



The TARC Reflector for June, 2012

CQ Field Day, CQ Field Day!!

Yep, it's almost time for us to flood the airwaves with the purpose of making as many contacts as possible in 24 hours.

For our newer members who haven't "burned the midnight oil" before, Field Day is an annual exercise for us to go out into the field and set up temporary emergency stations and make as many contacts as we can in the given time period.



It's also a time for those of you who don't have HF capability to get some "mic-time" and learn more about operating with stations far outside our area. If you're thinking about a radio purchase, this is also a good time to see some of the radios that are available first hand, and get to operate them.

The public is also invited to attend and see what this hobby is all about, so if you have a friend who is not a ham but is thinking about it, bring them along.

We've elected to stay in the "4-Foxtrot" class, which means we have four HF stations, a GOTA (Get-On-The Air) station and usually a VHF station on 6 meters. Each station has a Control Operator, which allows you to operate even though you may not have a General or higher class license.

By the way, Foxtrot class stations operate out of an Emergency Operations Center, so we'll be at Thomas County EOC at 1202 Remington Avenue.



We'll be doing a BBQ supper again on Saturday night, plus the traditional "Firehouse" chilidogs for lunch. Please make sure Wynona knows who all will be with you, and what side-dish you'll be bringing.

The June Test Session will also move to Field Day, on Saturday morning at 11am. There will also be a short class held, though we haven't decided on a subject yet. Having a short class at FD adds another 100 points to our final score.

We had a good group to handle the Peacock Day Parade, and for a few minutes, it looked like we might have a replay of last year...it was raining just west of town. The "Bird Crew" had an easy job, as the parade was a bit smaller than is typical...maybe due to all the clouds gathering?

This year's "Bird Crew" was made up of **KF4HSM, AJ4TO, KK4HYB, KK4DZB, KJ4KUK, KC4LYC, KI4RGD, KJ4UKR, N7SDQ, AL7NS, KA3FZO, and KE4FGF.** Wynona had another prize winning Tailgate Breakfast for everyone, and once we were properly "fueled up," we were ready to handle the event.

Everything went well and the clouds did stay away, but it was bittersweet as this was the final time we'll see **Josh, AJ4TO**, as he and his family are moving to Atlanta following his graduation from VSU.

Josh got his license at one of our test sessions and ran the gamut of all three tests in one sitting, so he was a Tech for about 15 minutes, a General for about 20 minutes, and left as an Extra. He also signed on to be a member of our VE Team.



Living first in Berlin, then moving to Valdosta, kept him from participating as much as he'd have liked, but he joined us in as many events as he could. We wish Josh Godspeed in his new life in Atlanta...we'll miss you!

So, June will be another busy month, but it leads up to July, which is our regular "TARC Summer Vacation" month. There will be no meeting, no Nets, and no test session. As busy as our group stays, we need a breather every once in a while.

I hope you'll make plans to join us for the meeting on June 2nd, at the Plaza, and we'll be in Room 3 this month. Arrive at 6pm if you plan to eat, and the meeting will start at 7:30pm. We'll be discussing final preparations for Field Day, so join us and help chart the course.

I look forward to seeing You and your Family there!

73,
Mike



The following members of our Radio Family have
June and July Birthdays

In June:

Wynona Sadler – June 2nd
Terry Sadler – June 2nd
Dot Lewis – June 6th
Bob Moody – June 9th
Dana Swicord – June 17th
Gina McCulley – June 23rd
Bill Kitchens – June 25th

In July:

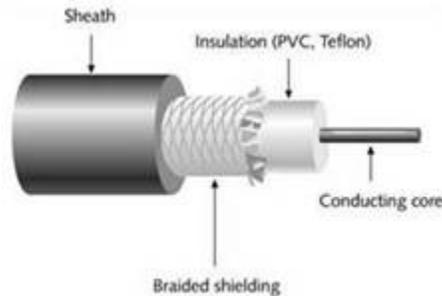
Kenny Freeman – July 4th
Bobby Cooper – July 5th
Nell Brown – July 6th
Buddy Peeples – July 7th
Linda James – July 7th
Kerry Lemley – July 19th
Dan Moniz – July 22nd
Donna Light – July 25th
Tom Brewer – July 26th
Gary Alberstadt – July 30th

Don't see YOUR birthday? Let us know at w4ucj@arri.net

NY4D's Tech Topics

Use The Right Coax For The Job

With summer almost here a lot of us are doing antenna work so I thought I'd do a piece on coax, because it seems like it is one of the things most often overlooked in many antenna installations. If you thought all coax was the same, read on, because some of this may surprise you.



