

VOX



HUNTSVILLE AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Huntsville, Alabama

Volume 48, Number 10

October, 2008

From The Veep

The Prez is on his way to shakeyside (Los Angeles). So he has asked me to do the presidents letter. We have had hamfest appreciation night, The history of the transistor, a video from Tom Duncan.

Friday Septembe 19th Mike Sabin will present his hamfest program "Radio in the Tropics". October 10th Al Bacon will present his hamfest talk on what you need to know about generators. October 9th the ARES-Races group is planning on having Red Cross training at the EMA, if you are interested you are welcome to join them at the EMA at 6 o'clock (Pizza available).

Support activities coming up include September 20th Spring City Cycle Club Century Ride and September 27-28th The Crow Mountain Hill Climb. We still need volunteers for Sept 27-28. Please contact KJ4GAI 256/565-5692 (cell) slowautoxr@aol.com

[Mailto:slowautoxr%40aol.com]

for details. The CMHC main site: [http://www.crowmountainhillclimb.org/]

It's a two-day event, but in past years some volunteers have come for one day only or half-day slots. It looks like 15-20 more hams were needed. Several HARC operators in the past really enjoy operating Crow Mountain, so I'm hopeful that plenty of folks will be able to help so everything will go well.

Many thanks to all who have supported our past activities.

Woodie Ziegler HARC VP

Continuation Of The Travis/Tim Discussion On APRS

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Positive 1:b MESSAGE GROUPS. A sure way to know somebody is on the other APRS end is to establish

contact on another frequency. During a local emergency or an ARES net, that other frequency is a voice repeater. A supporting APRS net could meet simultaneously (requires two radios). To proscribe participation, each APRS station creates and joins a common group. A group named "AL" is important to create for statewide emergency use, and our county EC Rolf could work with Tim to agree on auxiliary APRS net group names, following perhaps with creation of a tutorial on setting up a group AL for each software package or radio in use locally. Beyond "AL", APRS net users need a standard name for the Huntsville NWS area (N-AL-WX? HSV-WX? -AL?) and for Madison County nets (MAD-AL?). It might take an emergency or scheduled drill to find someone at his APRS station and to reveal the usefulness of APRS.

TIM:b APRS supports groups so that messages sent to a group destination like HSVWX would appear on all stations who allow the HSVWX group messages to appear in their message INBOX. This is just another way groups can communicate and contain their messages for the intended audience. One data packet message transmission can literally reach thousands of information displays. This is part of situational awareness and self documenting, no repeats required as the information is there. A voice net can test ones patience. With APRS bells and whistles can be setup to alert you when something new of importance happens.

Positive 2:b E-MAIL. Short multi-line e-mails may be sent by packet via Winlink to call@winlink.org or to any email address. Of course everything is on the Web and very public and persis-

tent, but in an emergency it will do. I've confirmed it works within 10 minutes sometimes. Please see www.winlink.org/node/24. There are said to be other APRS-to-email gateways operated by individuals: EMAIL is an email server owned and maintained by Keith Sproul WU2Z, but it never worked for me. In Australia is SAMAIL.

TIM: Unfortunately, I do not think the Sproul's (authors of WINaprs) EMAIL server is functional anymore. I use to have one on the local IGate but deactivated it when I changed from APRS+SA and used UI-View. UI-View does not support that feature. Let me take a look and see what I can find. I can change the IGate software and put that feature back on the IGate if it is useful. It was setup to allow email out of APRS and email from a licensed ham back to the RF link to any APRS station. This was a nice feature of APRS+SA software. Unfortunately, APRS+SA is not being updated much like WINaprs is not being updated. The 2 active players are now XASTIR and AGWTracker as currently supported APRS software packages. XASTIR will work on multiple platforms including Windows.

Positive 3:b Bob Bruninga, WB4APR, in his September 2008 QST article describes "Voice Alert." You can receive voice calls on the APRS frequency without hearing packet noise if the other guy transmits a 100 Hz tone, and you have a 100 Hz receive tone set and volume up. He doesn't say, but you'll need a receiver with two audio paths, one passing audio to packet applications, the other to the speaker.

(Text continued on page 3)

Huntsville Amateur Radio Club Information

Club Officers

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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", and a discussion forum at "http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/harc-al"

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. They have a web site at "http://www.qsl.net/nara"

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 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.

