



Huntsville Amateur Radio Club Information

Club Officers

President:

Tom Duncan, KG4CUY
duncant1@ds-s.com

Vice President:

Kim Hensley, WG8S
khensley@gamewood.net

Secretary:

Rolf Goedhart K4RGG.
k4rgg@arrl.net

Treasurer:

Heath Thorson, KC4HRX, 722-0250
hthorson@knology.net

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 43, Nr 9, October, 2003
A Newsletter published monthly except for August by the Huntsville Amateur Radio Club, P.O. Box 423, Huntsville, AL 35804

From The President

Temperatures into the 50s over the past few nights remind us that fall is just around the corner. HARC is emerging from the sleepy summer season (that is, if field day and hamfest count as sleepy-time activities) with October programs and another auction night on the 31st. Suggestions for programs are always welcome: a very good request came in for a program on ham radio lingo, for which a program will be scheduled in the November VOX - stay tuned! The shorter days remind us that the Christmas Party, HARC/NARA Joint Membership Drive, and Old Timers' Night are around the corner. Volunteers to provide refreshments for all three events, all sorts of Christmas party entertainment, and an Old Timers' Night Master of Ceremonies are welcome.

By the time you receive this in the mail, the 2003 Spring City Cycling Club All-You-Can-Eat Century will be 103 miles of bicycling history. Thank you volunteer operators and coordinator Tom Hatter, K4AKC. This is the second of we hope many years for HARC's involvement with this race. As Tom pointed out, events such as this provide the new ham with a glimpse into public service operations, and an opportunity to participate under seasoned supervision.

The elmering round table discussion on September 12th brought out several important points about HARC members' desires for furthering their own ham radio knowledge, among these:

- a) There is nothing wrong with repeating programs occasionally
- b) Those who want to know (the "elmees") may not know how to find elmers
- c) Some elmering is best done in classes, some is best one-on-one

Please include in your program suggestions requests for repeats or updates of programs already presented - that takes care of a). Like requests for programs, prospective elmers please make

yourself and those topics you wish to elmer known to any HARC officer. Similarly, would-be elmees are encouraged to let us know what you're interested in learning about, and if you would prefer a group or individual instruction. Hopefully we can match elmers with elmees in some fashion and get things going.

The shack is now open for business at 6:30 on meeting nights, and we have had QSOs the past three weeks, and even a QSL card! Perhaps we can also use this time to acquaint new hams with using the HF, VHF, and UHF equipment we have, and with the flow of a QSO. A few members have expressed interest in learning code - I'm sure our elmer list will include a few brass pounders to help out. I'll leave a code practice oscillator in the shack, and fix up the straight key for that purpose.

CAVEC Amateur Radio 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, October 4

Saturday, November 1

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

Before the first frost provides you an excuse to wait 'til spring, get those antennas ready for winter!

73, Tom KG4CUY

HAM-OGRAPHY

W4JXP - John Piccirillo:

The W4JXP QTH is at: Grid Square EM64rr; Latitude 34 degrees, 43 minutes, 39 seconds N; Longitude 86 degrees, 34 minutes, 2 seconds W. John's QTH and family includes XYL Pamela; their daughter Miranda, 33, (of Raleigh, NC); his Mother and a brother. W4JXP and XYL, have lived in the area since 1979; and love life in the Tennessee Valley. John was born in Brooklyn, NY, and grew up in Los Angeles, CA.

The Shack at W4JXP includes an ICOM HT for 2 meter work; and an ICOM 718 and di-pole acquired to help John in his quest toward code proficiency and upgrade from Tech to Gen-

eral Class. The used IC 718 came through the help of HARC President, Tom Duncan. Tom checked the rig for John before the deal was made. John is very satisfied with the 718' and the fact that in the process he discovered his first "Elmer", Tom; a combination of good fortune that can be very crucial to the enjoyment of Ham Radio. John will be using VHF and APRS to do weather balloon tracking this fall. John's other interests include Mobile Robotics.

