

VOX



HUNTSVILLE AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Huntsville, Alabama

Volume 44, Number 5

May, 2004

Huntsville Amateur Radio Club Information

Club Officers

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Secretary:

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Treasurer:

Heath Thorson, KC4HRX, 489-1240
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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 / 224.94 and 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 the second Friday of the month of publication.

"Vox", Vol 44, Nr 5, May, 2004

A Newsletter published monthly except for August by the Huntsville Amateur Radio Club, P.O. Box 423, Huntsville, AL 35804

From the President

Old Timer's night reinforced my fear that we stand to loose knowledge we don't mine from those who precede us. Hams present holding licenses for more than 55 years had first-hand experience with several generations of license class structure, frequency allocations, rules and regulations, on-the-air protocol, and technology.

Of what interest to us are any of these quaint bits of knowledge? Perhaps none: on a day-to-day basis none of us is apt to renew our old class B license, try to keep our 5 meter rig within band limits, ensure our log shows that last un-answered CQ, or grind down a dry cell anode to make a brush for the dynamotor of our 75 meter mobile rig. But ham radio does not have such tremendous momentum that it will sail through very real present obstacles like increasing average age, "legislated" allocation encroachment from other licensed services, and insidious encroachment (read "BPL"). Let us be aware of lessons from the past - held in the memories of our Old Timer elmers - lest we waste too much time down roads already fruitlessly traveled, or fail to consider the promise of those already successfully trod.

As Alabama Section Manager W4OZK reminded us in his remarks at our April 2nd meeting, it's never too soon or too late for any of us to assume our roles as elmers to the next generation of hams. Having such excellent access to the ARRL as an active SM belonging to our own club provides, the facilities of league are at our disposal in terms of training materials and help from ARRL staff, and insight into the intent of programs like the Big Project. We hope to brew up something more concrete as to how the club can help our next generation, and as always, suggestions are welcome.

73, Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

Hamography

This column will always attempt to strike a balance between new and long term members of HARC. The first few

issues concentrated on new members. The last 3 months or so, we have featured long term members of HARC. This month will be no exception. Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce or re-introduce you to one of the more prominent long term members of HARC.

W4NO DON TUNSTILL: Don's exposure to HAM Radio extends back to early childhood through his father and uncle; and the town he grew up in. Don was born and raised in Vantown, Tennessee; a very small community near Fayetteville Tennessee; populated by about 25 families. Even though small in



CAVEC License Exams

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

Upcoming sessions are:

Saturday, May 1

Saturday, June 5

For information contact:

Larry Frost, KR4GU, 536-4154

kr4gu@hamfest.org

Or

Don Tunstill, W4NO, 536-3904

dontunstill@hamfest.org

Exam Sessions are held the 3rd Saturday of each month at 1:00. In even numbered months they are held at the Athens EOC. In odd numbered months they are held in Madison at Intergraph, Building 15

For information contact Bob Hudson, W4RKH, 461-7905

population, the number of HAM families in the area was and is extensive, even today. It seems there was no way that Don would not become involved in HAM Radio. But, it was not until the late sixties and early seventies that the HAM fever really took hold of him. In 1970, Don passed the code for his Novice Ticket. In those days we first took the 5 WPM code exam given by local HAMS. Once that was done you sent an application for the written exam to the FCC in Gettysburg, PA. Weeks later the package would be delivered to a local HAM authorized to give you the written exam. Assuming you passed the written elements, the results were sent back to the FCC. After more weeks of waiting, the coveted ticket would finally show up in the mail box. Thus was the term "Snail Mail" coined. Even with "Snail Mail"; Don progressed through his Novice, Tech, General, and onto his

Advanced Class Tickets within the space of about 6 months time. W4NO currently carries the Extra Class Amateur Radio Operator and Station license.

Don has been a member of HARC since 1970. He has expanded that initial involvement in Huntsville HAM Radio to include all of the repeater groups; the DX Club; helping to establish the Huntsville Hamfest; and the third largest VEC Testing group in the country..

