



# NARS NEWS

March 2015

The Northwest Amateur Radio Society  
an ARRL Special Services Club #2120

## Important Dates

Monthly club meeting:  
Third Friday of each month, 7:30 pm.  
Cypress Creek Christian Community  
Ctr. 6823 Cypresswood Drive

Tuesday, March 31, 7:30 pm.  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Ponderosa Fire Station  
17061 Rolling Creek Drive

VE License Exam:  
Saturday, March 28, 10 a.m.  
Lone Star College Tomball Library,  
located at the south entrance to the  
College. Official address is: 30555 St.  
Hwy 249

### Lunch Break—North

Mar 18, Spring Creek BBQ  
Mar 25, Pei Wei Asian Diner  
Apr 1, Panera Bread  
Apr 8, Sweet Tomatoes  
Apr 15, BJ's Brewery & Restaurant

### Lunch Break—Medical Center

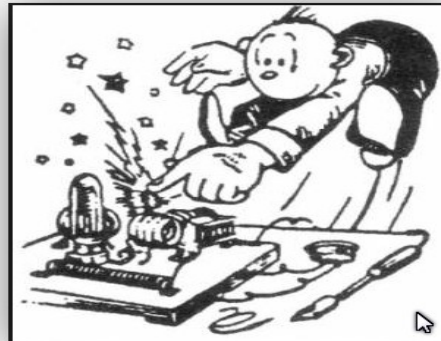
Mar 18, Pappa's BBQ  
Mar 25, Morningside Thai  
Apr 1, Pronto Cucinino  
Apr 8, Jason's Deli  
Apr 15, Buffalo Grille

Tail Dragger's Lunch Bunch -  
Mondays, 11 am.  
Aviator's Grill, Hooks Aerodrome

Notice: NARS membership dues are  
\$20 per year, renewable on anniver-  
sary date.

**Breakfast**  
**at Denny's**  
**7720 Louetta Road**  
**Saturdays 7 am.**

## Kit Building With Virgil Stamps, K5OOR March 20th.



Virgil, back by popular demand, will be doing a presentation on Kit Building, discussing his HF projects with emphasis on his new design: HF Packet AMP V4R7

First licensed in 1957 as K5OOR, in 2000 he became active again as an Extra Class, able to use his original call. Now at 75, Virgil says he is blessed to be working full time as design engineer and programmer. "All my spare time for the past fifteen years is supporting HF project creations."

Please join us for Virgil's enlightening presentation

## 146.660 Repeater News

NARS will be testing the replacement for the 146.660 repeater in the next few weeks. Anyone wishing to help defray the cost of replacing the repeater, antenna, connectors, etc. can make a donation to the Repeater Fund by making checks payable to NARS and designate "Repeater Fund" in the Memo field.

NARS, P.O. Box 90387, Houston, TX 77290-0387

The cost of this equipment is considerable and will be done in stages as we go along. Some equipment, material, and technical assistance has already been donated, but we have a long way to go towards completion of this massive project. Your monetary donations can help in bringing 146.660 up and running sooner. More details will follow in future announcements.

## President's corner

How time flies. Here it is already the end of February as I am writing this. March is upon us with the prospect of warmer weather. It is almost time to check antennas that have been affected by winter weather, rain, wind and corrosion. A great way to check those antennas is to use one of several models of antenna analyzers and plot the SWR of each of the bands that the antenna is capable of operating on. I like to use graph paper with my analyzer. You can use your computer to make your own graph paper with a separate graph for each band showing band limits. Some newer analyzers are now capable of displaying the SWR of the entire band on a display. These newer analyzers really cut the time and labor of manual plotting on graph paper. I think I would like to trade my older model in for one of the newer models. My current analyzer covers HF up through the 2 meter band.

Our February NARS meeting allowed us to see the different CW keys and paddles some of our members are using. Also present were several types of keyers and other types of CW related equipment. Some suggestions were made for some software to improve code speed and learning the code to begin with.

All of this has inspired me to improve my own code and get on the air more with code. It appears to boil down to listen and send at or near the speed you want to achieve and practice, practice, practice. Part of this recent interest improving my CW abilities is due to Keith Dutson's efforts toward mentoring some of us to improve our CW. I expect to improve my code speed to the point that I get on the air and use it more frequently.

