

W7TCK NEWS

Capital City Amateur Radio Club

Helena, MT

JOHN MCDUGALL K7JM - EDITOR

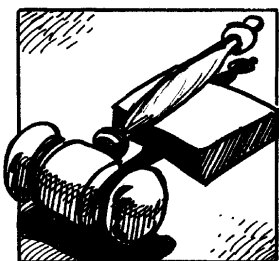
SEPTEMBER 2003

From The Pres.

*The best laid schemes o' Mice
an' Men, gang aft agley"*

-Robert Burns, 1785

The last time I had the opportunity to write my monthly article, I



was feeling pretty good about our plans for August and September. We had a picnic mostly-scheduled for mid-August. I had a speaker lined up for the September meeting. And, I had things on track to do our DF antenna kits and a foxhunt or two in September. Then August happened and the "gang aft agley" (or "oft go astray") part of the quote mentioned above started to apply.

I figure most of you are aware of the two main events which pretty much mangled both my and the club's schedule. For me, the emergence of three rather nasty computer worms and viruses all at the same time tied me up with some extended work hours around the

15th or so. About the time this was settling down, the fires in Lincoln started to heat up, which tied myself and about 10 club members up fairly heavily for several days. And it sounds like we're going to have some continuing involvement in the Lincoln Area to consume even more time.

Don't get me wrong. Other than the virus, the time-sinks mentioned above were actually a good thing. We have earned even more respect with the Red Cross and area law enforcement. We have gotten some well-needed publicity in the form of being mentioned twice in the Independent Record, not counting W7CK's mention in a separate article. In addition, the experience gained by operating the fires 24x7 has been invaluable. All those involved in helping with the fires, and especially Bob, K7HLN, should give themselves a pat on the back for a job well done.

That said, our best laid schemes have definitely gone astray at this point and as a result

(See Pres p.2)

September MEETING

Monday

September 8th

Salvation Army Church

1905 Henderson

7:00 PM

VE Exams

6:30 Sharp

Board of Directors

Pres: Forrest Christian, AC7DE

Vice Pres: John Curry, K7EBL

Sec.: Rich Weddle, KC7VVZ

Tres.: Dan Stinson, KC7KKH

News Editor: John McDougall, K7JM

Training: John Geach, KS7R

Technical: Don Heide, W7MRI

Volunteer Exam Team Leader: John Geach, KS7R

IN THIS ISSUE...

From The Pres. 1

From The Editor 3

Cool Weather, Coax, and

Mice 3

ARES News 4

A Pack-Rat's Treasure . . . 6

Metric Conversion Chart . . 7

(PRES cont. from p.1)

they are going to need some reconstruction over the next 30 days or so.

Let's start off with the Club Picnic. Hopefully everyone got the word about the picnic being canceled. I apologize for canceling this with such short notice. We were holding out hope that we would be done in Lincoln before the 23rd, but late on Thursday it became clear that this wasn't likely to happen. At this point, our intention is to re-schedule this for sometime in September, fire-permitting.

One thing which hasn't gone all that astray is our program for the September club meeting. After some confusion as to the meeting dates, I have arranged for Harley Leach, KI7XF to come and talk to us for our September club meeting. Harley is active in the international foxhunting sport. Most recently, he brought home a couple of silver medals from the IARU Region II ARDF Championships for both the 2M and 80M events. This should get us in the spirit for our DF kit building and foxhunting which we hope to be doing over the next couple of months.

I guess that the next thing I should talk about is the DF antenna kits. Basically, these aren't all that hard for us to put together and get everything going. That said, between my schedule and Don, W7MRI's schedule we haven't gotten together to get everything nailed down. W7MRI was in town while we were operating in Lincoln, but I was occupied with the fires. I'm still holding out hope that we can have this nailed down by the club meeting so we can proceed with this project, and possibly have one or more Foxhunts during the picnic.

And finally, I should probably mention the status of the Elkhorn Endurance Run. We have made an executive decision not to participate in this event this year. There are several

reasons for this decision which we can discuss at the club meeting if so desired, but they can primarily be summed up as a combination of how little notice we were given by the organizers and also how few operators were available that weekend on such short notice. I have contacted the organizers and have let them know we would be unable to assist at this point. They expressed their thanks for our prior years work and will be making other arrangements at this point.