Don has spent his entire working life in the Huntsville area. He retired as the Director of The Huntsville Technical School at the age of 56 years old. Since then, in addition to his activities and involvement related to HAM Radio, he has been a very active volunteer with the American Red Cross. It is this writer's opinion that Don's volunteer

involvement with the local chapter of the American Red Cross; has played more than a small part in providing the Huntsville Amateur Radio Club (HARC) with advantages and accommodations not enjoyed, and much envied by most other HAM Radio Clubs in the entire country. The Red Cross sponsorship of HARC includes schedules for a minimum of 4 nights a month, when the norm for most clubs is one night a month. Not all clubs are able to have a Club Station at their regular meeting location. The HARC club station we are able to maintain on the Red Cross facilities is an advantage and an attribute for the organization. Because of the advantage of a permanent station location, we are able to maintain more than a minimal station arrangement. The club station includes multiple antennas, two HF radio transceivers, an amplifier, and VHF/UHF equipment. The station is

HARC ACTIVITY CALENDAR FOR May, 2004						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25	26	27 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	28 Southeast Linked Repeater Net 2000 on +442.775 PL 203.5 Hz	29 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	30 HARC Meeting	1 *TWIAR CAVEC Exams, Red Cross Bldg, 0900 B'ham Hamfest Zamora Temple
2 B'ham Hamfest Zamora Temple	3	4 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	5 Southeast Linked Repeater Net 2000 on +442.775 PL 203.5 Hz	6 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	7 HARC Meeting	8 *TWIAR Mountain City, TN Hamfest
9	10	11 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	12 Southeast Linked Repeater Net 2000 on +442.775 PL 203.5 Hz	13 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	14 HARC Meeting	15 *TWIAR
16	17	18 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	19 Southeast Linked Repeater Net 2000 on +442.775 PL 203.5 Hz	20 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	21 HARC Meeting Vox & Social Night	22 *TWIAR
23	24	25 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	26 Southeast Linked Repeater Net 2000 on +442.775 PL 203.5 Hz	27 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	28 HARC Meeting	29 *TWIAR
30	31	1 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	2 Southeast Linked Repeater Net 2000 on +442.775 PL 203.5 Hz	3 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	4 HARC Meeting Election of Officers	5 *TWIAR CAVEC Exams, 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

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open to use by all club members, and can be made available at almost any-time during the week. This availability can be a real treat to someone who is normally limited to a minimal or restricted apartment located shack; or to a new HAM yet to be able to set up his or her own station.

The issue of a weekly versus monthly meeting schedule has been discussed and re-addressed within HARC from time to time. Don feels that the weekly meeting schedule has been an advantage to the club. It allows for member flexibility of attendance. The four sessions a month usually provide optimum opportunity for thorough discussion within the club, relating to all topics and issues, directly and indirectly associated with HAM Radio, that have member interest and concern. The multiple meetings each month help to instill a real feeling of personal involvement, interaction and position in the club's decision and determination process. The meeting schedule currently provides opportunity and time to present informative programs of interest to the membership; and takes advantage of the availability of guests and speak-

ers with professional credentials, unique to this area due to the influence of DOD and NASA related projects, programs and contracts. Last but not least, the four sessions a month have enhanced the membership social involvement, interaction and bonding.

Don relates a problem with not being able to specifically recall all of his accomplishments and activities within the avocation of HAM Radio. Since the fire that totally destroyed his house 4 years ago; a large void has occurred in his life concerning the years of mementos, awards, license copies, QSL cards from world wide HAMS and the memories they represent, recall and invoke normally; all of which were lost in the fire; along with antennas, radios and other equipment related to HAM Radio. Since the fire, Don has been struggling with getting a viable HAM Shack and station working again.