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, October 4
Saturday, November 1
For information contact:

Larry Frost, KR4GU, 864-3244
kr4gu@hamfest.org
Or
Rick Earl, AA4II, 256-653-0101
aa4ii@bellsouth.net

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

For information contact Dean Thompson, WW0I, 256-230-0270 or Rick Earl, AA4II (see above)

HARC ACTIVITY CALENDAR FOR October, 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	1 SE Linked Rptr Net 2000 +442.775/PL 203.5	2 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	3 HARC Meeting	4 *TWIAR CAVEC Exams, Red Cross Bldg, 0900
5	6	7 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	8 SE Linked Rptr Net 2000 +442.775/PL 203.5	9 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	10 HARC Meeting AI Bacon: What You Need To Know About Generators	11 *TWIAR
12	13	14 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	15 SE Linked Rptr Net 2000 +442.775/PL 203.5	16 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	17 HARC Meeting	18 *TWIAR Exams, Athens EOC, 1300
19	20	21 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	22 SE Linked Rptr Net 2000 +442.775/PL 203.5	23 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	24 HARC Meeting	25 *TWIAR
26	27	28 ATV Net 2000 Check In 145.33	29 SE Linked Rptr Net 2000 +442.775/PL 203.5	30 EMERGENCY NET on 34/94 @ 1930 Skywarn Net on 147.24 @ 2000	31 HARC Meeting	1 *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

GigaParts
www.gigaparts.com

✓ **Huntsville's Only Amateur Radio Store**

NEW LOCATION!

Map showing location at the intersection of University Dr. - Hwy 72 and Research Park Blvd. Landmarks include Back Yard Burgers, Providence, and Target.

**Mon - Sat
10am - 7pm**

(256) 535-GIGA

Logos for: HEIL sound, ICOM, KENWOOD, YAESU (Choice of the World's top DX'ers™), ALINCO, and MFJ. Also DIAMOND ANTENNA.

TIM:b Voice Alert has been documented here in the VOX. You only need 1 radio and 1 audio path to make this work. I have it configured on my TMD-700 with CTCSS set to 100Hz. The radio decodes packets and the audio is only activated on the speaker when the 100Hz tone is decoded. When this happens I often am startled and quickly look at my display to see the callsign displayed by the last station. Then I can pick up the microphone and confidently call the station by voice. Keep in mind, only stations that are attended should be setting their tone to 100Hz. Unattended stations need to make sure their 100Hz tone is disabled. Bob should have mentioned that audio is tapped ahead of the squelch after de-emphasis in the radio if you are using a TNC to decode data from any radio. Generally speaking, it is best to tap the audio before the squelch circuit in a 2M radio if your TNC can operate with an

open squelch as some cannot without modification.

MORE THINGS I DON'T LIKE

E.b Bob's September article talks up mobile APRS especially, and lists 10 things you can do from your \$600 cab radio. Nine of those things take your attention away from driving and are dangerous. You're hurtling along the highway in your mobile control room with three screens in front of you, and you're interpreting lines of text, writing keypad text messages, checking email — you'd insist that anybody else doing that is a menace on the road.

TIM:b You should always drive with safety in mind. Any rental car Navigational System will warn you at the press of a button when the car is moving that it is not safe to mess with the GPS while driving. All of those tasks can be performed while parked or a licensed passenger or non-licensed passenger under control operator instructions can safely work the buttons. Now, having said

that, how useful is an NWS bulletin (makes a different unique message sound) that displays how far you are from the maximum area of concern (direction and distance between you and the severe weather, i.e. Tornado...). Is that useful information about situational awareness that could save your life? Would you want to know what could possibly take your life if you drive into it?

F.b High cost to usefulness ratio of specialized radios.

TIM:b Any 2M radio can be interfaced with a TNC, a Tracker, a Weather Station, a flotation device indicating how high the river is rising (a Kantronics KPC3+ analog data telemetry channel or tracker with an analog data channel for any defined automated remote function). You do not need a specialized radio as virtually any 2M FM radio can be used. An Alinco radio with built-in TNC can be interfaced to a PalmPilot or Pocket PC to use as a

communications device with APRS software loaded to have even more features than a Kenwood at a much lower price point. A low cost laptop (does not need to be high speed, just low cost) can be used for the communications terminal with APRS software. With the analog telemetry feature on a Kantronics KPC3+ you can provide up to 5 channels of analog telemetry data to monitor remotely. Well, maybe 3 out the back port. The other 2 can be modified and interfaced to the outside.

G.b Special map symbols. If I wanted to know when a hamfest is, I would read it in a magazine or on the Web, not fire up packet equipment and computer and wait.

