

# SUBURBAN LIFE

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1994



BILL KALICH

## Hams give and receive

**A**mateur radio operators have done a lot over the years to help fellow citizens. One of our top priorities is to provide communications in times of disaster, such as the recent earthquake in California and the hurricane in southeast Florida.

Radio amateurs operate on a network frequency to take calls from other amateurs around the country who have friends and relatives in the disaster area with whom they would like to contact. To do so, the network operator works by telephone and try to contact the person involved.

When there's an electrical power failure in the disaster area, many amateur radio clubs use a portable generator to provide power for their equipment. To substantiate this procedure, every year the first weekend in June, radio clubs around the country participate in Field Day.

I am a member and vice president of the Farmington Amateur Radio Club. We meet at the North Farmington High School football stands. The idea of this seminar is to make as many contacts as possible around the country with portable equipment to prove that we will be able to provide communications to our area in case of a disaster, which of course we hope will never happen, but should it we are prepared.

Our club also provides communications every year for the March of Dimes Walkathon at Oakland Community College. At least a dozen amateurs are involved. There are six check points along the walkathon. We have an amateur stationed at each one to provide communications to a pick-up bus or an ambulance should any walker be injured or have a problem and cannot finish the walk.

We have an amateur in each bus and the ambulance to stay in contact with the check points.

Our club also provides communications for the Farmington Festival Parade, which we have done for at least 15 years. Some of our members belong to an organization called Radio Amateur Civilian Emergency System, which provides services basically for the county and the local police department.

We also help the police department every year for the 10K walkathon which is for charity. March through November every year we station an amateur at every emergency siren in the Farmington area when they are tested the first Saturday monthly. We analyze the sirens to be sure they are working properly. A report is transmitted to Oakland County to advise them of any problems.

Of course, amateur radio isn't all oriented toward public service, it's also a great hobby.

I have been a ham for some 25 years and my main interest is talking to hams around the world. I have made contact with people in more than 130 countries and I have had invitations to visit places all over the world.

My most interesting contact was with an American missionary based in Peru. He asked me if I could run a phone patch for two friends, which I did. A phone patch is an extra piece of equipment for my telephone which enables me to call any number and transmit the phone call into my transmitter.

I made several phone patches into the states of Vermont and Illinois. About three weeks later, I heard the missionary calling, "Mayday," which is an emergency call.

Before I could answer him, another ham beat me out. He wanted to make a phone patch to his home office in Iowa to advise them that an earthquake had destroyed 80 percent of his city and that a priest and nun were downtown and could not be located.

The following day, CBS television anchorman Walter Cronkite did a report on the disaster. One of the people interviewed by a reporter happened to be with the man I made a phone patch for three weeks earlier. As fate would have it, he was a member of the Peace Corps. I also learned the priest and nun who were missing were killed in the earthquake.

That was one of the most astonishing contacts I have ever made - to see a man on national television that I ran a phone patch for talk about a disaster I heard about on amateur radio.

If any reader is interested in becoming a ham, classes started on Jan. 31 and end March 3 at the Farmington Community School, 32500 Shilawasse, at the intersection of Tuck. To register or for more information, call 489-3333.

For those who are already ham operators and those who would like to learn more about amateur radio, our club meets 7:30 p.m. the second Wednesday of the month, except July and August, at the Wheeler Street Fire Station located at Wheeler and Independence, one block east of Middlebelt and one street north of Grand River, in Farmington Hills. We welcome new members.

Bill Kalich, WA8ESP, is a 28-year Farmington Hills resident and has been involved in the Amateur Radio Club since it started in 1971.



SHARON LEHLENS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Gotcha: Will Turner of Birmingham decided he wanted his eighth birthday party at Phazer-Land after attending another party at the Farmington business.

## Zap!

### Phazer tag sheds light on party fun



Phazer tag lets you zap even your best friends. A Farmington business offers the chance to try something different.

BY DIANE GALE  
STAFF WRITER

Red-faced and obviously exhilarated, Will Turner marched on pizza as he announced: "I just loved getting everyone."

In celebration of his eighth birthday, Turner's mother, Jennifer, treated a room full of Will's friends to time at Phazer-Land, in Farmington. The party for the Birmingham youngster was divided into two groups: one red, the other green. They donned their headgear equipped with four sensor lights and a battery-pack waistband. The miniature warriors were ready once they got their gun blasters.

One by one, they marched into the darkened room where the kids, along with Jennifer Turner and Will's uncle, Mark Dull, also of Birmingham, began their competition.

#### Game rules

Players shot beams of light at each other and tried to hit sensors on the other team. Every time a sen-

sor was struck, the laser blaster was deactivated and the player had to re-energize by placing the gun on a re-energizing tray, thus giving the other team a point. The score was logged on a board in the center of the room.

"We like to say we're paint ball without the paint," said Don Bristow, who owns Phazer-Land with his wife, Cheryl.

"This is for anyone 5 or older," he said. "In the group last night there was a woman in her 70s."