73 de Brad WD5GNI



4721 Watonga Blvd.  
Houston, TX 77092  
[www.ofarc.org](http://www.ofarc.org)

V.E. Exams every 4th Saturday of  
the month at 9:30 a.m.  
Contact: John Westerlage'  
[N5DWI@ofarc.org](mailto:N5DWI@ofarc.org) for further  
info.

## HOUSTON AMATEUR RADIO SUPPLY, INC.

HAM | CB | COMMERCIAL | DIGITAL SCANNERS | ELECTRONICS  
RETAIL | REPAIR | CONSIGNMENT | INSTALLATION

[houstonamateurradiosupply.com](http://houstonamateurradiosupply.com)

**Dave McCombs, NA5CW**  
Owner

281-355-7373  
[contact@harsradio.com](mailto:contact@harsradio.com)

2558 E. FM 1960 Rd.  
Houston, TX 77073

## NARS conducts special VE test session at Rice University on March 9th:

Element 2 tests given: 11; passed 11

Congratulations to:

Wei Zhang - new Technician  
Karen Cauffman - new  
Ross Pepper - new Technician  
Celeste Stephensen - new Technician  
Farah Ashraf - new Technician  
Sophia Avandano - new Technician  
Nicholas Karl - new Technician  
Lloyd Naing - new Technician  
Xiewen Wen - new Technician  
Huajin Chen - new Technician  
Gigi Nevils - new Technician

Thanks to the VE's in attendance:

Mike Bragassa K5UO  
Ken Mitchell KD2KW  
Marty Fitzgerald W5MF  
Mike Allen W5KDH helped with paperwork. This allowed us to finish the session earlier. Thanks Mike.

## Radio Shack going "Belly-up!"

Radio Shack Corporation has announced that it has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in a deal to shut down the almost century old retail chain. One that would also sell about half its store leases to telecommunications giant Sprint and close the rest.

In a press release dated Thursday, March 5th, the company announced that it had signed an asset purchase agreement with General Wireless Inc. to acquire between 1,500 and 2,400 of RadioShack's U.S. Company-owned stores. To make this happen, this transaction and an orderly sale of the Company's remaining assets, RadioShack and certain of its U.S. subsidiaries have filed voluntary petitions for relief under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware. The sale agreement is subject to court approval and other conditions. RadioShack's foreign subsidiaries and its franchisee-owned stores are not included in the filing.

Also as part of this action, Radio Shack has filed a motion with the Court to proceed with the closure of the remaining company owned stores under an agreement with Hilco Merchant Resources. A list of the stores slated for closure will be posted in the near future on the restructuring information section of the company's web site at [www.radioshackcorporation.com](http://www.radioshackcorporation.com). Stores that are closing are expected to sell remaining inventory. Discussions are underway with interested parties to sell all of the company's remaining assets.

(Radio Shack release)

## NARS 2 meter net ....

Held every Wednesday night at 8 pm. We will be temporarily using the Texas DX Society's repeater until ours is back in operation. Please configure your equipment for 147.36/96, Tone: 100.  
All are welcome, members or not!

## Charging your smart phone!

Should you leave your phone plugged into the charger overnight? Ok, not exactly a radio operator's concern, or is it? You'll be hard pressed to find a Ham without a smart phone these days. Even I had to acquiesce in getting one after years of "fighting off" technology. Was I the last one to place my rotary dialed cell phone into the trash can? Ehh! I'm sure there are still a few holdouts, but they'll come around in time.

But here's an issue that has plagued humanity since the dawn of the mobile phone. We use our trusty pocket computers so much that they rarely get through a day with any power left. Many of us plug them in at night and fall asleep, content in the knowledge that we'll wake up to a fully charged device. But is it really safe to leave our phones plugged into the charger once they're fully charged? Is it damaging the battery — or shortening its lifespan? There are lots of myths and questionable ideas on this topic. You'll find the Internet awash with opinions masquerading as facts. Try asking the sales reps at your favorite cell phone store. You'll get a variety of answers. What's the truth? We've got some answers for you.

"Leaving your phone plugged in overnight is okay to do, it will not drastically harm your device," says Shane Broesky, co-founder of Farbe Technik, a company that makes charging accessories. "Your phone is very smart. Once it's fully charged, it knows when to stop the current from coming in to protect your phone from overcharging."