Prior to 1980, The North Alabama Hamfest rotated between Huntsville and Decatur; with rotating sponsorship between HARC and the Decatur Radio clubs. In 1980 Don was one of the local HAMS that convinced HARC

to split off the rotating arrangement. A separate corporation was formed to manage and conduct the Huntsville Hamfest. A board of three members was established; with Don as President. Since then the popularity of the Huntsville Hamfest has skyrocketed; along with international acclaim and awareness. Don contributes the success of the event to the stability of the organization and the year to year loyal support provided by the various HAMS and HAM organizations involved from this area. It has had the advantage of minimal turnover in management and volunteer support. Dealers are attracted to the event, at least in part due to the knowledge that the organizations and people they dealt with in years past will be there again. An understanding between the Huntsville Hamfest Corporation and the dealers has grown and been maintained over the years, to the mutual advantage of both.

This writer has had experience with VEC groups in North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Missouri in going for my Novice, Tech and General Class Tickets; and then this past year in

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Huntsville, AL, when I gained my Extra Class Ticket. I can honestly say that none of those other VEC groups came close to the effort, foresight and planning; nor the efficiency and results obtained by our local VEC Group. That success is due to HAMS like and along with W4NO. Don is proud, justifiably so, of the fact that we have the third largest VEC Group in the country. This group was the first, even before ARRL, to make contact with the FCC to establish and coordinate the VEC efforts. Don currently, heads up the VEC for the area with teams in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee.

W4NO has been and is one of the "Movers and Shakers" within HAM Radio. Don is an example of the wealth of individuals within the Huntsville Amateur Radio Club, who have shaped the focus and thrust of HAMMING in general and especially in the Northern Alabama and Tennessee Valley area. Don, along with others like him in HARC, have attempted to promote the positive aspects of HAM Radio; and to encourage a rational approach to controversial issues in order to maintain the credibility of the HAM Community. They have accepted the responsibility to pave the

way for future generations of HAMS; a path that will be very different from the one they blazed and followed.

HARC: Take another opportunity to give a loud and solid "RR" to W4NO !!!

73, Fred Kersey, WB0UCI

Peer Reviews

Several weeks ago I was invited to attend an informal gathering of a couple of HARC/NADXC members. I saw a collection of not thousands or tens of thousands, but quite literally hundreds of thousands of QSL cards and the equipment used to procure them. What followed was equally impressive, in an entirely different way. An informal review of a few pages of antenna information in recent ARRL publications ensued, taking comments from eminently knowledgeable DXers, contesters, and engineers. The thrust of this was to provide feedback via a former ARRL staff member also present to improve the quality of these publications.

As a mute onlooker, this impressed me. I've had a glimpse into how academic and professional publications are peer reviewed, where the goal is to maintain and keep un-sullied the repu-

tion of these journals and their publishers. Similarly in the commercial realm, proposals are often internally peer reviewed to ensure not only technical feasibility, but economic viability. Our hobby's publications - from the ARRL, CQ Publications, the RSGB, and others - have a place on many non-ham bookshelves. I'm privileged to see such volunteer quality-assurance in action, glad to know it happens, and reassured knowing those thousands of pages on my bookshelf have passed by more than just the authors' eyes on their way to the printer.

73, Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

The Giggle Box

Happy Birthday To Everybody That Was Born In May!!

A note from Giggles: APRIL SHOWERS MAKE MAY FLOWERS I wish I had a nickel for everytime I've heard that phrase in my lifetime. We should have some g-o-o-geous flowers next month. This year, I bought several packs of flower seed and they are still in the packs. I have seen some beautiful flower beds with pansies in them. Steve calls pansies "monkey faces". When I think of pansies, I think of Marg

Berisford. Ed, Marg, Steve (KD4TFN) and I went to a place called Cash Point, TN near Ardmore once a week. Sometimes we would go two or three times a week, but to different places. I never knew so many places that had bluegrass and country music, but



