

SPARC GAP

St. Petersburg Amateur Radio Club

April, May, June



Field Day 2001 Set June 23-24

By Phil Gulick
KG4IGX
Newsletter Editor

It's coming, hams and all interested parties! The 2001 edition of the Pinellas County Amateur Radio

Field Day!

Mark June 23-24 on your calendar for Field Day 2001 at the Bay Pines Veterans Memorial Hospital in west Pinellas County. The site, where last year's event was staged, is on the east grounds of the hospital, an inviting place on the shores of upper Boca Ciega Bay, well shaded, cool and friendly.

For those who have attended a Field Day in the past, look forward to another fun weekend, meeting new friends, trading radio war stories and suffering the fun and frustration of setting up a field radio station under emergency situations.

For first-timers, you're in for a treat. Settle into a field chair at one of the many radio sites and listen as seasoned hams tap into the ether to the far reaches of our old earth. Contacts will be made with U. S. and foreign hams on a variety of frequencies. Sit back and talk radio with Novices and Amateur Extras alike, share their delight in long-distance, or DX, contacts, or QSO.

"Rah, rah, Field Day!" as Donn Davis, N4KII, president of the St. Petersburg Amateur Radio Club (SPARC) says.

The Metro Radio Club, John Stark, KU4BT president, will conduct

About 30 folks showed for the SPARC picnic at Lake Seminole Park Feb. 18. Above, chow time for the crowd while Grace Harris KG4CTG (right) discusses her race for the St. Petersburg City Council.

Photos by Carl Holdshoe N4AAV & Bill Pawlicki KB8IFI.



Hams jump into fire with MAC, both feet

Twice during February, Sarasota and Polk County hams deployed a Florida Fire Chiefs' Association Mutual Aid Communications, or MAC Unit, to help battle Polk County wildfires. One of the seven MAC Units in Florida had been in use in Polk County since Jan. 27 to enhance communication among Division of Forestry firefighters

battling astubborn 3,800-acre muck fire in the Green Swamp. The Green Swamp blaze began when an individual's trash fire got out of control.

On Feb. 19, Polk County Assistant Emergency Coordinator Charles Shipman, N4OBT, got word that forestry officials would relocate the MAC Unit and put it into service at a new

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WCF repeater on air above 1,000 feet

The ARRL West Central Florida Section now has a repeater system that offers access to hams in all 10 of the section's counties. The K4WCF repeater system, on 145.43 MHz and 442.95 MHz (100 Hz CTCSS for both), officially went on the air Feb. 23.

The antenna is at 1,030 feet on a commercial tower owned by Cox Broadcasting.

The repeaters are operating in a simulcast mode. "This is very significant and historical event," said West Central Florida Section Manager

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DATE LOG - 2001

SPARC meeting - First Friday every month, 7:30 p. m. Red Cross Headquarters, 818 Fourth St. N.

Testing sessions - Fourth Monday every month, Gulfport Senior Center.

Ham Fests: Fort Walton Beach, March 17; Stuart March 17.

CARS picnic: April 7, Sand Key Park, Clearwater.

Lake Maggiore Hamfest - May 6, Lake Maggiore Park.

Pinellas Field Day - June 23-24, Metro site, Bay Pines Veterans Hospital.

Next class session: July 11, 6:30 p. m. Red Cross Headquarters.

SPARC REPEATERS, WEB SITE, OTHER REPEATERS

SPARC repeaters: 147.06+ - 224.66+ - 444.475+.

Web site: www.qsl.net/W4GAC - Webmaster Dee Turner N2MNC

Metro repeater: 147.360+127.3. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 7:30 p.m. Radio room open 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Mondays thru Fridays. Phone 398-6661X4383.

CARS repeaters: 146.970-, 224.940-, 444.150+, 444.450+.

Egypt Temple Amateur Radio Assn. repeater K4FEZ, Tampa: 147.345+ after April 1.

WCF Section Net - Sundays 7:30 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 9 p.m. at 145.430+ & 442.950+(100Hz)

MAC Unit tackles Green Swamp fire

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10,000-acre brush line of the Green Swamp. Shipman offered Polk County amateurs to assist, but they were not fully trained to deploy the MAC Units on their own. Shipman contacted Sarasota County Emergency Coordinator Ron Wetjen, WD4AHZ, who cleared the deployment.

