FEEDBACK

Warminster Amateur Radio Club Web Page www.k3dn.org

September 2000

President's Message

I hope you have been enjoying the vacation season. We have had a few very nice days in between the rainy ones!

If you were unable to attend our August general meeting, you missed the opportunity for a preview of the enhanced functions of our new repeater controller soon to be integrated into the 147.09 system. Mark, N3GNW, our Vice-President, who has been working on updating and programming the controller, presented the capabilities at the meeting. The repeater committee plans to get the controller in place and operating before the new antenna goes up on the new 120-foot township tower.

Our main event for August is our booth at the Middletown Grange Fair. This provides the club with an excellent opportunity to expose the public to Amateur Radio and WARC. Frank, N3UQP, did a nice job pulling it all together. It is a difficult time to get members to volunteer (peak vacation time), and more so now that the Fair runs for five days. Several people have been introduced or re-introduced to the hobby at the Grange Fair. Although we did pass message traffic this year, we did have an HF station set up and were able to demonstrate long distance and local communications. I would like to thank everyone who came out to the Grange and helped to make the effort a success. One very good suggestion was to make the Grange Fair a special events station. We will be discussing this at upcoming board meetings.

You must agree our Feedback editor, Rich Maialetti (N3HSV), has been doing an extraordinary job. Unfortunately, Rich has informed me he would like to step down from the editor position. Feedback is one of the main methods of informing the membership of club activities and information of interest to amateurs. This is an important position in our club. If you feel you might like the challenge of putting the newsletter together, please let me know.

Have you checked out the WARC web page lately? Al, WI3Z, has put in a lot of hours to present our club to the word with a professional and functional page. Don't forget to update Al with the latest club or amateur information so he can get it on the page.

September brings the return to school and a reminder of the start of WARC licensing classes starting Monday, September 11, at Benjamin Wilson Center. Spread the word and contact George, KA3WXV, or visit the club web page for more information.

73,
Rocky, N3FKR

EARTH and SPACE SCIENCE

Celestial Sleight-of-Hand

Ever wonder why a full moon looks larger when it's near the horizon? This visual effect is one of nature's most puzzling mirages-- the moon illusion. Tests have indicated that observers perceive the moon near the horizon to be about twenty five percent (25%) larger than when it is high in the sky. This runs contrary to the fact that, because of the Earth's curvature, the moon is actually slightly closer to us when it is overhead. This "celestial-sleight-of-hand" is related to how we perceive the size and distance of objects. Since ancient times, numerous theories have been advanced to explain why the moon appears to change size depending on its location in the sky. One explanation is that atmospheric effects alter the moon's appearance near the horizon. When the moon (or the Sun) is viewed near the horizon, the intervening atmosphere refracts its light, causing the disk to appear somewhat oval or flattened and perhaps enlarged. Yet the moon's image is not magnified. A second theory is that the moon appears larger near the horizon because we are unconsciously comparing it with nearby, familiar objects in the terrestrial foreground. Yet the illusion persists even when we see the moon near the sea horizon without any familiar objects for comparison. Another explanation is that since we tend to perceive the sky as a curved vault (like a domed sports stadium), our mind regards the horizon as being farther away; consequently, it enlarges the moon when it's thought to be more distant. However, the most plausible (and scientifically accepted) reason that the moon illusion occurs is based upon research from Harvard University, which was done some years ago. That research concluded that the mind enlarges the perceived size of anything viewed in a horizontal (or near horizontal) direction. This would explain why the moon appears to be enlarged even when it rises over the ocean.

Keep Looking Up!

Mike
W3MJP
W3mjp@arrl.net

Hi George & et al:

Well, we're here and sort of moved in. Actually the place looks like a warehouse with boxes stacked everywhere. Fortunately we have a huge basement (1882 sq. ft.) or there wouldn't be enough room for us in the house.