Marj Berisford

Marg and Ed seemed to be listening to people talk about where the music was and would invite us along. I really looked forward to being around Marg and Ed. Marg and I (and sometimes Steve) danced to bluegrass and country music. Sometimes it would be a race of who got to dance with Marg on the dance floor. Marg could outdance me any day. It is not going to be the same without her. Marg passed away March 31st and I lost my dancing partner. Marg always wore her golden slippers. Marg and her husband, Ed Berisford (WA4KMA) poured coffee for the Huntsville Hamfest for 19 years. Some of the Old Timers will remember the QRM club which Marg was a member of. I think some of the ladies in the QRM took care of the coffee "at club." Someone said that Marg was a Silent Key, but she wasn't a ham. You would have thought that she was by the way that she supported Ed and the club. I never knew that I could grow so close to someone as I did with Marg and Ed, but they just had that magnetic personality. She was a wonderful friend to everyone. She always had a smiling face and a listening ear. The puzzle below is what Marg always said as we rode to hear country music. I love you, Marg.

A Joke or Two

SIXTY-THREE AND PREGNANT!!! A woman went to the doctor's office. Where she was seen by one of the new doctors, but after about 4 minutes in the examination room, she burst out, screaming as she ran down the hall. An older doctor stopped her and asked what the problem was, and she told him her story. After listening, he had her sit down and relax in another room. The older doctor marched down the hallway to the back where the younger doctor was and demanded, "What's the matter with you? Mrs. Terry is 63 years old, she has four grown children and seven grandchildren, and you told her she was pregnant?!!" The new younger doctor

continued to write on his clipboard and without looking up said, "Does she still have the hiccups?"

Baseball in Heaven Two 90-year-old men, Moe and Sam, have been friends all their lives. Sam is dying, so Joe comes to visit him. "Sam," says Moe, "you know how we both loved baseball all of our lives. Sam, you have to do me one favor. When you go, somehow you've got to tell me if there's baseball in heaven." Sam looks up at Moe from his deathbed and says, "Moe, you've been my friend for many years. I'll do that for you." and with that, he passes on.... It is midnight a couple of nights later. Moe is sound asleep when a distant voice calls out to him, "Moe....Moe...." "Who is it?" says Moe, sitting up suddenly. "Who is it?" "Moe, it's Sam." "Come on. You're not Sam. Sam died." "I'm telling you," insists the voice. "It's me, Sam!" "Sam? Is that you? Where are you?" "I'm in heaven," says Sam, "and I've got to tell you, I've got some good news and some bad news." "Tell me the good news first," says Moe. "The good news," says Sam, "is that there is baseball in heaven." "Really?" says Moe. "That's wonderful! What's the bad news?" "You're pitching Tuesday!!"

The Blonde and the Big Prize... A blonde goes into a restaurant and notices there's a "peel and win" sticker on her coffee up. So she peels it off and starts screaming, "I've won a motor home! I've won a motor home!" The waitress says, "That's impossible. The biggest prize is a free lunch." But the blonde keeps screaming, "I've won a motor home! I've won a motor home!" Finally, the manager comes over and says, "Ma'am, I'm sorry, but you're mistaken. You couldn't possibly have won a motor home because we didn't have that as a prize!" The blonde says, "No it's not a mistake. I've won a motor home!" She hands the ticket to the manager and he reads... (You're gonna love this)..... W I N A B A G E L !

Did You Know: THE MORSE CODE: When you rearrange the letters: HERE COME DOTS

The Thought for the Month of May A friend is someone we turn to when our spirits need a lift.

Solve the puzzle: NTCYUOR SICMU
SI DOOG ROF HET TRAHE DAN
ODGO ROF HET LOUS

73 Peggy (Giggles) Bell K4EGB SEW
LONG!

Goodbye, Old Friend!

When I first met her several years ago, it was truly love at first sight. Not only was she pleasant to look at (if you know what I mean), but also funny, intelligent, insightful, and just plain nice to be around. It was great! My parents had already known her from years before and actually introduced us at first. It was meant to be!

