



P.O.Box 603, Birmingham, AL 35203

June 2007

Jim Rogers, W4ATK, Editor

w4atk@arrl.net

OAK MOUNTAIN SEARCH AND RESCUE PRACTICE

by Jim Rogers, W4ATK

Friday, May 18th, I had the opportunity to join the Oak Mountain Search and Rescue Team on one of their practices. These guys do it right. We met at the ranger station at 6:00 pm and after everyone got logged in, we had a briefing session that set up the scenario.

A father, son, and daughter had come to the park to do some hiking. They were now overdue and the wife/mother was concerned.

The volunteers were divided into three teams for the "walking in the woods" part of the exercise. Each team had a communicator, read ham radio operator with an HT. At the ranger station there was a complement of operators to man the base station.

Each team was to call in at 10 minute intervals and report their progress. As the teams called in the time and details reported were logged. "Targets" had been placed at strategic areas of the many trails in the park. The targets represented the father, daughter and son.

Gary Green, W4GRE, had brought his complement of portable APRS devices and this practice was to test the application of APRS technology in this environment. Unfortunately we had some problems and the APRS did not function as we had anticipated. Never the less, each team also carried one of the portable devices and Gary had provided a laptop with a park map and we hoped to track the teams by APRS. "Murphy", famed for Murphy's Law, unfortunately stepped in and we had limited success, this time. Gary also served as one of the search team leaders.

We used the new repeater, 145.29, and it worked quite well. At one time we lost touch with one of the teams and thought we might have a dead spot, but it was an operator error. Apparently the HT had switched frequency. When the error was discovered and corrected, everything was back to normal.

The Oak Mountain SAR Team had brought a laptop and projector and were able to display a large map of the park with markers for each team. Thus as the teams reported in their progress was drawn on the map and we knew at every point exactly where the teams were.

The end result, we were able to find all three “lost individuals” within a very short amount of time. Everyone returned to the ranger station safely.

I wish I could remember everyone's name who participated and could give them appropriate recognition here, suffice to say there was a fair representation of BARC and SCARC members there. James Pilman, KA4ZQA was the “incident commander”. Stephen and Howard Moss, KB4FKN and KC4QJA were the primary communicators at the base station. Ed Pitchford, KD4AY and yours truly completed the base station contingent.

You can bet I will be there for the next one. I am hooked!

BARC/SCARC FIELD DAY EXERCISE PLANNED

June 23, 24, 2007

BARC will host the combined field day exercise of the Birmingham Amateur Radio Club and the Shelby County Amateur Radio Club. When these two get together, great things happen. This year's activities are chaired by BARC's own Jeff Drew, N4JDU.

What is “Field Day”? It is an operating event designed to test the amateur radio community's preparedness for conducting operations under less than optimal conditions. In other words, we the members of BARC and SCARC will transport our air-conditioning acclimated bodies to a remote field infested with chiggers and mosquitoes and operate!! We will power our stations off of emergency generators. Our antennas will for the most part be wires thrown into the trees. Our power output will be limited to 150W. So forget that big “leen-yar” you got sitting in the corner of the shack. For 24 hours we will slave over a radio to exact as many contacts as we can with other “field day-ers”.

Hopefully, we will be able to showcase our abilities to local officials and the new-media thus informing our fellow citizens that we are ready and able to provide communications when everything else fails.

Now you might think, the most important thing is the score we shall amass in the contest. I hope you forget the score, and realize this is an opportunity to hone your skills as an operator. Speed is not as important as accuracy. Forget whether or not you can run 30WPM CW. You are there to communicate and to do it with accuracy and precision.

We will setup on Friday. Our field day will not be as primitive as some. We will have beam antennas, shelters, and porta-potties. Some of our fellow amateurs will back pack into the woods or a remote mountain peak, throw a few feet of wire into a tree, unpack their KX1 from their back-pack and hit the airwaves with a mighty three watts of raw power. Now that is a field day!

Oh well....., back to our field day.....

Everyone will have the opportunity to operate. No matter your license class, or that you have no license at all. We will have plenty of control operators available to get you and/or your kids on the air. All that is needed to make this a memorable event is you. Y'all Come!!!!

Setup begins at 8:00 am on Friday, June 22nd. Operation will begin on Saturday, June 23 at 12:00 noon and continue for 24 hours until Sunday noon.

To get to the site, enter the main gate to Oak Mountain State Park. Continue down John Findlay Drive, the main road through the park, approximately 5 miles and watch for the “Field

Day” signs. The site will be just a short distance off of the main road in a very level, open area known as the National Guard site.

