



Di-Dah-Dit

Official Newsletter of the Parkersburg Radio Klub
820 23 rd. St. Vienna, WV 26104

World Record Balloon Attempt

A group of Amateur Radio operators hopes to establish a world distance record for an unmanned, helium-filled balloon. The BLT-28 balloon will launch from Katy, Texas, on a journey that will take it across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and then on to Nanjing, China. The South Texas Balloon Launch Team plans to release the balloon at 3 PM CST (2100 UTC) Saturday, February 11.

During the trans-Atlantic crossing, when out of range of shore based stations, the balloon's APRS beacon will operate on the International Space Station (ISS) packet digipeater frequency of 145.825 MHz.

The balloon payload package weighs only about 5 ounces and contains a high altitude GPS tracking system and a 144 MHz FM APRS Amateur Radio transmitter. To conserve weight and battery life, no camera equipment will be on board. The maximum altitude is expected to be above 19 miles, with horizontal speeds between 100 and 150 miles per hour.

You can track the progress of the flight online by entering the payload call sign KT5TK-11. Those in the southern and southeastern United States have a good chance of

copying the APRS beacons directly as the balloon passes nearby.

The APRS telemetry transmitter is frequency agile to cope with different APRS standards across the globe. The frequencies used will be
USA: 144.390 MHz
mid-Atlantic: 145.825 MHz
(International Space Station packet digipeater frequency)
Europe and beyond: 144.800 MHz

--Trevor Hawkins, M5AKA, AM-SAT-UK



Texas amateurs attempt a world record high-altitude balloon flight. [Photo courtesy of the South Texas Balloon Launch Team]

Solar Update

Tad "[Certain as the Sun rising in the east](#)" Cook, K7RA, reports: We are more than halfway through the winter season, as Sunday, February 5 was 45 days after the winter solstice. Propagation should improve as we approach the vernal equinox on March 20. Solar ac-

tivity is still in the temporary doldrums, with sunspot numbers below 100. But the weekly average of daily sunspot numbers rose this week by over 15 points to 55.6. There was a geomagnetic storm on Wednesday, February 15 (UTC). Early in the UTC day (Tuesday night in North America), the planetary K index went to 5, and the planetary A index was 22. The College A index in Fairbanks was estimated at 46, which is quite high. The disturbance was probably from a CME a few days earlier. Aurora in North America was seen as far south as Minnesota. The latest forecast has solar flux about 55-60 points lower than last month's prediction for the [ARRL International CW DX Contest](#) this weekend. Latest predicted flux values are 105 on February 16, 110 on February 17-20, 105 on February 21-22, 110 on February 23, and 115 on February 24-26. The predicted flux values bounce around from 105-110 from February 27-March 13, then go back to 115 on March 14-16 and again on March 20-24. The predicted planetary A index for February 16-23 is 10, 5, 8, 8, 5, 5, 5 and 9, then 5 on February 24-March 1. Look for more information on the ARRL website on Friday, February 17. For more information concerning radio propagation, visit the [ARRL Technical Information Service Propagation page](#).



FCC News

FCC Denies Anchorage VEC's Waiver Request

On January 24, the FCC issued an Order that denied a waiver request from the Anchorage VEC, one of 14 Volunteer Examiner Coordinators in the US. In its July 2011 Waiver Request, the Anchorage VEC asked the Commission to permit individuals who have previously held an Amateur Radio license grant issued by the Commission -- but which has expired and is beyond the two year grace period for renewal -- to receive credit for elements previously passed, and thus a new license grant, without additional examination. This Waiver Request was in addition to a Petition for Rulemaking (RM-11629) filed in April 2011 that asked the FCC to give permanent credit to radio amateurs for examination elements they have successfully passed, effectively creating a license exam credit that would be valid throughout an amateurs' lifetime, never expiring. The FCC noted that the denial of the waiver request was without prejudice to the Anchorage VEC's pending Petition for Rulemaking, meaning that this denial will have no impact on the pending Petition, and the FCC will still consider it.

To demonstrate that he or she is qualified to be issued a new or upgraded Amateur Radio license, they must pass an examination or otherwise receive credit for the examination element(s) required to qualify for the relevant operator license. A person receives credit for an examination element if he or she presents a certificate of successful completion of an examination, showing that they passed the element within the previous 365 days, or an unexpired (or expired but within the two-year grace period for renewal) operator license that required passage of that examination element. With one narrow exception (holders of a Technician class license granted before March 21, 1987 automatically receive credit for Element 3 [General class]), element credit is not given for an amateur operator license that has expired and cannot be renewed.

