

# The Ohm Town News

Voice of the Bridgerland Amateur Radio Club

## Vice President's Message

Spring is officially just around the corner. With it comes new leaves, budding of blossoms, mowing of grass, and planting of flowers, not to mention our vegetable gardens. Physical endurance is something you may recognize in the form of muscle strain and fatigue. As I have driven around the valley in some of our neighborhoods, I've seen some of these things going on to make me realize summer will be upon us in no time. It's a time to renew, organize, cleanup and repair. This is true not only with our homes and yards, but with our Ham radio equipment as well. It may be manifested as you look up at your antenna and realizing it is leaning off to one side just a little. That's not the way you installed it, you say to yourself. But then you realize old man winter with its high winds and heavy snow has taken its toll on your antenna. Now comes the time to repair. It's important to get your radio equipment into shape because many of us have a responsibility to our community and our valley with the licenses we carry and the equipment we have.

Just a word of caution. When doing repairs, BE CAREFUL! We want to see you at club meetings, breakfasts, Field Day and all the other activities we Ham radio operators are engaged in. Not in the other way because you fell off the roof and broke your neck.

Springtime is also high-water season. Water levels are getting high and will get higher as the snow pack melts in our mountains. BE PREPARED!

In closing, let me just say "keep your feet on the ground and reach for the stars".  
73, KC7CWX, Farrell

## Ham Profile

Lawrence I. Dimwiddle III, KF7LID

We are pleased to present Lawrence to the BARC as this month's special ham profile. Larry, as he prefers to be called, joined the hobby recently by cramming for the no-tech licence in just one night. He says he stayed up all night drinking strong caffeinated beverages to keep awake as he crammed. He feels cramming is the best way to pass any test because then you don't have too much time invested in learning. He forgot to take a shower before he took the exam, and a few of the VECs complained about the odor, but by golly he sure passed. Good thing too because he got tired of using his new HT without a call sign. He felt it was rude



that so many people kept asking him to ID. Larry isn't married yet (someone told him it continued on page 2...

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was because of that aforementioned odor problem), but he sure is hoping to meet some YLs who want to become XYLs. He knows this neat new hobby will help him a lot, and he plans to attend all the meetings so he can meet lots of people, especially YLs! You can find him by the smell.

Larry started his own company recently in which he catches and categorizes various lawn pests such as those cement flamingos and cute little squirrels. As a side venture he collects what he calls "doggie chocolates" from the lawns he visits regularly. He says this will soon catch on as the newest fad in fertilization technology for those pesky lawns that just don't respond to more conventional fertilizers. He is also considering franchising, so you may soon have a chance to get in on the bottom, so to speak.

While business hasn't caught on very well yet, he is hoping to do some marketing using his HT and the auto patch system, which he says is "real cool" and real cheap! Listen for him on the local repeaters...he says you can place orders right over your radio (that's for either pest-hunting or lawn chocolates).

Larry sees no reason to improve himself because his license is good for ten years and access to local customers is all he cares about right now. When the business really starts booming, he plans to invest in a high-power linear amplifier and a vertical-polarized Yagi antenna so he can expand his business to other areas. He thinks mobile for his trucks will be good too. He just loves this new hobby and thanks everyone for welcoming him into the ranks of new hams. He says "listen for my poop on the air!"

### Editor's Corner

The past two issues of this letter, I have continued on next column...

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seen two opposing views on ham etiquette, CB and other stuff that seems to be echoed in all the communication publications I read (QST, CQ, CQ VHF, 73 Ham Radio Today and whatever). There seems to be a crisis brewing in our hobby (HF vs VHF/UHF) and not much seems to be accomplished to correct the problem. We all know the arguments...some are in the hobby to get off the skum-bucket CB airwaves, some for the technical knowledge, some for comradery, some for Dxing, some who enjoy community service and emergency communication, and yes unfortunately, some who think they can be quasi cell-phone users at no cost. But all of us are in the hobby for a good reason, and all are important to the future of the hobby. I'd like to present my two-year perspective and I promise to not champion the reasons I'M in the hobby. First, overall, it seems clear those interested in HF are becoming a minority, and it may be that some HF'ers look at VHF'ers with disdain. Critics say this is good-'ol-boy attitude and elitist. On top of that, Ham radio is being assailed by cell phones, the InterNet, fax machines, phenomenal satellite technology, and a plethora of new communication technology that diminishes what Ham radio used to be able to do for communication (I well remember my introduction to Ham radio in 1958 when my friend talked to someone in Italy!); you can do that with the Net now, and those who used to be impressed are no longer. I communicate with people at my company's home office in Sweden every week using the Net, and do-so with 100% reliability! To compound the schism, the dang sun decided to slow down its activity (sun spot cycle) which makes VHF even a little more attractive right now. Unfortunately, the no-code Technician License has some feeling the flood gates have been continued on page 3...

