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## THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

By Wayne Williams

WT5J



Hi Everyone,

The GARC Annual Auction was a great success due to our auctioneer Clay Orchard (KC5MXN) and helper Kaye Duncan (K5AYE), and all of you who bought those items you just couldn't do without.

The consoles that Kaye Duncan (K5AYE) got from her employer Anritsu, have been temporarily installed at the ECC by Chris Engleman (KC5COF) Thanks, Chris and again thanks to Anritsu for the donation and all of you who helped get it in place. If you haven't seen the ECC lately, please stop by and see how things have changed.

I have been asked again, whether we were going to have a meeting in Nov. The answer is yes, and it will be Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>, which is the Mon. prior to Thanksgiving, so please make plans to attend.

The speakers for the November club meeting will be a combined presentation on APRS by: K8DNE (Bill Reynolds), KB4ASI (James Chandler), and N5TIM (John Galvin)

*We are having our last training classes for 2002. The Tech. Class started Mon. Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> and the Gen. Class started Tue. the 19<sup>th</sup>. Each will run for 5 weeks. It's not too late to join us, so if you want the training, just show up at the ECC in Garland at 7:00pm. You can get a map from our web site at: [www.qsl.net/garc](http://www.qsl.net/garc)*

***The GARC Christmas Party will be Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> 7:00pm at the Freeman Heights Baptist Church on N. Garland Blvd. between Walnut and Buckingham. It will be in the Fellowship Hall.***

***Meet and Drinks will be provided by the GARC and we ask everyone to bring a side dish or dessert. There will be entertainment provided by members and or their guests.***

73, De WT5J  
Wayne G. Williams

Next GARC Meeting will be Nov. 25<sup>th</sup> 2002  
@7:30 PM

## Bringing Santa to Kids via Ham Radio---12 Ways to Make It Better

By Joe Moell K0OV  
Contributing Editor  
December 6, 2001

*North Pole Network is a quarter-century holiday tradition in Orange County, California. What better way to introduce hospitalized children and their families to the magic of Amateur Radio--and spread holiday cheer--than to arrange to have Santa visit via Amateur Radio?*

"When can your hams come to Childrens Hospital this year?" My wife April, WA6OPS, hears that question every November. After 25 straight years of ham radio QSOs between the patients and Santa, the Recreational Therapists don't wait for us to call them; they call us first, to make sure that we can fill the optimum time in their busy holiday schedule.

Kids at Childrens Hospital of Orange County get visits from clowns, carolers, firemen, baseball players and rock stars. But nobody is more welcome and anticipated than the ten Amateur Radio operators who arrive on the weekend just before Christmas to establish a special ham radio link, making it possible for patients to talk directly to the "real" Santa in his office next to the big toy workshop at the North Pole.

Ten hams? Couldn't it be done with two or three? Yes, it could, and it was during the early years. But over time we have discovered how to do it better, making the experience more efficient, realistic and fun for the patients, the hospital staff, and the hams. As you start planning holiday activities for your club, here are a dozen suggestions for your best North Pole Network ever.



**1. PERSONALIZE EACH QSO.** It's easy to put the mike in front of a little girl and instruct her to tell Santa her name and where she lives. But imagine how much better the QSO will be if Santa calls her by name right from the start. He's Santa Claus, so he should know! Before each year's North Pole Network session begins, the hospital therapists provide our North Pole station with the list of names for every room and bed, along with plenty of other tidbits about the kids that make good conversation starters for Santa. A typical QSO begins something like this:

WA6OPS: "North Pole Station, this is WA6OPS at Childrens Hospital. Santa, we're in room 205 by bed 2. Do you know the little boy here?"

Santa: "Ho, ho, ho! Merry Christmas to Childrens Hospital and a special hello to you, Kyle. How is Rex, your

little Chihuahua?"

**2. ENLIST THE ELVES.** Because the Recreation Therapists at CHOC send information about each child to Santa in advance, the old boy is never at a loss for words and he has instant credibility. Therapists also let Santa know of any sensitive matters. For instance, we don't want him to mention Dad when a Dad doesn't exist. The CHOC staff loves to do this elf work and sometimes they even sneak in a little "behavior modification." When Santa greeted one youngster by name and asked why he was still sucking his thumb, the thumb shot out his mouth and stayed out for the remainder of the visit.

