



# the **RARRA RAG**

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December 1996

NO. 4

## DECEMBER 6 MEETING AT KODAK-ELMGROVE TO FEATURE INTRODUCTION TO SATELLITES

December is almost here and time again for our annual meeting at Kodak-Elmgrove. There will be a talk-in frequency to help those who have a problem finding the meeting site on 146.58 MHz simplex or 444.75+ repeater. There is also a map on the back page to refer to for further assistance if it is needed.

The December meeting will feature an introduction to the amateur use of communication satellites orbiting the earth. Walter Obenhofer, NQ2O, will visit us and share his expertise and knowledge on this fascinating subject. Satellite use is growing in popularity and is not all that difficult to participate in. Walter will demonstrate to us how it is all done and how we can get involved as well. Many great long distance contacts can be made using these miracles of modern technology and can be a lot of fun as well. Walter will also discuss the Phase 3D satellite project which he is very much a part of over the last few years. Here is an opportunity to learn about a very interesting aspect of our hobby that shouldn't be missed. Because the meeting will be at the Kodak-Elmgrove facility, it will not be practical to attempt a live demonstration. Instead, there will be a brief video that Walter and I are going to show, demonstrating how satellite contacts are made. Some of you may find that satellite work isn't as difficult as you may have thought. Come and see this very exciting presentation and learn how easy it really is. Hope to see you all there.

*George F. Lloyd, N2UIO RaRa Vice President*

## **RaRa Hotline**

**(716) 442-0587**

24 hours a day

## **RaRa-Kodak MEETING**

**December 6, 1996**

**8:00 P.M.**

Kodak Elmgrove

See map on back page.

*Introduction to Satellites*

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## **VE TESTING**

Join us on Saturday, December 21, 1996 at 111 Westfall Road for new license or to upgrade. Registration starts at 8:30AM. Exams start at 9:00AM.

**Next Rag Deadline**

**December 13, 1996**

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Amateur Radio News Service

## VANITY PROGRAM ON HOLD!

The FCC has confirmed reports that no more vanity call sign applications for any gates--except for September 23 Gate 2 receipts set aside for special handling--will be processed until Commission personnel deal with complaints from several hams whose Gate 2 vanity applications arrived too early and were dismissed. An FCC spokesman in the FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau in Washington said the affected hams all had used the same express service and had requested delivery on Saturday, September 21, so they would be in the queue for the opening day of Gate 2 on September 23. Instead, all of the applications arrived on Friday, September 20, were designated as "untimely filed" and dismissed by the FCC.

The affected applicants are seeking to have their applications reinstated. The FCC spokesman said he had "no idea" when a decision would be made in the matter. "The irony of it is, in many cases, the call signs they would like have already been assigned," he said. The affected applicants were not aware that their applications had been dismissed until a week or so after the opening of Gate 2. The FCC spokesman said the issue is under review. At best, the applications could be included with the day-two applications; at worst, they could stay dismissed, he said.

News of the delay drew several critical responses from the Amateur Radio community, and especially from those whose wait for a new call sign has been extended. Most of those who contacted ARRL Headquarters after hearing the news were upset that the problems of a handful of hams were holding up the process for hundreds of others. Others suggested that the FCC had mishandled the entire vanity program. But one ham wrote the ARRL to say that he'd sent a thank-you note to the FCC after he got his first choice in the vanity program. "The rules were clearly stated up front and the process worked well," said Roy Rusin, **W6II**. "I understand the concern of those who filed too early or made mistakes on their applications, but it's unfair to blame the FCC for their error," he added. "The criticism of the FCC's handling of Gate 2 applications is unwarranted."

All vanity applications under all gates received on or after September 23, 1996--the opening day for Gate 2--now are being handled in order of the date the application was received by the FCC. This means that an applicant filing under Gate 1 will have no special advantage to obtain a formerly held call sign; in theory, at least, the call sign could be issued to a Gate 2 applicant who filed earlier. "Gates 1 and 1 A kind of lost any significance after Gate 2 opened," the FCC spokesman explained.

"The only thing that matters now is the date of receipt."

Meanwhile, an FCC spokeswoman said on Tuesday that personnel at the Gettysburg office were "a little more than halfway" through the stack of up to 550 day-one vanity applications that needed some kind of special handling--which the FCC calls WIPS for "works in process." As many as 550 first-day applications ended up in WIPS, either because the FCC was unable to match one of the applicant's call sign choices or because the application contained "inconsistencies"--some as simple as a date of birth on an application that was missing or failed to match one already in the FCC's database. Several dozen more vanity call signs have trickled out of Gettysburg in the past few days as the FCC works through the WIPS stack from the September 23 applications.

By the way, as the FCC call sign update tapes are received and uploaded, new call sign information is inserted into ARRL membership records that can be matched against the corresponding FCC record. Your mailing label should reflect your new call sign by the February issue of QST. *Tnx ARRL Letter*

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## **HELP US TRACK YOUR LATE RAG**

We have experienced Rags showing up close to, or after the monthly RaRa meeting. You can help us by letting us know if you do not receive your Rag on time.

The RaRa Rag is normally mailed on the Thursday or Friday of the week previous to the monthly meeting. If you have not received it by the following Tuesday (the Tuesday before the meeting) please let us know by calling the RaRa Hotline at 442-0587 and leave us a message telling us your name/call, and the Zip Code where you receive the Rag. We will work with the Post Office to try to get to the bottom of the problem.