In its waiver request, the Anchorage VEC asserted that grant of the waiver will per-

mit individuals whose Amateur Radio license grants have expired to obtain a new license grant at an early date, thereby allowing them to again participate in normal Amateur Radio activities. It also stated that several potential beneficiaries of this action are of advanced years and are interested in prompt resolution of this matter. The FCC placed the waiver request on Public Notice and comments were evenly split between those supporting the request and those opposing it.

Section 1.925 of the Commission's Rules provides that the FCC may grant a waiver if it is shown that (a) the underlying purpose of the rule(s) would not be served or would be frustrated by application to the instant case, and grant of the requested waiver would be in the public interest; or (b) in light of unique or unusual circumstances, application of the rule(s) would be inequitable, unduly burdensome or contrary to the public interest, or the applicant has no reasonable alternative. The FCC concluded that the Anchorage VEC did not meet either requirement.

In denying the Anchorage VEC's waiver request, the FCC noted that "[a]llowing a licensee whose license is active, or can be renewed to receive element credit for examination elements previously passed, is consistent [with] the basis and purpose of the Amateur Service, which includes encouragement and improvement of the service through rules which provide for advancing skills in both the communication and technical phases of the art. Individuals who do not hold a current or renewable Amateur Radio operator license, however, regardless of whether they have held one in the past, must demonstrate their qualifications to be Amateur Radio operators before obtaining a new license. We conclude, therefore, that grant of the requested waiver to allow examination credit to be granted for any previously held Amateur Service operator license would not serve the underlying purpose of the rule. Additionally, we note that Amateur Radio testing opportunities are widely available. [Volunteer Examiners] can administer tests at any location and time convenient to them and the examinee. Consequently, Anchorage VEC has not shown that requiring retesting of

examinees whose operator licenses expired more than two years ago, including those of advanced years, is inequitable or unduly burdensome, or that these examinees have no reasonable alternative."

ARRL Objected to Waiver Request

In August 2011, the ARRL filed comments with the FCC, opposing the Anchorage VEC's Waiver Request. In its comments, the ARRL maintained that if the FCC granted Anchorage VEC's Waiver Request, it "would quite obviously prejudice the outcome of RM-11629. If for any reason RM-11629 is denied or dismissed, those who re-obtained licenses pursuant to the temporary waiver would either have been given a privilege not afforded others similarly situated, or else they would have their reinstated/renewed licenses revoked at a later date. Should the Commission grant the temporary waiver, it is tantamount to grant of the underlying petition. Indeed, it appears that the Waiver Request is principally an effort by the Anchorage VEC to bolster (or amend) the underlying Petition for Rule Making."

At the time that the ARRL filed its comments, it explained that it was not taking a position with respect to the merits of RM-11629. The ARRL said that it opposed the Waiver Request "because the Anchorage VEC has failed to justify the need for the interim relief sought therein. That opposition, however, does not extend to the underlying petition, RM-11629," and that "[r]eview of the issue now may be timely, but it should be done in the context of a normal notice-and-comment rulemaking, not by waiver."

In denying the Waiver Request, the FCC concluded that the Anchorage VEC "has not shown good cause for waiver of the Amateur Service rules to allow VEs to give examination credit to an examinee who holds an Amateur Radio operator license document that has been expired for more than two years. Therefore, we decline to waive Section 97.505(a) of the Commission's Rules."



KLUB Minutes

December 17, 2011

The Parkersburg Amateur Radio Klub held their annual Christmas party and meeting at the Washington Bottom Community Building. There were 24 members and guests present.

President Connie Hamilton N8IO and several others sang carols before the meeting. After the meal Connie N8IO sang a solo and a quartet consisting of Jim Palmer K8BOT, Earl Hulce KB8HRG, Mark Leatham KR5N and Jerry Wharton KA8NJW entertained us with several more carols. Then everyone joined in for more singing. Jane N8MOW played the keyboard throughout the singing. Sean KD8ODS and Mark KR5N furnished the amp and music accompaniment.

One item of new business was presented during a brief business meeting. Tim Miller WB8MOI offered to purchase a fiberglass antenna suitable for the 146.970 repeater and donate it to the club. Curt K8UC moved and Dave N8NWV seconded to accept Tim's offer. Motion carried. Earl KB8HRG will contact Tim WB8MOI.

Darlene donated 8 candle and plate table decorations. Winners were selected by a random drawing.

Thanks to the ladies who worked in the kitchen and decorated the tables.