Just in case that's not enough, we include a "spy elf" in our room-to-room entourage. She surreptitiously checks the patient rooms in advance and reports to her North Pole associate on a separate ham band, something like this: "We'll be in Room 102 next. There's a giant Pooh bear on the chair and the girl is in her pink pajamas, watching Sesame Street." The associate passes sticky-notes to Santa, who can work this information into the conversation as he sees fit.

**3. SANTA TALKS TO EVERYONE.** Be sure to accommodate the predominant nationalities and religions in your town. For the large Spanish-speaking population of southern California, Santa must be bilingual. At least one of our in-room communicators speaks fluent Spanish, too.

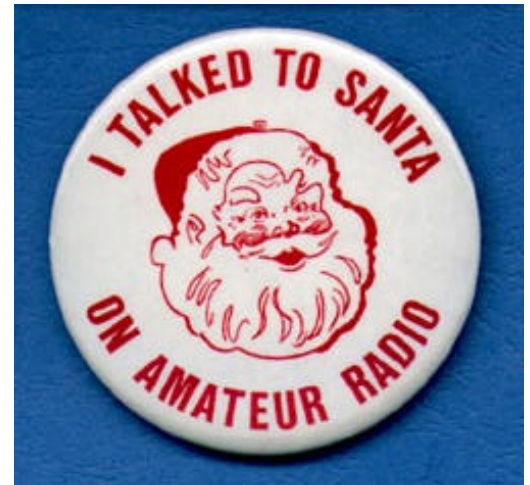
When appropriate, Santa gives a hearty Hanukkah greeting. If a youngster is too sick to speak, St. Nick always has a few words of encouragement for the child and his family. Sometimes, Santa talks directly with the family.

**4. MAKE IT REALISTIC.** We work to make Santa's radio voice as clear as possible, so patients and family can understand every word. Even so, there's no doubt that it comes from the North Pole. We use a professional audio mixer to inject the sounds of cold wind and reindeer hooves into Santa's transmissions. It's perfect for a few seconds just before Santa's voice appears at the beginning of each QSO. When the talk turns to toys, kids hear the sounds of elves in the background, busily turning out another year's worth of presents. Direct feed via the mixer keeps the sounds from drowning out the patients' voices when Santa is in the receive mode.

**5. LEAVE A MEMENTO.** We know of clubs that distribute candy canes after each Santa QSO. They risk protests from the nursing staff. Sweets often violate dietary restrictions and can be an infection hazard for patients in isolation.



With respiratory and sterilization precautions, patients in isolation rooms can talk with Santa. Jon Schaffer, W6UFS, is the masked communicator.



After talking with Santa, each patient gets a button like this as a remembrance.

toddlers, they must be completely kid proof, with no parts that can be pulled off and ingested.

For the past 15 years, we have handed out 2-inch round buttons that say, "I talked to Santa on Amateur Radio." Everyone loves them, including parents and nurses. They frequently ask if they can have one, too. (Sure, if they talk to Santa!).

These buttons are a great form of publicity. The patient's entire family is reminded that Amateur Radio is the service that brought St. Nick to them. In early years, we heard ourselves referred to as "the CB group that talks to Santa Claus," despite our educational efforts. Since we started giving out the buttons, the confusion has ended.

**6. ADD HELPERS FOR EFFICIENCY.** To maximize Santa's QSO-per-hour rate when the hospital is full, we have two or more in-room ham communicators. While one is in QSO with a youngster and Santa, another is entering the next room, greeting the patient and family, and explaining what is about to happen. As soon as one QSO ends, the next can start immediately. Another helper presents the Santa button to the youngster as the communicator departs.

**7. DON'T BROADCAST IT.** If there are "repeater turkeys" in town, be discreet and don't announce the event on the air ahead of time. After encountering both "helpful" and malicious breakers during our first North Pole Network on a repeater, we moved everything to short-range simplex. The 222 and 440 MHz bands have much less traffic than 2 meters, and as a bonus, these bands are more suited to hospitals--UHF propagation through the halls and floors is better. Computerized hospital equipment can radiate "birdies" that cause

loss of receiver sensitivity at 144 MHz, but this is seldom a problem on higher bands.