TIM:b If you are an out of town traveler not reading QST looking for something to do the HamFest advertisement on the APRS display can lead you to the path of opportunity. APRS is informational awareness. It can be a repeater directory when you do not have the repeater directory in your hand. With APRS it is on your display. With a specialized radio like the new Kenwood TMD-710A the auto tune button will tune your radio and PL tone based on the repeater beacon from the Local Information Initiative.

H.b Trivial information, outdated information. I don't want to know your position, course, and speed, which is the major premise of APRS, except in rare circumstances, such as a sailboat race or balloon flight. In an emergency if you dare use APRS to text "emergency, see APRS map" and somebody happens to see it, somebody has to translate coordinates into street intersections to guide the ambulance driver. It might as well be you, the person in danger, who simply speaks the location on a voice repeater frequency. With APRS, your ham dispatcher needs APRS maps that zoom to street level or he needs your call sign and SSID to go to FindU.com to find your position 5 minutes ago.

TIM:b Ah! You have fallen into the misconception that everybody

has about APRS. It did not start out as a tracking system! It was a tactical communication system from the beginning which as the founding premise some almost 20 years ago. The map display of APRS is supposed to be structured that everybody can have the same map view. Not all APRS authors followed this requirement. In an actual emergency, you need to use the appropriate tool that makes sense for the application. A few years ago at the Century Bicycle ride there was a very serious accident that required emergency help. Huntsville could not help us at Lexie Crossroads at Belvidere, TN. We were instructed to call 911 and I used my cell phone. The 911 operator in Lincoln County responded to my cell phone call. After what seemed like 10 minutes of frustration trying to precisely tell her where I was located she was still clueless. I knew exactly where I was located by street names, intersections, and LAT/LON coordinates. She specifically told me not to give her my LAT/LON coordinates because they could not handle it. When I mentioned FINDU and the Internet that was a foreign language and she had no access to it anyway. This is a real live emergency situation! A voice repeater did nothing for me and now a 911 operator cannot help me. Thankfully, she hung in there while I zoomed out to tell her what county in TN where I was located. Bingo! My APRS map gave us the critical information. She was responding to my 911 call in Lincoln County and I was in Franklin County. She quickly dispatched me to the Franklin County 911 system and they knew exactly where I was located. Again, it was informational awareness! Had I not had it, critical time would have been lost. When the Emergency Squad arrived, one of the cyclists hopped in the wagon and took them to the creek where his friend flew over a bridge head first into the creek. They dispatch a Med-Flight helicopter to a nearby field and flew the patient to Nashville to access the head trauma and other injuries. Even though you

may know exactly where you are located, it does not mean you can communicate it by voice without more detailed information from a map with zooming capability.

I.b Complexity. Packet radio is arcane with its TRANS, TBAUD, and PACLEN. APRS is another layer of complexity with another layer of jargon and rules of good practice and specialized equipment on top of that. Complexity and new jargon give me a headache, and I want to avoid headaches.

TIM:b Arcane is a heavy term that can be simplified. You are speaking terms from the old packet days. We no longer set those parameters. In fact, you cannot set them when you use the appropriate KISS interface. If everybody used the KISS interface on their TNC, then the APRS setup is simplified. The software takes care of these settings to avoid the complexity, but you MUST use the KISS interface. These parameters are then controlled by the software, not the TNC. Even though you can still tweak these setting in software, most APRS software has the appropriate settings controlled through software and not the firmware of the TNC. The TNC-X terminal node controller only has a KISS interface at \$48 for the kit. It is a great KISS only TNC and all that you need (low cost, but high performance). With the KISS interface the TNC is fully controlled by the software on the computer. All new things can bring on headaches to get up the learning curve. I will admit there is no single APRS book that details all the features of APRS. The closest book is far out of date.

J.b In summary, I have tried very few communications modes that are more disagreeable and don't pay back the effort of learning. You might love it, but I have found it impossible to communicate immediately and nearly impossible to communicate in any time frame. The Internet gateways (Igates) are immediate, and I can read others' one-line automated replies to me on the FindU.com data bases on the

Web, but no text is received by radio.

TIM:b If you are not receiving messages via radio something is wrong. I receive messages on my display all the time. If you have to query FINDU to get your messages something is definitely wrong. I had a station from Germany send me a message while mobile in West Virginia a few years ago. Germany on 2M? Obviously, this was the magic of the IGate's routing the message.