January 9, 2012

The Parkersburg Amateur Radio Klub met at Mary's Plane View Restaurant for the January meeting. Introductions were made by 24 members and guests.

President Connie Hamilton N8IO opened the meeting at 7 PM. The 50-50 drawing of \$11 was won by Karl Webb N8DZS. The minutes for November and December were read

and approved. The treasurer's report was given by treasurer Carol Johnson KC8TUD.

Connie N8IO read an e-mail from Jim Palmer K8BOT about the passing of Lynn's N8IIM mother.

An application for membership was submitted by Robert Robinson. Blaine WA8IOE moved and Dave N8NWV seconded to accept him. Motion carried.

Discussion was held concerning finding a new meeting place. Blaine WA8IOE will check with Western Sizzlin and Jane N8MOW will check with Mountaineer. Baptist Temple is available if there is any interest in having license classes.

Earl KB8HRG gave a report on the upgrading of the 146.970 repeater. Surge suppressor parts were ordered for both repeaters. Tim KB8MOI donated 100 feet of 3/4 inch hard line coax and fittings in addition to the antenna. Earl KB8HRG moved and Dave N8NWV seconded to grant Tim WB8MOI a free membership. A thank you letter and free membership will be sent to him. Joe Wigal W8JTW has tweaked the new repeater that is temporarily located in Earl's KB8HRG basement. It will have a PL of 91.5 on the output so Columbus can be filtered out.

Connie N8IO announced hamfests at Nelsonville OH January 15, TUSCO at Strausburg OH January 29 and Mansfield OH February 12. Dues for the year 2012 are now due. Jerry KA8NJW moved and Earl KB8HRG seconded to adjourn at 7:24 PM.

February 13, 2012

The Parkersburg Amateur Radio Klub met at Mary's Plane View Restaurant for the February meet-

ing. Introductions were made by 23 members and guests.

President Connie Hamilton N8IO opened the meeting at 7 PM. The 50/50 drawing of \$14.50 was won by Dave N8NWV. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved. The treasurer's report was given by Ray KC8RUJ.

Unfinished business: Blaine WA8IOE checked with Western Sizzlin and the meeting room is available on the second Mondays. The Mountaineer is also available. The decision on whether to move was tabled until the next meeting. New business: An application for membership was received from Jonna Wigal KD8DLY. Earl KB8HRG moved and Jep K8BOT seconded to accept her. Motion carried.

Hamfests announced were: Gallipolis March 10, Charlotte NC March 10-11, Fayetteville February 18.

Connie N8IO asked Libby KA8FUA to stand by to run the April meeting as she will be having surgery and may not make the meeting.

Blaine discussed an article in the February QST magazine.

Earl KB8HRG said the 147.39 repeater needs to be coordinated and the 146.97 repeater needs to be re-coordinated due to the addition of the PL tone.

A letter needs to be sent to Bob Robinson KU8C thanking him for the donation of the commercial repeater. Curt K8UC moved and Earl KB8HRG seconded to grant Bob an extension of paid up dues through 2013. Motion carried.

Jep K8BOT moved and Dave N8NWV seconded to adjourn at 7:34 PM.

Something Old

I was poking around in my toolbox and junk box and rooting through parts bins recently when I came across a little box marked "Crystals". Oh yeah, I recalled - I had picked these up from various hamfests and whatnot when one caught my eye. My rack of crystals from my Novice days was long gone but I'd never gotten over that feeling of plugging in an FT-243 and pounding some brass, seeing the needles jump, and just maybe hearing my call come back over the headphones.

Having several crystals was important if you wanted to call a station that might be several kHz away and not make them tune the whole band to find your 3-by-3-by-3 plea for attention. Of course, with the broad-as-the-side-of-a-barn receivers most of us used in those days, being a little off frequency wasn't the handi-cap it is today...you just had to squint!



Some of my old crystals occasionally see the light of day - will they eventually put a two-tube peanut whistle back on the air? How about a PSK31 warbler? (Photo by NØAX)

I enjoy holding a crystal now - if it happens to be on a useful frequency, so much the better, but that's not the story. The point is the feel of it and the way it was manufactured and used. Those old crystals - from JAN, Texas Crystals, International Crystal, and many, many other companies from the back pages of

QST - were hand-assembled and had attractive logos and text engraved into the crystal holders. Each one was an advertisement for the manufacturer and many were miniature works of art in their own right. Some were even hand-labeled as the Bliley crystal in the photo. Everybody ought to have one little thing from 'back then' - maybe a tube or a key or a meter or an insulator. Hold it in your hand and think about how many different meanings that artifact has had throughout its history. At first, it might have been cutting-edge technology, then a more ordinary commodity, finally to be dropped into a junk box as obsolete. Someday, someone like me spies and buys it for a pittance - like a lucky radio buckeye, polished and rounded and comfortable in my pocket or drawer.

