

## Sinkhole

## Chunk of Winter Park falls with house, cars, city pool



On Friday night a woman was feeding her dog in her front yard when she saw a tree sink, but bigger things were to go, that's her house down there.

## This is the Amazing Story!

On the morning of May 9th 1981 the bowels of the earth opened at Winter Park, Florida, A city block of the Central Florida town was destroyed within moments. Geologists said that this was one of the largest sinkholes in history and certainly the most costly. A dry cleaner firm, a print shop, a television store, a drapery factory, a stereo shop, a car repair shop, a city owned swimming pool, 2 city streets and a house were swallowed. Total damage was in excess of 21/2 million dollars.

A sinkhole is caused when the porous limestone rock below ground is depleted of water due to drought and collapses. The sandy ground layer falls into the underground cavern. The Winter Park sinkhole was 400 by 450 feet wide and over 100 feet deep.

Within minutes of the collapse a telephone call was made to Dennis Phillips (KA4RUL), who owned property on the southside of the hole. Phillips was unable to get any detailed information from the Police Department or Fire Department so he turned to his 2 meter rig and called for a break on the local repeater. He immediately made contact with Ed Cox (WØRAO/4) who just happened to be at the rim of the hole. Ed stayed on the air for nearly an hour providing information to local amateurs. Phillips was able to gain access to his property and the area due to advice via ham radio and the efforts of Ed Cox.

Officials advised that a Bell System long distance trunk line was damaged and that the phone communication link to South Florida would fail. Dennis Phillips quickly assembled a rag tag collection of gear and homebrewed an antenna system on his property at the edge of the crater. He began operation as KA4RUL Portable 4.

The story of this massive earth collapse spread around the world. During the following hours hundreds of amateurs in the U.S. and abroad were provided with up to the minute information about their relatives, their property, and the other sinkholes that had developed on the parched Florida landscape.

Every purpose of amateur radio as stated by the F.C.C. was accomplished and fulfilled by KA4RUL during the sinkhole operation. Activity was made on both S.S.B. and C.W. Phillips' rig was a Drake TX4B and R4B. The antennas were a 20 meter coaxial dipole and a 40 meter end fed Zepp through a Dentron Junior Tuner.

Within a few days the hungry sinkhole had stabalized and the slow task of clean up and restoration began. As a monument to the good accomplishments of amateur radio and as a gesture of thanksgiving that his property was spared major damage, Dennis Phillips continued operation from the side of the sinkhole providing contacts with a humorous certificate and information on this geologic oddity.

So, if you should hear KA4RUL Portable 4 "The Sinkhole Station" on the "Lower" bands, please give a call. You will become a part of this facinating story!

> **KA4RUL Portable 4** "The Sinkhole Station"

1006 West Fairbanks Ave. Winter Park, Florida 32789

Home QTH: 3901 Ibis Drive Orlando, Florida 32803

(305) 644-9112 (305) 894-6349