



SPARC Cap

The Official Newsletter of the Saint Petersburg Amateur Radio Club

Vol. 3 No. 1

April 2025

Multiple Clubs Join Together for Winter Field Day 2025

by: Tom Schaefer, NY4I

Three Pinellas County Amateur radio clubs joined forces for the annual Winter Field Day event on January 25th & 26th, 2025 at the Clearwater Fire Training Center in Clearwater, Florida.

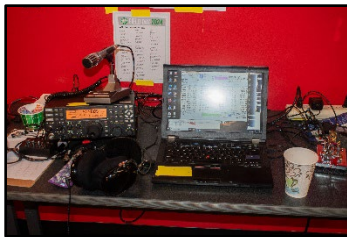


This collaborative effort was between The Clearwater Amateur Radio Society (CARS), the St. Petersburg Amateur Radio Club (SPARC) and the Upper

Pinellas Amateur Radio Club. This was the first time in a few years that SPARC had been back for Winter Field Day. “Given the number of members from different clubs, it was great to have everyone back together again”, said SPARC Club President, Tom Schaefer, NY4I.

The decision was made to hold the event indoors this year due to a very chilly forecast. “Yes, I know it is called Winter Field Day”, Schaefer quipped, “but, we live in Florida for a reason.”

A standard indoor configuration was used, same as the configuration used for ARRL Field Day in the summer. There were three stations; all of which were capable of operating SSB. Two of those stations were



double duty with one of them being CW while the other was operating the PSK31 digital mode. “Being Field Day, we always have a great spread of food to keep everyone fed”, Schaefer said. Ron and Ruth Appel

organized the food portion of the festivities. Schaefer added, “their team does a great job”.

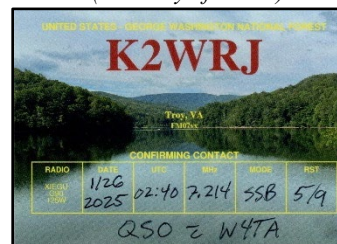
The Results:

- Total Contacts (all modes): 1326
- SSB (Phone): 1100
 - Jeff, N4EC making 545 contacts
 - Bruce, K2BHS making 231 contacts
 - Ron N2SKH & Glenn, N4GRC made the remainder of the QSOs
- CW (Morse Code) 183+
 - Dave, KR4U making 124 of those contacts.
 - Pat, AAØO with 59 contacts
 - Tom, NY4I added a few more to the numbers

There was also a Satellite station that utilized Ryan’s (AF40), self-contained gator case containing an Icom IC-9700 and an Arrow antenna on a Yaesu Azimuth/Elevation Rotator for tracking the satellites. Tom, NY4I made a total of six contacts using RS-44 for SSB contacts and PO-101 for an FM contact.



A QSL Card from a WinterField Day Contact (Courtesy of W4TA)



Guests that came to the Field Day Event got some education about ham radio from Fred, W2SUB. “One of our important goals”, Schaefer said “is to introduce new people

to ham radio.” This is done by offering a few pointers, encouraging a new ham to pick up the microphone and make a contact or even introduce ham radio to someone for the first time.

There were eleven objectives for Winter Field Day. These objectives included:



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- Operate on 100% alternative power
- Operate away from home
- Make satellite contacts using FM, SSB and CW
- Operate on at least six different bands
- Use multiple modes (e.g. FM, SSB, CW and digital)
- Operate the event QRP (low output power)

All of the objectives were achieved except one.

Oh the food! Not a single soul went hungry at this weekend event. Special thanks to our nourishment leaders Ron (W4RFA) & Ruth Appel and their team including Dean (NØOAC), Sarah (NØUKS), Karen Isak (KQ4HNI), Beth Whidden (NY4I's spouse) and Diane Friedman (K4SPF's spouse).

The official results are to be announced at a later time. Stay tuned.

