

SEPTEMBER 2008



HCARC <http://www.kerrhams.org> is a <http://www.arrl.org/> **affiliated club!**

SHORT NOTICE – TAKE NOTE!



The Saint James Lutheran Church Emergency Response Committee will host a Sky Warn training session on **August 30th at 8:30 AM**. Taught by professional meteorologists from the National Weather Service, this program will help attendees to recognize the conditions, which can lead to dangerous weather. Saint James is located at 23932 West Highway 290 in Harper. The class will be in the Fellowship Hall.



Frank Stead, **KE5VQR** and Tracy Cleaton, **KE5VQS** have now received their tickets. Congratulations to them. When you hear them on the air, drop in and say hello! Thanks to AD5UZ, K1VN and W9CNC for administering the exams.

Foundation for Amateur Radio Announces 2008 Scholarship Winners

www.arrl.org

The Foundation for Amateur Radio (**FAR**) has announced the 2008 winners of the 55 scholarships it administers. The scholarships were open to all licensed radio amateurs who met the qualification and residence requirements of the various sponsors.

A non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia, FAR represents more than 50 Amateur Radio clubs

in Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. It is devoted exclusively to the scientific, literary and educational pursuits that advance the purposes of the Amateur Radio Service. For more information, contact FAR, Scholarships, Post Office Box 831, Riverdale, MD 20783

Congratulations to Tamara Sevier, KE5DJZ, Austin, Texas
For this FAR scholarship award for 2008!

Richard G. Chichester, Memorial Scholarship -- \$2000

Sponsored by by Patricia and Jack Chichester, W9AMF of Kerrville, and a member of HCARC. Thanks Jack and Patricia.

For a complete listing of scholarships see the FAR website.

Next HCARC Meeting
September 4th, 7:00 PM
Red Cross Building



The last meeting of HCARC was August 7th at the Red Cross building; if you were there you know what the above picture is about. If you were not there, you need to start attending the meetings.

Hiram Percy Maxim's Telegraph Key Returns to ARRL HQ

www.arrl.org

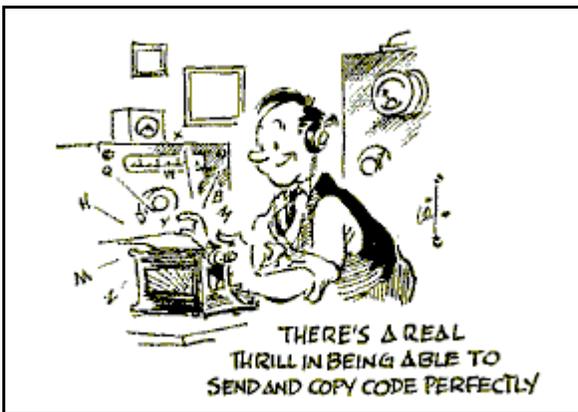


ARRL First Vice President Kay Craigie, N3KN, and Atlantic Division Director Bill Edgar, N3LLR (far right), present Hiram Percy Maxim's, W1AW, personal straight key to ARRL President Joel Harrison, W5ZN, and Chief Executive Officer David Sumner, K1ZZ (far left). [S. Khrystyne Keane, K1SFA, Photo]

At the ARRL Board of Director's [meeting](#) this past weekend, the telegraph key that once belonged to Hiram Percy Maxim, W1AW, was returned to ARRL Headquarters. According to ARRL First Vice President Kay Craigie, N3KN, the key had been in the collection of the Antique Wireless Association's [Electronic Communication Museum](#) near Rochester, New York for more than 20 years.

Craigie said that the AWA decided to return Maxim's key to the organization he co-founded almost 100 years ago. At the ARRL Atlantic Division Convention in May 2008, the museum's former curator, Ed Gable, K2MP, presented the key to Craigie and Atlantic Division Director Bill Edgar, N3LLR. Craigie and Edgar then presented the key to ARRL President Joel Harrison, W5ZN, and ARRL Chief Executive Officer David Sumner, K1ZZ, on Friday, July 18.

"The key will find a prominent place in the League's collection of historical artifacts," Craigie said. "The Old Man's key has come home!"



de KE7JOG

There once was a Sparks named McFee,
Who confused dits with dahs on his key.
Though he sent OSO fast,
Help steamed right on past-
Now he rests in the depths of the sea.

