



SQUELCH TALES



MERRYMEETING AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER FOR APRIL 2016



FCC Seeks Comments on Petition to Grant Lifetime Amateur Radio Licenses

The FCC is seeking comments on a *Petition for Rule Making (RM 11760)* that asks the FCC to grant lifetime Amateur Radio licenses. Mark F. Krotz, N7MK, of Mesa, Arizona, filed his request with the FCC last November. He wants the FCC to revise § 97.25 of its rules to indicate that Amateur Radio licenses are granted for the holder's lifetime, instead of for the current 10-year term. Krotz noted that the General Radiotelephone Operator License (GROL) already is issued on a lifetime basis, and he maintained that not having to renew licenses would lighten the FCC's workload.



"It would be mutually beneficial for the FCC and Amateur Radio operators to update Part 97 to grant operator licenses for lifetime," Krotz said in his filing. "The FCC would benefit by reducing administrative costs."

In 2014, the FCC granted lifetime credit for examination elements 3 and 4, but applicants seeking re-licensing under that provision still must pass examination element 2.

Individuals may [submit](#) comments via the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS).



Social Media and Ham Radio

Editorial by Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

In the last ten years, there's been an explosion in social media. I've found some to be really great. Others, I haven't found to be to my liking. Here are my opinions on a few of the most popular social media websites:

* Twitter ([twitter.com](#)). I like Twitter. I have more than 3,000 followers on Twitter, and it's not only helped me sell more books, I've found out about a lot of great projects, and I've met and corresponded with a lot of great hams there. It's a lot of fun. If you have a Twitter account, follow me there. I'm @kb6nu.

* Facebook ([facebook.com](#)). I have a Facebook account and I even have a page for my study guides. I don't like using Facebook, though, and avoid it when I can.

* **Reddit (reddit.com/r/amateurradio)**. Reddit hosts a very active amateur radio forum. What I like about Reddit is that these guys, unlike say the forums on eHam.Net or QRZ.Com are really interested in doing stuff, not just complaining or arguing. A lot of the hams on Reddit, and it's associated IRC channel (talk about retro!), #redditnet, have used my study guides, and apparently, I'm quite popular there.

* **Blab (blab.im)**. Blab is an interesting concept. It's kind of like an interactive podcast. You can record the blab sessions and then post them to YouTube or your own website. When I suggested having a regular Blab session to talk about ham radio topics to my blog readers, they weren't very enthusiastic about it. Even so, I think that I'm just going to do it. Sometimes you just gotta go with your gut, and my gut says this could be fun and eventually popular. Blab is integrated with Twitter, so if you follow me on Twitter, you'll find out when I'm blabbing.

The biggest problem with participating on these social networks, of course, is that it takes a lot of time, time that could be used for building stuff or getting on the air. Even so, I would say that, overall, using them has certainly increased my enjoyment of amateur radio and has connected me to people that I probably would not have connected with otherwise.

What do you think? What social media accounts do you have? Which do you prefer? What have they done for you?

When he's not blabbing or tweeting, KB6NU likes to work CW, build stuff, and teach ham radio classes. He's also a prolific blogger (www.kb6nu.com) and the author of the "No Nonsense" amateur radio license study guides (www.kb6nu.com/study-guides). If you have any comments, questions, compliments, or complaints, email him at cwgeek@kb6nu.com.



Solar Panels



When looking at solar panels, there are three basic technologies: Amorphous, Poly-Crystalline, and Mono-Crystalline. Amorphous panels are common for small panels because they are inexpensive and can be cut to any size, but they wear out more quickly and/or not very efficient. They are usually a deep brown color. I recommend avoiding them. Poly-Crystalline is a good technology and should be the minimum acceptable. They are typically bluish tint and usually have a fractured pattern. **Mono-Crystalline are the best.** They last a very long time and have the best efficiency. These typically look black and usually have cells that look like rectangles with two clipped corners. There are some flexible panels, but their efficiency is usually not very good. For my heavy deployable go-kit, I use a solar package similar to the [USA STOCK 100 watt 12 volt Folding Solar Panel](#) with one or two 50 Ah batteries, depending on the circumstances. -- *John Bloodgood, KD0SFY, Pikes Peak (Colorado) ARES*

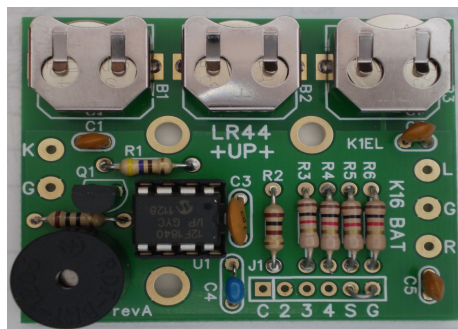
Editors Note: Donnie Dauphin, WD1F is our resident guru when it comes to solar power. He is almost off the grid at his QTH in Phippsburg. His solar system backs up the power to our Associations two meter and D-Star 70cMeter repeaters.

DIY Simple Mini Memory Keyer

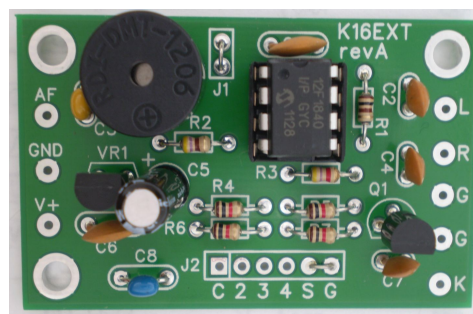
By J. Bruce Randall, W1ZE

In February while in the shack I noted I had a loose retaining ring on one of 1/8-inch key lines jacks on my trusty electronic touch-paddle keyer. I removed the plastic cover to put my needle nose on the jack to hold it while I tightened the ring. Oops – I forgot that the internal 9-volt battery was still connected and the keyer energized. As I removed the tool somehow a short occurred and in turn fried one of the little ICs that makes up the touch pad function. The IC had no markings on it so I couldn't run over to the local IC chip store and get a replacement. Being totally bummed out about not having that handy little keyer, I used it in lieu of the FT-450's internal keyer for quickly changing CW sending speed, without going through two program functions on the 450 just to change CW speed, plus the little keyer had one memory function.

I remember that I had assembled another little IC electronic keyer kit with memory several years ago called the K12 that I use mobile/portable. I said that would work OK on my station here in Poway but that keyer was 3200 miles away in the glove box in my F-150 pickup in Maine. I went online to the Hamcraft website at <http://k1el.tripod.com/K16.html> to see if I could order another one. The site no longer offers the K12 memory keyer kit. It has been replaced by the K16 kit which is almost the same with a few enhancements.



K16-Bat



K16-Ext

As you can see above, the keyer kit comes in two types, battery only and external power. For my needs I selected the K16-Ext that runs off an external power source of 3 to 15 volts (DC). Making it easy to adapt to different power sources.

After ordering the K16 online it only took five days for the little kit to arrive in the mail. I downloaded the assembly and operation manual from <http://k1el.tripod.com/docs.html> and wasted no time soldering the parts to the well designed and silk screened circuit board with a low wattage pencil soldering iron. I went over to my local San Diego electronic parts supplier and purchased a black plastic project box, four small push button switches, 10K linear taper pot, and the necessary keyer paddle, key line and power connectors. Assembly and off-board parts location is up to the builder. I used the small stranded wire conductors out of a scrap telephone cord to connect up the plugs and switches to the keyer board. After reading the manual (available online) the little keyer was off and running with four programmed CW memories.

If you want a fun and very useful weekend DIY project you may want to consider the K16 keyer kit.
73, W1ZE

