20 to 40 miles out: Expect that a medium size outdoor antenna at about 30 ft. will be needed.

40+ miles out: Heroic measures may be needed: a large antenna with a collocated low noise preamplifier at a minimum of 30 ft., placed in an optimum location in the local area. The preamplifier, costing between \$30. and \$60., will effectively negate the feedline cable loss, thereby permitting best antenna placement as determined experimentally.

Late Breaking News

On the evening of December 10, 2008 the U.S. House of Representatives approved a new DTV Transition Bill which specifically directs the FCC to develop and implement a program by Jan.15 to encourage and permit where technically feasible, the continued broadcasting of analog signals with DTV education information and emergency messaging after the Feb. 17 transition date. The program will be in effect for a 30-day period beginning Feb.18.

The bill passed the Senate in November and now goes to the President for expected signature.

The final chapter has not yet been written.

Epilogue

Since this article was written on December 17, 2008, the US Congress voted to extend the transition date from February 17, 2009 to June 12, 2009. Despite this vote, however, many television stations have decided to terminate analog transmissions much sooner than June 12th.

In Quincy, analog transmissions from three of the four major stations has stopped. WTJR ceased analog transmission on January 20. WQEC and WGEM ceased all analog transmission as originally planned on February 17. The FCC denied KHQA permission to terminate analog transmission as planned. As a result KHQA will continue analog through June 12th.

Coupons for converter boxes are now available through March 31st or while the supply lasts.

This information is based on direct communication with KHQA, WGEM and WQEC. WTJR's web site stated their discontinue date of January 20th.

73, Joe K2PEY

Addendum de N9JF:

As K2PEY noted in this installment, there are antenna requirements for the new HDTV system for those of us "out in the boonies". Since the change-over on Feb 17, we have no useable signal from Channel 10, a condition also noted by several of our neighbors. Part of my assignment for this weekend is to check the connections to our outside antenna (a rather modest commercial model mounted only 20' or so above the ground). If it isn't up to the task, there is a better one (I forget where I got it....) parked on the roof of the house, along with the other VHF/UHF antennas. I'll try it at whatever height it needs to be, though I sure hope it doesn't have to go up at 110'!

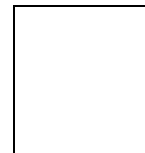
W9AWE – W90AB
The Western Illinois Amateur Radio Club, Inc.
WIARC homepage: <http://www.w9awe.org> e-mail to w9awe@qsl.net
WIARC email reflector: wiarc@mailman.qth.net

Sponsors of
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All voice repeaters use 103.5 sub-audible tone
APRS digi-peater W9AWE-1 on 144.390 Quincy
Digi-peater W9AWE-2 on 145.910 Quincy (ILQDX)
PacketCluster© node W9AWE on 144.910 Quincy

ILLINOIS QSO PARTY

Newsletter input due by the 20th of the preceding month
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March meeting: Wednesday, March 4, 2009.
Blessing at 14th, 7:30 PM, conference room C in the
basement adjoining the cafeteria

2009 dues due!!