



THE FEEDBACK

Volume 03 Issue 07

October, 2003

THE AMATEUR RADIO NEWSLETTER

Laurel Amateur Radio Club, Inc.

PO Box 146 Laurel, MD 20725-0146

<http://www.larcmd.org>

email: larc@larcmd.org

Meetings and Nets:

⇒ 1st, 3rd, 5th Wednesdays:

On-the-air Net at 8:30pm on 147.225+ PL156.7 (no tone required during nets)

⇒ 2nd Wednesday:

Informal/Social Gathering at 7:00pm – Sullivan’s Restaurant; Rt. 198, at Rt 197

⇒ 4th Wednesday:

Monthly Meeting at 7:30pm - The Woman’s Club of Laurel, 384 Main Street, Laurel

⇒ Nightly:

Informal Net/Rag-Chew from 9-11pm on 147.540

Repeater: 442.500+ PL 156.7 Hz

VHF Simplex 147.54; UHF Simplex: 445.975,

Laurel Amateur Radio Club, Inc.

c/o Pud Reaver, W3YD
6516 Brooklyn Bridge Rd
Laurel, Md, 20707



FIRST CLASS MAIL

Next Meeting:



Oct 22, 2003; 1930L

PRGM: Elections, etc

THE LAUREL AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Officers:

President:	Jim Cross	WI3N	301-725-6829	jcross3@juno.com
Vice-President:	HD (Frank Scott)	K3HDM	301-773-0155	hdm@prodigy.aol
Secretary:	Open			
Treasurer:	Jerry Siegel	N3WSG	301-937-1174	j_siegel@compuserve.com
Past President:	Pud Reaver	W3YD	301-498-6293	preaver@earthlink.net

Other LARC Positions and Contacts:

FAR Representatives:	Dan Blasberg	KA8YPY	301-345-7381	ka8ypy@arrl.net
Laurel VEC:	Diane Zimmerman	AA3OF	301-937-0394	aa3of@arrl.net
LARC VE Testing:	John Creel	WB3GXW	301-572-5124	wb3gxw@arrl.net
AutoCall Reporter:	Pud Reaver	W3YD	301-498-6293	preaver@earthlink.net
T-MARC/D-MARC Rep:	OPEN			
Public Information Officer:	Pud Reaver	W3YD	301-498-6293	preaver@earthlink.net
Youth Programs:	Mark Doore	K3RAM	301-572-2385	k3ram@arrl.net
Education and Training:	Pud Reaver	W3YD	301-498-6293	preaver@earthlink.net
Technical Specialist:	Kevin Arber	W3DAD	301-725-0038	w3dad@amsat.org
ARES/RACES Coordinators:	Jim Cross	WI3N	301-725-6829	jcross3@juno.com
Official Emergency Station:	Pat Gormley	KK3F	301-864-4694	
Official Bulletin Station:	John Creel	WB3GXW	301-572-5124	wb3gxw@arrl.net
Official Bulletin Station:	Pud Reaver	W3YD	301-498-6293	preaver@earthlink.net
Official Bulletin Station:	Al Brown	KZ3AB	301-490-3188	kz3ab@arrl.net
Official Relay Station:	Pat Gormley	KK3F	301-864-4694	
Official Relay Station:	Pud Reaver	W3YD	301-498-6293	preaver@earthlink.net

LARC Special Interest Groups and Mentors:

Antennas:	Kevin Arber	W3DAD	301-725-0038	w3dad@amsat.org
Packet Radio/APRS:	Mark Doore	K3RAM	301-572-2385	k3ram@arrl.net
Repeaters:	John Creel	WB3GXW	301-572-5124	wb3gxw@arrl.net
Satellite/EME:	OPEN			

ARRL Field Organization:

Atlantic Division Director:	Bernie Fuller	N3EFN	814-763-1529	n3efn@arrl.org
Atlantic Division Vice Director:	William C. Edgar	N3LLR	814-362-1250	n3llr@arrl.org
MD/DC Section Manager:	Tom Abernethy	W3TOM	301-292-6263	w3tom@arrl.org
MD/DC Asst Section Manager:	Brian R Davids	KA3WWI	(202)366-0507	
MD/DC Emergency Coord:	Mike Carr	WA1QAA	410-799-0403	bamcc@erols.com
Affiliated Club Coordinator:	Tony Young	WA3YLO	301-262-1917	tonyy@juno.com
MDC Section Bulletin Manager:	Al Brown	KZ3AB	301-490-3188	kz3ab@arrl.net

Items to be published in *The Feedback* should be submitted by the third Wednesday of the month. Email submissions may be made to preaver@earthlink.net

The Feedback is published monthly (except December) as the newsletter of the Laurel Amateur Radio Club, Inc.

