



SPARKS



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Newsletter of the Puget Amateur Radio Society

June 1999

June program -

A microcontroller project

Our own Doug Bell will guide us through the process of developing a microcontroller-based circuit at this month's meeting. For the uninitiated, a microcontroller is a microprocessor integrated with memory, parallel and serial ports, and other functions on the same piece of silicon. Microcontrollers are available with built-in A/D and D/A converters, counters, timers, UARTS, display controllers, etc. etc. A circuit that once took dozens of IC's to implement can now be done with just a microcontroller and a few resistors and capacitors.

Doug will be using a microcontroller to turn an ordinary computer keyboard into a CW keyboard. If you've been looking for an excuse to dust off your soldering iron, Doug may have just the project for you.

New PARS officers for '99-'00 year

The following members were elected at the May meeting as club officers for the 1990-2000 club year:

President: Kirk Bellar, N7UK

Vice-President: Charles Beckmeier, KC7GMF

Secretary: Tim Monk, KD7DEY

Treasurer: John Heflin, KD7E

The new board will take office July 1. As usual, there will be no general or board meetings in July or August. Our next board meeting will be on Sep. 2, and our next general meeting will be on Sep. 16.

Field Day! Field Day!

No doubt about it, Field Day is PARS' most eagerly-anticipated activity of the year, and it's happening **June 26 and 27**. We'll be returning to Downtown Park in Bellevue, just south of Bellevue Square, start setting up at 11 AM Saturday, and begin operating as soon as the antennas are aloft. We'll continue until 2 PM Sunday.

As usual, there'll be a potluck dinner Saturday about 6 PM. If you want to participate, call or e-mail Lorie to find out what to bring. The club will provide soft drinks, coffee and tea, and utensils. Spouses and kids are welcome.

Field Day chairman Bob Adams, KJ7BP, is coordinating operating shifts so that we can try to make it a true 24-hour operation (and maybe 25- or 26-hour operation, if we can setup quickly enough). Call or e-mail Bob, or come to the meeting Thursday, to see what slots are available. We'll finalize our Field Day plans then.

Even if you aren't interested in operating, I encourage you to come over to help set up, explain to passers-by just what the heck we're up to, or simply schmooze with your fellow club members. Be sure to bring your sun block and a folding chair.

440 MHz list

As I mentioned in last month's Sparks, I've included a list of 75-cm repeaters that we can hear around western WA, along with the standard simplex frequencies. It's bound to have an error or two, so I'd appreciate your corrections and additions. - *de N7UK*

Next general meeting - Thursday, June 17 at 7:00 PM at the Bellevue Senior Center, 4063 148th Ave. NE in Bellevue. Our own Doug Bell will present a program on microcontroller design (see article above). And be sure to join us at 5:30 PM for dinner at Coco's, 14804 NE 24th St. in Redmond. Visitors are always welcome at the meetings and at Coco's.

Next board meeting - At the home of Al Staples, N7VOF, 409 - 109th Ave. SE in Bellevue, Thursday, Sep. 2 at 7:00 PM. All PARS members are welcome.

The Prez Sez ...

Well, I must say that this year has gone faster than I imagined it would. And lo and behold, the club is still viable in spite of my tenure as President. That, incidentally, is a rarity based on my past experiences in the top offices. However, that's another story. It has been a learning experience for me this past year, and one of the things I learned is how much easier it is when you have adequate help. And I certainly did benefit from help on many fronts.

Lorie Graff N7LCO took over my biggest worries, that of the program coordinator. Kirk Bellar N7UK took over a tired old rag from a tired old editor and made the newsletter interesting again. John Heflin KD7E stepped right in to take over the Swap Meet chairmanship, and Bob Adams KJ7BP stayed at his post as Field Day Chairman. Of course, these are not the only ones who rendered assistance and service when asked, but those are the biggest shoes to fill. There is no way I could have done this past year without those four individuals, to whom I am very grateful.

