



# Squelch Tales



*Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for August 2009*

## Summer 09 has 50 MHz hopping

Report by W1ZE

Dedicated and casual six-meter operators have much to smile about this past spring and early summer. Throughout June and into mid July there was increased band activity, with E-Skip and F layer openings most days lasting into the late evening. This enhanced activity has allowed some of the big guns like K1TOL, K1SIX and K1GUN to snag some nice DX QSOs in Europe, South and Central America and the Caribbean. W1ZE who does not have the antenna farm and kilowatt amplifier of the big guns but does have 100-watts and a SteppIR Yagi at 55-feet has managed to land a few DX QSO also.

Since mid June I have exchanged reports and grid squares with Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, Brazil, Canary Islands, Balearic Islands, Mexico, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and the Azores. On a few late afternoons I experienced double-hop conditions out to California and Washington State. My mode of operation is split between SSB and CW with an edge toward CW (but that's just me). Some evening's the six-meter band sounds like 20 meters with large pileups and stations calling CQ on top of each other.

During Saturday of Field Day the KS1R group managed about sixty SSB and CW contacts all over the eastern half of the country running 100 watts and a Moxon 2-element beam. The following day (Sunday) contacts were hard to make but that is the six meters band for you.

When 50 MHz opens up you don't need a big antenna array to get on the band and have success. Throughout the past weeks I have worked folks using simple dipoles

strung in their attics, G5RVs and big 140-foot doublets and I was able to give them good reports and received the same. If your antenna tuner will work on 50 MHz and your transceiver has the six-meter band, give the Magic band a try.



## Easy Screwdriver Antennas tuning with Icom Rigs

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE

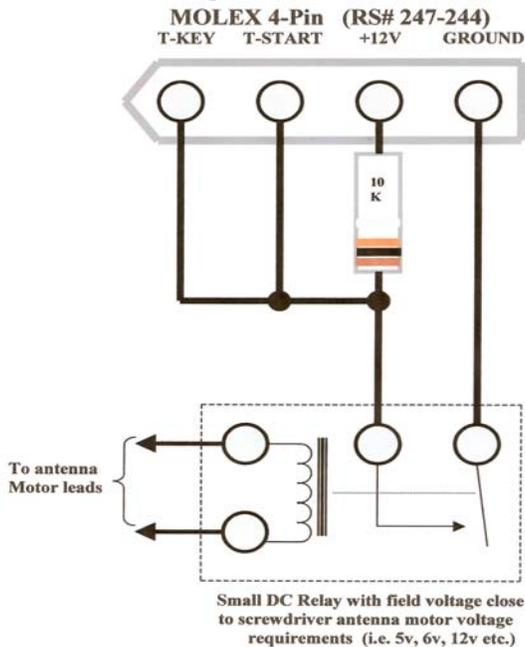
As many of you know I have an Icom IC-706MKIIG in my vehicle and use a DK3 screwdriver antenna for HF. The 706 is an excellent multi-mode HF transceiver and my DK3 is a good mobile performer.

When 706 and DK3 were first installed in my pick-up truck I had to use a CW key and lower the power to 10-watt CW so I could tune the antenna for low SWR and resonance. Without a key I had to go into the AM mode, again reset my power output level to about 10 watts, key the microphone and tune the antenna. After the antenna was tuned I have to reset the 706 for full power output, unless I wanted to go mobile QRP.... NOT. Tuning a screwdriver to resonance on the fly while driving down rural roads in Maine is not something you or I you should be doing.

There is one commercial source and several articles on the Internet on how to make up an Icom tuning emulation module that plugs into the 4-pin Molex jack on the rear of Icom radios. These circuit designs require you to push the tune button on the rig or have an external tune switch. These devices fool the rig into thinking it is connected to an Icom AH-series tuner. These circuits work well enough but I didn't like having to push a button and run the antenna up/down switch at the same time.