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Publisher: Mark Doore, K3RAM

PRESIDENTS' RAMBLING

Here we are on the downward spiral toward the end of the year and the end of my term as President. It's always fun to be a part of so diverse a group of people united by an interest in amateur radio.

Before you is an excellent slate of people to guide the activities of LARC for the next year. Joe Craven, N3TZA has been a member of LARC since obtaining his license in the early '90's and brings a life of experience and years of corporate history to the office of President. His son Kevin, WV3D has accepted the challenge of vice president and I believe will have a close working relationship with the president. Toby, KB3BWR will be a fine secretary and keep those minutes current. Dennis, KT3D will get a chance to test some different club software to keep the books in order. Dan, KA8YPY will continue to be our FAR rep since the president of FAR needs to be a rep from a club. Thanks to you all for taking on the responsibility of keeping the club active and moving ahead. I'm looking forward to the elections at this meeting and would like to thank the officers who have served for the last two years.

Thanks to Pud, W3YD for taking the reins of the Feedback and putting up with my late and missing articles. He's looking for a replacement editor, so think it over and let him know if you can help out there. Fresh people with fresh outlooks are the stimulation an organization needs to keep the current members interested and to attract more of the amateur community and expand our horizons.

LARC will be going through some other changes soon. I'll be meeting with city officials to discuss moving our club shack to other city premises. Originally the city thought we should be in the new public works building where we could locate our tower without any citizen complaints. I asked if we could move our station to the city EOC and they are thinking about that. It makes sense since we'd have a station available to them during emergencies and they wouldn't have to buy extra gear. It turns out that they have an agreement with the owners of the four story building behind their EOC that they can put antennas on the roof. There is also a mechanical room where we could locate the repeater with a short run to the antenna. Perhaps we could install a couple sections of tower with our beams, maybe a loop or large dipole antenna, etc. There are some exciting possibilities. They could give us a card to swipe to get in when we wanted to operate. More on this as it develops.

A few upcoming events should be noted. There are two contests that we will be working. One is the CQ DX contest the weekend of October 24-26. Note that it starts Friday night and runs through Sunday evening and we'll be talking about it at the meeting. The other big contest is the thirty hour ARRL Sweepstakes in November, where we try to work all the sections. We anticipate helping with the City of Laurel Holiday Tree Lighting and Parade again this year. It should be on the first Saturday of December. It's a fun event getting the parade lined up and started on time.

Finally, you all need to have some suggestions for our annual Holiday Banquet. We need to know if your favorite restaurant can host the group and how much they charge. This is usually held the first or second Sunday in December. If we don't get some suggestions we'll have to set up a dreaded committee to nail it down. See you at the meeting.

73, de Jim, WI3N

Nominating Committee Report

The nominating committee is very pleased to offer the following nominees for the Board of Directors of the Laurel Amateur Radio Club, Inc. for the upcoming year (2004)

President:	Joe Craven, N3TZA
Vice President:	Kevin Craven, WV3D
Secretary:	Toby Widdicombe, KB3BWR
Treasurer:	Dennis Fitzgerald, KT3D
FAR Representative:	Dan Blasberg, KA8YPY

If you would like to nominate someone from the floor, please make sure that you have their permission to do so. The election will be held at this meeting, the new officers will be installed at the Holiday Banquet, and begin their term in January.

Goodbye QRM!

By Bill Smith N3XL (*tnx for the article, Bill .. ed.*)

That noisy, annoying and, all too often overbearing, signal that you're hearing on the HF radio, that interference that is making the signal you want to hear frustratingly difficult to decipher, these can be history. The proverbial QRM can be made to disappear when an IF stage crystal filter is applied to your rig, as I recently discovered.

Since settling in on a favorite mode of operation, I have been working on the skills and station improvements that I need to be a better operator, steadily improve as a contester, and to get the most enjoyment when I sit down at the radio. Currently, CW is my primary operating mode. I made this choice for several reasons and I'll mention these reasons first, before I describe my latest discovery and the subject of this article, "Goodbye QRM".

