



# BRAZOS VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB



AMATEUR RADIO FOR SOUTHWEST HOUSTON AND FORT BEND COUNTY

AUGUST 2006

VOLUME 30 ISSUE

## AUGUST GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING ICE CREAM SOCIAL

The annual ice cream social takes place at the August meeting, at the Sugar Land Community Center (see P7) , at 7:30PM, Thursday, August 10. Bring a half gallon of your favorite ice cream, preferably homemade, for members and your whole family to enjoy.

## JULY MEETING – INTERESTING PRESENTATION AND SUCCESSFUL SATELLITE QSO DEMO

Allen Mattis, N5AFV, gave an interesting presentation about satellite QSOs. He discussed and showed photos of his December cruise in the Caribbean and his recent trip to Copenhagen. Later, at 9:20PM, along with the help of Will, KE5CWC and Scott, KD5FBA we all went outside and they gave a successful demonstration making several QSOs via the AO-51 satellite.

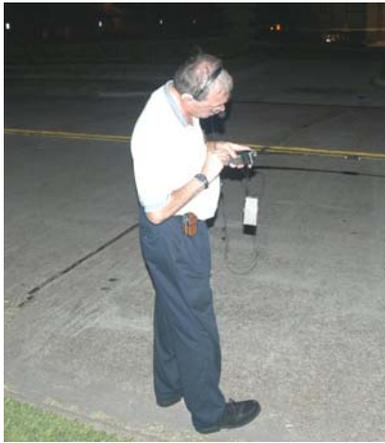
Due to air conditioning problems at the Sugar Land Community Center, we thank Parks & Recreation for allowing us the use of their facility next door. Everyone was very interested in the presentation and virtually everyone stayed for the actual QSO demo.



Allen Mattis, N5AFV, giving the featured presentation.



The gallery watching Allen's presentation.



**Allen setting up his rig for the satellite QSO demo.**



**The outside table with a receiver fed to a speaker staffed by Will, KE5CWC and Scott, KD5FB**

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## President's Corner

I finally get to pack for the last time today to finally come back to Houston after 7 weeks on the road. This road trip has been one of the longest in terms of mileage. In just naming the states I have been in New York, Arizona, California, Nevada, Kentucky, Vermont, Massachusetts, Illinois and Minnesota. I almost forgot that I took a quick trip to Canada for two days so I guess that means I was out of the country as well. I lost count of the number of motels that I have been in but I know it must be around thirty or so. The last week that I was in New York, I was in a different motel every night which made a good night's sleep very difficult to get. With all of this traveling I have been to 35 different tower sites in 4 states and have recorded nearly 100 hours of traffic data. My quick trip to Kentucky took 17 hours roundtrip and it was to collect data for only 1 hour. It has been a crazy trip.

I had my FT100 with me and made a few contacts but very few. Since I had receiving equipment on most of the time that I was in the car, I could not transmit since it would distort the data due to interference. I meet several hams in Minnesota and New York and we talked about all of the normal issues of amateur radio. Unfortunately I did not have very much contact with anybody during field day but did try to contact Pete on Saturday. From the preliminary report, it looks like BVARC did very well again for field day and I want to thank everyone for their hard work on the great score and the organization of the event. A special thanks goes out to the triple trio – Ross, W5HFF, John K5IZO and Allen, N5XZ for their organization of the event. Without their guidance, I know field day would have been a much smaller event. And John please thank Pricilla for her hard work as well.

The ice cream social is coming up in August with the Chili supper and elections just around the corner. Also coming up in December will be "Home Brew" night so start putting your special project together and bring it on out for show and tell.

Hope to see everyone at the Ice Cream social.

73,  
N5VCX

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## Public Service Events

**Due to Mike's business travel demands, this article is not available at press time. See the BVARC website for details as events approach.**

# GET YOUR FEET WET WEEKEND!

Thursday – Sunday, Sept 15 – 18

Have you ever thought of trying out CW but felt that you might be intimidated by either the speed of others or the protocol. The opportunity to overcome that is at hand. FISTS is promoting the second annual "Get your Feet Wet Weekend" from 7PM CDT Thursday evening to 7PM Sunday evening (0000 UT, Sept. 15 to 2359 UT Sept 18)

Please note, it actually starts Thursday evening and goes to Sunday evening, to accommodate various personal weekend plans,

The objective of this is to allow experienced and new CW operators to work with each other and provide the opportunity for newcomers to CW to overcome speed and "what to say" problems. It is actually a VERY laid back contest with novice and experienced classes. No automatic keys are allowed.

This is the opportunity to actually use your CW skills in a relaxed way.