Other than antennas there is probably more misinformation about coax (and other types of feedlines) than any other ham radio topic. In this article we will stick to coax only (no ladder line, that is another topic) and typical fixed and mobile installations and figure out what is the right coax to use in a given situation to maximize our effective radiated power.

As you may have learned already, coax loss goes up with frequency and is inverse to the size of the coax. In other words small diameter coax has high losses at high frequencies, especially at UHF. Coax power handling ability also goes down with the increase in frequency. One other important thing, coax quality is all over the map, what's inside is conveniently hidden from view so it is best to stick with brands that actually publish their specs and have a good overall reputation.

For more information and to get to the places on the net that the tables and calculators I used for all the figuring below, there is a list of links at the bottom of this article.

Coax often has a prefix like RG in front of it, such as RG-8. The RG stands for Radio Guide and is a leftover from US Government milspec designations dating back to the Second World War and really no longer in use. Manufacturers nowadays commonly use this prefix for coax, but what they are actually selling is an RG "type" that may or may not be manufactured to RG specifications. So buyer beware when buying coax at the local CB shop, ratshack, or truck stop.

All coax has loss, generally specified in decibels per hundred feet. As one decibel (db) is considered the smallest noticeable (by human ears) detectable gain or loss it would seem

a good idea to keep our coax feed line installation loss (at whatever frequency) below this 1 db figure. And in this article we are going to assume 50-ohm coax and 50 ohm antennas (low swr,) as loss also increases as swr increases.

Skipping all the theory and getting down to practical use let's start with a typical mobile VHF installation for 2 meters. Around 10 to 15 feet of coax is usually going to be enough. Many mobile mounts come with ultra skinny RG-316 that can be passed through a trunk or hatchback. The popular Diamond K-400 series mount is sold with 13 feet of RG-316 and even a connector. Using the online calculator at coax manufacturer Times Microwave, the loss for this short run at 147 MHz is 1.3 db, which allows almost 75% of the RF we are transmitting to reach our antenna. So if we are running 50 watts output approximately 37 watts of that is making it to the antenna. What happens to the rest of our RF output? It is dissipated as heat along the entire length of the coax.

Now 1.3 db is just a bit over our 1 db loss goal. So how can we get this below 1 db? Just bumping up to RG-58 will bring the loss to .7 db, and now around 42 watts is reaching the antenna. Will anyone notice the difference from 37 watts to 42? In most cases probably not, so the convenience of the thinner coax for the vehicle run may win out here.

But what if we want to add UHF to the mix? At 443 MHz our RG-316 is losing 2.2 db of signal in the short 13 ft run. That means if our rig is putting out 50 watts, only 30 watts is making it to the antenna. Changing it to a quality RG-58 will bring that back up to about 37 watts at the antenna. But to maximize the power transfer to the antenna we would really need to go to a 9913 or LMR-400 type of coax, which will get about 90% of the power to the antenna on the 440 band and 95% on 2 meters. So it is a tradeoff between convenience and loss here. RG-58 is much more convenient to use in the tight space of a mobile situation and that is the reason it makes sense as an upgrade from RG 316. It is difficult to run the half-inch size 9913 or LMR-400 coax in a vehicle. There are also premade mobile mount inserts with RG-58 already attached sold by the vendors at most hamfests, adding to the convenience factor.

So the choice for a dual band installation is often to live with the RG-316 or upgrade to RG-58. One way around this is to use low power at the radio and an amplifier near the antenna with a very short run of coax to the antenna. This can maximize power transfer if it is possible to do an install this way in your vehicle. But it is an extra expense for the amplifier and probably only justified if you are in a fringe repeater area. In reality most VHF/UHF antennas in our typical mobile situations have some gain at UHF, so the loss in the coax is made up in the gain of the antenna and we are happily oblivious to our UHF RF turning into heat in the coax.

So moving this concept over to a home installation is where it gets interesting. Let's say we need only 50 feet of coax to get to our 2-meter antenna. If we use RG-58 then we lose 2.2 db and only get 52% of our 50-watt output power to the antenna. That's only 26 watts, so almost half our power is lost. Upgrading to RG-8X gets us not much, as we are still only getting 30 watts to the antenna. To maximize our power transfer we need to go to a

quality Flex type 9913 or LMR-400, which will get our loss below 1 db and let around 40 watts get to our antenna.

