



# Monthly Update

February 2018

## Service Recognition



I would like to extend some well-deserved accolades, for his years of service to the North Shore ARC, to **Steve McEdwards VA3TPS**. Steve did a wonderful job as president over the last few years and under his leadership the North Shore ARC made notable progress on many fronts. Steve has a natural knack for uniting people and because of this our club has grown not only in size but in participation. A perfect example of this is clearly reflected in the noticeably increased turnout to our social events and the high volunteer rate that we have for service events. This goes beyond the confines of our club, however. Positive advances have also been made in creating unity among the three radio clubs here in Durham. It is not uncommon to have members from the South Pickering ARC and Whitby ARC join us for meetings and socials and, likewise, our members have been encouraged to attend functions at other clubs.

Unfortunately, for us, Steve decided to retire to his cottage near Fenelon Falls and so resigned as president as a result. So far, in his new retirement location, Steve has been able to play a bit of radio between endless rounds of exercise pushing his snow blower. Maybe we can rig up an antenna to mount to the motor so he can carry on a QSO while trying to keep up with all the snow! I am not sure if Steve can hit VE3OSH from his shack but he has joined us on VE3LBN several times to chat with us. He may be up north a ways now but he is still active in the club doing things like managing the table sales for our upcoming Hamfest and being a mentor and sounding board for the new president.

Steve, the club owes you a debt of gratitude for your service and we look forward to still seeing you out at our events when it is feasible. Thank you, again, for your dedication to the North Shore ARC.

## February Club Meeting

When: Tuesday, Feb 20, 7:00pm

Where: White Cliffe Terrace Retirement Centre, Courtice

**Lee McMurter VA3LHM**, of Durham Radio, will be presenting this month on digital over the air television. With so many options for watching TV this is definitely one that fits most budgets and, because of our geographic location, offers lots of channels. Tnx, Lee, for being willing to share this info with us.



If time permits we may take a beginners look at what a code plug for the Radioddity GD-77 and the TYT MD3xx radios looks like. So, if you have one of these DMR handhelds you may want to bring it with you. Not familiar with digital radio? Don't worry, you are not alone. Even those of us who have started to explore this mode are still learning all the nuances.

## Hamfest Update

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Durham Hamfest will take place on Saturday, April 28, 2018. The Hamfest committee, under the leadership of **Alison VE3GRL** and comprised of members of both the North Shore ARC and the South Pickering ARC, have been meeting monthly since January and plans are in full swing. **Glenn VA3GAR** has secured the event facility, **Steve VA3TPS** is already registering vendors, **Jeffrey VA3RTV** has arranged for the coffee and snacks, **Joe VE3VGI** has the parking crew ready to go and **Randy VE3JPU** has the ticket sales under control. Our next planning meeting will be Sunday, March 4, 12:00 noon, at the Tim's/Wendy's service centre at 401 and Brock St. in Whitby. All are welcome to attend so they know what to expect on the day of the event.



## DMR Notes

Since many of us are getting digital radios to experiment with we hope to have some tidbits of information in each newsletter to help demystify this exploding mode. Digital radio was never intended for Amateur use but that has not stopped Hams from adapting it to work for us. On the surface there does not appear to be a lot of difference but you will quickly realize that just understanding the terminology and trying to relate that to analog can be a daunting task. Our hope to bring some clarity to this new mode.



The lingo of digital radio is quite unique. Code Plug. Time slot. Color Code. Digital Contact. Talk Group. Channel. Zone. RX Group. Scan List. Admit Criteria. And the list goes on.

So, for the first round we will look at the term **Code Plug**. This is an odd term and for me I first envisioned that it was a piece of hardware that you had to plug into your radio. Well, as it turns out, Code Plug can be summarized as being the configuration file that tells your radio how it will operate. Many of you are familiar with the Chirp software that we use to program our analog radios. With Chirp we create what looks like a spreadsheet file that has the info for the repeaters and simplex frequencies that we want to use. This includes things like frequency, offset, tone, a name that will display instead of the frequency number, power, etc. Well, a code plug is basically the same as that spreadsheet but instead of only having just one section to configure there are several sections that need to be configured. The main sections of a code plug are Digital Contact, RX Group List, Zone, Hot Spot, Channel and Scan List. We will dive more into these areas in future updates.

There is definitely a bit of a learning curve in programming the code plug for a digital radio but once you get familiar with the various sections that need to be configured it makes a lot more sense. There are lots of good resources on the internet and I hope to start building some links to some of these on our website.

To be honest, at first I was not too interested in this new mode as to me it seemed like it was just an RF connection to a digital repeater and then a Skype-like connection to the world. In essence this is indeed what it is but it is so much fun. When you are talking to someone in Scotland you are not making a direct RF contact but with the HF band conditions the way they are this is a great alternative and I am actually getting quite hooked on it. We have a strong support group within our club so if you have any doubts be assured that there are lots of people to help you along the way.

