
WHITE



NOISE

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PBPG & BARDS WHO ARE WE?

Bill KB4XE

The invention of the Packet Radio Terminal Node Controller (TNC) by the Vancouver Amateur Digital Communications Group in 1981 more or less marked the beginning of the evolution of digital amateur radio beyond CW and RTTY.

The first operational packet repeater in the US was noted by Peter O'Dell KB1N and Hank Magnuski KA6M in the April 1981 QST. The first transcontinental packet repeater is noted by Edward Karlin K1RT in April 1982 QST. The availability of the TNC kit by the Tucson Amateur Packet Radio (TAPR) spurred wide spread interest in this new mode of digital communications by 1983.

The Florida Amateur Digital Communication Association (FADCA), as a SIG of the Florida Repeater Council (FRC), led the way in Florida with the new operating mode as it swept across the country. In southeast Florida the Palm Beach Packet Group (PBPG) was formed in February 1987 with the underlying theme that packet radio is maturing and the days of true networking over long distances with minimal retries are not far off. By November Doug Welcker WB4KGY, Bill Piazza KB4QVY, Bill Wright W4NVC and Tony Correa HK3QB/W4 steered the new organization towards its goals of building the Florida packet network with new digipeaters, providing expertise and hardware for others engaged in the same objectives as well as training members in their operation.

Monthly meetings were established at the Palm Beach Emergency Operations Center. The original agenda of a short business meeting, technical report, followed by an educational session continues through this day. The group had been established as a Florida non-profit corporation by May 1988.

The Broward LAN Organizational meeting was held at Racal-Milgo February 1988. The name Broward Amateur Digital Society (BARDS) was suggested by Joe Loewy W4ERL (KB4FO) as temporary until a replacement could be decided. But, the name stuck. BARDS is somewhat of a different kind of organization than the PBPG. Organized by Joe and Tom Kneisel K4GFG, it set as its goal to become an unencumbered technical society with no officers, no business agenda, and no dues. BARDS objective is the advancement of all forms of digital communications by amateur radio. Its early agendas clearly were in support of FADCA and the growing packet network particularly in Broward County. However, true to its broader goals, Tom and Bill Manley KB4XE demonstrated amateur facsimile data exchange during one of its early meetings. Meetings host duties were shared by Motorola and Racal-Milgo on an alternate month basis.

At the Miami Hamboree in 1989 principals of both organizations agreed that, in exchange for PBPG publishing the BARDS minutes in its *White Noise*, the BARDS would recommend to its membership that they join the PBPG. There still remains an overlap of the membership of both organizations as well as a supportive atmosphere by both organizations.

Currently the PBPG meets at 19:30 on the second Thursday of each month at the Piccadilly Cafeteria, corner of Summit and Military Trail in West Palm Beach, Florida. Visitors are invited.

Officers and members actively support FADCA and serve on its Board of Directors. The PBPG continues with its charter to advance packet radio in Florida. We provide consultation and equipment to other packet groups as well as own, manage and operate stations:

TYPE	FREQ	CALLSIGN	LOCATION
APRS	144.390	K4PKT-3	WPB
APRS	144.390	K4PKT-1	CLEWISTON
APRS	144.390	K1VAO-3	STUART
APRS	144.390	KF4DXY-3	BOCA
PACKET LAN	145.030	K4PKT-8/9	WPB
PACKET LAN	145.530	K1VAO-8/9	STUART
PACKET LAN	145.630 9K6	K4PKT-8/9	WPB
PACKET BB	223.480	K4PKT-8/9	WPB to BOCA
PACKET BB	440.075 9K6	K4PKT-8/9	WPB to STUART
PACKET BB	445.075 9K6	K4PKT-8/9	WPB BBS FORWARDING
PACKET BB	445.975 9K6	K4PKT-8/9	WPB to BOCA
PACKET BB	223.400	K1VAO-8/9	STUART to OKEECHOBEE
PACKET BB	440.075 9K6	K1VAO-8/9	STUART to WPB
PACKET BB	445.900	K1VAO-8/9	STUART to VERO
PACKET BB	446.550 9K6	K1VAO-8/9	STUART BBS FORWARDING

The PBPG web site can be found at <http://www.qsl.net/pbpg>.

