

# THE CIRCLE CITY COMMUNICATOR

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CORONA NORCO AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

November 2008 – Editor: Fred Roberts, w6tkv@aceweb.com – ARRL Affiliated Club #2108

## MORE ON VE TESTING

Our first VE Testing Session was conducted under the auspices of the ARRL. Because they have so many VE Testing groups, their process is quite involved and has a testing fee of \$19.

Some years ago, your Editor was also certified by the Greater Los Angeles Amateur Radio Group (GLAARG) which happens to be the same VEC used by the Riverside County Amateur Radio Club (RCARA). GLAARG has three advantages for California clubs. 1) The VEC is much smaller than the ARRL VEC and hence has less paper work, 2) Their testing fee is just \$4.00, and 3) Being smaller, they seem to have a quicker response time.

Dick-AF6F and Perry-AE6GQ have both been recently certified by GLAARG, so with Fred-W6TKV, we have a 3-man VE Test qualified with both the ARRL and the Greater Los Angeles Amateur Radio Group. Our on-going VE testing will be under GLAARG.

We have currently scheduled VE Tests (Technician, General and Extra) through 2009. The testing day will always be the 1st Saturday at 1:30PM (right after the CNARC T-Hunt). The scheduled dates are 11/1/08, 12/6/08, 1/3/09, 2/7/09, 3/7/09, 4/4/09, 5/2/09, 6/6/09, (No July 2009 testing), 8/1/09, 9/5/09, 10/3/09, 11/7/09, and 12/5/09. (Since July 4, 2008 falls on a 1st Saturday, there will be no testing that day.)

## EXTRA CLASS

Several of our club members hold Extra Class licenses. Your VE Team could certainly use your participation. Our plan is to hold "appointment only" testing on the first Saturday of each month at 1:30PM - right after our T-Hunt. Testing is at our meeting location, and we must have 3 VEs at each VE session. Your participation will allow us the ability to cover every session, especially those where one of the current VE Team has another engagement. Right now, we are at the absolute minimum level - 3 VEs. You can lend a hand when you sign up as a Volunteer Examiner (VE). Just contact me. Tnx es 73, Fred-W6TKV

## T-HUNT & PICNIC PHOTOS



(L to R) Norm-KN6CV, Erick-W6GEV, Joe-KO6XB, Carlos-KD6CZT - Getting ready for the T-Hunt.



(Left) Dick-AF6F finds one of Perry's Altoid cans in the GEO-cash search. (Right) Austin, a super kid and W6GVE's son - also GEO-cashing.

We had a great time at the picnic, even if the day was cloudy. It didn't rain, and the company was good, the food was good, and the activities were good.

Perry's GPS Hidden Altoid Cans turned out to be an interesting introduction to a new exercise program. You walk, walk some more, search, look around, return to where you were before, eye's light up and big smile.

The T-Hunt turned out to be harder than was expected. Everyone did, however, go on an unintended rather extensive tour of the picnic area, the lake, and every nook and cranny in the surrounding area.

Those in attendance were Carlos-KD6CZT & Margie, Carlos-KI6JRN, Dave-KI6LYZ & Shari with Travis (son) 'n Kaitlyn (daughter), Dick-AF6F & Leila, Erick-W6GEV & Kaitlan (daughter) 'n Austin (son), Frank-KE6NZZ & Willette, Fred-W6TKV & Ann, Jim-KD6ECI & Lorri, Joe-KO6XB and Gwyn-KE6JOF, Norm-KN6CV & Ann, Paul-KV6P & Janismarie, and Perry-AE6GQ & Karen.

We had 13 members present, 10 XYLS and 4 youngsters for a grand total of 26 folks. If you were one of those who checked my addition, it is absolutely correct. It's just that Gwyn qualified in two groups since she is both a member and an XYL.

## THE CNARC STORY

Our repeater – 147.060/+ MHz, PL-162.2 Hz

2M Net - *NOW ON Tuesday at 7:00PM*

WebSite – [www.w6pwt.org](http://www.w6pwt.org)

Articles to your Editor at [w6tkv@arrl.net](mailto:w6tkv@arrl.net)

Our next meeting will be at 7:00PM, on Monday, November 3rd.

Next VE Test Session, 1:30PM on 11/1/08 by appointment only. Call 687-8145.

## BARNEY OLDFIELD WINS!

Well, the Corona Road Race took place once again this year, and the pit crew consisted of Carlos-KD6CZT, Dave-KI6LYZ, Dick-AF6F, Fred-W6TKV, Norm-KN6CV and Perry-AE6GQ.

