

Hamfest season begins

March officially opens the local hamfest season for area hams. Beginning Sunday, March 14th, the Steubenville-Weirton Hamfest will be held in Follansbee, West Virginia.

On Sunday, March 21st, Two Rivers ARC will hold their indoor Hamfest and Computer Show at the Monroeville Expo Mart. This event will be the Pittsburgh Area's largest indoor 'Hamfest and Computer Show' with approximately 20,000 square feet of space available.

Some of the vendors include: ARRL, VHF Communications, Ham Radio Bookstore, Itec, Computer Bug, Lightning Bolt Antennas, Litek Inc., Baker Electronics, Micro Experts, Hill Computer Goodies, Bey Company, Tom Tech Computers, For Hams Only, System Electronics, and many more.

On Sunday, March 28th, Zanesville ARC will hold their Zamfest at the Secrest Auditorium in Zanesville, Ohio. Doors open at 8AM.

See page 7 for more information.

The origin of 'Elmer'

By WA8MCQ

Returning to ham radio in 1985 after a 15 year absence, one of the many changes I noticed was the introduction of the term "Elmer" to the ham vocabulary. Since then I have asked dozens of people about its origin, but none knew. I sent a bulletin a couple weeks ago, and Tom Kravec, W8TK, gave me a great lead; while he couldn't give me a reference, he knew it originated with Rod Newkirk, W9BRD, DX editor for QST from before 1950 until 1978. I dug into the old QSTs and found his first use of "Elmer" in the "How's DX?" column in the March 1971 issue.

Rod was talking about the challenges of becoming a ham, and said that personal contact is what most often makes nonhams get interested in ham radio and eventually become hams. He went on to say that one frequently hears the sad story, "Oh, I almost got a ticket, too, but Elmer, W9XYZ, moved away and I kind of lost interest." (In those days, ham calls

were not issued with an X suffix; if you wanted to use a safe, generic, non-existent call sign that couldn't possibly belong to anyone.

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WACOM VE Exams March 23rd

WACOM will hold their first VE Exam of the year on Thursday, March 23rd at the George Washington beginning at 7:00PM.

Those taking exams are reminded that they should make reservations with Ted Lockman, WB3BZK before the session and have their ham license, photo copy of license, ID, completed 610 form and check ready upon arrival.

Club room gets overhauled - under utilized

By Kevin Smith, N3HKQ

As promised I visited the club room on a Saturday during February to clean out a lot of junk. Along with a less cluttered back room, the file cabinet is nearly empty and the book shelves are completely empty. There are a couple of other items I wanted to pitch but will wait for some guidance — an old Radio Shack dot matrix printer, that I remember sort of worked at one time, and a TRS 80 computer with a B & W TV for a monitor. The TV set does work but I didn't try any stations.

Everyone probably would agree that the club room is underutilized by the club membership. It does serve as a convenient place for hamfest committee meetings, to store the club radio equipment, or to show off radio equipment to Novice class students. But after that there is no enticement to go there. That's probably

because there is nothing there that most club members don't already have at home.

Our President, Dave, not Bill, and I talked about this and came up with the following ideas to purchase in the future;

- 1) **MS-DOS 386 or 486 computer** with color monitor. This would first replace the old terminal in the club room and be used for packet. But its utility to club members goes far beyond packet. There are programs for code practice and practice exams for upgrade to any class of license. Also programs for controlling the HF rig, satellite tracking, logging contacts, and many other things hams would find very useful. Don't forget about word processing and any other standard uses for a computer. High quality printer prices are low enough to consider buying a laser printer as well. With a computer in place all the following would be possible.

- 2) A **multi-mode TNC** or a more versatile DSP multi-mode controller. Have you tried some of the other digital modes like RTTY, WEFAX, SSTV, NAVTEX, or AMTOR. New digital modes are being developed for HF that combine the best features of AMTOR and Packet, like PACTOR and CLOVER. Also DSP controller is ready for satellite telemetry, 1200, 2400, and 9600 baud PSK packet which are used primarily on the digital amateur satellites. A DSP controller could be upgraded to these modes with relatively simple software changes when they become available.