The BARDS now meet at 0900 on the third Saturday of each month and at Motorola at the corner of University Drive and Sunrise Blvd. Visitors are welcome. Talk in on 146.79. The meetings are chaired by Bob Walker N4CU and other members of the Motorola ARC. Recent discussions have addressed the broader aspects of amateur radio. Recent topics have included:

Randy K9BCT on PSK31,
Bill KB4XE and Bob N4CU on contesting software,
Art N2EPI on solar power,
Bill on EZNEC simulation of a 6M Maxon antenna,
Jesse KG4GEG on environmental risks and cures,
Carl W9ZGU on capacitive equivalent series resistance and leakage,
and Bob on a demonstration of the AEA SWR-121.
Next Meeting: January 20, 2001 The Biological Effects of Electromagnetic Radiation, by Quirino Balzano.

The BARDS web site can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/ResearchTriangle/Lab/7781/>

Whoops

Bill Manley - ed

We are regretfully mindful that the previous issue of the *White Noise* was projected to be offered no later than November 2000. Vacationing club officers would return by then. We certainly missed that goal.

The West Palm Beach Hamfest was targeted a the theme for the first post-vacation issue. But yours truly spent that hamfest weekend in the hospital. That, plus a number of related incidents, stood in the way of getting the *White Noise* issued.

We apologize for our tardiness.

(With the Miami Tropical Hamboree scheduled for February 3-4, 2001 and the Orlando HamCation scheduled for February 9-11, 2001, this article is of timely importance to Florida hams. Our thanks to *Worldradio* for their permission to reprint. - ed)

ARE HAMFESTS IN TROUBLE?

Bill Pasternak WA6ITF, "Amateur Radio Conventions", *Worldradio*, pg 37, January 2001

As we enter the new millennium, we are going to shift gears a bit and take a hard look at where Ham radio conventions have been, where they are today and where shows seem to be headed. Actually, it is being done for us by an amateur well known and very respected in the Northeastern U.S. His name is Harold Smith, K2HC, and he is the General Chairman of the Rochester and Buffalo Hamfests.

While Rochester continues to be a successful show, Harold freely admits that Buffalo has not lived up to expectations. And right after the last Buffalo outing, Harold received the following from what he termed as a "dissatisfied attendee." The writer of this message requested to remain anonymous but wrote:

"I was first licensed in 1963 and have been going to local hamfests for many, many years. Over the last few years, I have attended both the Rochester and Buffalo hamfests and am appalled and disappointed at the trend. Both hamfests are mere shells of what they used to be.

"While I was unable to attend the Rochester Hamfest this year, I did attend Buffalo, and it was absolutely the worst. "While I was at the Buffalo hamfest this year, I had to keep checking what my ticket said, since I could have sworn I was in the Bazaar tent at the Erie County Fair.

"I go to hamfests for "Amateur Radio" related exhibits and booths, as well as computer related exhibits and booths, since computers are so integrated in today's Amateur Radio. Leather belts, ceramic doo-dads, and car windshield cracks booths have NO place at a hamfest. Major "Amateur Radio" dealers have steadily disappeared.

"Please put the "Amateur Radio" back in the hamfests. I have to say that after this year's hamfest, I will have to think twice about attending next year. I know that I am not the only local Ham who holds this opinion and I know many who have already stopped attending for the same reason."
signed: A Concerned Amateur

(Note: The writer of this message requested to remain anonymous.)

It took a while, but after giving this note quite a bit of thought, Harold not only responded to this amateur's concerns. He also posted the original letter and his answer to the Rochester Hamfest website -www.rochesterhamfest.org. After reading what he had written, I asked for permission to reprint both items here in *Worldradio* because there is a lot to be learned from the words of both of these Hams. Harold Smith's response is as follows:

"Thank you. Your message says precisely what has been happening to hamfests, not only at Rochester and Buffalo, but nationwide - in Miami, Orlando, Baltimore, Dayton, Dallas, and Huntsville to name a few.