So far so good, but there are situations when leaving that smartphone plugged in overnight can slowly reduce the lifespan of your battery. "Lithium-ion batteries can react poorly if your phone experiences elevated temperatures, leading to a damaging effect," explains Shane. "If you have a case on your device that does not allow heat to escape, this heat will increase the temperature of the battery and will cause cell oxidation, which will shrink the capacity and shorten the lifespan." Make sure you take your phone case off at night if you're going to leave your phone plugged in and charging.

"The sweet spot for lithium-ion batteries is to keep them charged between 50 and 80 percent. This allows for the charged ions to continue to work and protect the life of your battery," says Shane. "Charging your device in short spurts throughout the day will give these ions just enough energy to keep them going." So frequent top-ups, rather than one daily charge up, is healthier for your battery. It's not convenient, but that's the optimal way to charge your smartphone if you want to ensure the longest life possible.

### What to avoid?

"The major threat to your battery is charge cycles," Shane explains. "A charge cycle is where your battery goes from empty or near-empty to full — and every phone battery has a limited number of charge cycles before the end of its life. Try to avoid going from 0 to 100 percent whenever possible, this will start to break down your battery and give your device a shorter lifespan."

There's one other factor to consider when charging your smartphone and it concerns the quality of the accessories you use. It's always best to use the charger and cable that shipped with your smartphone. Failing that, you can buy another official charger and cable. You may have a

high number of charge cycles before that limit is reached, but eventually the battery is going to noticeably degrade. When it does, you'll find that it lasts only a very short amount of time, or it will simply not turn on at all. Sometimes official chargers and cables are expensive. But you can find reputable alternatives. Manufacturers like Farbe Technik produce safe accessories that are fully tested, certified by the likes of Apple and Samsung, and compliant with legislation. If you are going to buy a charger from a third-party just make sure to stick to big brand names.

It's also important to ensure that the charger and cable you buy has the correct rating. Cross-check the amp or watt rating with your phone's specifications. The real risks are found at the cheap end of the market. Cheap counterfeits are not built with safety in mind and can be very dangerous. They often don't meet safety standards.

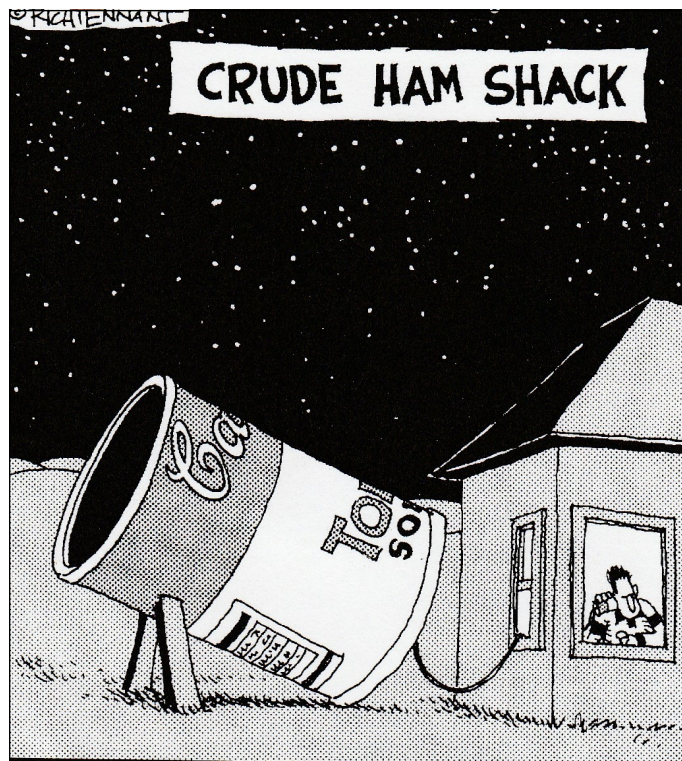
### Quick recap.

You can leave your phone plugged into the charger overnight without too much risk, provided it's not a counterfeit charger, and you don't let your phone overheat. For best results with your smartphone charging, here's what to remember:

- Always use official chargers and cables, or certified alternatives from reputable brands and retailers.
- Don't let your phone get too hot. Remove the case when charging overnight.
- For the longest battery life possible, try to keep your battery between 50 and 80 percent.

