



February Newsletter

Volume 09, Issue 2

February 1, 2009



WOSV

*St. Cloud Amateur Radio Club
Celebrating 90 years on the airwaves*

Message from the President - The Prez Sez...

Greetings from the President, I hope that everyone will participate with the Hamfest on Feb, 14th. This is a very important fund raising event for the Club and we have had very good feedback from the participants. The more members that get involved in making the event happen the better the event can be.

I also wanted to remind everyone that World Radio is no longer a printed publication. It will have a new format in that it will be Free on the inter-

net. February CQ magazine has a link to it from their web page www.cq-amateur-radio.com.

I want to thank the crew that helped with putting up the new antenna for echolink. Thanks especially to Phil N1ARM for arranging the bucket truck and operator. When we have good teamwork we can get things done. Echolink can be a good tool to promote more activity and I know my echolink skills need polishing, maybe we could have one of our echolink skilled operators give us a short

course in the functions and the remote options available.

I am personally looking toward the warm weather ahead when we can again do some outside antenna work and even get some QRP action going locally.

We hope to see you at the meeting on the 3rd Thursday. Your attendance at the meetings provides an opportunity to provide input, fresh ideas and direction for the good of this organization.

73,
Art Carlson, WAONJR

Dates to Remember:

February:

Feb Hamfest	14th
Feb Gen Meeting	19th

Mar Gen Meeting	19th
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Apr Board Mtg	9th
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Apr Gen Mtg	16th
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May Gen Meeting	21st
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June Gen Meeting	18th
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June Field Day	27-28
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July Board Mtg	9th
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July Gen meeting	16th
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Aug Gen Meeting	20th
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Sept Gen Meeting	17th
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Oct Board Meeting	8th
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Oct Gen Meeting	15th
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Nov Annual Meeting	20th
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Dec Gen Meeting	17th
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Inside this Issue:

- General Meeting Minutes & Hamfest info
Page 2
- General Club Info
Page 3
- Board Meeting Minutes
Page 4
- The Amateur Amateur
Page 4-5

Stearns County Skywarn and ARES:

Are looking for licensed ham operators to participate in their programs. If you are interested, but are not licensed, training and testing sessions will be scheduled to help you achieve this goal. Contact Jack Maus, 320-685-8295 for further details.

January General Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order on January 15th at 7:00 p.m. by president Art Carlson, WA0NJR.

The December meeting minutes were accepted as printed in the January newsletter.

The Treasurer's report was as follows:

Checking	2,555.96
Savings	1,323.54
Rest. Savings	547.68
CD	<u>1,022.73</u>

Total Balance of \$5,449.91

Treasurer's Report was accepted.

Art discussed that the February 14th hamfest is a club fundraiser and that we need club member support in the final planning stages and during the day of the event to make it a success. A sign-up sheet was passed around to indicate how those present at the meeting would like to help out and during what times. The hamfest will be on February 14th at the St. Cloud Armory, the back doors will open for vendors at 7:30, front hall entrance doors will be open for ticket sales for the general public, but the doors to the vendor area will remain locked until 9:00. The post card invitations have been mailed out with this information.

Art is checking on getting access Friday night to the Armory for a few club members to setup vendor tables, so that they are positioned for the vendors prior to the Saturday morning rush.

Phil Jorgenson, NIARM has been working on ID tags for the vendors to wear, Art showed a sample of a Red, White and Blue arm band that club members will wear for identification at the hamfest. General public identification of paid entry is being worked on with a possibility of a SCARC Cabin Fever Reliever Hamfest pin on tag.

Please bring bake sale items to donate to the club for sale at the hamfest food concessions. Please label items, which include nuts, some plain items are good as well. We will also be serving chili and hot dogs along with beverages.

In regards to the tower construction at the clubhouse, we have gained some contacts with the city, but will hold off moving forward with gaining approval until March or April after the Hamfest is over.

Ben Ramler, KOBRLR has been operating the section net on 38.60 at the clubhouse, the club discussed the possibility of installing an antenna cut to the frequency because of the extended use for the section net. All are encouraged to join this 12:00 noon net.

Phil Jorgenson, NIARM has arranged with a contact of his to have a bucket truck and operator assist with installing the new Echolink repeater antenna at the clubhouse higher up on the pole. Tentative plans were made for Saturday January 17th around 2 pm assuming the weather is moderate. It was also suggested to anchor a pulley up high and string a rope to use for raising the center of a dipole antenna as needed in the future since we have a bucket truck on site.