It's actually been a pleasure to serve as President, and with the help mentioned above, the easiest of the offices I have held. I thank you all for putting up with me. PARS may not be the largest club around, but I think there are none with nicer members. As I prepare to turn the office over to Kirk, I would ask and hope that you will give him the same support that I received. I would again urge you all to get involved with some part of the club's activities, you'll get a lot more out of it.

Field Day is fast approaching, and that's a good place to start getting involved. We have a good location, and an excellent operating station so get out and pitch in! It's actually fun! - 73 de Jim KC7FEH

IOTA contest

For those of you who just can't get enough of Field Day-style operating, the Radio Society of Great Britain(RSGB) is giving you another opportunity. It's called the Islands on the Air (IOTA) contest. The object is to work as many of the world's island "groups", as defined by the RSGB, as you can. In our part of the planet, the San Juans (including Whidbey and Camano Islands), Vancouver Island, and Tatoosh & Destruction Islands count as IOTA groups.

The contest period will run from 5 AM Saturday, July 24, to 5 AM Sunday, July 25. I'm planning on ferrying to Whidbey the night before and setting up to operate K7PAR from a suitable location. Anyone interested in joining in on the fun should call me at 206-542-6742, or e-mail n7uk@aol.com. - de N7UK

'99 Salmon Run

Another Field Day-style opportunity will occur in late September: The Washington Salmon Run, hosted by the Western WA DX Club. PARS worked its first one last September from the Senior Center; this year I'm planning to operate K7PAR from a "rare" county -- Wahkiakum, in southwest WA. If you've ever wondered what it's like to be a DX station, this will be the next best thing. - de N7UK

PARS 1998 - 99 Club Officers:

President - Jim von Seggern, KC7FEH	360-638-1715	Secretary - Kirk Bellar, N7UK	206-542-6742
Vice President - Lorie Graff, N7LCO	425-392-5846	Treasurer - Charles Beckmeier, KC7GMF	425-822-2339

The Puget Amateur Radio Society (PARS) is an ARRL-affiliated club serving radio amateurs in the greater Seattle area. Meetings are normally held on the third Thursday of the month (except July, August, and December) at 7:00 PM at the Bellevue Senior Center, 4063 148th Ave. NE. Visitors are always welcome.

Annual dues are \$15.00 for individual membership, \$22.50 for family (2 or more persons at the same address). PARS will prorate the dues of new members joining after Jan. 31. Call Kirk, N7UK, for a membership application.

Visit our Web page at <http://www.qsl.net/k7par>. We've just started building this page, so check back often.

Send articles, comments, want ads, mash notes, etc. for inclusion in this newsletter to Kirk Bellar, N7UK, 19353 Greenwood Ave. N, Shoreline WA 98133, fax to 425-867-2160, or e-mail to n7uk@aol.com.

Send all other club-related correspondence to PARS, PO Box 32, Kirkland WA 98083-0032.

Minutes of the PARS general meeting, May 20, 1999

The club met at the Bellevue Senior Center. 14 members were present, a quorum. One visitor also attended. The President brought the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.

Following introductions and the Pledge of Allegiance, the President introduced the night's speaker, Les Ellis, KC7TQP, who presented a slide show on the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and fielded questions from the members.

After the break, the President proceeded with the business meeting. The members approved, without revision, the minutes of the April general meeting as published in the May issue of *Sparks*.

Treasurer's report: The Treasurer reported that the club had a positive balance for the 60 days ending May 20. [Financial statements are available from the Treasurer - Ed.] The members voted and approved the Treasurer's report as presented.

Trailer Committee: The Secretary reported that he had replaced the two marine batteries for the 12V distribution system. He had ordered a Mosley TA-33-M triband Yagi, as had been approved by the members at the April meeting. Mosley would not commit to a particular ship date. He was in the process of refurbishing the club's Hy-Gain beam, in case the Mosley doesn't show up in time for Field Day. He had purchased several operating aids for the trailer: A 24-hour clock, road atlas, and pencil sharpener.