To sign up and/or schedule an operating time, contact Jeff Drew, N4JDU.

OK, Are There Any Homebrewers Out There?

Editor

If there are, then I have a web site for you, www.ad5x.com. This web site is not impressive in its presentation, but go to the “articles” and you will find a bunch of very useful, very practical information. One article that caught my interest was his method of producing air wound inductors of considerable size.

If you are homebrew oriented, then check out the ARRL publication QEX. I would not be without it. Sometimes it is over my “mathematically challenged” head, but I learn a lot from each issue and have a big stash of projects to be done at sometime in the future.

One great way to experiment is with the SoftRock series of Software Defined Radios. Tony KB9YIG, has a kit for around 60 bucks that is a complete SDR transceiver. Runs about a watt and the SoftRock receive only is what got me on the SDR bandwagon.

A number of you have radios with audio or IF DSP. A great learning tool about what is going on in the “black box” is “An Engineer's Guide To DSP”. You can download the whole book on the internet at www.dspguide.com. I have a favorite project going on here. I am trying to put the DSP engine used in the SDR-1000 into an “Audio Unit” plug-in on my new Apple MacBook Pro. Fun!

If there is a particular area of interest you have, then check out Yahoo Groups at www.yahoo.com. Chances are you will find just the right group to join and learn, learn, learn. You may even find that boat-achor has some hidden talents that might put off spending the big bucks for a new SuperSlick10000 with that huge knobs-per-dollar ratio.

Find you a niche and do some home brewing. Jeff, N4JDU has a KX-1 kit from Elecraft he is going to be “gluing” together. You will never enjoy ham radio as much as operating with something you put together. I still enjoy my “RockMite” transceiver a la BARC Build Days. Anybody up for another Build Day in the future???? It can be done!

Why Are We No Longer Snail-Mailing The BirmingHAM?

By the Editor

Well, to tell you the truth, it was just too big a job for one person logistically. I have discussed the issue with Ken, WB4FAY, and he being a short timer, passed it off to John, K3FP, our new incoming el Presidente'. John and I tossed it around and the solution is that I will continue to edit the newsletter, and pass the edited copy off to a publication committee who will be responsible for printing, mailing and so forth. John is working on getting such a committee in place for the upcoming year. In the mean-time there will be no snail-mailed newsletter until we resolve the issue of printing and mailing.

There are a number of benefits to going to an e-mail only newsletter. It can become a larger, more informative publication without “breaking the bank”. We can include color photos, diagrams etc. Printing color is very expensive, roughly \$1 per page. Just our old B/W newsletter was running close to \$1 per each copy mailed for a four page issue. I thought of making the mailed issue a standard four page offering, and then carrying the e-mail issue as far as we could including some information on an effective portable antenna that did not appear in the mailed newsletter.

I would like to see more technical content in our newsletter and am working very hard to gather some interesting stuff and getting it ready to publish. I hope to get going again on Dave

Cisco's, W4AXL, History of the Birmingham Club. We can all learn from each other's victories and defeats, so if you have something you would like to see in print, send it to w4atk@arrl.net. Be sure to include any drawing and illustrations.

Anyway, we will see what happens in the new year to start in July with the installation of the new officers.

Initial Hamfest Report

From the May 17th meeting

It appears that, if we are lucky, we will break even on Hamfest 2007. Ticket sales were down and a couple of vendors did not show. Attendance was down a bit as well. But that is OK. Of those who attended, the response to our un-official survey was positive. People had a good time and the vendors who were there are coming back again. There was no doubt, the vendors missed Glenn, KE4YZK, who had done such a wonderful job as our previous hamfest chairman. But Ken, WB4FAY and his team pulled it off. We are still one of the better hamfests in the Southeast. We get A+ for hospitality! Now it is time to begin planning for next year. Yep, that is right. It takes a lot of time and work to plan and put on this shindig. So get behind the new committee that will be put in place in July and volunteer your help.

New Committee Assignments

If you have not been approached by John Outland, K3FP, our incoming president to serve on a committee, then you have been hiding.

John is committed to seeing our old faithful members that have strayed return. We had at our last election 180 paid members. At our meetings we have on a good night around 40 members present. Let's get behind John's initiative and see if we can do something about that.

There are some exciting things being tossed around for year 2007-2008. Don't miss out!

June Meeting Schedule

June 7, 2007

6:30PM Board of Director's Meeting

7:30PM Regular Club Business Meeting

June 21, 2007

6:30PM RagChew and DX-Bragging Contest

7:30PM Program Meeting

Bring someone with you to the Club!!!!