On 440 MHz this gets real interesting. Using RG-58 we have a 5-db loss in a 50 ft run. So only 25% of our output gets to the antenna. That takes our 50 watts down to 12 or 13 watts at the antenna. RG-8X helps a little, bringing this up to 20 watts, but still pretty bad at 4-db or so loss, more than half our power. Only by going to low loss LMR-400 or 9913 type coax can we get this down to a reasonable amount, 1.6 db or so, allowing 35 watts or so to pass to the antenna. It's still not great, but 3 times better than using RG-58.

So now you have some for instances for VHF and UHF, but what about HF? A good answer here is it depends. It depends on what HF band, as there is an 8 to 1 frequency range between 80 and 10 meters. It also depends on your power level, as linear amplifiers are more common on the HF bands and your coax needs to be rated to take the power you are using.

For sake of comparison we'll stick to low power (100 watts) and use 100 feet of coax for our imaginary HF installation.

So for 28.4 MHz, the middle of the tech band, using RG-58 will cost us 2.4 db, and only 57 of our 100 watts will make it to the antenna. Bumping to RG-8x, we still have 1.9 db of loss and 64 watts making it to the antenna. Moving to RG-213, we have 1 db of loss and 80 watts making it to our antenna. Going to the LMR-400 or 9913 type here will gain us a few watts but is probably not worth it for the extra cost involved.

Dropping to 20-meters, the numbers go like this: RG-58, 1.7 db loss, and 68 watts to the antenna. RG-8x, 1.3 db loss, 73 watts to the antenna. RG-213, .7 db loss and 85 watts makes it to the antenna.

Dropping down to 80 meters, we have RG-58 with a loss of .9 db, with 82 watts to the antenna. RG-8x gets us down to .7 db loss and 85 watts making it to the antenna. Good old RG-213 gives us extremely low loss, just .4 db and we get 92 of our 100 watts out to the antenna.

Mechanical considerations aside, shooting for the solution that keeps us with 1db or less loss on our band of choice is the way to go for HF. In most cases except for 80 to 40 meters this will mean RG-213 type coax.

What about your HF mobile installation? If we assume 13 ft of feedline and on the worst HF band for loss, 10 meters, the loss in RG-58 is only .3 db for this short run. Even the skinny RG-316 that comes with the mobile mounts is only .5 db or so. So only if we are running higher power do we need to be concerned with the bigger stuff.

Some other tips and random thoughts -

Use coax from a quality manufacturer. ABR and DXEngineering are good sources and they don't sell junk and publish the actual specs on their websites. That Hamfest special hunk of coax might seem like a good deal at the time but you really never know unless you've put a dummy load at the far end and measured the power at each end with the same wattmeter. Same with the off brands from the CB shop or truck stop. Another problem is pre-installed PL-259's with the shield ring threads being either way too long or too short. The premade gray RG-8x cables you see at hamfests generally have shield rings on them that are so long they won't allow the connector to tighten down all the way on many SO-239 sockets, especially short bulkhead mounted ones. A little vibration or movement, and voila, the plug stops making contact and you now have toasted finals or if you are lucky, just no output if your swr foldback is working and has done its job.

Used coax is a crapshoot. Most coax has a useful life out in the environment. Commercial operations replace it on a regular basis. There are many ways coax can be damaged, chief of which is water intrusion. It may seem like a simple ohmmeter test would find any shorts, but the reality is that most won't show up until higher voltage (like the output from your transceiver) is applied. Reputable coax manufacturers test their production runs with kilovolts, so it is unlikely that the 9-volt battery in your digital multi-meter will find this kind of problem.

However don't pass up a good deal on coax that has never been out in the weather and has been stored properly. I have found roll ends at hamfests still on the manufacturer's cores cheap. I've also seen coiled up RG-213 that looked good at first glance but looking closer there were bulges from water intrusion and the price was almost what a new piece would cost. So "buyer beware" on used coax.

With foam core coax avoid tight bends and turns.

