

Big Rapids Area Amateur Radio Club

October 2010

PO Box 343 Paris MI 49338

Pres. Jim Woolen

Web Page: www.braarc.net

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President's Message September 2010

When I began my adventure into ham radio as a fourteen-year-old, I never gave much thought

about how long this hobby would last for me. It is extremely hard to believe that it has been over 53 years since I passed the Novice exam in 1957. Three months after getting my first license, I passed the General exam and that is the last time I took an amateur radio test. When I took my exams in Savannah (GA), they had an FCC office in the Federal courthouse. These offices have been long closed and replaced with the Volunteer Examiner (VE) system.

While my interest in amateur radio was initially sparked by my teenage friends showing me their radio equipment, it was an adult who helped mentor (Elmer) me through the process. I became a member of the local ham club and remained one until I left Savannah to live in Atlanta in 1966. I've also been a member of the ARRL since 1957, and became a Life Member in my early twenties. I realized early that we needed an advocate for amateur radio so we would not lose our frequencies to world-wide competing interests.

Now my youngest son passed his Technician exam this year at the age of fourteen. Out of all five of my children, he is the only one who got interested

enough in our hobby to become a ham radio operator. With a perfect score on his exam, he definitely beat his father's performance. My lifelong friend, who is also an amateur radio operator, has not been able to get one of his five boys to become a "ham." I definitely feel fortunate and proud to have Gregory join our ranks.

A lot has changed since the days of building my own equipment or building kits from such companies as HeathKit, Knight Kit, etc. My original contacts were on CW, but that quickly changed to AM within a few months. SSB and FM did not exist. I built my own 650 watt linear amplifier at the age of 16, and used my low-power HeathKit AT-1 transmitter to drive the input side. My antenna was a doublet on 40 and 80 meters. Communications on the higher HF bands worked just fine on this antenna. Good thing I never measured the SWR. I had contacts from all over the world, and even worked a politician and presidential candidate (Barry Goldwater), an entertainer (Arthur Godfrey), and a lot of great people over the years.

When I moved to New Jersey in 1968, I had to get an additional station license because my company was going to relocate me back to Atlanta (GA) after my temporary assignment ended on the Safe Guard missile project at Bell Laboratories. Now you can use your original call no matter where you live. During the two years I lived in New Jersey, I bought some used ham gear (Hammarlund, HeathKit) and operated as WA2HDC. I put an

antenna in the attic of our home, and eventually put up a vertical. I made lots of contacts and had a lot of fun with our hobby.

When I moved back to Atlanta in 1970, I became inactive due to a variety of reasons. But, when I moved back to Savannah in 1974, I got active again, joined a club, and bought some equipment. By this time, 2 meter FM repeaters were available along with reasonably small gear to mount in your car. I bought one of the first hybrid HF transceivers (solid state with tube finals) – it was called a Tempo 2020. A vertical on the roof was my only antenna.

When I moved back to Atlanta in 1982, I did not have the Tempo 2020 or the vertical. After establishing our residence near Norcross (a suburb of Atlanta), I purchased a new transceiver at the state HamFest. I still have that Icom 745. It traveled with me when we moved to West Virginia in 1991. It was moved again to Tennessee in 1995. It then traveled back to Atlanta in 1997. Finally, it came to Michigan where it has been in my “shack” for the past 8 years.

Since living in Michigan, I have been to the Dayton HamVention five times. Gregory went with me on at least three of those trips. I purchased new gear at the HamVention, and now have an Icom 706 MK IIG that I use quite a bit on our two repeaters. I also bought a Hygain vertical and an Ameritron ALS-600 amplifier on one of the Dayton trips. I joined the BRAARC when I first moved to Big Rapids.

The reason for this long-winded message is to give you a little background information on me and my commitment to amateur radio. Even though there have been a lot of ups and downs throughout the years, amateur radio has been the one constant in my life. Even though my bride of 28 years is not interested in ham radio, she has always been

supportive of my involvement. She even accompanied me to two large ham fests (Shelby & Atlanta). I am grateful for her support!

It is my sincere belief that we have the best hobby in the world! Where else can you have fun, provide emergency communications, learn new technologies, and “rub elbows” with some of the finest people in the Big Rapids area. I am honored that you have entrusted me with the presidency of this club, and hope that I can live up to your expectations. It will be difficult to follow in the footsteps of Mike McKay because he was so involved in all aspects of our club. Good job, Mike!

