SARA Newsletter

April 2007 Shreveport Amateur Radio Association

Meeting:
First Thursday of each month at 6:30 P.M. in the Bossier Main Library History Center

Local Amateur Information Available at:
www.K5SAR.com
or
www.qsl.net/nwlarn/

SARA Repeaters:
145.050 - K5SAR
DX Packet Cluster
145.110 - N5FJ
146.700 - K5KDQ
146.820 - K5SL
440.900 – N5FJ

SARA
PO Box 37632
Shreveport, LA
71133-7632

2007 Club Officers

President – Steve Smith, KG5VK
Vice President – Rick Westerfield, KH2DF
Treasurer – John Stewart, AA5KV
Secretary – Glenn Pettiet N5SH

30 Years of SkyWarn

Terry Atwood, KA5ARJ

J. D. Alexander expressed an interest in starting SkyWarn in this area, but did not know the NOAA meteorologist Earnest Etheridge. Having met him during the filming of several news stories I invited him to speak to one of the club meetings. He was interested in havin g a trained pool of disciplined spotters who could use ham radio rather than CB (which he reported had proved unsatisfactory) to spot cloud formations they were seeing on their radio (before Doppler radar).

He called one day saying a squall line was developing in east Texas moving this way and it might be a good test of calling up ham operators on two-meters to observe and report on this squall line as it moved through the area.

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The Swains Island DXpedition

Swains Island DXpedition set to go:
<http://www.yt1ad.info/n8s/index.html> will be on the air as N8S from April 3 until April 15 on all HF bands (including 60 meters -- 5403.5 kHz) as well as moonbounce on 6 and 2 meters. The international team includes YT1AD, K3LP, K1LZ, N6TQS, K6SRZ, RK3AD, RA3AUU, SV2BFN, UR0MC, YZ7AA, YZ1BX, UA4HOX, YU7NU, RU4SU, YU1AU, JT1CO and Z32ZM. The same team plans to operate from Samoa as 5W5AA from April 17 to April 24. YT1AD will handle cards for N8S; YZ7AA will handle QSLs for 5W5AA. Swain's Island is among the most-wanted DXCC entities. -- The Daily DX

Dog Product Helps with Antenna Installation

AA5KV

When my wife and I moved into University Terrace almost twenty four years ago, our yard had absolutely no trees. University Terrace was a cotton field before it became a housing development. A few months after we moved in, a friend of ours gave us a small sycamore sapling that had grown spontaneously in his yard. I planted it in my backyard, but realized that it would be many years before the tree gave us much shade, and more importantly, before it could be used to support an antenna. Now standing over 50 feet tall, it was time for my sycamore to earn its keep.

This sycamore is a marginal choice for an antenna support. Although the tree is tall enough, it has many closely spaced branches near the crown. My initial problem was how to get a rope over the highest branch. At first, remembering bygone days in right field, I thought I'd simply throw a small tethered object over the tree, attach some rope and pull it up. My plan met with two difficulties. First, the houses in

University Terrace are very close together. I worried that an errant throw could send a small object, such as a lead fishing weight, into a neighbor's yard, endangering both people and property. Second, I had definitely over-estimated my throwing arm. In several attempts to throw various objects on a high, arching trajectory, I realized that my days as an outfielder were gone forever.

I pondered my situation for several weeks and was tempted to call a club member who had a homebrew, PVC air-cannon, like the one made popular in our club by K5JBB and K5SL. I remembered K5SL's demonstration in the parking lot at the Bossier City Library. Using his newly constructed air-cannon, Randy sent a tennis ball at least 70 to 90 feet in the air without even trying. I could easily get a rope over my tree using one of those.

While perusing a mail order catalog from Duluth Trading, a company that sells an assortment of clothing and camping equipment, I saw something that might be useful for my antenna project. The product's name was HyperDog® and its stated purpose was to exercise or train dogs. In reading the description and looking at the picture, it became clear that HyperDog® was nothing more than a slingshot for a tennis ball. Advertised with the ability to launch a tennis ball horizontally 250 feet or more, it looked ideal. But would it work to "rope" a tree?

