

September 2009 Newsletter Vol. 17, Issue 9

Next Meeting – Saturday September 12th
Tailgate Swap Meet @ 10am, Foxhunt @ Noon
Picnic @ 4:30pm with Meeting to Follow
Location: Victory Park in Blooming Prairie, MN

Treasurer's Report

GENERAL FUND

Balance 07/26/09	\$1,387.23
Dues Paid	+000.00
Deposit	+000.00
Expenses	-000.00
Balance 09/06/09	\$1,387.23

MAINTENANCE FUND

Balance 07/26/09	\$4,189.43
Dues Paid	+000.00
Deposit	+00.00
Donations & Interest	+00.00
Expenses	-000.00
Withdrawal	-00.00
Balance 09/06/09	\$4,189.43

Submitted by KB0SVG Mary Nystrom / AARC Treasurer

Minutes to the August 1, 2009 Meeting

The August Meeting was held at the Red Cross and was brought to order at 9:06 AM by President AI N0RZO. 16 members and 1 guest were in attendance. The treasurer's report and minutes to July meeting were approved as printed in the July & August 2009 newsletters.

AI N0RZO discussed the upcoming Mower County Fair ham radio station, also the further Tower Trailer refurbishing by Mike KC0AAB and his son Dillon KD0DTX. AI also talked about the donated radio equipment from Orville Moran KB0QKD.

Planning for the September Swap Meet / Fox Hunt / Picnic was discussed. The date of Saturday September 12 was chosen, with the location to be Victory Park in Blooming Prairie. Swap meet at 10am, Fox Hunt at Noon and Picnic at 4:30pm with a short meeting to follow. Brats and hot dogs were donated by the Austin Shriners to us for our picnic. The Shriners received the brats and hot dogs from Hormel. THANK YOU.

Dean KA0RMP discussed the plans for the upcoming Mower County Fair and asked for volunteer sign ups.

The Albert Lea Amateur Radio Club is setting up an APRS digipeater at the location of Bob

KB0PFE here in Austin. The only club member of our Austin club that is APRS capable is Tom KC0VII of St. Ansgar. This will allow other radio operators in the Austin area to jump into APRS. Junior N0OJL (Albert Lea Club President) assured me that he will be happy to help us understand what to do to get set up individually. Tentative plans for an APRS Tech Meeting are in the works.

Mike KC0YQU inquired about getting another Club T-Shirt and John KB0SPM volunteered to work on it.

Motion to adjourn was made by Mary KB0SVG and seconded by Tom KC0VII and approved by unanimous vote.

Submitted by John KB0SPM / AARC Secretary

MOWER COUNTY FAIR REPORT

The Austin Amateur Radio Club wrapped up its 4th year of show-and-tell at the Mower County Fair. Our gracious host, the Mower County Historical Society (MCHS) invited us to return in 2010; we accepted. The Society does not charge the club for space in its Fire Equipment Museum. We use about 8 X 10 feet floor space in a building equipped with electricity. We operate from noon until 8 pm, then our equipment is unplugged and the building is secured until the next day.

In the past, we have operated a variety of dipoles. This year we did something different. We used the mobile antenna, hoisting its mast about 35 feet high. Perched atop the rotor shaft was a 2 meter Yagi horizontal antenna pointed south and below the Yagi was an HF 3-element beam. This year we experimented with an inherited G5RV antenna, it was an abysmal failure. It literally choked itself to death, so we replaced that dipole with a proven reliable 80-meter dipole and coupled that to a tuner with excellent results.

The human energy exerted erecting the mobile antenna was sweaty work. The high ratio of manpower expended vs. the low number of QSO's did not justify our time, and effort, erecting the mobile antenna. But, alas, that's a small price to pay for sweat equity in show business. KB0SPM's paint splattered chatter added color to the construction crew's give-and-take conversation, meanwhile, Tom and Justin stood on the roof quietly observing the frayed knot below. Hair scratching was plentiful amongst laborers Ray, Al, Denny, Keith and Dean. The antenna project was completed in two hours.

ARRL literature handouts were available. We solicited radiograms if we remembered to ask. Having club QSL cards with information about meetings, net schedules, web site, FCC testing, etc., would be a helpful talking tool. Just for the fun of it we could have a few give-a-way cards: "DANGER: BEWARE HAM RADIO OPERATOR"

Although it is fun to display ones radio equipment and operator acumen, don't expect to do any serious knob-twisting at the Fair. More than two club members at the operating position is a hindrance. Allowing for one operator for the equipment and the other member to field questions from the public, seems to be a good mix of time and talent. Steve very wisely brought along his wife to record evidence of good operating skills.

