

## OSCAR 10 SURVIVES

The latest amateur satellite *Oscar 10* is working almost perfectly despite being damaged during its launch.

Shortly after *Oscar 10's* motor was fired, a damaged fuel valve stuck open, making the 'burn' last for too long. This put the satellite into the wrong orbit. AMSAT says, however, that the satellite will be usable for about 11 hours a day (in the Northern hemisphere) instead of the planned 16 hours a day. It is expected that in about 12 to 18 months the orbit will drift to favour the Southern hemisphere, with Northern stations only in range for about three hours a day.

AMSAT says that radiation from the Van Allen belt will not be as serious a hazard as was feared at first, so *Oscar 10* should stay operational for many years. Luckily the 'bending' of the 144MHz aerial has done little damage to its performance.

## 'HAM IN SPACE' DELAYED

The Space Shuttle launch which was to have carried Dr. Owen Garriott W5LFL, complete with two-metre rig, has been put back until October, perhaps even later.

At the time of writing the frequen-

cies for the Shuttle link-up have not been decided. At first it was suggested that frequencies above 146MHz should be used for the Earth-to-space up-link, but the International Frequency Registration Board (IFRB) objected, because the Region 1 amateur allocation only goes as far as 146MHz.

Now NASA engineers are running elaborate computer programs to calculate which frequencies in the 144-146 MHz band can be used without causing interference to other Shuttle systems.

A normally reliable source has told HRT that a rumour that repeaters would be used as 'gateway' units to the Shuttle is incorrect.

## GRANBY HALLS

The annual amateur radio show at the Granby Halls, Leicester, is going ahead this October in spite of the Amateur Radio Retailers' Association moving its venue to Doncaster.

Amateurs and traders who wanted the Leicester exhibition to continue approached Frank Elliott G4PDZ, the Secretary of the Leicester Radio Society to see if anything could be done to save the show. The Society joined forces with the Leicestershire Repeater Group, and they are staging what they describe as the 'Twelfth Radio Amateur Show' at the Granby Halls on Friday and Saturday 28/29 October.



# COMMENT

I am leaving Ham Radio Today to pursue other publishing interests not connected with our hobby.

My privileged position as founding editor of this magazine has given me an insight into amateur radio which is not usually available to those for whom it is a hobby rather than a profession. In short, the course which amateur radio appears to be taking fills me with pessimism. In the space of a few very short years, I have watched our hobby change from a dynamo of inventiveness and improvisation to a machine of sterility and tediousness.

I could argue that 'all you need to get on the air is a valid credit card' lies at the root of the trouble. Certainly home construction gave amateurs something to talk about, and the 'off the shelf' syndrome is surely killing the hobby. However, this is just a symptom of deeper trouble.

Frankly, it is now too easy to become a radio amateur with the result that the ranks are filled with non technical operators, the same sort of people that salivate over adverts in the camera and hi-fi mags. These aren't radio amateurs. They're knob twiddlers with lots of money... Nothing to do with the ability to send morse, Class A, B or whatever. Their licence says that they are radio amateurs but their commitment to the hobby runs quite a bit short of some SWLs, CB'ers and unlicensed pirates. In fact, some of the most interesting conversations that I have had while editing this magazine have been with SWLs, CB'ers and pirates...

For proof of this, one only has to listen to 2m. When I first came on the air with the callsign G8SNW in 1979, the entire band was alive with reasonably interesting chat. There were those that could bore the hind leg off a dead sheep but there always were. Now, the 2m band is un-naturally quiet, full of people maintaining listening watch with incredibly expensive equipment, frightened of calling 'CQ' because they know that they are going to be bored with the result.

For me, the division is quite clear. Amateurs who took and passed the written exam are (generally) of a different, higher calibre to those who subsequently passed the multiple choice RAE. The Radio Amateurs' Exam is now so simple that a backward baboon could pass with a credit in at least one half. It doesn't bode well for the future.

Frank Ogden G4JST