



THE SIGNAL



Newsletter of the
Bella Vista area Radio Club

**Arkansas' Largest
Amateur Radio Club**

- **NOVEMBER MEETING –**
History of the
Fayetteville Radio Shack store
- Annual Christmas
and Awards Banquet nearing!
- A Christmas Story – Shep Style
- CW Series #2 of 4 –
Learn CW in 2025?
- To Upgrade Or
Not To Upgrade Your License?
- DXCC DEN: South Georgia Island

December 2024

Monthly Meetings: 1st Thursdays @ 7 p.m.
 Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy (ALETA)
 3424 S. Downum Road, Springdale AR
(HAM 101 Workshop for Newcomers @ 6pm preceding meeting)

Club Calls: N5BVA / W5NX

(Repeater Nets)

(Contesting & Special Events)

Repeaters: 147.255 +.600 khz offset, pl 162.2

444.100 + 5 mhz offset, pl 162.2

Website: www.bellavistaradioclub.org

WEEKLY NETS:

BVRC HAM 101 Net
Tuesdays @ 7 pm on the
WX5NAS Skywarn Link System:

Bentonville - 146.865, -offset, pl 103.5
 Springdale - 147.315, +offset, pl 97.4
 Fayetteville - 147.315, +offset, pl 110.9
 Huntsville - 443.625, +5 MHz, pl 97.4
 Green Forest - 145.310, -offset, pl

BVRC Legacy Net
Wednesdays @ 7 pm on the
BVRC Dual Linked Repeaters:

N5BVA/Bella Vista
 147.255, +offset, pl 162.2

N5BVA/Springdale
 444.100, +5 MHz, pl 162.2

BVRC 3830 Roundtable
Sunday Afternoons

4 pm during CST
 4:30 pm during CDT
 3.830 MHz



NEXT BVRC MONTHLY MEETING



Thursday, December 5, 2024 @ 7pm
Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy
3424 S. Downum Road
Springdale, AR

December Meeting Information



IF YOU'VE SIGNED-UP, BE SURE AND MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE 2024 BELLA VISTA AREA RADIO CLUB'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS & AWARDS BANQUET ON THURSDAY EVENING, DEC. 5, AT 6:45 PM. (DOORS OPEN AT 6:30.) LOTS OF FOOD, FUN, & HAM RADIO FELLOWSHIP, AS WELL AS **GREAT DOOR PRIZES!**

IF YOU HAVEN'T SIGNED-UP AS YET, REGISTER [HERE](#).

REGISTRATION CLOSING NOV. 27.

See you there and 73!



BOARD MEMBERS

President

Jan Hagan – WB5JAN
janhagan51@gmail.com

Vice President

Joe Hott – W5AEN
joe.hott@gmail.com

Secretary

Dana Hill – W5DGH
dana.hill1979@gmail.com

Treasurer

Marc Whittlesey - WØKYZ
almarc11@yahoo.com

Technical Officer

Tem Moore – N5KWL
temmoore@gmail.com

N5BVA Trustee

Roger Dickey – KJ4QIS
dickeyr@gmail.com

Board Member At Large and Public Information Officer

Tom Northfell – W5XNA
w5xna@arrl.net

APPOINTED OFFICERS

VE Testing Committee

Chair: Don Cooper – KC7DC
don_c@hotmail.com

Education & Elmer 911 Committee

Chair: Vinson Carter – WV5C
vinsoncarter@gmail.com

Nets Committee

Chair: Dana Widboom – KI5TGY
dcwidboom@gmail.com

Membership Committee

Chair: Tom Northfell – W5XNA
w5xna@arrl.net

Social Media Committee

Chair: Alex Smith – KI5EQK
ki5eqk@gmail.com

Webmaster

Roger Dickey – KJ4QIS
dickeyr@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor

Don Banta – K5DB
ark5db@gmail.com

NOVEMBER PROGRAM SPOTLIGHTS NW arkansas RADIO SHACK HISTORY



Once again, it was a packed house as BVRC members enjoyed a “depart from the norm” program, as guest speaker Ryan Vaughn from Fayetteville took them on a journey ‘down memory lane’.



Ryan, his wife Christina, and Vaughn family members owned and operated the Radio Shack stores in Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers, Siloam Springs, and the NW Arkansas Mall for many years.

The family business was founded by Ryan’s grandfather, Paul Vaughn. Paul served in the U.S. Navy in WWII, and upon coming home to SW Missouri he opened a TV repair store in El Dorado Springs. He and his wife then moved to NW Arkansas where he opened the first store in Fayetteville in 1971. Rogers followed in 1973, Springdale in 1975, Siloam Springs in 1977, and the mall store in 1988.

Ryan shared that he went through a lot of good times. His most fond memory was when he and his grandparents would attend the annual RS fairs. It was at these events when he was a child that he was [gladly] used as a “guinea pig” playing with each new electronic toy that was schedule to be placed on the market, and

giving feedback on which toys he enjoyed the most. What better way to have fun in assisting the RS board of directors with research and development? He stated that the most popular sale items in Radio Shack's arsenal of products were the toys.

Ryan also said at one time, RS was the leading supplier of cellphones in the U.S.

After growing up, Ryan enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and served for 10 years. He then came home to manage the Fayetteville store until he secured a position as an accountant, at which time Christina assumed managership of the store.

Radio Shack was one of the first companies to manufacture and distribute personal computers en masse, featuring their TRS-80 and Commodore 64. Ryan said to the best of his recollection, he thinks Bill Gates wrote the programs that these computers featured.

Ryan concluded the program with a Q&A session in which attendees posed excellent questions, along with our veteran ham members reminiscing with Ryan of the many trips they made to the stores and how the Vaughn family members were always kind, congenial, and helpful. The last store to close was Fayetteville, after 53 years of dedicated service. Ryan also brought some vintage Radio Shack catalogs for members to browse through to enhance their trip 'down memory lane'.

Thanks Ryan and Christina, and you're welcome back anytime.



BVRC Congeniality Coordinator Bill Durhan – KG5ZCI along with President Jan Hagan – WB5JAN present the BVRC COA to Ryan and Christina Vaughn



For our November HAM 101 Workshop, newcomers were treated to an excellent presentation by BVRC's new Social Media Coordinator, Alex – K15EQK.