Details are given on the FISTS website at [www.fists.org](http://www.fists.org)

You might also be interested in the upcoming code classes being given by BVARC. Details are given below. You will complete this class just before the GET YOUR FEET WET WEEKEND.

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## CODE CLASSES

Here is the opportunity to learn code or to brush up on your rusty code skills. Ross and John will use their time proven approach to allow you to learn code in a NON-INTIMIDATING way which DOES NOT REQUIRE memorization.

This will be a 4 part class. These will take place on 4 consecutive Saturday mornings, beginning on August 19, from 9 -11, at St. Paul Presbyterian Church/School on the northeast corner of Bellaire and US59. We will discuss with those attending whether or not we will skip the Labor Day. Four confirmed participants are required for the class to "make." There is no charge for the class. All materials are provided.

If you wish to attend, you MUST contact Ross at [W5HFF@yahoo.com](mailto:W5HFF@yahoo.com) or John at [K5IZO@yahoo.com](mailto:K5IZO@yahoo.com) before Wednesday, August 16. DO NOT just show up without confirming!

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### Houston Amateur Radio Supply

181 Cypresswood Drive

Houston, Texas 77388-6038

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<http://texasparadise.com/hars/> George DiLetto KD0RW

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### B-VARC AMATEUR EXAMINATION SESSION

BVARC has amateur examination sessions on the second Tuesday of the month. See page 7 for more information. Results of the July session will be published in the next newsletter.



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### Icom Stopping Production of the W32A HT by Allen Mattis N5AFV

Every now and then an amateur radio transceiver comes along that becomes an industry standard. For example, the Kenwood TS520 and TS820 series of HF radios were some of the best known HF rigs in the history of amateur radio. Many years ago I owned a Kenwood TS520S, and it was a very dependable and venerable work horse. Because of their performance and the fact that the amateur radio community continues to purchase them, classic amateur radio rigs such as these are usually produced for many years. I believe that the Icom W32A HT is also such a transceiver.

It is rare for any amateur radio transceiver to be in production for ten years, but Icom began production of its W32A HT in 1996 and it is still in production ten years later. A number of years ago production of the W32A was briefly discontinued by Icom, but complaints from the amateur radio community caused Icom to bring back the popular dual-band HT. It now appears that production of the W32A is in its final stages. An advertisement in the August 2006 issue of QST (page 165) states "Goodbye W32. Hello, 91A/AD!" The IC-91A/AD is now available, and Icom has cut the price on the W32A.

I purchased my W32A HT in 1997. I used it quite heavily for working public service events the first five years I owned it. It is a good solid reliable dual-bander that performs very well for both simplex and repeater contacts. It is full duplex and allows monitoring of both 2m and 70cm at the same time. For that reason, it has become a favorite for many amateur radio satellite operators. In the last six years, I have made over 7300 satellite contacts with my W32A, and over 6600 of those satellite contacts were made with the telescoping Premier AL800 antenna that I demonstrated at the July 13, 2006 BVARC general membership meeting.

One of the nice features of the W32A is that it has a tuning knob for each band. The ability to change frequencies in either band just by turning a knob is what makes the W32A an easy to use satellite rig. With most of the newer dual-band HTs, you can only change frequency in the main or selected band. This makes it difficult to work satellites because you have switch from the 2m uplink to the 70cm downlink in order to tune for Doppler shift on the downlink, and then switch back to the 2m uplink again to transmit. If the HT has cross band repeat, it may be possible to avoid this problem by programming in 70cm/2m pairs to use in working satellites. I use the cross band repeat capability in my Alinco DR605 mobile rig in this manner. But despite these methods of using newer dual-band HTs to work satellites, the fact remains that the W32A has been used by many amateur radio operators to make their first satellite contact.

A number of factors have caused Icom to come out with a new dual-band HT. The new IC91A/AD reportedly will be less affected by intermod and highly saturated RF fields. At the big Dayton Hamfest this year, AMSAT members doing satellite demonstrations found that the W32A could not handle the saturated high density RF environment that existed in the hamfest area.

The new IC91A/AD has been designed to be D-Star compatible. The IC91A is analog/digital upgradable (\$370), and the IC91AD is analog/digital ready (\$525). The IC91A/AD is small in size, has a full 5 watts of power on both bands, and has extended reception from 495 kHz to 999.990 MHz (excluding cellular). Even with these features, the success of the IC91A/AD may depend in part on how the amateur radio community accepts D-Star. However, one thing is for sure; the Icom W32A will be a tough act to follow.



The Venerable W32A in its Protective Vinyl Case

This was used for the various recent satellite demos, including the Greater Houston Hamfest, BVARC Field Day and the BVARC July general membership meeting.