Birthday parties for boys and girls ages five to 12 years old are the most common event celebrated at Phazer-Land.

"After that we see the milestones, 30, 40, 50, birthday parties," Bristow said.

Phazer-Land is something different to do for a Star Trek Club that visits once every four or five months, and for bachelor parties. There are also open play times for people who aren't with parties. In those cases, teams are created randomly.

"In the beginning we were concerned about mixing the groups,"

Bristow said. "It turned out to be no problem. They introduce each other and get along fine."

#### A good time

The first time Don and Cheryl Bristow played the game was while they were on vacation in Wisconsin, and they knew they wanted to know more about how it worked.

"We wandered into a place and said: 'What is it and what do you do?' We came out thinking, 'This is the greatest thing we've ever done,'" Bristow said.

The Bristows kept in contact with the owner, who later went out of business and sold his equipment to the Downriver couple.

"We get a lot of people who ask where we got the idea and that they would like to start something like this in another area," he said. "But there's nothing like this in Michigan."

If you're worried about health problems, there's no need. The beam is simply light, Bristow said. The computer boards operating the game are complex but totally safe, he said. When they opened almost three years ago, the Bristows thought it was going to be a weekend business.

#### Growing business

"Less than one year into it, it was

too big to handle part-time," Bristow said, adding that last summer Phazer-Land grew by 75 percent when a next-door tenant left.

Beginning next month, Bristow is concentrating on opening another, unrelated business, and Cheryl will quit her job as a real estate agent for Century 21 to take over full-time management of Phazer-Land.

People looking to book a party have two options. With one option, the cost is \$125 for 12 people and \$8 for each additional person, with special arrangements available for groups of 30 or more. That includes two hours of exclusive time, a party area, paper products for serving, two rounds of battle, custom invitations, a marquee announcement, discount tokens, and a picture of the event.

The second option is \$95 for 12 guests and \$8 for each additional person. That includes one hour of exclusive time, two rounds of battle, a marquee announcement, discount tokens, and a picture of the event.

After Will Turner's party, his uncle, Mark said: "It's a lot of fun. The kids are very competitive. In two minutes the kids are moving their helmet gear so they don't get hit again."

One of Will Turner's friends left the tag room and announced: "It's cool. I've been here 60 times."

## School auction features plays, musicals

The Mercy High School auction is one of many upcoming events in the Farmington area.

The Farmington Hills school will celebrate its 15th Annual Auction on Broadway Friday, Feb. 25, and Saturday, Feb. 26. Diana Lewis, WXYZ television anchor, is serving as honorary chair. Mercy parents, Mary and Jim Beiers and Mary Pat and Dan Armistead, are co-chairs.

The theme of the auction, On Broadway, will feature music and gifts that represent plays and musicals. Many other surprises are being offered. Proceeds will offset the difference between tuition and the actual cost of providing the education.

Some gifts include, a trip to Toronto including Show Boat; a trip to London, England, to visit the London stages; two cars, a Neon and a Jeep Cherokee; four coats; jet skis; entertainment center provided by the Masse Corp.; theater tickets and a New York trip; Vail condo and a signed Notre Dame football.

For reservation information call Johanna Monaghan at (810)476-8922 or (810)476-8020. The cost is \$16 per person Friday, Feb. 25. This includes a silent auction, hot and cold hors d'oeuvres, beer, wine and soft drinks. The cost is \$50

### AROUND FARMINGTON

per person Saturday, Feb. 26. This includes super silent and live auctions, entertainment by the award-winning show choir the Mercyairens, an elegant sit-down dinner and full open bar. Tables of eight or 10 are available.

#### Rainbow connections

Farmington Neighbors' Club benefit luncheon and fashion show, Rainbow Connection, begins at 11 a.m. Wednesday, April 20, at Glen Oaks Country Club in Farmington Hills. Fashions are by Unique Accessories Boutique of Plymouth. Luncheon tickets are \$25. For reservations call Phyllis Borst at 473-4543. Raffle prizes include a ladies sapphire and diamond ring donated by Duquet Jewelers; a weekend for two in Toronto by rail donated by Kaye Britton Travel and a Drexel Heritage table lamp donated by Ray Interiors.

Rainbow Connection fills at least 100 wishes of children with life-threatening illnesses.

#### Church exchange

There will be an exchange between the Mount Vernon Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit and the North Farmington Community Church in Farmington Hills on Sunday, Feb. 20.

The purpose of the exchange is to break down barriers between the city and suburbs and promote understanding and cooperation between the two congregations.

Dr. John Payne, pastor at Mount Vernon, will be speaking at the 10 a.m. service at North Farmington, and the Mount Vernon church will be providing the music for the service. The Rev. Mark Sommers, pastor of North Farmington, will be speaking at the 11 a.m. service at Mount Vernon and the North Farmington Church will provide music for that service.

The Mount Vernon Church has developed an extensive program to minister to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of northwest Detroit over the past five years.

The church runs a hot meal program that feeds more than 120 people every Thursday evening.

See EVENTS, 3C