Sometimes at work I would find myself daydreaming about what we would do that evening and into the wee-hours. Oh, the things we saw and heard... the places we went. The times we spent together are forever etched in my brain. But then the cold brutal reality always sets in. Life is funny like that. At first you gloss over any flaws in your companion because you *really* care about them, but then the flaws get to be intolerable. Things that used to be cute or funny are suddenly irritating and a total waste of time. You start noticing all the annoying things that can turn a good relationship bad in a big hurry.

At first she had a classic "hourglass figure". Wide at the top, wide at the bottom, and skinny in the middle. Then the ravages of time set in. Her bottom started getting really wide and I could have lived with that. The deal breaker was the alarming increase of venom and hatefulness and just plain ignorance coming out of her mouth. Suddenly I realized I could no longer tolerate this relationship because it was wasting all my time and it was making me unhappy and stressed-out worrying about the future. Not to mention the sleepless nights thinking about what I just saw and heard.

So last week I had to break it off. It was pretty ugly but the whole episode only lasted five minutes. A good clean break is the best! I did what I had to do and have no regrets at all. I also have NO plans for a replacement anytime soon. Just can't go there right now. Ms. 27" Zenith was tossed out to the curb with no regrets at all. 45 minutes later, some knuckle-dragger in a large loud truck snagged her and returned to his home. Hope he is happy with his "catch". Poor guy!

73, Chris Teuber, WB4UFQ

From The Editor's Wastebasket

I can't start this month without expressing sorrow at the loss we at HARC have had with the passing of Marj Berisford. As Peggy pointed out, she is not a Silent Key (SK) but I'll say that, for all the years of support she has given to

the Huntsville Ham Community as well as the dealers, etc. At the Huntsville Hamfest, Marj definitely deserves to be counted as an HSK or Honorary Silent Key.



Ms 27" Zenith -- Waiting for someone to give her a home.

Remember, election of officers for the 2004/2005 club year is set for the first meeting in June. Do what you can to help the Nominating Committee to do their thing, and plan to show up on June 4 ready to cast your vote and be ready to support the new officers during the coming year.

I'm always a little surprised at the number of people who use the expression "73's". The faithful old CW symbol "73" has always meant "Best Regards". Saying "73's" is equivalent to saying "Best Regardses", which is a lot like calling "Monte Sano" "Monte Sano Mountain" -- equivalent to calling it "Healthy Mountain Mountain." which I'm sure you'd not do by choice. It's one of those inconsequential quibbles, but it still looks odd to me.

For those of you who are interested in computer operating systems that don't come from Redmond, Washington, I've just received a copy of a CD containing a bootable version of "Knoppix", a version of Linux based on the Debian Linux distribution. It is a bootable disk, so if you can convince your computer to boot from a CD, you can load and play with Linux without having to install it and without affecting your current operating system. The disk also contains a selection of Amateur Radio based applications. It boots and runs on my system, but doesn't seem to communicate with my sound card or internet interface card. At this point I've not had a chance to try and correct those problems. Sound card compatibility is critical, since the packet radio, PSK and CW receive programs need to interface with the

sound card. A condition of my receiving the disk is that I make copies available to local folks that are interested in tinkering with it. If you're interested, let me know. I'll mention an important caveat. You DO NOT install from this disk. Someone phoned in to "Call For Help", a program on the Tech TV channel who had installed a Knoppix disk over his Windows installation and wanted to know how to recover from that mistake. The answer, I'm sure, was neither simple nor fun.

73, Frank Emens, WAHFU

NARA Notes

The quest continues to bring '94 back to a performance level at least close to what it was for now & hopefully better in the long term. About 3 weeks ago we moved '94 back to channel 31 after learning that a spurious pager transmitter we believe was dogging us was fixed. Additionally, the proximity of the TV signal to our antenna changed to give us more relief. Receive performance is still not quite as good as other VHF machines close by. Performance improved slightly when we re-introduced the pass band cavity filter (about a week & a half ago) but our current guess is that our receiver may have suffered some damage due to nearby high power RF. Sensitivity measured with the service monitor was not quite as good as it used to be.

