



BRAZOS VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB



AMATEUR RADIO FOR SOUTHWEST HOUSTON AND FORT BEND COUNTY

MAY 2006

VOLUME 30 ISSUE 5

MAY GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING The Saltgrass Repeater Network

Steve Agee, N5ZUA will present a program on the network at the May general meeting.
He will describe the systems and its unique network

SKYWARN CLASS/MEETING NEAR RECORD ATTENDANCE

The April General Membership meeting consisted primarily of a Skywarn class put on by Gene Hafele and Patrick Blood from the U.S. Weather Service. About 55 people attended. This comes close to a record attendance over the past couple of years. Each attendee received a certificate citing their certification. This presentation was very informative and was a good "cram course" in meteorology.

BVARC License Classes

There will be a special Technician License Class in May. Any member or non-member that wishes to attend is welcome. A group of about 10 students associated with the Catholic Charities of Galveston-Houston are very interested in getting licensed before the start of hurricane season so that they can operate on 2 meters for emergency traffic purposes and have committed to take this class. The General License Class originally scheduled for May did not "make." It will be rescheduled in several months. The Extra Class License class will probably take place in June, TBD.

This Technician class will take place at Morkovsky Hall at St. Dominic Chancery on Holcombe at 288 on 3 consecutive Monday evenings, May 8, 15 and 22 from 6:30 to 9:30 PM. We recognize that this is short notice, but this is the only time that was mutually available for another 6 or 7 weeks. It is imperative that you contact either Ross or myself (John) if you wish to attend.

There are no fees for this class, but you will need a copy of "Now You're Talking," Fifth Edition. These are available at Electronic Parts Outlet, Houston Amateur Radio Supply or Fry's for \$20 + tax.

Contact Ross at W5HFF@yahoo.com or John at K5IZO@yahoo.com if you wish to attend.

President's Corner

The past few weeks have been really busy with the preparations on the MS150 as well as the Sky Warn class. There were over 55 participants for the Sky Warn class in April which will become an annual program for BVARC. The people from the National Weather service enjoyed putting on the presentation and said that they would be glad to come out and do another program again next year.

The 2006 MS150 is finally over and was a huge success! With nearly 13,000 riders, 3,000 volunteers and another 5,000 spectators and friends and family the largest 2 day bike ride in the US finished around 5:30 p.m. Sunday April 23 when the oldest rider, 92 year old Bud Schiffman, crossed the finish line. After the last rider crossed a large portion of support vehicles and groups followed up the rear in the infamous "MS150 conga line" showing their support for the MS150. One of the most important support groups are the over 130 amateur operators at break points, support vehicles, motorcycle marshals and Net controls. The event was a success from end to end.

I have already started working on the 2007 event and how to make it better. If you have comments about the communications and how to make it better, please send me an e-mail and let me know. All comments are needed, whether good or bad, to improve things for next year. Please send all e-mails to mhardwick@lockardandwhite.com and let me know your thoughts. There will be a wrap-up communications meeting sometime in May. The date and location is still being worked on and I will let everyone know about it as so as the dates are final. I want to thank everyone again for your hard work and your volunteer spirit on the MS150.

One of the resources that are used on the MS150 is the Saltgrass repeater network. Steve Agee, N5ZUA will present a program on the network at the May general meeting. He will describe the systems and its unique network.

Field day is around the corner and we need volunteers. If you would like to help with field day, contact Ross or John or Allen and let them know.

See you at the next meeting.

73,
N5VCX

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N5AFV Caribbean Cruise Satellite Operation a Success

by Allen F. Mattis, N5AFV

Introduction

I presented a program at the September 2005 BVARC program about operating amateur radio on cruise ships. During the program I mentioned that I was preparing for another Caribbean cruise on December 17-27, 2005. The cruise departed Port Everglades, FL, and sailed to the island of Dominica in the Lesser Antilles and back to Port Everglades. Amateur radio operation was conducted at sea as a maritime mobile, and at six ports of call.

My previous experience operating on cruises helped me prepare for this cruise and its successful amateur radio satellite operation. All contacts were made using an Icom W32A HT and an AL800 telescoping antenna. This equipment has become my preferred choice when operating on cruises.