That brought back memories from the past. How important it is to stress accuracy, not speed on CW. Copying a position report such as 43N as 42N could throw the rescuers off by about 70 miles. One thing was always for sure, when an operator sent a SOS, he sure wasn't going to try to "snow" anyone, but rather making sure the receiving station had it right. Same thing went for the receiving operator, making a mistake could cost the crew in distress their lives. Stress ACCURACY, not speed. -ed.



The Official Story of how FISTS got it's Name de G3ZQS, founder

"I used to be a member of TOPS before it went out. Quote on their banner was "Where FISTS Make Friends". A "FIST", as you know, is nothing more than a CW ops' reference to another ops' keying characteristic. Phil (TOPS founder/sec) was delighted when I told him of the connection though he was later to follow his XYL and his beloved dog, but I will never forget the enthusiasm which came back from his old vibro. 73 de Geo"

The following was submitted by Gerd Rohleder,
DK8NV

AMSAT-P5A MISSION



AMSAT P5-A ground station successfully receives ESA's MARS-EXPRESS Probe

Since June 2nd 2003 the European probe MARS EXPRESS has been on it's way to the "red planet" scheduled to arrive on Christmas Day and to deploy the lander BEAGLE toward the Mars surface.

Joint preparations by the IUZ (Institut für Umwelt- und Zukunftsforschung / Institute for Environment and Future research) and the AMSAT-DL for this event have started months ago, because the 20 metre parabolic antenna is also deemed to be used as ground station for the AMSAT-DL for the future P5-A Mars Mission.

On Sunday, Nov. 16th, Germany saw a first event when a strong (40 dB Hz ~ 6 dB s/n at 2.4 kHz bandwidth) 8.4 GHz signal of the MARS EXPRESS - at that moment 102 million kilometer distant - was directly received at Bochum over a number of hours. The receive equipment was a horn, low noise downconverter to 1270 MHz and a Yaesu FT736R radio plus power meters . Although travelling through space with the speed of light it took about 6 minutes for the signals to be received on earth!

It was probably the first time that such a signal was received by amateur radio operators.



The above picture shows the facilities in Bochum/Germany. The groundstation of ESA with a 35-m parabolic antenna is situated in New Norcia / near Perth, Australia.

For the project team (all radio amateurs), under the leadership of AMSAT-DL P5A Project Leader Prof. Dr. Karl Meinzer (DJ4ZC) and the director of the IUZ Thilo Elsner (DJ5YM), this is a decisive breakthrough for the AMSAT P5A Mars mission, due for launch in 2007.

This success was only possible after intensive renovation of the whole antenna installation. Dismantling, building and re-assembling much of the electrical and mechanical systems for command and control have been performed by the IUZ, (Bochum observatory) with support from companies "Eurotherm Deutschland" and "Mach4 Automatisierungstechnik". AMSAT-DL in particular was responsible in this cooperation for planning and implementing the control engineering for antenna pointing as well as for the RF techniques for receiving and converting of the signal. Thanks to these new systems, positioning of 1/100° was achieved for the 20 m parabolic antenna.

The IUZ staff involved were:

- Guido Elsner/DL9DBP,
- Werner Klein/DL5DAA,
- Stefan Keidel/DB4QW,
- Stefan Schröer/DH1DAC,
- Ralf Höinghaus/DG5DAT
- Thilo Elsner/DJ5YM.

The participating amateur radio personnel from AMSAT were:

- Hartmut Päsler/DL1YDD - drive engineering and liaison with AMSAT-DL,
- Freddy de Guchteneire/ON6UG - Feed system and RF-integration
- James Miller/G3RUH - Tracking and antenna control software
- Karl Meinzer/DJ4ZC - System design and AZ/EL-servo design
- Michael Kuhne/DB6NT - 8.4 GHz-preamplifier and downconverter

The next highlight on the agenda will be the live observation of MARS EXPRESS when it arrives to the "red planet", which is expected for Christmas Day, December 25th 2003. Prior to that - on December 19th - a further test of the facility is scheduled to take place when the lander Beagle will be deployed from the probe.