We have another receiver tuned up and ready to install which is very sensitive and we hope more selective. Lastly, we plan to investigate the possibility of feed line or antenna radial damage best we can. At the same time, we now have two sets of remote receiver hardware well on the way. Both sets are at various stages of completion and we are working the site issues.

Hang in there & we'll keep you posted. As always, I stand ready to welcome helping hands who want to go along & learn about repeater maintenance. The 2004 NARA News is being drafted & the command sheets updated. I hope to have these out sometime in May. While the "road construction" continues on '94, check out 145.23 at Ralph's invitation. It is located not far from '94 so coverage is similar and with recent upgrades & re-work, it is performing very nicely. It's mission is a full time link to the Alabama Inter City Network (AICN) but with the Tuscaloosa Hub down at the moment, it is functioning as a local repeater. The PL tone is 186.5.

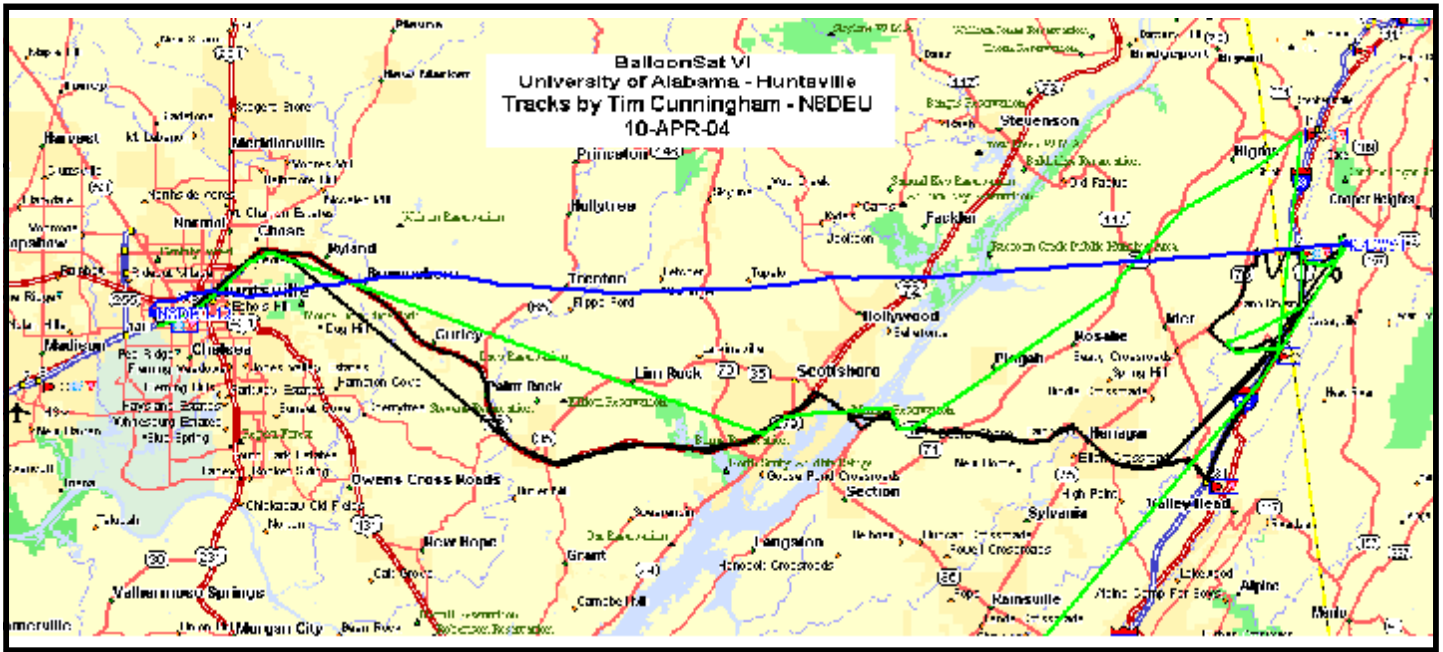
73, Ron, W4VM, NARA President. BalloonSat VI Chasing

The students at UAH launched BalloonSat VI around 11:00am CDST on Saturday 10- APR-04. Several HARC members and some out of town HAM's joined in on the chase across North Alabama. The weather was cooperating very well.