Cabin Fever Reliever SCARC Hamfest

February 14th

St. Cloud Armory

Please Volunteer your
assistance if you are able to!

The computers at the clubhouse were discussed, they are slow older machines and they should be updated a little. One member offered to donate a newer machine to replace one of the computers, we are still open for donation of one or two more.

Be sure to visit
the hamfest (if your not able
to help with the event), there
are a number of
improvements this year that
we hope will make it a better
experience for all!

Art has been working on the controller for the 442.225 Hospital repeater.

Jack Maus, W0MBD had scheduled to hold classes for new hams preparing for their license test, beginning January 4th, but due to lack of interest the class was canceled. Soon some organizations will be approached about a 1 day cram session for the license test, where students read the entire book before the day and then after the learning session, a VE test session would take place in the afternoon.

The club would like to build up an inventory of test equipment at the clubhouse if there are test equipment items that you would like to donate to the club, these would then be available to be used at the clubhouse when any member is trying to test or troubleshoot their equipment.

The Skywarn group is looking for volunteers to assist in weather spotting, those joining the group will be asked to have a ham license or get one within a specific time period.

Mike Parker, KCOUEA was present and won the \$5 door prize.

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Mike Parker, KCOUEA.

**Please pay your 2009
club dues to Treasurer
Jerry Dahlager,
KCOWCF.**

Volunteer Opportunities

Hamfest —February 14th, 2009

As the hamfest approaches and on the day of the hamfest many volunteers will be needed to plan, prepare and hold the Hamfest. We look forward to this fundraising event and hope that you can participate!

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Tower Construction at the Clubhouse

At the January meetings it was discussed to wait until March or April to move forward with actions to get city approval to construct the tower. Our current focus is on preparing and holding the February 14th Hamfest. We hope to be able to begin tower construction this Spring/early Summer.

Special Thanks This Month!

Thank You to:

Brad Johannes, KBOHNN for his hardwork keeping the snow cleared for us at the clubhouse!

Phil Jorgensen, N1ARM; Art Carlson, WAONJR; Jesse Abfalter, KCOTAB, Tom Weyhrauch, KDODOS, and Lee Shipman, NOFTH for their work installing the new antenna for the Echolink repeater at the clubhouse.

Lastly, a Very Special Thanks to Ken Bloomer, the boom truck owner for providing his services and support to the club to install the Echolink antenna!

Current Board Members

President

Art Carlson—WAONJR—Elected

Vice President

Dave Leigh - WODZW - Elected

Treasurer

Jerry Dahlager - KCOWCF - Elected

Secretary

Mike Parker - KCOUEA - Elected

Trustees

Larry Snodgrass - KCOSMM (2009 - 11)

Leonard Hopkins - KCONZF (2008 - 10)

Harold Hoffman - KCOFAX (2007 - 09)

Past President

Scott Hall - NOUV

Webmaster

Phil Jorgensen - N1ARM



To join the club's email reflector and/or to include your e-mail address on the private list shared between club members only, please email Mike, the newsletter editor at kc0uea@gmail.com



Weblinks of Interest

www.maps.live.com

Images are better than Google maps, as mentioned in an ARRL article, you can search a ham call sign, copy the address and then paste into the above site's search bar, once the map finds the location, click on Bird's Eye View for closer view (Bird's Eye view not available for all areas). You can check out people's antenna farms!

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www.co.stearns.mn.us/4708.htm

Learn about Stearns County Skywarn (volunteer weather spotters), what they are all about, what they do, how you can get involved and frequently asked questions.

January Board Meeting Minutes

The January Board meeting was called to order on January 8th at 7:10 p.m. by president Art Carlson, WAONJR.

The October Board meeting minutes were accepted as printed in the November newsletter.

The Treasurer's report was as follows:

Checking	2,555.96
Savings	1,323.54
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Treasurer's Report was accepted.

Art spoke about the February 14th Hamfest. He showed a sample of Red, White and Blue armbands that could be made inexpensively for club member volunteers to wear as identification for vendors and guests to know who to speak to about the event operations. Name Badges were being looked into for vendor identification.

It was discussed to have the talk-in station near the back door to avoid uncontrolled entry at the front door where it has been located in the past. A single point of contact area could be setup in the back corner near the door, the intercom PA, talk-in, and vendor check-in could all be in one area by the back door. Outside traffic control will help vendor entry for unloading items, someone outside would issue numbers to vendors as they arrive and vendors will then be able to unload when it is their turn.

For the general public, the front entry area will be open for pre-sales, but doors to the vendor area will not be unlocked for general guests until 9 am.