It sits on 2.54 acres East of Colorado Springs about 10 miles, and the Springs is growing out towards us very fast. Fortunately in this area everyone has a couple of acres or more, so it should continue to have a lot of open space. Right now there is no grass, and not even very many weeds. Attached is a picture of our house (See the club website). No antennas yet. Just to the left is Pike's Peak in the background. The road is gravel, but should be paved in a little over a year. We only have to drive 3 tenths of a mile on it.

You can continue to use my old email address of N0FS@ARRL.NET, remember there is no letter "o" in it, only the zero "Ø". I wish Microsoft would allow the option of using the slashed zero. As it is you have to use "Insert" than "Symbols", and "Symbols" again. However, I cannot use the symbol, as it is not recognized as a zero. The hams out here certainly haven't figured out how to get a slashed zero into the address, so it must not be possible.

Anyhow, all we are doing now is trying unpack and straighten everything up as we go. Progress is being made and we should be done in a year or two. Miss all you guys at the Warminster ARC. I will plan on joining the Pike's Peak Amateur Radio Association. I'll look for club members on HF.

Cheers & 73,

Frank, NØFS

I thought this one was worth passing on.

If you don't have time to read it, you're the person it's for.

I turned the dial up into the phone portion of the band on my ham radio in order to listen to a Saturday morning swap net. Along the way, I came across an older sounding chap, with a tremendous signal and a golden voice. You know the kind, he sounded like he should be in the broadcasting business. He was telling whoever he was talking to something about "a thousand marbles." I was intrigued and stopped to listen. "Well Tom," he was saying, "it sounds like you're real busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well but, it's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter's dance recital." He continued, "Let me tell you something, Tom, something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities." And that's when he began to explain his theory of a thousand marbles. "You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy five years. I know, some live more and some live less, but on average, folks live about seventy-five years. "Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3,900--the number of Saturdays in an average person's entire lifetime. Now stick with me Tom, I'm getting to the important part. "It took me until I was fifty-five years old to think about all this in any detail," he went on, "and by that time I had lived through over twenty-eight hundred Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy. "So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round up 1,000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside of a large clear plastic container right here in the shack next to my gear. Every Saturday since then, I've taken one marble out and thrown it away. "I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight. "Now let me tell
you one last thing before I sign off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container. I figure if I make it until next Saturday, I've been given a little extra time. And the one thing we can all use is a little more time. "It was nice to meet you Tom, I hope you spend more time with your family, and I hope to meet you again." You could have heard a pin drop on the radio when this fellow signed off. I guess he gave us all a lot to think about. I'd planned
to work on the antenna that morning, and then I was going to meet up with a few hams to work on the next club newsletter. Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. "C'mon honey, I'm taking you and the kids to breakfast." "What brought this on?" she asked with a smile. "Oh nothing special, it's just been a long time since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. Hey, can we stop at a toy store while we're out? I need to buy some marbles." If you don't have time to read it, you're the person it's for.

Submitted by
Hugh, N3SOQ

For Sale
Gauges for mechanical adj. of VCR. Tentel TQ600 torque gauge and Mitsubishi Master plane. Contact Don Rector after 7pm, 215-699-8050.

HURRICANE NET ACTIVATES, BUT DEBBY'S A DUD

As Debby twirled in the Atlantic, the Hurricane Watch Net activated this week for the first time in the current hurricane season. The Net began operation Monday on 14.325 MHz as Debby, then a tropical storm, approached the Leeward Islands. The Net activates on 14.325 MHz whenever severe weather

