VOX

HUNTSVILLE AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Huntsville, Alabama **Volume 47, Number 4** **April, 2007**

Huntsville Amateur Radio Club Information

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The club's address is Box 423, Huntsville, Ala. 35804. Meetings are held each Friday night at 7:30 P.M. at the American Red Cross Building, 1101 Washington Street. Dues are $12.00 per year, family memberships are $15.00 per year. The club maintains a Web Site at "http://www.harc.net"

The North Alabama Repeater Association operates repeaters on 146.34 / 146.94, 147.78 / 147.18, 223.34 / 224.94and 448.5 / 443.5. NARA dues are $16.00 per year and may be sent to NARA at P.O. Box 18941 Huntsville, AL 35804-8941.

The club's packet radio interest group, HUNTSPAC, maintains an extensive packet network for the Huntsville area. Dues for use of this network are $15.00 per year, and can be paid through the HARC Secretary-Treasurer listed above.

The club's ATV special interest group, TVATV operates an ATV repeater. It's input frequency is 439.25 MHz and its output is 421.25 MHz. A voice coordination repeater is operated with output frequency of 145.33 MHz, input 600 kHz down.

The Vox is published the third Friday of each month except for August. Editor of the Vox is Frank Emens, W4HFU, 3714 Lakewood Circle, Huntsville, Ala. 35811 or femens@hiwaay.net. Material of interest to the HARC membership should be submitted to the editor by Wednesday before the third Friday of the month of publication.

"Vox", Vol 47, Nr 4, April, 2007
A Newsletter published monthly except for August by the Huntsville Amateur Radio Club, P.O. Box 423, Huntsville, AL 35804

Christopher Brindley Best

was born 8:14am on Tuesday March 13th 2007 at Crestwood Medical Center in Huntsville, Alabama. He weighed 8lbs, 8oz and was 20 inches long. Mother and baby are doing fine.

Best Regards,

Christopher Michael Best, KB3DXR
Bianca Brindley, KI4POW

From The VEEP.

Breaking News: a new ham radio operator is born: Christopher Brindley Best at 8:14am on Tuesday March 13th 2007 at Crestwood Medical Center in Huntsville, Alabama. He weighed 8lbs, 8oz and was 20cm long. Mother and baby are doing fine. Congratulations Mr. President!

I am afraid young Christopher was born just 2 weeks too late to enroll in our General License class, which is now well underway. I guess the mailing we did to all technicians was a success as 34 showed up for the class! I hope we end up with 34 new Generals in May! Good luck everyone. And thank you Trainers: Tom, Tom, Leigh and Woodie for stepping forward and lead the troops!

There were even some brave souls that have yet to get their technician license, and they are practicing the Technician pool questions right after each General class finishes. Good luck guys, I know you can do it!

One of the Presidents last acts before becoming a father was leading a number of brave souls in assembling the Tiny Track 3 Plus. It was quite a sight to see as the tables were covered with soldering irons, tools and electronics parts. We have to do that more often! Thank you Chris!

I'm out of town while writing this article in sunny California which is experiencing a heat wave —-in MARCH—- for crying out loud. and people still denying we have global warming. but let's not get political.

I'm having withdrawal symptoms. It's been a long time since I missed 3 meetings in a row, but hopefully that will be last time for a while..

CAVEC License Exams

Exam sessions are held at 9:00 AM the first Saturday of each month unless a holiday causes the session to be delayed for one week.

Upcoming sessions are:
Saturday, April 7
Saturday, May 5
For information contact:

Larry Frost, KR4GU, 864-3244
kr4gu@hamfest.org
Org
Don Tunstill, W4NO, 536-3904
dontunstill@hamfest.org

Athens Exam Sessions are held the 3rd Saturday of each month at 1:00. They are held at the Athens EOC.

For information contact Bob Hudson, W4RKH, 461-7905

End of the month is AUCTION night. Start collecting your useful stuff and bring it in, make some cash and a bit for the club, which retains 10% of the sales. So help yourself AND help the club.

