

Newsletter for April, 1999

New Members!

Let's all give a warm welcome to the following new members!

Don Melton, N5RU
Ruthie Melton, N5AMI
301 Rancho Bueno
Georgetown, TX 78628 863-4710

Keith Mitchell, WA5VTT
16310 Rockgate Dr.
Austin, TX 78717 255-5393

Patrick Rogers, KD5GJG
13219 Briar Hollow
Austin, TX 78729 258-1224
73's Bob Redoutey, N5KF

Minutes of last meeting

DATE: March 4, 1999

PRESIDING: President, Bob Helms

QUORUM: A quorum was present, 51 members.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:30 P. M.

PROGRAM: Our usual order of business on the special occasion is have the program first, however, since Bob Rose, with the LCRA has not arrive yet, we will begin our meeting and when he arrives, we will start the program.

WELCOME OF VISITORS: Bob Helms AF5Z gave a warm welcome to the following visitors:

Ken Simmons, K5UHG
Patrick Rogers, KD5GJG
Kieth Mitchell, WA5VTT
Brad Worley, KD5GGO

TREASURER'S REPORT: No treasurer's report. Bob is out of town.

MINUTES: The minutes were published in the News Letter and mailed to all members. They are also available on our WEB site. Motion to accept as published, second, motion carried.

PROGRAM: Ed Underwood W2EBH introduced Bob Rose, Severe Weather Specialist with the LCRA. Bob announced the Skywarn School to be held at 3 M Saturday, March 6th, beginning at 8:30 A. M. until about 4:00 P. M. We will review a lot of the flooding in the morning session and go into some of the advance weather spotting information in the afternoon. Two new NOAA Weather Stations have been opened: Juction City and Richland Springs. The 1610 AM Radio broadcast will still be made because they have a different audience, mainly, the recreation vehicles such as boats, campers, etc. Single county Watch and Warning notification is now in operation. However, you must buy the new radio to receive it.

Robot radio announcing needs to be fixed. However, Voice synthesised broadcast announcements is 2 or 3 years away. Bob then presented information concerning the Severe Weather Outlook for Spring and Summer. Next, a video was shown of Advanced Skywarn Spotting information and techniques. The video was prepared by TV Station KFDA in Amarillo.

HAMFEST REPORT: Bob Helms AF5Z thanked every one for their support to the Hamfest with make a profit of \$1,100.

ARES REPORT: Harvey Henning N0AJP

1. The 2/440 meter antenna has been installed at the Georgetown/Williamson Co. EOC last Saturday. All that remains is the routing of the hardline coax to the operating site in the EOC. Mark Moss will advise us when they are ready for us to proceed with the installation.

2. A basic Skywarn Class was attended by some 6 WCARC and WCARES Hams last Tuesday evening.

3. The Call-up List are ready for distribution and you need to get your copy from Randy at the table after the meeting.

4. We are working on a Grid Map of Williamson County.

5. New Member Applications can now be emailed to new prospects, filled out on the screen and emailed back to Randy Pratt KC5CWD, Administrative AEC.

6. Need to take pictures of Kenny Keese KD5CBM and Pete Brunet WS4G. If you need your picture taken for your WC ARES ID, see me after the meeting.

7. WC ARES REFLECTOR, If you have not subscribed, please do so as soon as possible. It is a very good way to keep up with what his happening and aids in the coordination of events and planning.

8. Organization: Harvey presented Assistant Emergency Coordinator Certificates to:

Stuart Rohre K5KVH, American Red Cross Communications AEC

Dallas Mellichamp KD4HNX, Communications Alert AEC

Randy Pratt KC5CWD, Administrative AEC

The following AEC Certificates will be presented at a later time:

Mike Adams KC5IPB, Communication Section AEC

Tom Whiteside N5TW, Communication Alert AEC

Chris Hill KC5AQF, Equipment Management Section AEC

John Scott KK5VH, Operations Section AEC

9. Certificate of Merit Presentation: Harvey presented a Certificate of Merit to Roy Gray, KC5SUZ, with a Letter of Commendation to Roy for his years of service as the Sunday Night Net AEC. Roy has been a faithful leader in WC ARES. Thank you Roy for your commitment to protecting the lives and property of people in Williamson County. Roy feels that he needs a little break from the duties as the Sunday Night Net AEC. However, he will continue to serve as the Liaison to the National Weather Service for Reporting Flash Flooding and Rain Gauge collection reports.

