Arc Over

February, 2006

President's Traffic
by Dick Illman, AH6EZ

The new and returning group of club officers and committee chairs have been introduced to the membership at the January Banquet. W9XA did a great job with the Banquet. Everyone had a great time, even out on the dance floor, and the Big Band music was enjoyed by all.

I want to thank everyone for your support this last year and we all look forward to a fun, educational, and service oriented year in 2006. Congratulations to our new Vice-President, N9CHA and our new and enthusiastic Directors, KC9DAO, K9FBI, and KB9UJB.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the silent auction at the January meeting. It was very gratifying to the widow of KD9RR to receive fair bids on all of the items.

I hope that all of you have a New Year's resolution to get active on the HF bands and the FRRL HF Challenge.

As announced by N9CHA at the January meeting, the Education Committee is developing a schedule for classes to upgrade your Technician license to General as well as some tutoring for Extra upgrades. Although the FCC might eliminate the need for 5 WPM morse code, I strongly recommend that you learn the code to continue this useful part of the radio art.

A special congratulations to our 2005 Ham of the Year, Greg Braun, N9CHA. This award, voted upon by his fellow club members is truly indicative of Greg's beyond the call support of our members, our club, and ham radio.

February Program Notes

Although I have barely started on the program yet, I am expecting to be able to complete an interesting and fun program all about DX, what ever that means to you. This will not be all about HF DX but will include information about 6m, VHF, and UHF which all licensees can participate with. If this does not come together, I may have a program about ham radio and Katrina.

Dick Illman, AH6EZ
FRRL President

Erickson HF Challenge Update
By John Spasojevich, K9COE

2006! A new year. Could mean a new rig or a new antenna. Could mean a new house or car or maybe a new job. I'm not sure what it means for all of you or even what it holds in store for me but one thing I know for sure is that it is a new year for the Bill Erickson FRRL HF Challenge.

Bill Erickson FRRL HF Challenge you say? If you are a new or recent member you may have heard of this event, but more than likely you are saying "What the heck is that?" Let me take a moment to explain. Originally known as the FRRL Challenge it is a "contest" which runs the entire calendar year – January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006 – the main point being to work as many U.S. States, Canadian Provinces and DX entities (simply put, that's foreign countries, for the most part) as you can in one year. You can operate QRO Class (over 250 watts), Operator Class (250 watts or less) or Limited Class (where you work a specific mode or QRP) and Ragchewer (where your contacts last a minimum of 10 minutes). You can also compete in Ragchewer and any of the other classes for double the fun. The "challenge" comes in the fact that you are challenging yourself; while it is true you are competing against others in your class, it's really more about challenging yourself, your station and your abilities and learning more about the hobby as you go. Say you want to be in the Limited class and you decide your limitation is 10 meters, that is QUITE a challenge at this time in the solar cycle. You'll learn about propagation and ways to operate to maximize the opportunities during band openings for sure!

The reason it is called the Bill Erickson FRRL HF Challenge is because it was "invented" by Bill Erickson, WA9TPQ as a way to increase HF operations by FRRL members. Bill suddenly became a SK a few short years ago. I didn't know him personally but have certainly heard many stories about him and know that he was a good friend to many long time club members. I hope to include some stories about Bill throughout the year as a part of these updates.

So how can you get involved? First you need HF privileges, meaning you have to be a Tech Plus (or Tech with code as they call it now), General, Advanced or Extra Class operator. Since it's an HF challenge that means contacts 6 meters and up do not count. This is an incentive for no-code technicians to upgrade, if you are having fun on 2 and 440, just wait and see what you can do when you upgrade. Many of you have the rigs already and the antennas can be simple wires, no towers necessary to start having a blast with HF. Second, if you have HF privileges you need a score sheet, see Joe, NA9A to get one, it has all the rules and information included with it. Third, OPERATE!!!

The one other thing to remember is to send your scores to HFCHALLENGE@frrl.org each month by the 15th so I can get them submitted in time for the next Arc Over, so we all can enjoy the progress.

Scores are on Page 7.