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## Monday Night NET Updates

Don't forget the Monday Night Public Service Net starts at **8 pm**, 145.45 (PL –none). The order of check-ins start with mobile units first then fixed stations. If you have something for the net, make sure you let Net Control know about it when you check in. We are looking for Net Control Operators. Contact any officer of BVARC if you are interested. Here are recent check-ins with control-ops:

1/16 - 21 - Sid, n5zkd	3/13 - 22 - Pete, kd5qpx	6/5 - 12 - Cam, k5cam
1/23 - 28 - Pete, kd5qpx	3/20 - 19 - Sid, n5zkd	6/12 - 17- Doug, kc5vyz
1/30 - 22 - Doug, kc5vyz	3/27 -24 - Pete, kd5qpx	6/19 - 17 - Sid, n5zkd
2/6 - 32 - Cam, k5cam	4/3 - 23 - Cam, k5cam	6/26 - 15 Pete, kd5qpx
2/13 - 30 - Mike, n5vcx	4/17 - 17 - John, k5lkj	7/3 - 13 - Cam, k5cam
2/20 - 21 - Sid, n5zkd	5/1 - 23 - Cam, k5cam	7/10 - Doug, kc5vyz
2/27 - 23 - Pete, kd5qpx	5/8 - 17 - Mike, n5vcx	7/17 - 18 - Sid, n5zkd
3/6 - 24 - Cam, k5cam	5/20 - 13 - Pete, kd5qpx	7/24 - 15 - Pete, kd5qpx

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## BVARC Field Day Score: 4952 Points

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**BVARC has a new P.O. mailbox (as of 2 months ago). See the address page.**

# THE BVARC Rag Chew Net

By Joe Morgan, K5JWM, Net Coordina  
June 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 BVARC 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.

06/07/06\_\_K5JWM, KE5SR, N5CPA, WA5VRB, W5UHZ, K5LBU, NM5K, W5UFK, KE5CUT, W5RH, K5CEK, W5HFF. Check-ins (12)

06/14/06\_\_K5JWM, KE5SR, K5CEK, W5RJA, KZ5IO, W5UHZ, K5LJ, WA5VRB, N5CPA, K5VRJ, AB5BA, KB5SIT, WA5TWL, W5RH, WO5O. check-ins (15)

06/21/06\_\_N5CPA, K5CEK, W5UHZ, K5LJ, KG5RQ, KB5F, KB5LKE, KB5SIT, KE5CUT, K5VRJ, AB5BA, KG5KV. check-ins (12)

06/28/06\_\_K5JWM, N5CPA, W5RJA, W5RH, K5CEK, W5UHZ, KE5CUT, WA5TWL, K5VRJ, AB5BA, KB5SIT, N5JEP. check-ins (12)

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## Cycle 24 – The Jury is Still Out

By Rick Hiller – W5RH

I was reading in the July issue of World Radio that the prediction for Solar Cycle number 24 is for it to be bigger than the “Mother of all Solar Cycles” that occurred back in the 1950’s. This got me pretty excited, thinking back, even to just the mid 60’s and the good conditions then. Hal, K3ATO, my 7<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher, would bring in his Swan 350 and talk to folks in front of all of his math classes for that day, using just a folded dipole hung out the window of his 3<sup>rd</sup> story class room. After listening to the HF bands these days, it is no wonder that I start thinking of those days past.

So, at lunch today, I did a Google search (it is improper to use the word “Googled”) on Solar Cycle 23 and Solar Cycle 24. I found predictions for a large Solar Cycle 24, but I also found a reference to a paper by some Chinese physicists that predict “Sunspot Cycle 24: Smallest Cycle in 100 Years” (2005 Ke-Jun, Peng-Xin, Tong-Wei).

In general, the prediction is for the end of cycle 23 (and the minimum of cycle 24) to occur this December and the maximum of cycle 24 is predicted to happen around March 2011. Between the minimum and the maximum, there will be a period of rising sunspot numbers on a particular “slope” of the curve. If the numbers are slow to rise and the slope is a low angle, then cycle 24 will not reach the high peaks predicted. However, if the numbers rise quickly, meaning a steeply curved slope, then statistical analysis shows that that means the peak numbers will be high. Predicted “smoothed” peak numbers for both cases are; if it is a fast riser 189, or if it is a slow riser, 139. Another factor is that the end of cycle 23 might occur later than December 2006, possibly out to June 2008, which then delays the maximum until 2013. This delayed start, statistically, according to the Chinese, means even lower numbers overall. Which could bring, worst case, a maximum peak of 80 (bummer), the smallest peak in 100 years..