With this successful test the general functional and operational readiness of the 20 metre parabolic antenna in Bochum to serve as AMSAT-DL command station for the P5A Mars Mission has been proven. It will then be used to navigate the P5-A Satellite safely towards Mars and to enter a Mars orbit. When AMSAT P5-A has left the Earth vicinity its signal will be too weak to enable reception for most of the amateur radio operators. Therefore it's intended to connect the Bochum ground station via the internet with the terrestrial amateur radio packet radio net to have telemetry data available on a broad and permanent basis. This will enable our "martians" (actively in the project participating people) as well as all amateur radio operators to have a permanent view on the advance the project is making. The command stations will then have the opportunity to enjoy the comfort of controlling the 20 metre parabolic antenna as well as the satellite via the internet

AMSAT P5-A is further expected to deploy a balloon from the "Mars Society Deutschland" onto Mars and P5-A will then be used as communication satellite to forward data signals from Mars to Earth. Some of the techniques required for this purpose will be tested on AMSAT- DL's new satellite AMSAT P3-E in the year 2005.

More sensational news from Bochum: The receiving system was improved with additional more than +4 dB from further testings on 22nd November. MARS-EXPRESS was received again with a stronger signal than before. In addition, the AMSAT/IUZ team succeeded in receiving the American probe MARS ODYSSEY on 8407 MHz. Since October 2001 MARS ODYSSEY has been orbiting the red planet, and the large doppler effect of approx. ± 100 kHz of the Mars orbit could easily be observed. [This web page](#) shows how MARS ODYSSEY sees the Earth from above.

Naturally this is one more good day, but it is still very early, and further optimisation will be performed on the system. However, we now know that we have a high grade and precise instrument available in Bochum of which we are all proud of. These are the best indications for success with the future AMSAT P5-A Mars mission.

The K7RA Solar Update

ARRL Website

For several days over the past week, we saw a couple of sunspots -- but just like other recent dying Solar Cycle 23 spots, they faded quickly. This group, lasting from July 18-20, was number 1000. No sign of Solar Cycle 24 in recent memory, just a couple of false starts.

There are no predictions indicating more sunspots for the upcoming week. Predicted planetary A index for the near future is 5, with a slight increase to 8 on August 1 and a large increase to 20 on August 8. Geophysical Institute Prague predicts quiet geomagnetic conditions through the end of the month, except July 27, which is quiet to unsettled. Sunspot

numbers for July 17-23 were 0, 11, 12, 11, 0, 0 and 0 with a mean of 4.9. The 10.7 cm flux was 65, 65.3, 66.4, 65.9, 66.2, 65.8 and 65.5 with a mean of 65.7. Estimated planetary A indices were 5, 5, 3, 3, 6, 11 and 16 with a mean of 7. Estimated mid-latitude A indices were 3, 5, 1, 2, 5, 9 and 12 with a mean of 5.3.

The autumnal equinox -- the beginning of the fall season -- is less than 60 days from now. I would like to suppose that cycle 24 will be in full swing by then, but we have no way of knowing.

We are still getting regular reports from readers about the continued Sporadic-E activity on 6 and 10 meters.

Going back a few weeks, Mark Lunday, WD4ELG, of Hillsborough, North Carolina, commented: "Amazing the stuff that happens at the sunspot lulls. Actually gives calmer conditions under which to observe phenomenon like gray line prop without the geomag disturbances." That's true; I can recall a couple of years when there was a fair amount of sunspot activity, but month after month we witnessed severe geomagnetic storms that made the HF bands nearly useless, especially at higher latitudes.

Back on July 7 at 0210 UTC, Mark accidentally switched to 12 meters and heard FO5RH (French Polynesia) calling CQ on CW. This was 90 minutes after Mark's local sunset. They exchanged S5 signal reports. Two days later at 2335 UTC, George Pituras, W8KQE, of North Olmsted, Ohio (EN91), worked CT9HZE (Portugal) on 6 meters CW, when George was running 100 W into an omnidirectional loop antenna. The next day he worked Utah on 6 meters, completing 48 states worked using the same loop. He hopes someday to confirm Alaska and Hawaii on 6. He signs his e-mail, "Six meters forever!"