ISS Contacted During Boy Scout "Klondike" Event

Standing on a small knoll covered with snow, Dick called, "NA1SS this is W9CEQ, Whiskey Nine Charlie Echo Quebec, do you copy?" The small Kenwood HT answered back, "W9 Charlie Echo Quebec this is NA1SS." To the delight and amazement of fellow FRRL members, Dick, AH6EZ, made an unplanned voice contact with Commander William McArthur aboard the International Space Station on Saturday, January 20th during a Boy Scout "Klondike Derby."

Boy Scouts from the Maramech Hill District, Three Fires Council participated in several winter events held at the Kendall County Fairgrounds near Yorkville, Illinois. Nearly 300 Scouts and their leaders camped out, cooked, and completed special events during the 3 day winter outing.

Scoutmaster Jason Kocher contacted the FRRL in early January to have an amateur radio demonstration available for the event. Club Secretary John Spasojevich, K9COE, contacted fellow club member Greg Braun, N9CHA, to recruit assistance for setting up a portable station. Two additional club members, Dick Illman, AH6EZ, and Mike Bentley, K9FBI, joined in the effort.

Early Saturday morning, after nearly ten inches of snow had fallen over the Fox Valley area, the four club members set out for the fairgrounds. They were equipped with a Kenwood TS-430S HF transceiver, Buddipole antenna, Yaesu FT-8800 VHF/UHF transceiver, home-built dual-band J-pole, Kenwood TH-D7A, and an Arrow dual-band yagi.

Several Boy Scouts had an opportunity to talk to amateurs from around the area through the FRRL repeaters. They also made several HF contacts using both voice and data transmissions. A radio spectrum chart was used to explain the various frequency allocations used in the US. Several questions regarding universal time, the phonetic alphabet and call sign districts were answered by the FRRL members.

Future demonstration stations may be required by the area Boy Scouts. If you would like to participate in these type of activities in the future, please contact Greg Braun, N9CHA.

AH6EZ works the Space Station as onlookers listen in.

Boy Scouts make PSK31 contacts at the Klondike Event.

CW QSOs on the Internet?

By: Tom Kmiotek, AB9IN, FISTS #10607 and Joe Machan, KC9FPD

There is nothing that compares with the excitement of an actual on-air, CW QSO. However, for those of you who still can't get enough CW, or who would like to try something a little different, there is shareware/freeware available that allows you to use your PC for Internet CW QSOs. It's also a good tool to use for *sending* practice. And, if you want to brush up on your CW copy skills or increase your copy speed we recommend two excellent Morse code PC-based practice programs that allow you to save the audio practice sessions to your PC in .wav-formatted files that can be imported to your iPod or other MP3 player. Website addresses and download sites are listed at the end of this article.

CW Communicator

CWCom v1.47 is a free Morse code chat program developed by MRX Software. The software works with your PC using your internet connection. The IONOSPHERE Server provides real-time communications between CWCom users. You can call CQ, practice sending with other CWCom users, and even select a file to send to CWCom users. CWCom also works without an internet connection as a CW oscillator/electronic keyer for sending practice *with your own paddle* or straight key connected to your PC through a serial port. It can translate sent text to Morse code and received Morse code back to text on the fly.

Similar to most of the modern HF transceivers, CWCom supports manual straight keying and Iambic keying. With Iambic keying the speed is adjustable between about 5 words per minute (wpm) up to 50 wpm. The side tone audio is also adjustable between 100 Hz and 1500 Hz.

We were interested in sending practice using Iambic paddles. However, CWCom also provides for sending using a mouse, the keyboard DOWN ARROW like a straight key, or actual typed keyboard input. You choose whether you want simultaneous translation of your sent messages to text on your PC, translation of received Morse code to text, translation of both sent and received messages, or no translation at all.