I think that is all for now. As always, comments, questions and/or suggestions are always welcome at pres@w7tck.org.

73's
Forrest
AC7DE



From The Editor

Unless you were in a closet all month, you know that the month of August has been a busy one for many Ham Radio Operators in the area.

Although I have not been personally involved in any of the fire communications activities, I am proud to be associated with those fine professional (albeit not paid) Licensed Radio Operators that put so much time, energy, equipment, travel, and etc. into their commitment to serve. Thank you and God bless you all for your outstanding service.

John K7JM Editor



Cool Weather, Coax, and Mice

Cool Weather, Coax, and Mice? Yes they are all related in some way. When I set up my



shack, I hurriedly strung my coax and ground through my basement window. I put in a makeshift board to “kinda” close up the space in the window. There was only a small space that let a little cold air in and a little cold air out.

Just the other day, I was doing some computer work.

I have a turntable sitting to my immediate left that I was using to record some records (remember those?) To CD. I looked over and a MOUSE ran across the turntable and down into the junk on the table.

I knew where that mouse came from. That tiny little crack that my cable came through was more than enough space for that mouse to squeeze through.



A bulk-head connector purchased from www.buxcommco.com

My window set-up was only intended to be temporary but a couple of years went by and temporary “kinda” became permanent. I purchased some bulk-head coax connectors a year or two ago just for this project but it was never quite achieved priority status on my list. I got the connectors from BUX CommCo web site at www.buxcommco.com. If you have never visited this web site, I encourage you to surf on over. He has many practical and fun things for the Ham.

Now the excuse to do it right has come. The saying “Choose the difficult right over the easy wrong” proves correct again. I used a couple of two-by-fours and made the proper passage for my precious cables. Now, my window is weather tight



Just a small space in my window

and mouse tight. It also looks a lot cleaner and neater. I chose to go through the window rather than through the wall and through our new steel siding. Finally, after these few years, my temporary setup is done. And so are the mice.

John K7JM



The right way to do it. Air tight and mouse tight.

ARES News

Beginning on August 19, 2003, CCARC ARES provided communication support for Red Cross Evacuation Center for the

Lincoln Complex Fires and provided a radio link back into Helena, the county seat.

The fires were near the community of Lincoln, which is 60 miles northwest of Helena on the west side of the Continental Divide. Mobile radio communication was provided for vehicles delivering coffee and snacks to law enforcement and National Guard personnel manning road blocks.

Emergency radio traffic was under the Capital City Amateur Radio Club callsign W7TCK. Depending upon propagation and the smoke and weather conditions, contact was maintained back into Helena from Lincoln on the 147.82 Belmont repeater (W7MRI) and the 444.100 McDonald Pass repeater (WR7HLN). After quite a bit of "tweaking", a reasonably good link was established and maintained on the 147.820 machine. Normally the 146.850 repeater (Hogback) would have been used with minimal problems. The receive portion of the complex repeater system was out of service. Stations in the Lincoln area were not able to send messages through it.

An HF link was set up on 3.880, which at times was readable directly between Helena and Lincoln, but had to have a relay most of the time. Due to the communication problems between Helena and Lincoln and the developing statewide fire emergency, the Montana ARES Section Manager authorized a statewide emergency net on that frequency, with a net control officer and East and West relays. Twenty hour a day monitoring was provided from varying locations in Montana and Idaho for that effort.

Only a handful of messages were sent back and forth between the Evacuation Center and Helena.



Red Cross wanted to have the most direct communications should the telephone and power go out in Lincoln. Cell access is not possible from that valley, so that mode was out of the picture from the start. Most of the radio traffic concerned the logistics of keeping communication between Lincoln and Helena, and the staffing the operation in both Lincoln and Helena.

The Capital City Amateur Radio Club Mobile Communication Unit was moved to Lincoln and was in service as the Lincoln Base, with a 4000 watt generator available for power. We were not on grid power because of the location of the trailer away from the building housing the shelter. This was a classic example of "if it can go wrong, it probably will". If the .85 Hogback repeater had been at full operating capabilities, the 2 meter problems would not have developed. All of the Lincoln area is a propagation hole, with the Red Cross Shelter located in one of the worst spots in town. If the local hams had not been so involved in



In side CCARC's Mobile Com-Unit in Lincoln.

fire related activity and in evacuation status, they probably could have provided the radio coverage for the shelter operations, instead of assistance being needed from elsewhere.. Travel from Helena was fraught with problems ranging from road work and travel delays during the day to wild animals and cattle on the road to heavy smoke at times both night and day. Many of the Helena operators

could not get away for 24 to 36 hours, so the pool of operators available to go to Lincoln was limited.