I haven't mentioned one of my favorite budget coax types, which is RG-6, the 75 ohm cable used in cable and satellite systems, One of the problems is that there are so many grades and types of this product that you need to be careful about what you are actually buying or scrounging. Obviously it needs to be made for outdoor use and needs to have a good shield. Another is that it is 75 ohms, so your 50-ohm output transceiver is looking into a 1.5 to 1 swr to start with. For HF this generally isn't a problem if your rig has a built in antenna tuner or you are using a tube amp with a pi network. Another problem is that it isn't easy to adapt or connectorize to standard PL-259's.

All that said, if you can overcome all these problems it can be an excellent choice for a low band HF installation. I've used it to feed 40 and 80-meter resonant antennas where the weight of a heavier coax would be a problem. It has slightly less loss than RG-8X and slightly more power handling ability. It is ok for the medium power 600-800 watt amps on the market as long as you have an antenna with low swr. You can often scrounge RG-6 from someone in the cable or satellite business but make sure it is outside grade and has a good shield.

So I hope you see that what you need for a particular installation really "depends." The good news is that it is possible to figure all this out without throwing up your hands in confusion. Use the links and calculators at the bottom of this article to figure out what is the best solution for your particular installation. Try to keep your loss below 1 db if possible; you might even modify what you were figuring on doing after doing some research. Get what you really need, so you are sure you have the best possible coax with the lowest possible loss for the job. Then you can just forget about it and get on the air with the best possible signal.

Links:

<http://www.w4rp.com/ref/coax.html>

<http://abrind.com/Home/CoaxGuide>

<http://www.timesmicrowave.com/cgi-bin/calculate.pl>

<http://www.dxengineering.com/default.asp?DeptID=36>

<http://www.timesmicrowave.com/cms/products/cables/lmr/index.shtml>

Shoot me a question at ny4d@arrl.net if you need more info.

Lowell, NY4D

A+ Test Results

The TARC VE Team held their monthly test session at the Thomas County EOC on May 19th.

Two people came in to test and both left with CSCEs in hand...they were:

Marilyn Webb, KK4HHL, who is a new General.

Charles McPherson, who is a new Technician.

Charles also joined the club after passing his test! Congratulations to both these fine folks and thanks to the Test Team, made up of **AI4CW, KJ4UKR, KW4EF, KC4LYC, N4KGT, and KE4FGF.**

We also had Ray Strickland, from Moultrie join us for breakfast on May 11th, to both have breakfast and take a test. He passed with no problems and left as a new Tech.

The next Test Session will be held at the 2012 Field Day Exercise at the Thomas County EOC on June 23rd. The time will be 11am. Come get that upgrade and plan on staying

afterwards to help us run up contacts during the Field Day exercise, which runs for 24 hours straight, starting at 2pm.

If you're looking at taking the Extra class exam, remember that the question pool will change as of July 1st, so this will be your last chance to pass, without having to buy a new study guide.

There will be no test session in July, as the club shuts down all functions for a summer vacation, but there will be two in August. The Instructors will again be busy with classes on August 18th and 25th, at the Archbold classrooms.



Josh, KI4NGO, following his first successful parachute jump.

It is with sad regret that I have to report that young **Josh Floyd, KI4NGO**, passed away on Memorial Day following a motorcycle accident in Taylor County.

Josh turned 20 back in February

The weather played a role in the accident. Josh was headed west on US-27 and a car in the eastbound lane hydroplaned, and crossed the median into Josh's lane. Josh was wearing a helmet at the time of the accident.

I'm sure most of our Florida members knew Josh and his family, and will tell you he was both a kind and friendly young man, with a bright future ahead of him.

He will be missed...please keep he and his family in your prayers....

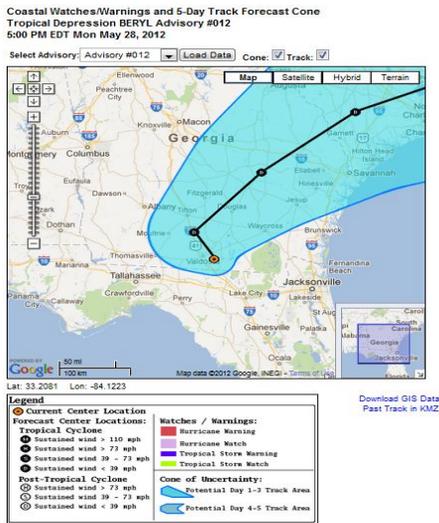


Weather Center

We have seen an early start to the 2012 hurricane season with two named storms in May! This early start would certainly lead us to believe we could expect an above average hurricane season however, NOAA announced last week that conditions favor a near normal hurricane season in the Atlantic Basin in 2012. Of course it only takes one hurricane making landfall in our area to make it an active season for us.