Summary Statistics

While on the cruise, a total of 45 satellite passes were worked, and 261 contacts were made. Amateur radio satellite operation was conducted on all three of the active FM LEO satellites, AO-27, SO-50 and AO-51. Contacts were made with amateur radio stations in 27 US states, 4 Canadian provinces, 3 Mexican states, and Guadeloupe, Martinique, Puerto Rico and Venezuela. I also heard a Brazilian station, but was unable to make a contact with him. Contacts at sea as a maritime mobile comprised 57% of the total contacts, and 43% of the total contacts were made while in port. This was the first cruise where I made an effort to operate from all ports of call.



KP4/N5AFV working KE4AZN on SO-50 from El Moro,
San Juan National Historic Site, Puerto Rico

Discussion

As I discussed in the program at the September 2005 BVARC meeting, obtaining licenses for operation from the various ports of call on a cruise can take a great deal of time and advance planning. On this particular cruise, my US license covered operation from Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. I also have a reciprocal license from the Bahamas, which was the first port of call and where the ship was flagged. Another port of call was the French island of St Bartholomew, and the CEPT convention gave me instant operating privileges there. Obtaining licensing for the remaining two ports of call was more challenging.

The British Virgin Islands application procedure for a reciprocal amateur radio license (<http://www.qsl.net/oh2mcn/vp2v.htm>) appeared to be easy to follow, and I prepared to submit my application. Copies of both my passport identification page and my FCC amateur radio license had to be notarized as being true copies, and an application form had to be filled out. I also submitted an international money order in the amount of \$20.10. However, because it was in the second half of the year, the correct fee was \$10.10. I was not aware that British Virgin Islands reciprocal amateur radio licenses are issued for the calendar year and expire on December 31st. This \$10 overpayment delayed issue of the license. I was able to contact the office of the Telecommunications Manager in the Ministry of Communications & Works by e-mail and explain that I planned to visit the British Virgin Islands in a few weeks and needed the license issued before my cruise sailed. The license arrived by mail ten days later.

Obtaining a reciprocal amateur radio license for Dominica appeared to be straight forward when I looked at the information on the ARRL website (http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/regulations/io/ recip-info_a.html#j7). I submitted an application according to the website instructions, and later sent an e-mail to the licensing authorities to inquire about the progress of my application. I received a reply by e-mail informing me that my call sign would J79AFV, and that I should pick up my license at their office when I arrived in Dominica. I checked satellite pass times for my stop in Dominica and realized that there would be a satellite pass before I had time to pick up my license. I inquired by e-mail about obtaining permission to operate before picking up my license, and I received a reply by e-mail that authorized me to operate as J79AFV for one year beginning November 16, 2005. When I arrived in Dominica, I began operating immediately. Later in the afternoon, I went to the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission office to pick up my license. I was informed that my license had been sent to the customs office at the dock where I landed and that I should pick it up there. I picked up the license on my way back to the ship, and it was then I found out that the call sign issued to me had been changed to J79AFM. Local amateur radio operators in Dominica usually receive a J73 call sign with their initials as the suffix, and reciprocal operators usually receive a J79 call sign with their home call sign suffix. My initials are AFM, and this was done as a favor to me. The contacts I made using the call sign J79AFV are valid; I just used an incorrect call sign while operating those passes. This incident illustrates some of the complications that can arise with amateur radio licensing in foreign countries.

When I was as far east as I would get on the cruise, I worked a number of east passes hoping to make a contact across the Atlantic Ocean. Even though I was not able to make a trans-Atlantic contact, those passes did yield some very enjoyable results. On two east passes, I had very nice conversations with Mark, VO1ONE, in Newfoundland. On another east pass, I enjoyed a four-way round table with Rony, FG5FU, Julien, FM0HN, and Pedro, YV6PM. These east passes are clear examples of one of the primary purposes of amateur radio as described in FCC Part 97.1(e): "Continuation and extension of the amateur's unique ability to enhance international goodwill."

Conclusion

Operation on the satellites during this cruise was very enjoyable. The amateur radio operators on the satellites were very courteous which allowed a high number of contacts to be made. I look forward to operating on another cruise in the future.

