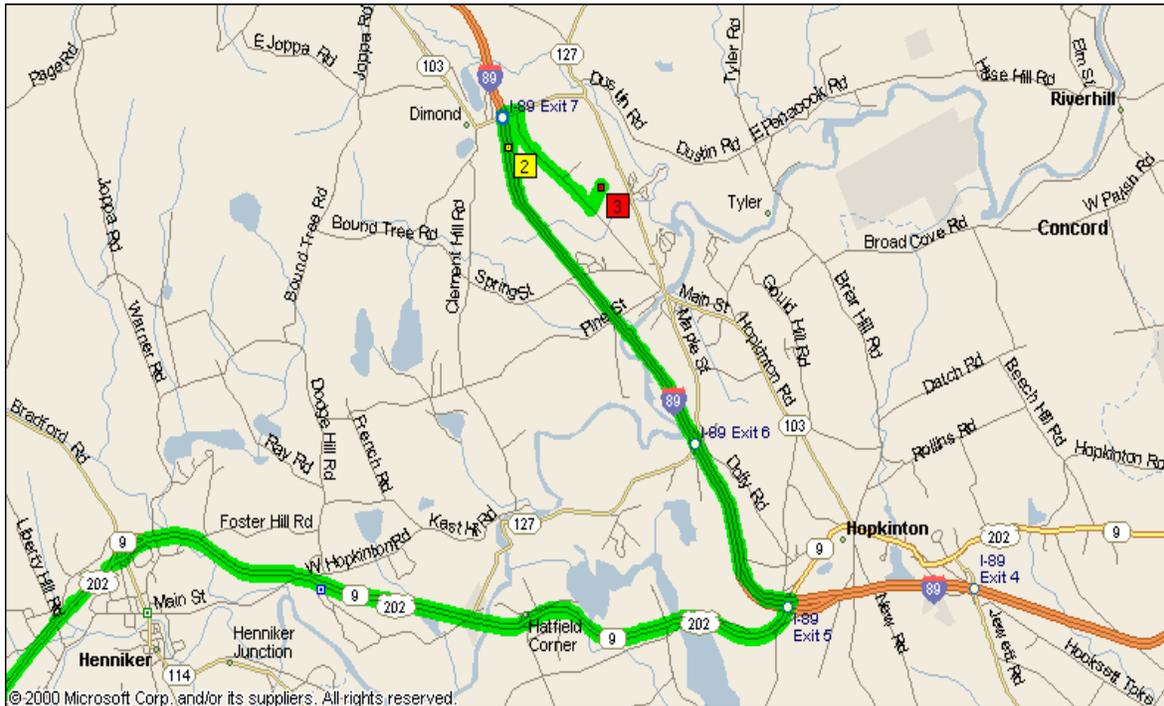


Happy Birthday MARA!

Only one Hamfests left in New England in 2001

That's right Hosstraders, the last Hamfest for 2001 will take place on October 5th and 6th in Hopkinton, New Hampshire just west of Concord.



From Concord travel west on I-89 to Exit-7 in Hopkinton. From Exit-7 travel southeast following signs to State Fairgrounds.
Hope to see you there!

Wouff-Hong and the Rettysnitch: Lost Traditions?

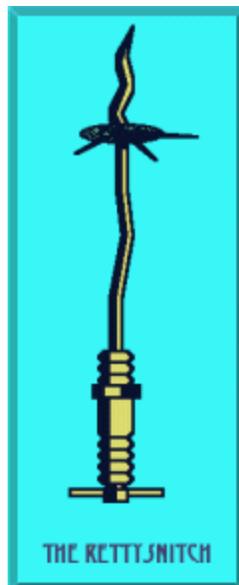
L. B. Cebik, W4RNL

"The Wouff-Hong is amateur radio's most sacred symbol and stands for the enforcement of law and order in amateur operation."



Fig-1

"The Rettysnitch. . . is used to enforce the principles of decency in operating work."



The Radio Amateur's Handbook, 1930, p. 11 In 1930, the Handbook had pictures of both instruments of enforcement. By 1936, only the Wouff-Hong appeared, and by 1947, the Handbook had deleted both photos. Just when we needed traditions of law and order and of decency in amateur operations to guide its growth in the post World-War-II explosion of technology and easier licensing, the symbols had disappeared from view.

