News from

The GLORIOUS SOCIETY OF THE WORMHOLE

November 2024

Hello Worms

The Chamber of Commerce building is still being used for hurricane relief storage and distribution so we will again meet outside under the trees. Bring a folding chair to the picnic tables behind the Chamber building.

Before the meeting the radio will be on for information about and directions to the meeting but that will discontinue when the meeting starts. No Zoom outside so the radio is all you get. The Chamber building may be opened so park in the school parking behind the meeting area. Just continue down the same road past the Chamber building and you will see us at the picnic area and the parking.

My heart goes out to those who had and have damage from the double whammy of Helene and Milton. Personally, the damage from the fallen tree will be fixed but the loss of the tower and antennas will be harder to replace. The house is a must do but the amateur radio stuff, stuff that accumulated over a 20 year period, is harder to justify spending that much at one time. Not sure what I will do for HF yet. I lost one of my dipole hanging trees and none of the remaining trees will work.

SOLAR MAX HAS ARRIVED: It's official. NASA and NOAA announced October 18th that Solar Maximum has arrived. This kicks off a period of high solar activity which could persist for another 1 to 2 years.

In the meeting we will have donuts, water and soft drinks (probably only root beer). Bring your drink of choice and lunch if you want. We will not be cooking but we have access to the Chamber of Commerce kitchen which has a microwave and a toaster oven so you can heat up/cook what you bring.

*ROBOT VACUUM CLEANERS HACKED TO SPY ON YOU *

Malwarebytes Labs by Pieter Arntz

Multiple robot vacuum cleaners in the US were hacked to yell obscenities and insults through the onboard speakers.

ABC news was able to confirm reports of this hack in robot vacuum cleaners of the type Ecovacs Deebot X2, which are manufactured in China.   Ecovacs is considered the leading service robotics brand, and is a market leader in robot vacuums.

One of the victims, Minnesota lawyer Daniel Swenson, said he heard sound snippets that seemed similar to a voice coming from his vacuum cleaner.   Through the Ecovacs app, he then saw someone not in his household accessing the live camera feed of the vacuum, as well as the remote control feature.

Thinking it was a glitch, he rebooted the vacuum cleaner and reset the password, just to be on the safe side.   But that didn't help for long.   Almost instantly, the vacuum cleaner started to move again.

Only this time, the voice coming from the vacuum cleaner was loud and clear, and it was yelling racist obscenities at Swenson and his family.   The voice sounded like a teenager according to Swenson.

Swenson said he turned off the vacuum and dumped it in the garage, never to be turned on again.

While this may seem bad enough as it is, it could have been much worse.   What if the hackers had decided to keep quiet and just spy on the victim's family?   In 2020 we talked about such an occurrence in our Lock & Code podcast, where a photo taken by a Roomba vacuum cleaner of a woman sitting on a toilet was shared on Facebook.

Within a few days, various similar incidents involving the Ecovacs Deebot X2 were reported in the US.   And, even though Swenson had several communications with a US representative of Ecovacs, the response didn't explain what had happened.

The Ecovacs representative claimed the victim's credentials must have been acquired by the hacker and used in a [credential stuffing](#) attack, where the attacker uses login information obtained in breaches on other sites to login to another one—in this case Ecovacs.

But that did not make sense, because even with a valid password the attacker shouldn't have been able to access the video feed or to control the robot remotely.   These features are supposed to be protected by a four-digit pin number.

In 2023, however, two security researchers showed a method to bypass that protection.   The weakness of the pin protection is that the app is the only place where the PIN is checked, not on the server or by the robot itself.   So, if you have control of the device with the app on it and the

necessary technical knowledge, you can have the device send a signal to the server which claims that you have entered the correct pin.

And though Ecovacs claimed to have fixed this flaw, one of the hackers that disclosed the flaw said it had been fixed insufficiently.