By early afternoon, Wetjen had assembled a team and they were on their way to Polk County, picking up WestCentral Florida Section Manager Dave Armbrust, AE4MR, on the way. Since the fire had closed a portion of 1-4, the team had to take a detour to get to Polk County.

"We arrived and checked in at what was left of the Command Post established three weeks ago for the 3800-acre fire, which was still burning," Wetjen said. The Sarasota group met up with the Polk County amateurs at the MAC Unit site, and the combined team prepared it for transport.

After clearing a roadblock, the group traveled west on the closed portion of 14, along the way passing through ground zero, where thick smoke from the burning swampland impaired visibility. Small patches of fire still

burned, toppled trees were across the road, and power lines downed.

With the sun down, team members set up a spotlight to illuminate the scene and it took about 90 minutes to raise the MAC Unit's antenna and put the repeater system on the air.

From Ron Wetjen, WD4AHZ and ARRL Web site.

Newsletter submissions

Send material to Phil Gulick KG4IGX at: xerxes6@aol.com or 727-392-3481 or 8495 Magnolia Dr. Largo, FL 33777

Repeater ready to handle traffic

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Dave Armbrust, AE4MR. "Not only will this be a tremendous communication tool for the amateurs of our section but will prove to be very valuable to the many ARES served agencies, like the National Weather Service, as was proven during a recent Simulated Emergency Test."

K4WCF will host a daily traffic net, among other on-air gatherings. *From QST, The American Radio Relay League, Inc.*

Field Day 2001

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Field Day 2001. They will be joined by SPARC, the Clearwater Amateur Radio Society (CARS), president Mike Branda, and the Boy Scouts Seratoma of Pinellas County managed by Jon Pearl, W4ABC, and Dan Johnson, W4BNC.

How do you get there? Tyrone Boulevard to the main entrance at 100 Way. Just inside the entrance, turn left and follow the road until you come to a square, blue sign that reads, "VA Police" and "Fee Services." Turn left and follow the road until it bears right. You'll see an open field on your left and a pavilion near the water - and you're there!

Hams will begin setting up their rigs early Saturday morning and be on the air by noon. According to Stark, Field Day coordinator, this again will be a Five A event, meaning at least five transceivers will be on the air. Operators will work HF, APRS, Packet, PSK31, VHF, slow-scan TV, satellite and CW operations.. "This is not a contest event, but we can earn contact bonus points from the ARRL," Stark noted. "We, of course, will handle traffic, too."

Operators will scan the bands, making as many contacts as possible. Everyone, licensed or not, is encouraged to join in the fun, sit down with the operators and talk with other hams across the country.

So, you are interested and want to spend the day? Feast on the free food provided by each club, especially the Boy Scouts, who never seem to run short.

Antennas .. Up or down?

By Alan Kaul, W6RCL

Many hams consider the No. 1 problem facing them these days is their ability to put up antennas.

I must say I don't know how to deal with the topic, or what kinds of stories it could or should generate. But it comes against a backdrop of failures in the last year, i.e. despite both Houses of the California Legislature approving a statewide PRB-1, THE GOVERNOR VETOED IT! Amazing, truly amazing, considering there was no large lobby agitating for the veto.

A couple of bills have been introduced in Texas this year, some making it easier for hams, but at least one making it more difficult.

The publicity about power line and cell phone radiation is going to continue and many voters will infer that any kind of radiation is bad for them, so there will be NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard-campaigns) when the issue gets raised locally.

Another failure occurred at the FCC when a hearing examiner refused the ARRL petition to extend PRB-1 to cover restrictive deeds and covenants. The same officer also failed to overrule herself in the appeal. And now the ARRL (see the last



The Good Old Days ...

... They were tough on hams

By John Stark KU4BT

What was it like to be a teenager wanting to be a ham in the "old days" before incentive licensing, before the Internet, before cell phones, before

computers and before repeaters?

It was exciting, and challenging.

I became hooked on radio communications when I was four and a veteran of the Pacific campaigns of WWII

allowed me to don the headphones and listen to a short-wave radio tuned to the marine band. The radio was as big as a console TV.

My interest in communication and radio continued to grow through the Boy Scouts and other, now defunct youth groups. In those days, the goal of these organizations was not to build the self esteem of children, but to teach them useful and necessary skills.

Since the country had been in a continuous state of war since before I was born, and with no let-up in sight, many of the skills were somewhat military in nature and I was exposed to semaphores, light signaling and, of course, Morse Code. I found this "secret" language to be fascinating and used a written version to send messages to my girlfriend.