Download, setup, and configuration can be a little tricky, but a little persistence pays off. The download instructions are generally straightforward. One of us had a problem with the download and installation. In that instance, no link was created for the CWCom executable file. To get around this problem, we found the installation directory, looked for CWCOM.EXE and made a desktop shortcut to this file. Installation went seamlessly after doing this. We emailed the author of the software and he said he would fix the problem. After downloading CWCom, it is worthwhile printing the file at "Read About CWCom" that serves as the instruction manual. You can experience an audio problem because CWCom uses the configured soundcard exclusively. CWCom uses the PC's "Wave Device" so you have to make sure that the wave device is enabled in the Windows sound settings. And, the software may not run if another application is using the Wave Device. However, we were able to carry on an Internet QSO with CWCom while coordinating our setups by simultaneously having a voice conversation using instant messenger.

Simple to follow instructions are also provided for connecting your paddle to your PC. To connect your paddle, you will need a serial cable and a serial port on your PC. We don't know if a connection will work using a USB port because we didn't try such a connection using a either a USB cable or the serial cable with a serial-to-USB adaptor. When using a serial cable for the Serial (COM) Port Interface, be certain that you clip off the male connector end and leave enough cable attached to the female connector end. Don't rely on the color coding in the instructions other than to identify the proper pins. The color coding in the instructions does not necessarily correspond to the wire color coding. Separately identify the proper wire corresponding to the pin number using your ohm meter. Once you have done this, you can directly connect the serial cable to your paddle. Instead of a direct connection to the paddle, we connected the serial cable to an in-line stereo jack. By using a stereo jack instead of a direct connection it is a simple matter of unplugging your favorite paddle from your rig and then plugging the paddle into the in-line jack on the serial cable.

You will have to spend a little time setting up the CWCom configuration. First, you have to identify the Morse Key as a straight key or an Iambic key and then identify the Morse Input as the COM Port. To more closely mirror the "feel" of your favorite electronic keyer you may want to modify the character delay timing (Char Delay) between transmitted characters. Actual sending takes a little getting used to. The CWCom software is less forgiving that a real operator. The first time you use your paddle to send Morse code you will be surprised by how sloppy your spacing may be. Delay too long between characters in a word or call sign and you get an unintended space in the text. If you're too quick between characters your translated text on screen shows a different character or characters or else it presents you with a "**?**."

Koch Method CW Trainer – G4FON

Koch Method CW Trainer – G4FON, Version 8 is a great way to brush up on your rusty Morse code copying or work at increasing your speed and copying skills. The G4FON software allows you to set your Farnsworth speed (the speed at which actual characters are sent) and the effective code speed. The side tone audio is adjustable between 350 Hz and 1300 Hz. You can practice with clean audio or you can introduce QRM, varying levels of background noise or both. Introduce QSB and it simulates what you might actually hear on the air.

The default characters available in the G4FON software do not include the full 43 characters that are standard for FCC testing. You will have to add the procedural signals <BT>, <AR>, and <SK> to the character list. You might also consider adding the newest, official International Morse Code character, the "@" symbol or <AC> to the character list.

With all the characters selected under "Setup," the G4FON software will generate characters randomly at your chosen speeds in random length character strings separated by a space. Practice sessions are selectable between 1 minute and 1 hour long. The software contains a "common word" file for copy practice with actual words. You can record your practice sessions by choosing the drop down option "Record Audio File." You have to select

the record option *before* starting the session you actually want to record, however. The audio CW is recorded as a .wav file and the accompanying text of the practice session is saved as a .txt file. You can also choose the "Play Text File" option to generate CW audio from files you've saved in Rich Text Format. The sample QSO files use non-U.S. call signs. If you would like to practice copying U.S. style QSOs similar to those QSOs used for Element 1 testing you have the option of downloading a Zip File from the G4FON website that contains around 300 sample QSOs. Instructions on how to use these files with the G4FON software are also provided.

Just Learn Morse Code – LB3KB

Like the G4FON software, the LB3KB software is a Morse code training program that uses the Koch method and Farnsworth timing. You can practice your CW at effective code speeds varying from 5 wpm to 100 wpm with separately adjustable Farnsworth speed. Side tone is adjustable between 400 Hz and 1200 Hz. The character set is customizable from the "Tool" menu. You can't create new characters, but the choice of available characters is probably all you will ever need.

