



KARS KEY KLICKS



JOURNAL OF THE KANKAKEE AREA RADIO SOCIETY

Volume 83 Issue 9

Editors: K9QT, K9NR,
Photos: K9QT
Contributors: KC9FAV, N9IO

September 2008

RC AIRPLANES & CONTESTING

The Next KARS General Meeting will be on Tuesday, 7 PM September 2nd at St. Mary's Hospital. Enter the hospital using the South main entrance on Merchant St.

There is a two part program this month following a short business meeting.

The first program is a video and discussion about Remote Controlled Airplanes. Several club members have dabbled in the hobby through the years and will be relating some of their adventures.

The second program is a video and discussion about contesting. The contest season is upon us making this an excellent time to refresh our operating skills. New amateur operators are sure to find this aspect of the hobby exciting as well.

KARS FOXHUNT

KARS FOXHUNT 1 PM This Saturday Aug 30th!

Arrive 20 or so minutes early if possible to get your equipment ready. Meet at our normal starting place in the Meadowview Shopping Center in the parking lot just west of the Cinema.

KARS foxhunts are mobile hunts and are MILEAGE metered hunts. Low mileage hunter/team wins (not speed... Safety First!).

Directions and Complete Rules for KARS Foxhunts are at this URL: http://www.w9az.com/foxhunt_main.html

Paul, W9IEY and XYL Terry have graciously accepted to be our fox for this hunt. Hope to see everyone there. We'll decide where and if to meet for food.

73' from Clay N9IO, KARS Foxhunt Coordinator & Supreme Webmaster.



FUN IN THE SUN

KARS August Pool Party at Greg WR9L's QTH took the place of a regular general meeting. Enjoying the inviting water are Emily KC9ELV with son in foreground, and John K9BYT and son in the deep end.

KARS KALENDAR

August 30.....Foxhunt
September 2.....KARS General Meeting
September 16.....KARS Board Meeting
September 13-15.....ARRL VHF QSO Party
September 13-14.....Radio Expo Hamfest
September 19-20.....W9DXCC Convention
September 20-21.....Peoria Hamfest
September 26-28.....ARRL/TAPR Conference
September 27-28.....CQWW RTTY Contest
October 19-20.....Illinois QSO Party
October 25-26.....CQWW DX SSB

The Kankakee Area Radio Society operates repeaters on:

146.34/.94 107.2 PL Access

449.8/444.8 114.8 PL Access

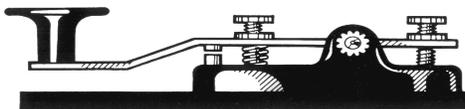
Also, co-sponsors:

145.130 107.2 PL Access

Additionally, KARS sponsors:

144.39 Wide Area APRS digi-peater

145.53 KARS DX Cluster



W9AZ

NET CONTROL -UPDATE

Since I was unanimously voted in as the "Net Control Coordinator" (*like I had a choice*), I first thought it would be a hard task to accomplish. However, I have discovered that getting the net schedule out there to the volunteers has been a useful tool. I have found that reminding the net control stations has its advantages. We have more participation from the operators and the nets seem to run smoothly.

My goal is to remind the operators who volunteer to be NCS (Net Control Station), when it is their turn. I usually try to send out the list of nets for the month first, usually right after the meeting when we decide who is going to do them. Then, send a follow up email to the individual NCS, no later than the prior Sunday, that it is their turn to take the net.

This seems to be working well. I want to thank all of the net control operators who have been running the nets up to this point. I appreciate all of you and your efforts. Thank you!!!

I would also like to ask all the club membership to consider taking the net sometime. This is a very useful and needed task for Amateur Radio. When a net control operator is needed, it is good to have the skill to take on this task.

I have created a script that is very easy to follow doing a net. I will gladly send a copy to anyone wishing to use it. I have found net control to be fun and enjoyable. I get the chance to hear new call signs and meet the new members of the club.

This is enjoyable and makes our hobby fun!

Brian - KC9FAV

KARSFEST 2008

KARSFEST 2008 was a considerable success. Special thanks goes out to our Co-chairmen Chris W9LIZ and Carl K9CS who put in endless hours of preparation throughout the year. John K9BYT worked hard on fliers and tickets. Not to forget those who worked at the fest and took fliers to other hamfests! The D star presentation was very well attended. Several people took advantage of the test session.

Be sure to check out the pictures from KARSFEST on page 3. If you are receiving a paper copy of the newsletter, then go to:

<http://www.w9az.com/>

KARS HOMEPAGE— WWW.W9AZ.COM —KARS HOMEPAGE

KARS EXPANDING APRS SYSTEM

A brief history: In 2001 former Kankakee County EC and KARS member Gary KA9MNX (now AI4JA of SC) headed up a project along with John WD9AYI implementing packet in a way that was relatively new to us here at the time. The W9AZ-15 WIDE APRS Node was put on the air on Jan 11, 2001 in University Park near Governors State Univ. Howard AK9F operates the tower. At 440 feet, W9AZ-15 continues to be a major WIDE Digi Node in the APRS network in the Chicago/NW Indiana region. Back then it was thought we would be fully covered here and well south of Kankakee. The W9AZ-15 node is about 25 to 30 miles to our north. This assumption was true to a degree but not fully understood at the time in that we are on the fringe of the node and coverage drops off sharply around the south side of Kankakee. To be digipeated consistently "on the fringe" an APRS mobile station should run on the order of 25 to 50 watts. 5 watts from a handi-talkie works fine closer in obviously. The number of APRS users here in Kankakee was and is small even today so "fill-in" digi's don't exist...yet. Our intention is for this to change soon with home digi stations out in the collar areas of the county. Other factors in 2001 were that cheap commercial surplus GPS units did not exist yet; computers powerful enough to handle mapping tasks were barely there and certainly not as cost effective as is the case today.

