

## Early Recollections of the Port Arthur Amateur Radio Club

By Norman Helms, K5SAC

I became interested in radio while in Junior High School in the mid 1950's. My Dad bought me a Hallicrafters S-38D from Diehl Radio & TV Supply in 1957 and he took me to visit Burt Terry, W5OPJ, who showed me how to use it and tune in SSB with the bandspread and BFO. After seeing Burt's room full of equipment and watching him make contacts, I was hooked.

There was a Radio Club at Thomas Jefferson High School that met once a week after school. The sponsor was P. T. Reynolds who taught bookkeeping and piloted his own plane but was not a ham. He offered plane rides to students making an A in his class and I qualified, but was too chicken to go. I still am. Ask Fred Goenne. I recall some of the school club members, particularly George Martin, K5EKQ, and Willard Youngblood, K5IBN, brought a novice rig to one of the meetings. Using the steam radiator for a ground and a wire hanging out the second floor window for an antenna, they tried desperately to make a CW contact in the short time allowed for the meeting. Nevertheless, it was impressive.

Some members of the school club told me about the Port Arthur Amateur Radio Club that met in a Boy Scout hut on Nashville Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Street behind the Methodist Temple. I attended my first meeting with my classmate Burt Jones, K5RZQ, and we encountered an active club with about 25 members in attendance. One was Burt's neighbor Ben Freeman, W5BCF, who worked at Gulf Oil and repaired TV sets in his home workshop. Burt and I both took our Novice exams in that shop in 1958.

At another meeting in the Boy Scout hut Glenn Tronstad, W5MSX, brought his new Drake 1A receiver for a demonstration. It provided the best SSB reception we ever heard and was very stable.

In about 1958 or 1959 the PAARC moved to the Army Reserve Training Center on Pleasure Island. The arrangements were made by Bill Roussel, K5RVF, who was active with the Reserve. Burt and I were leaving one of the meetings when Bill said "come in the office boys and I'll sign you up for a hitch in the Army". We ran like crazy to our cars.

One of the popular club activities was hidden transmitter hunts on 80 meters. Most mobile rigs consisted of receiving converters operating through the car's AM radio and homebrew crystal controlled transmitters on 3885 Kc. running 5 to 25 watts AM. It was primitive but lots of fun.

Some of the active members were: Arthur Kay, W5APX,; Phil Richards, K5INE,; Floyd Sanders, W5HQU,; Cliff Bowker, W5ZAT, Charles Foreman, K5EUH,; and Revere Smith, W5OD. Sometime in the early 1960's the PAARC met at the Lakeview Town Hall on Duff Drive near 7th Street. Lakeview resident Walter Vick, WA5DUG, probably made the arrangements.

Most of the club members stayed in contact day and night on 6 meter AM (50.38Mc.). We participated in AREC and RACES and got together for "antenna parties" nearly every weekend. As surplus Motorola equipment became available through Arthur Kay, we moved to 2 meter FM on 146.94Mc. and eventually through the work of James "Squeaky" Goodridge, WA5HGH, we had our first 34/94 repeater. It transmitted from the Sabine Hotel and received at the Griffing Park water tower. Two meter activity grew so much that a spinoff club, the Triangle Repeater Association, was formed to maintain the equipment and promote activity. They met at the No. 6 Fire Station on Memorial Boulevard at 32nd Street as arranged by Squeaky who maintained all radio equipment for the city of Port Arthur.

I became inactive in the 1970's and I think that's the time the PAARC moved to the Community Meeting Room of Gulf States Utilities (now Entergy) on 9th Avenue near 14th Street. This was probably arranged by GSU employee Tom Clark, W5HFJ. During this time the club participated in events benefitting Huguen School such as the Bum Phillips Celebrity Golf Tournaments.

A search began for a more permanent location and Nederland resident John Musselwhite, W5HYV, arranged for us to use the old Nederland Library on Boston Avenue and 10th Street where we still meet today. John said it wouldn't be right to keep the name Port Arthur ARC while accepting Nederland's generosity so the name was changed to Jefferson County Amateur Radio Club. We were later offered use of the old Nederland Senior Citizens' Center on 10th Street next door to the club house.

I may have missed a few details and gotten a few facts wrong, but that's my best try at remembering a fine old club I've been associated with for 59 years.