"I have been general chairman of the Rochester hamfest since 1963 and of the Buffalo hamfest since it was inaugurated in 1990. The Rochester event has grown steadily over the years.

The mid 90's were most successful at Rochester. With the excellent facilities at the Erie County Fairgrounds, I had hopes that the Buffalo event would grow and surpass Rochester. Like Rochester, the mid 90's were also the most successful at Buffalo.

"The Rochester and Buffalo hamfests are operated as a service to the Amateur Radio community - not as money raising events. We hope to cover expenses. There have been times at both events where we failed to meet the expenses. Fortunately, there has been an adequate reserve to cover such situations.

"We are able to bring in nationally known speakers and major manufacturers in the exhibit areas. Non-amateur merchants do order booths at the shows. We are not in a position to tell them to go away. We need their booth revenue to help pay the bills.

"Most people have no idea how much it costs to operate a major event such as Rochester. It starts at around \$25,000 just to rent the grounds and Dome Center in Rochester - bare bones. Everything else is extra - and there are lots of extras.

"Having said that, here is the problem -because of the advancing age of the Amateur Radio population, many active people are now inactive. They are not on the air, They are also not attending events such as hamfests. They have't been there and done that!

"And so, attendance declines. As attendance declines, dealers and other exhibitors tend to stay home as well. As that happens, attendance declines even more. It is a 'Catch 22' problem. It has been so bad, there have been failed and canceled hamfest throughout the nation.

"Unfortunately, most of the dealers and exhibitors are not astute business. They need to show attendance at a hamfest on their advertising budget, not their direct sales budget. An appearance at a hamfest is absolute advertising. If you see someone in person, you may consider buying his product.

"The major manufacturers and dealers have held formal meetings at the Dallas and Huntsville shows to discuss this very problem. I attended those meetings. While they all know what is happening, none of them would commit money or work to solve the problem. The meetings ended with no resolution.

"We cannot force any merchant to attend a hamfest. We cannot force any amateur to attend a hamfest. We (the hamfest committee staff), work our butts off trying to make our event world class. We do not set out to create a failure.

"The amateur population is facing an emergency situation. When the lights go out or there is a disaster of some sort, amateurs are on the spot to make things better. Hamfests are an amateur disaster at this time. Amateurs themselves are the only ones who can fix the situation.

"Next spring at Rochester, 1-3 June, the amateur population of upstate New York and southern Ontario should send a message to the Amateur Radio industry (the people who make their living from Amateur Radio). The amateur population should turn out in record numbers. If that happens, the merchants working the event will go home very happy. Those people talk to their contemporaries at other shows. You can bet the number of merchants at Rochester in the year 2002 will exceed all existing records.

"The problem can be fixed. You, and all those who find fault with the hamfest decline, must be willing to contribute one day - attending a hamfest. I have contributed nearly every day for decades. I cannot fix the problem alone. I need your help."

Regards,
Harold Smith, K2HC
General Chairman

Do you think Harold has evaluated the problem in a way that all of us can understand? Do you have any other ideas that can help to revitalize hamfests, Ham radio conventions and even radio clubs? If yes, please address any comments directly to Harold Smith, K2HC, by e-mail to harold@rochesterhamfest.org and copy them to me at billwa6itf@aol.com.

Well that's it for the first column of the new millenium. See you in March with our plans for the 2001 Dayton Hamvention in May and other nifty tid-bits. Till then -73.

PALM BEACH PACKET GROUP MINUTES OCTOBER 12, 2000

OPENING AND REPORTS

The meeting was called to order by President, Doug Welcker WB4KGY, at 19:30 Hrs. All present introduced themselves using their names and call signs. There was at least one new face in the crowd.

Treasurer, Marvin Kaskawits KD2CK , gave the treasurer's report. The report itself will be made available on the pages of *White Noise*.

