

# The Bolt

The Official Publication of the Ford Amateur Radio League

## President's Note:

### The Rebirth of PSK 31:

The holiday season has offered me some time to enter the radio shack in my basement and have some radio play. I got my computer interface hooked up to the rig, and looked at the data mode part of the band. I am used to seeing a lot of RTTY signals down there. Much to my surprise, what I saw was PSK 31 signals, not RTTY. Back in November of 2001, my first presentation to the Ford Amateur Radio League was on PSK 31. The mode was all the rage in the early part of this decade, as the combination of laptop computers, computer sound cards, and computer to radio interface devices allowed hams to work data modes of communication without having to build specialized equipment. Sometime a few years ago, however, everyone seemed to shift back to RTTY. RTTY was developed a long time ago around electric circuits and heavy teletype machines. It uses a decent amount of bandwidth when operating to handle the technology of the time, meaning there are fewer signals that can be squeezed into a certain section of the band. RTTY is also more efficient sending capital letters, meaning people SHOUT at each other. PSK 31 uses much less bandwidth, being designed for casual communication at about 50 words per minute, and is more efficient using lower case characters. This holiday season, PSK 31 has made a comeback. I enjoyed nice communications with New York, Washington State, Guatemala, Virginia, and Florida. I was running 35 watts, and they were running between 10watts and 40 watts. That amount of power was really all we needed for good, solid communications. The ham in Florida was running a Stealth antenna from his planned community, a Force12 antenna, a 9ft tall stick with a couple of short horizontal sections at the top. He hides it in the greenery in his backyard, and it is behind the house from anyone looking from the street. We had a 50 minute chat before the band faded out between us. I sent him the link to our club website, as he was interested in some of our past presentations, including how I operated for 7 years out of my condo using stealth antennas. We all have our ways!

On the bands, I also heard a Pactor signal. This signal has error correction in it, so everything that comes through is pretty much correct. RTTY and PSK do not have any error correction, so band fades and noise can cause the typing to contain errors. (Although, my typing error rate was much higher than what I could blame on the band, HI HI.) With the band conditions at the time, the Pactor signal data throughput was about 30% of what any given PSK signal was. This is a problem with the digital signals we will have to deal with as amateur radio moves toward the digital realm. When can we get enough of the message across using non-error correcting modes, and when do we need to slow down the signal to send error free signals? Which will be more effective in a given emergency? I will probably write more about this in future articles.

73,  
Dave,  
N8HKU

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## *Speaking with Santa:*

The Ford Amateur Radio League conducted our annual Speaking with Santa on Wednesday, December 5<sup>th</sup> at Mott Children's hospital. Many thanks to our two Santas, William, KC8GMH, and Rusty, N8RGI, for their usual wonderful job! Thanks, also, to our batch of elves this year, consisting of Pat, WD8JDZ, and Roger, KD8CSE on one team, and Dave, N8HKU, and Katie, KD8GDK on the other team. Special thanks to our lead elf Bill, N8OZV, for all of the planning, preparation, and coordination of the event.

Mott was very happy to have us again this year. The kids enjoyed conversing with Santa and Rudolph at the North pole. However, we were not able to see as many kids this year as before due to various germs and infections going on. The elves had to mask and glove up for several of the kids. A couple of the kids also did not think much of our extra large sized elves, so we desire a few shorter elves to join us next year.

Operationally, the "North Pole" on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor was renovated this year into an internet café. As such, we had to locate into a pair of offices to avoid being seen by some of the kids. This left the 440 station off in a corner, where it turned some far corner rooms on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor into RF shielded vaults. Fortunately, Santa came through for one child via cell phone ported directly to the room, so Santa came through loud and clear in the end. We elves will need to modify the set up next year for better communications with Santa, but this is something we should be able to handle.

## **FARL Annual Christmas Dinner**

We had another great time and great turnout for the Tin Lizzy Club annual Christmas Party at Amentea's Restaurant in Westland on December 13th.

The list Dave Treharne gave me on that Thursday was down to 11 people confirmed from the 20 we had estimated, and I was concerned that it was going to be a small, but festive group. I thought for a moment about the hamfests we had recently been to and how small they were compared to years past. Maybe this was just another sign of the diminishing interest in ham radio, or the busy lives people led or the health problems many people were dealing with.

Well, Scott at Amentea's set up for about 12 and at 7 PM people, just kept walking in the door to join the party. It was great and Scott and the staff at Amentea's just bent over backwards for us. We ended up with 20 hungry folks! The food and service were excellent and everyone seemed to enjoy the event immensely.

We didn't conduct any club business but spent most of the time catching up on what people were doing (some were moving, some recovering from illnesses and some we just hadn't seen for a while) and enjoying the friendships. A couple of us did manage to talk a little about ham radio and plans for antennas or equipment next year.