Alex's workshop was on the Go-Pro HD camera, of which Alex IS a pro! He showed videos of his bicycle mobile operations, as well as Go-Pro's many usage options and accessories. Alex said the Go-Pro can also be immensely enjoyed during POTA operations.

Thanks for a GREAT program, Alex!!!

Announcing the First BVRC Santa Net !



The Bella Vista Radio Club is pleased to announce our club's next big operating event – The Santa Net! Coming this December – BVRC's N5BVA Santa Net will be on the air!

Yes, BVRC is developing and sponsoring an opportunity for all children in the Bella Vista area Radio Club's footprint to have a real-time QSO with Santa Claus this Christmas season.

The net will run on Friday, December 6, and again the next Friday, December 13.

The Santa Net will be a special net in that there will be no on-air check-ins. Instead, to participate in the net with your young children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc., check-ins for the net will be by registration. All you need do is simply complete the Santa Net registration form on the BVRC website. Persons registering will chose which date and time slot they can be on frequency to check-in to speak to Santa. The NCS will use the registered slots as a net check-in list. *Be sure and be on frequency that evening.* The Net Control Station will call you when it's your turn. This will not only enable your little ones to speak to Santa, it will also introduce them to ham radio! **THE NET WILL USE THE NW ARKANSAS SKYWARN LINKED REPEATER SYSTEM.**

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN, SO SIGN-UP NOW! Click [here](#) to go to the BVRC homepage, then click this icon to register:

If you need more information, contact the Santa Net Coordinator, Dale-W5DSL at ldddale@gmail.com or phone 479-531-3600. ***HO! HO! HO! – SEE YOU THEN!***



From the Desk of the President

As we enter this holiday season, it occurs to me that the themes of many of our holidays this season serve as an appropriate metaphor for our Bella Vista Radio Club.

Thanksgiving is all about giving thanks for the blessings and bounty that have come our way through the past year. It is appropriate that we, as a successful Bella Vista Radio Club, take a moment to recognize and be thankful for the growth and experiences we have enjoyed together as a club this year.

Christmas is a time of celebration and, likewise, it is an appropriate time for us to take time to celebrate our enjoyment of the wonderful hobby we share together through the Bella Vista Radio Club.

Finally, New Years is a time to look forward with a spirit of growth and for planning a future year that brings the joy and satisfaction that we all hope to achieve. So too, it is a time of the year for our club to plan for future activities and events to help us all enjoy amateur radio together in a way that helps us along our journey through the hobby.

On December 5th, all these themes come together for our 2024 Christmas and Awards Banquet. During this exciting and fun evening, we will certainly be thankful for and celebrate this past year's activities and the accomplishments of our club as a whole and several of our members individually. We will also look forward to the future year with the development of several exciting events and the continuation and growth of many of the successful activities we have enjoyed through the years.

I hope that you will be joining us this year on December 5th as we celebrate all our club's members in their personal journey through our hobby through their membership in the Bella Vista Radio Club.

I look forward to an evening of food, fun, surprises and fellowship as we continue our journey together through our exacting hobby!



**2024 ARRL FIELD DAY
NATIONAL CHAMPIONS
3A COMMERCIAL DIVISION**



**States Worked: 50
Canadian Provinces Worked: 10
DX Countries Worked: 14
Total QSOs: 2,523
Participants: 103
Total Points: 9,720**

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL



A reminder for everyone wanting to keep their BVRC memberships current for the coming year, the deadline for dues is March 31. The dues are \$15.00 per year (\$1.25 a month). If you have any immediate licensed family members living with you at your home domicile, you can include them as a Family Membership *at no extra charge*. You can renew your membership using any of these options:

- Personal check or money order to the BVRC Treasurer, Marc – WØKYZ via regular mail, payable to:
 Marc Whittlesey
 1 Radcliffe Drive
 Bella Vista, AR 72714
- Via PayPal by using Marc’s e-mail address: almarc11@yahoo.com. After entering \$ amount, in the next section marked *What is this for?*, enter “BVRC membership renewal”
- Pay in person at a BVRC monthly meeting

*Also note: If you are 73 years of age or older you now qualify for BVRC’s Lifetime Membership. Contact Marc at the above e-mail address and when you advise him that you have reached your 73rd birthday, your membership in BVRC from that time forward is **FREE**. You will also receive a handsome BVRC Lifetime Member certificate suitable for framing.*

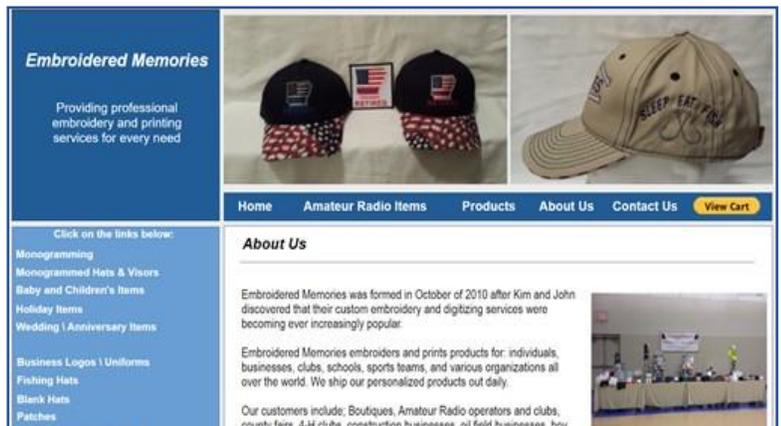
The BVRC membership form and other important information is included on the BVRC website club membership page. To view the page, click [here](#).

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

BVRC Members!
BVRM MERCHANDISE AND MEMORABILIA MAKE GREAT CHRISTMAS GIFTS!

BVRC members John Robinson - W5HB and his XYL, Kim - KD5TVX, own and operate Embroidered Memories©, BVRC’s official club merchandise supplier, which embroiders and prints products for individuals, businesses, clubs, schools, sports teams, and various organizations all over the world. They also have personalized products that ship every day.

And they really excel in amateur radio accoutrements: Callsign hats and visors, EmComm and Skywarn hats and visors, shirts, callsign etched glass blocks, metal tumblers, coffee mugs, amateur radio patches, name badges (be sure and order your own BVRC name badge!), license plates, and many other items.



Place your order today in time for Christmas! To order, click [HERE](#).