- 3) **Multimode VHF/UHF transceivers** and peripheral equipment. Most of us in the club have at least Technician class privileges, yet don't fully utilize them. The most exiting things going on in amateur radio today are occurring in the VHF, UHF, and microwave bands, all of which are accessi-

ble to Technician class operators. They include satellites, SAREX, Weak signal, gateways from 2 meter to satellites like AO13. Imagine an amateur television station in the club room.

These are ideas for making the club room more useful and more interesting to the membership. I list them in the order they could be obtained by the club to be of maximum use. Your ideas should be included here. Let me know what you think.

WACOM

Committee Phone Directory

A.R.E.S.	Walt Piroth, N3BKW	746-2327
RACES	Bob Ketzell, KB3IN	228-0425
EMA	Dave Smith, N3LIK	225-0346
MARS	Jack Kelvington, K3DMY	223-3219
President	Dave DeMotte, N3IDH	228-8178
Vice President	Ted Lockman, WB3BZK	695-8608
Secretary	Steve Elliott, KA3UDR	225-1901
Treasurer	Jack O'Korn, N3KUF	228-2472
Education	Carmen Putorti, KA3PRO	746-3542
Special Events	Frank Holden, KA3UWW	228-0455
2mtr Net Mgr.	Norm Torisky, N3KLR	745-6154
10mtr Net Mgr.	Joe Musante, WB3GTE	223-0897
Newsletter Editor	Jim McNutt, NW3X	941-5159
Repeater	Sam Mayberry, W3CYO	222-0367
VE Testing	Stan Cole III, NX3P	222-9211

FOR SALE

Climbing Belt - \$60.00

Good condition

Contact Dave DeMotte, N3IDH

228-8178

from the President

Dave DeMotte, N3IDH



This month, it's scattered thoughts from a scatter brain:

The club rooms are looking better thanks to the efforts of Kevin, N3HKQ. At the March meeting, let's hear your suggestions for the rooms. Hopefully, the end result will be more operating and club functions there.

Also at the March meeting, Walt, N3BKW, and Bob, KB3IN, will discuss A.R.E.S. and RACES. Come

hear about these two groups and how you can help, it's easier than you may think.

Shame on those who missed Don and Margi's slide show last month on their trip through Canada. Very nice shots and well done.

And last but not least, don't forget the V. E. Exams on March 23 at the George Washington Hotel. Hope to see a lot of new upgrades and licenses happen there.

PEMA



Weather Drill set for March 23rd

The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Washington County EMA, RACES and ARES will be working together on Tuesday, March 23rd, for their annual weather drill.

Last year's drill began at 9:20AM and concluded at 1:30PM. Fourteen club members helped with the exercise.

Club members are asked to volunteer some time that day to help in the ham portion of the drill. Contact Bob Ketzell, KB3IN, or Walt Piroth, N3BKW, if you would like to participate.

Radio programming for hams

by Norm Torisky, K3KLR

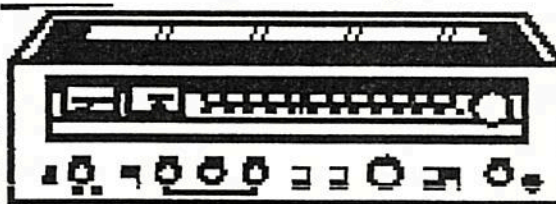
There are at least two shortwave broadcasters which run a weekly program devoted top Amateur Radio. If you have a shortwave receiver, or if your HF rig has continuous coverage on receive, try tuning in to these:

"DX-ERS Unlimited" on Radio Havana with Arnie Coro, CO2KK. It runs Tuesdays 7:35-7:55PM (winter schedule.) Arnie puts on an upbeat, usually interesting program. Some topics recently discussed: tropospheric propagation, solar cycles, amateur satellites and

new antenna ideas. There is also a chance for feedback: he says he monitors 28.885 MHz on week-ends. Look for him at 6010 and 9815 SSB.