Many of today's hams have no idea what a Wouff-Hong and a Rettysnitch look like. To rectify that gap in hamdom's essential history, I have used my very limited CAD abilities to make sketches of the two instruments. Figure 1 is the Wouff-Hong. The two main pieces appear to be wood banded by metal strapping and by heavy wire. What the sketch cannot convey is the darkness at the upper end of longer the wood pieces, as if stained by blood or purified for its grave duties in the fires of purgatory--or both. Of the 5 teeth around the disk near the pointed end of the Rettysnitch, only three remain. According to tradition, the other two have done their work and perished in the effort. Again, my limited skills in rendering the Rettysnitch rob the device of its terrible demeanor, and therefore of its force to ensure operating decency among amateurs. Perhaps the last time the story of the Wouff-Hong and the Rettysnitch was told was in 1934. Thanks to Ed Guilford, AA7HQ, in Bothell, Washington, I have the May, '34, QST in which Rufus P. Turner--famous in the annals of electronics writings--recounted "Hamdom's Traditions: A Bedtime Story for Young Squirrels." But even by Turner's time, the Rettysnitch was relegated to a paragraph on the story's continuation page in the back of the magazine, with no picture. Somehow, even then, folks had forgotten that you can never have law and order without first having decency. Some pessimists think that we now have neither. I do not subscribe to the pessimist's view. Sure, the number of rotten operators has skyrocketed, but not their proportion to the main corps of good, legal, and decent operators, capable and courteous to a fault. We should not be troubled by the size of the job of curing amateur radio of its illegalities and indecencies, for we have more folks to help use the Wouff-Hong and the Rettysnitch just where and how they ought to be used. No, not on others, but on ourselves--to make sure that we set a model for how amateur operations ought to be conducted. Turner offers no prescription for using either device, but thought the Wouff-Hong able to beat out King Kong's brains or easily plow up acres of Manhattan bedrock. That will tell you something of the power of these machines. But it won't tell you how they came to be. Remember T.O.M.--The Old Man--who wrote in earliest days of "Rotten QRM." His very first article in 1917 blasted concocted abbreviations just coming into use. Among the almost unintelligible gibberish in his headphones were words like "wouff-hong" and "rettysnitch," surely instruments of terrifying punishment.

By mid-1917, ARRL was besieged by orders for these contraptions, orders that could not be filled because the League staff had never seen either device. In 1919, after World War I (then called simply the Great War since no one could imagine doing all that destruction and killing all over again), the League once more took up its work in earnest. At just this critical time, the Directors received from The Old Man a package containing an authoritative and well-preserved specimen of Wouff-Hong. Turner described the contents of the

package as "the gruesome instrument of torture." By order of the Directors, it was hung in the office of the Secretary-Editor, within easy reach. Its first portrait appeared in QST for July that year. At each Board meeting, the Wouff-Hong stood on display, to the blanched looks of the humbled Directors. The Old Man also presented the world with its first glimpse of the Rettysnitch. In 1921, the monstrous machine was presented to the League traffic manager by the Washington, DC, Radio Club ostensibly after receiving it from T.O.M. Even at its first public appearance, two of its teeth were missing, suggesting a long history of necessary and effective use. However, to this day, the Rettysnitch has lost no other teeth. It was ordered to hang by its mate.

In the 20s and 30s, many a reproduction of both instruments, but especially the Wouff-Hong, materialized across the country. A group of hams in Flint, Michigan, created the mystic society called the Royal Order of the Wouff-Hong. The society endures to this day, according to legends to which I have so far not been privy. And The Old Man has been given a name: Hiram Percy Maxim, W1AW. At least, legend tells the story that way, perhaps based on the fact that T.O.M. glared at "Kitty" while reflecting on the "rotteness" of everything. Maxim did have a cat. However, true to feline nature, Maxim's cat never spilled the beans. But what has become of the Wouff-Hong and the Rettysnitch? More important, what has become of their power to enforce both decency and law and order on the ham bands? Hams used to cringe at the thought, let alone the sight, of these dreadful tools of enforcement. But, we do not hear of them much anymore. Oh, a tremor of curiosity every now and again brings out a ripple of questions and speculation. But not much more than ripple. You see, today, we have much more terrifying weapons, things like Oozies and H-booms and the like. They scare us in ways that seem to make the Wouff-Hong and the Rettysnitch tame and toothless. However, even in Maxim's day, objectively more powerful weapons were used in France, like tanques and gas more poisonous than that made by Texas chile. Why were the Wouff-Hong and the Rettysnitch so powerful to those early hams?

Because those hams cared about amateur radio in their hearts. They wanted what they knew they could never have: a perfectly law-abiding and decent radio service that would inspire young and old alike to become hams or, lacking the inclination to electronics, to become admirers of hams. Every minute of on-the-air time was a chance to show how noble a pursuit amateur radio was and should always be. They feared the Wouff-Hong and the Rettysnitch as instruments of their own consciences, as they strove to meet the standards they set for themselves. And that is where today you will find both the Wouff-Hong and the Rettysnitch--deep in your own conscience. If they seem to hold no power, then you know it is time once more to elevate your standards a notch higher, and then to strive to achieve them perfectly. Each of us has a secret and private office where no one else may go. Above the door, facing our individual operating tables, hang two instruments, one of law and order, the other of decency. However much the outside world may neglect the tradition of these terrible reminders of responsibility, each of us posses our own Wouff-Hong and Rettysnitch. May you never deserve their sting. Like all legends, this one, too, must end with special words: pass it on.