Band conditions were fair, but with the noise factor at some QTHs - occasioned by the high winds made the race more difficult.

We are looking forward to receiving some incoming QSL cards from the stations worked over the weekend of October 11th and 12th. The first QSL was received from Don, K5DLO in Spiro, OK (KN6CV)

## ARTICLE BY TIM-AI6DX

When I asked for members to submit an article for the Circle City Communicator, I had anticipated receiving 2-3 paragraphs.

Much to my surprise, Tim took me at my word and submitted the following article which I believe will be very helpful to both our brand

new hams and surely old timers will find interesting as well. His article starts on Page 3.

## ELECTIONS

November has been the traditional month for CNARC elections. And, so they will be held during our next meeting.

As you know from having read our Constitution and By-Laws, we are operating under a Management Committee with three members - Fred-W6TKV, Norm-KN6CV and Larry-KI6DCG - based upon a committee decision, Fred currently serves as Chairman.

Larry has decided to step down at this time, and so we need to have someone replace him on the committee. Fred and Norm represent two of the members who have been members of CNARC for a very long time. It clearly might be our wisest choice to elect a newer member so that have a more balanced leadership.

It may be time to get your feet wet!

## NOW FOR LIGHT READING

A blonde teenager, wanting to earn some extra money for the summer, decided to hire herself out as a "handy-woman" and started canvassing a nearby well-to-do neighborhood. She went to the front door of the first house, and asked the owner if he had any odd jobs for her to do.

"Well, I guess I could use somebody to paint my porch," he said, "How much will you charge Me?" Delighted, the girl quickly responded, "How about \$50?" The man agreed and told her that the paint brushes and everything she would need was in the garage.

The man's wife, hearing the conversation said to her husband, "Does she realize that our porch goes ALL the way around the house?" He responded, "That's a bit cynical, isn't it?" The wife replied, "You're right. I guess I'm starting to believe all those 'dumb blonde' jokes we've been getting by e-mail lately."

Later that day, the blonde came to the door to collect her money. "You're finished already?" the startled husband asked. "Yes," the blonde replied, "and I even had paint left over, so I gave it two coats."

Impressed, the man reached into his pocket for the \$50.00 and handed it to her along with a \$10.00 tip.

"And by the way," the blonde added, "it's not a Porch, it's a Lexus."

## NEW TO HF? A “LIMITED SPACE” ANTENNA SOLUTION

de, Tim Alsky, KD6WAG, now AI6DX

While I don't profess to be an expert by any means in ham radio, I do consider myself to be an ever evolving “student” within the hobby. I'm constantly learning new things from hams who are more experienced. I have never written an article for any publication of sorts, let alone an amateur radio club. I thought I would contribute something to our club members by way of sharing my experience with a particularly simple HF antenna system. Fred's (W6TKV) suggestion for members to contribute an article to our club's news letter gave me this idea to start writing. I hope it offers someone some useful information or ideas.

I have learned over the past few years that if I continued to procrastinate, I would never get active into world of “HF.” I had to get motivated and commit some of my valuable free time to learning, upgrading and seeking out ideas for HF antennas. My only problem and somewhat “fear” I had was the dreaded question asked by many new General upgrades: “What kind of antenna do I use?” Looking at the marvelous ARRL “Antenna book” and “Handbook” only and discouraged me. They're both as thick as an old White pages phone book! At the time, it looked very complicated. (Now, I can't do without them. Every shack MUST eventually have these books for amateur reference.)

Onwards. When I initially upgraded to the “General” class operator, I was motivated to “get on the air” A.S.A.P! After passing the test, I couldn't wait to get home, fire up the 20 meter band (probably the most common HF band) and call, “CQ CQ CQ...KD6WAG stroke Alpha Golf.” (“/AG” is the term a new “General” uses after one's call sign until the FCC posts the new class license in the data banks, about a week after the of passing your test.) I felt that my only hold-up was my agonizing questions I had about antennas. “Where do I put up an antenna with such limited space and very little knowledge about HF antennas? What type of antenna do I use? What's better, a random wire, dipole, Yagi, vertical, loop, quad, G5RV etc...?” It seemed that the antenna ideas and questions were endless and I had to quickly figure out which one would be the best solution

for me at the time. After all, I had some “rag chew'n” to partake in.