W4JXP joined HARC in August, 2003, a week after passing the exam for Technician. John relates his first try was successful; but he put as much study and preparation into the process as any other significant endeavor in his life. John's dedication to HAM radio extends from other parameters and achievements he has sought and captured. John's first call sign was KI4TJF, which he changed to W4JXP three weeks later.

John's background includes a BS degree in Physics and a PHD in Astronomy, which may have played a part in leading him toward HAM Radio. He is employed as an engineer with a defense contractor, Radiance Technologies. John also lectures a Senior Design Class at UAH, in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department.

When asked what his most critical need for his involvement in Ham Radio might be, he replied: "Elmers, Elmers, Elmers and more Elmers; I need all I can get. I have a thousand questions I need help and advice on..!!!!!"

This writer's personal feeling is: That as much as John is now looking for lots of Elmers; it will be but a very short time before W4JXP becomes one of the key "Elmers" within the HARC family!

**HARC ACTIVITY CALENDAR FOR
October, 2003**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	1 Southeast Linked Repeater Net2000 on +442.775 PL 203.5 Hz	2 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	3 HARC Meeting	4 TWIAR CAVEC Exams 0900 Red Cross TenTec Hamfest, Sevierville, TN
5	6	7 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	8 Southeast Linked Repeater Net2000 on +442.775 PL 203.5 Hz	9 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	10 HARC Meeting	11 TWIAR Evans, GA Meridian, MSA
12	13	14 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	15 Southeast Linked Repeater Net2000 on +442.775 PL 203.5 Hz	16 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	17 HARC Meeting Vox Night	18 TWIAR Amateur Radio Lighthouse soc. St Simons Lighthouse, GA Oak Ridge, TN
19	20	21 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	22 Southeast Linked Repeater Net2000 on +442.775 PL 203.5 Hz	23 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	24 HARC Meeting QRP, W4HFU	25 TWIAR Chattanooga, TN Clarksville, TN
26	27	28 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	29 Southeast Linked Repeater Net2000 on +442.775 PL 203.5 Hz	30 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	31 HARC Meeting Halloween Auction	1 TWIAR CAVEC Exams 0900 Red Cross

*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

GigaParts
www.gigaparts.com

Huntsville's Only Amateur Radio Store

Visit our new web page for updated pricing!

ICOM hy-gain KENWOOD DIAMOND ANTENNA

YAESU Choice of the World by 20 years

RF PARTS COMPANY

ALINCO MFJ WEIL sound

Lowest prices, best service!

4925 University Drive # 140 (256) 535-4442
The Gallery Shopping Center 10 - 7 Mon-Sat, 1 - 4 Sun

Come see us next to Chili's!

HARC: Please give a constant and warm welcome; and lots of "Elmship" to W4JXP..!!!

73, Fred Kersey WB0UCI

NATRA Winter Hare Scrambles

Once again the North Alabama Trail Riders Association asks the communications assistance of local hams during our annual Winter Hare Scrambles to be held near New Hope on Sunday October 19, 2003. This is an all-day event and helpers need to be on site at 9 AM and as late as 4 PM. In addition to 2m gear, a folding chair, hat, sunscreen, water, lunch, and camera are suggested. Last year the food vendor didn't show so those who didn't bring food got hungry. That shouldn't happen again but its best to be prepared.

Seven local hams helped last year and made a real, positive, impression. Hope we do as well this year.

This event is a motorcycle race at 11 AM and quad All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) at about 2:00 PM. The bikes race for 2 hours then the race ends when the leader crosses the finish line. Last finisher may be 20 or 30 minutes back. The

ATV's race for 90 minutes. The course is (not finished) about 10 miles thru the woods.

Kids races start at 8:30 AM. Helpers are more than welcome to show up early and watch the kids race. Kids races are a blast! Shorter distance and time so there isn't the same need for communications thru the woods.