I have to let you in on a little secret on how my once avid interest in digital modes like packet, RTTY and PSK-31 began to wane. One day when in a rush to get my 2-meter packet station operating on portable power (a car battery), I was clumsy and touched the hot lead wire of the battery to my Terminal Node Controller's (TNC) metal case and zap, I managed to fry a circuit. Well, so began my diminished interests in digital comms. Since I had already experienced packet on 2-meters, and since I had discovered that a quality sound card interface, or a replacement TNC, would add "significant" cost and clutter to my station, I nixed the purchase. Also, I have discovered and learned to apply the XYL Law, which demands getting by on the cheap and keeping clutter to a minimum.

Enter my first HF rig the ICOM 718 (with microphone and an internal CW keyer included), which is one of the competitive "starter" HF rigs coming in under \$600. At one time I had a vision of connecting my TNC to it, but that went by the wayside, as you now know. Once I hooked my new rig up, one of the first activities I did was a SSB phone (voice) contest. Having previously done a SSB phone contest at the LARC club shack under the tutelage of HD, Dennis, and others (thanks guys), I viewed contesting as an appealing way to see just how well my station was running and to see if I could rake in some DX contacts. It worked! OK, I can do that. What next? A beam - no way. An amp - nope. So I looked into CW, after all, I had struggled to pass my Morse Code qualifications, and I keep hearing about the thrill of QRP CW, and how CW at 100 watts is good for contesting, and I do like a challenge. Since giving up on my trumpet playing (unlike our fearless leader, Jim Cross who still plays the horn !!), I kinda miss doing something that I need to practice. So now I'm a FISTS member - stranger things have happened, I'm sure! I am definitely grateful for the G4FON software tool that I needed to practice my CW copy skills and for the CWGET software tool to decode those ops that are sending too fast (probably from a keyboard) for me to copy.

OK, as I said, no beam and no amp are in the equation. What about a memory keyer? Pud told me about guys who have done a whole CW contest by just pushing two or three buttons. Umm let me see. It doesn't pass the XYL law. To quote the Logikey K3 manual: "Getting Started: You will need the following with your Logikey K-3 keyer 1 3.5mm stereo plug with two wire shielded cable for paddle 1 2.5mm DC power plug, with wire to power source 1 RCA plug terminated cable to transmitter, shielded center conductor 1 Paddle 12 Volts DC - Do NOT use typical 12 volt wall style transformers" Although a memory keyer can be pretty cheap, it doesn't pass the XYL Law, and anyway, I want to develop skills not just push buttons. What about keying from my keyboard. After all, the computer is there - well at least most of the time it's right there - ummm. (Computers are power hungry too - I didn't realize this until I started looking into the power usage charts for an emergency generator.) Well, more wires and again, I'd just be pushing buttons. Let me see, is there anything else that might help? Icom has some filters that you can add to your rig that fit inside it. No clutter - maybe that's a good idea. But beware, read the manual and you will see that the radio supports only 1 optional IF stage filter. The DSP RF stage filter now comes standard with the rig and I hear that it helps out in SSB. There are also IF crystal filters for SSB too, but remember - only one optional IF filter. As the ICOM manual suggests, pick the one for your favorite mode.

To make a long story short, after considering a RF DSP filter, ruling out SSB filters, and studying the 500 Hz and a 250 Hz CW IF filters, I really just went with gut instincts on picking the narrower 250 Hz CW filter. Might as well cut as much extraneous bandwidth as possible. A CW signal is around 70 Hz wide so I figured that 250 Hz bandwidth should leave enough space to hear "most" of the stations who may be communicating with the sender. I then proceeded to put the \$175 filter on my birthday wish list and in practically no time the filter arrived, just before the FISTS CW Club Spring Sprint. I figured that the Sprint (a 2 hour contest) would be a good time to see how the new filter performed - it was.

I found that conversations occasionally occur on widely disparate frequencies outside the filter's bandwidth, but most folks get inside the 250 Hz window of the filter. Using the filter after narrowing in on a contact without the filter by using the CWGET o'scope feels very natural. I would just caution a narrow filter user to turn off the filter and see what's going in the neighborhood, especially when breaking a pile-up and you don't get a response to your call or, as I said, always when searching for a signal to zero in on. It's always nice to hear both halves of the conversations, in order to get any sense of timing of your call. On rare occasions when conversations are occurring between stations on widely disparate frequencies, your filter will work against you, if you're not careful.