THE BVARC Rag Chew Net

By Joe Morgan, K5JWM, Net Coordinator

March 2006 check-ins

3910 KHz +/-3KHz Wednesdays at 7:00PM

Just WHAT IS the Rag Chew Net? Well it's a chance for you to get on the low bands and hang out with other B-Varc members, as well as hams from around the south central US! WHAT?? Don't have voice privileges? Got a short-wave receiver? Dial in and listen, then check in using the telephone number announced at the beginning of each net.

03/01/06__K5JWM, KE5SR, K5CEK, W5UHZ, KZ5I, KB5SIT, WO5O, WA5VRB, AD5UW, W5RH, K5LJ, K5VRJ, AB5BA, N5CPA, NM5K. check_ins (15)

03/08/06__K5JWM, K5CEK, KE5CUT, N5CPA, KE5SR, N0JAA, W5RH, K5LJ, W5UHZ, W5RJA, WA5VRB, NM5K, K5VRJ, AB5BA, KB5SIT, W5EET, KA5MEI check_ins (17)

03/15/06__K5JWM, KE5CUT, KE5GWO, W5UHZ, KE5SR, K5CEK, W5RJA, KA5MEI, WO5O, N5CPA, K5LJ, WA5VRB, KB5SIT, N0JAA, KK5LO, WB5TIH, KD7THJ, KA5VVS. check_ins (18)

03/22/06__K5JWM, N5CPA, K5VRJ, AB5BA, K5CEK, KE5SR, KB5SIT, W5UHZ, KE5CUT, NM5K, KB5F, KB5VTB, W5RJA, K5LJ, KE5BCD, WA5VRB, WO5O, KG5RQ. check_ins (18)

03/29/06__K5JWM, N5CPA, KE5CUT, K5LJ, W5UHZ, K5VRJ, AB5BA, N0JAA, KB5SIT, KD7THJ, KB5F, WA5VRB, W5RJA, W5RH, WO5O, KA5MEI, KZ5I, W5HFF, KE5BCD, N5XWB. check_ins (20)

MINUTES – BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING, APRIL 6, 2006

Mike Hardwick called the monthly Board of Directors meeting for The Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club to order at 7:30 PM on April 6, 2006 at the Denney's Restaurant, Sugar Land Texas.

Attendees:

Mike Hardwick, N5VCX (Pres.) Peter Sauermilch, KD5QPX (Rec. Sec.)
Sid Sherwood, N5ZXD (2-Y. Dir.) Cameron Mitchell, K5CAM (Past Pres.)
John Chauvin, K5IZO Charles Frost, K5LBU

Minutes for February and March 2006 meeting were approved as reported in the BVARC Newsletter.
Secretary/Treasurer's Report was not presented to the Board

Old business:

Classes: The General Class instruction will begin on April 30th and last for three weeks. A minimum of 4 people are needed to make the class.

By-Law Revision: Tabled until the May director's meeting.

Warehouse: There has been no movement securing new warehouse space. This will be discussed at the April General Membership Meeting.

Field Day: Again John Chauvin, Allen Brier, and Ross Lawler will head the Field Day committee. The Field Day site is tentatively planned to be the Richmond Fire Training Facility.

145.45 Repeater: Tabled

Hamfest:

2006 Wrap Up: BVARC received approximately \$1,000 (net).

2007 Plans: Location will be at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, Building "C". Plans are underway for appropriate advertisement and vendor contacts such that optimal exposure will be created. It is already known that Pearland will have a hamfest on May 17th and that is possible competition.

New Business:

There was no new business presented to the board.

Schedule:

April: Skywarn: The National Weather Service is scheduled. Meeting time must be advanced to 7:00 PM to allow enough time for the presentation.

May: Saltgrass Network:

June: ARES:

Other Business:

Public Service Events:

MS150: Date is April 21st and 22nd. The rider population stands now at 13,000 and 135 radio operators are needed.

Shiner Bash: Date is May 6th. 15 radio operators are needed in Houston, 10 in Austin, and 10 in San Antonio.

Meeting adjourned at 8:08 PM

Submitted by Recording Secretary Peter Sauermilch-KD5QPX

Houston Amateur Radio Supply

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<http://texasparadise.com/hars/>

George DiLetto KD0RW

RESULTS OF THE April 11th B-VARC AMATEUR EXAMINATION SESSION by: John Moore, KK5NU

B-VARC sponsored and administered the ARRL's Amateur Radio Examination session that was held on Tuesday, April 11, 2006 at HCC's Scarcella Technology Campus here in Stafford.