## Tuesday Night Rag Chew



Several of our members have started a Tuesday night informal rag chew on VE3OSH. The discussion starts at around 7pm when people start to show up on the repeater. Sometimes we slide over to the VE3LBN digital repeater where we can also chat with guys like Mike VA3MCX up in Kapuskasing or Steve VA3TPS in Fenelon

Falls. Topics change by the minute and we make every effort to make sure that everyone gets to have their say in an orderly fashion. Even if you just want to listen in we encourage you to at least break in and let us know that you are there.

## Wednesday Night Face-to-Face

As well as the Tuesday night rag chew on the repeaters there is quite a crew that meet at the Tim Horton's at King and Wilson at about 8pm every Wednesday. It actually gets quite crazy as we discuss all things radio, update our digital radios with the latest code plugs, discuss hobby issues, and generally have a good time. Some come a bit early to secure our seating area and a lot of times we don't get away until 10pm. Others can only pop in for a little bit but everyone is welcome no matter. We are even getting some local Amateurs who are not club members but come to enjoy the fellowship. If you are in the area on Wednesday night and have a few minutes to spare we would definitely enjoy your company.

## Your New Executive

With **Steve VA3TPS** and **Alex VE3ZSH** having to step back from leading rolls in the club executive we had to have an election to vote in new executive members. So, at the January meeting the following members were voted in.

**President – Laird Solomon VE3LKS** – Laird previously served as both the secretary and the treasurer and wanted to step down from one of them. After some discussion he agreed to step down from both positions and take on the role of president as long as others stepped up to fill these two, now vacant, positions. Two people came forward to fill those roles and Laird was voted in as president.

**Vice President – Martha Dinsmore VA3SBD** – Martha has been serving as vice president for several years and agreed to stay on in that roll. Not only has Martha been a good vice president but she also coordinates other events like Field Day, the Christmas Potluck, arranges for cards and flowers when needed, and helps get operators out for JOTA.

**Treasurer – Bob Cowley VE3HIX** agreed to take on the treasurer position and was voted in. Bob has been with the club now for several years and has brought a wealth of technical knowledge to the repeater committee of which he is part of. Bob has also been instrumental as being an ambassador for the hobby leading out with events like Camp X and Amateur Radio displays.

**Secretary – Jacquie Norman VA3BTQ** agreed to take on the secretary position and was voted in. Jackie recently got her ticket and is now on the air. Don't let this fool you into thinking that she is inexperienced as radio runs through her blood. It is my understanding that her dad worked at Camp X so she comes by it quite naturally.

**Membership – Clint Metcalf VA3KDK** agreed to take on the membership position and was voted in. Clint, too, has served on the repeater committee for several years and brings technical knowledge to the group. However, he holds one of the biggest responsibilities that the club has that most people don't even realize – he is the barista that makes the steaming pot of java for our monthly meetings. Clint is also active helping Martha out with Field Day.

## Saturday Coffee Break



One more social event to promote here. The Whitby ARC hosts a coffee break every Saturday afternoon. They meet at the Blue Sea Fish and Chips located at 836 Brock St. N in Whitby from 2pm to 4pm. All Amateurs are welcome.

## More Service Recognition



Over the last few years we have had the pleasure of getting to know **Sabrina Skoczylas VA3AXU** and **Alex Keller VE3ZSH**. Both Sabrina and Alex were in school when they first joined the North Shore ARC and have been valuable members over the few years that they have been with us. Sabrina and Alex were quite involved with leading out and assisting with Hamfest, looking after the club membership, working with the repeater crew, creating advertising, working with content on the website, participating in public service events, teaching classes, and I am sure there are other things that I am forgetting. Well, now that school is over they have entered that phase of their life where they have entered the workforce to pay bills, stash money away to buy radios, and spend many hours commuting to and from Toronto. They are still active members in the club and we will see them around but due to these new time constraints they have decided to take a step back from the areas that they were either heading up or assisting with. Thank you, Sabrina and Alex, for your service and we wish you both the best as you start your careers.

## Saturday Breakfast

If you are not tired of chatting or meeting up with club members during the week then you will be interested to know that there is a group that meets on Saturday morning for breakfast at Johnny's Original Eatery. The restaurant is located in the plaza on the northwest corner of King and Thornton. Members and families usually start to arrive at about 8:30am.



## QRM from the Shack



Well, I am quickly running out of room in this update. I would just like to thank everyone for putting their trust in the new executive. We will strive to serve you well and please don't hesitate to come forward with suggestions to make the North Shore club better and stronger. If you have suggestions for meeting presentations please let me know.

We have three new members in our club now. **John Deacon** and **Carl Fischer**, both SWLs, and **Jay Cowle VA3JYE** have joined since Christmas. As well **Peter Melnik VE3PLM**, a past member, is back on the air and has been joining us at Tim's. I bought my first HF rig from Peter way back in 1990. Also, **Leigh Schutt VE3LSO** has been on our rag chew. Please join me in welcoming these new members and friends to the North Shore Amateur Radio Club! **73 de Laird VE3LKS**