

## Rocker Radio crystal set

By W1ZE

A month ago I was surfing the web and landed on a site titled the Crystal Set Society ([www.midnightscience.com](http://www.midnightscience.com)). This site brought back some memories of my youth when I noted an ad for the Rocket Radio. When I was 12 years old I had one. Some enterprising individual (most likely in China) decided to market this tiny crystal set that looked like a Buck Rogers rocket.

As a pre-teens in the mid 50s, I had a Peter Pan AM radio on my night stand and loved to listen to the evening radio shows being broadcast by the big stations in Los Angeles and on the west coast. I liked it so much that my parents threatened to take it out of my room if I didn't turn it off and go to bed.

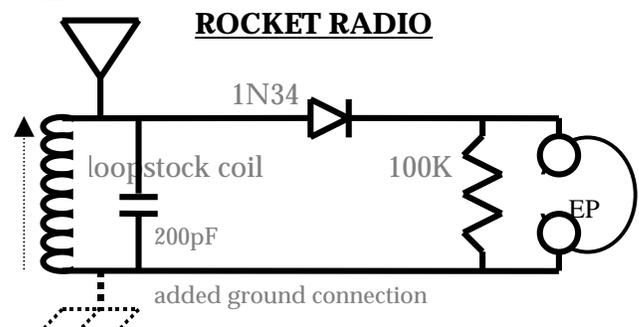


During that same time period, on the way home from school, I stopped by the Army-Navy store to look at all the old surplus WWII military stuff. At the sales counter there was a display board with a Rocket Radio on it and they were selling them for a few bucks. Within two weeks I had mowed enough lawns to fund the purchase of a Rocket Radio, so I could listen to the radio with a little earphone and my parents wouldn't know I was still listening to the radio.

I hooked it up to a 50-foot long random wire strung through the shrubbery around the house,

stuck the little crystal earphone in my ear and...I couldn't hear much. 50 KW Clear channel KFI was only 20 miles away and I could just make it out. To say the least I was disappointed.

I was telling the man next door, kind of a neighborhood Mr. Wizard type, about my disappointment. He asked about my antenna. I showed him the wire winding through the flower border. He said that should be OK and what was I using for a ground. I replied with something like, "what's a ground?" He explained what ground was and said let me see your Rocket Radio. I showed him the little Gem. He advised that the little radio didn't have a ground wire connection and asked if he could open it up and take a look. I said sure. He attached a small length of wire to one of the earphone solder terminals and said connect it to the water pipe outside my bedroom window. I did what he advised and BOY what a change. I could hear stations all over the place. Not as selective and as sensitive as my Peter Pan, but good enough to listen during the parent imposed lights-out periods in my room



In November I ordered the Rocket Radio for twelve bucks plus shipping, just to have another one for a nostalgia trip. A week later it arrived in the mail. I had to do the same thing with the new model, solder on a ground wire. It still works the same. I only live 2 miles from WJTO and It is very LOUD at my QTH and I can still hear several of Maine's big AM stations.

Over the years I have built a few crystal sets but my first Rocket Radio was a thrill.

If you have not built a crystal set, do it. They are fun to build for little or nothing. It is a great starter project for the young and old radio enthusiast or ham want-a-be and no batteries required.

**73, Bruce**

## ***W1AEK 6-meter repeater on the air***

Chuck Bullett, W1AEK and one of the founding members of the MARA has taken over the old K1AAM Arundel 50.050 repeater and has reinstalled it in Litchfield near the 146.70 repeater. The coverage in the Bath-Brunswick and mid coast area is very good. The new call sign will be Chucks, W1AEK/R.

In early December, Bruce/W1ZE had a nice QSO with Chuck on the repeater while commuting from Freeport to West Bath and signal strength never dropped below S-9. With a signal that strong you could expect that a HT could access it with good results. If you have 6 Meters FM, give the 50.050 (PL 136.5) machine a try.

## ***Year End dinner has good turnout***

The gathering of the clan at the China Rose on December 13<sup>th</sup> was a good success. Several new faces were there and everyone had their fill at the buffet tables. MARA President Don Dauphin/WD1F welcomed everyone to the dinner but one of the highlights of the evening was to be the Ham of the Year award, which was to go to three outstanding members of the Association. In years past, two hams have received the award but 2003 had several hams going the extra mile to promote the MARA and Ham Radio. The three were Bill Messier/K1MNW for his efforts in promoting the technical aspects of the hobby and facilitating the new 1284 repeater, 10 GHz project and the groundwork for the ATV repeater. The second recipient was Lee Tribou/N1HOC for her enthusiastic support of the MARA and interface work with the community, showing what the hams in the MARA can do. The third recipient was Abe Galonski/KC1W for his volunteer efforts

and jumping in to take on the job of recording secretary and keeping the Association President on task at the meetings, with detailed minutes of club meetings. Plus Abe's can-do attitude deserved to be recognized. None of the recipients were there to receive their award so they will receive them at the January meeting.