The approval for the club to purchase tables for use at the hamfest was re-visited. Treasurer Jerry Dahlager, KCOWCF had looked into the prices, he will be purchasing 6 tables prior to the hamfest.

Scott Hall, NOUV, most recent president

handed off some paperwork to new president Art Carlson, WAONJR, as well as several years of club newsletters for the club to keep for historical reference.

Art indicated that the 442.225 Hospital repeater and it is currently off the air, he has been troubleshooting it. The controller is not working, potentially needing a replacement microprocessor IC.

Plans were made to re-visit seeking the city approval for tower construction at the clubhouse until after the February hamfest is over.

Any club members with keys were to report their key number to Jerry Dahlager, KCOWCF for the annual key inventory.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Mike Parker, KCOUEA.

The Amateur Amateur: One Medium Counterpoise, Hold the Anchovies

By Gary Hoffman, KBOH - Contributing Editor - January 19, 2009

Living in the suburbs and operating on the HF bands are not two mutually exclusive activities, but it often seems that way. For years now, I have been searching for an acceptable antenna solution, and it has been eluding me.

Now to be truthful, I haven't tried very hard. Most of my Amateur Radio activity revolves around local efforts for an ARES® team. I've made the occasional stab at getting my HF antenna system to function properly, but when it doesn't work, I just give up and move on to some other project.

I did have a working HF antenna system at one point. It consisted of a simple wire stretched between masts at either end of my house, hovering just a few feet above the roofline. It was connected to a SG-230 antenna coupler, which did a reasonably good job of tuning it. I also had a random length of counterpoise that ran down the eave of the roof, down to the back yard and connected to a rod pounded eight feet into the ground. I later added a second length of counterpoise that ran down toward the front yard where it meandered aimlessly through ivy, bushes and other vegetation. There wasn't much planning involved -- I just ran wires where there was room to put them.

Amazingly, this system did work. It had great NVIS propagation (Near Vertical Incident Skywave), which was wonderful for local emergency communications work. Beyond NVIS, I also manage to work stations in Spain, Argentina, and Cuba. The antenna seemed just about perfect.

Trouble with Masts

So, what was the problem?

The problem was that every time I transmitted I generated RFI in the house. The electronic devices in one room of the house would go haywire. The computer speakers would howl, the printer would have fits and the three-way touch lamp would jump from one setting to another. After my wife Nancy informed me that it was very difficult to sit down and read a book in a room that seemed to be possessed by demons, I ceased my HF activities altogether.

That was back in 2005.

I thought perhaps that the RFI problems might go away if I moved my HF wire antenna higher up the mast. I didn't get around to testing this theory, though, until I installed a new mast. Once the new mast was in place, I mounted the SG-230 box much higher above the roofline.

That didn't solve the RFI problem, so I stayed off the HF bands.



The SG-230 antenna coupler in its initial position, just above the roofline.

The Amateur Amateur: One Medium Counterpoise, Hold the Anchovies

I Want Candy

Now let's move forward to fall of 2007, just after Halloween. Nancy was raking leaves in the front yard. I was on the roof messing with the SGC antenna coupler and my wire antenna. I had decided to return it to its former location, since it had worked reasonably well there. As for the RFI, well, I figured it was unavoidable. The touch lamp had been replaced by a lamp with a manual switch, and I'd been told that computer speaker wires were notorious for picking up stray signals. Maybe I could dampen the effects with some RF filters. Even if I couldn't fix the RFI problems, I wanted to have an antenna that worked if I was absolutely desperate to get on the HF bands.

I had remounted the antenna coupler a few weeks earlier, but had left the antenna and counterpoise wires dangling from it in coils on the roof. I finished stringing the wires and climbed down from the roof.

"There's a lot of candy in the yard," said Nancy.

I went down to my basement shack and turned on my HF transceiver. I pressed the transmit key and said, "KB..."

That's as far as I got before the transmitter shut off.

This isn't good, I mused. What happened?

I keyed up again and watched the SWR meter.

Whoa! Not good at all. What had gone wrong? The antenna was back in its original position. What had changed?

Well, I had modified the counterpoise when I'd moved the antenna to a higher position months before. That must be it. Back upstairs.

The young boy from next door was helping Nancy rake the yard.

"It's his candy," said Nancy.

"My cousin and I got into a fight on your lawn last night," said the boy. "Our bags broke."

I climbed back onto the roof and moved the counterpoise. I climbed down again and said, "Don't eat any of that candy on the ground. We'll give you some fresh stuff."