For the entire six-month season, which begins June 1, NOAA's Climate Prediction Center says there's a 70 percent chance of nine to 15 named storms (with top winds of 39 mph or higher), of which four to eight will strengthen to a hurricane (with top winds of 74 mph or higher) and of those one to three will become major hurricanes (with top winds of 111 mph or higher, ranking Category 3, 4 or 5). Based on the period 1981-2010, an average season produces 12 named storms with six hurricanes, including three major hurricanes. (NOAA Article May 24, 2012)

New this year on the National Hurricane Center (NHC) forecast pages will be interactive 3-5 day track forecast maps using Google Maps. You can quickly and easily look at previous advisories and compare them to current forecast trends. The older static images work well but it is often difficult to determine the specific locations that are included in the forecast. By using this new map option you are able to zoom in close enough to see the local towns that are included.



When we look at the forecast tracks the NHC stresses the importance of not concentrating on the forecast line but rather the cone which takes into account their average margin of error for a given forecast period. That is the reason the shaded area gets wider with time as their margin of error increases with extended forecast.

Let all continue with our hurricane preparations and let TS Beryl be a reminder to us just how quickly tropical systems can form. We may not always have days of preparation prior to a storm so now is the time to make sure we have our hurricane preparedness kits together.

73's,
Stewart
KJ4GOJ
DEC NWS Tallahassee, FL

TARC Meeting Minutes for 5-5-12

Mike, KE4FGF, opened the meeting at 7:30pm, welcoming everyone and making the following announcements:

The May Test Session is at 10am May 19th, at the Thomas County EOC. The Midmonth Breakfast will take place on May 19th at Seminole Wind at 8:30am.

The Ragchew Breakfast takes place every Friday morning at 8:30am.

The Statewide "Hurrex" Drill runs from May 14th thru the 16th.

Dan, KF4WF, gave a report on the Grady ARES Emergency drill.

Thomas, W4TBJ reported that the hospital in Moultrie has purchased two radios; a Yaesu FT-450 HF radio and a Yaesu FT-7900 Dual Band radio.

The Minutes and Treasurer's Reports were approved as presented.

Old Business

Mike reported that TOSRV was a great success. He gave special thanks to:

KJ4KUK, KJ4ZNK, KK4DZB, KK4HYB, NOTW, N4KXL, KJ4UKR, KJ4OSU, AK4KC, KF4GBS, KI4RGD, KE4RWR, NY4D, W4TBJ, KJ4SWI, KE4URL, AI4CW, N4KGT, N4KGT, KJ4GOJ, and KE4FGF, who made up "the crew."

We discussed the purchase of a Dual Band Radio for the club last month. Mike reminded us that we already have access to an Icom IC-2820, provided by GEMA for the Thomas County EOC, including a Comet GP-3 antenna. The purchase was tabled. It was suggested to look at the purchase of a case to keep both it and the Kenwood TS-480 together for deployments. **Mac, W4GLM**, donated a 15-amp supply for the Icom, but we'll still need to purchase a power supply for the Kenwood.

Lowell, NY4D reported that he had the paperwork straight for moving ownership of the website to the club. He also suggested that we need to check on getting a debit card or something of that sort so we can expedite payments of this kind. The motion to do this passed and Bobby will look into acquiring the card.

New Business

Peacock Day is May 12th, and Mike asked for volunteers to contact Wynona about helping with this event. She does plan on a Tailgate Breakfast.

Mike then led a discussion on the 2012 Field Day exercise, which is June 23rd and 24th, and it was decided to continue as a 4-Foxtrot station. Mike then asked for people to start thinking about being station Captains. Currently, **Terry, N0TW** will be CW Captain, and **Mo, KI4PZS**, will be the GOTA captain. No one else volunteered, so Mike urged folks to think about it.

It was decided to continue the tradition of “Fire House Chili Dogs” for lunch, and a combination of BBQ chicken and Boston Butt for supper. Wynona will coordinate side dishes.

Mike indicated that the regular June Test Session would move to Field Day and take place at 11am on Saturday.

Press Kits will go out 2 weeks beforehand, and we’ll also need for anyone who can, to invite an elected official, for that 100-point bonus. Virgil asked Mike to help with the TV stations and Mike agreed to do that.