Similar to the G4FON software, the LB3KB software practice sessions generate random characters grouped in random length character strings. But unlike the G4FON software, both minimum and maximum word, or character string, length can be selected between 1 and 10 characters long. So, if you want to practice 5-character string groups you just select 5 for both the maximum and minimum word length.

Practice sessions are selectable between 1 minute and 1 hour long. You can record your practice sessions by choosing "Record" from the drop down "Action" menu. When you select "Record," the audio file is generated in .wav format and saved when you enter "save." You can choose whether you want to save the accompanying text file.

The latest version 1.23 of LB3KB will generate CW from your own text files. You also can directly enter your own text on screen or practice words, abbreviations, or Q codes.

CW Websites

"MRX Software," http://www.mrx.com.au/. This is the homepage for the free CW Communicator software. The site also includes a detailed description of the CWCom, v1.47 software, with setup instructions.

Homepage for the free Koch Method CW Trainer – G4FON Version 8:
http://www.g4fon.net/.

Homepage of the free Just Learn Morse Code – LB3KB version 1.23:
http://justlearnmorsecode.com/. If you have problems with downloading from this site, try: http://utvikling.com/JustLearnMorseCode.msi .

Bill Erickson HF Challenge — Final Standings for 2005

Here are the final standings for the 2005 HF Challenge. These are the scores submitted to NA9A for tabulation. If you did not submit a score sheet your score is not listed here. Remember to email your 2006 updates to challenge@frrl.org by the 15th of each month. We will begin publishing 2006 scores next month.

Ragchew Class	States/Provinces	DX Countries	Total
AH6EZ	-	-	62
AL9A	-	-	48
K9COE	-	-	34
NA9A	-	-	18

Operator Class	States/ Provinces	DX Countries	Total
K9JE	62	137	199
W4CEO	58	120	178
K9FBI	57	69	126

Limited Class	States/ Provinces	DX Countries	Total
KB9YSI (QRP)	56	33	88
K9COE (Digital)	22	29	51

QRO Class	States/ Provinces	DX Countries	Total
AH6EZ	72	175	237
NA9A	56	175	231
AL9A	62	161	223

FRRL Club Nets

The regular weekly FRRL 2 Meter Net takes place every Tuesday evening at 7:30 pm local time, except on meeting nights, on the W9CEQ repeater, 147.210 MHz. +600 KHz, 103.5 access tone. The Next Gen Hams Nets take place on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday evenings of each month at 7:00 pm local time on the NIARC repeater, W9ZGP—146.580 MHz., +1.08 MHz. (147.660).

ARRL Kids Day with The Next Gen Hams

By Tobi Davis, KC9GDL

On January 8, 2006, an event took place that proves that kids and radio really can mix. The Next Gen Hams participated in their first ARRL Kids Day. Greg, N9CHA graciously hosted the event at his home. With three stations, three kids on air, two playing in the yard and six adults joining in the fun, it was a great success. Greg, N9CHA, Tom, WB9CHY, John K9COE, Dean, KC9EOQ, Eric, KC9FQV and I helped the kids learn what to say and do. It was especially heart warming to see kids and parents working together.

Early in the day, the FRRL 2 meter repeater was quiet, so Connor's first attempt at a contact was unsuccessful. However, after our pizza break, the FRRL members got busy and helped Connor, Brenden and Sarah learn what it's like to talk to others on the radio. Each kid learned some protocol and got a chance to "meet" a stranger across the airwaves. Connor quickly picked up what to do and how to say Whisky Niner Charlie Echo Queen when giving the club callsign. I was roaming from room to room and got snippets of what was being said, but I was pleased that there were more than the requisite first name, age, location and favorite color being exchanged. Actual conversations were happening and all the adults who answered The Next Gen Hams' CQs were very supportive.

I went downstairs to see what was happening on 20 meters and found John setting up for PSK. Brenden thought this was really interesting and was absorbed in watching the packets go by in the waterfall display. Later, all three kids made voice contacts on 20 meters. The seasoned hams explained about listening to a QSO when only half of the conversation was audible (which as a fairly new, non-HF ham, I didn't know) and the kids learned to wait until someone called CQ before pushing the button to talk. Sarah was able to talk to a delightful girl and the discussion of pink as a favorite color was quite absorbing.