Doug Phillips, W7RDP, of Sammamish, Washington, reports that on July 12 he and a group known as PNW QRP used the call K7S for an [annual outing](#) to the Bowman Bay area of Deception Pass State Park on Fidalgo Island. (48.416 degrees N, 122.65 degrees W). In addition to HF, Rod Johnson, WE7X, ran 3 W on 6 meter CW and SSB into a halo antenna 15 feet above his picnic table and worked several Southern California stations in the Los Angeles and East Mojave Desert area.

Jim Henderson, KF7E, of Queen Creek, Arizona, sends us some provocative observations regarding the double solar cycle peaks and possible double minima, mentioned by W7TJ in the [July 11 edition](#) of the Solar Update: "The double peak was prominent on the last two cycle maxima. Last minimum showed slight double as well. But I have stated since about mid-2005 that the coming cycle will start after a protracted, double minimum (as in a dip, slight but obvious increase, then dip)." He referenced this [Web site](#).

Jim continued: "Of interest to me (besides the admonition that this minimum is not a record low) is the possible support of Mausumi Dikpati, et als, forecast that this cycle will start late and be '30-50 percent more intense' than is revealed in the plots for the 1933 minimum at the end of this piece. While we need 200+ days of spotless sun to equal 1933, a comparison of the peak of Solar Cycle 16 (approx 80) to that of Solar Cycle 17 (approx 120) shows that it was almost exactly 50 percent higher. Protracted low, followed by a bigger maximum. A bit of good news? It doesn't prove anything, but I am encouraged to continue placing my bet on Ms Dikpati. If I am wrong about

Dikpati's forecast and we go into an extended period of low cycles, I will be selling my 10/12/15m antennas and installing a 160 meter Yagi."

Dikpati is reference to a 2006 prediction for a large Solar Cycle 24. See the [March 10, 2006 edition](#) of the Solar Update.

Mark Bell, K3MSB from Airville, Pennsylvania, writes. "Just read Jeff Hartley's, N8II, comments about the IARU radiosport contest in [last week's](#) Solar Update. For me, the biggest surprise was working 5B4AI (1530 UTC) and TA3D (1635 UTC) on 10 meters CW from Pennsylvania! They were not strong and didn't last too long, but I got 'em. As Jeff said, the HQ stations were beacons on 10 meters."

Regarding 6 meters on June 22, Ed Oswald, W3DUB, of Sinking Spring, Pennsylvania wrote, "Probably not the first mail you got about 6 meters today, but what a morning/afternoon here in FN10. Six was open today here from the time I first got on the radio around 1600 UTC to right around 2000 UTC, first opening north/south with lots of stations heard here and worked from Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee (W3GQ, K4LF, KM4QQ, K4AAK). Stations were booming in S9+ and the band seemed pretty packed. Around 1830 UTC or so, the band started going east/west with Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin coming in, with K9ZVZ, N2BJ, N0VZJ and N0JJQ worked. I have to say the highlight of my day was the contact with KP4A around 2000 UTC on 50.110 MHz. That was my first "DX" on 6 meters. Altogether a dozen contacts over four hours and 11 grids. Being new here, those 11 were all new, so I'm pretty happy! Not too shabby for 100 W using an 80-10 vertical tuned for 6 (if I say so myself)."

Several readers sent stories from [Science Magazine](#) and [The Baltimore Sun](#) that have nothing to do with propagation, but are interesting pieces on solar physics.

Amateur solar observer Tad Cook, K7RA, Seattle, Washington, provides this weekly report on solar conditions and propagation. This report also is available via WIAW every Friday, and an abbreviated version appears in [The ARRL Letter](#). Readers may contact the author via [e-mail](#). k7ra@arrl.net [k7ra@arrl.net](#)

MARS Lends a Hand with Hurricane Dolly Operations

www.arrl.org

When Tropical Storm Dolly [turned into Hurricane Dolly](#), various Amateur Radio Emergency Communications groups, such as [WX4NHC](#) at the National Hurricane Center, the Hurricane Watch Net ([HWN](#)) and the VoIP WX Net ([VOIPWX](#)), began tracking the storm. One other group -- the Army's Military Affiliate Radio Service ([MARS](#)) -- was also on the scene.