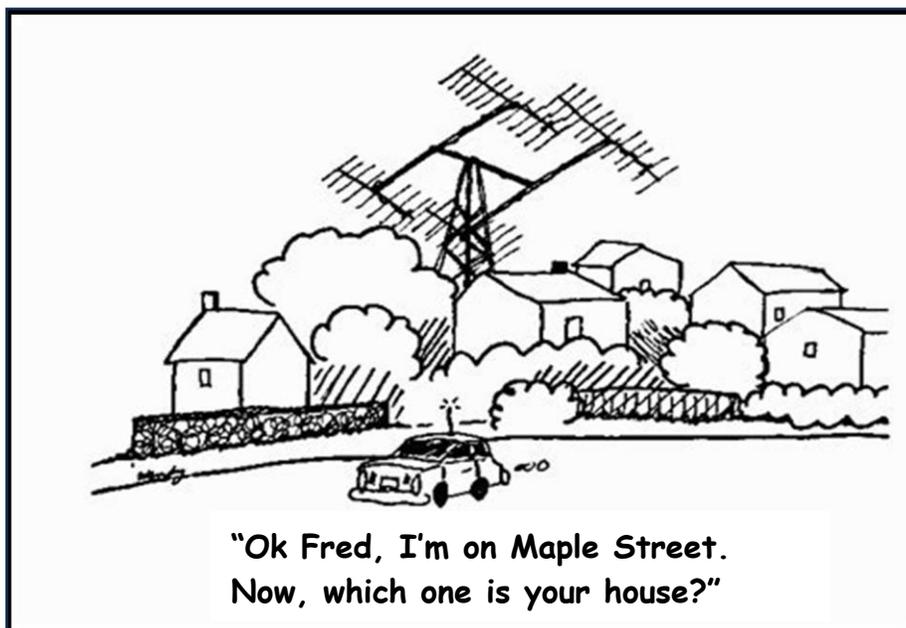
Talbert Reynolds – KJ5IKE – Rogers

Kent Lowery – KJ5ITW – Bella Vista

Mike Muenich – KJ5IUN – Prairie Grove

J.C. Biggs III – KJ5IWB – Prairie Grove

Shannon Henson – KF0SJB – Exeter, MO



BVRC VE REPORT

From Don Cooper – KC7DC

BVRC VE Coordinator

November, 2023



Congratulations!

**Kent Lowery – KJ5ITW – Bella Vista
New Technician!**

**Mike Muenich – KJ5IUN – Prairie Grove
New Technician!**

**J.C. Biggs III – KJ5IWB – Prairie Grove
New Technician!**

**Will Koertge – KC5DWK – Fayetteville
New General!**

**Charles Watts – KF0QWK – Powell, MO
New Amateur Extra!**

Next month's test sessions:

- Dec. 14, 10 am – Shiloh Museum, 118 W. Johnson Ave, Springdale
- Dec. 14, 2 pm – Bella Vista Public Library, 11 Dickens Place, Bella Vista



LEARN CW IN 2025?

By Don – K5DB



We now present the second article of our 4-part series, "All About CW".

BVRC's 4th CW Academy class will begin April 7, 2025. (More about that in next month's issue of The Signal.) We have lots of great fellowship and fun learning CW in these classes. If you would like to go to the next level in your amateur radio experience and learn the great mode of CW (Morse code), read this article. It will provide information to help you make that decision.

With the new digital modes now in our midst, I have thoroughly enjoyed one of them for the past 5 years – FT8. But don't forget the mainstay modes of SSB, CW, and RTTY are still alive and well on the bands! Of course, CW testing is no longer required to obtain a U.S. amateur license, but there are many new hams who have still learned the code because of the sheer fun and enjoyment in using it...without code readers, senders, and skimmers. I learned it 55 years ago when I was 13 years old and have loved it to this day. Perhaps you're one of the new hams who would like to do what I did, and take the plunge?

We're about to begin another new year...make it one of your ham radio goals to learn CW in 2025!

In earlier times all hams had to learn Morse code to obtain an amateur license. That all ended in February 2007, when the FCC dropped the Morse requirement for all classes of amateur licensing, resulting in an influx of new folks (with CW more or less unknown to them) into the ranks of amateur radio.

CW was dying.....at least that's what many thought!!!!

That was almost 18 years ago, and I have news for you: CW on the HF bands is FAR from dead. It has experienced ongoing use on the bands not only by veteran operators but in fact, by many who, free of the *required burden* of learning the code, have discovered on their own how much fun and how useful it can be to implement on the air.

You might say, "Well Don, now just how do you know that? Do you have anything to substantiate that there are that many newcomer no-code hams that have learned it and are using it?"

Absolutely! I have first-hand proof in my logbook. I have heard it live on-air, during the ARRL CW Sweepstakes contest, for example.

When you participate in Sweepstakes, the information you exchange with the stations you work consists of a sequential serial #, your operating class for the contest, your callsign, your ARRL section, and the last 2 digits of the

year you were first licensed. While operating during the contest, I have worked many stations that have sent me “07” through “24” denoting they were first licensed from 2007 to current. This means that they have learned the code on their own!!! Now, you may say “Yeah, right.... they’re probably using a code reader and keyboard or a skimmer for sending and receiving. True, some of them might, BUT – I’ve heard code long enough that I can distinguish when it’s being manually sent by a paddle or straight key, or if it’s being sent by computer. I am thrilled each time I work one of them during the annual Sweepstakes contest.



So, how has this come to pass? Why is this “archaic” mode of communication, a mode that has been a deterrent and/or stumbling block to so many, still around? But most noticeable of all, why is this mode now seeing such a continued and even *surging* popularity on the ham bands?

Well first, learning the code gives you a sense of personal accomplishment in knowing that compared to the population of this planet we live on, persons who know and use the code are an infinitesimally small percentage. But second, how about the mode of CW itself? An article in the December 2013 issue of QST entitled, “How Much ‘PUNCH’ Can You Get from Different Modes” denotes some very interesting statistics.

The article illustrates how the digital modes (of which CW is the oldest) are much more effective than the voice modes, especially when the bands become very busy, or propagation deteriorates.

For example, compared to SSB voice transmission, CW has nearly a 17 dB advantage on the air. That’s due largely to a more efficient duty cycle on transmission. How much is a 17 dB advantage? Simply put, the average 100-watt transceiver (and depending upon band conditions) will account for roughly somewhere between a 30- and 60-fold increase in signal strength!

