



SPARC GAP



St. Petersburg Amateur Radio Club

January, February, March



Mark Farr N9MIU (above) up to his ears in gear at the Tampa Bay Hamfest. The SPARC booth was a busy site (below). More pictures on Page 3.

PROJECT BIG STICK ALMOST ...

By PAUL TOTH NA4AR

The Project Big Stick repeaters and their promise of West Central Florida Section coverage are close to becoming a reality. K4WCF is expected to sign on at 145.43 MHz and 442.95 MHz in February after a nearly year-long effort to build these systems.

"One of our goals during the last year was to erect a repeater facility that could reach the 10,000 licensed Hams in our Section", according to WCF Section Manager Dave Armbrust AE4MR. "That is a mighty tall order to fill."

The project got a huge boost when Cox Broadcasting Co., which owns AM and FM broadcast stations in the



...READY TO SERVE 10,000 AREA HAMS

Tampa Bay market, agreed to host K4WCF on their 1,667 foot tower in central Manatee County. But putting an amateur radio antenna 1,010 feet in the air in no small undertaking. There is line loss, Florida's weather, lightning and the need to build a commercial repeater-grade system.

That's when Armbrust and

Assistant Section Manager Paul Toth NA4AR, who together conceived the project, turned to the Hams for help. "This project has enjoyed broad and generous support from our Hams", noted Toth, head of the fund-raising effort. "A number of our clubs and individual Hams have dug deep into their pockets to make these repeaters happen. This is truly a project designed, funded

come!

The meeting rooms are excellent and provided plenty of space to concurrently hold three forum sessions and amateur radio testing. On Saturday, Riley Hollingsworth of the FCC spoke to nearly 200 people, standing room only. Forum attendance was higher than many previous years.

The vendors were very busy! It seemed like there was a lot of buying and selling took place in both the arena and out in the tailgate area. The ARRL booth was a busy place.

FGCARC sponsored a special \$25 new membership rate. 27 people took advantage of saving nine dollars. DXCC card checking was also done at the ARRL booth.

The VE testing teams from the Manatee Amateur Radio Club administered exams on Saturday, and the VE testing

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Tampa

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DATE LOG - 2001

SPARC meeting - Feb. 2, Red Cross Headquarters.
 Testing sessions - Fourth Monday every month.
 Tropical Hamboree - Feb. 3-4, Dade County Exposition Center.
 CARS meeting Feb. 8, 7:30 p.m., Morton Plant Hospital.
 Orlando HamCation - Feb. 9-11, Central Florida Fairgrounds, Orlando.
 SPARC picnic - Feb. 18, 10 a.m. til ? - At Seminole Lake Park.
 Lake Maggiore Hamfest - May 6, At Lake Maggiore Park.
 Pinellas Field Day - June 23-24, Metro site, Bay Pines Hospital.

SPARC REPEATERS & WEB SITE

Repeaters are at: 147.06 - 224.66 - 444.475.

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



Rebecca White, 6, makes her first DX contact in the ARRL National Kids' Day at the SPARC shack.

Paul Toth NA4AR took the Kids' Day photos.

Keys & Keyers — What a difference!

By **JOHN STARK KU4BT**

Keys, and keyers, what is the difference?

Straight Key. - These keys work with an up and down motion of the wrist. The knob is held like a pen or pencil, and each dit or dah is made manually by closing the contacts.

It's hard to make good sounding code using a straight key unless you already know what good sounding code sounds like. The repetitive motion will wear out your wrist after a while. It is the simplest and oldest of all the keys. It works best at slower speeds, although proficient people can coax it up to 20 or so words a minute.

Bug - The most common form of bug is a Vibroplex. These keys are semi automatic. They are used by placing the keyer knob between the thumb and index finger, and rolling the wrist from side to side. To the left for dahs and to the right for dits (for right-handed operators). The dahs are made individually one at a time on a separate contact near the thumb. The dits are made automatically, using a vibrating reed, and a contact

on the reed end far away from the hand.

Sideswiper (cootie key, double speed key). These are keyed similar to the Vibroplex bug, they make the dahs manually, and the dits are made automatically. The difference is that both contacts (the contact for the Dah, and the contact for the Dit) are on the same lever or reed, on different sides. These have a distinctly different sound from a standard bug.

The term bug refers, in the general sense, to any semi automatic key, so you could call both of these types of keys bugs, and be correct. Sideswipers are often homemade. There are also hundreds of different makes of

the standard bug, not just Vibroplex.

Fully automatic keys. These all require the use of a keyer, an electronic device that generates strings of dits and dahs.

Single lever key. This key usually has the same type of knob on it as a bug. It is keyed the same way, rolling the wrist to the left will generate a string of dahs, rolling your wrist to the right will generate a string of dits.

Double lever key (Paddles). These keys can be used just like the single lever key described above. They are used with something called an Iambic keyer.

