They’re Pillars Supporting Scouting and Amateur Radio

In the fall of 2013 I had the wonderful experience of meeting with Sid Hughes, K0SCH, and George Weber, KA0BSA at Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch near Elbert, Colorado.

A member of my RGA Youth Activities Committee, Stan Reubenstein W6GNN, arranged for me to go to this fabulous location and meet with two of the driving forces behind the excellent scouting program there.

We’re always on the lookout for youth groups incorporating amateur radio that may be in need of some assistance from our Radio Club of America Youth Activities Program.

K0SCH

Sid Hughes upgraded to Extra in February 2008. He is semi-retired, after having spent 20 years in the Army, retiring in 1992 as a lieutenant colonel. He is very active in the Boy Scouts of America, at both the troop and district level.

“Scouting was important to me as a young man, and I felt it was time to give something back; and have fun doing it, too,” Sid said. Like many other hams that are involved in scouting, Sid had a passion for combining interests in scouting with amateur radio. He was on the staff of K2BSA, the Boy Scouts' amateur radio station at the 2010 and 2013 National Jamborees. He is the trustee of the Council’s amateur radio club, KB0BSA.

KA0BSA

George Weber wanted to get his amateur radio license when he was 12 years old because some of his friends did. He had a problem learning the Morse code and couldn’t get beyond Second Class in the Boy Scouts. Not to be defeated, when he was in graduate school at University of Colorado Boulder years later, he took a Novice class sponsored by the Boulder Amateur Radio Club and learned enough CW to pass the code test and the written test to get his ticket in 1978.

With typical ham perseverance, George got his Amateur Extra license and was able to request and receive the vanity call — KA0BSA. When his sons got into scouting, George got involved, too, as a leader. He did four tours at the National Boy Scout Jamboree.

KB0BSA: Putting Together a Plan

In 2010, at the Centennial Jamboree, George met Sid, who also resided in Colorado. In June 2011 the two of them began working on establishing an amateur radio club affiliated with their local council. A constitution, by-laws, and operating procedures were drawn up, and approved by a core membership of Scouter/HAMs. The Club was formed and was granted its request for the club callsign KB0BSA. By the summer of 2012 the permanent radio station was set up at the council’s main camp at Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch.

The purpose of the club and the station is two-fold:

- To promote and support the Radio Scouting program concept for the scouts of the Denver Area Council. Radio scouting consists of merit badge support in radio, electronics, communications, emergency preparedness, and so on: Jamboree on the air (JOTA), scout camps on the air, and the amateur radio hobby — including training, licensing, and fox hunting.

Sid Hughes, K0SCH, mentors a young scout at Peaceful Valley Scout Ranch near Elbert, Colorado. (Photography courtesy of K0SCH and KB0BSA)
George Weber, KAOBSA, a strong proponent of scouting and amateur radio, has done four tours of duty at the National Boy Scout Jamboree.

Foxhunting using hand-held, direction-finding VHF antennas, is a very popular activity among the scouting community.

- To serve as an emergency communications station to support the camp operations and neighboring communities in times of natural or man-made emergencies.

The first official activity supported by KBOBSA was the Denver Area Council 100th Anniversary Camporee in September 2012. The station provided scouting program communications and served as an auxiliary communications center for Elbert County first responders and the Douglas-Elbert counties' ARES® group.

Jamboree On The Air

The second official activity was JOTA in October 2012. It was a daylong event with several scout and Scouter visits during the day.

According to Sid, the 2013 JOTA event was well attended, focusing on JOTA radio contacts, Radio Merit Badge class, fox hunting, and amateur
radio hobby orientation. “There were 15 scouts who earned the Radio Merit Badge” Sid proudly reported. The scouts contacted stations coast to coast and worldwide, using HF, VHF/UHF, IRLP, and Echolink modes.

The station is equipped with two HF radios, one VHF/UHF dual-band radio dedicated to voice/phone and one VHF radio for packet communications. The equipment was acquired through private donations.

Antennas included a G5RV HF dipole and an Alpha-Delta tri-band for HF operations, a 3-foot vertical for VHF/UHF and a 6-foot vertical for packet. The antennas were mounted on two 30-foot telephone poles.

During my wonderful visit to this beautiful site, both Sid and George told me that the goals of Club/KBOBSA in 2014 are:

- To improve the station facility by adding better Wi-Fi access
- To add a commercial-band base unit to interface with the existing camp radio network.
- To receive donations to support purchase of administrative supplies such as QSL cards, postage, envelopes, and expandable office supplies.

My RCA Youth Activities Committee will continue to offer assistance to this dynamic organization that combines the best of the broad opportunities now available in both scouting and ham radio. For more information about this specific amateur radio club, contact George at <ka0bsa@arrl.net> or Sid at <kb0bsa@arrl.net>.

W3LNE and K5ND

Another ham radio friend who is passionate about scouting and ham radio is Don Kunst, W3LNE, offered to be available for questions as well at <w3lne@arrl.net>.

Don’s son, Garrison, KB3LEZ, was a young presenter on scouting at the Dayton Hamvention® Youth Forum a few years ago.

Jim Wilson, K5ND, is the point man for scouting and amateur radio at K2BSA:

- Email: <jota@scouting.org>
- Website: <http://www.k2bsa.net>
- Scouting and ARRL: <http://bit.ly/1djreWD>

In January 2011 the ARRL and the Boy Scouts of America signed a memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) designat-
ing the ARRL as a key resource for K2BSA and Merit Badge training at the BSA National Scout Jamboree and establishes the ARRL as the go-to source for scouts interested in learning about and becoming involved in radio communications.

N9JA and ICOM’s Ongoing Support

Besides being a huge supporter of Dayton Youth Forum presenters through the outstanding support of Ray Novak, N9JA, in May 2012 ICOM America and the Boy Scouts of America announced a joint sponsorship for the K2BSA operation at the 2013 national Scout Jamboree.

ICOM provided all the transceivers for the Jamboree. They also installed three amateur radio repeaters at the site of the Jamboree, held at the Bechtel Scout Reserve in West Virginia. The repeaters, callsign WV8BSA, are installed and operational on an ongoing basis to support all events at The Summit.

ICOM and the BSA also launched an amateur radio station loan program for local Scout Councils that provides complete stations for loan to councils in support of Radio Merit Badge workshops, summer camp, and Jamboree on the Air events.

In addition, ICOM supplies promotional support for JOTA, the largest Scouting event in the world with many thousands of scouts participating on more than 5,000 amateur radio stations in 150 countries. This takes place the third weekend in October every year.

For even more information about the station loans use the following links:
<http://www.k2bsa.net/icom-jota-support>
<http://www.k2bsa.net/icom-station-loans>

In Appreciation

Thanks to Sid, George, Don, Jim, and Ray for all their great efforts to help youngsters enjoy the very best that scouting and amateur radio have to offer. – WB2MGP