Since this is a volunteer organization, no member will ever be assigned to a project or task without their permission. However, our club cannot survive without people volunteering for club projects. It does not take rocket science to figure out that a service club like BRAARC cannot sustain itself without membership participation. This year we need to increase our membership, perhaps reach out to public schools in the area to help create amateur radio clubs, become more visible in the community, and have a lot of fun. Together we can gain more recognition in the community as a first class service organization.

I regret that I cannot attend my first official meeting because of a work-related conference that I must attend in Indiana on the same day. Even the vice president, Phil Marcotte, cannot attend because of a long-standing personal commitment. Sue Behler, our secretary, will conduct the meeting in our absence.

Don't forget the Celebrity Serve fund raiser on October 12th at Crankers restaurant on State Street. We start at 5 PM and should end no later than 8 PM. If you cannot join us as servers, then it is hoped you can come and eat to help make more money for your club. Tell your friends to go eat at Crankers during our fund raiser.

73s, Jim

BRAARC

September 2010 Minutes

Called to order at 7:02 by President Mike KD8DIB.

Member News – Patricia KD8GGD got a job as Tom’s KB8TYJ assistant, Gregory got a new radio, Tom brought wire to give away & antenna to raffle off.

Announcements – Check the website calendar application for events

Big Bad Wolf Adventure Race – On Labor Day weekend, September 4th, 2010. Meet behind the middle school at 8AM. Jeff Sells K8OE contact person for this event.

Emergency Committee Meeting – September 9 at 7PM – Meceola Central Dispatch

Advance Skywarn Training – October 8 at FSU contact Mike KD8DIB for details or to sign up
Tuesday, October 12, 2010 Celebrity Serve fundraiser from 5pm-8pm at Crankers, contact person Jim K4UIH

Announcements:

Saturday, October 2

9:00am

Club Breakfast – at Sharon’s in Rogers Heights

Sunday, October 3

12:30pm

Big Rapids Area Crop Walk for Hunger

Thursday, October 7

7:00pm

BRAARC Club Meeting - Wellness Speaker – Big Rapids Public Safety Building.

Friday, October 8

9:00am

Advanced Skywarn Training

12:00pm

Advanced Skywarn Training

Treasure Report – Val KD8IAM, moved and approved

Secretary Report – Shila KD8IAL, moved and approved

New Business

Nominations from the nominating committee: Jim Woolen K4UIH president, Phil Marcotte KC8QOV Vice President, Jens Rick KC8OIV for Treasurer, and Sue Behler KC8IFP for secretary.

**Moved and approved to close nominations
Moved and approved as 2010-2011 officers**

Program – J-Pole antenna construction/Pizza

Snacks for September – Greg
50/50 – Jens/Phil

Adjourned 8:30PM

Saturday, October 9

9:00am

VE Testing

Tuesday, October 12

5:00pm

BRAARC Celebrity Serve

When Tue, October 12, 5pm – 8pm

Where - 213 South State St, Big Rapids, Mi 49307

If you can help, please contact Jim Woolen

(K4UIH). If you can't help serve at this event, please join us for dinner.

These announcements are on WWW.BRAARC.net website with greater detail.



Brain Teaser

Don MacConnel, WA4FRJ

Answer to the last Brain Teaser

One of the Dumbest Things I've Ever Done in Ham Radio

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

Mark, W8MP, and I often argue about what's dumber—his county hunting or my collecting QSL cards from stations whose call signs spell words. It's one of those arguments that will never be won. When you get right down to it, they're both pretty dumb.

Well, one Wednesday morning, I got a call from Mark. He asked, "Hey, want to do something really dumb tonight?" When I asked what he had in mind, he replied, "Well, one of my county hunter friends, Tim, W8JJ (he's the guy looking nervous in the black cap below), claims to have confirmed all 3,077 counties. He needs at least two General Class (or higher) hams to check his QSL cards and sign off on his application for the USA-CA award sponsored by CQ magazine. I guarantee that this will be one of the dumbest things that you ever do in ham radio. I also guarantee that it will be a lot of fun."