"Ham Radio Today" on HCJB, Quito, with John Beck, HC1QH. It is presented Wednesdays 8:00-8:30PM (winter schedule.) Also an informative program, interspersed with religious promos, but well done. Recent topics:

basic antenna theory, solar cycle 22, LCD's, MARS messages from Somalia. Look for John on these announced frequencies: 9745, 15155, 17490, 21455 SSB.



I like the idea of radio itself as a medium for information about hamming, and would like to know if there are other programs out there. If you are aware of any, please let me know, or review them yourself in an article in the WACOM Ham.

Memories of early Pittsburgh television

by **Bob Rockwell, W3SYT**

Where were you when Kennedy was shot? Where were you the night that WDTV went on the air? Things like these would be hard for me to forget.

WDTV went on the air on Channel 3 in January of 1949. After a period of testing, of course, a special program was broadcast using the remote truck equipment of WABD in New York. It was from the Syria Mosque. Dr. Dumont was in town (WABD - W. Allen B. Dumont), WDTV (W Dumont Tele Vision). The auspicious occasion not only honored our first television station, but also the completion of the coaxial cable from New York to Chicago. Dumont and others spoke of the glowing future which proved truer than he ever imagined, but unfortunately not for his company. Where was I? I was standing in the wet snow in front of the window of Carson Electronics in downtown Charleroi.

In our ninth grade science class TV was the big topic. I also studied the deluge of articles in various science mags and *Radio News*. When we heard that the big broadcast was coming, my buddy and I walked the mile from home to Charleroi to see what the real thing would be like. Downtown Charleroi had an elevation of about 700 feet and being nearly 30 miles from the

transmitter, the signal was not too overwhelming. There was lots of ignition noise and quite a weave in the pix top. I remember the top of Dumont's bald head swinging out like a "cone head." We probably watched an hour of a slide saying "WDTV Pittsburgh" before the show actually started. Carson sold both Dumont and Stromberg-Carlson sets. If you wanted something cheaper you would have to go to Montgomery Wards. Frequently, the ignition noise and neon sign noise would get fierce enough to cause the picture to lose vertical lock. I had no idea why that "slide was changing", such was our juvenile interpretation of the rolling picture.

It wasn't too many months until I had gathered up \$141 (and no sales tax) and went into Monkey Wards and bought my first TV. It was a poor investment although I did not know at the time that the bottom line 7JP4 sets of all manufacturers were poorly made. This one was made by Sentinel in a suitcase type cabinet. It did not even have a fine tuning control, and the rear mounted hold controls never did "hold."

At about his time we moved to a hilltop (1255ft) location north of Charleroi. This was my TV DX period. I logged dozens of out of town stations and even had a list printed in Wilbur Clark's Sun Telegraph column. He is W3RMS. Since

only channel 3 was in use, it was possible to use the set for DXing anytime you wanted to. I logged KLEE-TV "The Eyes of Texas" more than once on Channel 2. WKY-TV in Oklahoma City frequently appeared as did Havana, Cuba. Even though I had only the poor little Ward's set, I had lots of success and tried all sorts of home made antennas including a huge wood and aluminum dish (total failure).

Pittsburgh was assigned channels, 3, 6,8,and 10 and of course, this was the period of intense competition for channels that caused the "TV Freeze," which left big cities like Pittsburgh and St Louis with mono channel service. Johnstown had been assigned channel 13 and WJAC-TV got on in time to beat the freeze. I spent hours watching WJAC's test programming which consisted mostly of running a fifteen minute promotional film for Alliance Manufacturing showing the benefits of a Tenna-Rotor so that you could watch the new station. Most of my antennas were tuned by "armstrong rotors." The FCC proceeded to create the newer, more efficient channel assignments which yielded 2, 11 and 13 in Pittsburgh, 4 in Irwin (200 miles from Columbus), 6 in Johnstown, and 7 and 9 in the Ohio Valley.