Tom Duncan brought up the shack needs an overhaul. and it does. please help Tom out and surprise me when I get back. We are in deep do-do if we need the shack for a real emergency and operate from the shack for an extended period. We may also want to check up on the antennas and make sure they are in peak performance.

April is coming up and that is our traditional Old-Timers night. Since I have been in the is club only for a limited number of years I ask your cooperation to solicit any hams that we have not seen for a while and bring them to the club that night.

Well that's all the time I have here, while away for work. I hope to see you all again at Auction night.

73 K4RGG Rolf Goedhart
Your VP

Report from ARES District 6

We had a storm early in the season — it was a killer. As trained storm spotters, we know that severe weather happens in every state, in every month. Alabama seems to have more than it's share of wicked weather. May and June are the peak months, in terms of tornados, but April is the deadliest month. Uh-oh. In an "average" year, 800 tornados are reported nationwide, resulting in 80 deaths and 1,500 injuries.

From the Amateur radio operator position at the National Weather Service office, I can tell you a couple of things for sure. First, the dedicated folks who run the office here in Huntsville are totally serious and focused on saving lives and property. Next, the sophisticated equipment is improving forecasts of wicked weather, and its very likely that lives are saved because of the improved warnings, vs. 20 years ago. Finally, I can tell you how important Amateur radio operators and storm spotters are to the "team".

Severe weather looks like this or that on the radar — it looks like something else in the eyes of a trained storm spotter. Most of the time, spotter reports are used by NWS and other emergency officials to "disprove" the radar. Do you think that the RADAR image that the TV weather guy is shrieking about really represents what is actually on the ground? Think again. RADAR shows a lot of stuff about reflectivity (rain? snow? sleet?) and motion (the Doppler effect), but it does NOT show reality — it isn't a camera (DOH!). A tornado that is 200 feet above the ground is way different from one that is on the ground, don't you think? Can RADAR tell the exact height above ground of the tip of the funnel? Get real!

What we need are trained storm spotters, checking into the local nets. Then the "team" can decide if some thing is "real" or just plain spooky (we just ask you to look in a certain direction and report what you see. We don't ask you to chase a storm!!). Want to help? Did you get training? Will you check into the

HARC ACTIVITY CALENDAR FOR
April, 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 April Fool Day. Be on the alert!	2	3 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	4 SE Linked Rptr Net 2000 +442.775/PL 203.5	5 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	6 HARC Meeting	7 *TWIAR CAVEC Exam, Red Cross Bldg, 0900
8	9	10 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	11 SE Linked Rptr Net 2000 +442.775/PL 203.5	12 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	13 HARC Meeting	14 *TWIAR
15	16	17 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	18 SE Linked Rptr Net 2000 +442.775/PL 203.5	19 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	20 HARC Meeting Vox Night & Fox Hunt Night	21 *TWIAR
22	23	24 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	25 SE Linked Rptr Net 2000 +442.775/PL 203.5	26 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	27 HARC Meeting Old Timer's Night	28 *TWIAR
29	30	1 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	2 SE Linked Rptr Net 2000 +442.775/PL 203.5	3 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	4 HARC Meeting	5 *TWIAR CAVEC Exam, Red Cross Bldg, 0900

*TWIAR -- This Week In Amateur Radio, +442.775 PL203.5 Hz 8 PM Every Saturday
ATV Net @ 20:00, Check in on 145.33, Tuesdays
Southeast Linked Repeater Net on +442.775, PL 203.5 Hz @ 20:00, Wednesdays
Madison County Emergency Net on 34/94 @19:30, Thursdays
SkyWarn Net on 147.24 @ 20:00, Thursdays

Thursday night net at 7:30 PM (N4HSV = 146.94- PL=100) or 8:00 PM (KB4CRG = 147.24+ PL=82.5).