These are major family events for the participants. Much like our hamfests other than one is held most weekends somewhere and its the same people attending most every one. Most will camp on site.

More information at <http://natra.dirtrider.net/>. If you can help please contact me, N4HHE, at 837-4740 or dkelly@hiwaay.net.

73, David Kelly N4HHE, dkelly@hiwaay.net

DSL Hell

It was a dark and stormy night when my broadband connection died a horrible twitching death. Well, actually it was a sunny afternoon but I've always wanted to start a story like that. I will not publicly embarrass my ISP for its

rapid decline in the quality of customer support service by actually naming them. Suffice it to say, it rhymes with "mirth-drink" (which used to be "grind-thing" before the merger). Anyway, I was checking my e-mail one day last month when I noticed a letter from them marked urgent/important. They said that they were going to be performing upgrades to the network and that anyone using a Broadmax (tm) modem would need to download a firmware upgrade to prevent any possible "service interruptions". So I did, as advised. Boy-howdy, was that stupid! I should have known better than to "fix" something that wasn't broken. But the new firmware killed the modem so I had to resort to 56K dialup. It was horrible, I tell you! Fortunately, I recently purchased a 2.4GHz SS phone with a speakerphone built into the handset which came in real handy because it allowed me to listen to Muzak (tm) at full volume whilst in the bathroom. So I called their tech-support. Average hold-time was 10-30 minutes. 3 or 4 times it was an Indian person giving me wonderful advice like "reboot the

modem" or "reboot the computer" or "make sure the phone line is plugged in". And these were actual Indians in India with names like Sameer and Vishnay and Hemant. In all fairness, I have nothing against Indians whatsoever. But when I live in the USA, I fully expect to speak to John or Frank or Bill, OK? And these poor folks didn't realize I do this stuff for a living every day and that their silly advice was just ticking me off since I already knew the firmware upgrade did me in. And there was NO way to "downgrade" my modem to the previous setting. My favorite stupid advice was to "reload the operating system".

Well, I finally got a case number which allowed me the "privilege" of talking with somebody past the "peon/newbie stage". Oh joy!

Three more calls and somebody finally figured out my modem was toast and it needed to be sent back for replacement. Else the version 2.1 WinPoet needed to be upgraded to version 4.03. Did that, no difference.

Had to wait 5 days for the replacement to arrive, and I was not the least bit surprised when it didn't work either. More phone calls. But now that I had a case number, was allowed to speak to actual technicians and "master technicians" that had me jumping through hoops just to see the same result: "failed authentication". A few more phone calls and I was told that there were "known incompatibilities" between their network and a new protocol that my phone-service (rhymes with "smell-mouth") had installed called 2.5 (???)

When the last "master tech" asked if my modem was anywhere near a microwave, it took every ounce of self-control to not yell at him and say: "no, you moron...it's IN the microwave...had to dry it out since it fell into the toilet!"

So for a couple more days, my ISP and the phone-company just pointed fingers at each other while I talked to MORE "experts".

But I finally got to talk to an actual engineer (that required an extra 30 minutes on hold).

He said the problem was REAL simple and told me how to fix it. (OK...I'm listening!)

The final story was that it was only a simple timing issue and that an e-mail

would be sent with another firmware upgrade to fix the offending modem (again...ha ha ha).

Well, this time it worked and I was able to connect right away after re-flashing the firmware.

Seems that in the authentication-process, my modem would say: "hello, I'm the modem...please authenticate me". So the server would send an ACK that happened within 100mS. Unfortunately, the firmware was set to write-off any ACKS that happened in over 20mS. Yep...simple timing issue. And an amazing comedy of errors between "them" and "me" and the "holy phone company".

Alas, I don't totally blame my ISP for this problem because I should have had the good sense to ask for a case number right away instead of hearing the same stupid advice, like..."is your phone-line plugged in" and "has the modem been reset?".

