

SQUELCH TALES



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for August 2001

Morris Farm & Dan Michoud Century Rides

The following note was received from Dr. Mark Wheeler MD (Ret):

Hi Bruce,

Last weekend was the Maine Bike Rally with 30 rides and lots going on. I had a cell phone on my ride to Booth Bay from Bath, and there were a few times when the phone simply did not work. I do not trust those cell phones out in the boonies. There is not substitute for a vehicle and a thoughtful person with a functioning radio.

We are counting on your support at the Morris Farm Ride on August 12. Registration starts at 0700 hrs. No need for you to be there before start time at 0730 hrs. Please join us at the end for the big Barbeque.

Thanks in advance for all your help. **Mark Wheeler**

The next event is the big event our club participates in every year. It is the Dan Michoud Memorial Century and Half Century ride to raise funds to fight cancer here in Maine. As many of you know Dan was one of the founding members of the MARA. He lost his battle with cancer in the mid 80s. Dan was also a member of the Merrymeeting Wheelers bike club, and since the early 90s that club has staged this event in his honor.

Hopefully we can count on you to volunteer and help provide communications in support of these worthwhile events. Both rides are through pretty countryside and we have yet had a bad weather day for these events. Mark Sunday, August 12th 7:15 AM for the Morris Farm ride and Saturday, August 25th 7:30 AM for the DMMR on your calendar. Please contact Bruce Randall, W1ZE at 442-9630 or w1ze@arrl.net and volunteer. Your help is needed.

Friday the 13th

July, Friday 13th was a bad day for your K1MJP and W1ZE tech committee. That date lived up to its reputation. Early in the morning on the 13th Bruce, W1ZE noted that his home PC had gone into cardiac arrest. It had been infected by the "Friday the 13th" virus. The hospital bill was \$260 for new hard drive and installation of Norton Systems anti virus program.

The next event happened that same day atop Cole 's Tower on the campus of Bowdoin College, where the MARA 's repeaters

reside. It seems the collage contracted for roof repairs. The workman in the process of doing their job managed to pull the hard line out of the connector attached to the 2-meter Station Master antenna. In an attempt to correct the mishap, they shoved the hard line back into the connector. To add to the problem, they neglected to notify Pete Russell, K1MJP. It was Wednesday of the following week before the word got to him of the mishap. Bruce, W1ZE noted that the receiver sensitivity was poor on the following Saturday, but it appeared to correct itself until Wednesday when he was having trouble communicating with Rusty, KA1FKC who was mobile in Bowdoinham. On Thursday morning Pete inspected the site and shut off the 147.21 repeater and made the necessary repairs.

KH2 and QRP

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE

The Q-signal QRP? asks, shall I lower my power? If you remember in you ham ticket study material that it is a good operating practice to use only the power necessary to make and maintain good communications.

When I was a young fellow (a long long time ago, 1960) and just getting on the air, my first transmitter was a one tube crystal controlled power oscillator made from a 6L6. On a good day and proper tuning I think I was getting a whopping 15-watts out on 80 and 40 meters. I made lots of QSOs and filled my wall with QSL cards. My grandfather wanted to reward me for finding such a good hobby, so he financed my purchase of a used Heathkit DX-40 from Henry Radio in West L.A.. That acquisition allowed me to become a big gun with 50 plus watts. At the same time I got excited about the challenge of VHF. I purchased a Heathkit 2-meter lunch box from a friend that was upgrading to a Gonset Communicator. The lunch box had a super regenerative receiver and a transmitter that emitted something less than 5-watts, enough power to light a No.47 pilot lamp. I worked all over the Los Angeles basin with that little rig.

When I got back into HF in the early 70s like most hams I wanted POWER! A few years later I acquired a Ten-Tec 509, 80-10 meter all-mode QRP transceiver from an estate sale. I started having fun with the little 5-watt rig and found myself working lots of SSB and CW DX on the 20 through 10-meter bands. In April of 1978 my employer, Long Beach Naval Shipyard, told me to pack my bags and head to Guam to inspect a ship home ported there.

I thought that I would love to take a HF radio with me but my TS-520 and power supply would be too big. However, the Ten Tec was small enough to fit into my luggage along with transistor keyer, 3-amp power supply, home brew wire tuner and a roll-up dipole for 10, 15 & 20.



Upon arrival in Guam I got a ground floor room in a hotel on a cliff overlooking Agana harbor. It was Sunday and within an hour of checking into the room I had found two small coconut palms 30 feet apart right outside my room. I strung up the three-band dipole between the palms about eight-foot off the ground. I hooked up the 509 to the supply, keyer, microphone and antenna tuner and set it all on a little table in the room. I had an ice chest with a 6-pack of San-Magels chilling. I took out one San Magoos took a sip and flipped on the transceiver and peaked it up on 15 meters. The CW band was full of signals, most JAs. I found a hole in the band and gave a short CQ. I didn't time this, but that Sunday was the first day for the new Guam prefix of KH2 (previously KG6). That first CW CQ went something like this CQ CQ CQ DE WA6MUP/KH2

WA6MUP/KH2 K. All hell broke loose. I never heard so many JA calling me at one time, ever. I went for an hour working nothing but JAs with my 5-watts and dipole 8-foot off the ground. After an hour that San Magoo had worked it's way to my bladder. I went QRX for an hour or two because it was now dinner time and I wanted to get things set for the next days ship check.