At the urging of myself (Clay N9IO), KARS President John WD9AYI and Kankakee County ARRL EC John K9BYT, the KARS board has decided to add a second WIDE APRS Node right here in Bourbonnais. At 240 feet, W9AZ-14 will enhance our weather spotting efforts as well as foster GPS mobile tracker experimentation.

This article is the first of a follow up series stemming from the June KARS meeting program of ideas and information on how (you) can get involved in APRS as cheaply and quickly as possible. Many of you give of your time to check in to the WX nets and report what you see as you have your eyes to the sky. We are convinced that the use of APRS mapping software and APRS short messaging capability by the County EC, the EOC, Riverside and St Mary's hospitals tracking the mobile units in the field along with real time weather imagery on these same tracker maps will enhance logistics greatly, lessening required radio traffic reporting unit locations and their proximity to adverse weather. WX spotters in the field are not distracted with

the tracker equipment since it runs unattended once turned on and confirmed. The NWS is also capable of looking at these same maps and station tracking while online and by radio in real time. The possibilities are endless.

Hardware: The simplest install is the mobile tracker (transmit only). Total cost is around \$100 to \$150 depending on the cost of the radio and GPS used. There are a few variables here. Most of us have a surplus of old 2-meter rigs no longer in use. This is a perfect opportunity to make use of that old rig that has no PL encoder now that Illinois repeaters are required to run PL. Otherwise I have seen many \$40 to \$50 2 meter radios at hamfests this year. A tracker is centered on a device named TinyTrak3Plus. The TinyTrak3Plus is a very small APRS GPS position encoder (transmit only) made by Byonics (www.byonics.com) which, when connected to a serial GPS and a radio, will transmit its location at an adjustable rate. In many cases can be installed inside a radio if desired. TinyTrak3Plus is the fourth generation in the TinyTrak series and is available as a kit construction project at \$38 and \$103 for the kit with a Byonics GPS2 GPS receiver included. It also comes built and tested for \$47 and \$112 with the GPS2 receiver providing an inexpensive way to build a mobile tracker without the need for a full TNC. It is configured by connecting to a computer's serial port, and running simple configuration tool software that allows setting of all user options (free download at <http://www.byonics.com/downloads.php/>). After that, the computer can be disconnected, and a GPS connected in its place for operation. A few of us including myself have recently purchased GPS boards and "hockey puck" style GPS units complete (with antennas) at a price ranging between \$25 to \$30 on good old eBay helping to keep the cost way down. These GPS units require +5 volts. The TinyTrak3Plus has a +5 volt output designed to power a GPS receiver directly.

Very recently an even newer TinyTrak4 has come into play taking the features of the TinyTrak3Plus and adding DSP Packet Decoding (transmit and receive). TinyTrak4 is a very new product and an ongoing project for byonics. Planned functionality for TinyTrak4 include 1200, 9600 and 300 baud encode and decode TNC & Tracker, DTMF encode and decode, use for remote control, logging, transmitter hunting, Weather station support, PSK31 support, Smart Digipeater, Remote control, and Full TNC at a price tag of \$75 built and tested. TinyTrak4 is not a simple transmit only tracker device and is beyond the

scope of this discussion but does open the door for talk down the road concerning full blown APRS stations without conventional TNC terminal node controllers (radio modems) and home digipeaters without the use of computers.

Putting it all together: Don't get freaked out at all the information talked about in this article. Even if you're the new kid on the block and your level of expertise with a soldering iron leaves a little to be desired there's good news. This is another reason why you should join and support your local ham radio club. There's strength in numbers. Your strength may be my weakness. We're all here to help one another, learn new things and develop our skills. Welcome to KARS, that's what we're here for. Please think seriously about putting together an APRS system for yourself and put it to use as the KARS APRS network advances into the next phase of the project.

Next month we'll talk a little more specifics about wiring and how simple it really is to put together your own APRS tracker system.

Till then, think APRS and weather spotting!
73'

Clay Melhorn N9IO

Bonfield, IL

KARS Webmaster, Fox Hunt Coordinator

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Sept. 11	W9TRF
Sept. 15	K9BIG
Sept. 15	W4HYB
Sept. 18	Velda
Sept. 29	Terry
Sept. 30	WB9Z

Let the newsletter editors know if we miss your birthday or get it wrong.

NCS FOR SEPTEMBER

September 1	KC9FAV
September 8	N9LYE
September 15	KE9MG
September 22	K9BYT
September 29	N9LYE

Don't forget the net!

Mondays at 2100 hrs. local time

KARS BOARD MEETING

The next KARS board meeting will be held in the banquet room of El Campesino Mexican restaurant on September 16th. All KARS members and spouses are welcome to attend. Eat at 6:00. Meet at 7:00

KARSFEST 2008



Hams stand in line to fill out their ticket stubs and put them in the drum for the first prize drawing



Frank K9XM, Crystal W9IOU, Chip K9IOC and Rodney K9UNO "workin' the gate"



Ken W9YNI shows ARRL Section Manager Tom KA9QPN his classic receiver acquisition



Will K9FO, Don K9NR, John WD9AYI and Howard AK9F doing their best work "at the bar"



Carl K9CS wears two hats. He's not only hamfest co-chairman (with xyl Chris W9LIZ), but is also in charge of VE testing. Also in picture Don K9NR, Pete N19H and Troy W9KVR



As you walk through the hamfest and you hear a voice booming hilarious absurdities, you can be sure it is Will K9FO at the microphone



Lots of goodies available from vendors inside the air-conditioned buildings



Tim, W9TRF and Janet visit with Patty AF9H and Jess AI9L at the CQ card checking table



Hams strolling the flea market looking for bargains.