According to Texas State MARS Director Dave Martin, MARS leadership began to track the storm while it was still in the Atlantic. MARS established a liaison with the Texas Military Forces ([TXMF](#)) and the Texas State Operations Center (SOC). An Alert Notification message was sent to all MARS members on July 18, informing Texas Army MARS that the SOC was at full operations and would announce when they would request full mobilization of all agencies. This decision was made just two days later and an additional Alert

Notification was sent to the membership to begin emergency net operations on July 22 at 8 AM.

"Our mission was to support the TXMF and the SOC with HF communications by expanding the normal net schedule and establishing a full-time liaison," Martin said. "In addition, requests were sent to the other MARS services in the region asking for liaison stations to participate in the Army nets. Fortunately, a hurricane exercise had been completed a week before and the exercise operations order was used to execute this mission. We reacted to the storm the same way we trained for the emergency."

Beginning on July 22, Texas MARS opened E-nets at 8 AM, 1 PM, 7 PM and 10 PM, with a 6 AM net opening the next day. While the Net Control Stations were in Texas, support was received from Oklahoma and Louisiana Army MARS. TXMF was notified that Texas Army MARS had received permission from Army MARS Headquarters to deploy HF communications teams with their deploying elements as we had done during a previous exercise. During the emergency, the nets had an average of 25-30 check-ins; all traffic was sent via [MT63](#) or [Winlink 2000](#).

Martin said that all MARS stations in the affected area were off the air during the height of the storm; however, MARS member Tom Whiteside was able to facilitate the use of the *Winlink* network, exchanging traffic with the Harlingen Emergency Operations Center; Harlingen is about 27 miles north of Mexico in Texas's southern tip. This area was one of the hardest hit areas in the state

As Hurricane Dolly approached Harlingen, Sergeant Gerald Manthey, KC6CNN, Harlingen's Director of Emergency Communications, was on duty at the EOC. Manthey has been the driving force in the Rio Grande Valley for *Winlink*, as well as pushing amateur voice capabilities in the area with surrounding agencies. Harlingen became the [South Texas ARES'](#) fifth EMCOMM PMBO in December of 2007 with both local VHF Packet and HF PACTOR capability.

Due to a localized power failure, the EOC was soon running on generator power. During the storm, Manthey kept in touch with both the SOC and the Emergency Operations Center in San Antonio. He also kept in touch with other hams in the valley via both voice and *Winlink*.

"*Winlink* is the perfect tool for this sort of thing," said Manthey. "You can send messages and get them when you have time. The system works very well even without the Internet, and *Winlink* is more secure and just easier for complicated messages."

Manthey communicated with the City of Brownsville EOC, the Cameron County EOC, the Valley Baptist Medical Center and individual amateurs via *Winlink* throughout the storm. One of those hams was ARRL West Gulf Division Vice Director David Woolweaver, K5RAV, who operates a *Winlink* RMS Packet station in Harlingen. The AE5R station was the first test of the new RMS Relay program that provides for local message hubbing of during an Internet outage.

MARS emergency operations continued until 10 PM on July 24 when Kevin Lemon, the State RACES officer, stood down the Amateur Radio operation. Army MARS also ceased operations at the SOC, but remained on call in case of a flooding event. "Hurricane Dolly was a serious but not major storm," Martin said. "Even at that, there were times when

communications were out due to winds or flooding. Volunteers in MARS and the Amateur Radio community provided what was needed to get through the storm and are standing by for any after effects." -- *Thanks to Texas State Army MARS Director Dave Martin, K5YFO/AAA6TX, and Tom Whiteside, N5TW/AAR6CQ, for the information*



Region 6 MARS Director
Ken Winkler, AAA6RD
aka KA5ARU

Texas State Mars Director
Dave Martin, AAA6TX
aka K5YFO

A New Ham and Proud of it!
By Robert Gully, KJ4AXU
kj4axu@arrl.net
Something old is new again.



Author's Shack: I use an ICOM IC-718 for HF, a Kenwood TM-V71 mobile as a base dual band rig, Yaesu VT-170 for handheld communications and Ham Radio Deluxe for my software logging program. I also have my ARRL frequency chart handy to make sure I stay legal and a map of the world handy for marking my future DX conquests! [Robert Gully, KJ4AXU, photo]

I'm a new ham operator and I say that with real pride. I have an undergraduate degree, several master's degrees and doctoral work all under my belt, but the day I passed my Technician exam was one of the best days of my life. Ten days later I passed my General license and I couldn't have been happier. (Okay, I will probably be even happier when I pass my Extra exam -- I admit!) I passed both tests in December of 2007, so the last couple of months have been incredibly exciting for me as I fulfilled a long-held dream of becoming an Amateur Radio operator.