Got Ham License + Got Training = Valuable SKYWARN Team Member

I am the SKYWARN Coordinator for Northern Alabama and Southern/Middle Tennessee, and I am asking for your help. Can I count on you during the next weather event? Please send me an email, or check into a training net so that we all know who the team members are. Your ham ticket can mean a lot if you'll step up and become part of the SKYWARN team. Thanks — it's one of the coolest things that a ham can do!

73, Doug Hilton, AG4FL
Alabama ARES District 6 ARRL EC

ARES / RACES update.

March started with a bang. just after Severe Weather Awareness week ended and the NWS had given us another very well attended (100+) Storm Spotter training. Unfortunately the first March Storms were a stark reminder why we do the work we do in Amateur Radio, while we mourn the loss of life.

Thanks to all who came out and participated in the Emergency nets and the Skywarn net.

Keep up the good work and check into the training net on Thursdays so we get to know each other, better yet volunteer for net control next time.

During the joint meeting we elected two new officers: Gary Dion as training officer and John Trickey as administrative officer, while undersigned became radio officer following in Ken Magnant foot steps. I don't think there words to express our gratitude to Ken for serving 20+ years as radio Officers for the Races group.

Gary started his new position with flair as he brought 30+ batteries to the EOC while explaining how to care for and not to kill your batteries. Thank goodness bad storms are far and few, but that really puts our batteries at risk, while the radios sit in the to-go kit slowly dying till the next recharge. Gary explained that the batteries loose approximately the first 10% within 24 hours, so a daily recharge of 30 minutes or so would keep them fully charged. You can use one of those 24 hour timers for that purpose and give your batteries their daily "kick". For a summary of his presentation see else where in the VOX.

Woodie Zeigler volunteered for the CSEP exercise and successfully passed traffic during the exercise. As you may know Madison is host county in case anything may ever happen in Anniston, just like we are host county in case of an emergency at the TVA plant.

You'll have to do without me for a few weeks on the Thursday night nets while I'm traveling out of state. In any case I hope to see you all at the next meeting April 12 at the EOC at 6 PM. Pizza provided as usual.

73 de K4RGG Rolf Goedhart
Emergency Coordinator Madison County

Frank's Law Proven

Today's balmy weather almost made me doubt my memory, but scarcely a month ago it was time for the CQ WW WPX RTTY contest, and the temperature was some forty degrees cooler. Not cooler, just plain cold. And windy. A day fit neither for man nor beast, but tailor-made to test out Frank's law. I suppose in some strict sense this cor-

nerstone of physics should be known as Frank's theorem, but a casual statement of the maxim carries the same weight as any law of Newton, Boyle, Kirchoff, or Lenz, to wit: the performance of an antenna is in direct proportion to how bloomin' cold it is when it's being put up. The constant of proportionality is available in a previous Vox, and no doubt elsewhere in learned literature.

I have a 40 meter vertical hastily erected before many contests, and torn down immediately thereafter. Fishing line is sling-shot over a tree branch (it's a 40m tree, so the branch is 33 feet off the ground), and the sinker end is tied to a more robust piece of light rope pulled back over the branch, which is then used to hoist up the 33' wire. A stake is driven into the ground at the feedpoint, radials laid out, an alligator clips to SO-239 adaptor pressed into service, and coax run back to the shack. Ready to work the world.

As I said, it was cold that day, so the fishing line over the tree branch part took a few attempts. The artillery used is a slingshot with a Zebco fishing reel attached. On the first attempt, I forgot to press the button on the reel, so the sinker felt only a brief tug as it ripped itself from the end of the line and hurtled down the street, narrowly missing the mailman with a load of QSL cards. On the second try, the line caught the handle on the reel, made an abrupt about-face, and walloped me in the forehead. Realizing the incredible skill I possess, safety glasses are now part of this procedure.

The fifth try got the sinker over the tree limb, but alas, the sinker was too small, and no amount of cajoling the line could overcome the friction between line and branch. Replacing this sinker with a size used when trolling for submarines, I managed to wrap the line around the branch a dozen or so times. It's still up there, but I'm cutting the grass there this weekend, so I'm sure it will fall.