If the item is truly fortunate, its new owner may go home and put it on the air once again. I am reminded of many childhood stories of forgotten toys that were rescued from an attic or basement to find new purpose. I have a soft spot for crystals, obviously, but you might find a tool or connector equally evocative. "Old" is subjective - perhaps all we mean is just "from a period preceding mine". These visitors from era gone by help connect us to the traditions of radio. Like grandparents, they connect us to history and might be no farther away than the next hamfest or swap meet, in a little box marked "Crystals".

73, Ward NØAX (via ARRL contest news)

New Rules for 5 MHz (60 Meters) To Go Into Effect March 5

On November 18, the FCC released a Report and Order (R&O), defining new rules for the 60 meter (5 MHz) band.

These rules are in response to a Petition for Rulemaking (PRM) filed by the ARRL more than five years ago and a June 2010 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). In the February 3 edition of the Federal Register, the FCC announced that these new rules will go into effect at 12:01 AM (EST) on March 5, 2012.

In summarizing the new rules, the FCC explained that the new rules amend the current rules to facilitate more efficient and effective use by the Amateur Radio Service of five channels in the 5330.5-5406.4 kHz band (the 60 meter band): "Specifically, and consistent with our proposals in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in this proceeding, the Commission replaces one of the channels with a less encumbered one, increases the maximum authorized power amateur stations may transmit in this band and authorizes amateur stations to transmit three additional emission designators. The Commission also adopts an additional operational rule that prohibits the use of automatically controlled digital stations and makes editorial revisions to the relevant portions of the Table of Frequency Allocations and our service rules."

The Amateur Radio Service in the United States has a secondary allocation on 60 meters. Only those amateurs who hold General, Advanced or Amateur Extra class licenses may operate on this band. Amateur stations must not cause harmful interference to -- and must accept interference from -- stations authorized by any administration in the fixed service, as well as mobile (except aeronautical mobile) stations authorized by the administrations of other countries.



Logbook of The World to Now Support CQ Awards

TAGS: arrl, ARRL Chief, award, chief executive officer, chief operating officer, david sumner, harold kramer, qsl cards, radio amateurs 01/24/2012

The ARRL and CQ Communications, Inc have signed an agreement to begin providing support for CQ-sponsored operating awards by the ARRL's Logbook of the World (LoTW) electronic confirmation system. The agreement was announced jointly today by ARRL Chief Operating Officer Harold Kramer, WJ1B, and CQ Communications President Richard Ross, K2MGA.

CQ's awards will be the first non-ARRL awards supported by LoTW and will be phased in beginning with the CQ WPX award, with additional CQ awards to follow. The ARRL's LoTW system -- an interactive database recording contacts between radio amateurs -- was created in 2003 and has been adopted by 47,500 radio amateurs worldwide. It already has records of 400 million contacts and is growing weekly. The target date for beginning LoTW support for WPX is April 1, 2012. Amateurs will be able to use LoTW logs to generate lists of confirmed contacts to be submitted for WPX credit. Standard LoTW credit fees and CQ award fees will apply.

ARRL Chief Executive Officer David Sumner, K1ZZ, observed that this step gives radio amateurs throughout the world an inexpensive and convenient means of gaining credits toward CQ's popular operating awards: "LoTW has significantly increased interest and participation in the ARRL's DXCC, Worked All States and VUCC awards programs. We anticipate a similarly positive response to the addition of the CQ WPX award. Amateurs will be able to

spend more time operating and less time chasing QSL cards."

CQ President Richard Ross, K2MGA, said he is very pleased to be able to move forward with LoTW support for CQ awards. "We have had excellent results with electronic confirmations for several years," he explained. "I am glad that we are now able to begin expanding that convenience to those participants in our award programs who use Logbook of The World. We look forward to a smooth launch for WPX and to the expansion of LoTW support to include the rest of our award programs, as well."

Yaesu is the Principal Sponsor of the LoTW website.



Earl? installing new antenna



Earl working on connector.



Jep. Working on Battery connector. Dave T had just left.

Thanks all who have helped on the new machine. KA8NJW

Pictures from working on the 97 site:

