

The Radio Hill Gazette

January 2015

Table of Contents

From the Editor.....	2
Go for the goal.....	3
USB to Serial adapters.....	4
Club roster information request.....	6
Trading post, things for sale or trade.....	7
Calendar and things to do.....	7
January.....	7
Looking ahead.....	7
VE Testing Results.....	8
SARC Email Reflector.....	9
Club Nets.....	9
Club Meetings.....	9
Club Officers – 2014.....	9
Club Committees.....	9
Schaumburg Amateur Radio Club.....	10

From the Editor

Welcome to another edition of the Radio Hill Gazette.

Another year dawns, and I hope you had a successful 2014. I tried to make 2014 a year of operating, of getting on the air, and doing something new.

We had the year long Centennial QSO Party and W1AW working from every state and most US territories. How did you do, did you contact them all? Did you make contact with the more than 200 ARRL staffers who were on the air handing out points? This was a once in a lifetime activity (unless you live for another 100 years!) that put life back into the US Amateur Radio operators, and many abroad.

I had a few milestones this year, like achieving my DXCC (more on this later), working pileups as W1AW/9 (IL) and along the way I logged over 9,000 QSO's.

What goals do you have for 2015?

Anthony
Editor, RHG



Go for the goal

Anthony Willard
AB9YC

Goals are a wonderful thing, and when they coincide with an achievement you can share with others, it's all the more special.

With 87 confirmed DXCC entities at the end of 2013, I made it a goal for 2014 to achieve my DXCC, that is confirmed contacts with 100 DX entities. This wasn't something that I was actively pursuing in 2013, but once I began watching the confirmations, it was clear that it could be done, even with my modest station (100watts, dipole, vertical).

It seems that counting countries is a wasted effort, like watching paint dry, or grass grow. But, when you start to get close, every contact, every QSL gets close attention as you try to advance your tally. It was no different with me. At the end of September 2013, I only had 81; I added 5 more in November, but only one in December. At that pace I was certain to complete 100 by mid 2014.

January 2014 only brought one new country, and that was in the third week. February was a bit more productive with 10 new countries. And there I stayed for over two weeks, with nothing new in the logs, and not hearing anything new on the bands. March arrived with a slow start, like January, and I managed two new countries, but had to wait for the LOTW QSL's before I could get too excited. It turns out that those contacts promptly uploaded their confirmations – I was ecstatic! I quickly filled out my DXCC application and submitted it for review – woo hoo!

April came and brought my official DXCC award certificate, which proudly hangs next to my operating position.

Since that time, I've continued to pursue DX contacts and have been working very hard to extend my range. As of this writing, with a combination of LoTW confirmations and QSL cards, I now have 150 DX entities accounted for. I still have QSL cards and contacts outstanding for another half dozen new entities, and I hope they will show up soon.

All this goes to show, if you stay at it, you can achieve it.

Anthony

USB to Serial adapters

Matt AC9IG

I recently attached my HF rig to my PC through an RS232 (serial) port. This was done with the intention of simplifying logging and has done so quite well. No longer having to worry about if I entered the correct frequency as I scan the band to make a few contacts has no doubt helped to make sure I get a few more things checked off on my WAS and DXCC progress.

While this is the only way that I've used the radio-to-PC connection so far, there are plenty of other uses for this setup. Digital modes make use of rig control through this connection to select frequencies and in some cases to key the transmitter. Also, using a DX cluster to spot QSOs can be used in conjunction with your logging software, making it as simple as clicking on a spot and having the radio automatically tuned to the right frequency.

While I have very much enjoyed the logging convenience this has brought me, it took some effort to get to this point. The first obstacle to overcome is that modern PCs lack a serial port. One solution to this is to get a PCIe to serial card and put it in your PC. This requires opening your PC and that's a task that just about any Ham should be fairly comfortable with. A second option would be to purchase an Ethernet to serial gateway. These devices are typically used in industrial environments and thus are fairly expensive. I use them frequently at work and have had a lot of success with them. I, however, chose the third and typically least expensive option. A USB to serial adapter.

Regardless of the solution that you choose you'll also need a DB-9 cable. You'll need to take a few notes on your hardware in order to get the correct cable. First look at the back of your rig and note the gender of the DB-9 port (a male DB-9 connector is pictured right). Next, look through the manual (or search the internet) to determine if the radio requires a null-modem or straight-through cable. A null modem cable swaps the transmit (pin 2) and receive (pin 3) lines from one end of the cable to the other. A straight-through cable does not. Finally, the PC side of the cable will always be a male port. With this information in hand you should be able to select the correct cable for your application. Note that it's also possible to purchase both null modem adapters and gender changers inexpensively for these cables in case you are unsure of your configuration.



The physical installation is fairly straight forward. Install the drivers provided with the adapter, plug it in to a USB port, and plug it into the radio. I did this, fired up my logging software (DX Labs Suite) and pointed the software at the new COM port. You can find what number the new COM port was assigned to in Windows' Device Manager. My frequency was now showing up automatically in my logging window, and changed as I spun the dial on the radio.

This was great! Until I keyed the rig for the first time. The software froze and the computer could no longer see the COM port. After a bit of troubleshooting and a reboot I had the connection up and running again. It was at this point that I realized that my S meter was nearly pegged on 20M when it

typically hovers around S3-S5. Disconnecting the DB-9 connector brought the meter back down to the usual level.

These problems pointed me at two possible issues. First, the crash when I keyed the transmitter suggested a problem with RF on the coax. This is something I had suspected previously as I would get intermittent interference with my PC's monitor when keying the rig, before I re-routed some cables. I'm working on a balun solution as more permanent solution to this problem. For now I wrapped both the USB cable and the DB-9 cable in through a ferrite bead, as close as possible to the adapter as I could. This has eliminated the problem for now.

The second problem was a bit more of a hunch, but I believed it was a ground loop. When I first attached everything, I realized that the PC had not been tied into the station's ground. I fixed this issue, and the S meter was back to normal. My curiosity, however, got me looking a bit more into the construction of the serial adapter and where the ground loop might be present. What I found (on all three adapters that I checked) is that the shield of the USB connector is not electrically connected to the shield on the DB-9 connector. It turns out that the DB-9 connector is allowed to float, and the shield on the USB connector is attached to pin 5 (ground) of the DB-9 connector. I suspect that this is a side effect of the RS-232 specification requiring a minimum of a $\pm 5V$ minimum swing for high and low voltage levels. Note that USB does not make -5V available so an inverter circuit needs to be integrated into this device.

A final note about the USB to serial adapters discussed in this article. After a few days of using this connection I noticed that the PC would no longer identify the adapter. This happened multiple times, even if I had not used the PC. By searching the internet I discovered that there are two vendors of the chips inside these adapters. One is made by Prolific, and was in the first two adapters that I used. Between these two adapters I have always been able to connect to industrial serial devices at work. But I typically wouldn't leave the connection on for days at a time. I found that the chipset manufactured by FTDI is much more reliable. I have replaced the one connecting my PC to my rig with one of these and not had the adapter shut down on me since.

Matt, AC9IG

Club roster information request

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are still trying to get information for the club roster. The information will be published only in paper form to prevent creation of spam emails etc, but will be useful to you and other members of the club, when you and they could use help in learning something. The spreadsheet requests the following information. If you don't want to provide all, you don't have to. (Actually, I was just looking at the list below, and I see it does not include offspring. It is possible that they could also benefit from knowing others from within SARC, as well.)

The info you send will not be on Google groups if you send it only to him, and thus it won't be available to anyone else (except the NSA, and they already know all about you.)

Name, Call Sign, License Class, First year licensed, SARC Committee Positions (current), SARC Committee Positions (former), Ham Radio Interests, Spouse Name, Home Address: City, State, Zip Code, Email Address, Home Phone, Cell Phone, Work Phone, Employer, Occupation, Former occupation, Other Interests or Hobbies, Special Abilities

Please send your information to Jim at mccannj706@gmail.com. Let's make a Roster that can be really helpful.

73 de N9MVO,

Rob

Trading post, things for sale or trade

For Sale: WTB ADMS-2E Programming Software and Cable for Yaesu FT-2600 2 Meter FM Transceiver. Contact Ray at w9rap@yahoo.com or raymond834@aol.com.

Calendar and things to do

January

Breakfast at Maxfields	3
ARRL RTTY Roundup	4
Board of directors meeting	7
NAQP, CW	10
Holiday Party	15
NAQP, SSB	17
EmComm Roundtable	17

There are plenty of contests this month operating in many modes on various bands, so find one and listen in. Check out <http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/weeklycont.php> to see what's coming up.

Looking ahead

Cruise	2016
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VE Testing Results

Results for December 6, 2014
 Next Test January 3, 2015
 Park District CRC; Sr. Center;
 Sunshine Room.



CLASS	NUMBER TESTED	NEW LICENSE or UPGRADE
Technician	2	2
General	5	4
Extra	0	0
Total	7	6

New/Upgraded Licenses:

****Technician****

Ryszard Puskarz KD9CRR
 Kenneth Kociolek KD9CRT

Robert Rauschert KD9CRS
 Jay Williams KD9CLS
 John Sargent W2DNN

****General****

Angelo Ralle KD9CLT

****Amateur Extra****

The SARC-sponsored VE exam sessions are held at 9:00 a.m. on the first Saturday of each month (unless it is a holiday or advised to the contrary by Schaumburg Park District) at

Schaumburg Community Rec Center (CRC)
505 N. Springinguth Road
Schaumburg, IL 60168-0251

The CRC is located at the S.E. corner of Springinguth and Bode Road, park in the North lot and enter through the North doors. Testing will be in the Sr. Sunshine Room, signs will be posted to guide the way to the room.

