

The Static

An evolving publication of the Hill
Country Amateur Radio Club

Issue 2011-2

And now a word from the Prez...

WOW!!! What do you have when you have a group of great ham operators, their guests, marvelous food, great conversation, and a hospitality team that can't be beat? Think no more because you have the annual Christmas Party of HCARC. I think I can speak for everyone there.....It was a fun time! Many thanks to everyone who participated.....all 66 of you. CAM will be very happy to receive your thoughtful contributions of non-perishable foods plus the \$20.00 donation someone gave for the cause.

I am busy preparing for 2012 where our club is concerned. I encourage you to be ready and willing to assist when you are asked to "step up to the mike" and serve in some area of club activities.

While we are talking about "stepping up to the mike", I want everyone to know how exciting it is for Bob Richie, K5YB, to volunteer as editor of The Static. Get the word "volunteer"? There was no arm twisting. Thanks so much Bob. Now to top off the resurrection of The Static after three long years, Charlie Robinson, AF5AO, has offered to help Bob with this project. Now folks, this is

what it means to be a really good member of HCARC.

I am truly excited about 2012 and the opportunities before us. May each of you have a joyous holiday season. See you on January 5, 2012.

73,

Marilyn KE5DDR

Poll results

This poll will not make national news but at the November meeting Marilyn passed out a survey of who was interested in various niches of amateur radio. Those results are tabulated below:

SHORT WAVE LISTENING	15
FM/REPEATERS	18
HF LOW BANDS	23
HF TRAFFIC HANDLING	12
DXing	22
CONTESTING	14
OPERATING AWARDS	8
HF DIGITAL OPERATING	24
HF CW OPERATING	12
PACKET RADIO 2M	14
VHF/UHF AND UP CW SSB	14
SATELLITES	12
IMAGE COMMUNICATIONS	5

LOW FREQUENCY OPERATING	11
EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION	25
CW AND CW STRAIGHT KEY	10
WIRE ANTENNA BUILDING AND EXPERIMENTING	26
EQUIPMENT CONSTRUCTION	17
MOBILE/PORTABLE OPERATIONS	21
COUNTY HUNTING	3
GRID SQUARE COLLECTING	9
QRP OPERATIONS	12
FIELD DAY	26
ECHOLINK AND D-STAR	11
LEARN OPERATION OF N5HR STATION	18
SKYWARN	22
MARS	8
RED CROSS	17
REFLECTOR	16
FOXHUNTING	9

Other areas suggested

- Vintage/Antique Radios
- Troubleshooting/Repairs
- Components double balanced etc.
- Ham Radio Education
- Public Service
- ARES

Wednesday morning coffee

For those of you not aware of it, (or those who keep different hours) we have a Wednesday morning gathering at the McDonald's on Junction Highway across the street from Starbucks. On November 16, Al Taylor, N7ADU brought in some QSL cards he had that dated from the 1930s – the early days of ham radio. It was interesting to see some of the abbreviations that were used. CUAGN (see you again) and UR (your) popped out. Some kids today would be mortified to know some of their texting lingo pre-dated their grandparents. It was also see that some of the cards listed the the circuits used in their oscillators (Hartley or Colpitts) and sometimes the tubes they used. One of the cards Al exchanged was from a ham who was later killed in the Spanish revolution. As hams, we have worldwide connections over time.

The following story appeared on Fox News November 22, 2011

Radio Days Are Back: Ham Radio Licenses at an All-Time High
By Michelle Macaluso



Fresno, Calif. – iPhone, beware?
The newest trend in American communication isn't another smartphone from Apple or Google but one of the elder statesmen of communication: Ham radio licenses are at an all time high, with over 700,000 licenses in the United States, according to the Federal Communications Commission.

Ham radio first took the nation by storm nearly a hundred years ago. Last month the FCC logged 700,314 licenses, with nearly 40,000 new ones in the last five years. Compare that with 2005 when only 662,600 people hammed it up and you'll see why the American Radio Relay League -- the authority on all things ham -- is calling it a "golden age."

- "Over the last five years we've had 20-25,000 new hams a year," Allen Pitts, a spokesman for the group, told FoxNews.com.

The unusual slang term -- a "ham" is more properly known as an amateur radio operator -- described a poor operator when the first wireless operators started out in the early 1900s. At that time, government and coastal ships would have to compete with amateurs for signal time, because stations all battled for the same radio wavelength. Frustrated commercial operators called the amateurs "hams" and complained that they jammed up the signal.