The same Ecovacs spokesperson said the company "sent a prompt email" instructing customers to change their passwords following the incident.   However, Swenson says he never received any communication about the issue with the pin codes, even though he specifically asked if it had happened to other people.

Ecovacs told ABC news it would issue a security upgrade for owners of its X2 series in November.   Until that happens you might want to do the same as Swenson and turn the vacuum off.

* SAN FRANCISCO WILL GET RID OF 5.25" FLOPPYS *

ars TECHNICA by Scharon Harding

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) board has agreed to spend $212 million to get its Muni Metro light rail off floppy disks.

The Muni Metro's Automatic Train Control System (ATCS) has required 5¼-inch floppy disks since 1998, when it was installed at San Francisco's Market Street subway station.   The system uses three floppy disks for loading DOS software that controls the system's central servers.   Michael Roccaforte, an SFMTA spokesperson, gave further details on how the light rail operates to ars Technica in April, saying: "When a train enters the subway, its onboard computer connects to the train control system to run the train in automatic mode, where the trains drive themselves while the operators supervise.   When they exit the subway, they disconnect from the ATCS and return to manual operation on the street."   After starting initial planning in 2018, the SFMTA originally expected to move to a floppy-disk-free train control system by 2028.   But with COVID-19 preventing work for 18 months, the estimated completion date was delayed.

On October 15, the SFMTA moved closer to ditching floppies when its board approved a contract with Hitachi Rail for implementing a new train control system that doesn't use floppy disks, the San Francisco Chronicle reported. Hitachi Rail tech is said to power train systems, including Japan's bullet train, in more than 50 countries.   The $212 million contract includes support services from Hitachi for "20 to 25 years," the Chronicle said.

Beyond the floppies, though, the Muni Metro needs many more upgrades.   The SFMTA plans to spend $700 million (including the $212 million Hitachi contract) to overhaul the light rail's control system.   This includes replacing the loop cable system for sending data across the servers and trains.   The cables are said to be a more pressing concern than the use of floppy disks.   The aging cables are fragile, with "less bandwidth than an old AOL dial-up modem," Roccaforte previously told ars.   The SFMTA is reportedly planning for Hitachi to start replacing the loop cables with a new communication system that uses Wi-Fi and cellular signals for tracking trains by 2028.   However, the SFMTA's board of supervisors still needs to approve this, the Chronicle said.

In addition to old storage formats and the communication infrastructure, the Muni's current ATCS includes onboard computers tied to propulsion and brake systems, as well as local and central servers, and more.   The SFMTA's website says that the current estimated completion date for the complete overhaul is "2033/2034."   According to the provided timeline, it looks like the subway technology replacement phase is expected to take place in "2027/2028," after which there's an on-street technology installation phase.

Like with other entities, the SFMTA's slow move off floppy disks can be attributed to complacency, budget restrictions, and complications in overhauling critical technology systems.   Various other organizations have also been slow to ditch the dated storage format, including Japan, which only stopped using floppy disks in governmental systems in June, and the German navy, which is still trying to figure out a replacement for 8-inch floppies.

* FACEBOOK FINED FOR PASSWORD HANDLING*

INFOPACKETS by John Lister

Facebook's parent company has been fined the equivalent of $100 million for storing user passwords in plain text.   Failing to encrypt the passwords breached Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Meta, which runs Facebook and Instagram, broke the rules despite there being no evidence that anyone accessed the passwords without authorization or that anyone was then able to access accounts.

The company was found to have breached the GDPR on four counts.   Two involved failing to adequately secure personal data, one involved not properly documenting these failures (which

were classed as a personal data breach) and one involved not telling data regulators about the failure quickly enough.

Storing password databases in plain text is considered incredibly poor security practice even if its not an immediate risk in itself.   That's because if somebody was able to access the database without authorization (either through an external hack or through unauthorized access within the company), they would not need to spend any time decrypting the passwords.