threatens Caribbean or Atlantic islands or the US East or Gulf coasts.
Net Manager Jerry Herman, N3BDW, said Monday that although Debby was just a tropical storm, it was forecast to become a hurricane, and he wanted the Net to get a leg up in gathering information from participating stations in the affected areas. Participating Hurricane Watch Net members pass weather-related information via W4EHW to the National Hurricane Center in Miami.
As it turned out, Debby did gain Category 1 hurricane status the following day, with winds topping out at around 70 MPH with higher gusts. The storm's pace attracted the attention of Southern Florida amateurs, who began gearing up for possible disaster duty. Southern Florida SM Phyllisan West, KA4FZI, said Wednesday that hams there were in a "wait-and-see attitude," although Debby had been downgraded to a tropical storm by then with only a slight chance of regaining hurricane status. West said that county emergency coordinators were working closely with local emergency operations centers to monitor preparations and be available as needed.
Debby was downgraded to a tropical storm as it cleared the northern coast of Hispaniola. Reports received from the islands that the storm has passed indicate little or no damage from the storm.
By week's end, Debby was continuing to diminish in strength and the Hurricane Watch Net discontinued operations after about 40 hours of operation. "Debby was certainly unusual in that we were in operation for some time while it was a tropical storm, but the proximity to the islands and forecast intensity warranted that," said HWN Manager Herman.
Herman thanked Net members--and especially the newcomers--for their performance in the Net's first activation of the 2000 hurricane season.
W4EHW at the National Hurricane Center, which handles HWN reports during severe weather, also shut down Thursday. "Our sincere thanks to all of our dedicated W4EHW Operators, some who took time off work to keep W4EHW on the air," Assistant Amateur Radio Coordinator Julio Ripoll, WD4JR, said. "Your time and dedication to public service and humanitarian ideals is what makes Amateur Radio much more than just a hobby. Without you, W4EHW would just be a bunch of wires, boxes with lights and a lot of silence."
The storm dumped a lot of rain over Puerto Rico and other islands in its path. One person on Puerto Rico died when he slipped from his roof while trying to secure his TV antenna from the approaching storm. ARRL Puerto Rico SM Victor Madera, KP4PQ, reports Debby went by without much wind damage. But Madera says the storm left behind some 11 inches of rain, and flooding was expected in Puerto Rico.
Rainfall totals of 4 to 6 inches and as high as 10 to 15 inches over mountainous areas were still associated with Debby by week's end. The National Weather Service said the rainfall could cause life-threatening flash floods and mudslides. Heavy rains affected portions of the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and eastern Cuba.
For more information and storm information updates, visit the Hurricane Watch Net site.

SOLAR UPDATE

Solar sage Tad Cook, K7VVV, Seattle, Washington, reports: Solar activity took a big dive over the past week, with sunspot numbers dropping to 84 on August 22 and 23. Although NASA's Spaceweather.com reported that the Boulder sunspot number has not been this low in this calendar year, our records from past bulletins show that it has been lower than this several times in January. Boulder sunspot numbers, which are the ones reported weekly in this bulletin, were 69 on January 1 and 2, 77 on January 3, 81 on January 29 and 82 on January 31, 2000.
Does this drop mean that the peak for the current cycle has passed? Not at all. There are many wild variations in solar activity over the course of the average 11 year cycle, and the only real way to determine the peak or the minimum is to look back at a moving average many months later.
The quieter sun did present some advantages for HF operators, because while the activity was lower, the earth's geomagnetic conditions were quieter as well. Conditions look quieter for the near term as well. Solar flux is probably bottoming out over the next few days, with predicted values for Friday through Tuesday at 128, 128, 130, 132, and 135. Predicted planetary A index looks quiet as well, with unsettled conditions possible for August 30 through September 3. Solar flux for the next few weeks is expected to peak at only 175 near September 7-9. This is based only on what is known about activity

during the previous rotation, and any new activity could change this.
The fall equinox is less than one month away (September 22), and soon we should see a transition from summer to fall conditions. Daytime absorption on the upper bands and atmospheric noise on lower frequencies should be lessened, and stronger signals should be the rule for this equinox at the peak of solar cycle 23.
Sunspot numbers for August 17 through 23 were 252, 231, 209, 150, 132, 84 and 84 with a mean of 163.1. The 10.7 cm flux was 177.1, 169.5, 157.1, 152.4, 151.4, 144.2 and 136.9, with a mean of 155.5. The estimated planetary A indices were 11, 6, 6, 7, 12, 5 and 11 with a mean of 8.3.