K.b If a local APRS net comes to pass I will run my station during drills and emergencies, where APRS may shine. I can relay to mobile stations and to the Internet — that's all a fixed APRS station without a weather station can do. I have a dedicated 2M FM radio and laptop computer, 225 AH batteries for the ham shack, and battery backup for routers and modems, both cable and DSL. Like many other hams, I want to put that equipment to good and effective use in emergencies or on a continuous basis. Suggestions welcome.

TIM:b Emergency preparedness is all about knowing how to operate before the emergency arrives. This can only be done with practice and can serve to iron out any issues users are having with their station setup. Battery backup is a great asset to have on any network. APRS has some redundancy which is also good in any emergency environment. When a station goes down there are other stations that can carry the load. When the Internet goes down, data can be routed to Internet Gateways that are still alive and functioning.

L.b I want to thank Tim Cunningham for his patient answers previously and to this particular diatribe.

TIM:b Travis, thank you very much for taking the time to present your thoughtful insight to your experience. Believe it or not, what you have experienced to this point is what many others have experienced. Without asking questions,

you never know what lies behind the curtain until you peel the onion and kick the tires. APRS is a workable solution providing situational awareness daily.

SKYWARN North AL & Southern TN

I am your SKYWARN coordinator for Northern Alabama and Southern-middle Tennessee. First, I'd like to thank Tim, N8DEU for his great article on APRS Packeting in the July 2008 Vox. He is passionate about ham radio and emergency communications, and it is very nice to know that hams like Tim have your back during an emergency! Now I would like to make a suggestion to Tim, and everyone who has these great ideas of how to help out. This month isn't technical, it's managerial. It is SMART (not me, the topic).

So, Tim and fellow ham operators, let's talk about tasks, which is the part of getting things done that is essential to success. I'm going to use Tim as an example, but feel free to fill in your own name where his appears. I work for a software development company, and I am trained as a "scrum master" in an agile software development team. Our team blows the doors off some of the other teams because we are empowered to get things done. I learned a lot about how to let highly-motivated (and highly-compensated) people get their job done without getting in their way. Here's how things work: First, Tim has a great idea, and he discusses it with someone. This time, his great idea was the use of APRS with respect to tactical communications, and "someone" is all the hams in the Huntsville area. So far, so good. He made his case for the use of APRS, and it appears to solve some problems that I brought up in the April Vox, i.e., it is an effective communications tool. But now what shall be done about it?

Every great idea does not get done. Only the ones that have a good plan have a chance of actually

being implemented. Let's break it down. In order for a good idea to become real, it needs tasks and personnel and budget - and it needs a little more besides: it needs a mentor or leader to make sure that all the tasks get done, and that the overall view of the project stays focused and on track. The tasks have to have a certain "quality", or they will never see the light of day. Tasks should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Applicable, Relevant, Timely. This is where so many people fail, and wonder why they failed. Let me pick on Tim for a minute (constructive picking). We agree that his idea produced "applicable, relevant and probably timely" tasks, but they were not "specific and measurable", so I predict that nothing will happen to the idea - EVEN THOUGH IT IS A GREAT IDEA, I DON'T THINK IT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED!

What happens is that everyone will read Tim's proposal and bob their heads up and down, and say "That's a great idea." Some hams will even say "I hope he does that", or "I hope someone does that." Bingo — there's the problem: There are no specific, measurable tasks to make it all happen. So next month, the great idea will be incomplete, then partially forgotten, and next time a weather event happens and Tim's great idea isn't implemented, Tim will be frustrated, a couple of hams will think about the idea and wonder why it wasn't implemented by now, and most hams will be back to their pre-existing ways of doing things (having completely forgotten Tim's proposal). That's how life works sometimes. So enough picking on Tim - he had some great ideas, and a passion for his great ideas.

Undoubtedly, other hams who read the article said "Yeah, that's exactly what we need to do." I say: "let's take the idea to the next level - Tim, how about a concrete plan to make it happen?" I do NOT want to see your idea die, since all it lacks is a set of SMART tasks. But they must be SMART, or we'll lose a great op-

portunity. Jump back into the September Vox and tell us:

1. What are the exact steps that a ham operator needs to do to have a fully-functional APRS communications solution?

2. What equipment needs to be purchased?

3. How should it be hooked up to a set of different VHF, UHF and HF rigs?

4. What software is required?

5. How does it get installed? (which operating system, etc.)

6. How to configure it?

7. What does the NWS office in Huntsville need to do to use the new system (exactly and specifically)?

8. How much does it cost each ham?

9. How easy is it to maintain and upgrade?

10. What if my station can't hit the local repeater - I'm on the wrong side of "the Rock"?

11. etc., etc., etc. (Tim probably has 20 more tasks to add)

