

Delaware Beach Life

June 2005

The 'back bay' area

Once a tourist destination, then a quiet retreat, the western shores of the bays are thriving again

Day of the dolphin

A tale of rescue and recovery as volunteers respond to a beached animal in distress

Beach dream

Ever think about launching a resort business? Fledgling entrepreneurs offer some advice



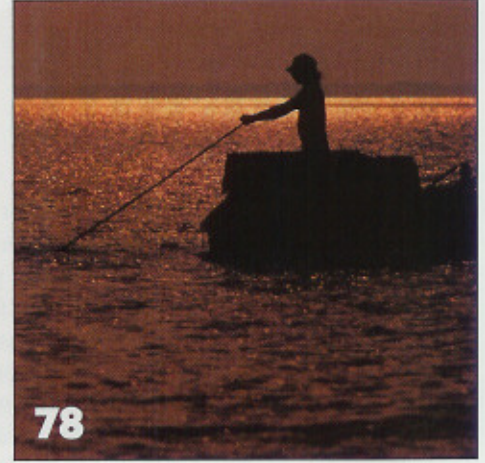
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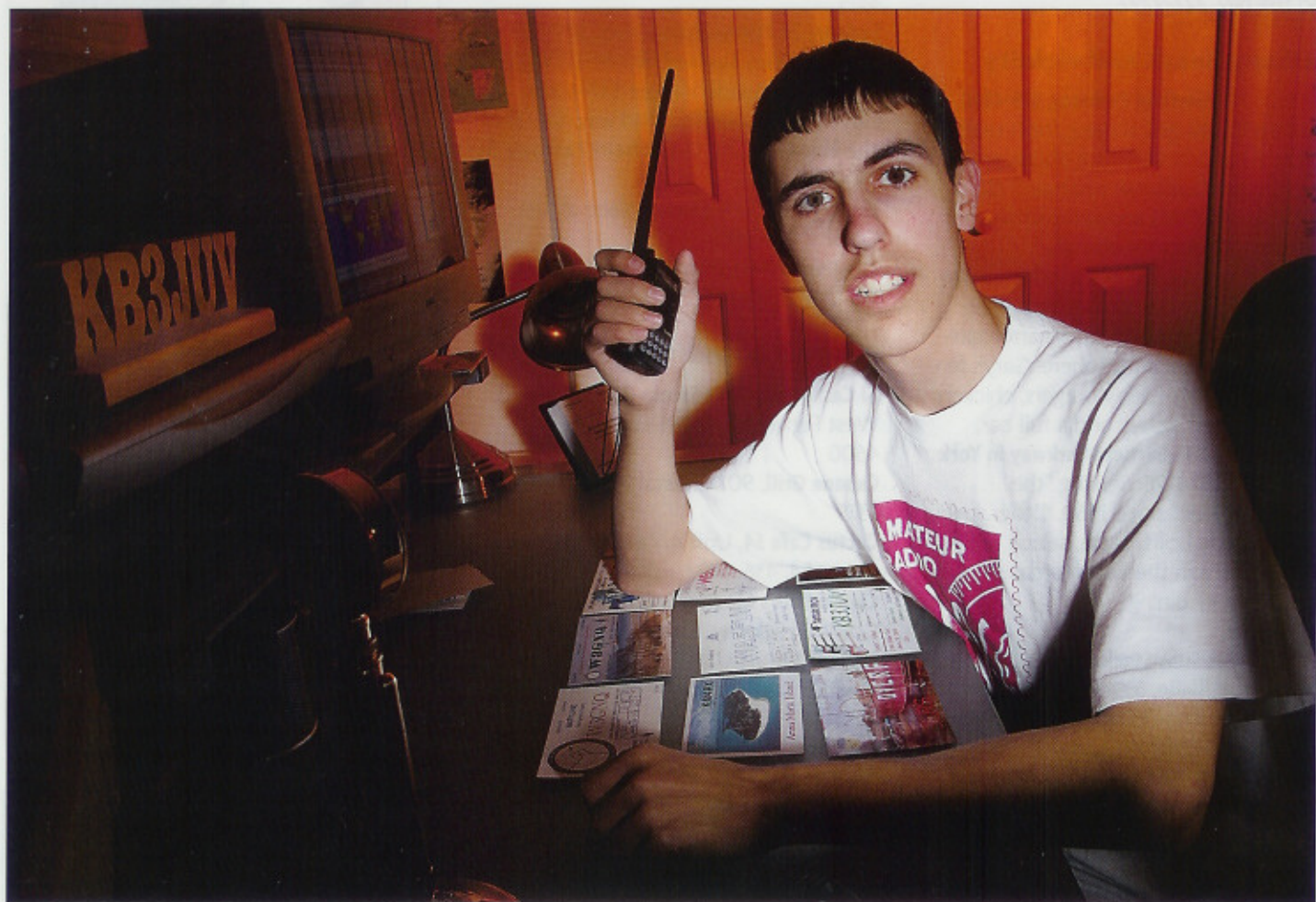
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Photograph above left courtesy of the Marine Education, Research and Rehabilitation Institute; center and right by Kevin Fleming
Cover photograph by Richard Dorbin