FIELD DAY: President Bob Helms AF5Z stated that we still do not have a Field Day Chairman and he is still waiting for someone to step forward and volunteer. He is concerned about the time remaining before the third weekend in June, however, we will discuss it more at our next meeting in April. We still do not have a location yet. Please contact Bob if you are interested in assuming this responsibility.

VHF/UHF ROAMING REPORT: D. C. Roberts KE9IT

D. C. related how they started at San Marcus, went to Oklahoma City, Tulsa and down to just West of Houston traveling over 1200 miles and making over 900 contacts. Certificates were give to the amateurs making the most contacts in the following categories: FM, SSB, Laser and others. They could have made

more contacts if the schedule has permitted them to say longer in some of the places they traveled.

A suggestion was made to announce their schedule on the WCARC Reflector and maybe more hams would make an effort to make contact with them via radio, etc.

OLD BUSINESS

Club Picnic: The date: April 24th, Jim Bittick KC5BHF will be cooking. Serving will be from 5 to 7 P. M. It will be at the San Gabriel Park.

REPEATER: Bob Helms AF5Z reported in the News Letter about the current progress on the new repeater. Any questions about that report? I am working hard to complete putting the equipment in the cabinet and looking forward to working with some people to help clean and test the antennas. I have not approached the county yet to see if we can put a UHF system on the tower, but I'm hoping we can do that without any hang-ups.

TEXAS COUNTY HUNTERS AWARDS: John McColly W5RQ suggested that we defer this subject until our April meeting due the time.

TOWER AND TRAILER REPORT: Mel Cruets, KF6DZ

An opportunity of a life time came upon me this last week. My son, who is doing part work in San Jose California was given an offer to purchase a portable, crankup, foldup tower 40 high with a 6 inch capacity for the mast. It handles 20 sq feet of antenna and I am going out this next week to pick it up and have it refurbished in good shape. Dallas needs it for the novice teck station. Need to look at the pictures. These things sell new for \$14,000.

CLUB ROSTER: Don Bonner W4WLG keeps our Web site current. However, because of the type of software he uses, it makes it difficult for him to update the roster. We need someone with a web site to allow us to put the roster on their web site and link it to the WCARC Web Site. Bob Helms is going to ask Dale Chatham if he will do that since he has some of the Club's information already on his web site.

NEW BUSINESS: Jeff Schmidt N5MNW

Pete Olhaver wants to sell some of his equipment, like a 440 transceiver and other equipment so give him a call. Also, Jeff is sponsoring a General Class License up-grade course at Doss Elementary, starting June 5th - July 10th on Saturday afternoons from 12:00 noon until 4:00 P. M. There will be no class on the Dallas Swapfest weekend in June or the July 4th holiday. The course will last for 5 weeks.

HB 1345 --- Martha Underwood N2VRF

We need to support this bill because it affects how cities and other jurisdictions regulate tower construction for hams. Martha wants to go to the Texas Legislature when this bill comes to the floor for debate or a hearing. Please let her know when this happens. Dallas reported that he went to the committee hearing and that the bill passed the committee with 7 yes votes and 1 not present. It will probably come the House floor in 30 days. Bob Helms stated that this bill is in support of the Federal Law PRB 1 through the efforts of ARRL. This bill addresses the rights of Amateurs to put antennas and deal with home owners rights to put up antennas. It helps deal with restrictive ordinances, however, it does not deal with neighborhood covenants or deed restrictions that you inter into in your own business dealings.

QRP RIGS CONSTRUCTION --- Stuart Rohre K5KVH

I would like to invite anyone interested in building a QRP rig to come to the Austin QRP Club, very informal group, no dues, no officers. Held every second Saturday, 11:00 A. M. at Lubys on North Loop off Burnet Rd.

NEXT WC ARES MEETING --- Harvey Henning N0AJP

To be held next Thursday 7:00 P. M. Central Fire Station Round Rock, March 11th.

Adjournment:

Respectfully submitted, Harvey Henning, NOAJP
Secretary

A Note from the Treasurer

Deposits for the month : \$749.00 (includes \$550 for amp) Current bank balance is: \$3489.56

President's Column

Wow! Time flies when you are having fun. The blue bonnets are back and spring is here. Thanks to those members who attended the annual SKYWARN Storm Spotter training session in March. Your recently learned skills have been applied twice during recent storms and will be a benefit to our area throughout the upcoming severe weather season.