The fine of €91 million came from the Data Protection Commission in Ireland where Meta does much of its European data processing.   It said that "It must be borne in mind, that the passwords the subject of consideration in this case, are particularly sensitive, as they would enable access to users' social media accounts." (Source: dataprotection.ie)

Whether the fine is excessive or will have enough of a deterrent is a matter of opinion and may depend on whether you take into account Meta's finances.   Based on its most recent financial reports, it's the same amount in makes in profit in just 16 hours.

The same data regulator previously fined Meta more than a billion dollars for a previous breach of the GDPR.   In that case, Meta had failed to follow rules for transferring data between Europe and the United States which are designed to make sure personal data is protected to the same standards in both places. (Source: bbc.co.uk)

* LiNUS TORVALDS "AI IS 90% MARKETING AND 10% REALITY*

tom's HARDWARE by Mark Tyson

Linus Torvalds recently offered his opinions on the merits of artificial intelligence (AI) as we know it. The creator and lead developer of the Linux kernel didn't disappoint with his characteristic cynicism regarding the substance of the AI industry in 2024. Famous for his highly informed yet [unvarnished opinions](#) on all things tech, Torvalds grimaced as he summarized the state of the AI biz as "90% marketing and 10% reality." Torvalds spoke at the Open Source Summit in Vienna earlier this month, where TFiR [interviewed him](#). Tsathustra highlighted this interesting AI segment.

During the highlighted interview segment, Torvalds attempted to see the potential in AI, but relentless industry hype is taking its toll. "I think AI is really interesting,

and I think it is going to change the world. And, at the same time, I hate the hype cycle so much that I really don't want to go there," said the tech icon.

The Linux pioneer outlined his AI hype coping mechanism: "So my approach to AI right now is I will basically ignore it because I think the whole tech industry around AI is in a very bad position (grimaces)..." However, it seems like there is almost too much AI BS around for the Fin to tolerate, and it is currently "90% marketing and 10% reality." That's quite a ratio.

On a more positive note, Torvalds reckons there is change afoot. "In five years, things will change, and at that point we'll see what AI is getting used every day for real workloads." But it now seems fitting to remind readers that this isn't the first instance of an IT industry heavyweight asking about the validity of the AI industry. Just a week ago, we reported on [the CEO of Baidu](#) voicing an even more pessimistic opinion – that the AI bubble would burst and that just 1% of companies would continue to pick up the pieces after the predicted 'pop.'

The Linux godfather ended the highlighted video segment by mentioning what he believes to be the current strengths of AI. "Chat GPT makes great demonstrations (rubs forehead), and it's obviously being used in many areas, but especially in graphic design, things like that." However, Torvalds couldn't resist a last dig, reminding us "But, I really hate the hype cycle."

Sadly, it is challenging to be a tech enthusiast and ignore pervasive trends in the industry, which often can frustrate as they seem to be marketing bandwagon-led. However, individuals are probably best advised to follow in Torvalds' footsteps and "basically ignore" things they don't like, concentrating instead on the abundant enthralling aspects and potential modern technology delivers.

* IN-DEPTH LOOK AT ELON MUSK'S 100,000 GPU CLUSTER*

If you want to see a video tour of the xAI Colossus AI Supercomputer go to https://www.tomshardware.com/desktops/servers/first-in-depth-look-at-elon-musks-100-000-gpu-ai-cluster-xai-colossus-reveals-its-

secrets?lrh=7f66708411428c65732192f0bd182309a79adecf791281e47053ac8335ba904a

---

CLUB MEETING and ZOOM

The meeting time is 1100 on Saturday morning at the Lurie Civic Building on the St Petersburg College campus in Seminole.   Turn west at the light at 113th St N and about 92nd Ave N.   It's the first building on the north side.   Here is a link to a Google map: Google Maps .   There are a few parking spots in front the Chamber building but double parking is fine since we will be able to find the owner to move his vehicle if necessary.   Alternately if you go another 100 yards past you can park in the college parking lot.   We cannot run Zoom and a computer presentation at the same time.   Below is the Zoom information, same as last month.   The ZOOM meeting is limited to 40 minutes so I will start it early and restart it to cover the whole meeting.

