



Pearl River County Amateur Radio Club

Promoting Amateur Radio and Public Safety in South Mississippi
Operating the KE5VSR Repeater - 145.210 (-) 136.5 in Poplarville, Ms.

Pearl River County Amateur Radio Club is dedicated to promoting Amateur Radio in south Mississippi.

Officers

Ron Smith - President
Larry Wagoner V-President
Roger Aubert - Treasurer
Janice Wagoner - Secretary

Website

www.prcarc.com

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Field Day Event Set June 27-28

HENLEYFIELD - The 2009 Pearl River County Amateur Radio Club Field Day Event will be held during the last weekend of June - June 27-28 at the Community Center in the Henleyfield Community. As in previous years, the local radio club will be operating class 2-A - which means that we will operate two HF stations - one on CW and one on voice, as well as a GOTA (Get On The Air) Station and a VHF station.

As last year, the local amateurs will also have a digital display on hand to show off the ability to operate on digital modes - as well as an educational table with items to introduce non-hams to the hobby.

The GOTA station provides an opportunity for non-hams or those whose license might have lapsed to get on the air and see how they like amateur radio.

The local group will operate 24-hours straight - weather permitting - from the site at the Henleyfield ballfield - which is located on Highway 43 about 13 miles north of Picayune and 8 miles south of Crossroads.

In past years, the club has performed well in the contest part of the Field Day event, and similar results are expected this year. Two years ago, the locals placed first in the state in Class 2-A.

The real purpose of Field Day, however, is to give hams an opportunity to practice their skills at setting up stations under other-than-normal circumstances and establish communications similar to those that might be used in an emergency.

Larry's Towering Adventure

There are some adventures in life that need to be recorded and shared. Putting up a new tower for your ham antennas is one of those - especially if you come to the project with the background I do. For the last several weeks I have been involved in just such an adventure - which I can now share with you.

Those who know me snicker at the thought of me climbing tower - for they know I have a "thing" about heights. I freeze up. I grab the tower legs in a death grip and it takes vice grips to get me to let go. There are some photographs of me on a tower in Poplarville - which are a laugh because what they do not show is that I was barely 10-feet off the ground.

A year or so ago I worked on a tower in Picayune at about 25 feet and I was terrified the whole time. I love to fly - so I don't know exactly where this fear came from - but it is very real.

A few months ago, I was asked by the widow of a local silent key to assist in selling off his station and equipment. I agreed to do this - and many of you are aware that I have been selling some equipment lately. This gear was from the silent key.

What you might not know is that I obtained a tower and antennas as part of the arrangement. The tower is a 40-foot Rohn 25, and there is a three-element multi-band beam and a WARC rotatable dipole.

At first I was content to let the tower and antennas stand at the home where they were - and to work first on selling of the rest of the gear. One morning, however, I got a call from the widow asking me to go ahead and remove the tower and antennas - as she was going to act of sale on the house the next day.

So - I got together with a friend and we undertook to take down the antennas and tower. It was a hard morning's work, but we got the antennas down without damaging them, as well as the rotor and feedlines. With a lot of work we got the tower sections apart and lowered them down with a gin pole.

The last section, however, was in concrete - and we had to cut the legs off at ground level. My friend had a portable band saw and we made short work of cutting the tower section off.

After carefully marking the various pieces, I disassembled the antennas and loaded the whole lot on my trailer and hauled it home. At home, the whole lot was stacked against a fence and I went inside to rest and consider how to put it all back together at my place.

About two weeks later, I decided to make a start - and started digging a hole in the yard for the tower foundation. About two hours, some very sore shoulders and about ten gallons of sweat later, my son and two of his friends showed up at the house. I lost no time in recruiting them to shovel duty - and before long I had an admirable hole.

(Continued - TOWER)

Tower ...

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The next morning, I started bright and early to line up my cut off tower section in the hole and pour concrete in - one bag at a time. Slowly, bag after bag went into the hole - and before long, the concrete was at the top of the hole and climbing up the form I had placed.

By some miracle, I had guessed in the number of bags of concrete almost perfectly - leaving only one bag when I was done.

After a few days for the concrete to set, I kept pondering the five-foot section of tower sticking up and thinking about the rest of the tower - sitting stacked and ready to go up.