So do you think that Tim will take on the challenge? I hope so. See, I set out a list of specific, measurable, relevant, achievable, timely tasks for him. Of course, he may have 832 other high-priority items in his universe, just like you and I do. So if he doesn't have the time, will YOU help him out with the APRS-ing of the Tennessee Valley? Some of you are on APRS all the time, and are wizards at it. Most hams are at the other end of the spectrum. Send an email to Tim and tell him that you're volunteering to help him out. Tell him that you're going to handle numbers 4, 5 and 6. Then let's see what happens. With your concrete volunteer help, Tim is likely to succeed! Remember - just reading a book about APRS is not like actually using APRS as a communications solution in an emergency situation!

The great ham operators of this area are needed and respected by the National Weather Service Fore-

cast office. They need us and want us. Now, N8DEU has a truly "better way" to get things done. Will you help out? Stand by: we'll find out next couple of months. So, APRS-ers, let's hear from you on Thursday night at 7:30 P.M. SKYWARN needs you, especially now that the hurricane season is upon us. Thanks Tim, and a much-deserved 73 to you for caring about us, friend.

*73, Doug Hilton, WD0UG / AAV4YP
SKYWARN Coordinator, Northern
Alabama / Southern-middle Tennessee
email: WD0UG@ hotmail.com*

Ares / Races Update.

Hope you had a good hamfest! It was good to see so many familiar faces, including Don Neville, our 147.220 repeater trustee.

The Red Cross training, including damage assessment is rescheduled and will now be during our October 9th joint Ares/ Races meeting. Please make sure you do your Red Cross background check before then on
www.mybackgroundcheck.com
then click on the Red Cross logo or directly:

<http://www.mybackgroundcheck.com/order/ArcVts/> When asked click volunteer as purpose for the background check. It took me less than 3 minutes to do it and there is no cost for you. In a few days you will get an email with the results and a nice certificate stating your clearance. Thank you Shirley for arranging these classes for us.

Those who attended the last meeting have seen the new Ares/Races bulletin board on www.hmcraces.org/BB if you have not signed in, you will need to wait for administrators approval, but everyone that was at the meeting has been approved already. So go ahead and start posting. Our district 6 EC Thom is getting web active too: check out his website on www.AlabamaAres.org and while you're at it check out Alabama section website www.arrl-al.org.

SET is coming up in October, expect announcements about that later.

Thank you Gary for all the work on the HF rig in the shack, at least we now know the source of the noise is coming from the AC but there are still several steps to take / money to spend to totally eliminate it.

Your EC and AEC will be traveling for 2 weeks and be back on Oct 5th. So the weather better behaves in that time. An acting EC will assigned during that period.

Our next meeting will be on October 9 at 6 o'clock on the 2nd Thursday of the month at the Huntsville Madison County Emergency Management Agency at their Operations Center at Fountain Circle in Huntsville. More information on:

<http://madisoncountyema.com/RACES.htm>

Or

<http://www.madisoncountyares.com>

73 de K4RGG at arrl dot net

Rolf Goedhart Emergency Coordinator

Madison County

APRS News

There are 22 weather stations being built for Morgan County on a Federal Grant. They will be spread across the county to provide a 24/7 weather spotter reporting system. The FINDU server on the APRS-IS collects the weather data from all the APRS weather stations across the country and forwards this data to NOAA every 15 minutes for weather modeling. The 15 minute limit is really set by MADIS due to processing capability. This may be changed to every 5 minutes in the future as they are investigating where the Nyquist limit of weather data might exist. So, if you have a weather station reporting more often than every 7.5 minutes it may be a little too often. No other Amateur Radio service provides such a wealth of weather information in near real time every day. All the equipment for the Morgan County project has been ordered and the Decatur and Eva Amateur Radio Clubs are working together with the Morgan County EMA to get the job completed. This is a rather large

coordinated effort that is talking place.

Lawrence County has landed a grant for at least 4 weather stations to get up and running in the coming months to provide another addition of 24/7 automated weather spotters on the APRS network.

Rumor has it another county in North Alabama is about to land a grant to install some weather stations on APRS in the very near future. More on this development as it comes to fruition.

We have been challenged by Doug Hilton to implement a great idea (Thanks Doug). Will it be implemented? Only time will tell and if anybody steps up to the plate to volunteer and make it successful. What makes Amateur Radio different from the workplace is the compensational factor called money. One can be empowered to make things happen or facilitate them, but it takes highly motivated willing people to make it work without any pay except for the satisfaction of success. There will be those along the way that will look for all the negative aspects to poison the process to discourage advancement. These people exist in the workplace always complaining about something and never getting anything done. Some companies employ the 80/20 plan to remove 20% of the poison each year and replace them with fresh highly motivated people who want to succeed. I will write more on the protocol envisioned to make the SkyWarn check-in process very simple utilizing APRS.

This month I will focus on equipment requirements for APRS.

The most basic APRS station does not even need a radio, just an Internet connection. Most of the APRS software packages will work with a computer and an Internet connection. This setup will give you full capabilities to communicate with any APRS users on the RF network and visa-versa. However, when the Internet is lost your station is down. This is the quickest

way to get up and running on APRS without an antenna or a radio. You can download UI-View, AGWTracker, or XASTIR. There are far too many to list, but these are the popular programs used today. Check out the comprehensive APRS capability chart to discover what is available on each software or hardware package at: http://www.eskimo.com/~archer/aprs_capabilities.html#table0

Generally, if you want an RF capable APRS station you will need a 2M radio tuned to 144.39 Mhz (the national APRS frequency), a computer (PC, PalmPilot, Windows CE, or Windows Mobile device), a TNC (a sound card in a PC can also be a TNC with the AGW Packet Engine), a mapping program or use online maps like GoogleMaps, and an optional GPS only if you are mobile. A GPS is not required for a home station unless you want to track its travel in a tornado.

The older MFJ TNC's have held their value on the market and MFJ will be introducing a new model early next year. Kantronics, PacComm, and Symtek still manufacture TNC's. One TNC that is cost effective is the TNC-X (~\$48) which is a KISS only TNC (www.tnc-x.com). Just about all APRS software programs support the KISS interface. This is a great simple low-cost design. There are others like the TinyTrak4 (www.byonics.com) and the OpenTracker+ (www.argentdata.com) that can decode packets.

Some radios like the Kenwood (D700, D710, and D7), Alinco DR-135TP, or the new Yaesu VX-8R (expected in October) all have a TNC built into the radio. This eliminates the need for an external TNC. The Kenwood and the Yaesu have a built-in interface for messaging without the need of a computer. I really like the messaging interface on the Kenwood and Yaesu as they provide messaging and email capability in the field. What I like most is the information display always tells me how far I am from the maximum

area of concern during severe weather (direction and distance). There is the HamHud (Heads-Up Display) at <http://www.hamhud.net/>.

There are many people on APRS who use a tracker which is a position transmit only device. A Tracker consists of a device like the TinyTrak3 (<http://www.byonics.com/tinytrak/>), a 2M radio, and a GPS. It does not have 2-way communication capability. While it is perfectly suited for search and rescue operations or weather spotter location by providing position information you lose the ability to send/receive messages.

Next month I will provide some links for more APRS goodies.

*73', Tim - N8DEU
Alabama APRS Coordinator*

THE GIGGLE BOX

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE GUYS AND GALS THAT HAVE BIRTHDAYS IN OCTOBER!!

Hi guys, fall is just around the corner. When I went to work this morning, I almost grabbed my light jacket, but figured that it would get warmer later in the day and I would end up carrying the jacket around with me all day. We will be wearing jackets and coats soon enough anyway. I can't believe September is half over all ready. Someone mentioned today that Christmas was a little more than 3 months away. Didn't we just have Christmas a few months ago? Since I have gotten older it seems like the years are flying by. At the club meeting, we had our Hamfest Appreciation Night last Friday. We got a good report from the Huntsville Hamfest Committee. It sounded like the hamfest was a success. Better go.

CUL, Peggy

A Story or Two

RED MARBLES I was at the corner grocery store buying some early potatoes. I noticed a small boy, delicate of bone and feature, ragged but clean, hungrily appraising a basket of freshly picked green peas. I paid for my potatoes but was also drawn

to the display of fresh green peas. I am a pushover for creamed peas and new potatoes. Pondering the peas, I couldn't help overhearing the conversation between Mr. Miller (the store owner) and the ragged boy next to me. 'Hello, Barry, how are you today?'

'H'lo, Mr. Miller. Fine, thank ya. Jus' admirin' them peas. They sure look good.'

'They are good, Barry. How's your Ma?'

'Fine. Gittin' stronger alla' time.'

'Good. Anything I can help you with?'

'No, sir. Jus' admirin' them peas.'

'Would you like to take some home?' asked Mr. Miller.

'No, sir. Got nuthin' to pay for 'em with.'

'Well, what have you to trade me for some of those peas?'

'All I got's my prize marble here.'

'Is that right? Let me see it,' said Miller.

'Here 'tis. She's a dandy.'

'I can see that. Hmm mmm. Only thing is, this one is blue, and I sort of go for red. Do you have a red one like this at home?' the store owner asked.

'Not zackley but almost.'

'Tell you what. Take this sack of peas home with you, and next trip this way, let me look at that red marble,' Mr. Miller told the boy.

'Sure will. Thanks Mr. Miller.'

Mrs. Miller, who had been standing nearby, came over to help me. With a smile she said, 'There are two other boys like him in our community; all three are in very poor circumstances. Jim just loves to bargain with them for peas, apples, tomatoes, or whatever. When they come back with their red marbles, and they always do, he decides he doesn't like red after all, and he sends them home with a bag of produce for a green marble or an orange one when they come on their next trip to the store.'

I left the store smiling to myself, impressed with this man. A short time later I moved to Colorado, but I never forgot the story of this man, the boys, and their bartering for marbles. Several years went by, each more rapid than the previous one.

Just recently I had occasion to visit some old friends in that Idaho community, and while I was there, learned that Mr. Miller had died. They were having his visitation that evening and knowing my friends wanted to go, I agreed to accompany them. Upon arrival at the mortuary, we fell into line to meet the relatives of the deceased and to offer whatever words of comfort we could.

Ahead of us in line were three young men. One was in an army uniform, and the other two wore nice haircuts, dark suits, and white shirts...all very professional looking. They approached Mrs. Miller, standing composed and smiling by her husband's casket. Each of the young men hugged her, kissed her on the cheek, spoke briefly with her, and moved on to the casket. Her misty, light-blue eyes followed them as, one by one, each young man stopped briefly and placed his own warm hand over the cold pale hand in the casket. Each left the mortuary awkwardly, wiping his eyes.

Our turn came to meet Mrs. Miller. I told her who I was and reminded her of the story from those many years ago and what she had told me about her husband's bartering for marbles. With her eyes glistening, she took my hand and led me to the casket. 'Those three young men who just left were the boys I told you about. They just told me how they appreciated the things Jim 'traded' them. Now, at last, when Jim could not change his mind about color or size...they came to pay their debt. 'We've never had a great deal of the wealth of this world,' she confided, 'but right now, Jim would consider himself the richest man in Idaho.' With loving gentleness, she lifted the lifeless

fingers of her deceased husband. Resting underneath were three exquisitely shined red marbles.

*** **Proverb:** Marriage is a relationship in which one person is always right, and the other is the husband.

When our lawn mower broke and wouldn't run, my wife kept hinting to me that I should get it fixed. But, somehow I always had something else to take care of first: the truck, The car, email, fishing, always something more important to me. Finally she thought of a clever way to make her point. When I arrived home one day, I found her seated in the tall grass, busily snipping away with a tiny pair of sewing scissors. I watched silently for a short time and then went into the house. I was gone only a few minutes. When I came out again I handed her a toothbrush. 'When you finish cutting the grass,' I said, 'you might as well sweep the driveway.' The doctors say I will walk again, but I will always have a limp. (I know how this woman felt. -PB-)

*****KIDS CAN DO SOME PRETTY PRECIOUS THINGS:** While I sat in the reception area of my doctor's office, a woman rolled an elderly man in a wheelchair into the room. As she went to the receptionist's desk, the man sat there, alone and silent. Just as I was thinking I should make small talk with him, a little boy slipped off his mother's lap and walked over to the wheelchair. Placing his hand on the man's, he said, 'I know how you feel. My mom makes me ride in the stroller too.'

*** As I was nursing my baby, my cousin's six-year-old daughter, Krissy, came into the room. Never having seen anyone breast feed before, she was intrigued and full of all kinds of questions about what I was doing. After mulling over my answers, she remarked, 'My mom has some of those, but I don't think she knows how to use them.'

*** Out bicycling one day with my eight-year-old granddaughter, Carolyn, I got a little wistful. 'In ten

years,' I said, 'you'll want to be with your friends and you won't go walking, biking, and swimming with me like you do now.'

