

The W.A.COM HAM



August/September 1995

Editor: Kevin Smith

Planning for This Year's Hamfest Underway

Walt Piroth, N3BKW and Joe Stout, KA3MZS have begun making arrangements for this year's Tri-State Hamfest and Computer Fair. Already they have reserved Chartiers-Houston High School and have secured ARRL status for the event. This year's hamfest will be November 19, 1995, the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

That may seem pretty far off to some, but to those who have worked on past hamfests, it's time now to get serious about planning. Walt has mentioned that he needs to fill some committees with chairmen. A few of the committees are: Treasurer, Vendor, Security, Publicity, and several others. Walt is in need of club members to fill these positions. Give him a call at 746-2327 in the evenings and volunteer.

WACOM to Provide Communications Support for Labor Day Classic 5K Run

WACOM will again volunteer communications for the annual American Cancer Society's Labor Day Classic 5K Run on Monday, September 4, 1995. As always, the run will begin around 9:00 AM in Washington Park and conclude at Wash High on Jefferson Avenue.

Jim McNutt, NW3X is coordinating our participation and Walt Piroth, N3BKW will serve as net control. Volunteers to the Classic usually receive a tee-shirt. The run is usually over within an hour to hour and a half and members stop after somewhere off refreshments. No experience is necessary and everyone is invited to participate.

Annual Club Picnic to be September 9th

The annual WACOM family picnic will be on Saturday, September 9th at the South Strabane Fire Department #2 picnic grounds as it has in past. The picnic will begin at 3:00 PM. For newcomers, the picnic grounds are directly behind the fire hall which is located on East Maiden Street (Route 40 east of Washington) in Pancake.

Dave DeMotte will handle taking reservations and co-ordinating covered dishes. Dave asks that all reservations be in by the Labor Day weekend. As indicated above, all members are requested to bring a covered dish to the picnic. The club will provide the meat, buns, condiments, and drinks.

Speaking Out

by Kevin Smith, N3HKQ
Newsletter Editor



You probably have wondered fun to do. But it is more time whether you would receive a consuming then I ever thought it newsletter before the summer was would be. There were times this through. This newsletter business summer when I just didn't have the has been a real chore for me this time to devote to it. summer. I have been faced with Just a warning, not getting a lots of things to do this summer. newsletter out may happen again. I Things I would liked to have done, will try to avoid it, but if priorities and things I had to do. The have to be made, the newsletter may newsletter did not fall into the later have to be put off. category.

One suggestion made to me was I am sorry if not getting the a good one. Next year I will newsletter out in a timely fashion probably combine the May/June and has inconvenienced anyone. I want July /August issues of the WACOM to do this newsletter. Usually it is HAM.

Radio Amateur Volunteers Needed for the Westmoreland County Air Show

Two meter operators are needed to provide communications for the Westmoreland County Air Show. This year's event will be held at the Rostraver Airport just off Rt. 51 near Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania.

The dates for the air show are September 23rd and 24th with a possible media show on Friday the 22nd. If you are intersted in giving communications assistance, please send a post card or a PBBS message to:

JOHN J. MORAN; KA3JHB
211 SOUTH THIRD ST
WEST NEWTON, PA 15089
PH 412 872-6726

or
KA3JHB@W3CSL.#SWPA.USA.
NA

Please put the following information on the post card or in your PBBS message: name, call, address, and telephone number. Also include the days and times you are willing to work the airshow. Extra batteries and possibly a battery charger would be a plus.



WACOM Committee Phone Directory

A.R.E.S.	Walt Piroth, N3BKW	746-2327
RACES	Bob Ketzell, KB3IN	228-0425
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Secretary	Ted Lockman, WB3BZK	222-6473
Treasurer	Cheryl McGrevin, N3PYC	225-9545
Education	Jim Burtoft, KC3HW	228-0546
2mtr Net Mgr.	Norm Torisky, N3KLR	745-6154
10mtr Net Mgr.	Joe Musante, WB3GTE	223-0897
Newsletter	Kevin Smith, N3HKQ	258-4153
Repeater	Sam Mayberry, W3CYO	222-0367
VE Testing	???	???

