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Up, up and away ...

By Jim Grover, N8PZL

The QCWA Chapter 21 sponsored a balloon and tracker that has now circumnavigated the world two times. At last check it was on its third go around. It is at a float altitude of approximately 45,000 feet. Mel Vye, W8MV, Thom Price, KP2K, and I want to thank the club for its generous support.

We are using an SBS-13 balloon that is filled with hydrogen. Hydrogen was used because in its natural state it is H₂ with two atoms of hydrogen. This molecule is larger than Helium, which in its natural state is a single molecule. Hydrogen does not permeate the Mylar film of the balloon as fast with the potential of staying aloft longer.

At 45,000 feet the balloon is above most storms and has dodged at least one hurricane. Some times the balloon is cruising at 100 miles per hour and at other times it is at a leisure 3 miles per hour. The winds aloft are strange and highly variable.

The current radio is a LightAPRS tracker with an integrated GPS receiver and a 30 dBm 2-meter transmitter. The power source is a single PolyFilm solar panel about the size of an index card. Two 3.3 farad super caps store charge while in sunlight, and acts as the source of energy for the APRS transmitter. Every two minutes the tracker transmitter its call sign, W8MV-11, latitude, longitude, and altitude. Every minute the comment “Launched by QCWA 21 Canton OH USA” is transmitted.

The tracker uses WIDE2-1 as its destination. High profile digipeter or igates capture this information and send it data to aprs.fi via the internet. If there is no ground station within range, the data is lost and not forwarded. It is this weakness that leads many balloons to use WSPR instead or along with APRS. There is no data transmitted in low light and night as with APRS trackers but since the WSPR signals are at 20 meter there is a good chance that the signal will be received by a WSPR ground station. Go to qcwa21.org/special for more detail, photos, and updates. You can go to aprs.fi and search for W8MV-11 to get current data. The data is stored on the web site for 2-years and may be downloaded at raw data or KML for display on Google Earth or other mapping software.

Another balloon launch is planned for this spring with the sponsorship of the Cuyahoga Falls Amateur Radio Club. References will appear in future newsletters.

Upcoming Event

Lunch at Karen and Les Myers’ house on 16 November, Saturday. This will be followed by a presentation by Mel Vye on Mongolia and Siberia. The myers’ address is 8345 Kepler Avenue NW, Canal Fulton, Ohio. See <https://qcwa21.org/meetings/index.html> for a map. Please RSVP by 13 November via telephone to (300) 854-4453.

Ragchew



Don't forget the monthly ragchew at Tim's Tavern at Noon on the last Wednesday of the month. The address is 3323 Parkway Street NW, Canton Ohio 44708. All are invited. For you information that is October 30, 27 November, @9 January, and 26 February for the next quarter. Add these dates to your calendar.

Local Dues

The first of August 2019 was the beginning of the QCWA Chapter 21 fiscal year. If you have not already done so, please pay your local dues at the next meeting or rag-chew.



Some Local Hamfests

11/03/2019 | Massillon ARC Hamfest

Location: Massillon, OH

Type: ARRL Hamfest

Sponsor: Massillon Amateur Radio Club

Website: <http://www.w8np.org>

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General Meeting @ Canal Grill, Canal Fulton, Ohio

Tour of Historical Ham Radio collection restored by Cid Vance K8JLY

Chapter 21 Quarterly Newsletter

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To be added when I return from Japan.