Avoid letting phone battery completely discharge, and don't charge it from 0 percent up to 100 percent too often.

*Article courtesy of Simon Hill, Digital Trends, with supporting comments by Joe Sokolowski, Editor.*



## *Editorial - NARS – A glimpse of its Ground Plane....*

Many of our present membership would be hard pressed to remember when NARS was formed back in July of 1985. Some of those “founding fathers” have gone to other places, and a few, believe it or not, are still very much alive with the organization. Let me list those that were on the Steering Committee back then: Bob Welch KE5IC, (SK) Paul Frantz WB5DBT (now KF5SB) Dee Logan W1HEO, Ken Edinborgh W5BKK (SK) Ken Harlan KA5AKG, Dan Wells N5IDE, Henry Freedenberg N5HF, Dick Rousseau KA4MFS, (now KU4QK) Bob Allen KA5PSO and Jim Stevenson W5KMN. Certainly, a few of you around today should have recognized at least a some of these guys. Just weeks before, this little band of adventurers got together for their first Field Day operations, and under the call N5HF, managed to log in a whopping 474 contacts! By December '85, NARS was on their way with a total of 60 charter members and now almost thirty years later, we're at the 135 mark.

I bring this up because many of us tend to forget where our roots are, or how our “ground plane” is laid out. We Narsians are committed to our hobby, we get involved, we help others when in need, and most importantly, we're open to others' ideas. If there's a better way to do it, then let's hear about it. But even I, the ever so humble KD5KR, become complacent and have to be reminded every so often that it just doesn't happen by itself. Recently, while going through some of my historical files, I came across a letter penned by Dee Logan W1HEO some seventeen years ago. He was one of the founding fathers and one that played an important part in the formation of NARS back in '85. His comments, in part, follow:

*“It has been quite a few years and at least one sunspot cycle since we met in my living room in Spring and talked about starting a new radio club. I had done once before when I worked for GE in Fairfield, CT. I knew it was much work and that it would take the cooperative efforts of several like-minded licensees. As you say, the rest is history. But you are so right about a radio club growing and prospering through a variety of individuals who pitch in, but don't burn out. That's the sad fact of life up here in Lake County, Ohio. The same people doing the same jobs over and over again. Eventually they cry “enough,” and split without so much as a “73.” I congratulate NARS for its ability to reinvent itself and emphasize fresh blood through licensing classes and keeping an active schedule of club activities. I started writing an article on how to keep your radio club alive and well, and kept coming back to NARS as a great role model. Certainly, one rule of survival must be, “Have fun!” Keep business among the board and try to make the club meeting a fun experience. If not, why attend the meeting?”*

So there you are, a quick glimpse of your “roots.” It just doesn't happen by itself, does it? It takes work, cooperation and the desire for a group such as NARS to succeed. NARS is in its 30<sup>th</sup> year, and we must be doing something right. But, complacency is a sign of failure. If you really enjoy your club you have to be an active part of it. Our few existing charter members may not be around for the next sunspot cycle. When that occurs, someone has to insure the club's future. Every so often we need to be reminded of the NARS tenet. I know, I do. Besides, now that I'm in the “winter” of my years, my memory is starting to slip; in fact it's getting worse. First I began to forget faces, then names, then to zip up. Yesterday, I forgot to unzip. *Gevalt!!*

Joe Sokolowski, KD5KR

### ***Recap of February's program –***

*Joe Sokolowski KD5KR reporting*

CW is alive and well! That was the theme of last month's program, and given the number of sending keys that were displayed, we'd say that CW is indeed alive and well! Iambic paddles, single lever paddles, semi-auto Bug keys, doubles, triples? Whoa, what's next on the drawing board? Oh, the straight key and its popular Navy key were also displayed for review. Each owner proudly described its functionality and why it was their favorite.

I never advanced past the straight key since my message sending aboard a Fletcher destroyer back in the late 50's was with a flashing light. We Signalmen could whip out a message at the blazing speed of ten to twelve words a minute! Hey, don't knock it. It had its place in history and is still in use today.