Amateur television broadcasting using microwave links to nearby TV receivers impressed the public. This bit of wizardry generated conversation about ham radio technology. A tip of the hat goes to Vern, Jim, Don and Carl for their expertise.

Let me share with you my latest idea for generating National Traffic System (NTS) radiograms. a. Attend the next VE session with a handful of radiogram forms.

- b. Explain the relevance and importance of NTS in (band utilization, operator proficiency)
- c. Solicit the new licensee to generate a "ham-gram".
- d. Radiograms are sent free of charge.

The club's refurbished trailer is envied by many, but replicated by few. Our mobile antenna is the shining jewel at residence. Having said that, one's valuable assets must be protected and maintained. Protection is the result of attention to details: proper maintenance happens with dedicated, trained personnel. My point is: we need skill-training to assure the equipment is operated safely, the unit erected and dismantled safely, fully functional equipment (including all nuts and bolts), antennas assembled and mounted / oriented properly on the rotor (preferably with the stacked arrays pointing in the same direction) and a written SOP (Standard Operating Procedure). Antenna cables should be clearly labeled, and sufficient hand tools to complete project. And don't forget to bring the duct tape. Stay calm, be cool - tact and diplomacy always travels well. Have fun.

Thanks to all who helped make amateur radio at the County Fair a worthy venture.

Good Luck and 73 Dean / KAØRMP / Austin

Free Radiograms:

The National Traffic System is ready, willing and able to handle your radiogram. If you are a ham, ideally you'll compose the message, then you jump on the air to pump the traffic into a local or regional net using SSB phone or CW signals. If you are not a ham or you are a ham and don't have the necessary radio equipment, or you don't have the time to meet schedules, give the message to a friendly traffic handler, it's sent free of charge. All that's needed is the recipient's name, address, telephone number and your desire to send happy information to someone that's least expecting a radiogram; don't let message numbers, preamble, routing instructions stop you, that's the handler's job. Holiday greetings are always in style - just do it. I'll help you stay in touch.

Dean / KAØRMP - 507-433-1051

PSK the RED GREEN WAY

PSK31 was developed by English amateur radio operator Peter Martinez (G3PLX) and introduced to the wider amateur radio community in December 1998. Martinez initially called his creation "varicode", because it uses variable length encodings (Huffman codes) to represent characters. blaa, blaa, blaa.. High tech stuff over my head. but anyway.

PSK31 was enthusiastically received, and has since quickly spread into worldwide use. Due to the efficiency of the mode, it has become especially popular with operators whose circumstances do not permit the erection of large antenna systems and/or the use of high power. Very little equipment, in addition to a standard radio transceiver, is required—normally an old PC and a few cables will suffice; the software is both free to download and runs on older, slower computers.

Well, how about that. free software, standard radio transceiver, computer and cables is all we need to do this relatively new digital form of communication. I was looking at this a week or so ago. a bunch of hams from my Preparedness group started to use this on 40 meters a few months

ago. and doing well at it. I decided to download DigiPan and try to listen to them. I was on 14.070 and receiving multiple conversations on the same freq !! this is cool I thought.

I'll have to explain my "interface" between computer and HF radio. As most of you know I have a 30 year old Kenwood TS-520, no WARC bands, it's one of the first Hybrid radios that came onto the market. a Hybrid radio is defined by Tube transmit and solid state receive. I have to dip the plate, and peak the drive when I change bands and do minor adjustments when tuning around the same band. now back to my computer interface. I have my computer mic right next to my radio speaker. the volume doesn't have to be very loud. I was picking up several QSO's at once ! I was listening to (reading) the QSO's and thought, why can't I put a computer speaker next to the radio mic? worked the other way around pretty good. To minimize outside noise, I used an old foam can "coolie". I cut out the bottom and put that over the desk mic and pushed it next to the computer speaker.

So I taught myself how to use the DigiPan software on how to send messages, set up some Micro's for the buttons. I listened for a while until I heard a station call CQ, I responded to his call holding the radio mic PTT down next to the speaker, and let the computer do it's thing. When it was finished transmitting I let up on the mic.

About 15 seconds later he came back to my call ! my first QSO on PSK-31. all I remember from his call is that it was from 4 land and the suffix had a G in it. When I attempted to respond back, I hit the "clear" tab and erased everything. so, I have an unconfirmed PSK-31 QSO. I'm waiting for another chance to use this mode to communicate.

I think we as a group should experiment with this mode on a local level. I might suggest a 2 meter FM simplex and see what happens. I'm game for that some evening.

Submitted by Mike KC0UWF

CLUB OFFICERS

President --- Al Bush N0RZO

Vice President --- Tom Crowley KC0VII

Treasurer --- Mary Nystrom KB0SVG

Secretary & Newsletter Editor --- John Nystrom KB0SPM