It is not all gloom and doom. I did find that the majority of the other scientists are predicting a fast rising, high rising cycle up into the smoothed 180 range, with short peaks topping out at over 200. Of course, we will have to wait until 2010 for those highest numbers to start appearing on the horizon. We can take pleasure, though, in that fact that once the numbers start rising, the bands will open up quickly and start hopping with activity. Come on 2007 !!!

It is interesting to note that after six pages of scientific verbiage, charts, tables and arguments, the Chinese physicists don’t even venture to bet on either scenario. They summarize by simply pointing out that certain analysis points to possible end events and certain other analysis points to different end events. With all of the measurements, presumptions, historical data, statistical analysis, projections and estimations, you would think that they would come to some fairly solid scientific conclusion, but no. They choose to end their paper with the mind boggling closure of “Time will tell.”

My prediction for cycle 24: working VU’s on 10 meters with 5 watts into a wet noodle. Now that’s Ham Radio.

Rick Hiller -- W5RH

## 2006 Club Officers:

President:

Mike Hardwick, N5VCX  
[n5vcx@worldnet.att.net](mailto:n5vcx@worldnet.att.net)

Vice President:

Allen Brier, N5XZ  
[n5xz@arrl.net](mailto:n5xz@arrl.net)

Corresponding Secretary/Treasurer:

Ross Lawler, W5HFF  
[w5hff@yahoo.com](mailto:w5hff@yahoo.com)

Recording Secretary:

Pete Sauermilch  
[kd5qpx@arrl.net](mailto:kd5qpx@arrl.net)

One Year Board Member:

Robert Polanski, KD5YVQ  
[polinski@swbell.net](mailto:polinski@swbell.net)

Two Year Board Member:

Sid Sherwood, N5ZKD  
[n5zkd@arrl.net](mailto:n5zkd@arrl.net)

Past President / At-large

Cameron Mitchell, K5CAM  
[k5cam@arrl.net](mailto:k5cam@arrl.net)

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## Club Happenings:

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### 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.

### THIRD FRIDAY DINNERS:

August 18, 7:30p.m., TIO PEPE'S SPANISH RESTAURANT  
5213 Cedar in Bellaire.  
September 15, 7:30p.m., THE HICKORY BARN BARBECUE  
11534 Wilcrest in Houston.

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## UPCOMING FEATURED PRESENTATIONS

**August - Ice Cream Social**

**September – TBD**

**October – TBD**

**November – Chili Supper**

**December – Homebrew Night**

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## Upcoming Hamfests

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

### **4-5 Aug 2006 Texas State Convention - Austin ARC & Texas VHF FM Society**

Austin, TX

Red Lion Hotel (Now known as the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza)

[6121 North Interstate 35](http://www.holidayinn.com)

**Talk-In:** 146.34/.94

**Contact:** Joe Makeever, W5HS Phone: 512-345-0800,

Email: [w5hs@arrl.net](mailto:w5hs@arrl.net)

<http://www.austinsummerfest.org>

### **October 7, 2006 Ham Expo -- Belton, Texas**

From I-35 take Exit 292 to the Bell County Expo CenteDome

Friday setup for vendors & pre-registered non-commercial sellers

Doors open at 7:00 a.m. on Saturday, **October 7**

**NEW!** Admission: \$2.00

**Parking lot Tailgaters will pay \$5.00 per occupied parking space**

<http://www.tarc.org/hamexpo/>

### **21 October -- Brenham Swapmeet**

Washington County Fairgrounds, 1305 East Horton, Brenham, TX.

Talk-in 145.390- (PL 103.5)

For more info contact

Frian Gaskamp, KA5BKG 979-251-8024 or [ka5bkg@arrl.net](mailto:ka5bkg@arrl.net)

<http://www.alpha1.net/~w5aum>

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## JULY BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MINUTES

**As this issue goes to press, these minutes are not available. They will either be put on the website or included in the next newsletter.**



Monthly Publication of the Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club.  
Serving Amateur Radio for Southwest Houston and Fort Bend County  
Club Call sign – KK5W  
BVARC Website: <http://www.hal-pc.org/~bvarc>  
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**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](mailto:w5hff@yahoo.com) or the BVARC website at [www.hal-pc.org/~bvarc](http://www.hal-pc.org/~bvarc).

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**August 2006**

**BRAZOS VALLEY  
AMATEUR RADIO CLUB  
P.O. BOX 2997  
SUGAR LAND, TX 77478-2997  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

**FIRST CLASS POSTAGE**

**General Membership Meeting – August 10, Ice Cream Social**

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