Lesson learned! This problem could have been solved in less than 5 minutes had the proper route been taken. It is SO hard to get good technical help when one is speaking to a foreigner making 75 cents an hour (& ^ % \$ #).

And of course the ISP is trying to save money in this manner because (truth be told), MOST broadband connectivity problems can be solved with a simple reboot or turning OFF the caps-lock key when entering the password.

The other 1% of the time, it takes an expert to figure it out...someone who knows what's going on.

Thanks to my background in Ham Radio and all things technical, I was able to convince them it was their problem. Yep.. always keep careful notes when dealing with hardware, software, firmware, but *especially* people. Tomorrow you will thank yourself for keeping careful notes yesterday. Trust me on this....when you get to be my age, written notes help a lot!

The best advice I was ever given: "make only ONE change at a time and carefully note the results..... if you make numerous changes at the same time, you will have NO idea what fixed it.

cheers all, and happy computing always!

73 Chris WB4UFQ

The Giggle Box

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO EVERYBODY THAT WAS BORN IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER!!

A note from Giggles: I received an email from Sasha and Howard Trexler, now in White Sands, NM and I thought everyone would be interested in how they are doing. I thought a change was good from all the silly jokes. I hope you enjoy Sasha's email.

Hey Peggy! It's so good to hear from you!

Yes, definitely ready for some cooler weather! We were in the lower 100's and upper 90's most of the summer. The last week or so, we've been in the lower 90's, upper 80's, so it's starting to cool down. Without the humidity, it's nice!

I miss all my ham friends terribly! It's very lonely out here. I've made some friends here on the street...one of them is the head honcho of the military police, (A good friend to have!) but they just aren't my radio friends. :(

The kids started school August 11, and they're doing OK. This school is SO wierd. It's not a DoD school, but part of the public school system out here. The kids have Mexican food for lunch, at the very least, 3 times a week. They like tacos OK, but that's about it, so they pack a lunch a couple times a week. Sierra's 4th grade teacher has tattoos and her tongue is pierced. Brycen's teacher looks just like Faith Hill and sometimes dresses like an exotic dancer. Mind you, the kids have a strict dress code. I guess the teachers aren't required to follow it? The school also wanted us to sign a power of attorney for the kids. I said "over my dead body".

Besides my friends, I miss the shopping! LOL We have one Wal-mart that's ALWAYS packed...we have to stand in line for an hour to be checked out. Even if it's 1am! We have a Target and an old K-mart, and that's about it! The people in town (about a 40 minute drive from this very isolated base) can be pretty rude. Their driving is definitely atrocious!

Our house is at the very edge of the housing area. We have a desert view with the mountains in the background. It's very beautiful! Also, when they have missile shoots, we get to watch them from our back patio

swing! It's pretty cool. Last Thursday they had a missile shoot at night. It was dark, and we saw the missile go off, and hit it's target, which was an old tank! Big explosion! It was awesome! It was so fast though, it lasted maybe 3 seconds at most. I wanted to see it again! LOL I told Howard maybe I should join the military and become a bomb tech, like him! He wasn't too keen on the idea. :-)

We've seen half a dozen tarantulas in the housing area here. One was stuck to my living room window! (Outside, thank goodness!) A neighbor guy came and rescued me since Howard wasn't home at the time. LOL He thought I was funny. We've had one scorpion and 3 whip scorpions around the outside of our house...did you know roach spray will kill those little suckers? It does!

We also had a baby bull snake try to come into our house...we found him dead, with his head stuck in the front door the next morning. Ugh! Ick! I FREAKED out! I think I'm going to get a cat! Of course, it had rained the night before, and that's when all the little critters come out, to try to find a dry place. You see, when it rains here, it's all or nothing! We're in the middle of our "monsoon" season, and we get rain about once every 2 weeks. LOL Flash floods are common here, surprisingly.

