

Orbit

The Journal of the Radio Amateur Space Program

No. 9

January/February 1982
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Our Cover: The USSR pavilion at TELECOM-79, a large telecommunications exposition which preceded WARC-79 in Geneva in September of that year, featured an Amateur Radio display which included this blue-and-white package identified as an RS-Satellite Transponder. Is it one of those now in orbit as RS-3 through RS-8? (Photo by Dave Sumner, K1ZZ).

LET'S TALK

OSCAR

DATA IS DERIVED FROM OBSERVATIONS BY PROJECT OSCAR REPRODUCTION AUTHORITY. SELF ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE. OSCAR P.O. BOX 1136, LOS ALTOS, CA 94024. OF THE LATEST AVAILABLE DATA.

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SHEETS AREN'T ALL WE HAVE TO OFFER**

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
4 JAN 1982	5 JAN 1982	6 JAN 1982	7 JAN 1982	8 JAN 1982	9 JAN 1982	10 JAN 1982
UTC	UTC	UTC	UTC	UTC	UTC	UTC
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HAM IN SPACE TEE SHIRTS

ORBIT MAGAZINE

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Ellipsis...

AN EDITORIAL BY VERN RIPORTELLA, WA2LQQ*

Symbols. Life abounds with them. Some say life is nought but symbolism. Even if that pronouncement is untrue, symbols do play an astoundingly complex role in everything we are and everything we do. Apparently symbols have always been important to human beings. Cave paintings from France, tool adornments from Peru and the great Pyramids of Egypt are easily viewed as symbols. The Pyramids were symbolic to the builders, and the owners (some of whom later became the occupants). Furthermore, the great philosophers and prophets of antiquity spoke in a language rich with symbols. Jesus, Mohammed, Moses, Bhudda, Confucius and Zoraster spoke to their respective flocks in terms of symbols (parables). Indeed, the term "flock" is a symbol (metaphor) in itself. The question is, why use symbols at all? The prophets used symbols, no doubt, because in their wisdom they recognized explicitly the power of symbolism as effective communication tools; vehicles for conveying important yet abstract concepts such as ethics, metaphysics, etc.

"What," you may well be asking, "has all this got to do with amateur satellites?"

Consider OSCAR a symbol. You needn't select any OSCAR in particular; just OSCAR. Is it plausible that OSCAR obtains an enriched character, a dimensionality if you will, if viewed as a symbol?

At first blush it seems rather trivial to view OSCAR as a symbol. It is so widely recognized an image, however, that we might like to pursue the imagery beyond the superficial, trivial aspects.

Amateur Radio is a limited-edition ARRL publication sent largely to national policy makers and leaders in the Amateur Radio Community. Its cover design contains some interesting symbolism. (See below) The designer sees the amateur world in quarter spheres. The stylized United Nations symbol (Earth with olive branch) signifies international brotherhood; peace and understanding. The facial profile in conjunction with the HT denotes public service and emergency communications. The image of OSCAR 8 above the Earth symbolizes technical acumen; innovation. The ARRL logo in this context is seen as the unifying influence in binding the foregoing elements.

Why does OSCAR 8 appear as representing the technological arena? Is OSCAR 8 the most sophisticated Amateur Radio enterprise of all time? We suspect not. Its use as symbol, we find, is based on the



richness of the image it conveys and the simplicity of the image itself. In other words it is another example of conveying a very complex subject (advanced technology) with a recognizable, simple symbol. Thus, OSCAR 8 in the context cited above, is an *effective* symbol. What's more, we suspect that because it is an effective symbol, it assumes a general significance beyond that which it might inherently possess.

Now that we have broached the subject, let's see what lies deeper. Freudian's might suggest intriguing aspects of OSCAR symbolism resulting from its manner of "birth." After a harrowing journey from Earth this new entity, OSCAR, emerges from a sleek, cylindrical rocket to find life in the Sun.

Other symbolic images connected with OSCAR seem much closer and practical. For example, I've wondered for some time at our marked predilection for knowing the *precise* time of rise/set of OSCAR. Come now! Are our lives *really* going to be lessened if OSCAR appears ten seconds later than expected? Yet I find myself, stopwatch in hand, breathing a sigh of relief as 8J peeps across the horizon at me precisely on schedule. Why? Seen symbolically, this apparently innocuous neurosis expresses a human need for assurance "that all is well with the world." After all, if the "heavens" can't keep its affairs in order, what can be expected from we mortals? Sure enough, though, the sun rises and sets in well-

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