Monthly SPARC NTS Net Training Sessions to be held at Club Station

by: Bruce H. Solov, K2BHS

Bruce Solov, K2BHS will be holding a monthly NTS Net training session on the fourth Thursday of each month at the SPARC Club Station at:

DMI Research
6699 90th Ave. North
Pinellas Park, FL

National Traffic System (NTS) Nets are a part of a big part of how hams service their community. The ARRL National Traffic System was created by the ARRL back in the 1950s for the purpose of passing free, third-party messages across the country. This system is especially helpful during emergencies (e.g.: natural disasters), when traditional forms of communication are unavailable or damaged. The system can also be used to pass what is known as "routine" messages, where there is no emergency situation.

Every evening at 18:30, the SPARC Nightly 2-meter Traffic Net commences for that very purpose on the WA4AKH repeater (147.060 MHz). Bruce, K2BHS is the Net Control Station on Thursday nights.

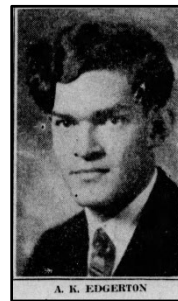
Bruce has been a licensed ham for 38 years getting his inspiration from his father, Ed (K2SE – SK). His father also was very active in NTS traffic handling, primarily on HF nets (both SSB & CW). Bruce got his start with NTS traffic handling up in New Jersey where he was both a Net Control Station for the New Jersey VHF Net (NJVN) and was a liaison station for the New Jersey 220 Traffic Net (NJTTN).

It is open to anyone who is interested in learning more about NTS Traffic Handling, running a net, or even just checking in.

If you are interested, please email Bruce, K2BHS at bsolov@hotmail.com no later than the Monday before. Hope to see you there.

Throwback: A Look into SPARC's Rich History

by: Bruce H. Solov, K2BHS



The St. Petersburg Amateur radio Club has been in existence for over 90 years, starting back in April 1934. The predecessor of SPARC was actually a club called SPARK (not SPARC), which was formed 12/20/1929. This "klub" had a membership of ten charter members. The president was 21 year-old, A.K. Edgerton – W4OO. (Picture credit: Tampa Bay Times 10/24/1929). The meetings were held in members' homes.

The St. Petersburg Amateur Radio Club or SPARC as we know it, began on April 28, 1934. The club started with a mere 12 members with the expectation of the membership to climb to over 30 members in the coming



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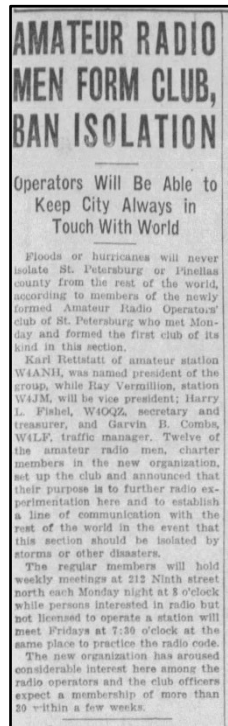
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weeks in the Spring of 1934. The founding officers of SPARC were:

- President: Karl Rettstatt, W4ANH
- Vice President: Ray Vermillion, W4JM
- Secretary & Treasurer: Harry L. Fishel, W4OQZ
- Traffic Manager: Garvin B. Combs, W4LF

The newly formed club held their meetings weekly on Monday nights at 20:00 at a venue on Ninth Street in St. Petersburg. There were training sessions to practice code for those that were interested in ham radio, but not yet licensed. These sessions were also held every Friday at 19:30, at the same location where the meetings were held.

The club was formed to foster radio experimentation and so that St. Petersburg and Pinellas County would not be isolated from the rest of the world in times of an emergency (e.g.: floods & hurricanes). This and much more was outlined in the pictured clipping from the *Tampa Bay Times* dated April 28, 1934.



This is the first of many articles highlighting a time in SPARC's extensive 90 plus year history. The club will have its 91st anniversary on 4/28/2025. Stay tuned, for future articles on this subject.