People like John Pritchett have used the slang term ever since.

"It takes an inquisitive mind that wants the challenge to speak with the rest of the world," Pritchett told FoxNews.com.

"I meet a lot of people as a result amateur radio. It's a fascinating experience to meet somebody who you've talked to for years -- when you

finally meet them and go, wow, that's you."

Pritchett has been a ham for over 35 years. He sits in his ham shack slowly turning the dial on his amateur radio and listening attentively for a voice through the high radio frequency. But he's not looking for aliens: Pritchett is dialing in to make contact with someone around the world.

"W6JWK, This is John in Fresno, California," he says.

Pritchett can communicate with people around the globe or even astronauts in space by talking through his microphone or using Morse code.

With more people joining the hobby, local ham radio businesses are growing as well. Amateur Electronics Supply in Las Vegas sells everything to do with ham radios, from transceivers, amplifiers and antennas to handhelds.

"We have clientele from all walks of life," manager Luke Rohn told FoxNews.com.

"We have church groups who are interested in ham radio for a viable source of communication in times of natural disaster. We have young kids that find ham radio interesting. Maybe they've heard about it through their father and grandfather and it's a lot of fun for them."

According to the American Radio Relay League, retirees and emergency groups are among the main reasons for the nearly 30,000 new hams that pick up the hobby each year.

Ham is a boon for safety as well as a fun pastime: When normal communications methods fail and cellphone towers are jammed, ham radios will still work and can help out in disaster situations, because they don't require towers to relay the signal.

"Amateur radio came into play very much during the major earthquake in the

Bay Area in 1989. The only thing I had was a little handheld radio. Nothing else worked, telephones didn't work, cellphones didn't work, amateur radio just kept right on working," Pritchett said.

Looking to ham it up a bit with some friends? Try a fox hunt -- the radio equivalent of ham-to-ham combat. In a fox hunt, local amateur radio clubs search for a transmitter (called the fox) using their homemade antennas.

"The fox hunting is really fun -- the thrill of the chase, the competition of being the first to find the transmitter," said Rob Mavis, president of the [Clovis Amateur Radio Pioneers](#) club in Clovis, Calif.

Ham radio is inexpensive fun, as well: All you need is a couple hundred bucks to get started and a FCC license -- which is free, but requires a \$10 to \$12 fee to cover expenses.

So join the latest craze -- no iPhone app required.

Amateur Radio Resources online

There are many sources of amateur radio information online. In the last issue I mentioned www.hamuniverse.com. There are many do it yourself antennas on the site and if you are interested in experimenting this is a good place to get ideas. For new hams be sure to check out www.QRZ.com and enter a bio about yourself. There are news articles, forums, discussions, swapmeets, free online practice tests, and more. The online data base of call signs is widely used so get familiar with this site. Check out www.ac6v.com to find 700 radio topics, 6000 links and 133 webpages. If you cannot get on the air because of poor band conditions, these sites will keep you focused on amateur

radio. Good reading. I'll have some more suggestions next issue.

...and now a shameless plug

The Amateur Radio Relay League (ARRL) is the premier organization in the United States for advancing and protecting the privileges of all amateur radio operators. In addition to their role as an advocate for us they publish *QST* magazine monthly. We have over 700,000 licensed amateur operators in the United States. ARRL has 163,000 members which is slightly less than 25% of licensed operators. If you have not yet joined ARRL I urge you to try it for a year. For about three bucks a month you'll get the best magazine on amateur radio and be a part of the only organization that works to protect your favorite frequencies. You'll find educational opportunities, publications, updates on the newest technology, and interesting reading. You will find information on the internet at www.arrl.org.

Now hear this...

CQ CQ CQ FIELD
DAY CQ CQ CQ

I know it seems a bit early to mutter these words but it really is that time again to start planning and getting every thing ready for the 2012 ARRL Field Day. I asked to chair the committee for Field Day this year and our President did not hesitate to take me up on the offer. I am honored to be allowed the privilege, to hold the position, Chairman of the Field Day Committee. I am also fully aware of the task at hand. The challenge of planning, and executing field day is no small task. I also know that there will be helpers needed along

the way to ensure that this year's event is a great success. I will be calling on those who indicated that they would be willing to help with field day preparations and planning. This is a group event and will take the group to pull it off.