Updated 2-16-99. Versions of this item have appeared in 72, the newsletter of the New England QRP Club and in QST, the journal of the American Radio Relay League. Photographs of both the Wouff-Hong and the Rettysnitch may be seen at the Sparks Telegraph Key Review pages, along with a vast array of telegraphy keys.

Windsor Hamfest Report

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE

September 8th was a beautiful post Labor Day Saturday when I got up at 7 AM to head off in the bright sunshine to the Windsor Hamfest. As I turned into the Windsor Fairgrounds I was greeted by Phil and Dot Young (W1JTH & W1TGY) smiling and ready to collect my entrance fee.

At first glance it looked like the attendance was about the same as the past several years, so it did not take long to find a strategic parking space.

I started to make the rounds and the first tailgater I came to had a trumpet for sale along with a small collection of electronic stuff. As I was looking down at his collection Jerry, K1GUP who had come up behind me, bent over picked up the trumpet,

stuck in the mouthpiece and began to play Revile. I was impressed - and relieved because I had thoughts of doing the same thing and after being away from a horn for over 35 years I would have just emitted a string of sour and cracked notes.

Like most ham flea markets I have attended as of late, I went with the plan of not spending any money except maybe a cup of coffee or two. This time it was only a good intent. I stopped by Bruce Worcesters, N1VLQ's Radio Shack stand to look over his wares. Bruce does a good job of getting the Tandy Company to allow him to have Hamfest bargains. At this event he had a stack of communications headsets (earphone/microphone) with VOX for just under \$8 so I had to have one just to play with. At my feet was a stack of CB/Ham Radio Base Station antennas boxes with a sign on them saying A-99 \$10. I asked Bruce if they were the same A-99 antennas used by hams on the 17 through 10-meter bands. He replied. "It sure is the exact same." Hams that use them say they are a great fiberglass vertical antenna that does the job for just a few buck. The 1-800 folks sell it for a cheap 40 to 50 bucks, but at ten dollars it was a giveaway. I had to have one. Now at one stop I had invested just fewer than twenty bucks. Before I spent the next weeks lunch money I had better move on down the line.

Several MARA folks were spotted like Bob Ackley (KQ1A), Bob Watson (N1GWE) and Jerry Partelo (KB1FYA). A lot of good ham friends were there two.

If you missed it this year, plan to attend next year, you will have fun. **73, Bruce**

K1EU DX Packet Cluster Moved

For those of you that chase HF DX, IOTA, Grid Squares or weak VHF/UHF signals, the following information may not be news to you because you most likely already use the DX Packet Cluster system here in Maine.

The K1EU DX Packet Cluster Node, formally in Cape Elizabeth, has moved to North Yarmouth. Hams on the mid-coast and greater Portland area (including most of southern Maine) now have a strong link into the cluster system. The K1EU node is still on 144.91 but using a new more useful and informative software program. The cluster system is connected to a wide area network (WAN) cluster system via radio links to the 144.99 NY1E node in the Bangor area, 144.93 K1FZ node in Blue Hill and the rest of the country via Telnet. It appears that the W1AO 144.93 node in Augusta is experiencing problems and is not part of this WAN link system.

All you need is your old packet TNC connected to your PC with a packet terminal program or a dumb terminal connected to a 2 meter FM transceiver tuned to 144.93 simplex.

When you connect to the system for the first time you will be asked a few questions so the node can establish an account (free) on the system. It will ask you for your Name, QTH, E-mail Address and your Latitude and Longitude. After that I recommend you download and save the cluster commands so you know how to get the latest DX spots, input your own spots, get WWV propagation information, and enter into the TAKL mode. The Talk mode allows you to carry on a keyboard chat with other hams connected to the system. Oh yes, your conversation can only be read by the station you are in Talk Mode with, everyone else is blind to your QSO.

The following are the common user commands:

ANNOUNCE - make a general announcement

BYE - bye, disconnect from cluster

CONFERENCE - enter conference mode

DELETE - delete mail message

DX - DX spot information announce

HELP - display this list

HELP command - display help for particular command

KILL - delete last read mail message

QUIT - bye, disconnect from cluster

READ - read mail message

REPLY - reply to last read message

SEND - send mail message

SET - set user specific parameters

SHOW - display various cluster information

TALK - talk to specific station

WX - announce weather conditions

WWV - log/announce WWV propagation info.

NEWS FROM NEWINGTON

ARES/RACES NYC EFFORT STANDS DOWN; REACT SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

After more than two weeks of intense effort, the Amateur Radio volunteer activation in New York City is winding down. ARRL New York City-Long Island ARES Section Emergency Coordinator Tom Carrubba, KA2D, says all ARES/RACES World Trade Center operations in support of the American Red Cross and the NYC Office of Emergency Management ceased early this week.