SPARC Holds Its Annual Homebrew Night

Members Showcase Their Homemade Gear

by: Bruce H. Solov, K2BHS

The St. Petersburg Amateur Radio Club held its monthly meeting for February, on February 7, 2025. The program for this meeting was the Annual Homebrew Night. This is an opportunity for members to showcase their electronic and creative prowess by showcasing their wares that they built from scratch (although kits were also permitted).

There were four presentations with a time limit of eight minutes per presentation. The Presenters were: Pat – AAØØ, Glenn – N4GRC, Ryan – AF4Ø and Alex – KO4CEE.



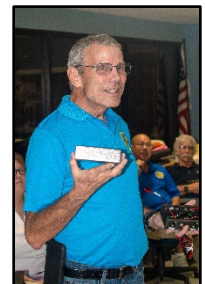
Pat Connelly, AAØØ: Rotator Controller
The rotator controller's main components are a Yaesu G450 used with K3NG Arduino Software and a 3-D printed case. This could be used as a total replacement for the Yaesu controller.

He had an accompanying slide show with his presentation, including a QR code. The pictures included photos of the inside of the device and a schematic of the item.

Connelly gave a detailed parts list for the project and estimated the total cost of \$67.80. He concluded by stating that the Powerpoint Slides can be downloaded and more information is available from his website at AAØØ.radio.

Glenn Cate – N4GRC: Antenna Grounding Switch/System

There is always a need to protect our equipment from the constant threat of lightning. The purpose of this system is to ground all the antennas. Cate said that it is a 'glorified switch'. He also provided a parts list. Glenn finished his presentation by





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telling the audience that the project is so simple that anyone can do it.

Ryan Rager – AF4O: Field Day Patch Panel

Rager’s project is a deployable coax patch panel for use in Field Day and any other field operating events such as Parks on the Air (POTA).



The panel is mounted to a piano type hinge using SO238/SO239 type connectors. Rager’s patch panel is specifically set up for 10, 15, and 20-meters. He further stated that this is a “clean” way to quickly switch antennas.

A triplexer is available to allow you to use multiband antennas. His setup also allows you to have three radios that can transmit & receive, using different bands, all on one antenna. Each radio would have to be on a separate band.

Dave, KR4U contributed by showing the original triplexer that SPARC once used. There was no parts list available at the time of the presentation.

Alex Harvey – KO4CEE: Hamlib
Hamlib is an open source library that uses a set of tools. These tools support CAT controls and lets the computer talk to the radio. The homebrew part of Alex’s project was that he had rewritten the software for the radio.



The cost of this project is \$0, all you need is an HF QRP radio. The radio has a built-in tuner and more. Alex mentioned that the QRP radio is discontinued. He added that it was discontinued shortly after he acquired it.

He further provided the link to the website as:
hamlib.github.io

Thank you to the four members that showcased their homebrew projects.

SPARC Members Take a POTA Field Trip to Georgia

by: Tom Schaefer, NY4I

photos by: Ryan Rager, AF4O

Just beyond the Florida – Georgia border off of I-95 (Exit 1), you are ushered into a world that feels distinctly different. As you leave the bustling traffic of Jacksonville behind, time seems to slow to a more relaxed pace in St. Marys, GA. The first landmark to greet you is the sail of a mock Polaris submarine that appears to be surfacing from the Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay’s parking lot.



From March 26th through March 30th, several members of local radio clubs including SPARC’s Tom Schaefer – NY4I

and Ryan Rager – AF4O converged at Crooked River State Park on US-2170, to participate in an annual *Risk* tournament (yes, the classic board game). The group seized the opportunity to operate their radios and activate US-2170 as part of the Parks-on-the-Air (POTA) program.

There was an added bonus in that the weekend was also the weekend of the CQ WPX SSB which meant that using one of their 2x1 callsigns would make them the belle of the ball, where other stations would want to work them for a multiplier. This meant that they could call CQ and work massive pileups.



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Several antennas were set up with the primary rig being an Elecraft K4 with some extra power from an Elecraft KPA500 amplifier.