Connor spent some time using IRLP to talk to Greg's dad in Wisconsin, showing him not only a different facet of radio communications, but that this hobby really is something the whole family can enjoy. We also spent some time trying to contact a man and his grandchildren from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia on 20 meters, but he was running a kilowatt and, although we could hear him, he couldn't always hear us. Oh well, another thing learned by The Next Gen Hams.

In total, 27 contacts were made on 2 meters, 440, 20 meters SSB and packet, and 40 meters SSB, with people from IL, WI, ND, NH, SC, CA, TX, WA and as far away as British Columbia, where Koji noted that there was no snow that day. A wonderful map showing where our contacts are located can be viewed on the web site at http://www.frrl.org.

We ended our first on-air adventure with Connor reading one of Greg's radio books and Brenden not wanting to leave because his nose was buried in his Quiz Show study guide.

The best part of Kids Day 2006 for me came the following Wednesday during The Next Gen Hams net. The first thing Brenden enthusiastically said to me was "I had such a good time on Sunday!" Later he said he wanted to get his license and that maybe he and Dad (upgrading to General?) could take the test on the same day. As no one could see me, I will tell you that I threw my arms up, jumped in my chair and did a little victory dance. That's what it's all about, getting kids excited about amateur radio, getting them licensed, and keeping the airwaves humming with young voices becoming our next generation of hams.

*For more information on our Kids Day event and for fun stuff for kids, visit www.frrl.org, choose the **Next Gen Hams** link on the left side menu, and then click on **Kids Click Here** next to the TNGHams logo. Keep watching the Just for Kids section for new things for kids to read and do.*

About the FRRL

The Fox River Radio League, Inc., is a general interest amateur radio club serving the central Fox River Valley area. Records indicate the club has been in existence since at least 1924, and has functioned continuously ever since. We are an ARRL Special Service Club, an Illinois not-for-profit corporation, and a 501©(3) tax exempt organization as specified in IRS Statutes.

We sponsor training classes for new hams, license examination sessions, an annual hamfest, and participate in various public service events. If you have a specialized amateur radio interest, chances are you can share it with one or more of our club members.

The Fox River Radio League meets on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at the Prisco Community Center in Aurora, Illinois. The meeting begins at 7:30 PM. After conducting business, coffee and snacks are served while we socialize. Following the break, a program of interest will be presented. All persons interested in amateur radio are invited to attend. Families are welcome. *We hope to see you there!*

License Exams

The Fox River Radio League, Inc., in conjunction with the ARRL VEC, conducts amateur examinations on the 3rd Tuesday of January, March, May, September and November in the basement of the Prisco Community Center, 150 W. Illinois Street, (South East corner of Lake and Illinois) in Aurora, IL. at 7:30 PM. No advance registration is required, but please be sure to bring your license (if you have one) and a photocopy of it, original CSCEs and a photocopy (if needed), some form of photo identification, and the fee of $14.00. (The FRRL receives no portion of this fee.)

The next exam session is scheduled for March 21, 2006, at the Prisco Community Center in Aurora, IL. At 7:30 pm

FRRL Dues

Annual dues are payable no later than the January Club Meeting each year. Persons joining during the year will have their first year's dues prorated to the nearest yearly quarter.

Regular dues are $20.00 a year, Senior Citizen dues are $12.00. Family dues are $30.00. You can also help support the FRRL Repeaters by joining as a combined Club/Repeater member for $30.00. Repeater dues are $20.00.

Check with the Treasurer for details and additional dues rates.