The main road off the base here, that leads to the highway is called "Owen Road". It's named after a Specialist Owen, who was with the military police. SPC Owen had come across a family of 4 that had been caught in a flash flood. Their car was stranded in the middle of rising water that was crossing the road. They were trying to escape. SPC Owen used his vehicle to try to somewhat block the flow of water from this family, so that they could get away. Tragically, the family and SPC Owen perished. So they named the road after SPC Owen and his selfless, heroic efforts. I cried when I first read the "In memory of..." sign.

Wow, this has gotten to be long! LOL I'll try to finish up...

Howard's gone TDY alot. He's leaving the end of this month and will be gone for 5-6 weeks. His unit has also been put on the list to be deployed in March or April. First, they were told Iraq, but now they're being told Kosovo. So we'll see what happens. The girls and I are planning on coming back to Alabama in June for at least a couple weeks to visit. If

Howard's deployed, we'll probably stay a month. :)

Please tell everyone "hi" for me! I miss ya'll so much!

73, Sasha

A Joke or Two (I couldn't resist. :-))

Black and White

(Under age 40? You won't understand.)

You could hardly see for all the snow,
Spread the rabbit ears as far as they go.
Pull a chair up to the TV set,
"Good Night, David. Good Night, Chet."

Depending on the channel you tuned,
You got Rob and Laura - or Ward and June.

It felt so good. It felt so right.
Life looked better in black and white.

I Love Lucy, The Real McCoys,
Dennis the Menace, the Cleaver boys,
Rawhide, Gunsmoke, Wagon Train,
Superman, Jimmy and Lois Lane.

Father Knows Best, Patty Duke,
Rin Tin Tin and Lassie too,
Donna Reed on Thursday night! —
Life looked better in black and white.

I wanna go back to black and white.
Everything always turned out right.
Simple people, simple lives...
Good guys always won the fights.

Now nothing is the way it seems,
In living color on the TV screen.
Too many murders, too many fights,
I wanna go back to black and white.

In God they trusted, alone in bed they slept,
A promise made was a promise kept.
They never cussed or broke their vows.
They'd never make the network now.
But if I could, I'd rather be
In a TV town in '53.

It felt so good. It felt so right.
Life looked better in black and white.
I'd trade all the channels on the satellite,
If I could just turn back the clock tonight

To when everybody knew wrong from right.
Life was better in black and white!

*** **Did You Know:**

Lettuce and celery keep longer if you store them in paper bags instead of cel-

lophane. The Thought for the Months of October: A best friend is like a four leaf clover, hard to find and lucky to have.

Solve the puzzle: UOY ANC OTN IDHE A EECPI OF CCOOLIRB NI A SSAGL FO ILKM.

73, Peggy Bell (*Giggles*) K4EGB SEW
LONG!

My First Weather Balloon Launch Chase

On Saturday, 12-JUL-03, I decided to take a drive down to the NSSTC building at the UAH campus to check out a balloon launch. I had heard and read about these events many times in the past, but I had never actually watched or chased a balloon from launch to landing. Dr. Corsetti, KG4UWE, posted an email the day before the launch announcing the time and location. There was a lot of preparation that took place before the launch and that made things look very easy. I was more interested in what happens after the launch. So, I took my laptop along to use APRS+SA along with the Street Atlas map to track the balloon via APRS (Automatic Position Reporting System). This would allow use to track both the balloon and our vehicle location relative to each other to keep us on track in our chase. Dr. Corsetti was also using APRS+SA and checking the telemetry data before the launch to make sure everything was working.