**A CHOC patient admires her button after a Santa QSO.**

**8. PREPARE FOR TECHNICAL ISSUES.** Hospitals are concerned about RF interference to medical equipment. We assure them that our ham H-Ts are not the same as cell phones--usually banned in hospitals. Experience has shown that the potential for interference is very low, but one must always be watchful. If staff does not want you to transmit from a room with respiratory equipment or a specialized monitor, comply with the request without argument. Transmit at the lowest power possible. Use a speaker-mike on the H-T and hold the radio high, away from the patient. Sterilize the mike with alcohol wipes as directed by nurses when you visit patients in isolation rooms.

**9. INCLUDE ALL AGES.** Christmas time is an emotional roller coaster for any hospital patient. The joys of the season can be offset by the miseries of infirmity and loneliness. You might not

think that a talk with Santa on ham radio would mean a lot to a teenager, a middle-ager, or a senior citizen. But for many, it's a real uplift.

Patients are cheered by the friendliness and heartened by the fact that a group of strangers thought enough of them to put on a special program. All the wonderful memories of past Christmases are rekindled. As one elderly stroke patient exclaimed into the mike, "Santy, it's good to talk to you again. You and I go 'way back!" So consider taking North Pole Network to rehabilitation and convalescent hospitals, as we have done.

**10. PLAN AHEAD.** Make arrangements with each hospital well in advance, especially if your group hasn't ever done North Pole Network at that facility. Every hospital has its own way of organizing activities, so it may take some persistence to find the right person to coordinate your event.

At large pediatric hospitals, start with Recreation Therapy or Child Development departments. At small town hospitals, you may have best results with the Community Relations person. Keep in mind that many facilities have only a few children at any particular time.

Convalescent or skilled nursing facilities have an Activities Director or Recreation Leader. These people are always looking for activities for their patients. If staff members aren't familiar with Amateur Radio, arrange a meeting beforehand to acquaint them with what you want to do. Show them this article and tell them about your previous North Pole Network experiences, if any. Be prepared to demonstrate the equipment that you plan to bring into the hospital.

## *MINUTES OF June Meeting GARLAND AMATEUR RADIO CLUB, INC. October 28, 2002*

The GARC meeting was called to order at 7pm by president Wayne Williams (WT5J) with the Pledge of Allegiance and Member and Visitor introductions. Business agenda included:

### **Old Business:**

- Motion was made to approve the minutes as printed in the October ArcLite. Motion carried without further discussion.
- Wayne reminded the membership that Net Control Operators were still needed for 2003. A \$100 cash drawing will take place in March for all Net Control Operators who participated over the past year.

### **New Business:**

- Bill Westphal (AD5CC) was voted in as a new member of the GARC.
- Linda Lupro from the Garland Central Library was here to accept the Amateur Radio materials the GARC is donating to the library. However, Chris Engleman (KC5COF) was not able to attend the meeting. She did thank the membership for the donation and said that she looked forward to adding the material to the library resources.
- Kaye Duncan (K5AYE) will head up the Christmas Party Committee again this year. The party will be held again at the Freeman Heights Baptist Church Fellowship Hall on December 16<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. She asked for volunteers at the meeting and Maria Guerrero (KD5LMT), Gordon Reynolds (KB5JWJ), and Carol Fitzgerald (KC5CYR) volunteered. In addition, Kaye requested from the membership a motion to increase the party funds to \$300.00. The motion was carried.
- David Kahn (KD5LGU) will be holding Radio Merit badges for scouts at the ECC
- Gerry Crenshaw (WD4BIS) will teach a class at the ECC on Anderson Power Connectors for those will be interested in the mobile connectors.
- Clay Orchard (KC5MXN) stated the date for the City of Garland Christmas Tree Lighting ceremonies has not been set, but he will let us know as soon as he finds out when it will be. There will not be fireworks this year so a fire watch team will not be needed.
- Someone stated that the time on the repeater needed to be changed.
- Ed Hubbuch (KC5GGZ) announced there is \$3,127.09 in the bank account, less 2 bills that need to be paid out.
- Kaye asked the membership to check the roster at the front for corrections that needed to be made and for any

A 10 Minute break took place then Clay Orchard (KC5MXN) lead the GARC Auction.

Wayne (WT5J) adjourned the meeting around 9:30pm.

Submitted by:  
Kaye Duncan. Secretary  
GARC

## Santa Cont:

**11. PROTECT THE MYSTIQUE.** Whenever you talk about North Pole Network to patients, staff, parents or media, remember that Amateur Radio is a global hobby. Never show doubt that they are QSOing the one and only St. Nicholas, thousands of miles away at the top of the world. Dealing tactfully with Scrooges isn't easy, but it's part of the task.

