

## 30 Years on the Illini Net Congratulations Earl!

The Illini Net reached a milestone of 30 years on the air Wednesday, March 1, 2006. Earl Finder, W9CGZ, started the net, and he still runs it on or around 14.320 MHz daily at 1130 local CU time. Here are Earl's comments on the net:

The Illini Net began when I retired on March 1, 1976. W6RWD, Ray Cunningham who had moved from Urbana to Hollywood, CA two or three years earlier and I agreed to listen for each other on 20 meters late each morning. This quickly turned into daily contacts, and as time went by, local hams joined us and many non-local hams heard us and checked in. Eventually, there were frequently as many as 12 to 15 check-ins each day. Now, 5 to 7 check-ins are the normal pattern.

Over the years, many hams have checked in consistently for quite some time and then seemed to disappear. But, they would reappear again months and sometimes years later. Our discussions have covered just about every subject you can imagine, especially related to ham radio questions and problems and later about computers. We seldom talked politics or religion, although these subjects were not completely absent. We have lived through many family crises, including the passing of spouses, illness of pets, including the trials and tribulations of K6MHY and his horses.

Since many of the hams, both local and from out of town were graduates of the U of I or had connections with Illinois, we discussed many times the successes and failures of the Illini basketball and football teams and many other matters related to the U of I. On one occasion in the early 1980's I mentioned the health problems my XYL had been having which doctors had been unable to diagnose.. One of the former local hams by the name of Jack Baum, (I can't remember his call), who, at the time, lived in Alamogordo, NM, after hearing the symptoms, immediately said that he had some experience with diabetes and the corollary problem of

hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). He suggested some books on the subject, which I checked out from the library. After following the advice in these books concerning a diet of high protein and low carbohydrates, my XYL began to show immediate improvement and basically recovered her health in a very short time.

We were immensely elated several years ago when KG6QR notified us that his son had won the California lottery. I believe the amount was \$10, 000,000 before taxes. One time, we were in Florida in our motor home. Illinois and Indiana were playing a crucial football game. Of course, the game was not broadcast on radio in Florida and it was not on TV. So, W9SB, in Champaign, and I arranged to check with each other on 20 meters every half hour or so. He kept me up to date on the scoring as it transpired and then the final results. As I remember, the Illini won in a dramatic fashion near the end of the game and I believe they went to the Rose Bowl after that season (Perhaps 1984).

One of the first hams I ever knew about lived two doors from my grandmother's home on Prairie street in Champaign in the early 1930's.. He was a young fellow by the name of Dan Hazen. I don't think I met him at that time, but I always remembered his name, especially since his father had the same name and later became a ham with the call of W9HUM. Around 1990, KB6PBM (Ray) said he had met a ham from Champaign by the name of Dan Hazen at his local radio club in Los Angeles. Ray told Dan, then KF6R, about the Illini Net and Dan joined us on a fairly regular basis for many years.

The Illini Net has been conducted almost every day even when my XYL and I traveled in the wintertime in our motor home. We have operated from 12,000-foot mountain passes, the seashore, Death Valley, and most other types of terrain around the country and in Canada. It has been fun for me and I hope for the net members. Unfortunately, a very high number of the hams on the roster of the Illini Net are silent keys. But, this is life. It has been great to get to know them over the air and I have had the pleasure of

eyeball QSOs which many of them, either through visits at their QTH or when they came here. Below are calls of hams who checked in and have ties to Champaign-Urbana.

AL7HN W9GLR K6MHY KC5DP KD4JOS N6JJA N8ALJ K9KUZ NF6R NM9V NP4V NT7L W0PEA W6NPJ W9AXL W9CD W9CGZ W9CWN W9HQE W9IUR W9RRY W9RWZ W9RXC W9YR WA9IXS WA9RIL WA9WJE WB9CRA W9BCN WA9WET W9SB N9HXL C6AHW KK7AC W9OPY W9FVN W9CFL W9SEH AA9X KF9Z K9QZI N9GOC W9ULS W9JPN K4DRN W9BM W5CSY WR9X WA9STI W9DEA K9RSL K0SRW K9BF KA9SZX K9SI WB9KMD W9YH NO9Z W9KFX KA9IBS KA9EES W9KQL N9GKA K9FLP

Many others not related to CU also checked in.

## EchoLink Adventures

By K9QZI

My recent travels provided me with the opportunity to use EchoLink frequently. I spent a week in the Orlando area prior to the hamfest. The 442.100 repeater has an outstanding coverage area and hosts both IRLP and EchoLink. The repeater can be entertaining as well. It announces the time every 15 minutes, complete with a "Big Ben" chime, and sometimes a cuckoo is heard after the chime. Also, any user can initiate a long time report. It contains a "discussion" of the time, "is that correct?", etc, which can be entertaining. Temperature, weather forecasts, and an S-meter are available as well. I enjoyed being able to talk back to Champaign from almost anywhere in Orlando, using an HT. I appreciated everyone listening for me during that time. If you would like to check out the system, go here <http://www.qsl.net/ke4tte>

A couple of weeks later, I was in the area around the Wisconsin Dells where I used the 145.310 repeater with EchoLink. Again, I was able to visit with many back here on the link. On both trips I did check into our Thursday night net on .76. You can have a lot of fun talking back home if you check the listings for nodes before you travel.

## 2 Meter FM Challenge

The 2 Meter FM Challenge appears once again! Started by Sean, KX9X, it ran several times until Sean moved from the area. Zack, W9SZ, revived the Challenge and scheduled it for Sunday, March 19, from 8 to 9 p.m. The rules and details are on both the W9SEH and K9CU websites. This is always a fun activity, and you don't need a lot of equipment to participate. Check out the rules and join the fun on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

## Hamfests

As usual, hamfests are a little scarce during the winter months. However, one stands out from all the rest. That is the Orlando Hamcation at Orlando, Florida. Yes, it is a bit of a drive, but well worth the trip. It was February 10-12 at the fairgrounds in Orlando. As usual, the locals apologized for the cool weather – it only got up to the low 70s during the weekend. This hamfest appears to be growing in numbers while most are declining. There was a large outdoor flea market, a large indoor flea market, and a large commercial vendor building. Friday and Saturday were very busy from opening to close. Friday was a half-day and Saturday a full day. Sunday was like most multi-day hamfests, a little slow. Everyone reported excellent sales. It almost felt like Dayton. Some of us actually ran out of merchandise to sell. The hamfest committee was most helpful and well organized. One of the committee members is W9HJM, Jack Clark, who used to live in our area. He is now an Orlando resident. Zane, KB9LCJ and his wife attended, as well as Milt, K9QZI. Also, former Champaign residents, Al Saldeen, WB9BSX and his wife attended as they now live in Deltona, Florida. If you want to take a break from the cold weather next year, plan to attend the Orlando Hamcation!

It is not a hamfest, but Amateur Electronics in Milwaukee will hold their annual AES Superfest at the store on March 30 and April 1. Many manufacturers will display their goods, and usually there are several excellent seminars at the event. It runs Friday afternoon into early evening, and Saturday a.m. to early afternoon.