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We did miss seeing Pat and Linda Quinn and Ralph Chrysler and his son and daughter. They had expressed a strong desire to be with us for dinner, but health issues prevented them from coming. I talked to Doug and his dad is better and would appreciate any and all calls just to say Hi. His home phone number is 313-278-0036.

I tried to think of some appropriate words to say to everyone as the dinner was winding down and all I could think of was to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah, Kwanza, Rash Shana or other spiritual occasion that anyone might be celebrating. I also reminded everyone to remember their holiday generosity when tipping our server and I was informed a gratuity had already been included in the bills. Talk about department of redundancy department.

I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy and Safe Holiday season and look forward to more good times in 2008.

Bill Brezina, WA8HEA

## Club Topic for January, 2008 Meeting:

AMSAT update: We will ask Bill, WA8HEA, to give us the latest update on the Above the Earth world of Satellite communications. For more information, see <http://www.amsat.org>.

## Upcoming Swaps:

Here is a list of upcoming swaps. We can discuss whether to get a table at the January 20<sup>th</sup> swap.

Sunday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008: Hazel Park Swap: <http://www.hparc.org/>

Sunday, February 17, 2008: Livonia Amateur Radio Club Swap: <http://www.livoniaarc.com/Swap.htm>

## *Next Club meeting: Thursday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008*

The Ford Amateur Radio Club meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month, except for Christmas and the summer months (July & August). The meetings are held at 7 PM at the Ford Engine Manufacturing & Development Offices (EMDO) building. EMDO is located at 17000 Southfield Rd, Allen Park, MI, on the east side of Southfield just north of the Allen Park Municipal offices. Park in the front of the building and come to the front door near the flagpole. Knock on the door if no one is standing there to let you in.

**New Conference call: All FARL club meetings are available via a conference call. Dial in at 7pm to: 313-633-2320. When prompted, enter passcode 19153130#.**

Meeting agendas start with club business items followed by a short break. Presentations on selected ham radio topics of interest are given after the break. Anyone wishing to present a topic can contact any Board member.

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No official business at the December club meeting, so here are the November meeting minutes repeated.

FARL CLUB MEETING MINUTES - November 9, 2007

Prepared by Roger Reini, KD8CSE, Secretary

Meeting called to order at 7:03 PM by Dave, N8HKU, President.

10 attendees present.

MINUTES: Minutes from the October meeting were approved (N8OZV moved, KD8CSE seconded)

TREASURER: Treasurer Bill, WA8HEA, was unable to attend tonight, but he had provided the treasurer's report to Dave. The club's balance is still solid. Reports was approved (N8OZV moved, W8AMT seconded)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: No news to report this month.

REPEATER: The 220 MHz repeater is not keying up the 2m repeater. According to Murray, KE8UM, the hardware appears to be functioning correctly, so he suspects a software problem. He will work on fixing that.

PHONE PATCH: Dave provided cards with the phone patch information for the repeater. The instructions have been confirmed to work. It functions with all local area codes but will not work with long distance numbers. **This information is not to be given to non-club-members.**

TRAINING: Bill, N8OZV, mentioned upcoming seminars and classes he has planned, including a presentation on amateur and marine radio at the Ford Yacht Club in the spring, an introductory seminar at Building 1 (date TBD), and a Linux and Ham Radio presentation at Penguicon in April.

VE's: The club roster does not note whether a member is a Volunteer Examiner (VE). At least 4 were in attendance this evening.

NEWSLETTER: Volunteer needed for the December newsletter.

WEBSITE: The equipment listing has been updated to remove information about the location and value of the equipment.

50+ CELEBRATION: N8HKU has sent his QSL's out. N8OZV asked for ideas for something special to send to the one individual to qualify for the special certificate.

RADIO SANTA: The event is on, scheduled for December 5 at Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor. Try to be there for 5:30 to 6. The plan is to be complete by 8:30 PM.

CLUB DINNER: The choice for the dinner has been narrowed down to Richter's Chalet and Amantea. By a vote of 6 to 4, Amantea was chosen as the location. The dinner is December 13 at 6 PM, replacing the normal club meeting.

2 METER NET: Still active every Sunday at 8 PM.

THANK YOUS: Rodney, K8SGL, thanked the membership for the flowers sent to his wife's funeral last month. Bill, N8OZV, thanked everyone who helped with Rusty (N8RGI).

ROSTER AND PAID-UP STATUS: Roger, KD8CSE, and Mike Sansalone, K8ZLG, complained that the club roster, as well as labels on the Bolt, have inaccurate paid-through status for a number of club members.

PRESENTATION: Dave, N8HKU, gave a presentation on the new Sync system developed jointly by Ford and Microsoft. He pointed out the possibilities of connecting a transceiver to the vehicle sound system through it. NOTE: the presentation on AMSAT originally scheduled for this meeting will take place at a future meeting.