The eleventh try worked like a charm. By this time - did I mention the rain? - my eyelids were frozen shut, but it was dark by then anyway. I groped around until the radiating element was up ("vertical" is only an approximate description of this antenna's orientation) and the radials were down. I connected the coax, and reeled the other end into the shack, dragging the entire radial assembly with it for the last 25 feet or so. Another trip into the dark, frozen tundra, and I slipped over the stake which was to hold the bottom end of the antenna down near the repositioned radial common point. The stake pounded in, everything was ready.

Back in the shack I observed that the SWR wasn't nearly as good as I had hoped, and this antenna seemed to have even lower receive output than the average 47 ohm resistor. Yet another trip into the wilderness revealed I had reversed the connections on the alligator-to-SO-239, my sense of touch being profoundly colorblind, especially in the dark.

With 15 minutes to spare until the contest began, I finally got the result I was hoping for. A little tuning around the low end of 40m and I heard an EA9 calling. There's one I need on 40! I answered and snagged him, and to my amazement, the power was still set to 5W from the previous night's domestic rag chew. All night long, and the next night, this antenna delivered similar results. Now I must admit, this performance was not without some compromise. The frozen antenna was completely immune to high angle signals, exactly the ones I wanted to ignore in this contest, and so might not have worked well for close-in stations. In fact, it seemed to have one lobe, 5 degrees high, centered on 11 degrees elevation, with 9 dB gain over a dipole! Impossible, you say? No indeed - this is Frank's Law in action.

Alas, with the contest complete, the antenna came down, and a month later was re-erected for the ARRL SSB DX contest. It was about 65 degrees, the sun was still up, and it only took two tries with the slingshot (a good thing, too, because I'm running out of sinkers). Same antenna, same radials, same coax, and the same stake driven into the same hole.

It was an abysmal contest.

73, Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

NARA Notes

I'll keep it short this month on repeater status. The NARA executive board met to discuss the upcoming Huntsville hamfest this year. This year our hamfest will host the ARRL convention. We want to make sure the system of NARA repeaters will be ready to support that activity.

The newly deployed GE voter system is working great on 146.94. It will pick out the best signal on 146.34 from receivers around Huntsville and use that to retransmit on 146.94.

All of the NARA repeaters have been working fine. The only problem to note this month is the ICOM mobile we were using as a remote base link radio on 147.18 failed. It's PA final output on 440 died. We have another GE commercial radio to put up in its place as soon as possible. In the mean time, the 147.18 IRLP linking is down.

Gary N4TXI and I have been discussing how to utilize APRS on the 146.94 system during weather events. With all of the new HARC tiny trackers in Huntsville, there is some growing interest in this. I'll report back later on how this is progressing. With the spring season nearly here, it will be time for some antenna work on the repeaters.

Speaking of antennas, today I wanted to show you a very simple antenna you can build in less than an hour for two meters. All of the components are available at Radio Shack or perhaps in your junk box. It only takes a short piece of 300 ohm TV twin lead, a handy 6- 10′ length of RG-58 and a PL-259 connector. If it is for an HT, you may need a BNC or SMA adapter as well. I can't take credit for the design. This J-pole antenna has been around forever. I made one a long time ago and it works very well! It makes an excellent antenna for boosting your VHF HT signal or even as a temporary base/mobile antenna in an emergency. I think MFJ makes one of these and calls it a 'roll-up' antenna since you can roll it up and throw in your emergency kit.