Carolyn shrugged. 'In ten years you'll be too old to do all those things anyway.'

*** Working as a pediatric nurse, I had the difficult assignment of giving immunization shots to children. One day I entered the examining room to give four-year-old Lizzie her needle. 'No, no, no!' she screamed. 'Lizzie,' scolded her mother, 'that's not polite behavior.' With that, the girl yelled even louder, 'No, thank you! No, thank you!'

*** My wife left the car unattended for only a minute, but it was long enough for our two-year-old to climb in, throw the car into reverse and crash into a lamppost. He was fine, but the car wasn't, and I had a hard time explaining who was behind the wheel to the insurance company. After a pause, the adjuster asked, 'Do you let him drive often?'

*** My sister had been ill, so I called to see how she was doing. My ten-year-old niece answered the phone 'Hello,' she whispered. 'Hi, honey. How's your mother?' I asked. 'She's sleeping,' she answered, again in a whisper. 'Did she go to the doctor?' I asked. 'Yes. She got some medicine,' my niece said softly. 'Well, don't wake her up. Just tell her I called. What are you doing, by the way?' Again in a soft whisper, she answered, 'Practicing my trumpet.'

*** On a brutally humid day, I walked past a miniature golf course and saw a dad following three small children from hole to hole. 'Who's winning?' I shouted.

'I am,' said one kid.

'Me,' said another.

'No, me,' yelled the third.

Sweat dripping down his face, the dad gasped, 'Their mother is.'

*** On the way back from a Cub Scout meeting, my grandson asked

my son the question. 'Dad, I know that babies come from mommies' tummies, but how do they get there in the first place?' he asked innocently. After my son hemmed and hawed awhile, my grandson finally spoke up in disgust. 'You don't have to make something up, Dad. It's OK if you don't know the answer.'

*** Just before I was deployed to Iraq, I sat my eight-year-old son down and broke the news to him. 'I'm going to be away for a long time,' I told him. 'I'm going to Iraq'

'Why?' he asked. 'Don't you know there's a war going on over there?'

*** Even though the toddler was having a furious tantrum, his mom was unfazed. 'You may as well give up on the crying,' I heard her say as she led him to the store exit. 'You're stuck with me for 18 years.'

*** Paul Newman founded the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp for children stricken with cancer, AIDS and blood diseases. One afternoon he and his wife, Joanne Woodward, stopped by to have lunch with the kids. A counselor at a nearby table, suspecting the young patients wouldn't know that Newman was a famous movie star, explained, 'That's the man who made this camp possible. Maybe you've seen his picture on his salad dressing bottle?' Blank stares. 'Well, you've probably seen his face on his lemonade carton.'

An eight-year-old girl perked up. 'How long was he missing?'

*** For the first time, my four-year-old daughter Kelsey was coming to my office to have me, a dental hygienist, clean her teeth. She was accompanied by her grand-mother. When they came in, I greeted them warmly, seated Kelsey and, as usual, put on my gloves, goggles and mask. About ten minutes into the procedure, she got scared and cried, 'I want my mommy!'

I quickly pulled off my mask and said, 'I am your mommy.'

Without hesitating, my daughter yelled back, 'Then I want my granny!'

The Thought for the month of OCTOBER

We will not be remembered by our words but by our kind deeds. Life is not measured by the breaths we take but by the moments that take our breath.

The Puzzle for the month of OCTOBER

OUY NAOTCN AETCH A NAM
THNNYGAI. OUY NCA LONY
LPEH MIH COVERSID TI
THINWI SMIHLF.

Galileo Galilei

From The Editor's Wastebasket

Looks like things may finally be settling down into a Fall mode instead of High Summer mode. The WX even seems to be beginning to moderate into an autumnal pattern. Before we know it there'll be Trick-Or-Treaters rapping on our door looking for handouts.

What we really need now is a good supply of HARC members who are willing to present a program for the club on a Friday night. It has always been more interesting to see what our fellow club members are doing and what they are interested in than to watch a canned program of some kind. I know we have members who are doing interesting "stuff" I just don't know what we need to do to get them to take some time and tell us about it.

We can also use some like material for the Vox. This issue contains the final installment of the Travis/Tim discussion re APRS and its possible contribution to emergency communication situations. That got so lengthy and detailed it was necessary to publish it as two installments. I hope you hung on to a copy of the September Vox so you can re-assemble the whole discussion. If you need it, let me know and I'll see if I can get a copy of the whole thing posted where you can access it all at once.

73, Frank Emens, W4HFU