Doug gave the technical committee report. The Clewiston AP RS is temporarily off the air. Jim Johnson W4JBZ , the site owner, checked the radio and found it wasn't receiving or transmitting. He removed the radio and brought it back to West Palm Beach for repair. The West Palm Beach switch has had its one major antenna problem corrected Wednesday, October 11. When the new antenna and transmission line that we share with the Palm Beach Sheriff Office was installed the transmission line to the trio-band antenna was accidentally cut during the removal of the old line. Andy KF4ATC was instrumental in sorting out this problem and getting the problem resolved. The new Southbay tower, where our western Palm Beach County Switch will be located, is nearing construction phase.

OLD BUSINESS

Due to summer vacations no old business was on the agenda. For those who would like more information on Packet Radio, APRS, or other digital modes, the PBPG has six Packet Books for lending. Please contact Burck KC4UEV if you would like to borrow one. Also information on the SWITCHES & NODES is available on the WEB site www.qsl.net/pbpg .

NEW BUSINESS

There was discussion of the upcoming Hamfest to be held Saturday, October 21st. The PBPG will have a booth and all members are invited to stop by to participate in booth operations. We could really use your help if you would like to get involved. Marvin has the tickets for the drawing - since the ticket stubs are not serrated the tab will need to be cut off before putting them in the Drum. The main prize is the EARTHMATE & Software package. Ticket prices are \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. Jamey will do APRS and provide most of the equipment needed. The handouts will be an APRS guide from Rich K4GPS , various packet flyers from the club, and PacComm catalogues and more. Doug will provide the PBPG banner. There will be 8 1/2 x 11 signs for raffle and memberships. Digital radio information will be available from PBPG library. Finally, Marvin is accepting Memberships this evening and at the Hamfest.

ADJOURN/BREAK/WORKSHOP

There was no workshop due to the length of the Agenda. The next meeting will be Thursday, November 9, 2000. The meeting was adjourned at 20:25 hrs.

PALM BEACH PACKET GROUP MINUTES November 9, 2000

OPENING AND REPORTS

The meeting was called to order by President Doug Welcker (WB4KGY) at 19:30 hrs. All present were known to each other so they did not introduce themselves.

In the absence of Marv Kaskawits (KD2CK) the treasurer's report was given by Mike Michaels (K2GPI). The balance in the savings account is \$1,195.31, the CD that will mature in 1/22/01 is \$4,000.00 and the checking account balance is \$262.00. The report itself will be made available on the pages of "White Noise". In a brief discussion that will affect reporting, it was determined that future financial reports of the club will be provided from the treasurer to the editor of "White Noise".

Doug gave the technical committee report.

1. WPB Switch problems: There was a high SWR between LAN Tx (145.030) and the PBSO splitter. PBSO changed the unit on November 7th, and it is working much better. The 9K6 link to Boca was not running - reset TNC on November 1st. The 9K6 link to Stuart inoperative as of November 7th at 14:00 hrs. Is PBSO responsible?
2. The Clewiston APRS radio was returned to service. The antenna relay was destroyed by a possible lightning strike. Jim Johnson (W4JBZ), the site owner, reinstalled the radio for the club.
3. Boca has a problem forwarding traffic south to Robin (N4HHP). It is currently unresolved.
4. Almost two gallons of water were added to station batteries at WPB.

OLD BUSINESS

The next "White Noise" is in production. More articles are needed.

Hamfest Report: We set up the booth Friday afternoon with Dick and Marvin's help. Jamie brought his computer and demo'd APRS. There was lots of interest. The prize winner was Pete Amar (KD4SPW) from Ft. Pierce.

PBPG has six Packet Books for lending. See Burck (KC4UEV) if you are interested.

The Southbay Switch site is still up in the air due to excessive costs to construct the site.

The handout for SWITCHES and NODES are now on the WEB site.

NEWS and INFO

Bill (KB4VOL) has relocated his Web Page to www.gate.net/~kb4vol. He has improved the layout and selection

SWL Frequency/Station Information - www.anarc.org/naswa

PBC Thrift Store is open November 18th from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. - good buys.

Hamfest Information: November 11th - Port St. Lucie, St. Andrew Lutheran Church, 295 N. Primavista Blvd. Talk in -146.955/146.520
November 18th - UMACR Coral Gables
December 2nd - Tampa Bay Hamfest
December 2nd - Okeechobee Hamfest

NEW BUSINESS

Next month is time for nominations for officers.

