

RADIO AND EASC

by JAMES H. GRAY

There's a new look on Harris Hill — and a new sound, too! Don't be surprised if a hasty glance doesn't reveal the secret. As is often the case, good things come in small packages. Let's make a closer inspection together.

Did you notice that we no longer need a flagman midway down the field — so that the winch operator can tell when to launch a sailplane?

Is the smoother, faster launching more apparent? Why, you wonder? The answer lies in two small radio units completely hand-held and battery powered. They are known as "Heathkit Model GW-30 Citizens Band Transceivers" — HandiTalkies, if you will. Complete with carrying strap cases, batteries and collapsible "whip" antennas, they weigh less than two pounds; but are worth their weight in gold to our operation.

For quite some time, we at EASC have recognized the necessity for providing quick and efficient communications between flight line and winch.

Until now, radio units were too costly, bulky, and complicated to suit our use. Licensing was a problem. Telephones were out because of cost, difficulties in stringing wire, and maintaining large battery power supplies.



Mott Sekella, both C pilots with private glider pilot certificates, demonstrate the Heathkit Citizen's band sets in front of the Harris Hill glider hangar.

Photo by James Gray

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Alternating current was neither available at the flight line nor the winch. Then the Heath Company of Benton Harbor, Michigan, (a division of Daystrom) announced the GW-30 Transceivers, operating within the 27 megacycle citizens band.

What's more, they limited the power so that no license is required to operate them — yet provided enough "sock" to maintain two-way communication up to one mile distance.

Our units were obtained in kit form. With simple tools, it took only five hours each to assemble and test them. On the first try, they worked perfectly. Even better, they are fixed tuned and crystal controlled; so simple, my children have operated them around the neighborhood.

Here's how EASC puts them to work. The winch operator has one unit, the wing-man the other. When the pilot and ship are ready for launching, the wing-man presses his push-to-talk button and informs the winch driver who acknowledges and

proceeds with the launch. Simple? Yes. Effective? Definitely!

What of the limitations? Because of low power and small "whip" antennas, the transceivers are restricted in range. This, however, is not all bad because they do not cause interference to other radios in the area. For our use we don't need greater range.

They are battery operated. What of it? With normal use the batteries last for 75 hours, and cost less than \$2.00 to replace.

Interference from other C-B stations? Sure, there is a little, but by ordering the proper crystals, this can be minimized. You guessed it, we like 'em! We can't find any real draw-backs. In fact, it probably won't be long before we purchase a fixed ground station with more power and better antennas. Heath builds these too, you know. Then we can take the small ones in our ships and communicate air-to-ground, air-to-air or ground-to-ground.

"Come on over, Jack, I've centered the grand-daddy of all thermals — at the drive-in."

Why doesn't your club give them a try. We think that you will be pleasantly surprised.

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