Up to this point, I had not even met a ham, although I had met two or three retired service, Merchant Marine or commercial operators. Many of the toys we got had the Morse code printed on them. I had it memorized, but, of course, could not copy it by ear very well.

When I was twelve, I finally met a ham who lived close to me, a Mr. Wallace, an engineer at WSUN. I cannot remember his call or his first name, but someone in SPARC may remember him (page 4)



Hot dogs, hungry hams ... and a wimp boat!

The annual SPARC picnic at Lake Seminole Park attracted a nice crowd of talkers and eaters.

Dee Turner (N2MNC) (above left) carried out his duties as the club's chief chef, catering to the hungry hams pictured above.

Phil Gulick KG4IGX, club newsletter editor, brought his radio-controlled PT-109 model to run, but both drive shafts broke and it turned into a "Wimp Boat." A miniature SEAL team is investigating the possibility of a terrorist attack!

*Photos by Carl Holdshoe N4AAV
& Bill Pawlicki KB8IFI*

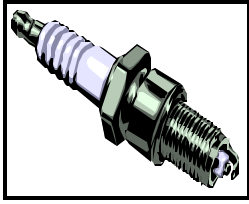


board minutes on the Web site) is plunging ahead with plans to appeal the decision to the entire FCC Commission. The bad news about that is if their arguments are not compelling, and the entire FCC decides

AGAINST reversing the hearing officer, it will be even harder to get the decision of the full panel reversed in court the next time.

Obviously, I agree with the ARRL position, but I am not convinced the League's

case was compelling. When you're a lawyer, you don't want to appeal a bad case to the supreme authority because that'll make it easy for them to turn you down. And then it becomes harder to get the issues reheard.



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SPARC meetings are the first Friday of every month at the Red Cross Headquarters, 818 Fourth St. N. at 7:30 p. m.

In This Issue...

2001 Field Day, Earthquakes, Fires, Antennas and the Club Picnic!

...Old, pudgy, bald and smoked a big cigar continuously

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Written materials consisted of the "Amateur Radio Handbook," a few inexpensive and short ARRL books and regular electronics texts.

Getting the Novice license was easy. It was a 25-question test and only a five wpm code test. You did not have to go to the FCC to take the test since any General class or higher adult ham could give it.

I bought a code course record (yes, it was a record) from the Allied Radio catalog and was able to handle five wpm after a few frustrating months listening to the hi-fi, when the rest of the family would let me.

Then, I bought a Hallicrafters SX-110 and a Knight Kit T-60 transmitter. Since the license took 90 days to receive, I had my station (with a 40-meter dipole, of course) ready and waiting.

There were no voice privileges. I made plenty of contacts, but soon realized that the clock was ticking. The license was for one year and it was non renewable. You upgraded, or you went off the air.

You also had to schedule to take the test at a local FCC office, in my case in downtown Tampa, and the tests were given quarterly, if they had enough takers. Well, five wpm was just not

going to cut it, as the General test was 13 wpm solid copy.

I spent a lot of time copying the ARRL code practice sessions. In those days, W1AW did not have the whopping signal it does today and copy was spotty at times. Contents of the written test were secret, so you did not have a study manual like today with the real questions and answers. You had to make due with study guides and textbooks.

The day of my appointment finally arrived and I got a ride to Tampa from my father. The room was upstairs and crowded and I was the youngest person there. The FCC engineer was old, pudgy, bald and smoked a big cigar continuously.

The receiving code test was given first. It was played by a paper tape-

reading machine. It was not a standard QSO format, as it is today, but consisted of regular English text. I remember the word "volcano" was in the test. It was given to the whole roomful of people over a speaker at one time. Those who failed were asked to leave, those who passed were called to the front of the room and the FCC engineer administered a sending test with a straight key at his desk. He had me send a only few words and then he waved me back to my seat.

The written test was difficult. I had to draw a full-wave bridge rectifier circuit with appropriate values. I had to draw a Colpitts oscillator. We also had

schematic diagrams with missing components. We had to draw these in and calculate acceptable values. Pi networks and other matching circuits were drawn. You didn't have to know what the right-hand rule of thumb was, but you did have to use it in a calculation. You also had to calculate combined resistance and capacitance circuits.

At the time, with some very important exceptions, the adult hams were indifferent or outright hostile, to us teenagers. We were not welcomed in the local clubs.