This launch was intended to test the communications payload for subsequent launches that will follow in the coming weeks. One of the experiments was to send a cut-down command via the radio communications system to separate the payload from the balloon. This system would control the landing site in order to stay clear of any rugged areas that may not be easily accessible.

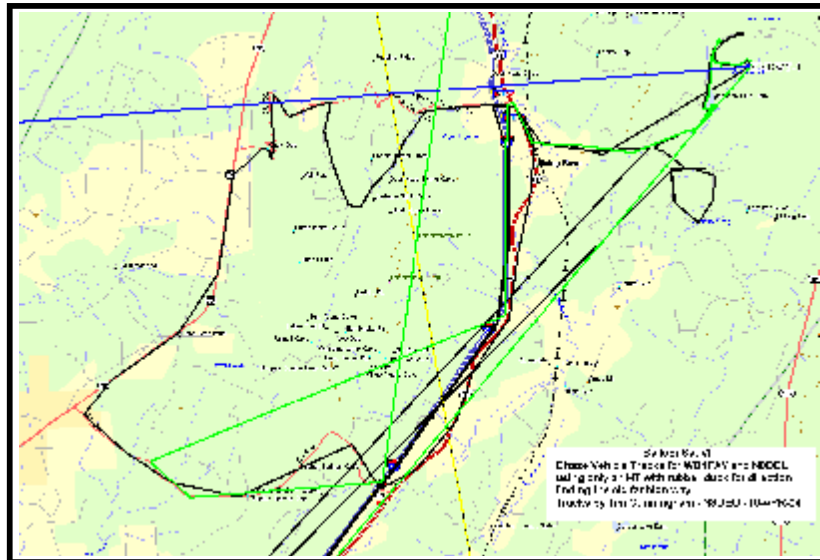
For those who have never witnessed a balloon launch, you are missing all the fun. The balloon is a high altitude weather balloon. Some of these balloons reached up to 110,000 feet last year. That is correct, 110,000 feet. The payload typically looks like a 6-pack cooler with a 2-meter HT radio, Kantronics KPC3+ TNC, a GPS, batteries, and some other interesting experiments. The KPC3+ has been modified to transmit up to 5 telemetry channels via APRS. Each channel uses a 256-bit A/D to encode the data. The GPS is used to feed the TNC to transmit the location of the balloon at specific intervals. A secondary beacon was attached that provided a CW beacon on 144.34 MHz at 30 mW. This beacon would prove its usefulness as the events unfolded during the chase.

BalloonSat VI was sent a cut-down command when it reached about 75,000 feet (rough guess). It was planned to be cut-down at 50,000 ft to control the landing location. The ground team could not communicate with the payload, so Dr. Corsetti (KG4UWE) and I send the proper command sequence to initiate the separation of the payload from the balloon. This process takes about 15-30 seconds for the nicrom wire to burn through the rope after the payload responds to the command. Shortly after the successful cut-down uplink sequence was initiated, communications from the APRS beacon ceased operation and no further APRS beacons were heard from the payload. The balloon was over the Mud Creek Boat Dock near CR213 and CR597, south of Fackler, AL. It was at an altitude over 60,000 feet when the APRS and telemetry communications halted. Bill Brown,



WB8ELK, gave us some updated landing data based on the altitude when the payload was commanded to be released and parachute back to Earth. This would put the package near the Alabama and Georgia State line. We had to use the secondary 30 mW CW beacon on 144.34 MHz to radio locate the package. Great! This was not going to be a very easy task or it seemed that way.