Once the balloon was launched, we watched it rise quickly in the sky as it went over Holmes and Jordan lane. We knew this because the APRS beacon was reporting the location over the airways on the 144.39 MHz nationally coordinated APRS frequency. Chris Best, KB3DXR, hopped in my Jeep and we were on our way. Bill Brown, WB8ELK, was at the launch site providing some great tips to the team on his experience launching balloon payloads. He made some predictions on where the balloon could land. However, the balloon launch was delayed a little over two hours and this would change the landing predictions, as we would learn later. It was a good thing we had APRS to guide us. Chris and I drove down Governors Drive and stopped to get some fuel for both the vehicle and ourselves since we had no idea what to expect or how long we would be gone. Before we left the Fueling Station we noticed the balloon was heading west toward Hwy

72 instead of Hwy 431 (the winds changed in the 2 hour launch delay). We decided to change course and high tail it up California Street to get on I-565 headed east. As we were driving, we watched the location of the balloon on the Street Atlas getting its updates from APRS+SA and our GPS. We had a serial data cable connected between the Kenwood D700A and a laptop to capture the data over the airwaves. Our GPS kept track of our location and it was very easy to see where we were in relation to the balloon at all times. The big question was how high would the balloon rise and then where in the world would it land when it came back to Earth from its journey to the edge of space.

Steve Bell, KD4TFN, joined in on the fun by watching the balloon updates on the World Wide Web via <http://map.findu.com> or www.findu.com and it sounded like he was having a blast giving detailed updates via the 145.33MHz repeater. The beacons from the balloon were being captured by our local APRS gateway and it was putting the information on the web instantly.

We chased the balloon over to Woodville on Route 35 just a few miles North of Woodville. The balloon must have been up around 75,000 feet at that point and then it began to turn back to the west, just as WB8ELK had predicted. So, we found a spot to turn around and began to chase it as it reached 104,000 feet over the Hampton Cove area. The point at which we turned will become very significant later in the chase. I must admit, we found some new roads using the Street Atlas to make our way from Woodville over to Hampton Cove. As the balloon reached its maximum altitude and burst, the course was about to change once again. Right before we reached Hampton Cove on some back roads we watched the balloon start heading back to the east as it passed right over our heads. Of course, at that altitude we could not see the balloon, but we watched its precise location via our Street Atlas map with APRS data showing a nice track of the balloon path. You guessed it! We turned around and headed back to the east the same way we got there.

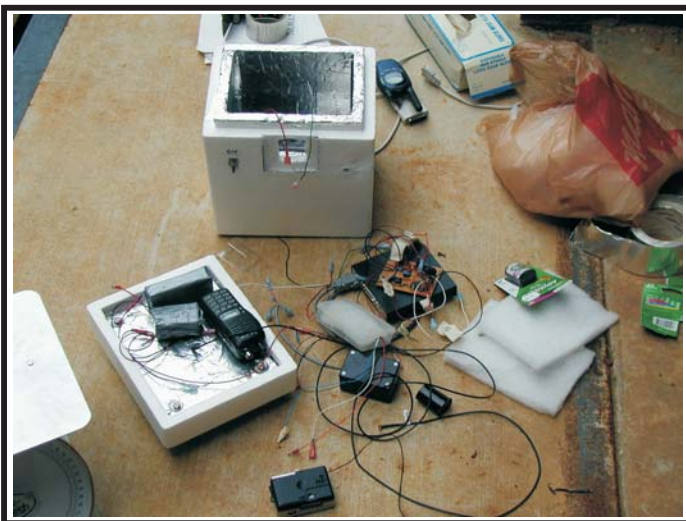
The balloon was rapidly descending as it headed to the east, so we engaged the thrusters on my Jeep and made a beeline for the balloon. Why, it was headed right back to where it came from and we were once again going through Paint Rock over to Woodville on Route 35. In fact, right about the point we had turned earlier, we found that the balloon



was headed right for us. So, we drove up the road a couple hundred feet and did a U-turn. We realized it was close enough that we should be able to see it. WB8ELK suggested we look up. What a great idea! Chris immediately saw it and yelled, "We have a visual". Sure enough, the payload was parachuting out of the sky right before our eyes and we saw it land in the trees on a hillside. It landed about 0.2 miles from the edge of the road. Dr. Corsetti and his team were right behind us as we identified the spot of the landing on the hillside in the trees.