You say, “Ok, but how will Morse code really help me? And, will it be worth the trouble of learning the it?” More than likely.....yes. As with anything else in life, you reap what you sow: Anything you get out of something depends on how much time and effort you want to put into it, and the amount of impetus you have.

If all you choose to do is talk thru FM repeaters (which is fine, of course), there’s no reason to pursue learning CW. On the other hand, if you’re aroused at the prospect of making contacts with other hams all over the world, having loads of fun in making lots of QSOs in a contest, desiring to pursue the DXCC, WAS, WAC, etc. awards, or having a good ol’ code “ragchew”, then CW will offer you great advantages and fun times over those who don’t – or won’t – use it.



So, let's say that up to now in this article, I have possibly "whetted your appetite" a little. How do you start learning CW? It's easy! All you have to do is devote a few minutes a day for the approximate span of a few months or so to learn the basics of the code, then apply it by practicing it on the air. *It's really that simple.*

To begin the process of learning CW, you can acquire one of the computer-based code teaching programs such as the Koch or Farnsworth method. These programs will teach you the alphabet, numbers, and a few punctuation marks and operational signals (ex: period, comma, slash, BT, AR, etc.). For more information, look at these websites:

www.ac6v.com/morseprograms.htm,
www.lcwo.net , and
www.arrl.org/learning-morse-code .

That's one method...

Or better yet.....

Two *really excellent* sources in which you can enroll in online *code classes* can be found at these links:

<https://longislandcwclub.org/>
<https://cwops.org/cw-academy/>

Either of these organizations are excellent choices to begin learning the code.



So, going on into the future, let's say you have now learned the code, made a practice contact with a club member (which is an excellent thing to do), and now you are ready to make an actual contact on the air with someone you do not know. With CW, it's either all or none. There is no such thing as "partial CW". The best way is to jump-in with both feet!



Personally, I would suggest first listening and tuning the FISTS frequencies which are + or - 50 MHz up from the bottom of the U.S. CW band (ex: 3.550, 7.050, 14.050, 21.050, 28.050. See www.fists.org). Tune until you hear someone sending at a speed of which you can copy them with 70-80% accuracy. They may be calling "CQ" at which time you can answer them as soon as they cease transmitting and begin listening for an answer (Ex: CQ CQ CQ DE K5DB K5DB.....CQ CQ CQ DE K5DB K5DB K). Or, they may already be in QSO with another station, in which case you can practice copying them until they finish with the other station, then you can give them a call (Ex: W5ABC DE K5DB K5DB K).

Ok, they answer you....now you're hooked-up with them in the beginning of a QSO. What are you going to say, and how are you going to say it?

The following CW dialog is an example of what might be said during a routine QSO with another station. (Explanations of the CW abbreviations used in this simulated CW QSO appear in bracketed **red** print. Also, the operational symbol BT (BREAK) is used a lot in CW. It is sent as one character with no pause in between characters, no two separate characters. BT in CW denotes a break (or pause) between thoughts, topics, or information categories that you are sending to the other station. BT is not necessary, but usually very helpful for the receiving station:)

W5ABC DE [FROM] K5DB. TNX FER [THANKS FOR] CALL [CALLING ME] BT [BREAK] UR [YOUR] RST [SIGNAL STRENGTH] IS 579 579 BT [BREAK] NAME IS DON DON BT [BREAK] QTH [YOUR LOCATION] IS SPRINGDALE, AR SPRINGDALE, AR BT [BREAK] HW CPY? [HOW COPY?] W5ABC DE K5DB K [OVER – YOUR TURN TO TRANSMIT]

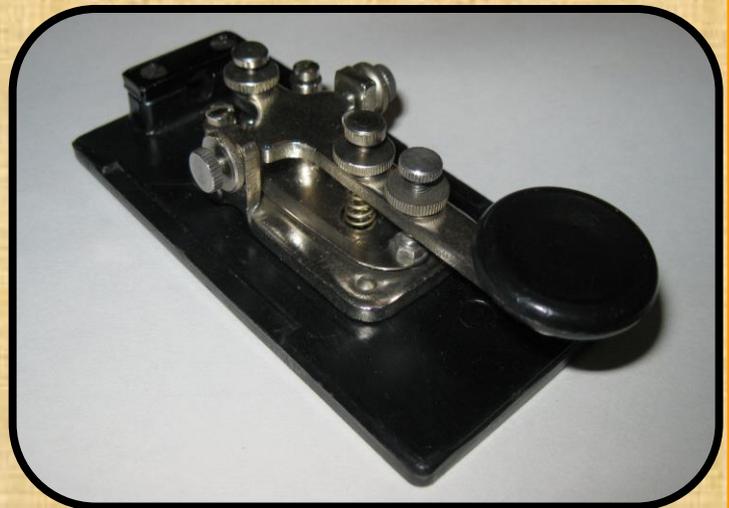
The other station will then send you back this same type of information. With this introductory phase of the QSO complete, the conversation from that point can go anywhere with any subject – your current weather conditions/temperature, what county you're in, what kind of rig and antenna you're using, your hobbies, etc.

Something important to consider during a CW QSO (or any mode for that matter): *Remember that whatever you say or send is going out for the entire world to hear.* So, don't say anything that you wouldn't want to see on a billboard along I-49 or plastered on Facebook.

In the preceding dialog, notice there is a Q-signal included: "QTH". Q-signals are used more or less for all modes, but especially CW, RTTY, PSK, and JS8-Call. Q-signals are a kind of "ham shorthand". Instead of sending a lengthy word, thought, or phrase, all you do is send a particular combination of 3 letters beginning with "Q", which stands for that phrase, thus saving extra time and effort. In this case, QTH means "my location". There are many Q-signals. I don't even know all of them, but I know the most commonly used ones.

You can view the Q-Signals list at this website:

<https://www.qsl.net/w5www/qcode.html>



Getting back to our topic, if you become interested in working DX, you'll discover as you become more proficient in CW that it is much easier to work DX stations during pileups than on SSB, with FT8, RTTY, and PSK falling somewhere in-between.

By the way, if you ever make a humorous statement that you want to accentuate with a chuckle, at the end of the statement (such as LOL in texting lingo), send: HI HI [HA HA in CW].

So, what do you think? --- Are you going to give it a try?

If it is something that grabs your fancy and feeds a passion in you for working DX, contests, or casual rag chews; if it is important enough to you to justify exerting some time and effort in learning it; and especially to develop a unique on-air conversational skill, the world of CW can be really fun and gratifying.