Nets

Net Name	Freq.	Day	Time
FRRL	147.210	Tuesday	7:30 PM Local
10-10 CW	28.150	Monday	8:00 PM Local
10-10 SSB	28.720	Monday	8:30 PM Local

FRRL CLUB MEETINGS ARE HELD AT THE PRISCO COMMUNITY CENTER AT 150 WEST ILLINOIS STREET IN AURORA. PLEASE CHECK THE FRRL WEB SITE FOR A MAP TO THE MEETING LOCATION .
http://www.frrl.org

FRRL Event Calendar

February, 2006

March, 2006

Handy Web Links

FRRL Web Site	**http://www.frrl.org/**
ARRL Main Site	http://www.arrl.org/
ARRL Central Div. Site	http://www.central.arrl.org/
ARRL IL Section Site	http://www.central.arrl.org/illinois.html
ARRL IL Section News	http://www.arrl.org/sections/?sect=IL
ARRL Contest Page	http://www.arrl.org/contests/
Contest Calendar	http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/
Callsign Lookup (QRZ)	http://www.qrz.com/
Vanity Callsign Info	http://www.vanityhq.com/
IRLP Main Page	http://www.irlp.net/
AMSAT	http://www.amsat.org/
FCC Services	http://wireless.fcc.gov/services/amateur
SMC Contest Club	http://www.w9smc.com/

ArcOver FRRL Newsletter
Copyright 2006, FRRL

Local Area Repeaters/Nets

W9CEQ—147.210 Mhz. *
+600 KHz, 103.5 access tone
Owned by FRRL

W9CEQ—444.300 Mhz. **IRLP Node # 4850**
+5 Mhz, 114.8 access tone
Owned by FRRL

W9ZGP—146.580 Mhz. **
+1.08 Mhz (147.660)
Owned by NIARC

KC9OEM—145.470 Mhz.
-600 KHz, 103.5 access tone
Owned by Kane County OEM

W9XA — 224.40 Mhz, +5 Mhz, IRLP Node #4846
       — 443.65 Mhz, +5 Mhz
       — 1292.00 Mhz, -20 Mhz (1272.00)

- Weekly FRRL Net—Tues. Eve. at 7:30 pm local time on the FRRL 2 Meter repeater.
- Next Gen Youth Ham Net— 7:00 pm on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month. On the NIARC repeater.
- KC OEM Amateur Net— Wed. Eves, 7:00 pm on the KCOEM repeater.

New FRRL Members for 2006

The following hams have joined the FRRL as new members for 2006:

Name	Call	License Class	City/State	Month Listed
Donald Bryant	N9NLE	Tech	West Dundee	February
Joe Buan	N9JAB	Tech	Oswego	February
Matthew Cox	KC9HRH	Tech	Geneva	February
Craig Crozier	AB9IV	Extra	Bolingbrook	February
Paul Matovich	AB9LI	Extra	Aurora	February
Michael Miller	AB9RU	Extra	Naperville	February
Barrett Milliken	KC9CHG	Extra	Evanston	February
Larry Stark	K9ARZ	Extra	St. Charles	February

Please welcome these new members when you see them at a meeting or hear them on the air.

Yahoo Group Update

The FRRL internet group on Yahoo is growing; we are seeing more members and messages being added every day. If you are a paid-up member of the FRRL you can join the group and share in the information passing.

For complete directions on how to join the group, please visit our FRRL club internet web page at http://www.frrl.org/membership/YahooGroup.html and follow the instructions there.

Remember, you will need a Yahoo email address to join, and you must be a paid up member of the FRRL. Please put your name and call in the letter you send asking for membership approval so that I can quickly verify your membership and grant you access to the group.

If you have problems joining, please email me at kb9ysi@yahoo.com and I'll be happy to assist.

We're looking forward to seeing YOU there!

Bill
KB9YSI
FRRL Yahoo Group Moderator

Greg, N9CHA, is Ham of the Year

Congratulations to Greg Braun, N9CHA, the Fox River Radio League Ham of the Year for 2005!

FRRL President Dick Illman, AH6EZ, (L) presents the FRRL Ham of the Year Certificate to Greg Braun, N9CHA, at the Annual Club Banquet.

FRRL Cougars Night Announcement

Let's have a ball (game)! The FRRL is going to the ball park to cheer on the Kane County Cougars and hopefully come home with a victory again this year. Mark your calendars. July 28th is game night. First pitch is at 6:30 pm at Elfstrom Stadium in Geneva. Tickets are only $9! There is a spectacular fireworks show scheduled for after the game.

For tickets, please see Greg N9CHA Cougars@frrl.org