The project leaders were running for their payload as we pointed them in the right direction. Bill, WB8ELK, drove down to the next farmhouse to seek permission to cross their land to recover the payload. It landed on the Whittaker Farm. As it turns out, the owner was a School Teacher who had participated in the Starshine satellite project by having his class polish one of the mirrors used on that satellite. The owners allowed the team to cross their land with no trouble. Bill's quick thinking may have saved the expense of a few shotgun shells being spent on the perpetrators. It is always a good idea to check with the landowners to get authorization to cross their land and most importantly to make sure it is safe to do so. It is a little effort, but one that is easy to overlook when you are excited in recovering the payload quickly.

Bill told us it is not too common to actually see the payload parachuting back to Earth, but we somehow seemed to get lucky and Ace the landing in real time on our first attempt thanks to APRS.



Once the payload was recovered, we drove down to the Whitaker farmhouse to visit the landowners and show them what we retrieved. The team gave them some history on their project and passed along some newspaper articles they could keep and read about the balloon launches from UAH. This seemed to be great Public Relations and we got to meet some really nice people at the conclusion of the chase.

The balloon carried 2 instruments to measure altitude and temperature. The radio used for transmitting was a simple HT connected to a Kantronics KPC-3 TNC. The TNC has 2 analog channels that can be used to transmit telemetry data via APRS and they were only using both of the channels. Each channel is an 8-bit channel to record data with 256 steps of resolution. The antenna was a simple dual band mobile antenna that mounted on the bottom of the payload. The payload was housed in a small Styrofoam container lined with aluminum foil to protect the equipment from temperature extremes as it traveled to the very frigid edge of our atmosphere.

I think everybody was excited in finding the payload and finding it quickly. This is just another aspect of Amateur Radio that brings value to our community. I learned a little more about winds at different levels of altitude and how they affect the rise and fall of the payload.

Be sure to check out the pictures.

73, Tim - N8DEU

The Value of Amateur Radio

Going home to check on the dog at lunch time, I pulled a couple of QSL cards and, yes, the most recent QST out of the mailbox. I always read the correspondence section so as to quickly categorize those whose letters are chosen for publication into the bins "lid" and "agrees with me and is obviously right".

Last year at this time, on September 21st, I was writing a letter to Bud Cramer urging his support of H.R. 4720. I didn't want to take the standard approach of touting amateur radio's value in emergency, since I was sure he had already received many letters to that effect, so I tried to address other areas of our charter as spelled out in the opening paragraph of FCC rules 47CFR97, "Amateur Radio Service".

What I was looking for was the letter on page 24 of this month's QST under the heading "The Value of Amateur Ra-

dio". Those of us who pore over articles on receivers are very familiar with the author, Rick Campbell, KK7B. This letter's content is on a different level than those articles. Please read this letter - if you don't get QST, I'll have the letter with me at the next HARC meeting.

Thank you, Rick.

Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

HUNTSPAC Meeting

A HUNTSPAC meeting is scheduled for 11:00am Saturday, 11-OCT-03, at the Greenbrier Restaurant at Greenbrier Road and Old Highway 20 west of Madison. If you are a member of HUNTSPAC, you are invited to attend. If you are not yet a member or just interested in attending, come on out and join us. If you plan on attending, please let me know before the meeting so we can plan on having enough seats. Since it is a restaurant, you can eat your lunch at the meeting and we can use the space.

The ground rules for packet radio have changed with the surge of the Automatic Position Reporting System, commonly known as APRS. Nobody could have imagined what it would do for packet radio in the aftermath. Nobody, that is, except the father of APRS, Bob Bruninga (WB4APR) himself. Now we have a system that is inter-linked by various means and continuing to show growing numbers every day.

We now have weather nodes at APRS digipeater locations popping up across North Alabama at Fort Payne, Scottsboro, Wilson Mtn, and expect more sites to add weather stations at their locations.