My interest in ham radio started over 35 years ago when I saw my cousin's bedroom wall filled with all kinds of radios. My uncle custom made a storage rack built into the wall for all

Mark's equipment, and it was an impressive sight to say the least. I was about 10 or 11 at the time and I talked my mom into buying me a Realistic DX-160 receiver, which my cousin had recommended. Those of you who remember that radio know that it had SSB and something called a variable BFO (Beat Frequency Oscillator) -- that meant I could play with the dial and make those Donald Duck sounds I heard sound normal -- way cool! And of course, I was able to "tune in the world" on the shortwave bands. I was in heaven! This was even better than covertly listening to my transistor radio at night under the covers when I was supposed to be asleep. Tuning in AM stations from as far away as St Louis, Chicago and New York was great, but listening to the BBC from London was even better!

I began studying for my Novice exam, devouring everything I could get my hands on and listening to Morse code tapes. About the same time I was getting near to taking the test, I moved in with my father and everything changed, causing me to leave my childhood dream behind. As the years passed I often had a spark of interest, but life always got in the way. You probably know the story -- it happens to all of us in one way or another.

Vintage Receiver Fans the Flame

Fast forward to the present when I decided innocently enough to take up shortwave listening and playing around with radios again. I found an old DX-160 on eBay and in a moment of nostalgia, bought it just for the good memories it held. When I told my wife about the fond memories I had of my cousin and his ham radio addiction, she said "Who knows, maybe one day you will have your own room filled with radios." I harrumphed and brushed the thought aside, mumbling something like "those days are long gone."

One thing led to another (my wife had planted the seed, confound it, and it just kept nagging at me.) and soon I started reading up on HF radios and antennas and all the new things hams were doing and I knew I was a goner. The itch, the bug, the unrequited love of all things radio took over and I started plotting and planning how I would get my first license, and then my General, so I could start talking to people around the world. I purchased both of the ARRL study books for these licenses, the *Antenna Book* and the *2008 ARRL Handbook* for good measure. I studied like a fiend for several weeks for the Technician exam, then several more weeks for the General. I checked every day online for my name to show up in the FCC database and let out a yell when it showed up December 5, my wife's birthday.

And was I ever ready! I had purchased a used ICOM IC-718 transceiver and a used Astron RS-35a power supply, and was waiting on my G5RV antenna to arrive in the mail. In the meantime, I used a 50 foot long-wire out the window and made my first contact almost a week after getting my General license. I really did intend on making my first contact right away, but I was plenty nervous and the timing never seemed right. I would hear people talking, wait until one of them was signing off and then try to make contact, only to have the band shift a bit or have someone else jump in before I did.

That First Contact

When I finally made my first contact I couldn't have met a nicer fellow if I tried. John, N4SXJ, from Jackson, Tennessee was as pleasant as could be, welcomed me to ham radio and was honored to be my first contact. Believe me, the honor was

all mine! We talked only for a few minutes, but when we were done you would have thought I just climbed Mt Everest! I was almost breathless with excitement and I wore a grin big enough to split my face in two! I meticulously wrote down the details of my first contact and was overjoyed several days later to receive my first QSL card from John. I hope to talk with him again someday as we traverse the bands.

I still find it hard to enter into conversations and, of course, as any experienced operator will tell you this part of the sunspot cycle can make DX contacts very hard. My house and my yard are not conducive to good antenna placement; I live near a moderately large city with a lot of electrical interference. Also, I haven't found a particularly good way to avoid interference issues through our two sets of computer speakers, but I am having a whale of a good time nevertheless! More Experiences -- More Excitement

Here are just a few of the exciting moments I have had already. I heard a fellow from Australia just the other day (my "barefoot" system couldn't reach him) and I was like a kid in a candy store. On another occasion I was catching a CQ from the back side of a fellow's antenna in Colorado calling for DX across the Pacific and heard just the faintest scratching of someone responding to him from Johannesburg. While I couldn't make out what he was saying, I could hear *something* and that was exciting all by itself. And to top it off, I recently spoke to a fellow over my Kenwood dual band mobile who lives in England and was using his PC/EchoLink connection to hit a 2 meter repeater in my area. Is this a great hobby or what!