Here is what I did to make tuning my screwdriver a simple one-function process: I looked through the manuals for the Icom 706, 703, 746PRO and IC-7000 and noted their external antenna tuner control circuits were the same. All three use a Molex 4-pin jack. So out came the pencil and paper and I started to sketch-up a keying device for my set-up that would not need a telegraph key, external switch or the need to push the tune button on the transceiver.

Almost all the screwdriver antennas control their up/down tuning with a center-off, momentary DPDT switch. This switch provided the DC voltage to the screwdriver antenna motor. I use the output motor voltage from the toggle switch to key a small SPST relay; it in turn keys the transceiver and delivers 10-watt CW to the antenna. When I release the antenna tuning toggle switch the transceiver returns to full-power SSB, or what ever mode I am in at the time. This makes the tuning while mobile easy and less distracting.



This interface should work well with most Icom transceivers with an external antenna tuner jack. It should also work well with most all motor tuned mobile antennas like the Hi-Q, DK3, High Sierra, Tarheel series, MFJ, etc. Most antenna motors operate on or around 12 volts so

any relay that has a field coil for 12-volts should do just fine. For screwdriver antennas that use lower voltages, I recommend a 5 to 6 volt relay; these relays are available at Radio Shack.

I assembled my module right on the Molex plug itself. Only a few parts are required:

- 1ea. 4-Pin Molex plug (male)  
RS# 247-244
- 1ea. 10K carbon resistor (1/4-watt)  
RS# 271-1335
- 1 ea. small 12-volt Micro relay  
RS# 275-241 or  
a 12V reed relay RS# 275-2333

After assembly, I covered the exposed wiring and solder connections with clear RTV, which acts as an insulator and stiffens-up the module. Hot glue could be used in lieu of RTV. 73, Bruce/ W1ZE



## Maine summer & fall Hamfest Schedule

- August 8<sup>th</sup>  
Saint Albans, ME. Presented by the Piscataquis ARC at:  
Snow-Devil Snowmobile Club  
9 Bryant Road  
POC = George Dean, WA1JMM at [Wa1jmm@roadrunner.com](mailto:Wa1jmm@roadrunner.com)  
Talk-in 146.52 simplex
- September 12<sup>th</sup>  
Windsor ME, Presented by the Augusta Amateur Radio Assoc. at:  
Windsor Fairgrounds on Route-32  
POC = Bill Crowley, K1NIT, 207-623-9074 or [k1nit@arrl.net](mailto:k1nit@arrl.net)  
Talk-in 146.88 (PL 100.0)
- September 19<sup>th</sup>  
Alexander, ME, Presented by the St. Croix Valley ARC  
Alexander Elementary School  
Route 9  
POC = Mike Sanford KB1GEO, 207-427-3058 or [kb1geo@arrl.net](mailto:kb1geo@arrl.net)  
Talk-In 147.33 (PL 118.8)



# W1AW to add new digital modes to its transmitting schedule

From ARRL Bulletin 027 July 2009

After a survey of W1AW-listeners, W1AW will begin using two different modes on August 17, 2009. On August



17, 2009, W1AW will replace its AMTOR and ASCII transmissions with PSK31 and MFSK16, respectively. RTTY (Baudot) will continue to be the first digital mode used in the transmission schedule. The frequencies used by W1AW for all its digital transmissions will remain the same. All regular 6 PM and 9 PM Eastern Time digital transmissions will begin with RTTY. PSK31 and MFSK16 will be sent as time allows. The Tuesday and Friday Keplerian data bulletins will be sent using RTTY and PSK31.

The W1AW operating schedule, complete with times and frequencies can be found on the ARRL Web page at, <http://www.arrl.org>.



## Sagadahoc LEPC invites MARA and ARES members to the July meeting

**Brunswick:** On Tuesday, July 14<sup>th</sup> Members of the MARA and Mid Coast ARES/CERT attended the Sagadahoc County LEPC meeting at Midcoast Hospital. The reason for the invite was a show and tell on the Life Flight helicopter ambulance service presented by Mr. Dave White, an EMT from the Life Flight service. The presentation was well done, well received and very informative.

