

Hamfests

There were many hamfests over the summer months. July found the Indianapolis hamfest alive and well. The crowd was good and about the same as last year. The weather cooperated well to make the weekend enjoyable. At Peotone, the Kankakee Radio Club held their hamfest in July and the Hamfesters Radio Club held theirs in August. The July weekend was much smaller than the August fest. Both were smaller than they had been in the past, in vendors and attendees. The weather was warm but enjoyable for both. At the July hamfest, Rob, N9RIX, from Paxton, won the \$100 cash third prize.

A week after the Hamfesters Hamfest, Huntsville, Alabama held theirs at the Von Braun Center in Huntsville. This year, 10 of us represented the Champaign-Urbana area. It was great to see so many locals at Huntsville. Most arrived early, to have time to visit the Space Center Museum and make a trip to Chattanooga to ride the Incline Railroad up Lookout Mountain. We also visited the "Chattanooga Choo Choo" which is now a museum with a trolley ride and a huge model train display.

The hamfest was about the same as in the past with a few less sellers. Some tables were not occupied, but only a few. Sales were a little slow, as reported by several vendors.

Don Wilbanks of Amateur Radio Newslines presented The Young Ham of the Year Award to Catherine E. Ferry (NC8F) -- an 18-year-old from Silver Lake, Ohio, on Saturday at the hamfest. Catherine was selected based on her long-term commitment to Amateur Radio, her work in public service and in promoting the hobby/service to others. The daughter of Bruce Ferry, AK8B and the late Joan Ferry, Catherine was first licensed in 1998 at age 10 and received her Extra class license at 13. She is currently an Assistant Emergency Coordinator for Administration in charge of taking the minutes and maintaining copies of important Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) documents.

All indoors, the hamfest was a most enjoyable 2-day event. The hamfest committee provided their usual outstanding "Southern Hospitality" all weekend.

Chicago's Radio Expo moved their date at Grayslake to the last weekend in August. This permitted many of us to attend, having no conflict with Peoria. The crowd was larger than last year, but still much smaller than a few years ago. The weather cooperated once again to make it a nice weekend. The fairgrounds have now been sold, so we are waiting for future announcements on dates and location.

September 16-17 is the Peoria Hamfest at the Expo Gardens in Peoria. Mark your calendars for this one! If you plan to attend only one day, Saturday is the day to be there.

The Decatur, Illinois hamfest is October 21. The date was moved from May to avoid conflicts. It is a one-day hamfest on Saturday.

Club Information

The Twin City Amateur Radio Club meets monthly on the second Tuesday at the UI Fire Institute at 7:00 p.m., unless otherwise announced. At times, we may arrange a tour at a different location. Watch the newsletter for these changes. We meet September through June, and not in July or August. Membership is open to Amateur Radio Operators and anyone else interested in the hobby. Dues are \$20 per year for individuals and \$21 for a family residing in the same household. The membership calendar year runs January 1 to December 31. There is no prorated dues amount for anyone joining during the year. We have a contest group in the club, which functions somewhat separate from the main club. Ben, K9BF, heads that group. We operate one repeater on 146.760 MHz. We hold a net on that repeater each Thursday evening at 9 p.m. local time. The net accepts announcements and for sale or swap items. Amateur Radio Newslines is transmitted during the net.

KX9X in the News

In the Summer 2006 edition of CQ VHF Magazine, there is a nice feature article by Sean Kutzko, KX9X, who grew up in Urbana. Most of us remember him from Field Day and other contests. He moved south of Springfield a couple of years ago. The article is about a Dxpedition to grid EN20, around Rock Port, Missouri. It was June 9-12, coinciding with the June VHF QSO Party. Sean and Matt, NM9H operated from a KOA campground in that grid square. The article includes pictures of both Sean and Matt. In case you are wondering, Rock Port is on the western edge of Missouri between Omaha, Nebraska and St Joseph, Missouri. Evidently there is little or no Amateur Radio activity there.

Long-Silent Suitsat-1 Keeps Going and Going

From ARRL News

When SuitSat-1 -- the novel satellite built in a surplus Russian Orlan spacesuit -- was launched during a spacewalk from the International Space Station last February 3, those familiar with orbital mechanics predicted it would stay in orbit for 120 days at best. As of August 25, some 203 days (nearly seven months) later -- largely forgotten and its ham radio voice long since silent -- SuitSat-1 has defied the odds and remains in orbit some 155 miles above Earth.

A project of the Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) program, SuitSat-1, identifying as RS0RS, transmitted its voice greetings on 2 meters plus an SSTV picture thousands of times. Although its signal was far weaker than it was supposed to be for reasons never determined with any certainty, SuitSat-1 remained operational for more than two weeks.

ARISS International Chairman Frank Bauer, KA3HDO, had credited ARISS-Russia's Sergei Samburov, RV3DR, and his colleagues with

coming up with the SuitSat concept, called Radioskaf or Radio Sputnik in Russian. The SuitSat-1 mission proved to be an Amateur Radio

public relations bonanza. In addition to prompting dozens of news items on Web sites and in journals around the world, Reader's Digest judged SuitSat-1 "Best Empty Suit" in its "America's 100 Best: The 2006 List" Popular Science ran an article about SuitSat-1 in its June issue called "Tossed in Space."

To keep the SuitSat-1 momentum going a bit longer ARISS and AMSAT in May announced a "Chicken Little Contest" <<http://www.amsat.org/amsat-new/ariss/suitsatContest.php>>, in which participants pick the date on which they believe SuitSat-1 will drop out of orbit and burn up in Earth's atmosphere. Entrants are only allowed one guess, and the winner will be the individual who picks the date closest to SuitSat-1's actual demise. Those who have not already entered may do so by filling out the online entry form on the AMSAT Web site. The odds could be in their favor.

Certificates will go to winners in each of three age groups. Winners not only earn bragging rights, but the fame and notoriety associated with successful satellite re-entry prognostication.

Even before SuitSat-1 went silent, ARISS and AMSAT already were discussing the possibility of a SuitSat-2 with contacts in Russia, although plans remain tentative at this stage. ARRL ARISS Liaison Rosalie White, K1STO, is among those named to the SuitSat-2 team, which will meet prior to the ARISS International Meeting/AMSAT Space Symposium October 5-10. Among other things, the team will look into the possibility of equipping SuitSat-2 with solar panels instead of just batteries, to extend its usable life. No formal announcements about SuitSat-2 are expected until around mid-October.

Meanwhile, the time grows nigh when Suit-Sat-1 will pick up enough additional drag from Earth's atmosphere that friction-generated heat will cause it to burn up and vaporize. Just when that will happen is still anyone's guess.