In addition to DX one of my main interests in ham radio is working some of the satellites. While it all seems a bit like magic to me at the moment, I know it won't be long and I will make my first contact from space and I can't wait! I know right now is a special time as almost everything is a "first" for me, but I have a feeling this is not going to get old or boring to me anytime soon. I recently joined a local amateur club here in northern Kentucky and met a number of people who seem to be almost as excited about all this as I am, and they have been operators for many years. With [ARES](#), [MARS](#) and other public service opportunities, I know there are many ways to give back to the community and I look forward to these experiences as well.

Stepping Into a Wide World of Radio

Ham radio has a lot to offer folks with a wide range of interests and I am the type of person who never wants to stop learning and trying new things. I am also the type who has to share what I learn and so I look forward to someday teaching others about Amateur Radio and hopefully sparking the same interest in them as I have in me.

I envy those of you with many years of great experiences, which certainly overshadow my meager ones, but I know many more exciting times await me as I take my first fledgling steps in this lifelong journey. Through some of the contacts I meet I hope to find an Elmer who will take me under their wing and help me get the most out of this hobby. I have so much more to learn and I've already let too much time go by (35 years!) not to make the most of every opportunity.

Here's to hoping you never lose the joy of your first contact, or the excitement of trying something new that renews your passion for radio all over again. If you hear my CQ I hope you'll answer back and just maybe you'll be another

"first" for my logbook and we'll have the opportunity to share a good story or two!

Richard Gulley, KJ4AXU, passed both his Technician and General tests in 2007 and upgraded to Extra in May of 2008. He spends most of his radio time on HF, but has also made some friends locally on VHF and UHF. He is a member of the [Northern Kentucky ARC](#) and his local ARES group. When not operating, Richard is an adjunct college professor and a retired minister. He also teaches classes in woodworking and dabbles in photography, digital imaging and computers.

On the lighter side....

Her 4th Wedding

A woman married three times walked into a bridal shop one day and told the sales clerk that she was looking for a wedding gown for her fourth wedding.

"Of course, madam," replied the sales clerk, "exactly what type and color are you looking for?"

The bride to be said: "A long frilly white dress with a veil." The sales clerk hesitated a bit, then said, "Please don't take this the wrong way, but gowns of that nature is considered more appropriate for brides who are being married the first time - for those who are a bit more innocent, if you know what I mean? Perhaps ivory or sky blue would be nice?"

"Well," replied the customer, a little peeved at the clerk's directness, "I can assure you that a white gown would be quite appropriate. Believe it or not, despite all my marriages, I remain as innocent as a first-time bride. You see, my first husband was so excited about our wedding, he died as we were checking into our hotel.

My second husband and I got into such a terrible fight in the limo on our way to our honeymoon that we had that wedding annulled immediately and never spoke to each other again."

"What about your third husband?" asked the sales clerk.

"That one was a Democrat," said the woman, "and every night for four years, he just sat on the edge of the bed and told me how good it was going to be, but nothing ever happened."

LAST MINUTE SOLAR UPDATE

ARRL Letter August 15, 2008

Tad "Under the light of five hundred Suns" Cook, K7RA, this week reports: Our Sun is still not producing any sunspots. As mentioned in previous bulletins, the peak of the last Solar Cycle was a double peak, so perhaps we are in the midst of an extended bottom. Sunspot numbers for August 7-13 were 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 and 0 with a mean of 0. The 10.7 cm flux was 66.1, 65.5, 65.5, 65.6, 65.7, 65.2 and 65.3 with a mean of 65.6. Estimated planetary A indices were 4, 4, 18, 13, 7, 6 and 5 with a mean of 8.1. Estimated mid-latitude A indices were 3, 3, 16, 9, 6, 6 and 3 with a mean of 6.6. For more information concerning radio propagation, visit the ARRL Technical Information Service Propagation page <<http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/propagation.html>>. To read this week's Solar Report in its entirety, check out the W1AW Propagation Bulletin page <<http://www.arrl.org/w1aw/prop/>>. This week's "Tad Cookism" brought to you by Allen Ginsberg's "America."

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