Topic: Bill Williams' Zoom Meeting
Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime

Join Zoom Meeting
https://zoom.us/j/2737114584?pwd=d1BETHVOQ21vWWZXZ0lYQ0FlWWtIdz09
Meeting ID: 273 711 4584
Passcode: worm

CLUB NETS

Check in on the club net Thursdays at 1930 and 2000 (or at the end of the 2M net).   2M at 146.850 – with a tone of 146.2.   Our 6M net runs after our regular 2M net on 53.150 – 1MHz offset 146.2 tone.

LOCAL NETS

MONDAY

Time	Frequency	Net	Location
1830	147.060+ no tone	St Pete ARC daily net	St Petersburg
1900	144.210 USB	CARS, vertical polarization	Clearwater
1900	147.135 +146.2	Zephyrhills ARC	Zephyrhills
2000	147.165+ 136.5	Brandon ARS	from Brandon
2000	50.135	Pinellas ARK	Pinellas County
2030	NI4CE system	EAGLE Net, NTS traffic net,	NI4CE system
2030	145.450	Pinellas ARK	Pinellas County

TUESDAY

Time	Frequency	Net	Location
1830	147.060 no tone	St Pete ARC daily net	from St Petersburg
1900	50.200 USB	6M net	Brandon ARS
1900	28.365 USB	10M Net	Clearwater
1900	NI4CE system	WCF Section VHF ARES	NI4CE system
1930	145.170 & 442.4 both pl 156.7	Pinellas ACS net	Clearwater
1930	444.900 +141.3	Sheriff's Tactical ARC	Tampa
2000	NI4CE system	WCF Skywarn net	NI4CE system
2000	147.105+ 146.2	Tampa ARC net	from Tampa
2000	28.365 USB	simplex	Brandon ARS
2030	NI4CE system	EAGLE Net, NTS traffic net	NI4CE system
2100	28.465 USB	10/10 net	from Orlando
1900	146.490 simplex	3RD Tuesday monthly, Hillsborough Co ARES simplex Net	

WEDNESDAY

Time	Frequency	Net	Location
1830	147.060 no tone	St Pete ARC daily net	from St Petersburg

1900 147.165 + 136.5	Humpday Net	from Bandon
1930 52.020 simplex	Suncoast 6'ers	from St Petersburg
1930 NI4CE system	WCF Section Digital Info Ne	NI4CE system
2000 147.105 146.2	Greater Tampa CERT net	from Tampa
2000 146.97- 146.2	Clearwater ARS	from Clearwater
2030 NI4CE system	EAGLE Net, NTS traffic net	NI4CE system
2100 NI4CE system	Tampa Bay Traders Net	non-affiliated
0000-2359 HF Winlink	Winlink Wednesday Net https://winlinkwednesday.net/reminder.html	

THURSDAY

1800 146.52 simplex	Hillsborough ARES/RACES	North Tampa
1830 147.060 no tone	St Pete ARC daily net	from St Petersburg
1900 444.750 +146.2	Fusion net	from Tampa
1915 224.660- no tone	St Pete ARC	from St Petersburg
1930 146.6385 -127.3	Lakeland ARC	from Lakeland
1930 440.0 +162.2	Hillsborough ARES/RACES	from Tampa
1930 146.850- 146.2	Wormhole	from Pinellas Co
2000 53.150 –1MHz 146.2	Wormhole	from Pinellas Co
2030 NI4CE system	EAGLE Net, NTS traffic net	NI4CE system

FRIDAY

1830 147.060 no tone	St Pete ARC daily net	from St Petersburg
1900 3.830 LSB	Brandon 80M Net	from Brandon
2030 NI4CE system	EAGLE Net, NTS traffic net	NI4CE system

