

## **How do I?**

### **An occasional series**

### **This week: Clubs, Nets and Social Activities Part 2**



This past weekend I went to Tappahannock, VA to attend the **Virginia Fone Net (VFN)** annual meeting.

The VFN is the oldest ham radio net in Virginia. It has been continuously active since 1934. It meets twice a day, at 1600 and 1930 eastern on 3.947 MHZ. There are 150 members with numbers. In order to obtain a number, you must make 50 check ins in 90 days and send the log with the Net Control's+ (NCS) Name, Call sign and net number to the secretary along with ten dollars. You will then be issued a wait list (W) number and then a regular net number. When you receive your net number you will also receive a membership certificate. Because there are only 150 numbers, you may have to wait a few months to receive a regular number. If you do not make a minimum of 5 check ins a month you will be dropped from the rolls. If you make more than 5 but less than 10 or 15 a month, and they need numbers to move people off the wait list, you can be dropped. If you are regular member for at least 10 consecutive years and aid the club by being a net control (At least 5 of the current net controllers have been one for at least 5 years), or serve as an officer, you may be nominated for life membership. The upside is that you no longer have to pay the \$10 dues, the downside is that until very recently life membership was only conferred when members were usually not able to check in much longer and the life expectancy of a life member was typically measured in months. The member who had the most check ins in 2018 (somewhere around 700) has been a life member for at least 2 years, so perhaps the odds are more in your favor.

The VFN members are not only from the Commonwealth of Virginia. It currently has members in PA, NY, MI, DE, MD, WV, TN, KY, NC, SC, GA and several who winter in FL and check in from there. There was long time member, Gary, N1VFU, from NH but severe health issues caused him to lose his membership and he occasionally checks in now as a visitor. Mike, KB4CAU, member Life 7, checks in to at least 1 net a day to forward any traffic on to the regional and national traffic nets. For the other 149 members, (anywhere from 2 to 65 participate in any given net) it is a social net. The friendly neighbor stopping by to talk. Many members in rural areas and checking in to the net is a way of keeping in contact with the world and letting folks know they are still able to.

Tappahannock is about an hour southeast of Fredericksburg, VA. The meeting was attended by 80-90 members and another 40 or so XYL's, kids, grandkids, etc. The youngest present, probably about 4, was given the honor of reaching into the prize drum to draw the winners for the door prizes. Frank WD5HLO came 864 miles from the orange groves in FL. Many travelled 3-4 hours one way for a 3 hour meeting. The group is made up of many interesting individuals. Most are retired engineers or educators. Many are ex military. One former member, Colonel Dan-now a SK- was able to occasionally check in from Vietnam in the late 1960s. At this meeting 5 new life members were elected. They will keep the net number but add an L in front; this allows the net to elect 5 new members. The net typically loses 2 or 3 silent keys a year and another 3-4 who just are not able to be active members any more.



**Picture 2 &3: VFN meeting 2019 at Lowery's Seafood, Tappahannock VA.**

The annual meeting is held to elect officers, do some business stuff and between the meeting and lunch, prizes are drawn. This year the club spent about \$3600 on prizes. The grand prize was a Yaesu FT DX1200. Other prizes included a Yaesu FT891 HF mobile rig, several Yaesu HT's, ARRL handbooks, and shack accessories such as antenna analyzers, power supplies, antenna tuners.

Todd N4USS wrote a computer program that lets the net controls check people in on the computer. Anyone can log in and see where they stand in the rotation. More importantly, if the net control has a problem, say a power outage, ANYONE else can immediately take over the net and continue on as if nothing happened. His brother Van, KN4TC routinely checks in from the barn on his 2 meter HT which his Kenwood can crossband repeat to 75 meters. This allows him to talk on 2M to his shack, it sends out the signal on 3.947 mhz and he hears the net on his HT. That is very cool!

VFN members are also active on the Green Frogs at 0700 and 0800 daily and on the Virginia Late Net at 2200 daily. The Late Net is almost a pure traffic net, with check ins either having traffic for the net, or report "no traffic" but are able to deliver or pass along any traffic for their area. The Green Frogs is purely a social net.

Catch Ya on the air!