MEMBERS OF THE VE TEAM:

Dennis Dietrich, W5DDD
Larry Jacobson, K5LJ
John Moore, KK5NU
George Ontko, KM5VP

Five examination elements were administered during the evening to five applicants. Four new Technician licenses were attained, and an upgrade to General class license; with the total number of elements passed being 5. The overall "pass rate" for the evening was 100%.

Congratulations to the following who attained a license and/or passed an exam:

John M. Blanks	- {KE5ICK}	- Technician
Richard E. Goldy	- {KE5ICL}	- Technician
Charles A. Myers, Jr.	- {KE5ICM}	- Technician
Stuart E. Nelson	- {KE5ICN}	- Technician
Ivan E. Robinson	- WA5RJU	- General

Many thanks to all the Team Members and Assistants who volunteer their valuable time and effort each month.

All of us at B-VARC again thank everyone at HCC Scarcella Technology Center for making these excellent classroom facilities available to us for our exams each month.

..... 73

Upcoming Hamfests

Hamfest info for the next few months. More information at: <http://www.arrl.org/hamfests.html#listing>

13 May 2006 Pearland Amateur Radio Club Tailgate Sale

Pearland High School, Hwy 35 at Oiler Drive. 8 am to 1 pm

Talk-In: 147.22 (PL 167.9)

Contact: John Allen, W5AKE. Email: jpall@swbell.net

9-10 Jun 2006... West Gulf Division Convention (Ham-Com 2006)

2000 Ease Spring Creek Parkway Plano Centre. Plano, TX

Talk-In: 147.18 (PL 107.2)

Contact: Barry A. Goldblatt, WA5KXX. Email: wa5kxx@verizon.net

Phone: 972-596-4669 Fax: 972-596-6161

<http://www.hamcom.org/>

8 Jul 2006... Tidelands Amateur Radio Society

Doyle Convention Center

2010 5th Avenue North, Texas City, TX

Talk-In: 147.14 (PL 167.9)

Contact: Joe Wileman, AA5OP, Phone: 409-945-6794, Email: aa5op@arrl.net

Antenna Intimidation – Back to the Basics

After looking at the latest issues of *QST*, *World Radio* and *CQ*, I was surprised, but pleased, at the amount number of ‘antenna’ products that are available. Complete antenna kits, accessories, modeling and analysis software, measurement devices, books, etc. So many products exist today that an antenna beginner, coming into the current Ham Radio world, might feel a bit intimidated and not know where to begin. All of these antenna products have their place. However, a good foundation in understanding the basic “Antenna Attributes” is absolutely necessary in order to know how and when to apply these different products.

As I state in my Ham Radio e-mail signature, “Antennas – How can a simple piece of wire cause so much confusion, dilemma, quandary and question, and yet, create so much pleasure?” A simple piece of wire, yes, but put some RF on that puppy and it turns into a complex animal. If you are just starting out – KISS – “Keep It Simple Sir “ (not totally the correct meaning, but I’m being nice here) is the principle to follow. Get back to the basics, read those beginner articles and books and use your Elmer for an answer box.

What are the basics? I present them below as “Antenna Attributes” (essential inherent characteristics). Three characteristic sections -- “Basic, Controlling and Performance” -- are my way of separating them into understandable groups.

Antenna Attributes

Basic Characteristics

- Resonant length or lengths
- Feed point Z (Impedance)

Controlling Characteristics

- Feed point location
- Standing Wave(s) – Current Distribution
- Polarization
- Height above ground

Performance Characteristics

- Gain and Gain Pattern
- Angle of (primary) radiation

I will leave it to you to read further about each of these sections in the various antenna handbooks or at the many online resources. They have been explained many times, and, certainly, much better than I could ever do. But, putting them all together, in their order of influence, is what I want to show.