SATURDAY

0730 3.940 (7.281 Alt.)+/- QRM	WCF Section HF Net	from WCF
1830 147.060 no tone	St Pete ARC daily net	from St Petersburg

2030 NI4CE system	EAGLE Net, NTS traffic net	NI4CE system

SUNDAY

0800 3.933	Florida Traders Net	non-affiliated
1830 147.060 no tone	St Pete ARC daily net	from St Petersburg
1930 NI4CE system	WCF Section Net	NI4CE system
2000 147.550 simplex	550 Simplex Net	Pinellas County
2030 NI4CE system	EAGLE Net, NTS traffic net	NI4CE system
2100 144.210 USB	Clearwater ARS	vertical orientation

FOR SALE / WANTED

Anyone having something for sale or who might be looking for an item let me know. I will not print phone numbers or email addresses unless specifically told to since this newsletter might end up on the web. The exception is when I get the information off the web. If you are a member of the Wormhole then you can ask club members for the persons contact information. If you are not a member ... why not? OK, if you are not a member you can contact me at the email address at the end of this newsletter, I will give you the information to contact the person involved.   If you want to see anything here and you are coming to the meeting let the seller know, maybe he can bring it.

FOR SALE,
See Bill AG4QX for the following: make me an offer.
    *ICOM IC-W32A , 2m and 440 HT, AA battery pack, $30
    *ICOM IC-T7H, 2m or 440 HT, AA battery pack, no antenna $15
    *Heathkit HD-1215   Phone patch $15   looks ok
    *Drake   WV-5 wattmeter $90   looks ok
    *Cushcraft A4S, 10/15/20 4 element beam $250
    *Cushcraft AV-12AVQ, 10/15/20 vertical $125
    *Cushcraft A50-#S, 6m beam $125
    *Cushcraft A-#WS,   17/12 WARC beam $250
    *15000 V neon sign transformer currently used for Jacobs ladder $30

HAMFESTS

2024

November 2   Dade City, East Pasco ARS Fall Hamfest,   flyer at https://eparsonline.org/2024/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/EPARS-2024-HAMFEST-november.jpg, admission $5, tailgate $5, indoor table $10, talkin 146.880 146.2 analog or C4FM

November 2   Apopka, Bahia Shriner's Tailgate, Bahia Shrine Center, 3101 E. Highway 436, no talkin, no hamfest on website, Den Ardinger , KT3S, 164 Sheridan Ave Longwood, FL 32750 or call 407-332-0405 or Email: dba327@hotmail.com

November 9   **Pinellas Park, SPARCFest, admission FREE, tailgate free, Freedom Lake Park, 9990 46th St N, Southeast corner of US 19 and 49th Street, Talk-in on 147.060+ no tone. VE testing at 0900.   Website has not been updated yet.**

December 7   Ocala, Silver Springs Radio Club Hamfest, First Christian Church 1908 E. Fort King St, Talk-In: 146.610 -123.0, admission $10, tailgate including one admission $20,   Contact: Elbert Wilkinson , KQ3K, 940 NE 50th St. Ocala, FL 34470, 352-843-0509 or kq3k@outlook.com

December 13 & 14   **Plant City, the 2024 Tampa Bay Hamfest and West Central Florida Section Convention,** Friday and Saturday**, at the Strawberry Festival grounds, admission $13, 16x40 ft tailgate space $10, electric $10, for information contact Bill Williams AG4QX,** chairman@fgcarc.org **or go to** http://www.tampabayhamfest.org **or you can just ask me, Jim or Dee at a meeting ;-)**

January 11   **TARCFest** TARC Clubhouse, 22nd St at the river, 8AM-1PM, $5 entry including tailgate, a few inside tables must be reserved in advance, talkin on 147.105 +146.2, license testing after, more info at http://hamclub.org/

February 7-9   **Orlando Hamcation,** Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 West Colonial Drive, Tickets $20 in advance, $25 after Dec 21 and at the door.   Talk-in 146.760 - PL 103.5 analog or Fusion.   Also D-Star is on 146.820 -, all the information at   www.hamcation.com or call 407-841-0874.   There is also an AM low power Information Station on AM 610.