All participating parties agree that this was a good exercise and an eye opener for what may face us again before this year's fire season is over, or for any major disaster in the rural and remote portions of the state.

Robert L. Solomon K7HLN 29 August 2003
(Excerpts from Bob's official ARES report)



A Pack-Rat's Treasure

Many of you who have been reading the W7TCK news for a while might have discovered that I am a pack-rat. I love to find good ole things that other people just can't seem to keep. My brother owns some storage units in Missoula. It is amazing to hear how often, these units are abandoned by the renters with all their "stuff" still in them. After the usual legal requirements, my brother disposes of the stuff, usually with a sale to try to recoup some of the lost rent on the storage unit. Our family had a get-together in Butte over the 4th of July. My brother mentioned that he had a code key and an old microphone. He described the mic. and I said that it sounded like a D-104. Are you old enough to remember them? They have finally just been discontinued after many many years of production.

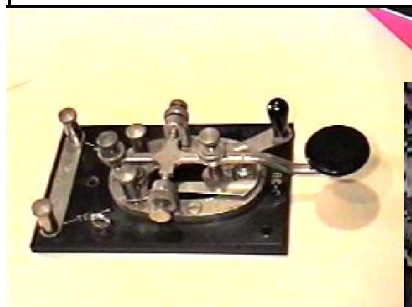
I was in Butte the other day visiting my parents and my mother brings out this "stuff" and says "this is for you!" My brother gave the key and mic to my mother to give to me. Yes, it was a very old D-104 and a GENUINE J-38 Key. I am now trying to date the D-104 as there is no serial number on it.

Are you a pack-rat? Look at your own "stuff." If you find it hard to get rid of what others refer to as junk, you just might be a pack-rat too!



God is a refuge an ever-present help in trouble. PS 46. A very timely message for those at this church made Red Cross shelter in Lincoln.

John K7JM



My J-38 Key and D-104 Mic.



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The W7TCK Newsletter is published by the
Capital City Amateur Radio Club.
P.O. Box 1112
Helena, MT 59634

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<http://www.w7tck.org>
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CCARC Regular meetings are at 7:00 PM on the first non-holiday Monday of each month at the Salvation Army Church 1905 Henderson.

The CCARC Volunteer Exam Team conducts sessions at 6:30 PM in Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sep, Nov, and at special times as announced.

W7MRI Repeater : 147.82 (- offset)

**Net every Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. local
time on the 147.82 (- offset)**

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All expressions of opinions and all statements of supposed facts are published on the authority of the author and are not to be regarded as expressing the view of CCARC

Biscuits and Gravy

Come to Hardee's on Saturday. Every Saturday morning between 9:30 and 11:00, as many as twenty hams show up for "EYEBALL QSOS."

COME JOIN THE FUN!

Metric Conversion Chart

Do you know a milli from a kilo? If not, refer to this handy metric conversion chart.

<i>International System of Units (SI) — Metric Units</i>			
Prefix	Symbol		Multiplication Factor
exa	E	10^{18}	= 1,000,000,000,000,000,000
peta	P	10^{15}	= 1,000,000,000,000,000
tera	T	10^{12}	= 1,000,000,000,000
giga	G	10^9	= 1,000,000,000
mega	M	10^6	= 1,000,000
kilo	k	10^3	= 1,000
hecto	h	10^2	= 100
deca	da	10^1	= 10
(unit)		10^0	= 1
deci	d	10^{-1}	= 0.1
centi	c	10^{-2}	= 0.01
milli	m	10^{-3}	= 0.001
micro	μ	10^{-6}	= 0.000001
nano	n	10^{-9}	= 0.000000001
pico	p	10^{-12}	= 0.000000000001
femto	f	10^{-15}	= 0.000000000000001
atto	a	10^{-18}	= 0.000000000000000001

First Class Mail