## **OSCAR 13: THE END IS NEAR**

OSCAR 13--Amateur Radio's "DX satellite"--is in its last days. The satellite continues to operate, but the end is near. Its orbit is decaying rapidly, and it is about to re-enter our atmosphere. James Miller, G3RUH, reports that severe heating has begun as the satellite churns through the atmosphere with each near-Earth (perigee) pass. As OSCAR 13 swings around the planet, solar panel temperatures are rising, and, at last report, were well above 100 degrees C. The satellite is not designed to tolerate these temperatures. G3RUH advises those equipped to work with OSCAR 13 to make their last QSOs as soon as possible. Miller doesn't think the electronic systems can survive more than another week, if that long. According to present estimates, re-entry will take place in less than two weeks.—

*tnx Steve Ford, WB8IMY, via the ARRL Letter*

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# MORE HAM RADIO ON THE SILVER SCREEN!

Ham radio has another movie role on the horizon, in the Warner Bros movie *Contact* (based on Carl Sagan's 1985 novel of the same name), due out next summer. ARRL HQ staffers have worked with a representative of the movie maker to provide authentic Amateur Radio props. *Contact* will star Jodie Foster, James Woods and Matthew McConaughey. Foster will play Ellie Arroway, who, as a girl, got her ham ticket along with her father in the late 1960s, then goes on to become a radio astronomer and the first person to decipher a message received on Earth from extraterrestrial intelligent life. Eventually, she's among the team sent into space to explore the message's origin. Robert Zemeckis will direct the film.

ARRL Media Relations Assistant Jennifer Gagne, NITDY, provided the filmmakers with an ARRL map (thanks to Circulation Manager Deb Jahnke) and other League publications of the 1960s. Executive Vice President David Sumner supplied some vintage QSLs from his own collection, and Educational Activities Department Manager Rosalie White, WA1STO, advised the Warner Bros contact about types of antennas and equipment they'd need to make the movie set realistic. She also sent an appropriate copy of *The ARRL Handbook* (donated by Mike Tracy, KC1SX) and several late '60s QSTs. ARRL Southwestern Division Director Fred Heyn, WA6WZO, was to assist the film company in obtaining appropriate 1960s-vintage ham equipment. Also, Dave Newkirk, W9VES, contributed a 1971 copy of *The ARRL Handbook* as well as his historical expertise.

Filming for *Contact* begins this fall. Ham radio played roles in the current films *Independence Day* and *Phenomenon*. League staff members also helped to supply some props used in the latter film.

*Tnx ARRL Letter*

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## FCC: INTERFERENCE PROBLEMS OFTEN START AT THE FACTORY

The FCC says it cannot resolve most of the thousands of complaints of interference to TVs, radios, stereos and televisions "because the cause of this interference is the design or construction of these products and not a violation of any FCC rule." The FCC points out that basic consumer information concerning interference solutions now is available on the Internet through the FCC

Compliance and Information Bureau's home page at <http://www.fcc.gov/Bureaus/Compliance/WWW>.

The list also is available through the Commission's Fax on Demand service at 202-418-2830. Request document 6904.

The basic information includes the CIB Interference Handbook and the CIB Telephone Interference Bulletin, among others. The Telephone Interference Bulletin states: "Interference occurs when your telephone instrument fails to 'block out' a nearby radio communication. Potential interference problems begin when the telephone is built at the factory." The Interference Handbook includes a list of equipment manufacturers who provide specific assistance with interference problems. "Involving dealers and manufacturers in the resolution process should give them knowledge of the problems and provide both the opportunity and incentive to protect their products through customer service," the FCC said in a recent Public Notice.

The Commission emphasized, however, that its Compliance and Information Bureau "will continue to take appropriate enforcement action where it has been determined that the interference is caused by violations of the Communications Act or the Commission's rules or policies."—FCC via ARRL Letter

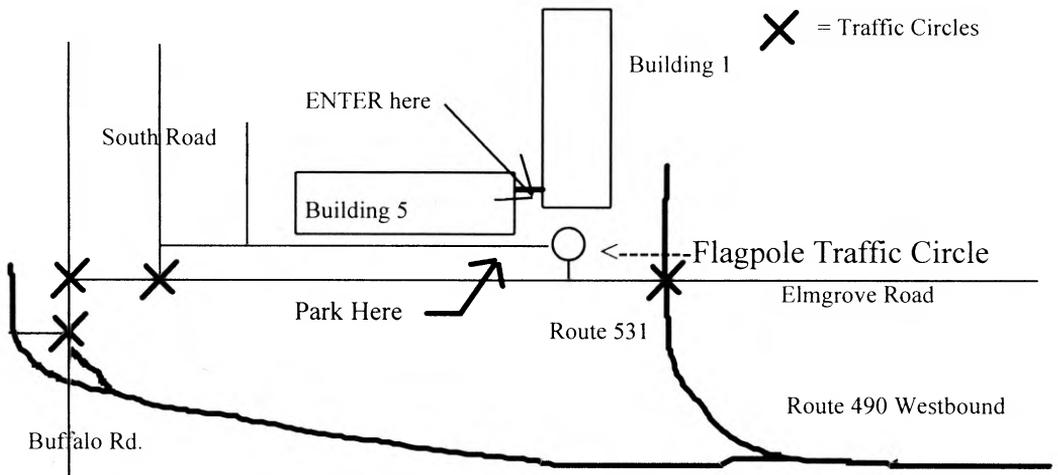
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