A few years ago who would have believed Packet Radio would fall off and then start growing in leaps and bounds once again. It is really amazing. Nonetheless, it is a great way to learn about the Internet, satellites, radio, weather stations, SKYWARN, and computers. It is the integration of many systems. With the new weather office in Huntsville there are endless possibilities on how we can help provide a great service from within our own hobby and provide a valuable service to our community.

We have several items to discuss during the meeting. I have heard several ideas for projects that seem to be very interesting and hope to hear a few more. Please bring some fresh new ideas to the meeting.

The Agenda for the meeting:

1. Notes from last meeting.
2. Discuss available funds for HUNTSPAC.
3. Explain the current packet network status.
4. Discuss equipment inventory.
5. Discuss new packet radio projects.
6. Assign duties as necessary (be prepared to be selected).
7. Assign action items for next meeting.

We will not solve the world's needs at the meeting but we will keep the agenda on track. Plan on meeting from 11:00am to 1:00pm, including lunch if you wish to buy your lunch at the meeting.

If you need directions, use the 146.34/94 repeater or APRS from the N8DEU-12 beacon.

*73, Tim - N8DEU HUNTSPAC
Chairman n8deu@arrl.net*

October Hamfests

October 3-4, 2003

Ten-Tec, Sevierville, Tennessee. See <http://www.tentec.com> or contact Stan Brock, WD0BGS, 865-453-7172 or sales@tentec.com.

October 11, 2003

ARC of Augusta, Evans, GA. Contact John Samples, KG4LEY, 706-651-9504 or kg4ley@hotmail.com.

ARRL MS Section and Meridian ARC, Meridian, Mississippi. Contact Russell Brown, W5RB, 601-934-2816 or w5rb@arrl.net.

October 18, 2003

Amateur Radio Lighthouse Society, St. Simons Lighthouse, Georgia. Contact Jim Buffington, K5JIM, jim@jimbuffington.com.

Oak Ridge ARC, Oak Ridge, Tennessee. See <http://web.kornet.org/orarc/hamfest03.html> or contact Thomas Muncy, AG4SF, 865-482-4123 or ag4sf@arrl.net

October 25, 2003

Chattanooga ARC, Chattanooga, Tennessee. See <http://hamfestchattanooga.com> or contact Louise Carter, KE4DGW, 423-821-4043 or ke4dgw@msn.com.

Clarksville Amateur Transmitting Society, Clarksville, Tennessee. See <http://www.ql.net/kf4l> or contact Art Varga, WA9LXT, 931-551-3432 or wa9lxt@arrl.net.

73, John Farr, KC4ZXX

The Editor's Wastebasket

The "Rap Session" on the Elmering process, what newcomers to the hobby need and how best to satisfy that need, was one of the more interesting programs we've had in quite some time. I think Tom had some doubts about that, but then I pointed out that almost everybody was still there when the discussion ended. It has been all too common lately for folks to sidle out of the room and gravitate out to the lobby during programs. I don't approve of the practice --

not only may you miss something you'd find to be valuable, but it doesn't show much respect for the person who has gone to the trouble of putting together a program. Of course there's another side to that issue. A presenter who has not spent some time in advance organizing his /her thoughts and figuring out how to present the topic in a reasonable time might deserve to be walked out on.

I see by the calendar that our October auction falls on Halloween night. I can't say now what that portends for the auc-

tion, but I hope the ghoulies and goblins don't disrupt things too much. It's kind of sobering to realize that this month's calendar goes though November 1. November! 2003 is running out quickly. Better get those antenna projects implemented before you find yourself taking advantage of Frank's law (The performance of an antenna is improved by three db for every five degrees below freezing it is when the antenna is installed.)

73, Frank Emens, W4HFU

Labels must be parallel to the bottom of the
mailpiece within 5 degrees. Please affix labels
carefully. Cover this block completely.

NON-PROFIT ORG
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
HUNTSVILLE, AL
PERMIT # 637

Huntsville Amateur Radio Club
P. O. Box 423
Huntsville, Alabama 35804