After a fine salmon dinner with some very chewy noodles (that Mark claims his son, KD8EEH insisted that he make), we cleared the table, and Tim got out his box of cards. Mark then explained how we should proceed. I was kind of curious about this, as it's clearly impossible to check all 3,077 QSOs in a single evening.

Basically, what the two checkers are supposed to do is to check random contacts until they are satisfied that the applicant does indeed have a QSL from all 3,077 counties. To select the contacts, you might choose counties where you lived, or counties that you have visited. I hit on the idea of having Tim produce the confirmations of all 16 counties in Massachusetts. Clark, who is more familiar with which counties are the most difficult to confirm, asked Tim to produce cards from some rare counties in Colorado and Hawaii.

Above all, though, the idea is to give the applicant as much grief as possible during the process.

Mark came up with the idea of calling several county hunters that he had phone numbers for and asking them to verify in their logs some of the QSOs that Tim was claiming. He first phoned Jim, N9JF, and we asked him about a 44 report that he'd given Tim seven years ago. He wasn't near his logbook, but he said that he did remember that contact and even rattled off the county (Wahkiakum, WA)!

Next, Mark phoned Guff, KS5A, who confirmed a contact, but was off by almost seven minutes. A long discussion ensued regarding the details of how a mobile logs contacts while out driving. In the end, we accepted the seven-minute discrepancy.

Finally, Mark phoned Larry, W0QE, to confirm a few of the MRCs that Tim had from him. (MRCs are records of multiple contacts. Using them instead of QSL cards makes the process of managing all these QSLs a lot easier.) Mark joked that it looked like one of the MRCs had a forged signature. Larry replied that all of his MRCs are stamped.

"Aha," Clark exclaimed, "this MRC doesn't have a stamp!"

I don't know what was going through Tim's mind at this point, but it probably wasn't good. Larry then explained that he probably sent out that MRC before he got the stamp. When we confirmed those dates, I think Tim breathed a little easier.

In the end, Clark and I signed off on Tim's application. And, even though Mark and I joke about how dumb this activity is, it's really only a joke. In my mind, it's quite an achievement. It takes a lot of persistence, too. It took

Tim nearly ten years to do it.

Another cool thing about the county hunting sub-culture is the camaraderie amongst the county hunters. It's the nature of the beast that you'll be contacting many of them multiple times, and it's inevitable that you'll make friends with many of them.

As we were leaving, Tim said, "My wife asked me the other day if I could get now get rid of all my radios since I've talked to everybody." She obviously doesn't understand this ham radio sub-culture. Tim's only just begun.

You can keep up with all of Dan's dumb ham radio activities by reading his blog at www.kb6nu.com. When Dan's not doing dumb ham radio things, he programs websites and does community-service type stuff as a member of the Ann Arbor (MI, USA) Rotary Club. You can email him at cwgeek@kb6nu.com.

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To our club members:

I just thought I would let you know and starting to take steps to get back on the hf bands. I went to a hamfest at St. Joseph, MO. yesterday and I purchased a Kenwood TS120S. I am buying some other items to get ready to go back on the air. I don't know how soon it will be, but I am hoping some time before Christmas.

I am looking for some items so if you know anybody who has these items let me know. I am looking for a MC-50 desk mike; a SP-120 external speaker; an AT-120 antenna tuner. I would also like to find a model VFO-120 and a PS-30 regulated DC power supply. Like I said if you ever hear of anyone who has one or more of these items, let me know.

73's
Bob Moody, WB8RWM

BPL Still Around

Proponents of BPL (Broadband over Power Lines) are still pushing to adapt the technology. This time their thrust is to use power lines to carry the data that power companies use to control and monitor their power grid. Hams and others are concerned about radio interference created by BPL. Recently one of our club members had this to say in Smart Grid News.

"It seems to me that BPL is only an interim solution. Arguably it's less expensive and faster to install than fiber optic transmission schemes but it is also significantly limited in bandwidth capability.

Smart grid data loads are very likely to follow the same growth curve we've seen in other applications, i.e. they will double about every nine months. BPL technology will continue to improve but will never match the speed and low latency capability of fiber optic data communication.