Field Day: Chairman Bob Adams, KJ7BP, reported that someone [Chuck Graff - Ed.] had volunteered to tow the trailer to Downtown Park, and that we would begin setting up at 11 AM on June 26, and operate through the entire FD period if enough people were available. The Vice President agreed to coordinate a potluck for the evening of the 26th. The members discussed the logistics of moving all of the needed equipment to the park.

Fox Hunt: No members of the Issaquah or Maple Valley ARCs had expressed any interest in participating to either Doug Bell or the President. The Secretary had sent notice of the fox hunt to both clubs.

Old Business: none

New Business: The President announced the nominees for the 1999-2000 PARS board: for President: Kirk Bellar, N7UK; Vice President: Charles Beckmeier, KC7GMF; Secretary: Tim Monk, KD7DEY; and Treasurer: John Heflin, KD7E. The President solicited additional nominees from the floor; there were none. The members voted to close nominations, and all four nominees were elected by acclamation.

The Vice President noted that Charles' duties will include organizing programs for the general meetings, and solicited speakers or ideas for future programs.

The President announced that Doug Bell had consented to do a program for the June meeting.

With no further business, the President adjourned the meeting at 8:18 PM.

*Respectfully Submitted -
Kirk Bellar, N7UK
PARS Secretary*

Birthdays!

Charles Beckmeier, KC7GMF	June 22
Bill Martin, N7EU	July 6
John Black, W7HIL	July 8
Al Staples, N7VOF	July 20
Eppy Eppenstein, N7CAL	July 28
Dick Schwanke, W9HXM	August 13

EARS hoping you'll call

Eastside Amateur Radio Service - interested parties contact John, W7HIL, at 425-391-8026 or Chuck, WA7EBH, at 425-392-5303.

June Board meeting minutes available

Minutes of the June Board meeting are available from the Secretary.

Code wars reach Wall Street

The Wall Street Journal has taken notice of the code vs. no-code debate. From the June 2 edition: "Morse Code is a dying language in the Digital Age, but it's still required reading for amateur radio buffs."

"The debate over whether it should stay that way, however, has provoked some intemperate words, warnings of an impending invasion of riffraff and counter-accusations of elitism among the nation's half-million two-way-radio hobbyists, who call themselves 'hams.'

"Unlike CB, or citizens band, radio, which is open to anyone with a transmitter, ham operators must have a license from the Federal Communications Commission. For much of the century, one of the requirements for the most advanced of these licenses has been a 20-word-a-minute test in deciphering Morse Code, a skill that can take years to learn. The code, developed 155 years ago by Samuel F.B. Morse, inventor of the telegraph, uses dots and dashes - or short and long bursts of sound - to represent letters and numbers.

"Now, as part of a proposed streamlining of its licensing procedures, the FCC is contemplating relaxing the Morse Code requirement. The issue won't be decided until the end of summer, but it is already fighting plenty of static in the ham radio world. The two sides in the debate - the no-coders and the coders - have flooded the FCC with more than 2200 comments.

"Both groups insist they are fighting for the very soul of ham, a term whose origins are shrouded in mystery. Coders say they are trying to put the brakes on a slide toward diminished standards. No-coders say they are fighting an anachronism that threatens the future of their hobby. The controversy has spawned duelling Web sites, speakers bureaus, newsletters, and Washington lobbying drives.

"To say that ham-radio operators are intense about this is hardly an understatement' says William T. Cross, the FCC's lead staff person on the question. 'People have invested thousands of hours of their time in ham radio, and often tens of thousands of dollars of their money.'

"With the rise of computers and the Internet, the ranks of hams have all but stopped growing. And many of the same technologies have nearly killed off Morse Code, which has been replaced for practical communications by digital methods. The U.S. Military abandoned it years ago. But it still holds sway in the popular imagination; in the film 'Independence Day,' for example, earthlings used the code - also known as CW, for continuous wave - to keep invading aliens from listening in on battle plans.