Virgil also has an idea about opening an online store and following some discussion the club gave him the go ahead to check it out.

Dana reminded everyone again that she and Theresa need more recipes for the club cookbook, and hope to have a trial copy by Field Day for everyone to look at.

As there was no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Dana Swicord, KJ4GWB,
TARC Secretary



Filling in the Blanks...the two FDs of June

We have two “FDs” this month, one the aforementioned Field Day, and the other takes place the weekend before...Father’s Day. A few years ago, I did a back page on some of the fathers in our group and in doing it I left one out because it was still difficult to write about him, because he’d recently passed away.

The original version of this column was written to right that wrong, and it also appeared a few years ago. I came upon it again today, and decided to use it again, as it’s still appropriate, and also helps fill in a gap when I accidentally left out an article on Memorial Day last month.

So, I hope this makes up for that accident, and also gives pause for you to think about a very important person in your life...your Father....

Fred Brown was born in 1922 as the fifth of six children in the Sam and Ida Brown family. Early in life, two of his favorite things to do were to hang around the blacksmith shop in Merrillville and to go fishing with “Ol’ Man John Turner”, who ran the grocery store.

One of his least favorite things was school and indeed, my mother’s earliest memory of him was that he slept a lot in class. Destined to never finish school, he worked on the family farm and dairy until joining the Army National Guard shortly before the entrance of the US into WWII.

During his deployment to Camp Shelby, in Mississippi, some sort of trouble landed him on KP duty, and from that he found he had a consuming interest in cooking as well as building.

Because of their deployments, he approached his commander about rigging out the kitchen truck to make it capable of cooking without having to unload the equipment, in effect making it a “mobile kitchen”. It worked well enough that he was assigned to help rig out the other trucks used for the same purpose.

With the nation at war, his term of enlistment came to an end. The camp commander requested him to stay on as a Cooking Instructor, and made sure he understood that if he left, he’d be drafted right back in anyway, but being strong minded, he said he was going home and left the National Guard.

Within two weeks of arriving home, just like his commander indicated, he was called up in the draft and he found himself assigned to the 456th Anti-Aircraft Battalion, which was training for deployment to Europe. They were sent on maneuvers into northern Michigan and there the unit was to take its first casualty.

Most of the men were from the south and were not used to the harsh northern winter and they were sleeping in tents in the -40 degree temperatures. Despite being warned, one of

the men stripped down to his underwear before getting in the sleeping bag one night, and there they found him the next morning, frozen to death.

After deployment, they were placed on a troop train to Jacksonville for boarding ship to head overseas. Realizing they would come through Thomasville, he somehow managed to get word to his family that they were coming through in hopes to see them if the train stopped.

On the way in, one of his friends wanted a haircut and they agreed to cut each other's hair. Both jobs were so bad that the only way to straighten them out was to shave their heads clean.

As luck would have it, the train did get to stop, and despite the guards trying to keep everyone aboard, he managed to get off on the landing. His sisters walked right past him, not recognizing him with his "new" hairstyle.

The rest of the journey was uneventful, and they boarded a "Kaiser Ship" for the transit to England. Because of rough seas, almost everyone stayed sick for the entire trip. They arrived in England a few weeks before the D-Day landings.

The unit went ashore at Normandy a few days after the initial landing on June 6th, and their first night was spent on the cliff where the American Cemetery is now located. Their first chore was cleaning the cosmoline off the truck's electrical system, which kept it from drowning out during the landing on the beach.

The 456th was attached to the 3rd Army under command of General Patton and was soon part of the race across Europe. Their job was to protect the supply convoys from Luftwaffe aircraft and that kept them on the move, and his modifications to be able to cook in the truck showed quick benefits.

Because of the fast forward movement of the columns, they had to be on guard for German units who might find themselves accidentally behind the lines. Early one morning, as he got coffee and breakfast underway for the men in the unit, he heard a noise outside, behind the truck.

Upon pulling the back cover aside, he found himself facing 13 German soldiers, who were fully armed. Unarmed and unsure of what to do, he looked at them for a moment and then, keeping their hands away from their guns, they threw their arms up and started shouting "comrade!...comrade!"

Essentially a bunch of dirty and hungry teenagers who had been pressed into army service long before their time, the overpowering smell of coffee and food cooking was just more than they could stand, and they were ready to be through with Hitler's war. He made sure they were fed before the MPs took them away.