For our 20th Christmas at CHOC, the hospital invited a TV station to cover the event. They taped staff interviews and several excellent QSOs, including one with a girl who spoke for the first time after coming out of a coma. Then the reporter suddenly asked to interview Santa on camera and demanded that we take her to him. We refused, saying that the kids were the story, not Santa, and there was no reason to expose our communications secrets.

It quickly became a stalemate. The reporter briskly told her cameraman to pack up and they left. We assumed that was the end of the story, but her editor must have been a true believer. On Christmas morning, we were delighted to see an excellent three-minute piece on the station's newscast, with staff interviews and QSOs in English and Spanish, including the child who spoke for the first time.

**12. DON'T MISS THE MIRACLES.** Every year, we have had at least one extra-special encounter that astonished families, staff and the hams. Children have spoken in a Santa QSO for the first time following brain trauma, fevers have broken shortly after North Pole Network visits, a head injury patient started to eat after being encouraged to do so by Santa, and so forth. We don't know exactly how much the personal contact with Father Christmas has aided in patients' recoveries, but we are always grateful that our hobby can add a little joy and holiday spirit to patients and their families.

# Upcoming Events

All public service events are open to any licensed amateur with a desire to participate!

No event experience? Lets us know and we can team you with an experienced amateur to show you the ropes.

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**November 28 - 2002, Dallas YMCA Turkey Trot at Dallas City Hall** - 9:00 AM starting at City Hall Plaza for 8 Mile Race and 3 Mile Fun Run/Walk. Talk-in on 146.880 repeater and event is on 146.96. Contact Karl Meyer, N5UOI - n5uoi@arrl.net. Event Info:

Easy Sign-up Form

**December 15, 2002 - White Rock Marathon** - Dallas' annual premier running event. This 27 mile run is a qualifying event for the New York Marathon. Comments from operators are encouraged. Contact Bob Jones, W5BJ, bobj1@airmail.net or John Galvin, N5TIM, n5tim@arrl.net to join the communications team.

Marathon Race Information.



**email addresses for event coordinators.**

Karl Meyer, N5UOI - n5uoi@aol.com  
 Bob Jones, W5BJ - bobj1@airmail.net  
 Clay Orchard, KC5MXN - mcorch@juno.com  
 Bill Fell, KK5PB - kk5pb@arrl.net  
 Bob Bailey, N5ITN - n5itn@attbi.com  
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 John Galvin, N5TIM - n5tim@arrl.net  
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 Jonathan Sennetti, K5VX - sennetti@nortelnetworks.com  
 Scott Hamilton, KK5PP - kk5pp@arrl.net

# December 2002

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> 8:00 pm Dallas County Races	<sup>2</sup> GARC INFO NET – 7:30 PM	<sup>3</sup> 3856, 3987 7:00 pm	<sup>4</sup> 7:45 P Amsat Net 147.14	<sup>5</sup> Garland Races—9pm	<sup>6</sup> 3870 7:30 p	<b>7</b> 7275 9:00A
<b>8</b> 7245 9:00 am	<sup>9</sup> GARC INFO NET – 7:30 PM	<sup>10</sup> 3856, 3987 7:00 pm	<sup>11</sup> 7:45 P Amsat Net 147.14	<sup>12</sup> Garland Races—9pm	<sup>13</sup> 3870 7:30 p	<b>14</b> 7275 9:00A
<b>15</b> 8:00 pm Dallas County Races	<sup>16</sup> <u>GARC MEETING 7:30 PM</u> <u>CHRISTMAS PARTY</u>	<sup>17</sup> 3856, 3987 7:00 pm	<sup>18</sup> 7:45 P Amsat Net 147.14	<sup>19</sup> Garland Races—9pm	<sup>20</sup> 3870 7:30 p	<b>21</b> 7275 9:00A
<b>22</b> 7245 9:00 am	<sup>23</sup> GARC INFO NET – 7:30 PM	<sup>24</sup> 3856, 3987 7:00 pm	<sup>25</sup> MERRY CHRISTMAS	<sup>26</sup> <u>VEC TESTING</u> <u>ARRL (K8DNE)</u>	<sup>27</sup> 3870 7:30 p	<b>28</b> 7275 9:00A
<b>29</b> 7245 9:00 am	<sup>30</sup> GARC INFO NET – 7:30 PM	<sup>31</sup> 3856, 3987 7:00 pm				

## Same Net Time, Same Net Frequency

The Following nets occur on a regular basis throughout the month.