Thanks to the twenty-one individuals who turned in the survey from the February newsletter. I'm about half-finished in inputting the results to a spreadsheet. I expect to summarize the highlights next month and make the detailed results available to the club officers. No, it's not too late - I'll gladly accept any more survey forms to be included.

John McColly W5RQ proposed that our club sponsor an award program for working all Texas counties. The proposal was well written and would have likely become a reality. We were surprised to note in the current QST magazine that the Temple ARC is now providing a similar award. Thanks to John for your interest. Let's promote some 'county hunting' so we can collect those certificates!

Hamfest season is upon us. Several members plan to camp on Lake Belton and attend the swapfest there on the weekend of April 17th & 18th. John Fabac, Bill Sepulveda, Dave Hassell and myself attended the Midland, TX swapfest on March 20th. Although we enjoyed ourselves, the event did not match the Belton swapfest in size or quality of equipment available. Don't forget the Dallas HAMCOM swapfest on the first or second weekend in June. Plan to join in with several members who regularly attend.

For those members who use or are interested in digital communications, try PSK31. This is a new emission specifically designed for keyboard-to-keyboard operation on HF frequencies. The signal is a form of either binary phase shift keying or quaternary phase shift keying and occupies a bandwidth of less than 100 Hz in practice (31 Hz in theory!). The particular code was developed by Peter Martinez, G3PLX and is based on CW! The VARICODE alphabet character set used varies in length depending upon on the frequency of the particular letter as used in English. This helps optimize accuracy and throughput/speed. Unlink packet, AMTOR, GTOR, PACTOR and CLOVER digital modes, PSK31 doesn't require a "connection" between two stations. The VITERBI DECODER error correction scheme allows easy monitoring and simultaneous communication among multiple stations. The best part is the software to send and receive this new mode is free and little hardware is required! If you have a frequency stable HF SSB transceiver and a computer running Windows 95/98 or NT equipped with a Sound Blaster compatible sound card you are in business. Receiver speaker audio is fed into the Line Input of the sound card and the Line Output of the sound card is fed through an attenuator to the microphone jack of the radio. Shielded cabling is required and the attenuator consists of a 100,000 ohm series resistor going to a 1,000 ohm resistor in parallel with the radio microphone input. Typically the resistors are mounted inside the microphone plug going to the radio. To obtain the software, search the internet for PSK31 and choose the site titled "The Official PSK31 Web Site". The latest software version is 1.05 at present. Oh, by the way, I looked up most of the BIG words in this paragraph - Don't ask me what they really mean.

The WCARC spring picnic will be held in San Gabriel park at the main picnic area on Saturday afternoon April 24th. Jim Bittick KC5BHF and several others will be there that morning to get the food started and

enjoy some hamming (see next paragraph). I'm sure Jim would like some company and help with preparing the meats. Club members, their families and guests are invited to bring desserts, a covered dish or drinks for the serving to begin between 5:00 and 6:00 PM. Hopefully the weather will cooperate and we will be in daylight savings time - So expect an enjoyable, warm spring evening.

The annual spring QRO to The Field is sponsored by the Northern California QRP Club on April 24th in honor of our picnic!! ;-) This event is for home or portable stations using 5 watts or less transmitter power to contact each other. The detailed rules are similar to ARRL's Field Day but the event lasts from 11:00 AM until 7:00 PM on Saturday, April 24, 1999. One or more stations will be operated from our picnic site. Interested individuals are encouraged to come out and observe or operate with us. Operation will be primarily CW on the 40 through 10 meter bands.

Yes, our next club meeting will be April 1st - The first Thursday of the month. Ed Underwood W2EBH, our VP, has arranged for an excellent program on the new computer controlled HF transceiver made by Kachina. Come see how computers and amateur radio are coming even closer together with this new radio design.

Our own John Warren NT5C was featured on the local TV news on March 25th. Sorry I missed it but I'm sure he demonstrated amateur radio to the public quite nicely. Thanks John. Until next month.

- Bob Helms, AF5Z

Editor's Waste Basket

It looks like it's going to be a good summer for Ham Radio. Be sure and read the president's article. Also check the club web page for upcoming events. It's a good time to be a ham! The campout at Belton Lake for the hamfest sounds good. I may try it this year. The president says that spring is here! That may be but it's been awfully cold the last couple of days. Oh well, maybe it'll warm up by the time I see everyone this Thursday!

73's...Ed