In addition to the eight MARA/ARES folks, the meeting was attended by folks from Midcoast and Parkview Hospitals, BIW fire department, Supervisor of

Shipbuilding's (Navy office in Bath) Safety manager, Sagadahoc County Sheriff Joel Mary and several others citizen volunteers.

Lee Tribou (N1HOC), Steve Kercel (AA4AK) and John Briggs (KC6TVF) are members of the LEPC and key players.



## Mid Coast ARES Net has good participation

Net Managers report

The Monday evening Mid Coast ARES Net continues to have about 50% participation. That is pretty good considering that the summer months are upon us with folks out of town on vacation, busy with family activities and work requirements. Volunteers to do Net Control duties has not been a problem with the following folks stepping up to control the net:

- John Goran, K1JJS
- Steve Kercel, AA4AK
- Marjory Turner, KX1I
- Harry McNelley, N1TTT
- Lee Tribou, N1HOC
- Michelle Briggs, W7LIF

Many of the above folks participate on Monday evening activities at the Topsham Red Cross building and take the opportunity to use the N1TRC station to do their NC duties.

If you would like to try you hand at being a Net Control Op, just download the Net Control text from the MARA web site at [www.ks1r.net](http://www.ks1r.net) and let John, K1JJS know you would like to give it a try so he can schedule you in.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all folks that check-in and do net control duties for their participation.

*73, Bruce Randall, W1ZE, Net Manager.*





## A busy summer for CERT/ARES

By Steve Kerchel, AA4AK, Sagadahoc ARES EC

The summer is shaping up to be very busy for the CERT and ARES teams. We've already accomplished a lot. We had 56 participants in Field Day, including 36 licensed hams. According to Bryce, we had three ARES members providing support for the LL Bean Run on July 4. Several of those did double duty, with a total of 9 ARES members putting in 4 hours each to support the Bath Heritage Days parade also on July 4. Finally, on July 14, 12 ARES/CERT members took the Life Flight Training at the Sagadahoc LEPC meeting (Life Flight will be issuing certificates to all participants.)

That was only the beginning. On August 5-6, four of our members are signed up to take the two-day course in Mass Prophylaxis, being given by Sagadahoc EMA. This becomes especially relevant, as it appears that the second wave of swine flu is building, and is expected to hit this fall. If it is anything like past flu pandemics, "swine flu 2.0" may turn out to be much more dangerous than last spring's "swine flu 1.0." CERT and ARES members are cautioned to look to the safety of themselves and their families in a potentially dangerous (made all the more so because it has not looked all that dangerous) time, and not to be surprised if Misty calls up to support Sagadahoc EMA in a flu emergency.

By that token, all Midcoast CERT/ARES members are encouraged to take the FEMA Web course on Points of Distribution, <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is26.asp>. Both in response to a pandemic emergency, and in response to other mass disasters, PODS support is one role for

which Misty is likely to call us up. The course only takes about 2 hours, and less if you're a "quick study."

Speaking of training, Bryce has a goal of having Maine ARES "NIMS Compliant" by the end of 2009. That mostly involves documenting the training levels of all ARES members. In support of that goal, he has added a Web page <http://www.maineares.org/training.html> showing the various training levels, and the courses required for each level. Please note that with the exception ICS 300 and 400 (only required for the highest levels of management) the training requirements can be met by Web based training. The training is mostly free, and where there is a charge, it is usually cheap. We encourage all members to check out the Web sits and see what gaps (if any) they have in their training. We will come back to NIMS compliance later in the fall, but these training recommendations are a good thing to keep in mind.

We have two big exercises in October, the "Full Scale Exercise" on October 3, and SET on October 24. The Sagadahoc "Full Scale Exercise" is still being planned by Misty and a countywide emergency planning group, and the scenario is not yet known. There will be a very small role for CERT/ARES, probably limited to piping APRS messages between the two hospitals, the Red Cross, the Fire Station and the Incident Command post. SET envisions a major earthquake, and the CERT/ARES response (assuming any CERT/ARES members survive) to it. We are hoping to get a geologist to come to the July 30 ARES meeting to give us some guidance on realistic expectations of damage from a major earthquake on the Maine coast.