Photograph by Judy G. Rolfe

Justin Kates: Ham radio operator

Interview by Patricia V. Rivera

While his friends are using the latest wireless technology to communicate with friends, Justin Tyler Kates sticks with what some call a dinosaur of modern communication. From his home in Lewes, the 17-year-old uses the air waves and radio antennas to chat with people in far-away places. He still prefers the element of the human voice. But at times, he falls back on the once highly useful Morse code.

Grade and school: Junior at Sussex Technical High School, Georgetown

When was the first time you started fiddling with an amateur radio? My electronics teachers introduced me to "ham" radio in ninth grade at Sussex Tech. Our class was listening to amateur radio operators in Texas who were searching for pieces of

the Space Shuttle Columbia that exploded in 2003. It was interesting talking to people across the country and around the world.

What do you like the most about it? Through amateur radio, I became active in Army MARS [Military Affiliate Radio System]. Army MARS provides backup communications for the military. I've participated in interesting exercises and met a lot of great people.

What is the hardest part of working an amateur radio? During field day, an amateur radio event where local and state emergency agencies come together at one location to simulate emergency communications during a natural disaster, operators rehearse communications during a disaster. I would imagine that it would be very stressful during an actual disaster. One of the hardest parts I've actually experienced is getting my license. There are three grades of licenses: technician,

general and extra. I have an extra class license. It takes many hours of studying and to earn an extra class license. You also learn Morse code.

Describe what's involved in communicating with someone. First of all you need a radio and antenna (or a hand-held radio). Once you find a frequency that people are talking on, you say your call sign. Then you tell the person that you're talking to where you're from. After that, you can talk about anything else you're interested in. Mostly I talk about electronics, computers and hobbies. It's interesting to talk about the places where people live and the weather.

Have you made any long-lasting friendships through this medium? I've made a lot of friends. I don't think I'd be involved with amateur radio if it weren't for some of the people I met when I was starting out. I met one man at the first field day that I attended. After only knowing him for a couple of hours, he gave me a hand-held radio to use. I was also given a radio to use at home and antennas from a few people over the years. "Hams" are very supportive. They want to encourage other people to take up the hobby. I really enjoy meeting someone for the first time that I've only spoken to on the radio. Some people are surprised that I'm so young when they meet me.

What are some common misconceptions about amateur radio? People don't realize amateur radio is the most reliable form of communication. In case of a disaster, cell phones won't work.

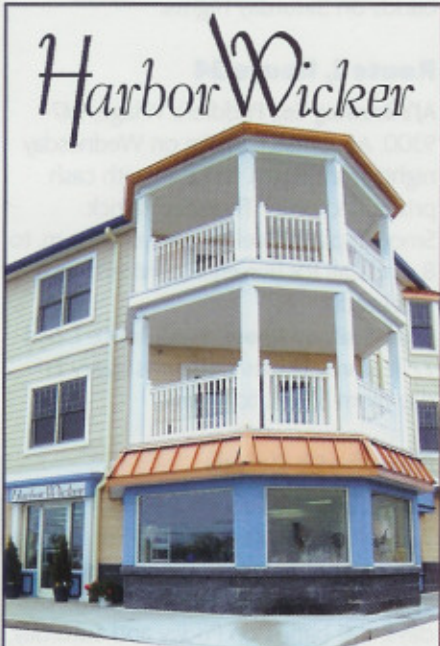
This just happened last year, during the Florida hurricanes and, most recently, the Southeast Asia tsunami in December. The cell antennas were also destroyed on the World Trade Center towers during [the Sept. 11, 1991, terrorist attack]. Computer servers and electricity were down also. Most of the emergency communications were provided by amateur radio during those times.

Do you have other hobbies? I've been playing guitar since I was 6 years old. I currently play electric guitar in my school's band. I also like to work on computers and build Web sites. I've created a Web site called CQ Delmarva (www.cqdelmarva.com) that provides information on events and volunteer opportunities for local amateur radio operators. From that Web site, a newsletter is e-mailed to anyone who's interested.

What do you want to study in college? I'd like to attend the University of Delaware and major in computer engineering or electronics engineering.

What career plans do you have? I'm not really sure right now. But I know it will have something to do with computers and electronics.

Who are your heroes? I don't know if I'd call them heroes, but I admire my parents. They have supported me in everything I've done. They have also been great role models for my sister and me. ■



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