Iambic keyer. These keyers

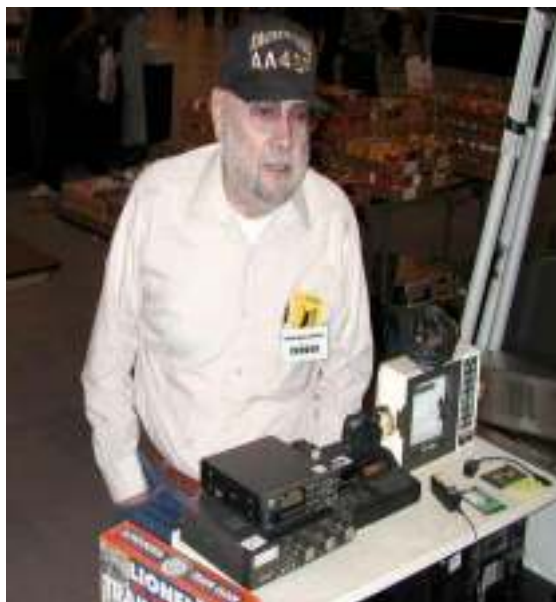
have three general modes. Semi automatic, where they work just like a bug, making the dahs individually, and the dits in strings.

Iambic mode A, and **iambic mode B**. The way you tell what type of keyer you have is to squeeze both paddles together at the same time. If the key makes a string of nothing but dits, or nothing but dahs, your keyer is mode A, and squeeze keying cannot be used with it. If the keyer generates an alternating string (either dah di dah dit, or di dah di dah) you have an iambic keyer in mode B.

Squeeze keying. Six or seven letters can be produced by squeezing both paddles together more or less at the same time. This is not necessarily faster than regular keying, but it does reduce repetitive motion.



Cedric Harris KF4ZCG and Nick Martin KG4IYC get tips from Norm Martin AG4BI during SPARC's Kids' Day Jan. 6, 2001.



Tampa Bay Hamfest 2000



SPARC member Bob Phelps AA4SF (top left) visits the SPARC booth at the Tampa Bay Hamfest. Central Florida Assistant Section manager Paul Toth NA4AR (above right and above) works the weather trailer set up at the Fest. John Doyle Jr.'s WX1JAD van is loaded to the roof with complex radio-TV-monitoring gear.

SPARC member Bob Wanek N2ESP took the Hamfest photos.

Big Stick

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nights, a daily Section NTS Net, Section ARES and Emergency Communications Nets and more. Toth indicated discussions are under way to bring two weekly Technical Nets to K4WCF as well as a Section SSTV Net. K4WCF will also be used when WX4TBW, the Amateur Radio Station at the National Weather is activated during SKYWARN emergencies.

K4WCF/440 is also expected to serve as a hub to connect a number of local repeaters together in the Section. This will enable Hams, using their local Club repeater, to talk with Hams in other parts of the Section on their local repeater.

"Of course, when you have an antenna at 1,010 feet, there are a lot of other communications possibilities", says Armbrust. "The more funding we have to work with, the more needs we are able to address."

Hams still wishing to become



Project Big Stick Founders can make a \$100 or greater contribution by sending a check to: Project Big Stick Fund, % Finkelstein

and White, PA, 27 Fletcher Ave., Sarasota, FL 34237.

KH-6 Land Became China Land On-The-Air!

By **ANN SHAVER WH2E**

Everyone knows amateur radio is a great way to make friends with people from other countries, but we recently demonstrated a totally legal way to do it with non-licensed, non-English-speaking folks — and we did it with just an HT! How? Read on!

Propagation was good out in KH-6 Land, so good in fact, that a small convoy of warships from the People's Republic of China tied up at Pearl Harbor and held an open house. W4GAC was well represented at the event by trustee WH2E and NH2Z, both laboring under the strain of carrying UHF/VHF HTs.

The Chinese sailors were cordial, but almost no one spoke English. Signs posted on the decks of the guided-missile destroyer, Qingdao, and its support vessel, Tai Cang, pointed the tour route.

Hamfest

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team from the St. Petersburg Amateur Radio Club administered the Sunday exams. The VE teams did a great job accommodating a number of exam candidates. Exams were administered on walk-in basis, with no pre-registration necessary, which was quite convenient for the candidates.

The costs associated with putting on the hamfest at the Manatee Civic Center were substantially reduced from the state fairgrounds. Even though attendance was slightly down from the previous years, which was expected due to the change in venue and in dates,



Ann Shaver WH2E with hand-held — hamburger?

Al and I split briefly, one more interested in things aft and the other wanting to snoop around amidships and then head to the other ship. We agreed to use a simplex frequency to be certain that neither of us got, well, shanghaied.

Curious Sailors

After a few minutes visiting different areas, I decided it was time to regroup, join forces, and cast off. No sooner had I transmitted, I was surrounded by eager sailors. Twenty years ago, I might have reacted differently, but

now my fantasies were just of a steady diet of rice and tea, nothing more! Fortunately, Al quickly appeared and we demonstrated the wonders of VHF simplex communication. The crew was amazed we civilians had such gadgets.

One of the curious sailors produced a similar radio. We entered his frequency, keyed up, broke the law and smiled. The Chinese sailors were fascinated by our marvelous toys and wanted to inspect.