One afternoon - I was feeling particularly energetic - or maybe it was foolish - and so I grabbed a section of tower and lifted it overhead - determined to put it in place. The book says sections of Rohn 25 weigh 46 pounds apiece - and I am not inclined to argue with that - but a 46-pound weight you are lifting from the ground - and a 10-foot long section of tower you are trying to balance overhead and guide down onto three legs is a very different story.

I got that piece in place without killing myself - but quickly decided to abandon that method of tower stacking as too risky and tiring.

I started checking around to find another way to lift my tower. I only know one person who has a bucket truck - and that person has recently undergone surgery and is in no shape for a tower install.

I checked with several places on the costs of renting a lift - only to find out that most of the lifts available are too short for such a project and cost a bundle. That left a gin pole.

Now a gin pole is a device part ingenious and part torture. It allows you to strain every muscle in your upper body while putting it in place in order to allow someone else to lift the tower sections. The mechanics of the device are simple - but in application, the situation is somewhat more complicated.



The completed tower as installed. The two-meter yagi can be seen top, with the rotatable WARC dipole underneath and the three-element yagi at bottom. The sidearm mount of the Carolina Windom can be seen right center.

Those who remember basic science remember the concept of friction - which adds to the job of lifting. Pulleys that are not lined up just right can become a source of additional strain rather than a help.

Also - for many of us - what we remember being able to do is rather more impressive than what we are currently able to do.

Anyway - I got in touch with a good friend who I knew had a gin pole - and the very same afternoon, I was driving home with the pole lashed to the roof of my Jeep and dreams of a tower standing tall. Now - one of the things about a gin pole that is not evident on the face of things to anyone who has not used one is that lifting the pole itself into place, then holding it steady against a tower leg while you simultaneously try to bolt it into place is a real task. The fact that you now have a 10-12 foot tall pole rising above you without support doesn't help a bit.

One other problem - fear of heights. I know people who tell me they have no fear of heights. I have another word for these intrepid folks: "CRAZY". It was with a great deal of soul-searching, deep-breathing and trepidation that I talked myself into pulling on the climbing harness and actually starting up the tower - then lashing myself to the metal.

With much struggle, sweat and more than a few choice words, I got the gin pole in place and locked in. The rope was lowered down and a section of tower attached. My daughter's boyfriend - no doubt trying to impress her dad - agreed to pull up a section of tower. Up it came - inch by inch - until it was poised above my tower. Now - we always think that the tower legs will match up neatly and slide into each other without undue struggle.

I can hear Mr. Murphy (Murphy's Law) snickering as I type this.

In fact, the tower legs can have any number of minor imperfections, dings, lumps and bends that make getting the tower legs to fit together a real adventure. I can tell you this - I have learned many tricks now to making the legs fit together.

In 10-foot jumps the tower started to rise. 25-feet, then 35-feet went up - and then the guy-lines were attached. I will confess to feeling a certain smugness once those were in place, and I even started feeling cocky about being up the tower with the knowledge that my metal stick was supported from three sides.

The top section of tower became a real adventure. To begin with, it is naturally heavier than the rest of the tower, because it has the mounting site for the rotor, mast and what-not. Because I wanted to use a 10-foot mast on which to mount the antennas themselves, I installed the mast in the tower section before lifting it.

The mast I had chosen is of a heavier gauge - and is heavy. All of this added to the weight of the section - and the resulting difficulties in getting it in place. After two abortive attempts to get it to seat - I decided to call a friend to get some assistance.

A weekend later, he showed up on a bright clear Saturday afternoon to help out. He pulled the harness on, and with all the cocky assuredness of an experienced tower climber, he headed up the metal.

We grunted and strained and pulled to get the tower section up again - only to find he too could not get the legs to match up.

A piece of 2X4 lumber came to our rescue as we cut it to slightly more than the distance between the legs and knocked it down to give us the 1/8 inch we needed to

get the legs to match up.

A few minutes later, the bolts were in place in the legs of the tower and it was at its full height of 45-feet. I had spent the morning getting all the antennas ready to go up - and so we quickly lifted two of the four antennas I wanted mounted up the tower - the two-meter yagi and the WARC dipole.

As each went into place and was bolted up, my friend lifted the center mast a few feet to accommodate the next antenna. However - evening was quickly approaching - and his energy level was fading - so we put off until Sunday afternoon finishing the job.

