

SPARKS

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Puget Amateur Radio Society

April 2001

April program - Ham trivia challenge!

Our own John Heflin will make like Regis this month, and put the rest of us to the test to see how much - or little - we really know about this hobby of ours. There'll be Fabulous Prizes (but no Lovely Parting Gifts) for the winners, and a Special Award of Ignominy for the last-place finish.

WPX contest results

The CQ Worldwide WPX Contest drew quite a crowd to the trailer this year. 7 members spun the knobs and pushed the buttons over the course of the Mar. 24-25 event: Bob Adams, John Heflin, Mark Whitaker, Doug Bell, Charles Beckmeier, Don Hickman, and Your Sparks Editor. Other members and guests showed up throughout the weekend to help set up and to see what we were to: Jim Darby, John Brewer and son, Bob's son-in-law, Dick Schwanke, and Al and Wilbur Staples.

The wx actually cooperated with our antenna-raising chores for a change, although Murphy would not be denied. We discovered that it's NOT a good idea to extend a 36-foot telescoping mast before trying to tilt it up, especially not with a tribander on top. Luckily, Jim Darby applied some basic physics and I supplied some muscle, and we managed to get the mast reasonably straight again. The bands were in good shape. We were fortunate in dodging the solar storm that put the HF bands out of commission on the following Saturday.

For the third year in a row, we snagged 50 DXCC entities, though not quite the same ones as in the previous outings. This year's rarities included Cyprus, Fernando de Noronha, Galapagos

Islands, Guyana, Kuwait, Madeira Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, and United Arab Emirates. Our claimed score: 356 QSOs, 246 multipliers, 173,922 points total.

Here are the DXCC entities we worked:

Alaska	Hawaii
Argentina	Hungary
Aruba	Italy
Asiatic Russia	Japan
Australia	Kuwait
Austria	Latvia
Bahamas	Lithuania
Belarus	Macedonia
Belgium	Madeira Isl.
Brazil	Martinique
Canada	Mexico
Chile	Morocco
Costa Rica	New Zealand
Croatia	Panama
Cyprus	Poland
Czech Republic	Portugal
Estonia	Puerto Rico
European Russia	Romania
Fernando de Noronha	Slovak Republic
Finland	Slovenia
France	Turks & Caicos Isl.
French Guiana	United Arab Emirates
Galapagos Isl.	Venezuela
Germany	Wales
Guyana	Yugoslavia

Thanks to everyone who helped set up and tear down, and especially to Jim Darby, who took some time during the WPX weekend to repair the trailer hasp. - de N7UK

Next general meeting - Thursday, Apr. 19 at 7:00 PM at the Bellevue Senior Center, 4063 148th Ave. NE in Bellevue. John Heflin, KD7E, will be the emcee for our first-ever PARS Ham Trivia Challenge (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, May 3 at 7:00 PM. All PARS members are welcome.

Field Day

This year's Field Day promises to draw the biggest crowd in PARS history, thanks to Mark Whittaker's efforts at enticing public-safety agencies, ARES/RACES groups, school clubs, etc. etc. to join our party. Oh, and we might even play with a couple of radios, too. Downtown Park in Bellevue is the place to be June 23-24.

Controller hunt continues

Doug Bell has done a tremendous amount of work compiling information on commercially-available repeater controllers, and Your Sparks Editor has been slogging through the resulting paper. With all of the features available these days, I've divided my wish list into Gotta Haves, Oughtta Haves, and Niceta Haves.

The Gotta Haves are the things that keep Uncle Charlie, aka the FCC, happy: An IDer, a time-out timer, and a means for a control op to turn off the transmitter if need be. And to keep the WWARA happy, we'll continue to use our 103.5 Hz PL tone for access.

The Oughtta Haves are features Your Sparks Editor *thinks* are Gotta Haves, but you might disagree. I believe we should have a voice IDer, since we can't expect Technicians to know Morse (a CW ID would be okay if a QSO is in progress, since it's less distracting). We should have the means to record and play back announcements, and have a voice mailbox so users can leave a message if they can't connect in real-time. This implies that the controller would have a digital voice recorder (DVR). Personally, I detest synthesized speech, not for the quality of the speech itself, but because it makes all repeaters sound

alike. There's at least one controller available which has a complete vocabulary of recorded words, rather than synthesized ones.

The Niceta Haves? Well, an obvious one would be an autopatch, but with the proliferation of cell phones and the W7SRZ open autopatch, it doesn't seem worth the trouble to me. The capability is standard in almost all modern controllers, but we'd either have to pay for our own phone line into the radio vault, or add a point-to-point link to somebody's house to get the phone access, assuming PSE would even let us do this. Some repeater owners are adding Internet phone links to allow you to connect with other repeaters anywhere on the globe ... we might find this idea appealing enough to go to the trouble of adding a phone line or link.

We could have the capability for getting time, temperature, or weather. And there are other niceties like kerchunk filters, audio delay (so your first couple of words aren't lost while the transmitter is keying on), audio processing, etc.

Many controllers now have the ability to control an HF radio. An intriguing possibility, but again we'd have to depend on PSE's largess to let us install the HF gear on their property. I'm also concerned that some people might want to monopolize the repeater for extended HF rag-chewing.

So, there's my two cents on controllers so far. I'm sure there are other features I'm overlooking, or haven't discovered yet. We'll bring it up for discussion at this month's meeting. - de N7UK

PARS 2000 - 01 Club Officers:

President - Charles Beckmeier, KC7GMF	425-392-5846
Vice Pres. - Al Staples, N7VOF	425-454-2882

Secretary - Kirk Bellar, N7UK	206-542-6742
Treasurer - John Heflin, KD7E	425-828-3034

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>. This is always a work in progress, so check back often.

