Official Newsletter of the Palm Beach Packet Group, Inc

WHITE NOISE

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AMATEUR RADIO TO BE PRIVATIZED?

Bill Manley KB4XE

There is an enigmatic item included in the recently released FCC 1998 agenda:

> "WTB Part 97: Streamline Amateur Radio Service. Seek comment on amending Parts 0, 1, and 97 of FCC Rules to privatize further the administration of the Amateur Radio Services and to simplify the licensing process. "

The following is reprinted with permission from Ham Radio *Online* magazine, available for free on the Internet at http://www.hamradio-online.com.

> "U.S. Rulemaking Proposals - There are currently several rulemaking proposals before the U.S. government's Federal Communications Commission. Many of these proposals have not received the publicity they deserve. Indeed, the full text of several proposals submitted to the FCC by the ARRL are not, at the time of this writing, provided at the ARRL's own web site. The ARRL is the largest amateur radio organization in the United States."
>
> "Taken together, these proposals have the appearance of turning over management of the Amateur Radio Service to the ARRL. This is an issue that deserves widespread discussion."
>
> "The Amateur Radio Service, in the U.S., has been largely self policing and self regulated under existing laws. This has occurred for many reasons. For one, the FCC has been directed by the U.S. Congress (the elected representatives of the people of the U.S.) to deregulate and introduce competion in to what have historically been highly regulated monopolies. This means that there are very few staff members at the FCC working on Amateur Radio issues at all. Other radio services have grown by orders of magnitude while the Amateur Service grows at a very low rate. The old axiom that the "squeaky wheel gets the grease" implies that other hot spots have diverted attention of the FCC to other radio services and issues (including spectrum auctions). This has left a vacuum, to some degree, regarding exactly who is watching over the interests of Amateur Radio."
>
> "In to this political environment of deregulation and off loading government functions to the private sector (which I generally favor), comes the issue about what to do about Amateur Radio. As previously published here at Ham Radio Online, Canada and now the U.S. are considering moving the adminstrative functions of Amateur Radio in to private hands. This presents a major transition point in Amateur Radio."

As of the time of writing, the ARRL has been silent on the subject.

ANOTHER NEAT FPAC FUNCTION - ALIASE's

Doug Welcker WB4KGY

No doubt by now you have heard about FPAC and all it's proported great functions. Today I thought we would take a few minutes and review the use of "ALIASE's" in the FPAC domain. As a backdrop to how this all works remember that the packet SWITCH/NODE is now run on a PC and the TNC's are assigned to serial ports which basically operate as RF modems. In the past all smarts of the SWITCH were loaded into the TNC and with it's limitations in processing power, RAM, ROM, and speed, little to no room was left for adding functions or improving performance.

Now with the PC as the brains behind the SWITCH suddenly we have the ability to do all the previous functions the TNC's performed and almost anything else that can be dreamed. Of course this is limited by the time a good programmer has available to put forth. One of the functions is what is called "ALIASE's". Hummmm "ALIASE's" - what does that really mean to me. What has been done with "FPAC" is to give the user the ability to get quickly connected to packet sites that are of interest to a majority of the users. This is done by assigning an "SSID" to the SWITCH callsign. Remember "SSID's"? That's the number that shows after callsign. It was originally conceived to give the packet system the ability to allow more than one station on the same frequency to use the same callsign ie. K4PKT-9 and K4PKT-12 or any number between 0 and 15 (The 0 is automatically assigned but does not display) can use the packet channel without confusion. Now the SSID function has been expanded.

So if it is so easy what do I do? When you are on the LAN frequencies of West Palm Beach (145.030 or 145.630) simply keying in "C K4PKT-2" from the command prompt will connect you to John's (WB4MOZ's) BBS. WOW - was that easy or what! What happened was that PC up at the SWITCH recognized that SSID and from its look-up table it knew you wanted the BBS. Not only that but it took the fastest data rate RF path available which in this case is 9K6. If that wasn't available it would try an alternate path to John's BBS.