To help explain these attributes and their groupings, the best scenario is like baking a cake. First, you need raw materials – **Basic Characteristics**; then you need a recipe telling you how to put them together – **Controlling Characteristics**; and finally, you have a cake, the end result -- **Performance Characteristics**. As Hams, our main interest is the antenna radiation pattern, i.e., what shape the far field radiation envelope takes. To get there, we need to use and massage the raw material in a certain way. Just as in baking, you can use raw materials in different quantities and different recipes and end up with cakes or cookies or scones, etc., so can you do the same thing in the antenna world. The same wire, oriented differently, bent a bit different, lengthened a little or a lot will give you different end results.

So, get back to the basics. Gather your raw antenna materials and erect them in a certain way and see what the end result brings. Read up on antenna characteristics and study those “cookbook” articles that tell you exactly what to do and apply the basics to these articles in order to understand the theory behind them. Pretty soon, you will be back in the pages of *QST* looking for some modeling software application or an antenna feed point analyzer. You will understand basic antenna attributes and the data that these antenna products provide. You will not be intimidated by antennas ever again.

Someone once said, “Knowledge is the key to understanding.” As Hams, and antenna experimenters, we should take these words to heart and strive to fully understand the basic antenna attributes. When you understand the basics, you will build better antennas that will create bigger signals that generate more contacts, and hence, you will have more fun. And that’s what it’s all about.

Enjoy your new found knowledge....Rick – W5RH rhiller@sdicgm.com

Public Service Events needing operators

The 2006 BP MS150 is finally over and was a huge success! With nearly 13,000 riders, 3,000 volunteers and another 5,000 spectators and friends and family the largest 2 day bike ride in the US finished around 5:30 p.m. Sunday April 23 when the oldest rider, 92 year old Bud Schiffman, crossed the finish line. After the last rider crossed a large portion of support vehicles and groups followed up the rear in the infamous "MS150 conga line" showing their support for the MS150. As always some of that support is from the over 90 amateur operators at break points, support vehicles and Net controls that are on the nearly 190 mile course. Also supporting the event and communications are the over 40 hams on motorcycles that are the "eyes" on the course providing communications at incidents on the route. The event was a success from end to end.

Now it is time to start working on the 2007 event and how to make it better. If you have comments about the communications and how to make it better, please send me an e-mail and let me know. All comments are needed, whether good or bad, to improve things for next year. Please send all e-mails to mhardwick@lockardandwhite.com and let me know your thoughts.

The Volunteer appreciation parties will be sometime in June. I will let everyone know when and where or you can check www.ms150.org in 1 to 2 weeks.

There will be a wrap-up communications meeting sometime in May. The date and location is still being worked on and I will let everyone know about it as so as the dates are final.

I want to thank everyone again for your hard work and your volunteer sprit on the MS150.

Thank you.

Mike Hardwick, N5VCX

The Shiner BASH

7 a.m. Saturday May 6, 2006

www.shinerbash.com

The Shiner Bash is a 3 route bicycle ride beginning in Houston, San Antonio and Austin and finishing in Shiner Texas. Forty operators are needed for communications for all 3 routes. Positions that need operators are SAG vehicles, supply trucks and medical vehicles. Event communications will be on UHF on all 3 routes. If you would like to volunteer for this event, please let me know. T-shirts and food will be available at the finish line as well as at the break-points.

Still needing 20 operators mostly for the San Antonio and Austin routes.

Give me a call if you would like to help out on the ride.

Thanks,

Mike Hardwick, N5VCX
713-771-4625

REMEMBER FIELD DAY – JUNE 24 & 25

If you wish to help or participate, contact Ross Lawler, W5HFF, Allen Brier, N5XZ or John Chauvin, K5IZO. Contact info is in the "boiler plate" at the end of this newsletter.

2006 Club Officers:

President:

Mike Hardwick, N5VCX
n5vcx@worldnet.att.net

Vice President:

Allen Brier, N5XZ
n5xz@arrl.net

Corresponding Secretary/Treasurer:

Ross Lawler, W5HFF
w5hff@yahoo.com

Recording Secretary:

Pete Sauermilch
kd5qpx@arrl.net

One Year Board Member:

Robert Polanski, KD5YVQ
polinski@swbell.net

Two Year Board Member:

Sid Sherwood, N5ZKD
n5zkd@arrl.net

Past President / At-large

Cameron Mitchell, K5CAM
k5cam@arrl.net

Club Happenings:

General Meeting

Second Thursday each month,
Sugar Land Community Center,
226 Matlage Way

Board of Directors Meeting

First Thursday of each month,
Sugar Land Community Center,
See the website.