A.R.E.S. Report

by Walt Piroth, N3BKW
Washington County EC



A few events coming up in the months ahead that might be of interest are the Beaver County Air Show and the Westmoreland County Air Show. The Westmoreland County Show will be at the Rostraver Airport. Both of these Shows will use Amateur Radio for communications. The Beaver County Show will use Ham operators as the primary communications source. For more information on both Air Shows monitor the SW PA ARES Net on Sunday evening on the 147.09+ Repeater at 7:30 PM local time.

On Thursday, July 13th a Skywarn Net was conducted on the .79 Repeater. Lee, N3IAL, at the Weather Service Office, came on frequency at 10:40 with an announcement that a Severe Thunderstorm Warning had been issued for Washington County until 11:15pm. NW3X, N3KDN, NX3P, N3PCE, KA3PMW, WA3TLD, and N3BKW were on frequency.

High wind was reported by most stations. No severe weather was reported. Another severe weather warning was issued for Washington County on Saturday, July 15th. Most of the heavy weather was reported in the far eastern part of the county.

K3PLM reported very heavy rain on Route 70 near Bentleyville and N3PCE reported strong wind south of the City. Someone from the Weather Service did come on frequency to announce a thunderstorm warning. This was sometime after 10pm. He was directed to the Bentleyville Repeater where the storm was in progress.

From the Office of The Section Manager: The Simulated Emergency Test 1995 in The WPA Section: "The SET in WPA Section will be conducted on November 11, 1995. Detailed WPA participation instructions will be in your hands well in advance. The SET this year will be conducted in coordination with the Western New York Section.



Field Day at Camp Anawanna

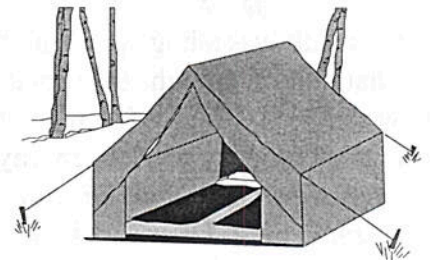
(Article by Frank Holden;
KA3UWW)

I would like to thank everyone that came out to Camp Anawanna for field day this year. We had a GREAT time! We used NX3P for our call and had a 3A rating.

A special thanks to Washington Steel for the use of their 5KW diesel generator and the fuel. There was K3DMY on 40M cw, NX3P on 40M phone, KA3KSP on 10M phone and KA3UWW on 20M phone. There was extra support from N3VBU, AD3T, N3AOK and KA3YTT in keeping us going.

If this is any sign of what to expect, next year will be even better!!! We had about 8 Webelo scouts visit and ask questions along with scouts from Troop 1009.

Throughout the whole day there were numerous other people show up at the camp site just to chat about radio and what we were doing. Most seemed very intrested in different aspects of the communication operations.



Turn it Down! Will Ya?!!!

by *Kenneth T. Frankenberg*
AA3GM -

Now that I have your attention, this is an article about QRP. In Ham lingo, QRP means, "Shall I decrease transmitter power?" In this case, it means to decrease it 5 watts output or less. Yes, I have heard the comments and excuses for staying with high power such as, "No one is going to hear you!", "Why punish yourself?", or the famous line, "Life's too Short for QRP!" Criticisms aside, QRP is a challenging facet of amateur radio where the results can be rewarding and the operating fun!

I got into QRP during the middle of March when I bought a Ten-Tec Argo 556 (the QRP version of the Ten-Tec Scout). Before purchasing the rig, I read through several books on QRP and thought it sounded interesting. I was, however, a bit skeptical about some of the claims of reaching the far corners of the earth on a watt of power. It just seemed a little hard to swallow. Well, a week after my Ten-Tec arrived, my doubts had vanished. My first DX contact with QRP was a station in Paraguay on 20 meters CW. His signal was very strong and the result was a huge pile-up of U.S. stations. I thought to myself, "What the heck, I'll give it a try ... I don't have Paraguay yet." I sent my call, AA3CM/QRP and he came right back to me!! I was shocked! I sent my report back with my power (5 watts) output and he said, "Good signal for QRP - 73." If I had known it would have been that easy

I would have turned it down to 1 watt!