Pittsburgh TV

by Bob Rockwell, W3SYT (continued from page 4)

In 1953 along came the new UHF channels and WKJF quickly came on the air using the tower (now WBZZ-FM) overlooking the point. I purchased a converter and bow-tie antenna and got a very acceptable pix on my hilltop location. That station failed and the channel 53 station today on Ivory Avenue is not related. Later in 1953 WENS appeared on channel 16 and was considerably more successful than WKJF-TV.

After high school, I had a fresh ham ticket and a fresh phone ticket, and thought that the romance of broadcasting was surely for me. While working at an AM station in Maryland, I came home on a weekend and firing up the ham rig, contacted W3LJZ, Clint Prewitt, a ham who happened to be quitting his transmitter job at WCAE (now WTAE-AM).

Scientifically I calculated that I could get that job. If I went to the Chamber of Commerce Building, I could apply to KQV and WJAS, gaining experience at the process before going to the Carlton House to apply for the WCAE position. I proceeded but made one small diversion on the second floor of the C of C building, figuring it would not hurt to apply at the new TV station too. As luck had it, I never got to the Carlton House. I was to start in the studio of WDTV on July 13, 1953. I was number 65 on the engineering seniority

list.

By the time I started at WDTV we were on channel 2 (actually channel 2 minus 10KC offset, there are three versions of each channel.) Live studio programming was well along and my first duties were "cable pulling," that is one puller behind every cameraman to keep cable strain off the camera. This job paid \$55.00 per week, a \$2.50 cut from my radio job. But, there was rapid advancement due to the big turnover of people in the field with all the new stations being built. Other functions were mike-boom operator, cameraman, floor director, etc., each a few bucks more.

Channel 13 WQED went on the air and our broadcast union was asked about supplying some troops. We were offered \$100.00 to start although I rarely made \$100.00, I opted not to go. I got a raise and was sent to the transmitter on Perry Hilltop of the North side.

The transmitter building was the original location of all operations from 1949 until the Chamber of Commerce studio was opened. Virtually, all film and slide transmissions. When I got there all that was left of the original station was an air-cooled Dumont-Link transmitter (built by Link Radio for Dumont) and it was our standby unit. A new water cooled Dumont Oak model was on the air. This rig used a 4W20000

single water cooled tube in the visual final and when the emission weakened a bit we moved that tube to the aural final. (The aural and visual transmitters are separate units joined at an RF duplexer on their way to the antenna. The visual output was about 20KW times antenna gain to give the FCC allowed 100KW. This batwing antenna was the original channel 3 antenna and was not replaced for channel 2.

On March 11, 1955 at 8AM I arrived to start my shift. The night crew met me on the front porch and said, "look across the hill at the WENS Channel 16 tower." I looked, by Mama, there was no tower. A storm had creamed it during the night. This proved to be the end of a somewhat successful UHF operation. WENS went dark and sold their equipment to WQEX for channel 16. This site later became the location of the present, successful channel 53. There was much levity and a carload of executives came out from the studio to gawk. All was quiet until about 11 AM when a man walking his dog came up to the door and asked if we were aware that our tower was bent? We promptly got a tower crew from a construction job in Ohio and they arrived without their boss. When he arrived, he promptly ordered them off the tower! This was a free standing tower and all four legs were askew.

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Pittsburgh TV continued from page 5

An attempt to use massive splints and U bolts failed to straighten the legs but did provide plenty of strength to the damaged legs. This tower was later cut and can still be seen below the present tower with the standby antenna on it. It is a strange looking sight to this day.

In 1954 while I was at the transmitter the studio was replaced by the then ultra-modern facility in Gateway Center. Also one year later Dumont sold the station to Westinghouse and prior to Bill Burn's Noon News one day in 1955 we changed the call letters to KDKA-TV. My signature is on the transmitter log.