We need suggestions on Educational Talks.

We are looking for input on topics for "White Noise" articles and writers.

Memberships are being accepted this evening by Burck.

ADJOURN/BREAK/WORKSHOP

The meeting was adjourned at 20:25 hrs. There was no workshop due to the length of the Agenda

The next meeting will be Thursday, December 14, 2000.

Burck Grosse (KC4UEV)

PALM BEACH PACKET GROUP MINUTES December 14, 2000

OPENING AND REPORTS

The meeting was called to order by President Doug Welcker (WB4KGY) at 19:30 Hrs. Members introduced themselves.

The Treasurer's report was provided by Marvin Kaskawits (KD2CK) and the report was accepted for audit. The report itself will be made available on the pages of "White Noise".

Doug gave the technical committee report.

1. He discussed problems that we have had with the Stuart Switch & APRS.
2. There are still some problems with the BOCA Switch.
3. The new Southbay tower is nearer to construction. The contractor has been chosen.
4. The Clewiston equipment relocation should happen within the next few weeks.

OLD BUSINESS

Doug received a thank you from Pete Amar (KD4SPW). Pete was the winner of the GPS and Delorme software raffled at the GPS Hamfest.

Articles are needed to provide material for "White Noise".

Bill Manley (KB4XE) is working on "White Noise" and hopes to have copy soon.

PBPG has 6 packet books for lending (see Burck - KC4UEV).

Replacement tower site for Belle Glade has created some problems, which were discussed.

Handout for SWITCHES & NODES are now available on the WEB site.

NEWS and INFO

Give PSK-31 a try. There are lots of stations available during this peak in the sun spot cycle especially on 10 meters. Doug reports that the other morning he had 11 European stations on the waterfall in the 2.5 kHz bandwidth of his receiver. The set-up is easy, and it is very good for keyboard to keyboard conversation. DX stations are much more engaging in long QSO's than they are on phone or CW.

Doug reports that Bob Pasquale (WD9ATM) is back on the active list after bypass surgery. You will find him active on the 145.030 LAN daily.

There is a hamfest on January 12th and 13th at Ft. Myers.

Collins Radio has been separated from its parent Rockwell.

Dick Schofield (AF4OR) reports that the VEC testing schedule has changed. Locally testing has been reduced to quarterly with the next test the 2nd Saturday in March.

The IRIDIUM SATELLITE LLC has bought the Iridium satellite system, which was in chapter 11 bankruptcy for \$25 M and started business with a DOD contract for \$72 M for 24 months

In December TSR Wireless (a national paging company) without warning filed for chapter 7 leaving 2.5 million customers without service and 1,700 employees without a job.

More Spectrum auctions are scheduled for this week, for broadband PCS. Next Wave Licenses were reactioned as they were unable to pay the bid price from a previous auction.

What is next on the automotive front? - 42 volt systems. The potential Impact on new and in-service vehicles was discussed. On the technical side, radios we will have to learn how to handle this new voltage. Burck has volunteered to head up this particular subject, and requests that articles and technical tidbits be forwarded to him.

NEW BUSINESS

President Doug Welcker asked for nominations from the floor for officers for the coming year. Nominations were made, candidates accepted nomination, and the election was held. The results are as follows:

President	Doug Welcker
Vice Pres.	Burck Grosse
Treasurer	Marvin Kaskawits
Secretary	Dick Schofield

Marvin is accepting memberships this evening.

If you would like to get involved, we could use your help.

ADJOURN/BREAK/WORKSHOP

The program was a video tape made by Andy Czermann (KF4ATC) showing the Work being done on the ADELPHIA tower when our new antenna and line were installed.

The meeting was adjourned at 20:30 hrs.

The next meeting will be Thursday, January 11, 2001.

Burck Grosse (KC4UEV)

Broward Amateur Radio Digital Society August 19, 2000

Jesse, KG4GEG, gave us an in depth presentation on keeping a healthy atmosphere in our mobile, home base, and home. He described a lot of symptoms, causes and cures for environmental problems in our home. He also covered the ergonomics of a good hamshack.