The next weekend was the WPX SSB Contest. I thought it would be really tough making ANY contacts on voice. QRP is strictly CW, right? Well, by the end of the contest I had racked up 17 more DX countries running 5 watts or less. In fact, during the contest, I needed to go to Bradford to run a few errands so I hooked my Ten-Tec in my truck and went QRP mobile on 20 meters using a Larsen 20 meter Ham stick antenna. During the 20 mile drive, I contacted Croatia, Belgium, France, Austria, Aruba, and Wales all on 5 watts SSB!! The guy from Belgium couldn't believe that I was QRP mobile. He stated that I was a true 5x9 signal! Later that evening, I made a contact to Montana running only 1 watt output power. The gentleman on the other end said, "I'm embarrassed! I'm running 1300 watts and your 10 over 9 with only a watt!" Conditions that weekend on 20 meters were very good to say the least.

Band conditions are of course very important in operating QRP. If the band is dead or there is loud static, QRP is not going to be of much use. The lower bands (160m, 80m, and 40m) are the most difficult to operate. Frequent noise from thunderstorms can make QRP operating nearly impossible. In those conditions it is best to use high power.

Good antennas are also of vital importance in low power operating. If band conditions are less than ideal, a high gain antenna can make the difference between success or frustration. Even a well tuned dipole with good coax can

work wonders with QRP.

One of the best deals with QRP is the low cost of equipment. Homebrewed rigs of all shapes and sizes are common in low power operating. There are many kits available in Ham advertisements and Hamfests. Many of these rigs are part of a growing facet of QRP known as milliwatting or QRPp. These amateurs use the bare minimum of under one watt of output power. Some have made DX contacts to Australia using only 250 milliwatts! One Ham operator was awarded Worked All States running ONLY 50 milliwatts! I haven't yet delved into QRPp but it sounds fascinating.

Since I began operating QRP, I have contacted 35 countries and 30 states (including Alaska). On DX, I have reached as far as Australia running 5 watts output power which calculates roughly to 2400 miles per watt! With luck, I'll have QRP DXCC in a few years. While QRP may not be for everyone, it is a fun and challenging facet of amateur radio. The cost of equipment is relatively inexpensive and you usually don't have to worry about interfering with your neighbor's telephone line. QRP does take patience for both the operator and for those he or she contacts (it is sometimes a real struggle to hear QRP signals!). If band conditions are lousy it is best to stay with high power or spend time with the family.

When the bands are hopping, GO FOR IT! The excitement of working distant stations on low power are worth it. QRP, its challenging, its cheap, and most of all, Its FUN!!

THE PACKET NODE PROJECT

By Dick Sisson, W5ONL

I was pleased to attend the July meeting of the WACOM Club, and had thought I might be able to attend in August and perhaps September as well. However my part of the project which brought me to Washington was completed early, so that I am now back in my current "second home", Akron, OH. Things were so busy until the last moment that I didn't even have an opportunity to say goodbye, for which I'm sorry.

Here in my apartment in Akron, I have the usual apartment restrictions on antennas and the constant threat of TVI/RFI. I have found that VHF packet radio is one of the best modes of operation for coping with these constraints.

Early on, I tired of the usual packet BBS fare. Nowadays, when I want to rag chew, I connect through the local Converse Gateway node at the University of Akron. Converse is a function of the Internet for amateur packet radio users. Through it, I can rag chew with other hams literally world wide, using only my very modest 2 meter packet station. Converse is to "real" amateur radio as virtual reality is to reality, as any hard-core DXer will quickly tell you. I'm a true DXer (among other things) when I have the opportunity to be, but for now, Converse has provided a lot of good worldwide ragchewing. The other thing I like to do on Packet in to go node travelling cross-country.

VHF packeteer can go through an HF packet gateway and cover the world, but I prefer to do most of my node travelling using only the VHF and UHF packet network. I've daisy-chained through the packet nodes from Akron to such places as Charlotte, NC; Naperville, IL, and Washington, DC. Unfortunately, most of these trips are

through unattended packet nodes and rarely involve keyboard to-keyboard communication with a human being on the other end. That's why I use Converse - for some human contact.

What good is node travelling, you might ask? One answer is for the challenge of doing it - just like the challenge of working DX. (There are those who question the value of that, too!) Also, node travelling helps me better understand the packet node network through which all that stuff on the packet BBS travels.