At war's end, the unit found itself near Berchtesgaden and from there home on a captured German ocean liner, which made the trip home quicker and much smoother. Upon arrival back in Thomasville he farmed and did odd jobs briefly and then took a job in the kitchen at Finney General Hospital, located where Southwestern State Hospital is now.

He married Nell Murphy in 1955 and in 1960, added a son to the family.

As a young boy, I remember riding on the front of the meal cart in the Finney dining hall and watching the joyful expressions on his face as he talked with the soldiers who were hospitalized there. If he ever had a job he loved, this was it. But, all things do come to an end and he found himself needing new employment when the government abruptly closed Finney General.

It's not easy to re-invent yourself when you're 45 years old but luckily since he was a government employee, they agreed to re-train him and he took on a new job as a Federal Meat Inspector.

He spent many years at this job, but it was to prove his undoing. He contracted a blood parasite called Histoplasmosis while inspecting chickens and it attacked his eyes, leaving him with no central vision.

He had a hard time dealing with this, as he enjoyed woodworking, reading, and a number of other hobbies that required good eyesight. As keen eyesight was also very important to his job, his condition forced him to retire. Even with worsening sight, he amazed me a number of times with what he could still do, though he never slept as well as before and I believe that was partly because he could no longer do one of his favorite things; reading books in bed.

As he aged, he began to have back problems and he was battling this when I first became involved with TARC. My involvement with the club inadvertently created a problem that I found out about in an unusual way.

Daddy was an avid fisherman and loved fast boats. Since I never let adverse weather stand in the way of a fishing trip, I was "accused" many times of either trying to freeze him to death or melt him into a puddle while we were out on the lake.

One day, while getting my hair cut, (not by him!) I was surprised when the barber asked how the radio club was doing. Since I'd never mentioned the club to him before, I asked what had prompted that question and he said my father had told him "the radio stuff is robbing a lot of our fishing time" ...uh-oh...

While we hadn't stopped fishing, I had slowed down a bit because he seemed frustrated that he couldn't see well enough to tie on a lure and being unable to see where he was casting caused him to stay hung up a lot. But the problem that bothered him the worst was very simple; *he hated having to ask for help.*

I'd also noted that he was having problems getting up on the back deck of our bass boat and that he seemed to be in worse pain for days afterwards because the boat's pounding through rougher water aggravated his worsening back.

His first back operation went decently, even though it didn't stop all the pain he was having and he was just really recovering from it when a younger doctor told him he could be a lot better...and unfortunately, Daddy bought into the idea.

That second operation is what really messed him up and he never really came back from it. Due to intense pain, he was prescribed a lot more medicine than he should have had and that left him weak, disoriented, and needing almost constant attention. At the end, he also began experiencing "dementia" or more accurately Alzheimer's.

In the short time before we finally lost him, he acted much differently than the man I grew up with, but that really was beyond his control. The funeral was well attended and there was a good size group of TARC members who were honorary pallbearers.

As I sat in the heat of the cemetery that day listening as Taps signaled the end of the service, I realized just how mournful the sounds of those measured tones really are, and it drove home the fact that he was really gone.

To this day, anytime I hear it played transports me immediately back to that moment of emptiness, frozen forever in my mind...

I regret I didn't get involved with the club before his health turned bad because he was really keen on group activities and loved a good cook-out, especially if he got to help with the cooking, and he'd have been right there shoulder to shoulder in the kitchen at Field Day and the Fish Fry.

Because he liked technical stuff and read a lot, I wouldn't discount the fact that he might have tried to pass a test for a license too. He wanted badly to go back to Europe and re-trace the path his unit took during the war, to see it at a slower pace, and it is a real regret that he lost his sight and health before he could do that.

As Father's Day approaches, the memories of the bad times he suffered at the end are eclipsed by those earlier memories; of the man who raised me, gave me a love of fishing and all things technical, taught me how to drive, told me war stories, and served as a symbol of how to face the world in good times or bad.

As we celebrate Father's Day 2012, I hope this gives pause for good thoughts of the past for those of you whose fathers have also gone on ahead. For those of you lucky enough to still have your father with you, I'll tell you that he's not waiting for a necktie or another bottle of aftershave, and while a mere phone call might suffice, it's still something of a cheat.

He wants to see and be with YOU, and that visit shouldn't have to wait until the 17th...