Sunday the "big antenna" - the 3-element multi-band beam was ready to be lifted into place. We quickly fashioned a harness for the beam of rope and attached the gin pole clip and the tag line and we were ready to lift.

Remember me mentioning earlier putting up the guy lines?

Well - guy lines when you are lifting a large antenna have another name - not printable in this fine family-oriented newsletter. We pulled and tugged and timed our lifts until finally we slipped the antenna elements past the guy lines and the antenna was above them. A few minutes later, we were hanging on to the gin pole line as the big beam was bolted into place.

We stepped back a few feet to admire the thing - not just for its own appearance - but in respect of our own labor.

From that point on - it was minor "clean up" jobs. Attaching the feed lines to the tower - remembering to leave a turning loop for the rotor - and on the way down the tower - lowering the gin pole to the ground.

A brief stop to mount a side-arm to the tower for the lifting of the Carolina Windom only took a moment. With everything in place, we all sat around the base of the tower to rest and reflect on the job.

After everyone had gone - and after a few minutes to cool off - I proceeded to pull the feed lines into the "shack", attach a few connectors, and try things out. I am pleased to report that the antennas all match well - and that they also work well.

I busted through a pile-up to the Azores to make a fist-call contact that evening. Comparisons between my old windom and the beam show a huge difference in received signal. (S-5 as compared to 20-over S-9).

I am gonna have a great time using the new gear and making more contacts.

But more - I know that I am continuing a grand old tradition - of keeping old gear in use and honoring the amateurs who have gone before us - as well as those who help us along the way.

So - my thanks to some of those who made this project possible.

In no particular order -

Thanks to Tim Helgerson - who climbed my tower and helped me get the last section of tower and the antennas up.

Thanks to Pete Liuzza - for the kind use of your gin pole and lift line - and the faith that I could figure out how to use it safely and correctly.

Thanks to my son Joshua, his three friends and my daughter's boyfriend Joey for their help.

Repeater Roundup

Location	Frequency	Offset	Tone
Poplarville	145.210	-	136.5
Poplarville	444.275	+	67.0
Millard	145.150	-	136.5
Hillsdale	145.410	-	136.5
McHenry	147.165	+	136.5
McHenry	147.375	+	open
Wiggins	145.270	-	136.5
Kiln	145.330	-	open
Biloxi	146.730	-	136.5
Biloxi	146.790	-	136.5
Hattiesburg	146.775	-	136.5
Hattiesburg	147.315	+	136.5
Hattiesburg	145.370	-	136.5
Hattiesburg	145.190	-	136.5
Hattiesburg	442.725	+	open
Hattiesburg	444.775	+	136.5
Hattiesburg	443.700	+	136.5
Collins	146.985	-	136.5
McComb	146.940	-	103.5
McComb	444.875	+	100.0
Pine, La.	145.430	-	107.2
Slidell, La.	147.270	+	114.8
Slidell, La.	146.460	+	114.8
Slidell, La.	444.425	+	114.8
Slidell, La.	443.950	+	114.8
N.O., La.	146.860	-	114.8
Covington, La.	146.715	-	open
Hammond, La.	147.000	-	open
Hammond, La.	145.130	-	107.2
Hammond, La.	145.010	HMU	Digi
Hammond, La.	444.250	+	107.2
Hammond, La.	53.090/52.090		open

Stay Radio-Active!

Tower ...

Thanks to my wife Janice - for tolerating this insanity of mine and actually being willing to grab a rope and pull here and there when needed.

Thanks to Ron Smith - who agreed to take time from his Sunday to help up pull ropes and get the big antenna up.

Finally - thanks and a salute to Leo Gibson (N5BFT/WA5ATY) who is now a silent key - and his wife Lisa.

Net Assignments

June 4	Bobby Graves
May 11	Tom Kelly
May 18	Larry Wagoner
May 25	Bobby Graves

Seen At The Meeting

PICAYUNE - Several new faces were seen at the June regular meeting of the Pearl River County Amateur Radio Club. The meeting was held in Picayune for the first time - this time at the new City Hall building.

Attending were:

Larry Wagoner	N5WLW
Janice Wagoner	KE5ZJX
Tom Stolee	KF5BJP
Joseph Thorman	KE5GEG
Tim Helgerson	KB7PGT
Heidi Helgerson	KE5MLH
Dan Beavers	KE5WJN
David Moore	N5ELI
Tom Kelly	AB6Z