Realizing that I lived in a severely restricted community which did not allow me to set up any ham radio antennas permanently, I narrowed down some options. Since my dream 50' tower with a 13 element beam pointing toward Japan would never come to fruition, I had to settle on something a bit more subtle. Something that didn't take up so much space was in order. Something I could not only use at home, but could also take with me on “portable” outings. Something that I could construct without the use of trees (I don't have any) and finally, something that wouldn't break the bank must.

I first looked at wire antennas. There are several different types of antennas made from good old wire. Due to limited article space, I won't bore you with the different and great wire ideas. In a nut-shell, they were not a viable option for me at the time. I soon realized the fact that I couldn't string up a wire of some sort because I did not have any trees up! Going across the roof line wasn't an option at the time either and did not meet my requirement of being a portable solution. If I was going to put up a wire antenna, I knew I wanted it to be as long as possible. With limited space, that wire wasn't going to happen any time soon.

Yes wires are good for some portable work - if you have something to hang it on. Last I checked, my favorite parts of the desert or beach didn't (and still doesn't) have a whole lot of trees to string up wire with. You don't want to hang a wire up in a life guard tower either because it could expose the life guard to unnecessary RF. They get enough “waves” from Ultra Violet radiation, they don't need my RF.

Next, I looked at vertical antennas. Well, a vertical was going to be difficult too. Remember, I was in an antenna restricted community. People would see the vertical (especially my neighbors) and would eventually complain. Plus, installing a vertical usually results in a permanent type of antenna that's not too easy to erect and take down regularly. Besides, the type of vertical I wanted was a large permanent type. Verticals for the most part need to be large and elevated high for good HF work in my opinion. Others disagree, but that is what I personally would want at my

house for a permanent HF station. Generally speaking a vertical also needs radials (long wires that run from the antenna feed point out over the ground. (Read: taking up a lot of real estate again!) Not having the real estate for a bunch of ground plane wires and a tall vertical, I quickly realized that this antenna idea was not a viable option for me.

I also knew that the antenna I wanted may serve "double duty" at some point. As stated earlier, I wanted an antenna that I could use for portable work as well as at my home. At the time, I looked into one of the vastly produced and excellent "portable" multiband dipole antennas, made by a professional manufacturer. However, those can cost several hundreds of dollars. I've seen these types of antennas run anywhere between \$500. - \$1,000. That was definitely outside of my budget, seeing how I just bought a new mobile HF radio and a tuner. I was plum out of money for anything that cost more than around \$75.00. Plus, I really wanted to assemble my very first HF antenna, no matter how simple it was.

So, that's when I discovered the Lakeview company, who manufactures the famed, "Hamstick." Without getting super technical for newly licensed amateurs, the "Hamstick" as it's called, is basically a vertical antenna that has a coil wrapped around the main fiberglass body. The antenna is then covered with a type of heat shrink insulation, which acts to protect the underlying coil. It has a black oxide finished stainless "whip," which protrudes out the top of the fiberglass portion. The whip can and MUST be properly adjusted (tuned) to get it as resonant as possible, on whatever band you plan to use. Usually this is a very simple one time process of tuning. The whip is basically loosened from two small set screws. The whip is either pushed in a little or pulled out a bit from the length of the fiberglass shaft. You can easily use the SWR meter on your transmitter for fine tuning. Just make sure you don't stop on another station and you identify as per the FCC regulations. Better yet is if you can beg a fellow ham to use his/her antenna analyzer to help you tune hem up. Usually hams that come over to lend a helping hand with antenna projects are generally rather thirsty or hungry. Tuning a Hamstick is fast and simple once you know how to do it. After tuning it the first time, you'll probably never have to readjust the whip length if you don't want to.

They are such simple antennas, even a caveman..... (better let that one go.) Let's just say that my 10 year old daughter can properly assemble one. Hamsticks don't take up much space. Originally designed as a mobile vertical antenna, it's usually no longer than the average fresh water fishing pole you used as a kid. Now hold on, I know you're reading this and saying to yourself, "But Tim, you just said you couldn't use a vertical." In fact, I did say that!

Here's where it gets so interesting for you new and/or future HF operators. Remember I said that virtually all verticals need some sort of ground plane (i.e. metal patio roof or roof of a car/trunk etc...) or wire radials to work properly? Without radials or a proper ground plane, you only have half of an antenna and it will not work efficiently if at all. Your radio can burn up it's finals without the other half of the antenna due to a high SWR. But .... one option presented is by taking two hamsticks of the same band (i.e. Two 20 meter or two 40 meter hamsticks etc...) and converting them into a simple dipole antenna! One Hamstick is your driven element (the "hot" side), while the other Hamstick acts as your "RF ground" side. (Just like a wire dipole, yet this set up is more compact and the overall length is much much shorter.)