Fiber is a highly secure medium and does not have the single point failure probability of above ground transmission lines. That is, just because a transmission line has gone down doesn't mean that there are no data needs from the nodes serviced by the line. As an aside, fiber has a much lower error correction overhead than wire lines exposed to lightning and transient induced disruptions.

I hope smart grid strategic plans will recognize future data needs and the role fiber optic communication can play in accommodating those needs."

HUGE AMATEUR RADIO ESTATE SALE

Estate of Gary Bortles, KB8IPU
Saturday, October 2, 2010, from 10am until 2 pm
at Powder Coat of Central Michigan,
1201 S. County Farm Drive,
Ithaca, MI 48847

Over 300 items: Transceivers, HTs, power supplies, tuners, antennas, owner manuals, test equipment, kits, and other items too numerous to list - - many new and in their original boxes. Alinco, Dynaco, Grundig, Hallicrafters, Heathkit, Hy-Gain, Icom, Kenwood, MFJ, Military, Panasonic, Radio Shack, Ten-Tec, Uniden, Yaesu, and more.

For a complete list and sale information, email:

gibson@alma.edu

Directions: The City of Ithaca is located near the geographic center of the lower peninsula of Michigan on US-127 between M-57 to the south and M-46 to the north, approximately 40 miles north of Lansing. Take the Ithaca Exit 117 from US-127 and proceed west on Center Street to the second flashing red light. Turn south on S. Pine River Street approximately 3/4 mile to the stop sign. S. Pine River Street becomes S. County Farm Drive at the stop sign. Powder Coat of Central Michigan is the first building in the southeast corner of that intersection.

Note: All unsold items at the end of the sale will be made available on a negotiated basis to interested retailers, consignment shop owners, amateur radio clubs and/or club members.

Terms: Cash and carry. Checks accepted with government-issued photo identification. All items sold as is, where is. No items sold in advance of the sale. All sales are final.

(List will be available at WWW.BRAARC.NET until sale)

Weather Words and Pictures

David Huhtala, KC8WGA *

With this cool weather we have been having, it's time to start thinking about the first freeze of the year. Here is a list of Michigan cities with the average date of their first freeze. Data courtesy of the Grand Rapids office of the National Weather Service

Average Date of the First Freeze

Ewart Sep 13th	Allegan Oct 6th
Baldwin Sep 17th	Paw Paw Oct 6th
Hesperia Sep 25th	St Johns Oct 6th
Big Rapids Sep 25th	Alma Oct 7th
Charlotte Sep 26th	Jackson Oct 7th
Ionia Sep 28th	Battle Creek Oct 7th
Newaygo Sep 28th	Montague Oct 8th
Hastings Sep 29th	Bloomington Oct 8th
Greenville Sep 30th	Grand Rapids Oct 8th
Lansing Oct 2nd	Holland Oct 10th
Mt Pleasant Oct 3rd	Muskegon Oct 11th
Ludington Oct 4th	Kalamazoo Oct 13th
East Lansing Oct 4th	South Haven Oct 18th
Hart Oct 5th	Grand Haven Oct 18th

These are some pictures that I shot at our house. The lightning shot was at night but the powerful strike lit it up like daytime.

(See next page for photos)

A Foggy Summer Morning



Nighttime Lightning Flash!



9/11 Sunrise: A Day of Remembrance



* David Huhtala has been studying and recording daily weather data for over five years. He is responsible for many of the DGI blog postings on the wunderground.com Big Rapids, MI site.

2010-11 Club Officers



Sue Behler – Treas

Jim Woolen – Pres

Phil Marcotte – VP

Jens Rick-Sec.

Club Officer Contact Info (any corrections please contact Phil or bring changes to next meeting)

President - Jim Woolen (K4UIH) -- 231-796-1426 -- woolenj@ferris.edu
VP - Phil Marcotte (KC8QOV) - 989-561-5091 -- phildolly@power-net.net
Treasurer - Jens Rick (KC8OIV) -- 231-796-6325 -- ottorick@att.net
Secretary - Sue Behler (KC8IFP) -- 629-8526 -- suebehler@yahoo.com

Breakfast



Sharon's Restaurant in Rogers Heights
Saturday, October 2, at 9:00am
Come for a great meal
And
Some great conversation



October 2010
PO Box 343 Paris MI 49338