While we are waiting for coastal Maine to drop into the ocean (somehow, I thought that was the eventual fate of California) we have the summer round of bike races. Tour de Merrymeeting Bay is August 8. Tour de Farms (generally recognized as serving the best food) is August 23. The Dan Michaud Race (*officially named the Hospice Something or Other, but everybody still says Dan*

*Michaud*) on August 29. We realize that not all members have time to support all the bike races, but traditionally, we get a good if not overlapping turnout for all three. These bike races tend to be among the most popular of the MARA activities.

Busy as it sounds, wait; there's more! On September 12 from 11 AM to 3 PM CERT and ARES will have a table at the Community Day at Curtis Memorial Library in Brunswick. This is an unexcelled opportunity to showcase ham radio to a public that is largely unaware of our existence. On Sunday September 27, starting at 8:30 am the American Heart Association is sponsoring a 1-3-4 mile "Heart Walk;" in concert with Parkview AMC, ARES will provide communications support. CERT/ARES members are also encouraged to attend the Sagadahoc LEPC meeting at the West Bath Fire Station on October 13; we are trying to arrange a live demonstration of the Bath Police Department K-9 dog at the October LEPC meeting.

For all these events, please check the MARA Web site from time to time for updates. As I am sure all readers have noticed, the above is strictly training and drills. In addition, you never know when we might get called out for real emergencies. In any case, there is never a dull moment with our CERT and ARES teams. My heartfelt thanks to all the participants who have kept our CERT and ARES teams energetic and vibrant.



## **HR 2160 GAINS MORE SUPPORT IN CONGRESS**

News from ARRL HQ

This week, four more Congressmen John Boozman (R-AR-3), Bob Filner (D-CA-51), Dennis Moore (D-KS-3) and David Wu (D-OR-1) pledged their support for HR 2160, The Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Enhancement Act of 2009. This brings the total number of cosponsors to 18.

Introduced by Representative Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX-18) in April

passed, HR 2160 would "promote and encourage the valuable public service, disaster relief, and emergency communications provided on a volunteer basis by licensees of the Federal Communications Commission in the Amateur Radio Service, by undertaking a study of the uses of Amateur Radio for emergency and disaster relief communications, by identifying unnecessary or unreasonable impediments to the deployment of Amateur Radio emergency and disaster relief communications, and by making recommendations for relief of such unreasonable restrictions so as to expand the uses of Amateur Radio communications in Homeland Security planning and response." The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

If enacted into law, HR 2160 would instruct the Secretary of Homeland Security to undertake a study and report its findings to Congress within 180 days. The study would spell out uses and capabilities of Amateur Radio communications in emergencies and disaster relief. The study shall:

- \* Include recommendations for enhancements in the voluntary deployment of Amateur Radio licensees in disaster and emergency communications and disaster relief efforts.

- \* Include recommendations for improved integration of Amateur Radio operators in planning and in furtherance of the Department of Homeland Security initiatives.

- \* Identify unreasonable or unnecessary impediments to enhanced Amateur Radio communications -- such as the effects of private land use regulations on residential antenna installations and make recommendations regarding such

impediments.

\* Include an evaluation of Section 207 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-104, 110 Stat 56 [1996]).

\* Recommend whether Section 207 should be modified to prevent unreasonable private land use restrictions that impair the ability of amateurs to conduct, or prepare to conduct, emergency communications by means of effective outdoor antennas and support structures at reasonable heights and dimensions for the purpose in residential areas.

The Secretary of Homeland Security shall utilize the expertise of the ARRL and shall seek information from private and public sectors for the study.