To install the filter I had to remove the top cover from the radio, which is a piece of cake, take out a few screws, and disconnect a couple ribbon connectors from the IF circuit board. I then had to lift the board out and mount the new filter on the clearly labeled holes and solder its four leads - very easy.

Halleluia! After tuning in on the sender's frequency using the computer o'scope built in the CWGET software, as I routinely do, I just press the filter button on the radio and all the QRM is gone. The signal I want to hear is as clear as an FM radio. Fantastic! The weak signals are now much easier to hear, but unfortunately the CWGET decoder program doesn't seem to benefit in its decoding capability. Apparently CWGET was able to ignore the QRM all along. But now I now have a much better shot at decoding the weak signals myself (and less headaches). Fortunately a lot of the weak stations send at slower speeds, which makes good sense, increasing the odds that someone (like me) will be able to copy.

When I told my wife that I didn't foresee any further radio equipment purchases, she refused to believe me. After all, I was the one who told her that radio was a bottomless money pit. Maybe I'll just ask for some new clothes this Christmas! 73

Editor's Notes:

Many thanks to Jim/WI3N and Joe/N3TZA for getting the 440-antenna ready for the RiverFest event. We surmise the Diamond we had up there took a lightning hit sometime this summer. We now have a 440 Isopole up, and the repeater is going strong (150 watts) ... both the antenna and amp are "on loan" from HD/K3HDM.

Wed is the last meeting of this year (except for our installation banquet in early December. The venue for this banquet will be a topic of discussion, so if you have any "druthers" come to the meeting with some price consideration, etc ... the holiday season is almost on us, so if we have some preferred place, we have to act now.

As stated before, I will resign as editor after the next (or at least last) issue I publish. Since all we do is e-publish (no hard copy) this job is a poc (piece of cake) ... just takes some time to beg/plead/grovel for input, then put it together in a WORD-doc ... please let the next prez you will volunteer.

By the way, there was a fox-hunt last Sunday ... no details available now, but I understand there will be a full report at the meeting ... I did hear that everyone who partaicipated found the fox.

Joe/N3TZA and Howard/K3IOG are usually keeping the club frequency (147.540) warm on the evenings around 930pm ... would be nice to hear some more participation up there. Just tune in and say hello ... normally this "net" is QRT by 1030pm

"W3LRC"
Laurel Amateur Radio Club Event

Riverfest

11 October 03

Communications, this year, were conducted on the W3LRC 440 repeater, again. (thanks to WI3N and crew for effecting the antenna repairs, so LARC had use of the repeater.

The attendance seemed to be down this year as were the vendors. It was cloudy and cool most of the event, which was the same as 2002.

This year we had NO worries of the Sniper, thank heavens.

Place: At the Park at the end Avondale St, off Main St.

07.45 AML: NetCon Operational

04.00 PML: NetCon QRT.

9 Op's, as follows:

Key: EG= Event Grounds

HW= Hay Wagon

R= Roving

S= Shadow

VP= Vendor Parking Area

ME=Main Entrance/Exit

Op's: 9

W3YD.....Pud (EG+NCS+ME) WI3N.....Jim (ME+X)

K3HDMHD (NCS) N3JMK.....Matt (EG)

KB3KFZ Cynthia (HW+R) KB3KGC.....Evonne (HW+R)

AA3WC.....Charles (R) KB3IWF..... Andrew (VP+ME)

KB3EQH.....Jeff (S)

Stopping by:

KB3ESX

HD/K3HDM was on site while it was still dark awaiting Kay's arrival. I was joined by W3YD/Pud and WI3N/Jim. Kay was on site around 7:20 AML, and as they arrived, shadows were assigned and Op's were dispersed to the operative locations.

This year we had three 'new' Op's. Two were from the Tech Class at the Fire Services Building, instructed by K3JOE/Joe.

These Op's were Cynthia/KB3KFZ and her cousin Evonne/KB3KGC. We also had an import HAM from Annapolis, Andrew/KB3IWF, who also aided a lady with his 'jumper cables", Thanks Andrew.

I would like to thank everyone on making this event work very smoothly, LARC members and those non members.

Respectfully submitted by,
HD/K3HDM