Overall, I found myself never too old to learn something new, and have renewed respect for those that can send at 30 wpm or better.... Gulp....



### ***Overheard at Starbuck's last week:***

“No more Mr. Nice Guy! I'm no longer going to put a smiley face at the end of my e-mail when I ask spammers to take me off their list!”

## ***Saturday, February 28 VE Test Session Results at Lone Star Col- lege Tomball Library***

We had 14 candidates taking 20 tests.

Element 2 tests given: 10; passed 10

Element 3 tests given: 9; passed 5

Element 4 tests given: 1; passed 1

Congratulations to:

Edward Hutcheson Jr - new Technician

Jose Santin - new General

Rafael Fernandez - new General

George Collins - new Technician

Martin McAfee - new Technician

Ronald Crow - new Technician

Paul McNerney KG5FAZ - upgrade to General

Kyle Welge KF5UAB - upgrade to General

Jason Turner - new Technician

Fred Orsack - new Technician

Jack Downs - new Technician

Breck Markham - new Technician

Brett Parrish KG5FYW - upgrade to Extra

Thanks to the VE's in attendance:

Sarah Connell W2AOV

Mike Bragassa K5uo

Skip Ferguson K5LLR

Ron Horton KF5LFL

Sheree Horton KF5LMJ

Martin Rogoff N5GPS

The next monthly session will be held Saturday, March 28 at 10:15AM at Lone Star College Tomball Library, located at the southern entrance to the College. Official address is 30555 State Highway 249. Let me know if you would like to serve at this session. Parking is in the lot to the right of the entrance.

There will also be a special session held Monday, March 9 at 6:30PM at Rice University. This session is for the ham radio class of Dr Pat Reiff W5TAR.

Anyone who wants to observe and/or participate in a session is always welcome. Just let me know if you want to learn more about becoming a volunteer examiner.

73, Keith Dutson NM5G

NARS VE Session Manager

## ***NARS in rewind.... October 1995***

*GPS, as presented by Max Huff KF5FZ:*

"GPS is fast becoming a ubiquitous appliance that is showing up in applications such as vehicle tracking, mapping, asset management and a lot of recreational activities. Recent product announcements offer GPS receivers with simple graphics for as little as \$200. While it may be sufficient for recreational uses, it does not satisfy any commercial requirement. At this time."

## ***NO MORE PRINTED AMATEUR RADIO LICENSES BEING ISSUED BY FCC***

In case you have not yet heard, waiting to receive your ham license in the mail is now a thing of the past, unless you have specifically requested it. As of February 17, the FCC stopped routinely issuing paper license documents to amateur licensees, noting that inclusion in the Commission's online database has for several years been the official record of a ham's authorization to operate.

Amateur radio licensees may print out official copies as well as unofficial "reference copies" of their licenses via the FCC's Universal Licensing System database or may request the issuance of a paper document. In its commentary filing while the matter was in its proposal stage, the ARRL had asked that new licensees continue to receive paper licenses, along with instructions on how to set up their Universal Licensing System accounts for future license renewals and upgrades. But the FCC declined, saying applicants or licensees who include e-mail addresses with their applications will receive an official electronic authorization via e-mail. The Commission says the change will save it over \$300,000 a year.

## ***VOA RADIOGRAM HAS BROADCAST ITS 100TH PROGRAM***

If you just happen have access to an older analog shortwave broadcast transmitter and are wondering what to do with it, just ask the Voice of America. That's because its found a novel use of one of its own and created a program for it as we hear from Kim Andrew Elliott, KD9XB:

VOA Radiogram has broadcast its 100th program. VOA Radiogram is an experimental Voice of America program on which digital text modes familiar to amateur radio are transmitted on a 50-year-old analog AM shortwave broadcast transmitter in North Carolina. The half-hour show is on the air four times each weekend. The idea is that shortwave radio can be used to communicate text and images when the Internet is disrupted by dictators, disasters, or other factors. In the early weeks of VOA Radiogram, digital modes were tested side by side, including the various flavors of BPSK, QPSK, MT63, Olivia, and Thor. Reports have been received from shortwave listeners and radio amateurs throughout Europe and North America, as well as Latin America and Asia, and even from New Zealand, 14000 kilometers from the transmitter.

