

Mark Garrett, KA9SZX, is Moving

Mark Garrett, KA9SZX, a long time member of the club is moving to Macomb, Illinois around the middle of May. He has accepted a position with Western Illinois University as the Assistant Director of Technology, or in other words, the Chief Engineer of the Broadcast Radio Stations at Western. They are Public Radio stations WIUM and WIUW, both FM. WIUM, a fully digital station, covers Western Illinois, while WIUW covers Southeastern Iowa and Northwest Missouri. The stations also provide a full reading service for the blind with several reading studios.

Mark is a Champaign native. He was employed by WCIA for 20 years. Recently he has been the engineer for AAA Entertainment Radio Group and WPGU radio.

Mark has been a member of the Twin City Amateur Radio Club not only as a supporting member since he joined in 1983, but he also served as Treasurer, and currently he is a Board Member. His election to Treasurer was at a meeting during his absence. He was instrumental in bringing Amateur Radio Newline to our Thursday night Champaign County 2 Meter Net. For over 19 years, he provided the audio feed for Newline to the net. In the early days, he would spend considerable time downloading the program each week over a dialup line. Recently, with high-speed connections, it has been much easier and faster. Only a few times substitutes ran Newline in Mark's absence.

As an Amateur Television enthusiast, Mark established an ATV repeater for local use in the early 90s. That repeater operated for about 10 years. Some of the NASA missions were carried on the repeater, and everyone using ATV locally could operate through the repeater. He also provided a NASA audio feed whenever there was a mission operating. That feed was on 146.880 MHz. He began those transmissions in October 1988.

Ballooning is also one of Mark's strong interests. He has been involved in many Midwest balloon launches and chases (locating the equipment after the balloon bursts and descends). He even generated enough interest locally that a few balloons were launched using garbage bags and duct tape. Ballooning is launching large balloons with ham radio gear on board – repeaters, GPS transmission, TV cameras, and beacons. Mark has also been very active with local foxhunts, looking for hidden transmitters. Since January 1992, Mark operated a beacon transmitter from his home on 28.215 MHz. Beacons aid in determining band conditions, and operate continuously.

Mark assisted with the operation and maintenance of our local repeaters. He is always willing to pitch in and help with any repeater work. He is a member of the club Repeater Committee. At our recent auctions, Mark provided the video service where we could see on a large screen, the item being auctioned. This enhanced our auction. He hosted the IRLP node for Champaign-Urbana at his home.

Mark's plans are to move to Macomb, but he will return to Champaign-Urbana frequently on weekends. He will move from his present residence slowly, which means we will see him around from time to time. He also will keep in touch using EchoLink, on our 146.76 repeater.

Party for Mark

On Saturday, May 13, a going away party for Mark will be at the home of Pat and Donna Curtin, N9GOC and N9KVE, 2507 Berniece Dr in Champaign. That's in the Rolling Acres Subdivision, in the area of Curtis and Duncan. The event starts around 5 p.m. and everyone is asked to bring a side dish to share, and your own lawn chairs. Please contact Sherry Fisher, N9DOG, 351-7655, if you plan to attend.

We wish Mark a huge success with this move. We can't thank him enough for his many years of service to the Twin City Amateur Radio Club.

Hamfests

A few have come and gone, but the big one is right around the corner. The Dayton Hamvention is May 19-21. This is always a "Don't Miss" event. Almost everything is on schedule, with some ticket packets still not received yet. They are mailing the materials now, so if you have not received yours, it will arrive soon. Hotel rooms are at a premium, both price and availability. A few rooms might still be available, but most locations are filled. Lodging requires a 3 night minimum stay and the campgrounds now require a 4-night commitment. From the talk we hear, Outside Vendor spaces may still be available. Plan to go if you possibly can!

On April 30, the MARK Hamfest was held at Arthur. For the second year, the weather dampened the hamfest. Rain was in the area much of Saturday, and remained on Sunday, the day of the hamfest. With cool temperatures and wind, the outdoor flea market was not very active. A few vendors did set up outside and sales were ok during dry periods. Several moved inside for the day. There was a good crowd, but down from normal, due to the weather.

This weekend, May 7, is a hamfest at the fairgrounds in Sandwich, Illinois. That's near DeKalb. It has always been a good hamfest, worth making the trip to attend. June 3-4 is Princeton, Illinois, now a 2-day event. If you happen to be in the Dallas, TX area June 9-10, Hamcom is Friday and Saturday. They have moved from Arlington to Plano, Texas. July 8 is Indianapolis, Indiana, at the same location as the past couple of years. July 9 is Aurora, Illinois. Then on July 16 is the first one at Peotone, Illinois. August 13 is the second one at Peotone. Don't forget that Radio Expo at Grayslake is now August 26-27. Just prior to that, the Huntsville, Alabama hamfest is August 19-20. All inside the Von Braun Center, it is an excellent hamfest.

Wanted – 8mm movie projector. Please contact Ben, K9BF, if you have one to sell.

Field Day 2006

Wayne, AB9FJ and Ralph, W9PGE, are heading up our Field Day operation for this year. The weekend is June 24-25.

Field Day, held on the last weekend of June each year, is a time when radio amateurs across the country operate under emergency power, making contacts with each other. It is not a contest, but a time for amateurs to test their emergency skills and equipment. Most clubs operate in a park or on a mountaintop or somewhere other than home. Generators and batteries are used for power. Portable antennas are erected. For a 24-hour period, all stations contact as many other stations as possible. Points are scored for contacts, and tallied by the ARRL. Scores are compared only with stations in the same class, or same number of transmitters.

This is an opportunity to see Amateur Radio fully in action. Guest operators are always welcome, with experienced operators on hand to guide the guests. It is an excellent opportunity for a social gathering, as in years past when we have seen many of our inactive members visit and meet their friends. We have held a potluck dinner for the evening meal in the past, which was most successful. The Field Day operation takes a lot of work, but with our hobby, most of that "work" is really fun. More details will be in the June Newsletter. However, if you want to participate or help in any way, please contact Wayne or Ralph right away.

Antenna Goes East

The Danville club has had many problems with the 146.820 repeater. It was struck by lightning twice, which damaged the equipment and destroyed the feedline. The club is trying to replace the repeater with one at their clubhouse. Funds are limited for the replacement. The TCARC Board and Officers agreed that we would donate our old 146.76 antenna from University Inn to the Danville club. They will use it at the new location and they appreciate it.