73, Ralph W4XE NARA President

TV Twin-lead J-pole design

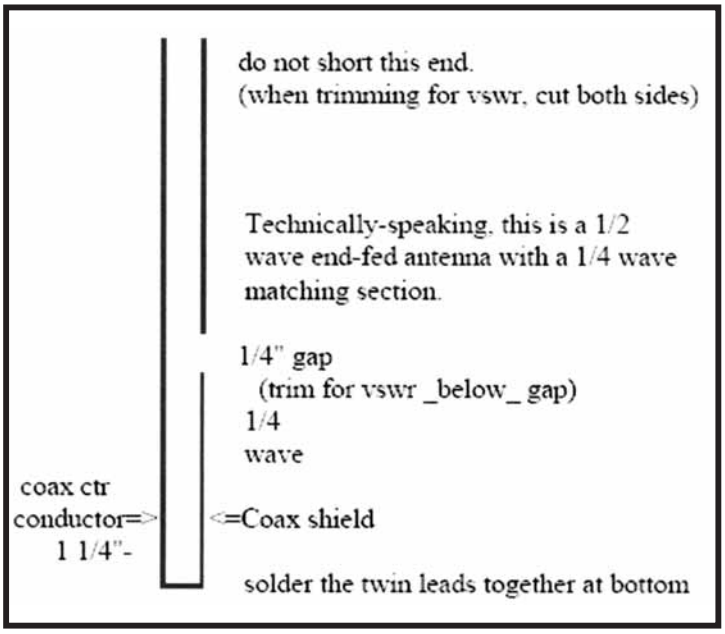
The following is a description of a J-Pole antenna made from 300 ohm TV twin-lead.

For a center frequency of 146 MHz: 1. Start with @54" of TV twin lead (flat, NOT foam core) 2. Strip 1/2" of insulation at bottom and solder wires together. 3. Measure 1 1/4" from soldered wires and strip insulation on both sides. This is the solder point for a coax feed line. 4. Measure 16 3/4" from coax shield solder point and cut out 1/4" notch. 5. Measure 50 1/3" from coax center conductor solder point and trim off twin lead at that point. 6. Feed with a length of RG-58U coax. Tape coax at feed point to the twin lead for strength and seal coax for weather protection. Note- Instead of the heavier RG-58 I used RG-174 for an HT application. The much smaller coax allows it to fit in your pocket.

To get the best possible match, in step three above simply MARK the "solder points" and measure from the mark for step 4 and 5. Now solder straight pins to your conductor and your shield. Insert the pins at the marked point and test for VSWR at the design frequency (146MHz).

If necessary, probe up or down till you reach 1:1 (close as possible). Solder at the best points. To try this, you may want to start with the twin lead a little long and trim down to resonant length - note: you will need to trim in a 3:1 ratio to maintain the 3/4 to 1/4 wave. It has been noted that this design can lead to rf coupling onto the Feed line. To avoid, put ferrite beads on the coax at the feed point, or use 3-5 turns of coax (1"-2") taped together at the feed point.

You may attach an alligator clip to the plastic on the top of the antenna in order to easily hang it. Alternately, punch a hole near the top and use a length of fishing line to hang.



FYI, the 1/4 wave sections for other center frequencies are: 144 MHz =17 inches, 145 =16.88, 146 =16.75, 147 =16.65, 148 =16.54 Just go ahead and solder the coax in place and trim down to as close to 1:1 VSWR as You can get. Then use the MFJ vhf antenna analyzer and a frequency counter and afterwards test with a radio and in-line SWR/power meter. When done, the antenna should also present 1:1.2-3 VSWR in the center of 444 MHz band as well.

73, Ralph W4XE NARA President

Batteries, Batteries, Batteries

A summary of Gary Dion's presentation at the ARES/ RACES meeting.

The batteries we use for our ham gear fall into two categories. High-cycle packs we use for hand-helds fall into the first. Deep-cycle emergency batteries for operation of higher-power radios are in the second. I'll quickly mention a third... the one we all leave under the hood of our vehicle when we sleep at night. It's not perfect, but in an emergency, power is power! Don't forget that you can only pull about 10-Amps from a normal auxiliary (lighter) jack in a car. If you need more current, you need to go directly to the source.