But you say "how do I know what ALIAS gets me where"? That's almost as easy. Just connect to the SWITCH and ask it! Connect from the command

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The PBPG can be reached by mail at

Palm Beach Packet Group
PO Box 1393
Boca Raton, Fl. 33429

The officers of the PBPG with their packet address and phone numbers are:

Doug Welcker, President
WB4KGY@WB4MOZ
(561) 686-3747

Mike Michaels, Vice-President
K2GPI@WB4MOZ
(561) 967-0478

Bill Rabun, Secretary
KE4GUM@WB4MOZ
(561) 688-2088

Marvin Kaskawits, Treasurer
KD2CK@WB4MOZ
(561) 683-2930

John Green, Director
WB4MOZ@WB4MOZ
(561) 793-6093

Bill Manley, Director
KB4XE@WB4TEM
(954) 752-3908

Terry Taylor, Director
W5JFM@WB4TEM
(954) 942-2390

prompt with a "C NODE V K4PKT-9" and you will get:

*** CONNECTED to NODE via K4PKT-9
connection in progress
Connecte a NODE-0 @ 3100561655
[DWJ-20r-C]
NODE : K4PKT-9
Type i9 <ENTER> for help
K4PKT-9 @ 10:09:14
: (A,B,C,H,HL,I,L,M,R,S,T,U,?) >

Send "i9" for help and you get:

Welcome to the Palm Beach Packet Information Center. This FPAC Switch provided as a service by the Palm Beach Packet Group, Inc.

Additional INFO is available by entering one of the following commands:

Info Text.
h Heard Info - Use H1, H2, etc. for station heard on port 1, port 2, etc.
u User and Trunk Status info.
? Node Command Explanations.

i0 General Connecting Information.
i1 Switch Call, Date and Time.
i2 i2 Not assigned at this time.
i3 i3 Not assigned at this time.
i4 i4 Not assigned at this time.
i5 Local BBS serving this area.
i6 Adjoining lans and npannx codes.
i7 Fast Connects available at this Switch.
i8 This Switch Port Assignements.
i9 This Information Menu.

K4PKT-9 @ 10:09:24
: (A,B,C,H,HL,I,L,M,R,S,T,U,?) >

Reviewing what you received you will see that "i7" will provide the information you are looking for. Now send "i7" and you get:

K4PKT-1 KB4VOL BBS.
K4PKT-2 WB4MOZ BBS.
K4PKT-3 Tampa Information Server.
K4PKT-4 FTLHHP.
K4PKT-5 WELBBS (WB4MOZ).
K4PKT-6 WELL3.

Enter i9 to return to the main menu

K4PKT-9 @ 10:09:55
: (A,B,C,H,HL,I,L,M,R,S,T,U,?) >

Another way to get this information though slightly different send an "A" and you get:

ALIAS's USAGE

To use ALIAS's : C K4PKT-n

n = 1 KB4VOL-0

n = 2 WB4MOZ-0
n = 3 NODE-0
n = 4 FTLHHP-0
n = 5 WELBBS-0
n = 6 WELL3-0

Now you can see the by adding the "ALIAS" of 2 to the switch callsign you get a fast connect to WB4MOZ. You may also notice that an SSID of 5 will get you to the same place.

For those of you outside of the West Palm Beach LAN check with your local LAN administrator and see if they have converted to FPAC. LAN's that I know of in operation include Fort Pierce, Apollo Beach, and Tampa Bay. Others is process include Boca Raton, Hollywood, Stuart, and Vero Beach.

If you have suggestions for more "FAST CONNECTS" please forward your thoughts to John

or myself. Stay tuned for more info and give your local SYSOP and BBS operator a hand - he will appreciate it. Till next time 73 Doug (WB4KGY)

THE 38th ANNUAL TROPICAL HAMBOREE and the APRS Meeting

Bill Manley KB4XE

A few observations about the 1998 Miami Hamboree are in order.

I attended Saturday, arriving about 10:00 AM. There was virtually no traffic but parking was packed right back to the bend in the entrance road off of Coral Way. I thought that it looks like it would be a packed house. There were no lines at the entrance gate. Except for the immediate vicinity of the prize booth the crowd inside was very light. Things picked up on towards noon-time and the people-crunch reminded me of previous Hamborees.