Seems a lot of subtle symptoms like drowsiness in the hamshack may be cured by better ventilation or new air conditioner filters. Do you clean your car's AC often or have you never cleaned it? Also Jesse's rule of thumb for your hamshack chair is that it cost half as much as you have spent on equipment. There are a lot of chair contours that we ignore. The next program hasn't been decided yet. If anyone has a good subject let me know.

Broward Amateur Radio Digital Society October 29, 2000

Carl, W9ZGU, brought us a lot of test equipment and information on capacitors. Carl recent built a kit from Australia that test Equivalent Series Resistance, ESR. Other than this \$45 kit, the minimum price for a piece of equipment that will do this test is about \$500 from B&K. Carl also brought in a Sprague capacitor tester, which will test leakage. He showed us the difference between leakage and ESR. He "formed" a capacitor and told us about capacitor aging, wear, and drying out.

Dave, KB0NNZ, and Bob, N4CU, described the TAPER/ARRL Digital Communications Conference last month in Orlando.

We brought in the "GOTCHA" from the May 13 meeting described in the May/June 2000 White Noise. This was where we told Carl he missed the greatest meeting of the year...which really did not happen.

There were several announcements scattered through the meeting. One was about the conflict for the November 18 meeting. We will combine this meeting with the December meeting which will be set earlier. There are a couple of functions happening that weekend. One is the ARRL November Sweepstakes and we will send out information on participating in this contest.

The White Noise web site is www.qsl.net/pbpg. The BARDS web site is <http://www.geocities.com/ResearchTriangle/Lab/7781/73>, Bob

Broward Amateur Radio Digital Society December 16, 2000

Bob, N4CU, brought an AEA SWR-121 graphical HF antenna analyser to the meeting along with the software application that runs and displays the antenna plots. A 200-ohm resistor through a tuner was plotted to how the device worked. Once again we had problems with the LCD display panel but Bill, KI4US, Dave, KB0NNZ, and Chuck, KE4NNF, got the panel running to show the plots Bob had run on his dipole. The plots were from 3.474 MHz to 3.564, centered on 3.524 MHz. They were by the SWR-121, the MFJ256B, and a TenTec wattmeter. It was pretty obvious the SWR-121 readings were noisy and inaccurate. The MFJ-259B was better but still read 1.3 to one on a 1:1 load. The root cause of the reading problem is pick up of extraneous RF that is not the reflected power. The 0-dBm signal source of the SWR-121 and the 8-dBm signal source of the SWR-121 limit the return power expected by the meter. Any extraneous RF is interpreted as a higher SWR reading. This is not a limit for the 10-watt radio driven SWR indication read by the TenTec. In fact, Jim, WA4CSQ, using a Hewlett Packard Vector Impedance meter, saw the same problem. Plots run by Bob on his mobile antenna and later by John, KN4HX, on his vertical showed no extraneous signal problems. The problem is location and/or antenna dependent. This is not the only problem with this type of measurement. Bill, KB4XE, said there was a Usenet, rec.radio.amateur.antenna, thread on using the MFJ-256B (MFJ-259B - ed). The conclusion from this thread is that common mode currents, i.e. RF on the co-ax, is a major cause of inaccurate reading with this category of test instruments. The summary of all this is that the graphical SWR analyzer works and provides a more understandable presentation of an antenna's SWR but one has to be careful interpreting the results.

Jim, KD4GR, presented Bob a pocket knife for his work planning and providing equipment for the ARRL November Sweepstakes Contest project at Markem Park

Al, K4BVL, brought us the latest information on P3D, now AO-40. Seems the satellite is not doing very well at this time. The January 20th meeting will be a presentation on the Biological Effects of Electromagnetic Radiation by Quirino Balzano, Q, is Motorola's chief scientist on this subject. Q. is about to retire and this will be our last chance to hear him.

The White Noise web site is www.qsl.net/pbpg. The BARDS web site is <http://www.geocities.com/ResearchTriangle/Lab/7781/>.

73, Bob, N4CU