ADJOURN: meeting adjourned at 8 PM.

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## Sunspot Update:

SB PROP @ ARL \$ARLP054  
ARLP054 Propagation de K7RA

ZCZC AP54  
QST de W1AW  
Propagation Forecast Bulletin 54 ARLP054  
From Tad Cook, K7RA  
Seattle, WA December 28, 2007  
To all radio amateurs

SB PROP ARL ARLP054  
ARLP054 Propagation de K7RA

Last week this bulletin reported sunspot 978 rotating from view. Now through a process called helioseismic holography, an image of the Sun's far side shows the spot fading away. 978 was first visible December 6, and squarely faced earth on December 12. Perhaps January 2 or 3 we will again see 978 peeking around the eastern limb, if it hasn't by then faded completely.

No sunspots at all this week, and average daily solar flux was down over 12 points from the previous week. Geomagnetic activity was still low, and down slightly. Over the next week the planetary A index is predicted to be 5 on each day, a low number indicating a stable and quiet geomagnetic field. Solar flux is expected to stay around 72 for Dec 28-30, rising to 73 on December 31, 75 for the first few days of the new year, then up to 80 and 85 by January 4-5.

This indicates an expectation for the return of sunspot 978 or possibly other sunspots around the same time.

My observations: Daylight operation on 17m and lower, only 40m and lower working at night.

Dave, N8HKU

## Membership Dues Reminder:

You may have noticed the address labels now show the expiration date that we have on record. If your address label shows your membership is past the expiration date, please send your membership dues (\$15 annually) to the PO Box. We try to keep the records up to date but if you find an error, contact Bill Brezina and he will correct your membership expiration date information.

We will stop printing mailing labels for members who are more than a year past their membership expiration dates so please keep current. While you're at it, drop us a line and let us know what you're doing if you haven't been able to make it to a club meeting recently...especially those who live out of the area. We enjoy getting your checks and enjoy hearing from club members even more.

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## Club Repeater Information

The Ford Amateur Radio League operates 3 repeaters under the K8UTT call. The repeaters are located in the Dearborn, MI, area and are open for members and guests to operate. The 2 Meter and 1.25 Meter repeaters are linked together. New from Murray, KE8UM: The PL is now transmitted on the output, so we may program in coded squelch, which is handy with the Lowell repeater coming in from Grand Rapids some times.

**Club Repeater Net: Sunday evening at 8 PM local time.**

**Autopatch: Codes are available from N8HKU to club members. The repeater autopatch can reach all of the Detroit Metro area. Please see Dave, N8HKU, for a copy.**

Please contact the following people if there is any problem with a repeater listed below:

<u>Band</u>	<u>Output</u>	<u>Input</u>	<u>PL Freq</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Phone No.</u>
2 Meters	145.270 Mhz	144.670 Mhz	100 Hz	Dave Treharne	734-476-1666
1.25 Meters	224.520 Mhz	222.920 Mhz	100 Hz	Murray Scott	248-734-1704
70 CM	443.425 Mhz	448.450 Mhz	107.2 Hz	Bob Krause	248-437-6634

Club Website:

<http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Hall/2183/>

Note on the club website:

I have been unable to upload to it since early December. Hopefully, this will be resolved by the time that you read this. I have written to Yahoo to try and get this corrected.

Links for the website: If you know of any appropriate amateur radio links you think we would get some use from, I would be happy to set up a links page. Let me some addresses! We can even support member's home pages if you wish us to.

Dave,

N8HKU

## Tin Lizzy Club Calendar

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## 2008 Calendar items

January, 2008: AMSAT Update

FIRST Robotics (WA8HEA)

Digital Voice on HF: Need volunteer presenter.

Sky Command and/or D-Link: Need volunteer presenter.

Fox Hunting techniques: Need volunteer presenter.

50<sup>th</sup>+ Anniversary FARL Special Event Station

Mobile Installation

Software defined radio

Linux for Ham Radio (April or May, 2008)

**Please suggest more topics for our club meetings!**

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## 2007-2008 Club Officers

Please contact any of the officers for information regarding the Ford Amateur Radio League, or go to the club website at [www.geocities.com/capecanaveral/hall/2183/](http://www.geocities.com/capecanaveral/hall/2183/) for current events and activities.

President	Dave Treharne	N8HKU	734-476-1666
Vice President	Pat Quinn	WD8JDZ	734-729-1993
Treasurer	Bill Brezina	WA8HEA	313-563-2905
Recording Secretary	Roger Reini	KD8CSE	734-728-1509
Repeater Chair	Murray Scott	KE8UM	248-743-1704
K8UTT Trustee	Dave Treharne	N8HKU	734-476-1666

**January Club Meeting: Thursday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 7pm**

The Ford Amateur Radio League  
PO Box 2711  
Dearborn, MI 48123