The rest of my mini DXpedition was a blast. I would start to work at 5 AM and knock off at 1 PM and head back to my room air-conditioned room to escape the afternoon tropical heat and humidity and my QRP rig. Over my two-week adventure I managed to work over 200 stations in CW and SSB. Even with 5 -watts and a low-level dipole I managed to do very well. The first signal hop was off salt water and the /KH2 on the end of my call sign was worth 6 dB. I worked Hong Kong, ZL and VK land, Hawaii, Samoa, South Africa, Eastern USSR and my best DX was a station in East Germany on 20 CW one night followed a few minutes later by a 4-1-9 report from a station in Merced, California. Oh yes, I did tour the island and go fishing the last full day on the island.

Before moving to Maine later that year I sold the 509 to K6EVY because he fell in love with it. A year later I purchased a Heath HW-8 kit to keep my fingers in the QRP game. In May of this year I sold that HW -8 at the Herman hamfest and purchased a new Yaesu FT-817 QRP rig. Boy, is that rig a lot of fun and make QRP work a dream. Now all I need to do is to return to a shack on a beach in the southern Pacific and two coconut palms and my QRP rig. 73, W1ZE



NEWS FROM NEWINGTON

60-Meter Ham Band Proposed:

The ARRL Board of Directors approved the filing of a petition seeking a domestic, secondary allocation for the Amateur Service at 5.250 to 5.400 MHz. The petition will ask that amateurs General and above be allowed to operate in the so-called 60-meter band at up to maximum authorized power. No mode subbands will be proposed at this time.

The ARRL said a new 150-kHz allocation at 5 MHz also could relieve substantial overcrowding that periodically occurs on 80 and 40. If the new band is approved, hams would have to avoid interfering with, and accept interference from, current occupants of the spectrum, as they already do on 30 meters. The band 5.250 to 5.450 MHz now is allocated to Fixed and Mobile services on a co-primary basis in all three ITU regions. "An amateur allocation in this band would improve the Amateur Service's already exemplary record of providing emergency communications during natural disasters when even modern communications systems typically fail," the ARRL concluded.

New 160M Band Plan:

The Board also adopted the revised band plan for 160 meters based on a proposal from the ad hoc 160-Meter Band Plan Committee. The plan adopted sets aside a segment for digital modes from 1.800 to 1.810 MHz, maintains CW operation for the entire 1.8 to 2.0 MHz band, recommends a lower limit of 1.843 for SSB operation, and designates QRP calling frequencies--1.810 for CW and 1.910 for SSB.

The 1.830 to 1.850 MHz "DX window" was eliminated. The committee recommended that contest sponsors "consider the use of DX windows as necessary." The plan accommodates established frequencies used on 160 for AM. (cont.)

QRP DXCC award approved:

The Board also approved a new QRP DXCC award. Applications likely will be accepted starting early next year. No QSL cards would be required, and there would be no time limits or endorsements.

PETE'S GOOD DEALS

FOR SALE:**Radio Shack HTX-10**

10-Meter, 25-watt, All-mode transceiver with remote speaker and manual for \$65. Contact Pete Russell, K1MJP at 725-3066.

MAINE REPEATER LIST AND MAP ON MARA WEB SITE

For those of you that have not checked out the MARA web site as of late, you will find that web site manager Mark Rideout; N1JIM has added a Maine repeater map to the Maine repeater listing.

Bryce, K1GAX created a handsome map of the state of Maine with the location of all the ham radio VHF and UHF repeaters. Bryce gave the MARA permission to put his map on our site. Check it out and make a copy for your shack or car. Check out: www.gwi.net/mara

July Breakfast Report

To say the turnout for the July breakfast was a little light would be an understatement. Only three MARA members showed up for the breakfast, Bob and Gay McQueeney and Bruce Randall. Two reps from the Merrymeeting Wheelers were there to give us organization plans for the DMMR. As a result of the poor turnout Trustee, Bruce WIZE will enlist the support of the Lincoln County, Groustown and Portland/Blackstrap clubs to help with the two August bike ride.

Editor's (Trustees) Opinion:

I think it is time for MARA members to start thinking of what they can do to make our organization a viable amateur radio organization in the mid-coast community. I know we all have busy lives but we still have two repeaters and a very small group of folks that keep it running. We are now at a point where we can not provide the local community with a core group of experienced communicators. A couple r folks are doing all they can do to help keep this organization together, but we are not getting much help in this effort.

It has never been easier to get a ham license and get on the air, but we have no one in our organization that is willing to inspire and Elmer new folks into the hobby. We do VE testing quarterly and struggle to provide communications for 4 events a year (2 small to large).

If you have a suggestion on how to make the MARA a more active organization we would love to hear from you and better yet get your participation.

73, Bruce WIZE *(KS1R Trustee)*

Merrymeeting Amateur radio Association

KS1R

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