What's nice about that is you now have a pretty good antenna that doesn't take up too much space; can be easily broken down and stored away in a closet when not in use; doesn't require the use of long wire radials; can be used at the beach, park, or while out camping; and is easily set up within minutes. Yes, it can even be used in your back yard or on the balcony!

You can readily find the mounting hardware for a "hamstick dipole" antenna at your local Ham Radio store or online. The Hamsticks easily screw into the bracket, plug in the coax to the SO-239 connector on the bracket, then run the other end of the coax to the tuner. Affix the bracket and Hamsticks to a mast of some sort like a sturdy camera tripod, painter's pole, long broom stick etc... and your in business.. Your imagination is endless. I use some 6' length aluminum poles that attach easily end-on-end. I found them at my local home improvement store. I've even tested them in strong winds when elevated no higher than 18' (3x6' masts = 18 feet). For that set

up, I used a semi-permanent 5 gallon bucket filled with cement and a piece of pvc pipe in the center, holding up the aluminum mast. The Hamstick dipole was bracketed to the top of the final aluminum extension piece at the 18 foot level.

If you don't have a tripod, you might consider using hose clamps, vise grips, tie downs or whatever to temporarily mount it onto your balcony, railing, fence, etc. There are several other ideas that come to mind for balcony or temporary/limited yard use, your imagination is the only thing limiting you.

If you have any doubts, many of the club members including myself would love to give you some easy tips about certain types of antenna installations. If you don't know, don't be afraid to ask.

Finally, some people have called Hamsticks, "the rubber-duck" of HF antennas. I somewhat agree with this statement, but rubber ducks do work! When fashioned into a "Hamstick-dipole" as outlined above, you'll be amazed at whom you can make contacts with. The downside to this antenna is that it's pretty much a single band antenna and not a multi-band. Although my 20M hamstick tunes up very nicely on 17 meters, it's really considered a "mono-band" antenna. With the current solar cycle conditions being so bad, a simple 20 meter Hamstick dipole is probably all you would need to get on the air A.S.A.P! 20 meters by far in my opinion as well as others, is easy to tune up and has the most activity during the day and early evenings. When solar cycle #24 "wakes up," it's conditions are only going to get better.

With my 20 meter Hamstick dipole, I've worked 45 of the 50 states, including Alaska and Hawaii. (I'm beginning to think that Kentucky doesn't have any hams!!!) I've worked Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Cook Islands, Ducie Island, Mexico, Japan, most of Canada and an Airbus A320 with a Canadian Airline (ham) pilot (VE3RMJ) at 37,000', over the Canadian Rockies. I got the QSL card to prove it! Earlier today in fact, I made a contact with the special event station club (KH6BB) aboard the Battleship Missouri, in Pearl Harbor. All of the contacts were with 100 watts or less, sometimes just 10 watts to Hawaii.

So, is this Hamstick-Dipole antenna going to get you that far and rare DX (long distance outside the U.S.) station? Maybe. Is it going to cut through a DX "pile-up" or overpower someone with a directional beam antenna running with a 1-kilowatt amplifier? Definitely not. Are there other types and ideas of antennas perhaps even easier to build? Probably yes, but I don't know of any quite this simple. At least the Hamstick-Dipole WILL easily get you on the air without taking up too much space and rather quickly. Bottom line - it's quick to set up, easily tuned, portable or fixed capable, it doesn't require too much space and can be easily taken down before anyone gets too upset at the sight of an "ugly antenna."

-73 and enjoy your HF QSO's! - Tim



## AN EDITOR'S THOUGHTS

When I first read Tim's article, my first thought was, "Holy Mackerel, our newsletter is just 2 pages. Then, I read his article a couple of times, and realized this is exactly what is needed for guys with a brand new license, lots of desired to attack the HF bands, but have no idea of what to do about an antenna.

Interesting insights come from making a lot of contacts - and if I have done anything, I have done that. I am not sure of the total number but I have received a 23 ft. high stack of QSL cards. I have 50,000 QSOs logged with one logging program, but I have 93 Log Books from the time before using the computer logging. And I have a new computer with 2,000 QSOs. My guess is my QSO total is 100,000+.

A fellow using a dipole 5ft off the ground, or a fellow who has an attic dipole, or a fellow who has a ground mounted vertical will all say, "I work everyone I hear." And that true statement made these hams very happy.