We heard the signal as we drove up I-59 from Alabama route 40. Ken (WB4FAY) joined the chase from Birmingham as we left Huntsville. John (W4JXP) was in another chase vehicle with one of the students. We realized things were going to be rough when nobody had a directional antenna or attenuator. We exchanged signal reports as we drove up and down I-59 and each side of the state line using signal strength on our mobile radios as an indication of the area. As we neared the Georgia state line on I-59 from both directions (North and South) we detected the secondary CW beacon. Then, we split paths to search east and west of I-59 near Rising Fawn, Georgia. This gave us the information that the payload was east of Rising Fawn. Ken (WB4FAY) had the signal full scale in his direction so we circled around to cover the area he was located near



Johnson Lake Dam off of SR189. Since this area is full of hills and valleys we had to get several position fixes using signal meters on our mobiles and getting out of the vehicle frequently with an HT held close to our bodies to get a general direction of the signal. As we combed the roads and spoke with a local, we found some new roads with their help. Now, we were hot on the trail. Within minutes we had very strong signals in a very wooded and hilly terrain. Ken, WB4FAY, spotted the payload with the attached parachute in a tree off a dirt road and radioed the information back to the rest of the search team. With the payload identified, the remaining task was to remove it from a tree that could not be climbed easily. Another team brought some rope from

a local store and we finally tied a hammer to the end of it and made several attempts to reach the payload in the top of a tree at about 40-60 feet. Finally we snagged the package pulled it down from the tree.

It was a long day on the balloon chasing trail, but the team was successful in the recovery process. So what happened to the APRS beacon you might ask? The answer is very simple and obvious after looking at the package. The antenna separated from

the package during the fall from high altitude. I am sure the antenna problem will be corrected for the next payload scheduled for next Saturday morning. Stay tuned... Many thanks to Ken, WB4FAY, for his radio-location skills in the recovery process. He commented, "Real hams don't need any stinking directional antennas". We certainly accomplished the task using some primitive techniques. Basically, the challenge was met, when all the high tech tools were left behind. APRS is a great tool, but when it fails to give us the location data, other techniques have to be employed. Without the secondary beacon the package would not have been recovered easily.

The pictures show the balloon path and the tracks for N8DEU and WB4FAY using the primitive driving around mode to locate the beacon signal. Happy balloon chasing

73's de Tim N8DEU

May Hamfests

May 1 - 2, 2004.

- Alabama Section Convention, Birmingham, Alabama. See <http://www.w4cue.com> or contact Glenn Glass, KE4YZK or 205-368-7361 or ke4yzk@bellsouth.net. The 'fest will be held at the Zamora Temple. Gates open at 9 am. Admission is \$5.00 for days.

May 8, 2004.

- Johnson County ARC, Mountain City, Tennessee. Contact Danny Herman, K4DHT, 423-727-0723 or k4dht@preferred.com.

73 John Farr, KC4ZXX

Calling all Gobblers....

It's just a couple months away until ARRL Field Day 2004. This year proves to be another great year for K4BFT. Current plans are being made for the event and everyone is encouraged to participate. All stations need assistance with setup, operating and teardown. We also will need extra help this year with Field Day power duties as well as camper hauling and setup. In addition, our crankup tower needs some well deserved TLC prior to this years Field Day effort.

K4BFT has always been a contender when it comes to the Field Day point score. However, this year we want to emphasize the FUN aspect of Field Day. It's great to receive national recognition and a high score tally, but the rewards of introducing someone new to Field Day and all that goes along with the deployment and setup of a portable Amateur Station is much more rewarding. We hope that experienced opera-

tors will come out and work with the new folks and introduce them to lure of Amateur Radio that hooked me just a few years ago. It is the FUN and the fellowship of other hams, not the score that we remember. We hope that you will join us for a weekend of fun this year.

It takes many people working together as a team to make Field Day a success and as Uncle Sam would say "We Want You". If would like to help with Field Day 2004, please e-mail me at kf4mmf@arrl.net . ARRL Field Day 2004 will be June 25-27. Hope to see you there with the rest of us gobblers, having lots o' fun calling CQ on behalf of the Big Fat Turkey.

73, Chris, KF4MMF

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