Also, in the shack along with SSB, was a CW paddle and FT8 capabilities. The FT8 was ideal for those late nights and early mornings while others were sleeping. The highlight of the operation was using the Hex Beam for calling CQ POTA via SSB. The use of the Hex Beam along with the amplifier gave them a significant advantage. Most parks operate with wire antennas and a maximum power of 100 watts.

Each day was a blend of radio operation during the day and the Risk tournament games in the evenings. That was followed by socializing around the obligatory campfire each night. The daily sessions leading up to the WPX contest resulted in constant pileups with everyone eager to work US-2170.

Here are the results of that weekend:

| | NY4I | AF4O | Totals by Mode |
|--------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| CW | 25 | 0 | 25 |
| SSB | 89 | 83 | 172 |
| Data | 74 | 0 | 74 |
| TOTAL | 188 | 83 | 271 |

In all modes used there was a total of 271 QSOs, between SSB, CW and FT8 (data).

All in all the trip was a blast, said Tom Schaefer, NY4I. They were able to pack a wide range of activities into a few short days. Schaefer thanked all the POTA hunters who worked with them and also all the stations they contacted during the WPX Contest. A special thanks goes to Ryan Rager, AF4O for bringing all the antennas and the amplifier.

Welcome New Members

By: Bruce H. Solov, K2BHS

The St. Petersburg Amateur Radio Club would like to welcome the following new members to our club.

November 2024:

Terry Colbert, K2TLC
Ian Timmins, KQ4YVN

December 2024:

Kevin Edwards, KQ4ZVL
Ray Ortgiesen, WF1B
Fred Botero, W2SUB

January 2025:

none

February 2025:

Dan Harden, KG7OYF
Chris Clement, KA4UPC
William Arnold, KO4ETH

March 2025:

Mike McKay, W7OCM
Mike Miller, KR4BNN
Robert Cooper, KR4BNO
Glenn Kaufman, KR4BOG
Barton Burkhart, KR4BNW
Joe Leone, W4GGJ
Ron Ambrosio, N2SKH

Congratulations and welcome to all our new members!

VE Testing Results:

By: Bruce H. Solov, K2BHS

The St. Petersburg Amateur Radio Club holds monthly VE testing sessions at the Club Station



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located at DMI Research, in Pinellas Park.

The results are as follows:

2/18/25

New-Technician

Glenn Kaufman, KR4BOG
Mike Miller, KR4BNN
Robert Cooper, KR4BNO
Barton Burkhart, KR4BNW

Upgrade-General

Michael McKay, W7OCM
Daniel Harden, KG7OYF

Upgrade-Extra

Ronald Brown, KC8ZFF

3/18/25

New-Technician

Didier Touchet, KR4CMA

Upgrade-Extra

Michael McKay, W7OCM

VE testing sessions are held on the third Tuesday of each month at DMI Research in Pinellas Park.

If you wish to test, please contact the club.

Congratulations to all the new hams and upgrades. Job well done! Enjoy.

Also, a reminder that I would absolutely love some *real* reviews of gear that you have (whether it is good, bad or downright ugly). The reviews are not limited to just transceivers, but everything (e.g. antennas, tuners, accessories, testing equipment, etc.) This type of information would be beneficial to new and seasoned amateurs alike. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to reach out to me.

Of course I can be reached by email:

editor@sparc-club.org All are welcome to make submissions.

73's,

Bruce H. Solov, K2BHS

Secretary and SPARC Gap Editor

Current SPARC Net Schedule

SPARC Nightly 2-meter Prenet from 18:00-18:30 on 147.060 MHz (7 days/week)

SPARC Nightly 2-meter Net starting at 18:30 on 147.060 MHz (7 days/week)

SPARC 220/440 Net starting at 19:15 on 224.66 MHz/444.475 MHz with a tone of 146.2 Hz (meets every Thursday evening).

Looking for Participation from club members.

By: Bruce Solov, K2BHS

As your editor of the *SPARC Gap* Newsletter, I am always looking for feedback, suggestions and submissions for future editions.

I am also always looking for people to submit articles to me.