

Okmulgee **DAILY TIMES** *News*

Ham radio club hits the airways

By CHERYL SCHUMAN / 6-27-03

A new Ham radio club has formed in Okmulgee County. The organization, Indian Territory Amateur Radio Society, has twelve members at the present time, but new members are being sought. This is a perfect opportunity for anyone that has an interest in becoming a ham radio operator, to learn from those with years of experience building and using amateur radios.

The initial start-up costs for the ham radio novice, is not costly, stated ITARS President Bill Griffin. "First thing is passing the amateur radio test," said Griffin. "A book can be purchased from Radio Shack for about six dollars. After the book is studied, then the potential ham operator can take the test."

Griffin said used radios can be purchased for \$50, new ones usually run around \$100. "To get started in this hobby takes less money than people realize," commented Griffin.

"Like with any hobby, you can spend as much as you like, but it is relative inexpensive to set up a ham radio operation." Griffin said he has built much of his equipment himself. This is called "brewing". "You home-brew your own radios and antennas," said Griffin. "I just put up a new 40 foot tower recently."

The more advanced or higher licensed a ham radio operator becomes, the farther abroad they will be able to send and receive radio messages. "The first license is called "technician", with this license an operator can broadcast locally," said Griffin. "However, the orbiting satellites now can enable further communication. When I

first got my technicians license, I talked with someone in Canada." Gone are the days of "over", "out" and "roger", said ITARS member Dave Lugo.

"Talking on a Ham radio is as easy as talking on the telephone," stated Lugo. "The only requirement is you have to say your 'call sign' every ten minutes." The federally issued call sign is a series of letters and numbers, the numbers indicate which portion of the United States the operator lives. This area of Oklahoma has a "5" call. Example: NI5X or W5TAZ, etc.

"A lot of radio operators frown on using the old over, out, roger words," said Griffin. "Although, you can say 'over' or 'back to you', to indicate it is the other person's turn to talk." Both Griffin and Lugo said absolutely no profanity is allowed on the amateur radios. "To do so could cause the operator's license to be taken away," stated Lugo.

A big part of ham radio is public service, said Griffin. "We help out the local Emergency Operations Center in Tulsa," said Griffin. "We also help out the National Weather Service." Lugo said, "anytime you are watching one of the Tulsa TV stations and they are giving out storm information, they are getting it from the National Weather Service, who in turn, are getting the weather updates from guys like us."

Continuing Griffin said, "it is true that they have the weather radar, but they can't see what is happening on the ground. That is where the amateur radio operator comes in." Griffin said they relay information such as whether funnel clouds, or tornadoes are forming, or how large the hail is coming down.

Ham operators are world-wide, said Griffin. He has talked with other operators in Japan and Italy. Even at that distance, the reception is very clear. "If the conditions are right, you really don't even need to use very high power," stated Griffin. Both Griffin and Lugo agreed Ham radio operating is a hobby the entire family can enjoy. "Kids really like talking on the radio and are capable of passing the technician's test and getting their license at an early age," said Lugo. The radio set-up itself only takes up the amount of space a computer would occupy. "Or less," said Lugo.

The ITARS will have an activity at Kiddy Lake, 12:00 noon on Saturday, June 28, 2003. "Folks can come out, use our call sign and talk on the radio," said Griffin. "We invite anyone, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-Hers, everyone that wants to learn more about becoming an amateur radio operator, to come out to Kiddy Lake and pay us a visit!"

For more information about the ITARS Activity Day, please call Bill Griffin at 232-8487 or David Lugo at 267-5136.