Hand-held batteries are either NiCd, NiMH, or Lithium-Ion. The big thing you need to remember is the first two types like to be cycled. And by cycled I mean discharged quite a bit before being recharged again. Both NiCd and NiMH batteries suffer from the so-called "memory effect". It's also known as "voltage depression" or "false bottom". NiCd is worse then NiMH, but can withstand more cycles over its life. NiMH has higher capacity then NiCd, but has a higher rate of self-discharge than NiCd. They can actually lose 5-10% of their charge in the first 24 hours! To combat this, take the charge rate of your charger (say, 300 mA), and divide it into the mAh rating of the battery (say, 1500 mAh). You end up with five hours. Ten percent of this time is 30 minutes. Take an old lamp timer like you use to make your house look "lived-in" during vacation, and have your charger kick in 30-45 minutes a day to always have a fresh pack waiting.

Lithium-Ion batteries suffer from neither memory nor self-discharge, but age about the same whether you use them or not (good life is about two years). So enjoy them to your heart's content!

Finally, deep-cycle emergency batteries are almost always lead-acid. These are wet-cell (they slosh when you shake them) or gel-cell (also known as VRLA or SLA). These are different than your car battery because the plates are thicker. They are not made for the high currents needed to run a starter, but instead withstand deeper discharges than car batteries see. The rule for these is keep them charged. Chemistries vary, and this affects the fully-charged float voltage. So I can't recommend one which works for all - some SLA batteries even have the recommended voltage printed on the side! Just remember the surest way to kill a lead acid is to either boil the electrolyte out with an overcharge or to discharge one and let it sit unmaintained.

73 Gary Dion N4TXI Assistant EC
Madison County

CW Forever and Ever

You must have at times, Thought into the past,
Where some things go out While others last

What comes to my mind is The old Morse code,
That has weathered the storms From any abode.

To talk with ones fingers Is surely an art,

Of any info you Care to impart,

In most conditions The signals get through,
While the same about phone Is simply not true.

Those dits and dahs Cut through the trash,
Of near by noise or Lightning's crash.

To the sensitive ears Of the hams receiver,
Who records this data With ardent fever.

He knows he's doing Something unique,
(in such poor conditions, That's quit e a feat)

To roger the message That came off the air,
These brass pounders Sure do have that flair.

They say Morse ops Are a dying breed,
But don't despair, There's always that need,

That when conditions get rough for the new automation,
Be rest assured, There'll be need for your station.

CW is dying? Believe it never,
This mode will be 'round Forever and ever.

But one thing is sure , What we really need,
Is to relay our knowledge To the younger breed.

To carry the torch, Long after we're gone,
To send Morse code Through the air like a song.

When at last, Silent keys pull that lever,
We can rest in peace, It's CW forever

Erv Horton, KB7IWT

The Giggle Box

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO EVERYBODY THAT WAS BORN IN APRIL!!

A note from Giggles: I can't believe it is finally getting warmer. I am sure that we will have some cool snaps, but maybe it won't be down in the teens anymore. My daffodils are so pretty and yellow, I am thinking about buying a whole bunch of seed packets and just broadcasting them in my flowerbed. Last year, I planted twelve tomato plants and I think I ended up with maybe, TWELVE TOMATOES. It was a rough summer for tomatoes. By the time that everyone reads this, we will probably be in the middle of Spring Break. I can't wait for it to get here. Spring Break is a week long but it seems to fly by. I can't believe that this school season is almost over. Some of the students are already counting down the days and the other older students are dreading the end of school because they know that there will be final exams. I keep telling my oldest granddaughter that it is best do her best now and the future school years won't be so hard. Time will tell if she listened. Hope to see you at the club meeting. CUL

A Story or Two

The Happiest Day Of My Life
Written by Michael T. Smith

It started innocently. Many years ago I worked in an office with large windows facing a busy overpass. I was standing by one of those windows one day when a woman in a passing car looked up and made eye contact. Naturally, I waved. A chuckle escaped my lips as she turned and tried to identify me. It was the beginning of a year of window antics. When things were slow, I would stand in the window and wave at the passengers who looked up. The strange looks made me laugh and stress was washed away.