As with previous years, I thought it could as well have been named the "PC/Crafts/Ham-boree". Icom, Kenwood, Yaesu, MFJ, and the ARRL continued their traditional presence in large booths. Swap tables with computer and software vendors occupied two large rooms and a portion of the main exhibition room. The printed program was smaller than what I recall from previous years, evidently lacking space from well-wishers and advertisers. Saturday's scheduled activities, as listed in the program, were about 60% ham related; Sunday's were 50%. The balances on both days were arts-and-crafts related.

I have worked on hamfest committees in the past. I have experienced the effort putting together an affair even an order of magnitude smaller than what the Dade Radio Club accomplishes each year. Theirs is always a stellar performance. Undoubtedly the realities of economics have forced change in the complexion of the Hamboree. Computer and crafts vendors fill the floor space formally occupied by ham vendors. One concludes that reflects a generally diminishing interest in ham radio. It is inevitable that declining participation by the ham community makes it unprofitable for vendors to support the event. It is to the Dade groups' credit that they expanded their scope by attracting craft and computer interests and hopefully continue to operate a financially solvent event.

Permit me to inject my personal experience into this scenario. My plan in attending the Hamboree was to buy callbook CDROM software, pick up some computer memory chips, and possibly a new antenna. I bought the CD-ROM. The memory chips were over-priced, in my estimation, so I passed on that one. I turned chicken on buying the antenna when I realized that it would cost upwards of $320. Perhaps I'll wait for the sun spot cycle to mature a bit before I'll consider that again. In total I spent $45.00.

On a brighter subject, APRS interests were well represented. The APRS-FOR-WINDOWS booth, staffed by both Keith and Mark Sproul and Steve Dimse, gathered a throng. Fortunately the AUTOMATIC PACKET REPORTING SYSTEMS (APRS) forum was scheduled for Saturday, so I got to attend.

Mark emceed the forum, with Steve's assistance. He walked through the existing and planned features of WinAprs for the benefit of the 50 hams attending.

He demonstrated the several ways messages could be initiated and replied by the software.

The ability to send messages to specific hams, through internet links, while using the WinAprs software, is anticipated by either the Dayton Hamfest in May or by the Digital Computer Conference in September. You will be able to click on any ham visible on your screen, invoke your local Internet Provider (IP), and send the message having

it using band-width (repeated) only in the targeted city.

Several Weather Bureau Services have adopted WinAprs for announcing severe weather conditions in targeted areas.

Mark pointed out that the shareware (winaprs211.zip), County (maps.zip) and TIGER map (yourstate.zip, eg FL.zip) information is available on their FTP server as well as from their homepage.

Future releases will include topographical data. This feature is already implemented in the MacIntosh version of the software. It is intended for search-and-rescue operations in mountainous areas. NTS messaging is also planned for implementation. This will be useful during shelter operations following a disaster. The future will also see a watered-down version running on Windows CE for palmtops.

WinAprs has certainly evolved into a powerful ham radio tool since its first release as a converted MacIntosh application. It, together with Steve Dimse's JavaAprs, has truly enlarge the functionality of packet radio well beyond the limits of the VHF horizon. If you have packet and are running Windows, join the excitement and give them a try.

Download the WinAprs files from:
http://www.rutgers.edu/APRS/

View JavaAprs at:
http://www.aprs.net/usa.html

WinAprs and the Internet

Bill Manley KB4XE

One evening this week I was working APRS using WinAprs software on Win95. The usual interesting screens of SE Florida, USA, and a messaging box were in view. The SE Florida map showed the 25 to 40 regulars which are seen every evening. Recalling Mark Sproul's forum at the Hamboree, I decided to explore his software.

I clicked on SETTINGS, TCP/IP CONNECTIONS, and then WWW.APRS.NET 10151. This brought up my DIAL-UP ADAPTER and I initiated the connection to my Cybergate IP. To my astonishment the USA map filled with station icons.