"HR 2160 presents the Amateur Radio Service with a unique opportunity -- but also carries with it the important responsibility of making your voice heard," said ARRL Regulatory Information Manager Dan Henderson, N1ND. "HR 2160 stands as the first step in trying to address the long standing problem of extending the protections afforded Amateur Radio operators under PRB-1 deed restrictions and covenants. To be clear, passing HR 2160 is not going to achieve that goal right away. But it will help lay the ground work by assessing the impact such restrictions have on our ability to train for and respond to disasters and other emergencies."

HR 2160 is also sponsored by W. Todd Akin (R-MO-2), Michael Arcuri (D-NY-24), Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD-6), Madeleine Bordallo (D-Guam), Bart Gordon (D-TN-6), Brett Guthrie (R-KY-2), Michael Honda (D-CA-15), Mary Jo Kilroy (D-OH-15), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA-16), Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-MO-9), Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI-11), Charlie Melancon (D-LA-3), Bennie Thompson

(D-MS-2) and Peter Welch (D-VT).

Check the ARRL Web site <<http://www.arrl.org/news/stories/2009/05/12/10818>> for information on how to encourage your Congressional representative to sponsor HR 2160.



## Legendary CBS newsman Walter Cronkite, KB2GSD, SK.

Information and text provided by ARRL



Walter Cronkite held the title of "Most Trusted Man in America," passed away Friday, July 17 after a long illness. He was 92. The avuncular Cronkite anchored [\*CBS Evening News\*](#) for 19 years until 1981 when he retired. During that time, he reported on such subjects as the Kennedy assassinations, the Civil Rights movement, the Apollo XI lunar landing, Vietnam and the Vietnam-era protests, the Arab-Israeli Six Day War, Watergate and the Begin-Sadat peace accords.

Cronkite, an ARRL member, narrated the 6-minute video [\*Amateur Radio\*](#)

Today. Produced by the ARRL in 2003, the video tells Amateur Radio's public service story to non-hams, focusing on ham radio's part in helping various agencies respond to wildfires in the Western US during 2002, ham radio in space and the role Amateur Radio plays in emergency communications. "Dozens of radio amateurs helped the police and fire departments and other emergency services maintain communications in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, DC," narrator Cronkite intoned in reference to ham radio's response on September 11, 2001. "Their country asked, and they responded without reservation."

As Walter would say at the end of every broadcast, "and that's the way it is."

Rest in peace Walter, we will miss you." SK



## August is bike-ride event month

### Your help is needed!

As in the past many years our Association is again going to provide communications support for three non-profit bike ride events in August on the mid coast. The MARA has done them for so many years it has become our specialty.

1. The first of the three is the 6th Annual "Tour De Merrymeeting Bay" on August 8, 2008, that consists of a 25 and 50 Mile Rides through out the Mid Coast Region around Merrymeeting Bay. The Communications volunteers are requested to arrive at the Topsham Athletic field on the Forside road at 7:00AM. Lunch provided.
2. The second event is the "Tour de Farms XI" on Sunday, August 23, 2009. This is a Century (100 mi.) bike ride through the countryside of Lincoln County starting and ending at the Morris Farm on Rt.27 in Wiscasset and winds its way from Whitefield to Pemequid Light and back. MARA volunteers are encouraged to arrive at the Morris farm at 7:00AM. Organic farmers BBQ at the end of the event.
3. The third and final event is on August 29<sup>th</sup>. This event is the Annual Maine "Hospice Event in memory of Dan R. Michaud" In support of Maine Hospice Council and Center for End-of-Life Care Hospice Volunteers: This bike event we originally volunteered for back in 1993 because Dan Michaud was a member of the MARA and an avid cyclist. The start and finish point is the Gazebo on the Brunswick Mall and takes a similar bike route as the Tour De Merrymeeting Bay. Hams need to be there around 7:00AM for assignments. There is a picnic on the mall after the end of the event.

We encourage all to volunteer for these events. It is our big volunteer month and a lot to ask, but we do need your help. We also plan to enlist the help of non-MARA hams in this event. If you can help with any or all three, if you have a two meter transceiver(s) and willing to help, please email Bruce, W1ZE at [w1ze@arrl.net](mailto:w1ze@arrl.net) and let him know your availability