Co-workers began to take an interest. They would stand from view, watch the reactions I received, and laugh along. Late afternoon was the best time - rush hour traffic filled the overpass with cars and transit buses, and providing lots of waving material for the end-of- day routine. It didn't take long to attract a following - a group of commuters who passed the window every day and looked up at the strange waving man. There was a man with a construction truck who would turn on his flashing-yellow light and return my wave, the carpool crowd, and the business lady with her children fresh from day care. But my favourite was the transit bus from the docks that passed my window at 4:40pm. It carried the same group every day, and they became by biggest fans.

After a while, waving became boring, so I devised ways to enhance my act. I made signs: "Hi," "Hello," "Be Happy!" and posted them in the window and waved. I stood on the window ledge in various poses, created hats from paper and file-folders, made faces, played peek-a-boo by bouncing up from below the window ledge, stuck out my tongue, tossed paper planes in the air, and once went into the walkway over the street and danced while co-workers pointed to let my fans know I was there.

Christmas approached, and job cuts were announced. Several co-workers would lose their jobs, and everyone was feeling low. Stress in the office reached a high. A miracle was needed to repair the damage caused by the announcements. While working a night shift, a red lab jacket attracted my attention. I picked it up and turned it in my hands. In a back corner where packing material was kept, I used my imagination and cut thin, white sheets of cloth-like foam into strips and taped them around the cuffs and collar, down the front, and around the hem. A box of foam packing and strips of tape became Santa's beard and when taped to the hat, slipped over my head in one piece.

The next working day I hid from my co-workers, slipped into the costume, walked bravely to my desk, sat down, held my belly, and mocked Santa's chuckle, as they gathered around me laughing. It was the first time I had seen them smile in weeks. Later my supervisor walked through the door. He took three steps, looked up, saw me, paused, shook his head, turned and left. I feared trouble. The phone on the desk rung a few moments later, "Mike, can you come to my office please?" I shuffled down the hall, the foam beard swishing across my chest with each step. "Come in!" the muffled voice replied to my knock. I entered, and sat down. The foam on the beard creaked, and he looked away from me. A bead of sweat rolled down my forehead, the only sound was the hammering of my heart. "Mike..." This was all he managed before he lost his composure, leaned back in his chair, and bellowed with laughter. He held his stomach, and tears formed in his eyes, as I sat silent and confused. When he regained control he said, "Mike, thanks! With the job cuts it has been hard to enjoy the Christmas

season. Thanks for the laugh, I needed it."

That evening, and every evening of the Christmas season, I stood proudly in the window and waved to my fans. The bus crowd waved wildly, and the little children smiled at the strange Santa. My heart was full of the season, and for a few minutes each day we could forget the loss of jobs. I didn't know it then, but a bond was forming between my fans and me.

It wasn't until the spring following the Santa act that I discovered how close we had become. My wife and I were expecting our first child that spring, and I wanted the world to know. Less than a month before the birth I posted a sign in the window, "25 DAYS UNTIL B DAY." My fans passed and shrugged their shoulders. The next day the sign read, "24 DAYS UNTIL B DAY." Each day the number dropped, and the passing people grew more confused. One day a sign appeared in the bus, "What is B DAY?" I just waved and smiled. Ten days before the expected date the sign in the window read, "10 DAYS UNTIL BA— DAY." Still the people wondered. The next day it read, "9 DAYS UNTIL BAB- DAY," then "8 DAYS UNTIL BABY DAY," and my fans finally knew what was happening. By then, my following had grown to include twenty or thirty different busses and cars. Every night they watched to see if my wife had given birth. Excitement grew as the number decreased. My fans were disappointed when the count reached "zero" without an announcement. The next day the sign read, "BABY DAY 1 DAY LATE," and I pretended to pull out my hair.