Send articles, comments, want ads, apologies to China, etc. for inclusion in this newsletter to Kirk Bellar, N7UK, 1935 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.

Bremerton radio mystery

A mass failure of keyless remote entry devices in the Bremerton-Port Orchard area apparently has ended, but a Federal Communications Commission probe of the outage could continue for some time.

At the same time, circumstantial evidence mounted that military electronic gear, such as radar or radio jamming equipment, could be to blame for the interference.

The bizarre problem, which began at about 4 p.m. March 21 and ended at about 6:30 p.m. Monday, disabled thousands of the popular keyless remote entries on vehicles within a 50-square-mile area around Bremerton and Port Orchard.

A specialist on electromagnetic interference said Tuesday that a very powerful signal would be required to disable remote entry devices throughout the area.

The specialist, John K. Daher, senior researcher with the Georgia Tech Research Institute, said aircraft carriers and other Navy ships such as those homeported in Bremerton carry a host of gear that emit a microwave signal strong enough to cause such a problem.

Such equipment includes radar, electronic warfare gear, radio-jamming equipment and some types of navigation gear, he said.

Although the microwave signals emitted by that type of equipment are in the 2- to 12-gigahertz range - far above the 300-megahertz range used by many remote entry devices - they could swamp filters built into keyless remote devices on cars, he said.

"It sounds like something was powered up for those four or five days (of the outage), then went down," he said.

Another possibility, Daher said, is that some kind of communications gear in the ultra-high frequency range was overpowering the remote devices.

But Navy officials so far say they could find no link between the disruption and naval ships or activities in the area.

A spokesman for the Bremerton-based aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* continues to deny that the ship was to blame, even though the problem began about the time the ship was returning to port from seven weeks at sea.

Keyless remote entries and other consumer remote control devices all use radio signals in the UHF range to transmit a special signal to a tiny receiver that unlocks a vehicle or performs other functions.

Although most keyless remotes returned to normal operation in the Bremerton area by early Monday, several vehicle owners reported a recurrence or continuance of the problem in the Port Orchard area through late Monday afternoon.

John Winston, assistant chief of the FCC's enforcement bureau in Washington, D.C., would say only that the outage has been under investigation since Friday.

He said the agency can't discuss its findings until the investigation is complete.

Some local residents have even blamed the interference for everything from cell phone malfunctions to strange growing patterns in their plants.

An East Bremerton woman said tulips she bought at a local store continued growing long after they should have wilted, and she wondered whether it was related to the radio interference.

But experts quickly cast doubt on such claims. "It's not like ionizing radiation," Daher said. "I'd say there would be no effect (on plants)."

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Minutes of the PARS General Meeting, 15 March 2001

The members met at the Bellevue Senior Center. 13 members attended, a quorum. 4 visitors also attended. President Beckmeier brought the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

Following introductions and the Pledge of Allegiance, Rick Beatty, NU7Z, presented a program on microwaves. He displayed some of his homebrew horn antennas and transverters for the microwave bands.

The members took a break for refreshments and examined Rick's microwave equipment.

The President reconvened the members for the business meeting. The members approved, without additions or corrections, the February meeting minutes as published in the March issue of *Sparks*.

Treasurer's report: The Treasurer reported a positive balance in the club account, and reported on the net income from the Mike & Key hamfest. [figures are available from the Treasurer - Ed.]

Trailer report: The Secretary had nothing to report, other than announcing that he had set up his Icom IC-706 transceiver in the trailer for members to try after the meeting. Mark Whitaker also brought his Yaesu FT-817 for inspection. The President remarked that the door hasp needed repair. [thanks for Jim Darby for taking care of this during the WPX Contest - Ed.]

Contest report: The Secretary reiterated that PARS would be participating in the CQ WW WPX contest during the weekend of Mar. 24-25.

Hamfest: The Treasurer noted that the club had exceeded its net sales goal by \$1.00. The Secretary thanked Hef for his efforts as Hamfest chairman; Dick Schwanke, Doug Bell, and Jim Darby for helping to clean up the donated items; the President for helping to transport the items to the hamfest; and the other members who helped man the tables during the event.

Field Day: John Brewer expressed his willingness to pull his travel trailer to Downtown Park for Field Day weekend. The members discussed the logistics of pulling the PARS trailer to the park. Jim Von Seggern mentioned that he might have an appropriate trailer hitch at home.

Publicity: Lisa Marker reported that she had written some copy for hamfest brochures. The Secretary added that he had printed the brochure on the back of a world callsign prefix list [available at our web site - Ed.], as an enticement for hamfest-goers to take them home.

The President thanked Al Staples and the Secretary for bringing refreshments.

Old Business: Doug Bell brought a spreadsheet showing various brands of repeater controllers, and their features. The Secretary asked for an electronic copy, and promised to discuss it further at the next board meeting.

New Business: Jim Von Seggern recognized Doug Bell for his passing the code exam and earning his Extra class license. The Secretary solicited volunteers to provide storage space for the remaining hamfest donations. The President read the announcement for the 2001 Communications Academy, to be held April 21-22 at NOAA at Sand Point Way.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:35.

*Respectfully Submitted -
Kirk Bellar N7UK, PARS Secretary*

Events update

The Stanwood-Camano ARC flea market will be held on May 12 at Stanwood Middle School, not Stanwood Elementary as reported last month. The address is 9405 271st Ave NW in Stanwood.