"Oh, I don't need it. I've got several more bags at home," the boy told me.

Down in the basement I found that the SWR reading had not improved.

Back up to the roof. Another repositioning of the counterpoise. Another check of the SWR meter. No change.

This went on for quite a while. Normally I would have given up by now, but this time I was determined to figure out what was wrong. And while Nancy and her helper filled bags with leaves, I moved the counterpoise wire to every imaginable position. I ran it down the rain gutter. I wrapped it all over the roof. I draped it along the ground in the back yard. Nothing helped, absolutely nothing.

I sat down in my shack and sighed. Okay, random actions hadn't accomplished anything. Maybe I should try to think my way through the problem. What's causing this horrible SWR reading?

It seemed to be the counterpoise.

Alright, what *is* a counterpoise? Nominally, it's the one half of a dipole antenna.

Ding. A tiny little bell went off in my head.

Pizza Angel

Okay, I'm no expert on antennas. In fact, every time I think I've learned something about antennas, someone tells me, "Oh no. You've got it all wrong." But doesn't a dipole antenna consist of two segments of equal length?

Oh, I know. There are a million exceptions. But it was the only idea I had.

I climbed onto the roof, reeled in the counterpoise, and ran it in the same direction as the main antenna wire. I cut the counterpoise so that it was exactly the same length as the main wire, then just threw it so it lay randomly on the roof.

I went downstairs, checked the SWR meter, and got a beautiful reading. I keyed up and this time the transmitter didn't shut off.

"KBOH testing," I said.

"Read you fine in Kansas City, KBOH," replied a voice. Success!

I went back up to the roof to work out a more orderly arrangement for the counterpoise. While I was cleaning up I noticed something sitting on top of the antenna coupler. I went over to see what it was.

It was a half-eaten slice of pizza. Apparently a bird had scavenged it from someone's trash and had put it up on the antenna coupler for safe keeping.

What a day. Candy all over the yard and pizza on the roof. At least the HF antenna was working again.

I know in my heart that cutting the counterpoise solved my SWR problem. But I can't help but wonder if at least a small part of the trouble was that I kept reheating that slice of pizza.



Attaching the other end of the antenna wire.

Editor's note: ARRL member Gary Hoffman, KBOH, lives in Florissant, Missouri. He's been a ham since 1995. Hoffman says his column's name -- "The Amateur Amateur" -- suggests the explorations of a rank amateur, not those of an experienced or knowledgeable ham. His wife, Nancy, is NONJ. Hoffman has a ham-related Web page at http://www.cvil.wustl.edu/~gary/Ham/ham_main.html.

Article from: <http://www.arrl.org/news/features/2009/01/19/10570/>

Local Repeater Info

Clubhouse Phone: 320-255-1410

E-mail: webinfo@w0sv.org

E-mail Reflector:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/scarcmn/>

To send to the reflector and all those signed up for the reflector, send your email to:

scarcmn@yahogroups.com

**On the Web @
WWW.W0SV.ORG**

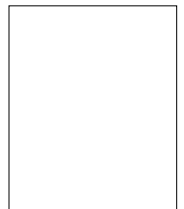
Repeater	Offset	Tone	Location
147.015	+	PL 100.0	Collegeville, MN
146.940	-	Autopatch	St. Cloud, MN
146.835	-	PL 85.4	St. Cloud, MN
147.105	+	PL 85.4	Avon, MN
224.800	-	No Tone	St. Joseph, MN
444.350	+	No Tone	St. Cloud, MN
442.225	+	No Tone	St. Cloud, MN
443.650	+	PL 85.4	Avon, MN
145.270	-	No Tone	Paynesville, MN
147.255	+	No Tone	Sauk Centre, MN
146.520		Simplex	Nationwide Simplex
146.640		Simplex	Nationwide Simplex



If you have any additions, corrections or suggestions for this newsletter, please email the editor, Mike Parker, KCOUEA at KCOUEA@yahoo.com

St. Cloud Amateur Radio Club

401 4th Street North
Waite Park, MN 56387



About the St. Cloud Amateur Radio Club

The St. Cloud Amateur Radio Club is 88 years strong! It all started back in 1921 with Robert "Bob" Witchen, WØSV, licensed as 9SV. The St. Cloud Radio Club call is registered as WØSV in honor of Bob Witchen, first licensed ham in the area. Since then, the club has grown by leaps and bounds serving in many useful ways among the surrounding tri-county area. For a more detailed history visit our website at: www.w0sv.org