Each day the number changed and the interest from passing cars grew. When my wife was fourteen days overdue she went into labour, and the next morning our daughter was born. I left the hospital at 5:30am, screamed my joy into the still morning air and drove home to sleep. I got up at noon, showered, bought cigars, and appeared at my window in time for my fans. My co-workers were ready with a banner posted in the window: "IT'S A GIRL!" I wasn't alone that night. My co-workers joined me in celebration. We stood and waved our cigars in the air as every vehicle which passed acknowledged the birth of my daughter. Finally, the bus from the docks made its turn onto the overpass and began to climb the hill. When it drew close, I climbed onto the window ledge and clasped my hands over my head in a victory pose. The bus was directly in front of me when it stopped dead in heavy traffic, and every person on board stood with their hands in the air. Emotion choked my breathing as I watched the display of celebration for my new daughter. Then it happened: a sign popped up. It filled the windows and stretched half the length of the bus, "CONGRATUlA-TIONS!" Tears formed in the corners of my eyes as the bus slowly resumed its journey.

I stood in silence, as it pulled from view. More fans passed and tooted their horns or flashed their lights to display their happiness, but I hardly noticed them, as I pondered what had just happened. My daughter had been born fourteen days late. Those people must have carried the sign, unrolled, on the bus for at least two weeks. Everyday they had unrolled it and then rolled it back up. We all have a clown inside of us. We need to let it free and not be surprised at the magic it can create. For eight months I had made a fool of myself, and those people must have enjoyed the smiles I gave them, because on the happiest day of my life they had shown their appreciation.

It has been more than 18 years since that special time, but on my daughter's birthday I always remember the special gift they gave me.

Peel and Win

A blonde goes into a coffee shop and notices there's a "peel and win" sticker on her coffee cup. So she peels it off and starts screaming, "I've won a motorhome! I've won a motorhome!"

The waitress says, "That's impossible. The biggest prize is a free lunch."

But the blonde keeps on screaming, "I've won a motorhome! I've won a Motorhome!"

Finally, the manager comes over and says, "Ma'am, I'm sorry, but you're mistaken. You couldn't have possibly won a motorhome because we didn't have that as a prize.

The blonde says, "No, it's not a mistake. I've won a motorhome!"

And she hands the ticket to the manager and HE reads.. "W I N A B A G E L"

The Hint for the Month of April

Tasty Favors - Guests always coo over these cute pacifier cookies, which are easy to put together. Buy a package of round buttercookies with a hole in the center, a bag of gumdrop (I use all colors) and a package of red shoestring licorice, cut in 4-1/2-inch lengths. Push a gumdrop through the hole in the cookie (small end up) and cut a small slit on the bottem of the candy. Insert the ends of the licorice into the slits to form the pacifier "handle," then arrange on a plate.

Thought for the Month of April

Limitations live only in our minds. But if we use our imaginations, our possibilities become limitless. - Jamie Paolinetti -

Solve the puzzle: **FI I KRDEWO SA CUHM SA HTERSO, I OULDW OD SA TLLITE SA HEYT.**

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From The Editor's Wastebasket

Too late to make it into the March Vox was the passing of Jimmy Cheek, WB4HBG. I think everybody got the word via the mass email route. Any way, we have seen too many of our members and ex members become Sks lately.

It is great to see the weather beginning to shift into Spring mode. Before long it'll be too warm to take advantage of Frank's Theorem on antenna installations. I misstated the theorem in last month's Vox. The performance of an antenna is improved by 0.6 db for every 5 degrees below 50 the outside temperature is when the antenna is installed, not 6 db as was stated last month.

The upgrade class seems to be a success. There is a roomful of eager students there every Friday evening. Hope the attendance and interest continues. I rather suspect there is a message there -- that the club needs to do more of that sort of thing. We have members who are well suited to serve as instructors and, apparently, we have a good many folks who are interested in upgrading.

We have shifted the date of Old Timer's night from the last Friday in kFebruary to a bit later in the year in hopes that there would be weather better suited to the attendance by our OT members. Last year, it was held on the last Friday in March. We've pretty well missed planning for that event for this year, so I recommend we set it permanently as the last Friday in April. The only weather problem that might interfere then would be thunderstorms. We need to pick an OT coordinator and make sure we have a good turnout of OTs in the mood to reminisce about how they got started in ham radio and what things were like back then.

73, Frank Emens, W4HFU

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