Every Monday night at 7:30 PM. local time except for meeting nights the GARC conducts a good news/info net on 146.66 MHZ

RACES holds nets on Every Thursday Night at 9:00 pm local time on either the 146.66 or the 147.24 repeater. In addition to these nets there are also additional RACES nets held at 8:00 pm local time on the first and third Sunday of the month. These Sunday night nets are held on the 146.88

repeater. Only those stations who are authorized by the FCC or the regional Races authority may transmit on a Races frequency during Races nets unless there is a threat to life or property.

145.31 8:00PM Tuesdays Ham Association Of Mesquite holds a good news/info net

146.94 8:00PM Wednesdays FT Worth holds a info/swap net.

147.18 8:00PM Thursdays Plano ARK holds a good news/info net

## Garl and Siren Test

The Garland early warning sirens are tested by the city the first Wednesday of each month at noon, weather permitting. Tests are generally conducted on the GARC repeater at 146.660Mhz with 600Khz negative offset.

Amateur radio operators wishing to help with these siren tests should contact Jacob Schroeder, AC5NA if interested in helping out.

## GARC General Information

### Repeaters:

The GARC operates two open repeaters for its members and for all local or visiting Amateur Radio Operators: Two meters: **146.66 (-)** and 70 Cmeters: **442.70 (+)**

### Voice Mail:

For late-breaking news or to leave the club a message, call our 24-hour voice-mail line at **(972) 272-4499**.

### Information Net:

GARC Information Net: held every Monday at 7:30PM on 146.66 (except for meeting nights and holidays). The net features current events, "swap shop", and a technical information exchange. All area hams are encouraged to check in. All members are encouraged to volunteer to be net control for this net. Contact the GARC communications officer, Jacob Schroeder ([jschroeder@characterlinknet](mailto:jschroeder@characterlinknet)), if you are interested.

### Internet:

Information on the GARC can also be found on the world wide web address below:

<http://www.qsl.net/garc/>

The web site includes a map to the monthly meetings, classes, links to local public service events, and other items of interest to the hams in the Garland area.

### Newsletter:

The Arclite is published monthly for the members of the Garland Amateur Radio Club. The contents of this newsletter are copyrighted the date of publication, but may

be reprinted without permission in any Amateur Radio Publication provided proper credit is given and the motive is the advancement of amateur radio and not for profit.

The deadline for Arclite materials is the 2nd Monday of each month. If you have any informative or educational articles that you would like to see included in this newsletter, or if you have items to be included in the GARC calendar, please send it to the Arclite editor.

Arclite Editor, 1027-B West Austin St.,  
Garland, TX 75040

or emailed to the Arclite Editor at [ng5y@arrl.net](mailto:ng5y@arrl.net)

### Membership:

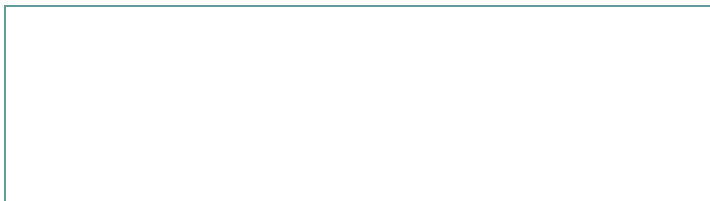
Membership forms are available at the GARC monthly meetings and on the GARC web site. Once the membership form and dues are submitted, new members are voted in at the next GARC monthly meeting.

The GARC membership roster is distributed to GARC members only and is included twice a year in the Arclite. It is not to be used for any commercial purposes.

To submit changes to the GARC roster (such as change of address, updated phone numbers, license upgrade, etc), send them to the GARC secretary, Kaye Duncan (K5AYE) at [kaye.duncan@attbi.com](mailto:kaye.duncan@attbi.com).



Garland Amateur Radio Club  
Emergency Communications Center (ECC)  
1027 B West Austin Street  
Garland, TX 75040



*Please Rush!!!*

Reminder

**We need your articles, ideas and suggestions for inclusion in the Arclite...**