The fee for taking a VE exam is \$14.00.

According to the FCC, the test fee allows an examinee one attempt to pass or fail each of the three examination elements. In addition, the order in which the examination elements are taken is not restricted; they may be taken out of sequence.

As in the past, an identical fee will be assessed to any applicant who fails an exam and wants to retest at the same session. The only condition is that the same exam (identical set of questions) cannot be given to the Applicant, since all our exams are unique, this is not a problem at our sessions.

Tom Doyle K9MF
 W5YI-VEC CVE & Test Session Manager
 847-895-0174
 Email: K9MF@ARRL.NET

SARC Email Reflector

Want to know what's happening in the club? Join the club's email reflector on Google groups.

Point your web browser to: <http://groups.google.com/group/sarc-all>

Click on the Join this group link. You can use your current email account to sign up or create a free Gmail account.

You can elect to receive individual messages, a daily digest, or just read the messages on the Google Groups webpage.

Club Nets

Technical information net - Every Tuesday night at 7:30 pm. on the SARC Repeater 145.23 MHz.-600 kHz WITH 107.2 Hz PL. Bring your Q&A's

Thursday nights are the 2 meter general information net on the SARC Repeater 145.23 MHz.-600 kHz with 107.2 Hz PL. at 8:00 PM (except meeting nights.)

Club Meetings

Club meetings are held at the Schaumburg Recreation Center (CRC) on the southeast corner of Springinsguth and Bode roads. Our nets are held every Thursday (except Meeting nights) at 8pm on the K9IIK repeater; 145.23 MHz -600 kHz with 107.2 Hz PL.

Club Officers – 2014

President: Rob Glowacki N9MVO
[n9mvo <at> sbcbglobal.net](mailto:n9mvo@sbcbglobal.net)
 847-981-1481

Vice Pres. Leo Ribordy N9NBH
[leoribordy <at> sbcbglobal.net](mailto:leoribordy@sbcbglobal.net)
 847-697-7616

Secretary: Ray Parsons W9RAP

Treasurer: Albert Valdes K6K0K

Director: Steve Karson AC9EM (2016)

Director: Anthony Willard AB9YC (2016)

Director: Cliff Sowka K9QD (2014)

Director: Ray Parsons W9RAP (2014)

Director: Gary Bernstein N9VU (2015)

Club Committees

Programs	Open	RHG	Anthony Willard, AB9YC
Social Activities	Roger Ryan, W9RDR	Publicity	Open
Membership	Leo Ribordy, N9NBH	Net	Jim Brink, W9JFB
Education	Open	Technical Assistance	Ted Lester AB9SZ
Public Service	Rob Glowacki, N9MVO	Fund Raising	- Open -
Emergency Communications	Bob	Fox Hunt Coordinator	Steve Karson,
Langsfeld, WB9TZC			AC9EM
Special Events / Field Day	Dennis White,	Repeater	Rob Glowacki, N9MVO
KC9NZP			



**Schaumburg
Amateur Radio Club**

Thursday Night 8:00 Net
S.A.R.C. Repeater
145.230 MHz- 600 kHz PL=107.2
442.275 MHz +5 MHz PL=114.8
Hz

Don't forget to check into the net! It will only take a minute and will let other club members know how you sound on the club repeater. The net features current club news, weekly NEWSLINE, news from other clubs and (of course) the swap-and-shop. Encourage your friends who are not yet members to check in with as well. Keep in mind that this is an open net and we encourage everyone to check in. See you Thursday at 8p.m.

The Schaumburg Amateur Radio Club, Inc. is organized as a general not-for-profit corporation in the State of Illinois to render public service whenever applicable to the needs of the community and further various pursuits of amateur radio as a hobby. Meetings are generally held on the third Thursday of each

month. Visitors are always welcome.

Please send all submissions for the Radio Hill Gazette to the following address:

Schaumburg Amateur Radio Club, Inc.
790 Washington Blvd.
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169-3077

Or you can send by email to rhg@n9rjv.org.

We solicit letters, articles, news items, quizzes, advertisements, suggestions, and criticism – plus anything else you can think of, including ideas to improve the RHG! Please make submissions by the 20th of the month for inclusion in the next issue.

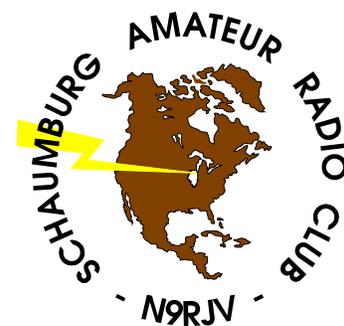
The editor reserves the right to edit submissions due to size or formatting limitations. S.A.R.C. shares newsletters with a number of other clubs. We scrutinize their publications very closely to make sure that we do not infringe on any copyrights. As a matter of form, we try to acknowledge all prior sources.

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