Sure enough, their equipment looked remarkably similar to ours despite different manufacturer's plates. We have a certain suspicion about common origins, but I won't elaborate here — you are welcome to use your imagination!

Thanks to this little incident, we had more interaction with the visiting crew than we might have otherwise. As we disembarked, our new friends all wanted to shake hands. We waved and shouted "Aloha."

I'd like to say we parted with "73," but that wouldn't be believable, even in a radio club newsletter!

Great turnout sends Hamfest into the black!

a moderate profit was realized, so for the first time in over half of a decade, the hamfest is again in the black.

As many know it was a make-or-break year for the hamfest. Our bank account was getting slim and we had to be very careful in our spending. Even with the uncertainty of having the hamfest at a new and not completely familiar location, there were no major problems.

The Civic Center staff was very responsive to our needs. As the 2000 General Chairman, I would like to thank everyone who attended. I would like to also thank the entire Tampa Bay Hamfest

committee for their hard work.

We have already started planning for the 2001 Tampa Bay Hamfest. The date is December 1-2. The ARRL Executive Committee has approved the Tampa Bay Hamfest as the host for 2001 ARRL Southeastern Division Convention.

It is **YOUR** Tampa Bay Hamfest! We welcome all ideas, and input and most of all your help. If you wish to participate as part of the hamfest committee, please attend our meetings the third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p. m. at the Hillsborough Co. EOC, 2711 East Hanna, Tampa.

The Tampa Bay Hamfest web page is www.fgcrc.org.

73 - Paul E. Knupke, Jr. N4PK

SPARC PICNIC

.....FRISBEE, FISHING, FUN AND A FEAST FOR ALL!

PHOTOS BY CARL HOLDSHOE N4AAV



Hamburger Heaven!

Dee N2MNC (right) cooked 'em and Al NH2Z (left) and everybody else below

ATE THEM!



Cecil KE4EYI and Judith



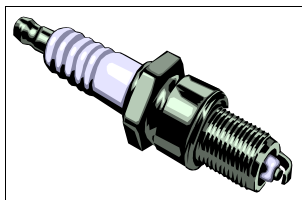
Hal W4VUO and Caroline W4VNE



Freddie KF4FCW, Betty N4AAV's XYL, Donn N4KII



Norm AG4BI and son Nick KG4IYC



**SPARC GAP
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PO BOX 4026
ST. PETERSBURG, FL
33731-4026**

Mailing
Address
Goes
Here

Next club meeting Feb. 2, 2001.
SPARC license classes are under way at the Red Cross Headquarters.

In This Issue...

Hamfest Report, Project Big Stick, Club Picnic, Visit With Chinese Sailors!

Long search rewarded: A binder for the man who has almost everything!

By **MARK FARR N9MIU**

What you are about to read is the truth. It has only been stretched to fit the screen or is time-edited to make the networks happy.

I'm the last person to talk about organization. For those who know me, know that I'm about as organized as a feather in a whirlwind, although I do have my moments. Not many but a few hear and there.

I live in an apartment so I don't have much room. I've had my extra class for several months now and I really enjoy playing radio. One of the fun aspects of playing radio is sending out QSO cards to the contacts I have made.

I usually play radio down at the club station, W4GAC. I have made contacts all over the world, usually on SSB and one CW contact to a distant station in a far off town named Gulfport in that sunshine state

of Florida!

I ran into a problem. I could either take my logs home and send out the QSL cards from my apartment or take the QSO cards to W4GAC. If I brought the logs home I would put them in a safe place and the logs would still be in a safe place in 2005. Of course, I would not have sent out any QSL cards because I would still be looking for the logs I have in a safe place.

If I took my QSL cards to W4GAC I would find a safe place there to keep them and I still would not send out any QSL cards. As you can see I have a problem.

I also had a good moment. I became inspired. I had a revelation from the QSL card ghost of the Past, Present and Future (sorry Charles, I had to do it!)

I became organized. Only for the QSL cards. I still have a reputation to uphold! I

remember bits of conversations with Dandy Donn, Ken Dale, Good George, Lee, Emmett, Dee and many other hams that have tutored me and I hope they will still help in the future. I'd listen and think. Then it all came together. I needed something I could take with me, something portable. Something that had a durable fabric exterior, a binder, lots of pockets, places for paper storage, pens, and a clock and would have a zipper so I could close it together and not lose any free flowing cards.

John Stark KU4BT and I went to Wally World. I was on a mission, a mission from the QSO gods.

I went on my search for the perfect item. After hacking my way through the back to school crowd I found my prize! It was a blue nylon, zippered three-ring binder with a separate zippered compartment and Velcro strips! It has places for pens, a calculator/clock extra three-ring

pocket dividers, accordion pockets for envelopes and all sort of neat stuff.

My search was over. I now have an Item where I can store envelopes for letters and 6 x 9 envelopes and certificate size envelopes. I can keep stamps, computer disks, and markers and just about everything you might need to fill out a QSO card, envelope, return envelope (computer-printed labels!) all but the post office!

I am now a happy camper and a QSOing I will go! Hope you enjoyed this and if you would like to see my portable QSO station just let me know.

73, de N9MIU,
Mark