Ultimately, it was MFSK that worked best on the shortwave broadcast transmitter. Specifically, MFSK32 so far provides the best combination of speed, 120 words per minute, and performance under typical shortwave reception conditions. Furthermore, MFSK can be used to transmit images as well as text. Digital text works on any existing shortwave transmitter, with no modifications necessary. And it can be received on any radio, including cheap portables with no sideband capability. The results show that digital text via analog shortwave transmitter often results in 100 percent copy even in conditions where voice broadcasts are difficult to understand. Digital text via analog shortwave has even been effective against jamming.

*Amateur Radio Newline*

# Welcome, Congratulations and Condolences

Welcome new members,

## NARS Resource list

### General help:

Allen Majeski WA5REJ  
281 528-0673 wa5rej@yahoo.com

Deral Kent K5WNO  
281 548-7476 k5wno@juno.com

### Digital modes:

Marty Fitzgerald W5MF  
281 251-4301 fitz6@swball.net

### VHF/UHF:

Brian Derx N5BA  
281 251-4301

### PC Programming & Ops:

Keith Dutson NM5G  
281 516-1466 keith1@dutson.net

### Building Electronics & kits:

Mark Tyler K5GQ  
281 587-0256 k5gq@juno.com

### Interference (Basic advice):

Terry Myers KQ5U  
281 443-6042 tmyers1031@sbcglobal.net

### Card checking for awards:

Bob Walworth N5ET—DXCC  
281 292-2221 rwalworth@charter.net

Brian Derx N5BA—WAS, VUCC  
281 894-5942

Bob Walworth N5ET—WAZ  
281 292-2221 rwalworth@charter.net

### NARS Public Info. Officer

Joe Sokolowski KD5KR  
281 353-2196 kd5kr@arrl.net

## NARS Information

### President & Board Chairman

Brad Nelson WD5GNI  
281 370-0934  
wd5gni@swbell.net

### Vice President

*To be announced*

### Treasurer

Sheree Horton KF5LMJ  
281 890-4038  
sher5456@gmail.com

### Secretary

Martin Rogoff N5GPS  
281 890-4538  
N5gps.tx@gmail.com

### Directors

Al Manard N6VQO  
281 292-3113  
almanard@gmail.com

Ron Horton KF5LFL

281 890-4038  
ron.horton88gmail.com

Deral Kent K5WNO

281 548-7476  
k5wno@juno.com

Mike Bowen N8ILU

mike5664g@yahoo.com

### Administrative & General Info.

Joe Sokolowski KD5KR  
281 353-2196  
kd5kr@arrl.net

Send changes in address, phone, or email to:

NARS  
P.O. Box 90387  
Houston, TX 77290-0387

### Nets

2 meter Wed. 8 pm. 147.36/96, tone 100  
(Courtesy of Texas DX Society)  
Coordinator: Jerry Whiting KB5VGD  
g\_whiting@sbcglobal.net

### Web site

URL: <http://www.w5nc.net>  
Web Master: Bill Buoy N5BIA  
281 370-3510 n5bia@arrl.net

### NARS Reflector

NARS@mailman.qth.net  
Coordinator: Keith Dutson NM5G  
281 516-1466 keith1@dutson.net

### Texas QSO Party

Co-coordinator: Chuck Sanders NO5W  
832 657-4832  
no5w.chuck@gmail.com

Co-coordinator: Keith Dutson NM5G  
281 516-1466 keith1@dutson.net

### VE Session (ARRL) Manager

Keith Dutson NM5G  
281 516-1466 keith1@dutson.net

### Meetings

Monthly General Membership 3rd. Friday  
each month (except January) at 7:30 pm.  
Cypress Creek Christian Community Ctr.  
6823 Cypresswood Drive

### Saturday Breakfast

Denny's 7720 Louetta Rd. 7 am.

### Wednesday Lunch-11 am.

Various places. Info on front page.

**NARS News** is published monthly by the Northwest Amateur Radio Society. Send all articles and materials for the newsletter to:  
Editor, Joe Sokolowski KD5KR, 281 353-2196 kd5kr@arrl.net Deadline for articles to appear in the next newsletter is the last day of  
each month.

Northwest Amateur Radio Society is a Special Services Club affiliated with the American Radio Relay League, ARRL Club No. 2120.