To be cordial but frank, over the years I've heard hams come-up with endless excuses for not learning CW. Most of the time I hear them say say, " I have tried and just can't learn it", when actually their inability simply lies in using the wrong method and/or not approaching learning the code with a positive mindset.

So, allow me to exhort you to consider learning CW as a goal for 2025. It's up to you, of course. But the pleasure and pride you'll gain will certainly be worth the effort. *You'll see.....if you'll just give it a try.*

After you learn the letters, numbers, commonly used punctuation marks, and prosigns, and start using it on-air, to keep your code speed up, to work on increasing your code speed, or to improve your copying efficiency, there's no better way to do than finding a good CW generator website, or better yet with W1AW on-air code practice broadcasts or on-line code practice files that can be found on the ARRL website. Here are the links for the on-air schedule and the files:

<http://www.arrl.org/code-practice-qst-source>

<http://www.arrl.org/code-transmissions>

<http://www.arrl.org/code-practice-files>

Whether you choose to learn it online or in our upcoming 2025 BVRV CW Academy class (info on the class in next month's issue of The Signal), *enjoy and best wishes in learning the code!*





**MY (HAM)
FAVORITE THINGS**

*(To the tune of "My Favorite Things" from
The Sound of Music.....what else?)*

Multiband yagis and beverage wires,
Bright copper ground rods
and warm amplifiers.
Paddles with magnets instead of with springs.
These are a few of my favorite things....

Rigs that have dials
and rigs that have mouses,
No deed restrictions - antennas on houses,
Working on FT - 8,
Gosh – what a zing!
These are a few of my favorite things.....

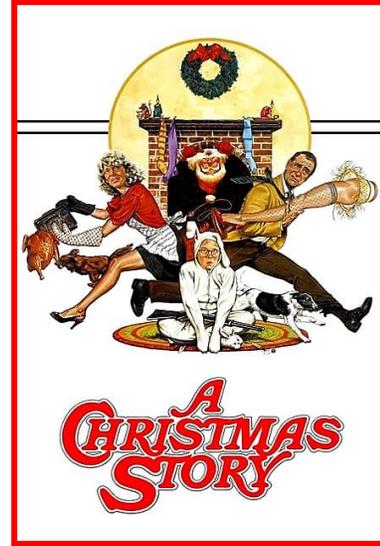
When the band's dead!
When the amp blows!
When I'm feeling sad
I simply remember my favorite things.
And then I don't feel so bad.

DXpeditions reply to my call sign,
Good propagation and sun spots and grey line,
Old Collins radio emblems with wings,
These are a few of my favorite things....

Contests and hamfests with
flea market pricing,
Relishing Field Day,
With no storms or lightning,
Multi-hop long-path the F-layer brings,
These are a few of my favorite things....

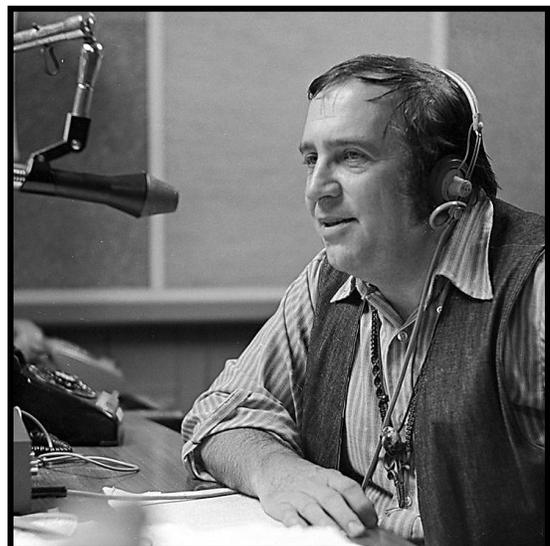
When my feedline,
Gets a dead-short,
When I'm feeling sad,
I simply remember my favorite things,
And then I don't feel so bad.....

**A Christmas Story
.....Shep Style ! ! !**



Undoubtedly, most of you are familiar with and may have watched (many times!) the movie "A Christmas Story". But, did you know that this story was written by one of the most famous amateur radio celebrities, Jean Shepherd – K2ORS (now a SK)? What you may not know, is that this story originally appeared as only one chapter in Jean's book, "In God We Trust, All Other's Pay Cash".

Shep, as he was affectionately known, also had a long running radio program on WOR-AM radio in NYC.



For All BVRC Technician License Holders

TO UPGRADE OR NOT TO UPGRADE - THAT IS THE QUESTION

By Don – K5DB

You've passed your Technician license exam and you have your shiny, new call sign. You have purchased either a hand-held radio or perhaps a 50-75 watt mobile radio for your home station (or both). You have begun to check-in to repeater nets, especially the BVRC weekly nets on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Maybe you've even gotten involved with "working the birds" (satellite communication) or even learned Morse code, purchased an HF radio and you are operating in the CW portion of some of the HF bands allotted to Technician licensees.

The question is: Are you satisfied with these operating privileges and activities? Are you aware of the additional knowledge you could gain to enjoy amateur radio even more, and all the extra frequencies and bands you could enjoy?

If you are satisfied with your Technician operating activities and privileges, that's fine and you do not have to read the remainder of this article. But, if you've been asking yourself in the back of your mind, "Is this all there is?" or "Would upgrading my license gain me enough new operating privileges to make it worth taking the test?" – The answer to that last question would be a resounding "Yes!"

Sure, using your handi-talkie is fun. Not only for repeater nets, but you can use it for fox hunting and even POTA or SOTA operation on the VHF and UHF bands, which your Technician license allows you to do.

But you won't know about the huge world of HF and all the events, modes, bands, and excitement that goes with it until you're licensed to operate those adventures.

I got my Novice license in 1969. It was good for two years and not renewable – you either upgraded or you lost the license. I could only operate CW (Morse code) on three of the HF bands. There was no 2-meters in my area.

I have always loved CW, so learning and using it was not a problem for me at all. For a year and a half I enjoyed making contacts all over the world with a Heathkit DX-40 transmitter running 75 watts and a Hammarlund HQ-110 receiver. About 6 months before my Novice license expired, I went with my cousin and my dad to Little Rock to go before the FCC examiner (we were all attempting to upgrade to General). In those days there was no Volunteer Examiner program. You had to travel to an FCC field office to take your test. The closest offices to NW Arkansas in those days were either Kansas City or Dallas. However, once each quarter the New Orleans office sent an examiner up to Little Rock to accommodate persons living in this area to take their test without having to drive the extra distance to Dallas or KC.