"No-code activists, however, consider Morse Code's reputation as a reliable, low-power communications system to be more myth than fact. Their main organization is No Code International, founded in 1996 by Bruce Parens, a Berkeley, Calif., computer programmer. Mr. Parens says he began the group after speaking at a ham-radio convention and realizing that nearly everyone in the room was past retirement age. He and other no-coders think the requirement that licensees spend long hours learning an antiquated technology is a turnoff for young people.

"I am doing this for my children. I want ham radio to be there for them when they grow up,' he says, adding: 'You don't make people learn how to ride a horse before they drive a car.'

"In the world of ham radio, however, Mr. Parens is in the minority; most licensees don't want any change in the requirement - especially since they have already passed the test themselves. The most organized of his opponents is a militant pro-Morse group called Fists; its name comes from the ham slang that a proficient Morse operator 'has a good fist.'

"Nancy Kott, a Fists leader, all but accuses the no-coders of taking bribes from ham-radio makers, whom she says want the Morse requirement abolished to attract more ham buffs and thus sell more equipment. 'There are so many reasons for keeping Morse Code that I could go on forever. It ties us in with our history. It gives a sense of discipline. These days, people want instant

gratification. They want to get on the air right now.'

"The coders are haunted by the specter of CB radio, a 1970's fad that led to a lot of bad on-air behavior, which in turn contributed to the demise of the fad. 'If it's not CW, then it's CB,' is a popular coder slogan.

"Indeed, Fists members say that crude, shock-jock talk is already creeping onto the ham channels, and that the floodgates will be wide open without the screening provided by the Morse Code requirement.

"Oscar Hollander, a Fists member, gives a visitor to his San Francisco home a tour of the ribald parts of the ham-radio spectrum. 'They are usually right around here,' he says, spinning the dial of his short-wave radio. A few seconds later, a male voice is heard uttering a stream of vulgarisms. 'If I had a young daughter, I wouldn't want her to hear this,' says Mr. Hollander, who prefers to let Morse's 'dits' and 'duhs' [sic] do his talking for him.

"Mr. Perens, the no-coder activist, isn't worried about a post-Morse ham world inhabited by barbarians. For one thing, there will still be rigorous tests on technical topics people will need to pass before they get a license. 'I don't think the new people coming in to ham radio will be riffraff,' he says. 'The riffraff have no reason to leave the Internet.'

The ARRL noted that the article "is silent on the issue of ITU regulations requiring a demonstration of Morse proficiency for HF operation and on the fact that a codeless class of Amateur Radio license already exists."

Thanks to Dick Schwanke, W9HXM, for sending me the WSJ article. - de N7UK

Fox Hunt report

Four PARS members, plus a guest from the Issaquah ARC, participated in a morning of fox hunting on May 22. Jim, KC7FEH, played the role of fox. The "hounds" consisted of Ron

Mawer, Doug Bell, Brad Dennis, KC7RGG, from the IARC, and Yours Truly.

The hunters showed up at the Senior Center at 0900. Doug and Brad decided to pair up, while Ron (aided by his two harmonics) and I intended to go it alone. Murphy struck early, however, and Ron discovered that his handy-scratchy battery was fresh out of electrons. Ron and I and his two kids piled into Ron's Rabbit, with me sticking my 3-element Yagi through the sunroof, as we careened through Bellevue.

As it turned out, the number of reflected signals we were receiving made DFing all but impossible with the equipment we had on hand. In some cases, I was picking up equally-strong signals that were 90 degrees to each other! The Doug/Brad team didn't fare any better. Jim finally started giving us clues as to his whereabouts, and Doug and Brad found the fox about 10:45. It took Ron and me another hour to locate him. We all commiserated over fish and chips afterwards.

This was my first experience with DFing, and it was a humbling one. It really makes me appreciate what the guys who track jammers must go through. Next year we'll organize a club project to build Dfers, and hold the fox hunt on the national fox-hunting weekend in mid-April. - de N7UK