Volunteer Examiner Program

BVARC administers Amateur License Exams
on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the HCC
Scarcella Technology Campus,

10141 Cash Rd. in Stafford.
Contact John Moore, KK5NU

Eating Schedule

Third Friday Dinner at 7:30 p.m.
Location announced in text of this edition.

Saturday morning breakfasts –

7:30 a.m. New York Coffee Shop
9720 Hillcroft, Houston

7:30 a.m. Viking Den
2939 S. Main, Stafford

Rag Chew Net

3910 KHz +/-3KHz Wednesdays
at 7:00 p.m.

Public Service Net

Monday night on 146.88 (103.5 PL) at 8:00 PM

BVARC EATING SCHEDULE

SATURDAY MORNING BREAKFASTS:

NEW YORK COFFEE SHOP, 7:30a.m., 9720 Hillcroft, in Houston.
VIKING DEN, 7:30a.m., 2939 S. Main (US90A), in Stafford.

Check in to one of the BVARC nets or check the website for
details on the Third Friday Evening dinner.

UPCOMING FEATURED PRESENTATIONS

May – Saltgrass Repeater Network

June – ARES + Field Day

July - AMSAT

August - Ice Cream Social

BVARC Website URL

The original URL still works
but we now also have

www.bvarc.com & www.bvarc.org

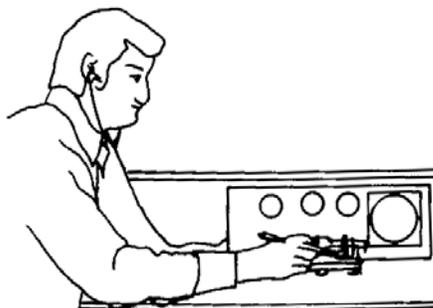
Monday Night NET Updates

At this time, the usual updates are not available. These will be included
in next month's newsletter.

EDITOR'S HARD DISK CRASHED

The editor's hard disk crashed with some files that weren't
backed up. This newsletter was started from a SaveAs of a much
earlier edition. If you note any errors in the "boiler plate," format
errors or any other errors, please let me know.

Tnx es 73, John





Monthly Publication of the Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club.
Serving Amateur Radio for Southwest Houston and Fort Bend County
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BVARC Website: <http://www.hal-pc.org/~bvarc>
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Claude Sessions, K5HFY, k5hfy@arrl.net

Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club (BVARC) was organized in 1978, primarily as an emergency communications group available to assist the communities of Missouri City and Stafford when required. Since that time, **BVARC** has grown and expanded its activities to become the most active amateur radio club in the Southwest Houston and Fort Bend County. BVARC is a Non-Profit Corporation classified by IRS as 501-(c)-(3).

Today **BVARC** is truly a general interest amateur radio club along with an impressive record of public service. The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) has recognized the club's commitment of service with the coveted status of Special Services Club. We are proud of our members who represent some of the finest in amateur radio. Membership is not limited to licensed operators, but is open to anyone with an interest in amateur radio. Club meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Sugar Land Community Center, 226 Matlege Way. Talk-in assistance for the club meeting is available on the 146.880 repeater (minus offset, 103.5 tone). General membership dues are \$20.00 per year, with student dues \$10.00 per year, additional family members \$2.00 per member per year and life membership \$160.00.

BVARC also administers amateur radio license exams on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Houston Community College's Scarcella campus in Stafford. A Public Service Net is held each Monday at 8 p.m. on the 146.880 (minus, 103.5 tone) or the 145.45 (minus, no tone) repeater & a rag chew net is held each Wednesday at 7 p.m. on 3910 KHz +/- 3 KHz.

To obtain information about joining **BVARC** or its activities contact the club's "Elmer", Ross Lawler, W5HFF at 281-342-3340 or w5hff@yahoo.com or the BVARC website at www.hal-pc.org/~bvarc.

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May, 2006

**BRAZOS VALLEY
AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
P.O. BOX 1630
MISSOURI CITY TX 77459-1630
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

FIRST CLASS POSTAGE

General Membership Meeting – May 13 – Saltgrass Repeater Network

If your mailing label is highlighted in color its time to renew your membership!