We all passed the General code test (13 words per minute) and written test and upgraded, heading back for NW Arkansas happy as larks. I was 15 then. Dad had gotten into ham radio after me, after seeing how much fun I was having with it. So, when both he and I were now General class license holders, and since I was just a teenager with basically no funds of my own to upgrade my little 'peanut whistle' station, dad proceeded to upgrade our station for both of us (how lucky can a teenager be?!) and we ended-up with a very nice Drake 4 line home station. It was at this time that I discovered what it means to hold a General license. I was amazed at now being able to operate SSB (phone) on the HF bands that I had only been able to operate on with Morse code. I also was fascinated with 10-meter AM (which is still going strong today on the upper end of that band).



Operating the VHF/UHF frequencies either mobile or at home can be fun, but that's just a drop in the bucket compared to what you can do with a General and/or Extra class license. Oh, by the way...I enjoyed my General license for many years from 1975-1999, and finally one day I decided to go all the way and be able to work any allotted ham frequency and mode that I wanted to. I passed my Advanced license and 20 wpm Extra class code test on a Saturday in the summer of 1999 traveling back over to my home town of Harrison and testing with my old club, the North Arkansas Amateur Radio Society. So while I was in the 'studying mode' I went to Kimberling City, MO the very next weekend and passed the Amateur Extra class written exam and acquired my Extra. I am so thankful to now have Amateur Extra class privileges. Remember, I'm just telling you the fun and sense of accomplishment in my past license upgrades that worked for me. If you acquire your General license and are satisfied with it (as many people are and there's not a thing wrong with that), don't worry about further upgrading and enjoy!

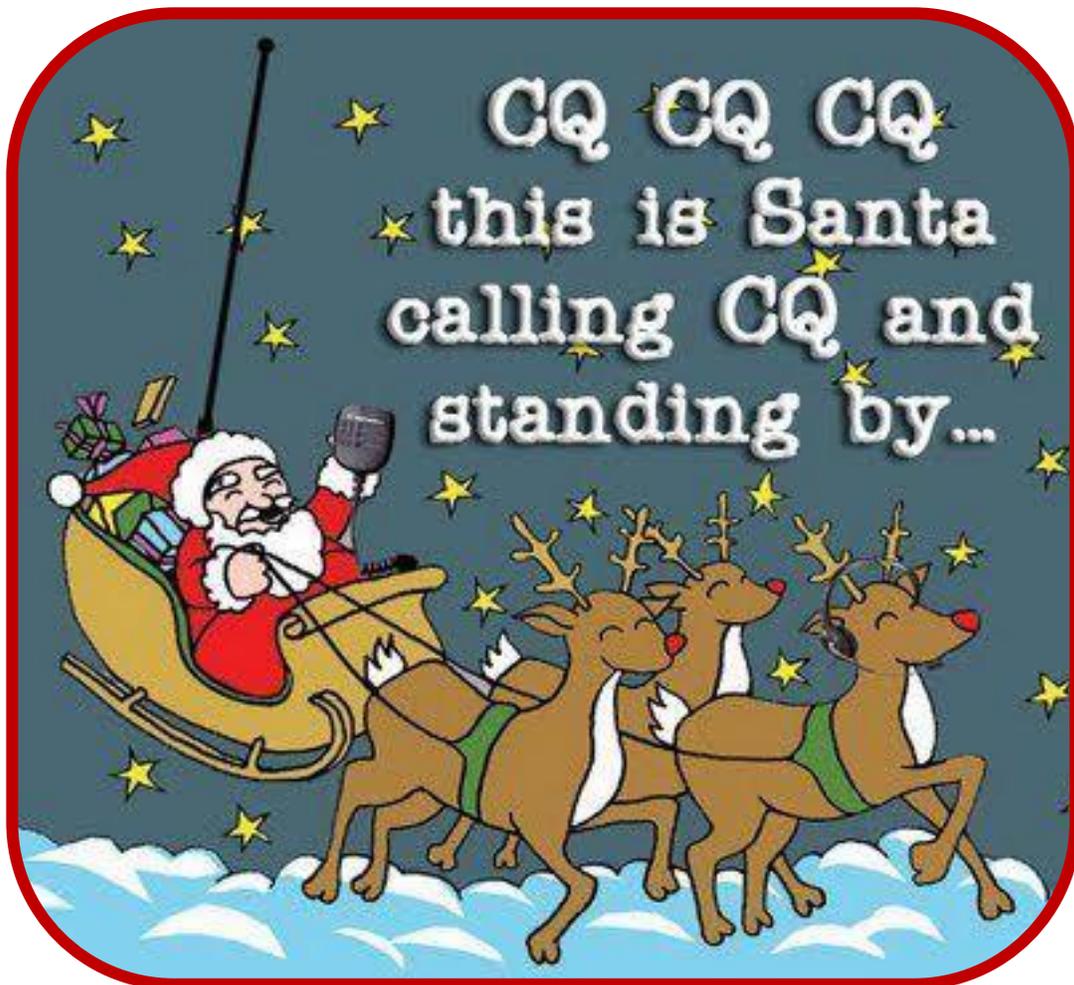
I am just relating my amateur radio upgrading experiences and the benefits I have achieved from those upgrades to hopefully encourage you to do the same.

