

THE WINNIPEG REPEATER SOCIETY INC.

With the help of Charlie Harvey VE4FG, Jack McIntyre VE4ER and Gordon McKone VE4KF we look back in time to the beginning of the Winnipeg Repeater Society.

The first repeater activity started around 1968 when Herb Klassen VE4HK, Marty Greenwood VE4XJ and Jack Binkley VE4HI set up a repeater at Herb's QTH in East Kildonan using two spaced antennas. As no duplexer was used, results were not too spectacular but it was a start and the boys looked for a better location that would give height and added coverage. It was decided to approach Tom VE4TC at Birds Hill for permission to install the repeater at his high location. A meeting was held at Tom's and about 8 hams attended. Tom agreed to let them begin the installation while more support was solicited. Some \$250.00 was raised from 18-20 interested hams. A shack was built of plywood and a trench was dug. Coax was purchased and then things came to a halt. For whatever reasons nothing further was done for almost a year and Tom asked that they fill in the trench. In early 1970 a meeting was held to see if Winnipeg could support a 2 MTR repeater.

At this time the Richardson Building had been built and this looked like the ideal site for a repeater. Mike Pura VE4MP, who was a friend of James Richardson was contacted to see if this site could be used for this purpose. Mr. Jim Richardson was favorable but it would depend on Mr. George Richardson and Oxford Holdings and the building manager. This required correspondence and meetings but permission was obtained. It was decided then to see how much support would be forthcoming from Winnipeg amateurs. A meeting was called June 22, 1970 at the Free Press Board Room. It was calculated that \$1000.00 was needed or approximately \$30.00 per member if the project was to proceed. Oxford Holdings required that the group be incorporated and insurance coverage be obtained. Harvey VE4FG acting as treasurer calculated that \$300 from each of the 40 hams present would do the trick. The response was good and it was decided to go ahead with the project and to proceed as quickly as possible. Blair Macaulay VE4CP offered to handle the legal work with help from Jack Binkley VE4HI who was studying law at the time. A meeting was set up at Blair's home and a set of by-laws and a constitution were drawn up to be used for incorporation. It was decided to make the dues \$25 because of the support that was evident and dues to be set by the executive at an annual meeting.

At this time there were 40 original members. Marty Greenwood VE4XJ was delegated to look at available equipment. He found suitable units in Moose Jaw and Regina which could be bought for \$50.00. The repeater was brought into Winnipeg piece by piece until the necessary units were on hand. Jim Branagh VE4FB of M.T.S. agreed to provide the technical know how to set the station up and build the necessary controls and I.D. unit. A 5/8 Sinclair antenna was ordered and Harvey VE4FG was able to contact the manager of Sinclair and obtain a duplexer for less than \$300.00

The first meeting of the Winnipeg Repeater Society Inc. was held June 22, 1970 in the club room of the Winnipeg Free Press. The first president was Joe Butchard VE4NY. VE4XK was on the air. This repeater was used until September 21, 1976 when a new G.E. solid state repeater was purchased. Before this solid state repeater was installed some attempts at split sites for receiving and transmitting were attempted by VE4VD John Delaive with limited success. John Brice VE4LU

was able to sell the old repeater to Kenora where it was placed on the air on the same frequency as VE3LWR. On March 4, 1976 a motion was passed permitting all handicapped hams free use of the repeater.

A new 4 stacked dipole antenna was purchased in 1978 and autopatch was installed by VE4RE, VE4MJ, VE4GJ and VE4PL in August of the same year. The call was changed to VE4WPG to reflect the area it served and an emergency battery supply was installed which would automatically switch over if power failed.

On May 3, 1977 a proposal by Ron VE4PL was put forward for a second WRS repeater. This repeater would be self contained and be physically mounted on the CBC TV tower at Starbuck, 18 miles southwest of Winnipeg. Meetings were held with CBC, EMO, the Red Cross and 73 Communications Group CFB Winnipeg to solicit support in the form of letters to CBC supporting the proposal. The Montreal Amateur Radio Club sent legal documents and information which was used as a model for our agreement with CBC. A financial committee was formed headed by Bill Milner VE4VH. The bylaws were changed to allow a special fee of \$100 for a life-time membership. Twenty-three members took out life memberships and many associates upgraded to full members. The necessary money was raised in short order. Jim Hobbs VE4OE was president at this time.

The G.E. solid state repeater was assembled at Prairie Communications by Murray Ronald VE4RE, Tom Blair VE4MJ, Vic Rowe VE4GJ, Ron Place VE4PL and Al Rowe VE4ABU. It was installed on the 850 foot level of the tower by Phil Barton VE4QB, Al Rowe VE4ABU and Ron Place VE4PL assisted by the able ground crew of Vic Rowe VE4GJ, Jack McIntyre VE4ER and Jim Hobbs VE4OE. The call letters selected were VE4MAN.

On July 1, 1978 the first link up of the Winnipeg Repeater VE4WPG and Montreal VE3MRC was held. The late Robert Steen, Mayor of Winnipeg sent greetings to Mayor Drapeau via this hook up. John Gowron, VE4ADS acted as net control in Winnipeg and Ron Place VE4PL did the technical work.

A new WRS repeater at Gimli, Manitoba became a possibility when Larry Toms VE4VX asked the society for its help in getting permission to put a repeater on the Gimli distilling plant. The executive, President Ron Place VE4PL, Vice President Jack McIntyre VE4ER, Treasurer Vic Rowe VE4GJ, and Larry Toms VE4VX met with the manager of Calvert of Canada and obtained permission to install a repeater on the site. This repeater went on the air July 15, 1979 with the call VE4GIM.

The value of these repeaters has been proven over the years when they have been used for various public activities but never more so than in this year's flood when the repeaters gave us reliable communications to the flood area. A great deal of credit goes to those people who over the years set up, maintained and improved the equipment.

In research and writing this brief history of the Winnipeg Repeater Society it became apparent to me how much work and dedication has gone into the building of the club to its present highly successful operation. I am sure that many names will not be here that should be but I hope this will serve as a basis for further research into our club's beginnings and important milestones.