REACT International continues to seek additional Amateur Radio and licensed GMRS users, primarily to support the Salvation Army's relief efforts in New York City. REACT International Secretary Lee Besing, N5NTG, said his organization has been lining up volunteers, and Jeff Schneller, N2HPO--who's affiliated with the Salvation Army Team Emergency Response Network (SATERN)--has been doing the scheduling for the support effort.

REACT needs up to two dozen volunteers a day. Those who are willing and able should first visit the REACT International Web site: http://www.reactintl.org/tragedy_09112001.htm or send e-mail to NYCHelp@reactintl.org.

Carrubba says the American Red Cross closed all shelters that remained open in New York City on Sunday, September 23, while the New York City Office of Emergency Management shut down Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service support Monday, September 24. Any remaining Amateur Radio Emergency Service activity will be handled by volunteers from the Greater New York City area, he said.

New York City District Emergency Coordinator Charles Hargrove, N2NOV--who served as incident commander--has expressed his appreciation to all amateurs who volunteered their time and equipment. Hargrove outlined Amateur Radio's role in the disaster response in a September 27 interview on Bloomberg Radio's WBBR in New York City.

ARRL New York City-Long Island Section Manager George Tranos, N2GA, also expressed his gratitude to all Amateur Radio operators who came forward to assist the ARES/RACES effort. "The system

works and our 'hobby' has

performed well as a 'service' to the public," he said.

Tranos said some 500 Amateur Radio volunteers helped out with communications support for the disaster. "The ARES organization has done a good job in mobilizing--some being on scene and ready on the morning of September 11," he said. Tranos also praised Carrubba, who, he said, "showed the way and was instrumental in the administration, organization and logistics of the operation."

"Thanks and congratulations go to each of those who helped," Tranos concluded. "Now, hopefully, we can try to return to some degree of normalcy."

ARRL PRESIDENT PRAISES AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY EFFORT

ARRL President Jim Haynie, W5JBP, took advantage of a visit to New York City hams to express his gratitude for the overall Amateur Radio volunteer effort in the wake of the terrorist attacks September 11.

"On behalf of the 680,000 ham operators in the US, thank you for doing such a fine job," he said during a September 21 visit with Amateur Radio Emergency Service volunteers at the heart of the communication effort.

ARRL Hudson Division Director Frank Fallon, N2FF, accompanied Haynie on his visit. "From the very first day I have been proud of the way ARRL members in the Hudson Division responded in overwhelming numbers," Fallon said. "So many responded that many, unfortunately, were turned away."

"It really has been our finest hour!" Fallon continued. "It has made us all very proud to be Amateur Radio operators."

John MacInnes, a Red Cross communications officer based in Tucson, Arizona, expressed high praise for the Amateur Radio community and for ARRL.

"We wouldn't be where we are today without the ham radio operators," he told Haynie. He said Haynie should be very proud of ARRL and asked him to relay his message of thanks throughout the amateur community.

Two more amateurs reported lost at World Trade Center:

The ARRL has learned that two more amateurs were lost and presumed dead in the World Trade Center attack September 11th. Gerard J. "Rod" Coppola, KA2KET, was a transmitter engineer for WNET, channel 13. He was 46 and lived in New York City. Winston A. Grant, KA2DRF, was a computer technician with Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield. He was 59 and lived in West Hempstead, New York. A fund has been established to assist the families of broadcast engineers. Send checks made out to "Ennes Educational Foundation Trust" to The Society of Broadcast Engineers Inc, 9247 N Meridian St, Suite 305, Indianapolis, IN 46260, ATTN: Broadcast Engineer Relief Fund. Information courtesy of Paul Sanchez /Emmis Broadcasting.

Transpacific VLF tests

Bob Vernall, ZL2CA, reports that on September 22, ZL6QH, ZL3PN, ZL3JE, ZL4OL, ZL4MD and AX2TAR (VK7ZAL) transmitted test signals in the 165-190 kHz band.

"Various DX listeners had prior knowledge of the schedule of individual test frequency and coding used by each station," Vernall reports. As happened in the initial successful listening test on June 30, Steve McDonald, VE7SL, of British Columbia, Canada, managed to receive signals from ZL6QH

sometime before dawn. "This time VE7SL obtained an ARGO capture of both frequencies of the DFCW [dual-frequency CW transmission," Vernal said. "The path length is estimated to be 11,709 km."

The uniquely coded transmission consisted of repetitive sending of the letter "Q" sent using dual-frequency CW, with all elements being of 120 seconds duration.

NEWS FROM NEWINGTON is taken from the ARRL's e-mailed newsletter and available to ARRL members free of charge directly from ARRL HQ via the Internet.

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