The short answer is yes. HyperDog® definitely works well enough to launch a tennis ball over almost any tree. But there are a few important considerations. First, I remembered Randy saying that adding weight to the tennis ball was critical. A tethered tennis ball is just too light to fall to the ground after clearing a tree branch. Without added weight, both the tennis ball and tether could easily get caught in the tree. The air-cannon boys and girls weight their tennis ball with about 20 pennies. That adds enough weight so the ball falls toward the ground, but not enough weight to reduce significantly the maximum throw height. I decided to do the same. I pushed the pennies into the ball, one by one, through a small slit. Then I wedged a safety pin into the slit so that the eye of the pin stuck out of the ball. The eye served as an attachment point for the light tether line that would eventually be used to haul the rope over the tree. In my experience, I would guess that the maximum height that HyperDog® can propel a weighted tennis ball is about 50 to 60 feet (at least in my hands). Second, practice is important. It takes a while to get the feel of this crazy slingshot. I found several ways to hold the slingshot and the ball, each with differing results. Each person needs to find a grip that works best for them (see fig 1). Third, certain materials work better for the tether than others. I think most hams use monofilament fishing line, which almost certainly would work well. I used a thin, light, nylon twine that I purchased for another project. It worked well. The line should be spread out on the ground in front of the launcher. Even a small snag of the line, caused for example by a twig or blade of grass, will seriously impede the ball's upward travel.

HyperDog® is available from Duluth Trading (www.duluthtrading.com – search "ball launcher") for $24.50, plus shipping. Several club members report that something similar may be available locally for less money. I've really had fun with mine. Best 73.

Figure 1: KB5VKN demonstrates the launch position for HyperDog®.

Email Alert from ARRL

Do not follow instructions in bogus e-mails: The ARRL is alerting members

-- and especially users of the ARRL E-Mail Forwarding Service <http://www.arrl.org/members-only/emailfwd.html> -- about bogus e-mails that claim to be from the "arrl.net user support team." There is no such entity, and the messages do not originate with ARRL but appear to be coming from outside the US. Recipients should not follow the instructions in the e-mail, which reads, "We have received reports that your e-mail account has been used to send a large amount of unsolicited commercial email messages during this week. We suspect that your computer had been infected by a recent virus and now contains a hidden proxy server. We recommend you to follow our instructions in order to keep your computer safe." Following the instructions will have the opposite effect, however, infecting your computer with the MyDoom Trojan worm and making it part of a spamming network. The League urges all members to invest in and use anti-virus software.

Field Day 2007

Offers a Learning Opportunity for HF Newcomers

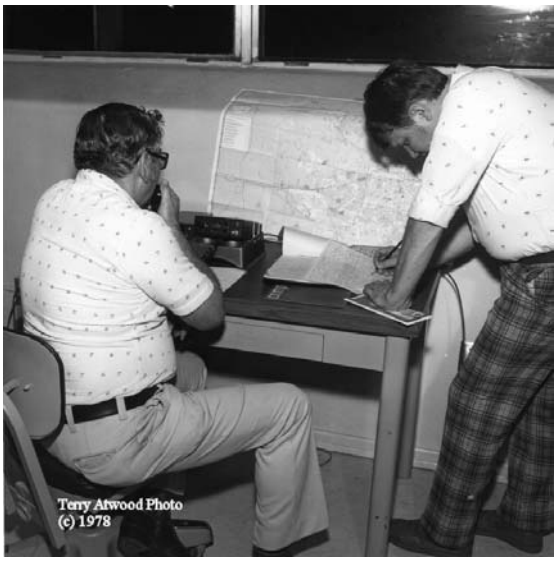
NEWINGTON, CT, Mar 12, 2007 -- Although Field Day 2007 is still more than three months away, many ham radio clubs and groups already have begun making plans for this year's event, Saturday and Sunday, June 23-24. Field Day has always been an ideal time for new hams to become more proficient operators and for prospective licensees to get "bitten by the Amateur Radio bug." That may be even more the case during Field Day 2007, as many radio amateurs gain new HF operating privileges because of the rule changes that went into effect February 23.