April 12   **TARCFest** TARC Clubhouse, 22nd St at the river, 8AM-1PM, $5 entry including tailgate, a few inside tables must be reserved in advance, talkin on 147.105 +146.2, license testing after, more info at http://hamclub.org/

May 16-18   **Xenia, Ohio, Dayton Hamfest,** tickets $30 at the door, tailgate $30, 10x10 booth $705

May 24   **WormFest 2025, Pinellas Park, admission FREE, tailgate free, Freedom Lake Park, 9990 46th St N, southeast corner of US 19 and 49th Street, 33782.   Park opens at sunrise for vendor setup, hamfest starts at 0800.   Talk-in on 146.850 – 146.2.   All FREE!   For a map and directions see** http://www.TheWormholeSociety.org **.**

August 23   **TARCFest** TARC Clubhouse, 22nd St at the river, 8AM-1PM, $5 entry including tailgate, a few inside tables must be reserved in advance, talkin on 147.105 +146.2, license testing after, more info at http://hamclub.org/

Fourth full weekend January	Winter Field Day https://www.winterfieldday.com/
Late January	Gasparilla celebration
Late February	West Central Florida Tech Conference
http://arrlwcf.org/wcf-special-events/wcftechconference/	
March/April	MS Walks
April	MS bike now named Suncoast Challenge
http://www.citrustour.org/register.php	
March/April	Mass Casualty Exercises
Late April	Southeastern VHF Society Conference,
http://www.svhfs.org	
Late April	Florida QSO Party
Mid May	March For Babies (was March of Dimes)
https://www.marchforbabies.org/Registration/Events	
Mid May	Annual Armed Forces Crossband Test
Mid-May	Florida Hurricane Exercise
Late May	Dayton Hamfest
May, Memorial Day Weekend	Wormfest
First weekend in June	Museum Ships on the Air

Fourth weekend in June	Field Day

http://www.arrl.org/contests/announcements/fd/

Third weekend in August	International Lighthouse/Lightship Week

https://illw.net/

September	Run for All Children's
Mid October	The Great Shakeout https://www.shakeout.org
October, 3rd weekend	JOTA, Scout Jamboree-on-the-AIR (around 14.280MHz)
Early December	ALS bike ride in Walsingham Park
December, Second weekend	Tampa Bay Hamfest http://www.fgcarc.org/

YOUR WORMHOLE OFFICERS

Bill AG4QX is President and editor of this newsletter, the Vice President position is open, Treasurer is Jim KD4MZL, Paul KA4IOX is the Secretary, Dee N4GD is the Repeater Trustee and Mike KV0OOM is our webmaster.

YOUR WORMHOLE REPEATERS

53.150   –1Mz PL 146.2

442.625   +5Mz PL 146.2

146.850   - 600Kz PL 146.2

The Wormhole 2M and 440 repeaters are both now dual mode Yaesu DR-2X.   FM analog as always and Yaesu Fusion, a C4FM digital mode.

The Wormhole website is at: http://www.TheWormholeSociety.org.

West Central Florida Section website: http://www.arrlwcf.org/.

The ARRL website is at: http://www.arrl.org/

This newsletter is written for The Glorious Society of the Wormhole, an ARRL affiliated amateur radio club located around the Seminole section of Pinellas County Florida.   Anyone wishing to be added or removed from The Glorious Society of the Wormhole mailings please write to me at the address below and thy will be done.

73,
Bill Williams
AG4QX

[ag4qx AT arrl DOT net](mailto:ag4qx@arrl.net)