I am looking into several different locations for field day. Some of the places that the club has held field day in the past include the Rest area on IH-10, Albertsons Parking lot, Camping inside a RV, the red barn, just to name a few. I am open to most any location. If you have a suggestions now is the time to let me know, so we can look into the possibility of that being a location. I ask that if you bring a suggestion of where you would like field day to be held, take a few minutes to scout the site before you just offer up lets go here. I would love a Cruise Ship to be our home base, but we have to be realistic about it.... PS I have checked and none are pulling out that weekend from any place close.

I will use email as the primary means of communication between the committee members. This will allow all to be informed at the same time. It also allows for decisions to be made quickly by a group in many different places. So here is some food for thought. Has anyone ever launched a weather balloon on field day to support and antenna? Has anyone ever transmitted SSTV on field day? Has anyone ever worked Digital modes on field day? Not sure or just don't know that's ok. Field day will be a great event to learn something new or share and experience with other hams. Now you need to get your creativeness going, get some ideas in via email to me, and we will for sure have a great time in 2012 at field day.

Remember Email is the best way to catch me and get your ideas submitted for consideration.

The early bird gets the worm.

Jeff Lavender N4YPT
inblavender@hctc.net

Meet our members

This will be a regular feature of *The Static*. I will bring interviews of various members and photos of their shacks. The first introduces John Huecksteadt, AC4CA, a major contest participant and chairman of Field Day 2010.

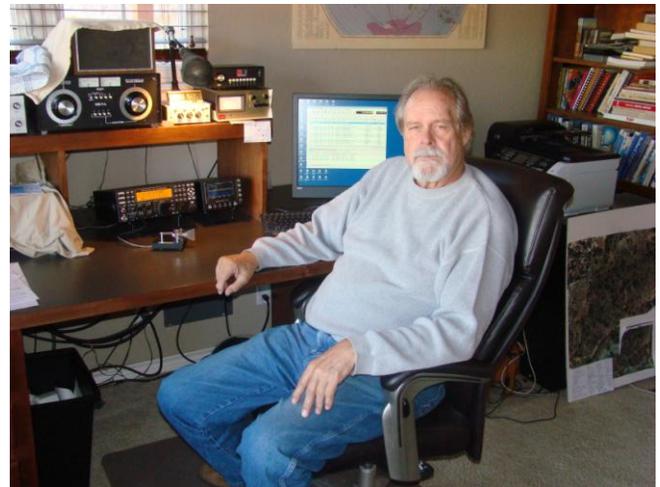
John (AC4CA) and Jackie Huecksteadt live in a nice Hill Country rock home surrounded by the typical Edwards Plateau grasslands. Their two black Labs do their obligatory duties of greeting guests and fetching thrown objects. John thinks the most attractive landscape feature is the 55 foot tower topped by a Force 12 antenna undergirded by various dipoles and an 80 meter Zepp. An adjacent 6 meter dipole is broadside to the Northeast listening for encroaching magic signals. On the backside of the house a spacious porch overlooks a limestone water feature that attracts the resident and and winter birds.



John was born in Davenport, Iowa in the hilly region adjacent to the Mississippi river. His interest in amateur radio was born there also. He got his Novice ticket there in 1955 and upgraded to General soon after. He has been active on the bands ever since. Sometimes, while travelling or on short assignments, John did not have the luxury of an HF station so stayed active with a two meter rig and a whip. There were always nets and repeaters to check in with. John, AC4CA, got his call sign while living in 4 land and is considering getting a call that reflects his residence in Region 5. While his symmetrical call sign looks like a hand-picked vanity call, he said it was the "luck of the draw." John was first exposed to the Texas Hill Country while he was stationed at Fort Hood some unspeakable number of years ago and returned for retirement. Better late than never. John likes hot weather but found the humidity in the 4 land oppressive.

The central feature of John's tidy shack is an Elecraft K3 transceiver cuddled up next to an Elecraft Panadapter. Jackie suspects that using the Panadapter may be cheating. A Bencher iambic is in the

foreground. There is a Tentec Triton IV transceiver - a CW dream machine - sitting on the top shelf alongside the antenna tuner. John usually works with 100 watts but will use the amp if there is a DX station he particularly wants. He usually works CW at 20 to 35 wpm but will work phone during contests. He also thinks the digital modes are a lot of fun. A couple of VHF rigs standby for use on the Monday evening Hill Country FM net and the Skywarn net. A computer rounds out the hardware. If you subscribe to the HCARC reflector you know that John scores well in contests.