Clicking on LISTS, STATION LIST brought up a screen with many pages of heard stations. I selected the entire screen and clicked on EDIT, COPY to insert them to my clipboard.

I then brought up a MS EXCEL spreadsheet and PASTED the clipboard to it. It instantly filled with the contents that had been seen on the STATION LIST screen. EXCEL provided a convenient way to count the heard stations.

THERE WERE
814 APRS STATIONS
ON LINE!

FROM THE HUDSON LOOP

LETTERS TO THE LOOP -

Dear Editor:

I recently saw the movie "Titanic" and when the Captain was informed that the ship was going to sink, he went to the radio room and ordered the operator to send a "CQD". Being curious, I did some research and found that CQD was the international distress call and that SOS was just being introduced. The second radio operator (who survived to relate the story) suggested using SOS and one source said the Titanic was ***the*** first vessel to send SOS and another said it sent the first SOS ever.

Unfortunately, the chief radio operator, who did not survive, has taken much of the blame for what could have been an avoidable incident. He posted the first six ice warnings he received to the bridge but then came within range of Cape Race, Newfoundland (call sign MCE), and started to work traffic. There was much social traffic and well as business traffic both ways. The Titanic (call sign MGY) received many other ice warnings which the chief operator ignored. In fact he told one ship "Shut up, I am working Cape Race. You are interfering." The last ice warning was for a position just 25 miles from their present position (at that time) and he acknowledged it but never posted it to the bridge. The rest, as they say, is history.

Another operator aboard a nearby ship, the California, shut down for the night against the general rule of the sea. He did not hear the Titanic's SOS and they were in visual range of the ship when they saw the distress rockets. By that time, the Titanic had lost power and wasn't able to respond to the Morse lamp.

Very shortly after the Titanic incident, Gugliemo Marconi had much praise heaped upon him for his contribution to wireless communications. They credit him and the wireless with saving the lives of those passengers who were able to escape the ship in lifeboats. They were rescued by the Carpathia, which was the nearest ship to the Titanic that heard the distress calls over the airwaves.

As an amateur radio operator, I am proud to be a part of continuing the work of Marconi and the tradition he initiated. Fortunately, the good deeds of all radio operators, amateur and professional, have been well documented and we can all be proud.

Alan Lovitch, WB2IXS
(alovitch@prodigy.com)

(Alan, the story of the Titanic as it relates to the history of amateur radio is documented in a series called "The Wayback Machine" written by Bill Continelli, W2XOY. Bill's articles are posted on the Hudson Division homepage, and are GREAT reading for all amateurs! -- Hudson Loop Ed.)

PALM BEACH PACKET GROUP MEETING
FEBRUARY 12 1998

OPENING AND REMARKS
Opening remarks and greeting were made by DOUG (WB4KGY) Introduction of members and guest followed.

WORKSHOP
*** Due to commitments our educational program, presented by BILL (KB4XE) was given prior to the Business Meeting.

YOU ARE 59 IN CORAL SPRINGS - If you are trusting your SWR meters to give the right readings, better look again. A lively informative program was presented by KB4XE. Thanks again for a great presentation.

REPORTS
Treasure's report. MARVIN (KD2CK) reported that the money department is in excellent shape and that a full report will appear in the next issue of the WHITE NOISE. Technical committee report. DOUG (WB4KGY) reports that:

1. Conversion to the NEW APRS frequency
   A. ARRL Board agrees and will contribute up to $ 500.00.
   B. New EPROMS are being acquired for PBPG radios.
   C. Conversion date has not been set.
2. Occasional & random Switch outages still occurring.
3. Tom Ringate, Tampa LAN, has received FPAC code and is updating the software. A new release is in test.

OLD BUSINESS
Get well cards were sent to BOB STAMPER and BURKE GROSSE
FADCA Meeting results:

A. Concurrence with the APRS move to 144.390 Mhz

B. Minor modification to the constitution.

C. Notification of election at Orlando Hamfest for Directors in odd number districts.

Packet books are available for lending. See KE4GUM.
Any Alias suggestions?
Hand out of:

ROSE Switch / NODE'S list.
ROSE user guide.
FPAC referance page.