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opened for people who become pseudo-hams. Read the letters-to-the-editor in ham magazines and see if you don't agree there is a split, soon to be a chasm, forming in the hobby, and we should be concerned. As has been said in the columns of this newsletter many times, there is room for whatever interest a person may have in this hobby, but in my not-so-humble opinion we should all be working toward a single goal to help this hobby continue growth and to achieve it's potential as a stand-alone avocation. To wit, two-meter repeaters have done so much to help build the hobby and has created competition among equipment builders (Kenwood, Yaesu, Alinco, Standard, ICOM, whatever) giving us phenomenal radios at very reasonable cost (i.e., high value). They are constantly vying for our attention with new features, lower costs, higher power, and so-forth. VHF/UHF, but especially 2 meters has been a Messiah to the hobby. Let's use it properly, but let's USE it!! Pick up SLC by tuning 146.620 and listen to the chatter...it's great! You know what? Unless there are a lot of vanity call signs, many seem to be advanced- and extra-class operators! They are jamin' and hamin'! I can't always reach them, but when I do, I've been welcomed! A point to be made is that we should be so lucky to have the kind of boost to HF that two meters has given.

So what do we need to do? We need to make the hobby of amateur radio the flag around which everyone can rally regardless of interest. And we can do that by using our radios!! And the new hams can adopt a professional attitude by remembering what they had to learn to pass their exams (club re-certification or qualification perhaps to raise professional standards?), working toward license upgrade (theory and CW classes), and all of us can learn from the OMs (experienced

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hams)! How about local CW nets to teach code and nurture new hams? It's just much too easy to sit back and take a shot at what you don't like instead of finding a way to be constructive and to make a difference! I'm almost done, but you know what amazes me most? I heard quite a few of our more-advanced hams no longer support BARC because they were offended by the direction the club was taking. Well that's a big help! I would like to see the new officers approach each of these Hams who was offended, make amends where needed, and invite each to reactivate. What a waste of resource to have the talent and experience lost to the club. But, for heaven's sake, get on your radio!

On another note, I have had some really interesting experiences with my two years in ham radio. One was during a business trip to Seattle. I scanned two meters and fairly quickly found some people who like to chat and were very cordial to my first time in their space. However, I was listening later that night on a different repeater on which someone "kerchunked"...immediately, and I mean immediately, someone came on and chewed the kerchunker a new one (if you know what I mean). This guy said in no uncertain terms "you're welcome to use our repeater, but if you are just here to hassle us, we don't want you here!" And I mean he was GRUFF! I wondered if he would be one who would scare the heck out of some new ham who may not know how to use his brand-new HT and pushed when he shouldn't. I resolved to always be courteous, even if protocol calls me to reprimand improper use of the repeater (I think that comes under The Golden Rule idea).

Next, my XYL and I traveled to California to visit my son and his wife who live in the LA area. Some may remember Mark as  
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KC7IHX while he was still in Cache Valley. I was pretty excited to see what was up in the LA basin, two-meters wise. I took Mark one of those TV-wire antennas Ellis, KC7CXE, helped us build last year. Imagine our MAJOR surprise when we found an X-rated repeater! No, not kidding, X-rated. It was on 147.435MHz! We were pretty shocked at the language (CB on two meters!)...we checked with HRO, Anaheim the next day who said "Yes it is X-rated and the call signs those creeps use are bogus". I didn't think to ask, but shouldn't someone be doing something with that repeater, like the FCC!?

On another occasion, I was in Philadelphia (hotel next to the airport) and strung my TV-wire antenna from the drapes in my hotel room and "looked" around for someone who would chat. Found a net in progress and checked in as a visitor. I was very welcomed (you should hear the accents in that part of the country, neat!). Someone from NY (not really that far from Philly, and no mountains to block signals) told the net about the 747 jet that had just crashed in the ocean off Long Island. It was such a tragedy; the net was shocked! Net control held a moment of silence for the victims just before the close of the net...a really nice gesture, I thought.