It was Westinghouse corporate policy to never have a free standing tower. Thus, the new (present) tower was built as a guyed tower. Another innovation on this tower was the use of continuous transmission line eliminating leaky joints. These lines are under inert low gas pressure to keep out moisture. A batwing antenna is fed separately with a North/South and an East/West line. Both the old and the new antennas were six bay batwings. It is interesting to note that channel 11 used quite

the opposite philosophy feeding very high power into a low gain antenna. This spreads the vertical dispersion pattern wider. Long after I left the transmitter, the water-cooled Dumont rig was replaced twice with air cooled RCA rigs. An old Westinghouse Baltimore built FM rig was installed with a side mount antenna for KDKA-FM. This is the period when no one listened to FM. However, it was on this old horse that the industry standard stereo system of today won out over EMI and others. We cooperated with these representatives and the FCC after midnight sign-offs for these system tests.

Meanwhile back at the studio — the two original 1949 Ike (iconoscope) film chains had been replaced by a new Dumont flying spot scanner system. 35mm slides were still produced on the two original flying spot scanners. These would be kept up until color. They performed beautifully. The three Chamber of Commerce studio cameras were kept but augmented by three more brand new ones from Dumont. Ultimately there would be nine before Westinghouse started using RCA gear.

RP: Kilo-Watt Harmonics/Feb 93

Origin of Elmer

(continued from page 1)

You'd use something like W9XYZ, the ham equivalent of "John Doe", sort of like the bogus phone numbers you see on TV and in the movies, which always start with "555-".) There's more, and when you read the whole column it's pretty obvious that this is the first use of the term "Elmer" as we know it now, not just someone using a term already in existence.

Rod went on to describe a local "Elmer", and then concluded by asking his readers to drop a line and tell about their "Elmers". They did just that, and in 13 more columns over the next several years, until the last "How's DX" written by W9BRD, in the February 1978 issue, he devoted space to their tributes to their Elmers.

Since then, the term has become an everyday part of the ham language, and virtually every ham in the country knows what an Elmer is, even if they don't know where it came from!

**Dayton
HamVention
April 23rd - 25th**

Don't forget to pay your WACOM dues

Steubenville-Weirton ARC Hamfest

Sunday, March 14, 1993

8:00 AM to 3:00 PM

**Follansbee West Virginia Community House
State Route 2, Follansbee, WV**

Talk-in on the 146.34/94 SWARC repeater
(W8CWO - Weirton, WV)

The Follansbee Community House is directly behind the Follansbee Middle School on WV Route State Route 2, at the north end of town, just a block south of the McDonald's restaurant in the old Hecks plaza.

TWO RIVERS ARC HAMFEST & COMPUTER SHOW

Sunday March 21 8 AM - 4 PM

Pittsburgh Expo Mart - Monroeville

The Expo Mart is located next to the Monroeville Mall on US Business Route 22.
5 minutes from the Pa Turnpike Exit 6, or the Penn Lincoln Parkway-Exit 14.

ZAMFEST '93

March 28th 8AM - 3PM

Admission \$4.00

Secrest Auditorium Zanesville, Ohio

Talk-in 146.61 Repeater

Conneaut Hamfest

Sunday March 14th

Sponsored by Conneaut ARC
Conneaut, Ohio

WACOM Calendar of Events for March 1993

TUESDAY		THURSDAY	SATURDAY/SUNDAY	
DATE	2 Mtr NCS	10 Mtr NCS		
2	N3KUF	KD3VX	4	WACOM Meeting
9	KA3YTT	WB3GTE	6/7	
16	KA3RNM	N3HKQ	13/14	Steubenville Hamfest
23	N3BXF	KA3VOM	20/21	Two Rivers Hamfest
30	N3KLR	WB3GTE	27/28	Zanesville Zamfest

Tuesday 8:30 PM - 2 Mtr Net 145.49/443.3/224.4
Tuesday 9:00 PM - 10 Mtr Net - 28.333MHz
Sunday 9:00 AM - RACES Western PA Net - 3990.5KHz
Skywarn Nets - K3PSP/R - 146.79MHz
Club PBB - N3HKQ - 145.03
Digipeaters (WASHPA - 145.01 and W3CYO - 145.03)

14th - Steubenville-Weirton Hamfest
 14th - Conneaut Ohio Hamfest
 21st - Two Rivers Hamfest - Monroeville
 23rd - VE Exams
 23rd - PEMA Weather Drill
 28th - Zanesville Ohio Zamfest

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