John's sole invention for amateur radio is an "XYL reliever" - a piece of 5/8" rebar that can be stuck in the ground at any desired angle. A spinning reel with "Spiderwire" line is attached at the upper end. This device relieves the XYL from holding the fishing pole. John uses a "wrist rocket" slingshot to launch a 2 ounce lead weight (a one ounce weight is too light) over selected tree branches for wire antennas. Using the spinning reel without the pole offers the

advantage of reduced drag on the line. John likes wire antennas because of their simplicity and versatility. His "yard" is 28 acres so he has plenty of room to spread out. Future projects include an inverted "L" for 160 meters and a 30 meter ground plane.

The rig is always on in John's shack because his interests are broader than contesting. On a recent morning he worked half a dozen African stations in about 15 minutes. In addition to Amateur radio John is active in the Hill Country chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists where he occasionally teaches classes on plant identification. In John's case, Extra Class refers to more than amateur radio.



...but that lucky ole sun...

Stormy sun could knock out power grids: report

By Ethan Bilby Posted 2011/12/02 at 12:40 pm EST

LONDON, Dec. 2, 2011 (Reuters) — An upcoming cycle of stormy solar activity risks causing damage to electrical transformers and threatening vulnerable energy infrastructure around the globe, a report by an insurance group says.

The sun follows a predictable 11 year activity cycle, with the next period of stormy activity expected to begin in 2012-13.

The report by German insurance group Allianz said a high impact solar storm, not easily predicted due to its recorded rarity, could cause blackouts and economic losses of over \$1 trillion and that the worst case scenario would be even worse.

"What we're coming into at the moment is the bad (space)weather period," Jim Wild of Britain's Lancaster University, an expert in solar plasma physics, told Reuters.

A large explosion on the surface of the sun could release billions of tones of superheated magnetically charged gas at a speed of a million miles per hour, and when that gas hits the earth's magnetic field, it can trigger a big solar storm.

The severity of a potential disruption has made experts at insurance and national security institutions take notice.

"When you start to imagine not having electricity in a sizeable fraction of a country or a continent for weeks or even months ... it's serious business," Wild said.

SMALL LEAD TIME

The difficulty lies in predicting how often serious solar type events occur.

The small lead time given by satellites is also a problem for preventing solar storm damage, as currently no satellite is close enough to the sun to give more than an hour's warning, Wild said.

Updating the satellites to give the earth more preparation time would cost around \$1 billion, he added.

Space weather is a relatively new area of study, with sophisticated observations going back only 50 years and lacking an international coordinated tracking system such as that found with normal meteorological weather.

"We have very little on a solar time scale," Wild said.

The most damaging storm in recent memory was a 1989 outage in Quebec, Canada, which affected six million people.

The first scientific recording of a large solar storm was made in 1859 by English astronomer Richard Carrington, who observed a white light explosion on the surface of the sun.

Wild said: "what they didn't know back then was why about two or three days later you could see the northern lights over Cuba and all of the telegraph

system was disrupted by geomagnetic activity."

According to the Allianz report, an event on the same scale today would cause extensive damage to electrical infrastructure.

(Editing by Henning Gloystein and James Jukwey)

The above article is from www.newsdaily.com and is available free of charge. They have many constantly upgraded interesting articles.

Where can I get

Name tags with the club logo
TNJ Engraving
829 Sidney Baker
Kerrville

Caps embroidered with my call sign
San Saba Cap
1818 Broadway
Kerrville

Christmas party

The HCARC 2012 Christmas party was held December 3 at the Windmill Ridge clubhouse. Here are some pictures.



What, another contest?

Yep, the 10 meter contest starts at 0000 UTC on December 10 and ends at 2359 UTC December 11. For all the new amateurs, you can participate in the fun on 10 meters (28,300 MHz to 28.500 MHz.) This will be a good opportunity to log some DX and maybe some rare countries. Have fun.

A little quiz...

When is the proper time to use the following?

- a) 73
- b) 73s
- c) 73's

Answer next month.

Also next month there will be another DX/travel adventure from KL7JR, a home brewed 6 meter antenna with all locally available materials, courtesy of AD7UZ, and an interview with Al Taylor, N7ADU. Co-editor, Charlie Robinson will have a technical article. The Prez will have some words about the coming year for the club. There will be a couple of general interest articles and the answer to this month's quiz. I'll include any letters to the editor. We will have a VE session in February so we'll have a pep talk about that.

In the mean time I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Stay safe, have fun and good DX.

Bob Richie, K5YB