Everybody who is on packet radio has probably seen a little piece of the packet node network in the area immediately around him. Practically nobody has seen the whole "big picture" of what the packet node network of North America looks like. The Packet Node Project is attempting to change that.

I started, a little over a year ago, systematically mapping the packet node network, starting from Akron. I have now collected data on well over 200 packet nodes in Ohio, representing over 95% of the nodes in operation here (excluding KA-nodes). Eventually, I expanded out into neighboring states in all directions, until I travelled about as far as one can. Packet node travelling is somewhat like building a house of cards you can only travel so far before the whole thing collapses. As soon as I had perfected my methodology for systematically node travelling and collecting the data, I enlisted the aid of about 25 other amateur radio packeteers scattered around the country to do the same thing in their respective areas. The data is collected and funnelled here, where it is being put into a computer database. Mapping software will be used to plot maps of the data to graphically illustrate what the node network looks like. This project is a bit like eating an elephant - we have to do it one bit at a time. We have made considerable progress but we have a long way to go.

One of the things our project has documented is a significant weakness in the packet node network in western

Pennsylvania.

For a packet station anywhere in Ohio to connect to -- say State College Pa, would be extremely difficult except for those rare times that there is a VHF band opening. The reason is, in western Pa from Erie county in the north all the way to Greene County in the south, there is not a single packet network node that regularly connects both with nodes to its west and with nodes to its east. Node WASHPA:W3CYO-2 maintains regular contacts with a number of nodes to its west, but absolutely none to its east. The nearest node east of WASHPA:W3CYO-2 is either MPARA:KA3JSD-5 or MTP:KA3JSD 3, both of which are located in Mount Pleasant, PA. These two nodes maintain regular contacts with a number of nodes to their east, but absolutely none to their west. The story is essentially the same up and down the entire length of western Pennsylvania. Absolutely all of the packet network nodes anywhere in Allegheny county, so far as I have been able to learn, are all operated by one individual, W3IXR.

Except for a single link which W3IXR maintains with node MERCER:W3LIF, in Mercer county, absolutely the only link I know of into W3IXR is via the Internet. I don't know of another city in the country the size of Pittsburgh where the packet node network is so under-developed! The potential for growth of amateur packet radio is certainly as good in western PA as it is in West Virginia, which has a remarkably good statewide packet network.

I am an advocate of a national amateur packet radio organization, quite likely under ARRL sponsorship, which will be able to address such issues as the development of the packet network. However, rather than jump on my soapbox, I am preferring to continue collecting data which will give us a true picture of what we have. If we build it, they will come.

August 1995

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																	
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September 1995

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<p>3</p> <p>9:00 AM RACES Net; 3990.5 kHz 7:30 PM SWPA ARES Net; 147.09+</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>9:00 AM Labor Day 5K Run; Washington Park</p>	<p>5</p> <p>8:30 PM 2 Meter Net; 145.49 MHz 9:00 PM 10 Meter Net; 28.330 MHz</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p>7:30 PM WACOM Meeting</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>  <p>3:00 PM Club Picnic</p>
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The WACOM HAM

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**2 Meter Net
 145.49MHz
 8:30 PM Local Time**

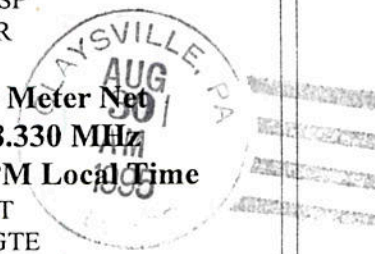
Aug 1 N3KLR
 Aug 8 W3IBT
 Aug 15 N3KLR
 Aug 22 KA3KSP
 Aug 29 N3KLR

Sept 5 W3IBT
 Sept 12 N3KLR
 Sept 19 KA3KSP
 Sept 26 N3KLR

**10 Meter Net
 28.330 MHz
 9:00 PM Local Time**

Aug 1 W3IBT
 Aug 8 WB3GTE
 Aug 15 KA3VOM
 Aug 22 KD3VX
 Aug 29 WB3GTE

Sept 5 KA3VOM
 Sept 12 WB3GTE
 Sept 19 KD3VX
 Sept 26 W3IBT



The W.A.COM HAM

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