NEW BUSINESS
We will hold Director's Meeting before next meeting.
Hamfests: ORLANDO / SARASOTA.
PBPG can use your help. Please volunteer !!!!!

ADJOURN
Meeting adjourned @ 21:35 hrs.

Respectively Submitted
Wm. H. Rabun (KE4GUM)

Broward Amateur Radio Digital Society
Minutes of November 15th Meeting

The meeting started in the Motorola Blue Room. There were no new attendees so the usual greetings were dispensed with. The presentation was in two parts, The Digital Communications Conference in Baltimore by Dave, KB0NNZ, and the AMSAT Symposium in Toronto by Bob, N4CU.

Dave started with some information on Spread Spectrum and the Beta test radio boards that were available. Dave had slides from the notes and described the equipment in use. The APRS QSY described below was an topic and Dave discussed some of the issues.

Bob finished up describing the AMSAT symposium. The problems getting Phase 3D in the air included a complete mechanical redesign and an overall cost to AMSAT of over $200,000. This is due to the data from the crashed 501 launch that showed unsurvivable lateral G forces. The 502 launch did not reach the orbit we will need for AMSAT's projected final orbit. We hope this is fixed by ESA before P3D goes up in about April. Future proposed AMSAT projects were the primary subject of the papers presented. There was an excellent antenna demo which included a novel helical antenna feed. Ray Sofer, W2RS, demonstrated an AO-27 FM 2 way Satellite contact with only a dual band handheld and whip antenna from the hotel parking lot at the symposium

We discussed the usefulness of the TAPR Mic-Encoder for Amateur Radio Positioning/Packet System. Dave and Bob will be testing two Mic-Es.

We discussed the move proposed at the DCC and at the AMSAT Symposium to move APRS from 145.79 to 144.39. There will be donations from AMSAT and TAPR to defray digi operators for expenses to move digis in frequency.

Minutes of December 20th Meeting

The Presentation was by John, KN4HX, on the APRSa program. This is a version of APRS that works with Street Atlas. John had and excellent presentation that switched from using APRSDos and APRSa. The Window version is much superior to the DOS version but requires Windows 95. It makes very good use of the point and click capabilities of a GUI interface. This was BARDS first experience

using a LCD overhead projector panel. After we got the bugs worked out it looks like we have a good platform for more informative presentations.

The next meeting will be at Motorola Jan. 17.
Minutes by N4CU

Broward Amateur Radio Digital Society
January 17, 1998

The meeting started immediately in the "Blue" conference room at Motorola. The program was part 2 of APRSa by John, KN4HX. John gave us a very thorough and informative demonstration of the features of APRSa. There are several users of this program among the attendees and we all gained a lot by the questions and answer period.

The second part of the meeting was a discussion of the frequency change to 144.39. This has become a very hot topic on the TAPR APRS sig. and is a subgroup at this time. There are 5 crystal controlled radios with 145.79 crystals on order. We decided to have the crystal manufacturer notified that we wanted the crystals on .39 and will change in this area when the radios arrive.

Dave, KB0NNZ, volunteered to conduct a survey at the Miami hamfest to see what problems a frequency change may bring. i.e. how many crystal controlled radios are in this area, how aware is the APRS population of the frequency change, and anything else that may affect the frequency change.

Minutes by Bob, N4CU

ARTICLES FOR *WHITE NOISE*

The Palm Beach Packet Group accepts articles from other clubs and individuals wishing to have them published in the *White Noise.* This is offered as a gratis service for those not otherwise having publication services at their disposal. Article content should be amateur radio related, including all operating modes, applications including computer, experiences, announcements and reports of meetings. Advertising is not accepted.

We reserve editorial privileges regarding content, spelling, punctuation and structure as well as the decision to publish or not. Articles can not be returned.

Send your copy to:
bmanley@gate.net
KB4XE @WB4TEM.#BCR.FL.US.NOAM