"This is an opportunity to get new or upgraded licensees on the air for some active mentoring and active learning," says ARRL Regulatory Information Specialist Dan Henderson, N1ND. "Field Day 2007 will be a chance to learn and grow, but above all, it will be a lot of fun -- and for many there is perhaps nothing more fun in ham radio than ARRL Field Day."

"Field Day is truly the time where we bring Amateur Radio to Main Street USA -- a great time for 'the Bug' to bite as many people as it can," Henderson says. "Use Field Day 2007 to open up Amateur Radio to the next generation of radio amateurs on *your* Main Street! It's up to us to make it happen."

SkyWarn Continued from Page 1

The alert went out. As I recall the first SkyWarn went something like this: Ben Laurents, W5JAH, headed toward the airport with a clamp-on two meter stinger antenna which would mount on a casement window. John Mussey, N5FJ, had a tw elve-volt power supply, and J. D. Alexander, W5VMY, had a portable two-meter VHF radio. They converged on the airport, set up the station, got on the air and took check-ins. Within a few minutes the squall line was over the regional airport and weather service office and a tornado touched down on the airport property just outside their window and within their view. The tornado did approximately $1,000,000.00 worth of damage in 1978 dol lars in the Mooretown area -- SkyWarn was off with a bang and has never had trouble since then getting hams to check in to report visual observations of suspicious radar echoes.



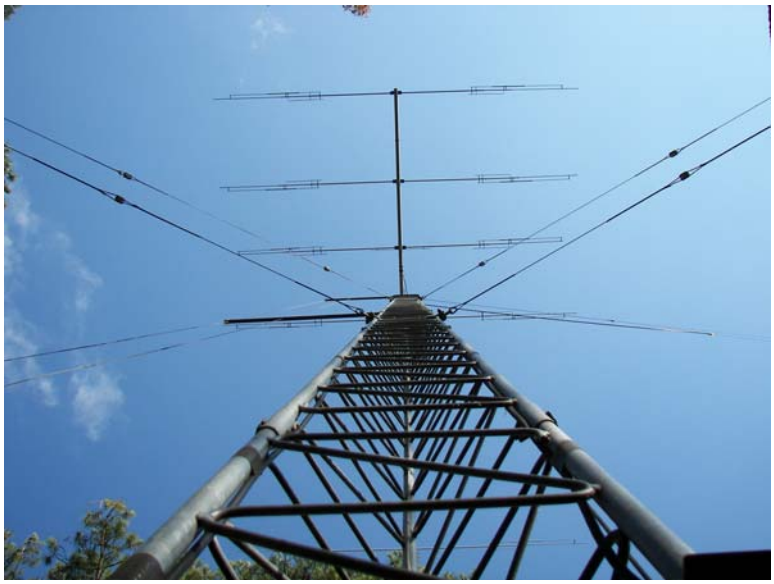
Soon after hams would head to the three TV stations with portable rigs and plugged into power supplies and outdoor antennas (which had previously been installed) every time SkyWarn was called up. The media quickly realized that we were providing the first reports of tornados in their coverage area, several minutes ahead of the weather teletype.

As tornado season gets under way this marks our 30th year of public service by providing visual observations of suspicious radar echoes for NOAA. How many tornado warnings and confirmed tornado sightings have we reported over these 30-years? It would take some research to come up with an answer--but if it was only five a year that would be approximately 150 tornados! And how many lives have been saved because of the extra few minutes of accurate tornado warning information?

Terry Atwood, KA5ARJ

QTH Highlight

Here's a picture of my antennas:



- 60 feet of Rohn 45G with a KLM KT34-XA on top
- to the right is a 40M full-wave delta loop, apex down, off corner fed, with a quarter-wave matching section
- to the left is the top of the 80M shunt fed tower gamma section, with LC matching network at the base

Here's a picture of my station: a Ten-Tec OMNI VI Plus, Ten-Tec TITAN amp, a Hy-Gain TAILTWISTER rotor control, and a Dell notebook computer.

Right now I have 324 of the current 337 DXCC entities confirmed.

73,
Marsh, KA5M