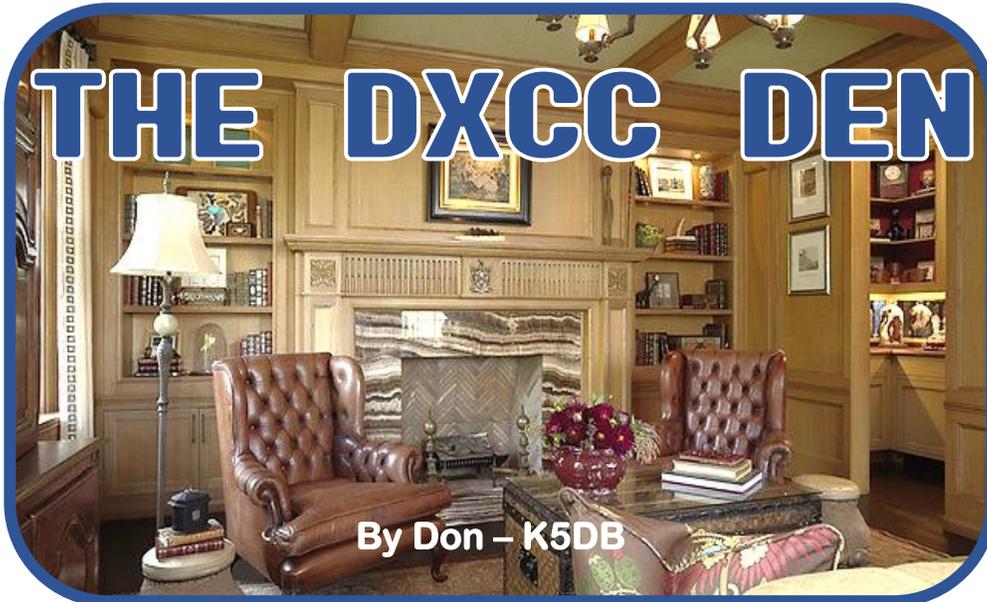
So, with this story in mind, why should you upgrade your license?

- **Upgrading opens you up to new frequencies and power on the HF bands.** – I mentioned this earlier, but it bears repeating. Yes, as a Technician you can operate the VHF/UHF bands, along with a small segment for SSB on 10 meters, and (if you learn the code) CW on 15-, 40-, and 80-meters. You also have digital privileges, FT8 for example, on 10 meters (**only**). But when you upgrade to General, in addition to your current Technician privileges, NOW you're able to operate on 160 through 6 meters with all modes! With your present Technician license, you are restricted to a maximum output power of 200 watts on frequencies below 50 MHz. Many hams have operated with 100 watts for decades and they are happy with that, which (of course) is fine. But during tough band conditions, you may wish you had the capability of boosting your power, especially when you wish to contact a rare DX station or during contests. As a General, you can now operate with output power as high as *1500 watts* on most bands. (The 30-meter band has a power restriction of 200 watts for all license holders.) This extra amount of power can make the difference as to whether you make that important contact or not at all. Whether you wish to run extra power would be your choice, of course. But as you can see, these are HUGE gains in privileges by upgrading.
- **Upgrading opens-up your understanding the art and science of amateur radio.** – As you already know, the Technician license exam unveils to you the elementary and necessary elements of FCC rules, basic electronic theory, and operating techniques. The General and Amateur Extra licenses and exam elements go deeper into operating, but also a study of all the different kinds of modes and their characteristics, antennas and the science behind them, and propagation. So, if you wish to gain more knowledge in amateur radio, acquiring that knowledge will rely upon you upgrading to the next license class.

- **Upgrading makes you a more valuable member of the team.** – By upgrading your license you can become more involved, and be more familiar with, your club operating events. You'll be more valuable because you are familiar with HF operation which in turn improves your operating skill for things such as contesting, special event stations, and a very important area – emergency communications. We all know that most EmComm groups communicate on the VHF/UHF frequencies. However, many groups do also rely on HF operation. The Hurricane Watch Net and the Maritime Mobile Net on 20-meters SSB are just two examples. Learning about emergency communications preparation will also help you with improving your home station and keep it in a state of readiness.
- **Digital Modes.** – As mentioned earlier, by upgrading you will be able to operate the hottest digital mode presently going, FT8. But there are also other digital modes that your General license will reward you with on frequencies below 10 meters. One of these is radio teletype, or RTTY, which is nicknamed by hams "Ritty". This mode has been around for decades and, although it has diminished somewhat with the advent of FT8, it is still a very popular mode with contesters. You will have RTTY at your disposal and among your General operating privileges if you so choose. Another popular mode you will be able to use is SSTV (Slow Scan Television), that is also popular with many General and above license holders.

Again, if you're satisfied with your current operating privileges and "ham lifestyle" as a Technician, there's not a thing wrong with that. However, after reading this article, you might give upgrading some serious consideration. If you decide in the positive, there are many new ham radio worlds out there waiting for you...go for it!

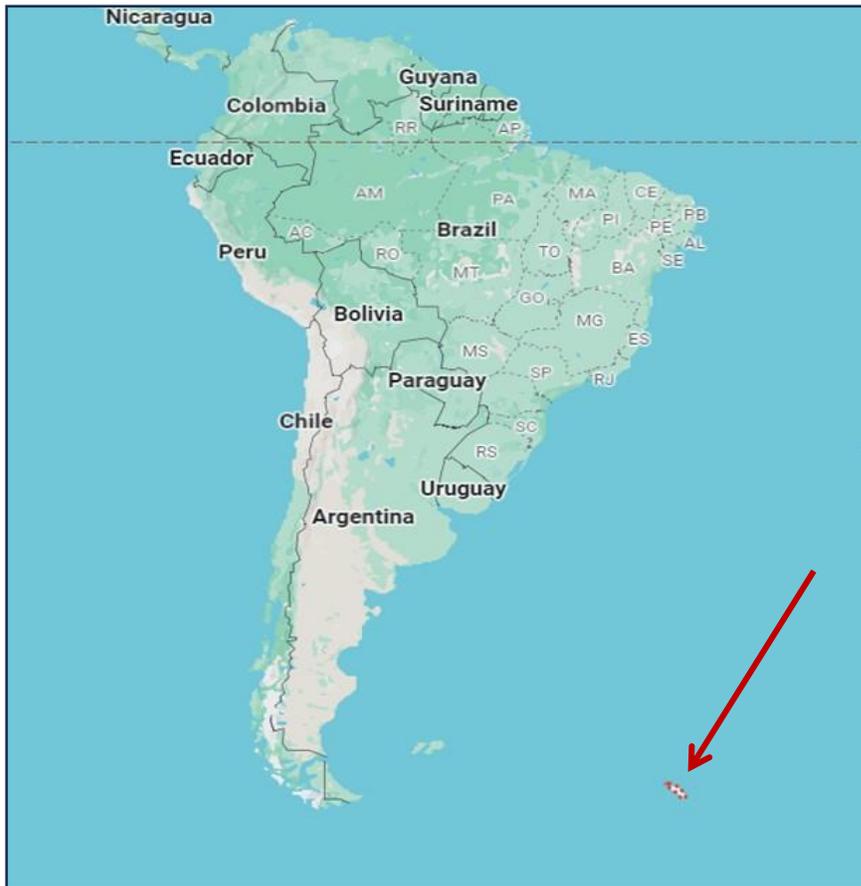




This month's featured country:

South Georgia Island
Primary Callsign Prefix: **VP8**

South Georgia Island is a British Overseas Territory in the southern Atlantic Ocean. It is located about 1200 miles east of the southern tip of South America. It is part of a remote and inhospitable collection of islands known as the South Sandwich Islands. South Georgia is 103 miles long and 22 miles wide, and is by far the largest island in the territory. A very small non-permanent population resides on South Georgia. There are no scheduled passenger flights or ferries to or from the territory, although visits by cruise liners to South Georgia are increasingly popular, with several thousand visitors each summer.