Finally, I hope you got to hear the first transmission from HAARP (High Altitude Auroral Research Project). We reported on that in an earlier news letter. Thanks much to Dan, KA0EOF who has kept me informed by radio, telephone and InterNet. I was able to pick up the first CW transmission on 6.99 MHz. What was interesting is that the central antenna array was going to be tilted such that they (the HAARP people) felt we would get a strong signal in the continental US in contrast to the first transmission which they indicated would

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be pointed straight up. I found just the opposite, as did Dan. Dan has been in contact with the head honchos at HAARP, and even sent them a tape recording of his sig report and the CW message, which has been put on their home page. I haven't checked it out yet, but the home page is <http://server5550.itd.nrl.navy.mil/haarp.html>. I'm sure you'd find some interesting things about HAARP on this site.

What I think is happening is that Ham radio does indeed have something for all of us, and HF is in crisis by being well out-numbered by VHFers. We also need to realize BARC is the glue that can help Ham radio grow in our part of the country, and thus contribute to vigor in the hobby. Let's set aside our various feelings and get excited about the potentials! Enough said!

73, KC7HYN, Richard

**Sun Spots**

The latest look at our own star!

Elsewhere in this newsletter, I said I wouldn't discuss what I like about the hobby. But that was elsewhere. I will tell you here my greatest interest is in HF. Oh, how I long to have my QSL card hanging in conspicuous locations throughout the world! Maybe in some steamy grass-thatched shack in the tropics with a person like Humphrey Bogart at the rig (in his somewhat swarthy voice "...stand aside, sweetheart, I've got a QSO coming in..."). Or maybe in an igloo built just outside the fence at the HAARP location in Alaska ("...ahh, one side, woman, QSO coming...say, shouldn't you be skinning walrus?"). Oh, a disclaimer at this point...I don't consider myself a MCP (male chauvinist pig), if you wish turn the genders around in the above examples please do so...same meaning, I think. Anyway, to get on

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## Sun Spots

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with the story, as I'm sure you all want to do, between my listening to "Gordo, WB6NOA" Morse-code tapes and "Super Morse" on my computer, I decided to look a little more at sun spots and prepare a short synopsis of what I learned. It is so interesting; I hope you will agree.

First, it is sun spot activity that seems to coincide with best HF propagation. It is hard to say cause and effect, but it is clear when sun-spot activity is high, HF propagates better. And another "given" is that sun spots run in cycles, about eleven-year cycles as a matter of fact. We are just past a nadir (low point) and will see activity pick up soon and peak somewhat after the turn of the century (another reason for Hams to look forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century). If you're naturally curious like me, you have taken a piece of welding glass, or smoked a piece of window glass with a candle to observe sun spots. Gosh, I remember having a Boy Scout leader in 1957 who did that with us at summer camp, but that is entirely another story. Anyway, weren't you just fascinated (assuming you tried it, of course)? Early observers of the sun (Galileo and Schindler, to name the two most prominent) noted these "imperfections" in the sun, which was heretical at the time (ask Galileo!) because it showed the sun as being imperfect! This teaching was contrary to theological thought at the time which held that God made the sun perfect.

Anyway, sun spots there were and those bean-counter types, I suppose, started to numerate the dang things and did so for centuries ("...hey Bruno, do you really get paid for counting those little dots on the sun!"). In another paper I read, there is some correlation to sun spots and glaciation! Not to digress too far, but there is an interesting story about the settling of Greenland by Eric the Red during

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## Sun Spots

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high sun spot activity, and demise of these colonies during low sun-spot activity some three hundred years later (and it is hypothesized as being related to extreme and protracted cold temperatures and advance of Greenland glaciers..you may have also seen that story on *The Discovery Channel*).

Yet another interesting sun-spot related story has to do with a terrific solar flare that occurred in March, 1989. I actually remember this one. This huge flare sent ions crashing toward earth where they channeled into the cusps created by solar wind against our earth. What happened was catastrophic for some. In Montreal this energy burst entered into a giant power-line grid and sent a powerful, low frequency spike that knocked out power to most of Montreal. Power was lost from early morning hours until almost noon. The cost to Montreal Power alone was millions of dollars. There were power outages as far south as Florida from this burst. In addition, communications world-wide were disrupted from this solar flare. What I remember most was seeing the *aurora borealis* from my backyard in Hyde Park. Wow! Maybe you remember too. This article said even people in the deep south of the US saw the lights too!

Well continuing, a recent issue of *Scientific American* (as well as several articles over the past year in *Nature* magazine) ran a really interesting story on the SOHO satellite. SOHO is one of those military/government acronyms meaning "Solar and Heliospheric Observatory". This two-ton satellite was launched in December 1992 (and placed into stationary orbit in February 1996) with the expressed purpose of studying the sun, and has done so in stellar fashion (no pun intended). Prior to this satellite, and the information it has provided, little was known about the

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