For those of you that could not attend the dinner, you missed a good time. The turnout was good and those in attendance all commented that they had a good time. Thanks again to Activities Chairperson Lee/N1HOC for making it happen.

## ***NEW Web Site for MARA***

The MARA's web site savvy duo of Don/WD1O and Mark/N1JIM are in the process of building up a new and revised web site at <http://www.ks1r.net>. The web site will be member interactive so that Association members can have edit access to sections of interest to them or portions they are in charge of. For example, the ARES section will allow Lee/N1HOC and Al/WA1SCS to make changes add information, etc. Mark/N1JIM, can update information such as Echo-Link and I-link.

Connect, take a look and provide comment to Don and Mark on what you think and is there sections that should be added that you think would be of interest to those folks that connect.

At this time the old site of [www.gwi.net/mara](http://www.gwi.net/mara) is still up and running but that may change in the future.

***VEs NEEDED!***  
***If you hold an General, Advance  
or Extra Class ticket and would  
like to become a certified ARRL  
Volunteer Examiner, contact  
Wes Clement, N1WC  
at 729-8563***

## December VE session has positive outcome

**Bath ME:** On December 13<sup>th</sup> the last VE session in Maine for 2003 was held in the Bath Public Library. The MARA supported VE team headed by Wes Clement/N1WC and supported by MARA VEs Bruce Randall/W1ZE, Brian Doval/AA1WI and Abe Galonski/KC1W administered exam that included all elements to a good group of folks. Everyone passed his or her intended elements. At the end of the session three folks took element-1, the 5-wpm Morse exam and all passed. The result of the day produced four new General class hams, with one starting from scratch. Two folks passed their Technician exam and one passed the Extra Class. That one person was the MARA's own Pete Wilhelmi/N1GEV. **Kudos Pete!**

### **NEWS FROM NEWINGTON**

#### **FEMA SAYS BPL WILL "SEVERELY IMPAIR"**

#### **ESSENTIAL HF OPERATIONS**

A proverbial monkey wrench in the works for BPL? Expressing "grave concerns" about likely interference from unlicensed Broadband over Power Line (BPL) systems, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) told the FCC that BPL could "severely impair FEMA's mission-essential HF radio operations in areas serviced by BPL technology." FEMA responded December 4 to last April's FCC BPL Notice of Inquiry, ET Docket 03-104. Now part of the Department of Homeland Security--the agency said its primary worry is BPL's potential impact on the FEMA National Radio System (FNARS) on HF.

FNARS is FEMA's primary command and control backup medium under the Federal Response Plan.

"FEMA has concluded that introduction of unwanted interference from the implementation of BPL technology into the high frequency radio spectrum will result in significant detriment to the operation of FEMA radio systems such as FNARS," FEMA asserted. "FNARS radio operators normally conduct communications with signals that are barely above the ambient noise levels." FNARS HF stations, FEMA

said, typically are in residential areas of the sort that BPL might serve.

As part of the Department of Homeland Security, FEMA's perspectives on BPL could carry substantial weight at the FCC, which may issue a Notice of Proposed Rule Making as early as February. The FCC's BPL Notice of Inquiry has attracted more than 5100 comments--many of them from the amateur community.

FEMA said BPL also could render useless such "essential communications services" as the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), the Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS) and the Civil Air Patrol. FEMA and ARRL last year signed a Memorandum of Understanding that focuses on how Amateur Radio may coordinate with the agency in disasters and emergencies.

Calling the HF spectrum "an invaluable and irreplaceable public safety resource," FEMA said there's no current alternative to HF in terms of meeting national security and emergency preparedness requirements at the national, state and local levels. The agency advised the FCC to beef up its Part 15 rules to ensure no increase in interference levels to existing FCC or NTIA-licensed communication systems. Otherwise, FEMA predicted, "any noise increase inevitably would diminish the ability to maintain essential communications" and would "directly impair the safety of life and property."

Likewise, FEMA pointed out, amateur HF transmitters could possibly interfere with and interrupt BPL service, leading consumers not familiar with Part 15 to blame licensed radio services.

Concluded FEMA: "The purported services in certain communications sectors do not appear to outweigh the benefit to the overall public of HF radio capability as presently used by government, broadcasting and public safety users."

**Is it time to upgrade your license? You bet. A few hours of effort will reap a lot of satisfaction**