Location of South Georgia Island

The United Kingdom claimed sovereignty over South Georgia in 1775. The territory of "South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands" was formed in 1985. Argentina claimed South Georgia in 1927 and claimed the South Sandwich Islands in 1938.

Argentina maintained a naval station on Thule Island in the South Sandwich Islands from 1976 until 1982 when it was closed by the Royal Navy due to the British recapture from Argentinian forces on April 25 during the Falkland Islands war.

Although extensive whaling and seal hunting in the latter part of the 1800s and early part of the 1900s was conducted throughout the chain of islands, Toothfish (a genus of ray-finned Antarctic fish) are vital to the island's present day economy. A large colony of King Penguins also inhabit the island.

The United Kingdom now holds sovereignty over South Georgia and the South Sandwich Island chain. Executive power is vested in the monarch of the United Kingdom and is exercised by the Commissioner, a post held by the Governor of the Falkland Islands. On the island itself, government officers manage vessel visits, fishing and tourism, and represent the government 'on the ground'. A summer Deputy Postmaster runs the Post Office at Grytviken during the tourism season. As no permanent inhabitants live on the islands, no legislative council and no elections are needed. The UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) manages the foreign relations of the territory.

South Georgia is mountainous and largely barren. Eleven peaks rise to over 6,600 feet high, their slopes furrowed with deep gorges filled with glaciers, the largest being Fortuna Glacier. The highest peak is Mount Paget in the Allardycce Range at 9,626 feet.





VP8SGI DXpedition - 2016

Amateur radio activity from South Georgia has been sparse in the last couple of decades, due to the severe weather patterns that encompass the island (much like Bouvet Island).

The climate is classified as polar and the weather is highly variable and harsh, making it a tundra in the Köppen climate classification. Typical daily maximum temperatures on South Georgia are 32°F in winter (August) and 46°F in summer (January), although severe wind chills from westerly winds that blow throughout the year can occur, interspersed with periods of calm.



The Braveheart served as transportation for the VP8SGI team

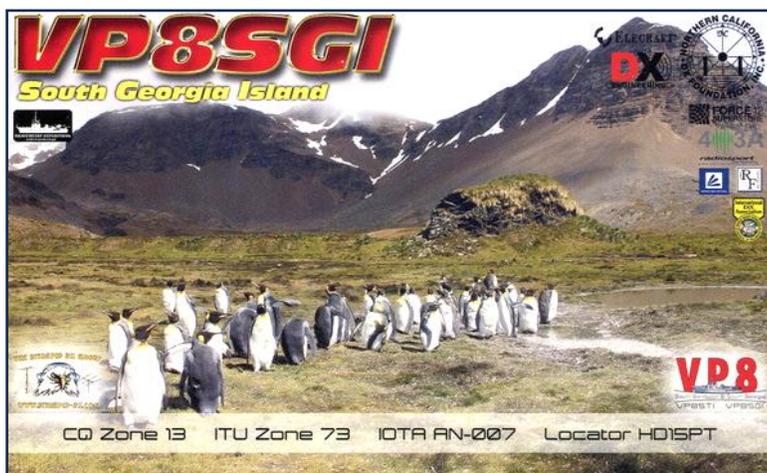
Because of these conditions, only two DXpeditions have ventured to South Georgia in the past 22 years, VP8GEO in 2002 and VP8SGI in 2016.

The VP8SGI operation, conducted by the Intrepid DX Group, also included a twin operation from South Sandwich Island. Between the two operations, the team garnered 137,000 QSOs.

To see an excellent video of the VP8SGI DXpedition along with the horrendous wind conditions they had to endure at times, click [HERE](#).



Another future DXpedition to South Georgia is presently not in the works, but keep watching the DX web outlets so you can prepare to seize this rare DXCC entity.



My QSL from the 2016 VP8SGI DXpedition

As we near the Christmas season and the conclusion of 2024, we would like to keep with tradition as we have each year of this newsletter and conclude this issue of The Signal with the following excerpt from the 1947 motion picture "The Bishop's Wife" (modified for amateur radio):

The Empty Stocking

Tonight, I want to tell you the story of an empty stocking:

Once upon a midnight clear, there was a child's cry. A blazing star hung over a stable and wise men came with birthday gifts. We haven't forgotten that night down through the centuries. We celebrate it with stars on Christmas trees, with the sound of bells, with carols, and with gifts.....but especially with gifts. You give me a new set of headphones; I give you a new dual band HT. Aunt Martha has always wanted an I-tablet and Uncle Henry can do with a new FT-710. We forget no one, adult or child.

And all the stockings are filled. ----- All that is.except one.

And we have even forgotten to hang it up. The stocking for the child born in a manger. It's His birthday we're celebrating, you know. Let us never forget that

And let us ask ourselves what He would wish for most. Then, let each of us put in their share - lovingkindness, warm hearts, and a stretched-out hand of tolerance. All the shining gifts that make peace on earth.

*Have a very Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah,
and a blessed and prosperous 2025.*

Don-K5DB, editor

THE SIGNAL newsletter is published monthly for members of the Bella Vista Radio Club. BVRC denies any responsibility for the accuracy or content of articles published herein. The opinions expressed are solely those of the authors. BVRC neither necessarily endorses nor opposes said opinions, brand names, products, businesses, organizations, etc. Submission of any amateur radio related articles is encouraged and welcomed. Submit your article to the editor: Don Banta-K5DB, 3407 Diana St., Springdale, AR 72764 (or E-mail to: arsk5db@gmail.com) for publication in THE SIGNAL. The deadline for articles is the 10th of each month.