



Squelch Tales



Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association Newsletter for February 2008



Spring Lights QSO

By Cory, N1URA

It is a New Year and time to start planning lighthouse activation again! The Spring Lights QSO is coming up at the end of March (March 20-30). The plan is to rent the lighthouse for a week. Wing's Neck Lighthouse in Pocasset, Massachusetts offers rentals by the week and the price varies by season. At the end of March the price is \$2500 per week which can be split among 8 guests. If we maximize participants, then those wishing to spend the entire week will pay \$312.50 and those wishing to split a week would pay \$156.25). The timeframe for renting the lighthouse is springtime; hopefully we can get a time window firmed up. If you want to split a week, then it would be for Saturday, Sunday, and Monday night or Wednesday, Thursday, Friday nights.



If you are interested in joining us, please reply back and let me know if you want to spend the entire week or split a week, if splitting the week let me know if you want the 1st or 2nd half.

Q. How many people can the property accommodate?

A. Maximum occupancy is eight people. There are three bedrooms upstairs and a pull out sofa in the family room.

Q. Are there bathroom and laundry facilities?

A. There is a full bathroom upstairs with a tub and shower. Downstairs is a half bath with a washer and dryer. There is an outdoor shower.

Q. What is the minimum rental period?

A. The minimum rental period is one week. Weekly rentals begin on Saturdays after 2PM and end the following Sat at 10AM. Occasionally we can accommodate a long week-end in the off season.

Q. Can you go up in the light tower?

A. Yes. The lighthouse itself is attached to the home by a breezeway. It is accessed through a door in the family room. A spiral mahogany staircase takes you to the top of the light tower where you can climb a ladder to the glassed in area where the light was once housed. The view is great but we ask that you use caution in the light tower.

Q. What amenities does the house have?

A. Cable TV, DVD player, two TV's, microwave, dishwasher, fridge, stove, coffee maker, lobster pot, toaster, bikes, lawn chairs, beach toys, beach towels, etc.

73, Cory

K1MJP is no more!

No, Pete O. Russell, a founding member of the MARA, is not a Silent Key (SK). He just changed his 49-year-old call sign. Several weeks ago Bruce, W1ZE emailed Pete at his Indian Harbor, Florida high-rise condo to let him know that K4POR (Peter's initials are P.O.R.) was available in the FCC data base and if he wanted to change he may be able to get it under the Vanity Call program. Pete talked it over with the family and decided to give it a try on-line. On January 20th It was official, Peter O. Russell, K1MJP (Mostly Junk Parts) is now K4POR (Parts Of Radios).

Pete retired several years ago from Bowdoin College. Now he and the XYL are snowbirds. They move south in the fall and winter, but return to Maine after the ground became unfrozen. They no longer have real estate here in Maine, but are looking for a summer place. We hope to see him back up this way in the spring.

If you hear the call sign K4POR on the association's repeaters, it is a local boy with a 4-land call.

MARA

to issue Membership cards



Association membership Treasurer guru and Marjorie

Turner, KX1I has come up with a membership card that will show the holder that the association is pleased to have them as a member. It will also help the recipient know when yearly dues are due. Several designs were proposed including a fold-over card with club information like repeater frequencies, web site address, net time, etc. For more information about the membership card, contact Marjorie at **KX1I @ar1.net**.

OAK HILL TECKY TALK



The to-do list on Oak Hill is getting longer. There was a transmission line/antenna issue on the two meter repeater. The repeater users may have noted that there is a lot of snap crackle and pop on the signals and fringe stations have a difficulty holding a solid signal into the repeater. The Tech Committee thought that the PL-259/SO-239 connection on the Station Master antenna may be corroded or loosened up. It had been several years since that connection was inspected. On 1d January 26th, a cold but clear Saturday morning, a stout harked Jim McIrvin, N1IPA hopped on the ladder rungs of the tower and went up the repeater tower. He found the pigtail connectors between the hardline and the antenna had loosened up over time and tightened the connectors up. With that the snap crackle and pop went away...TNX JIMMY!

The committee decided that this spring they should take down the 444 MHz repeater antenna, open up the raedome and inspect the elements for good electrical/RF connection and lack of corrosion.

Two days prior to that effort by Jim, Bill Messier, K1MNW took the KS1R packet node into the shop and replaced the TheNet program chip with a new chip burned for TheNet 2.08, a later version. As of this writing the node SYSOPs are learning how to set peramitors and become intimate with the program. On Saturday evening, WD1F, K1MNW and N1IPA got their heads together and got the peramaters set on the BRUNS node. Low and behold the node starting to hear other nodes around the state and BRUNS was able to pass traffic between them. The following morning Bill moved the node from his shop to the repeater building but we found out that the lithium battery battery was flat, when the TNC was disconnected from the shop power supply all the peramameters were lost and had to be reset. Another learning experience.

At this time most of the packet users on the tech committee are assigned as SYSOPs. They are K1MNW, WD1F, W1ZE, N1IPA and KC6TVF. The BRUNS node KS1R call sign has changed from -1 to -2 to comply with common packet SSID numbering scheam.

We are in hopes that the folks that maintain the various packet nodes and digipeaters around the state can get together to get the SSID numbering scheam standardized across the state so the users do not have to keep a list of which number on which node does what. Maybe the Maine State Convention in Lewiston would be a good place to hold such a quick meeting.

Replacing the old UHF GE MVP with Airtron transceivers on the 444.4 repeater may be in the offing this year. When the PL board in the GE gave up the



Mid Coast ARES Net continues to prosper

By Bruce Randall, Net Manager

The past few years has been a present experience for me as Net Manager for the Mid Coast ARES net. A good coar group of folks have stepped in to make sure there are net control operators at the ready and every one who has taken on that assignment has done an outstanding and professional job. Check-ins have been continuously high and that is pleasing news to the Sagadahoc County EC DR. Alan Kuong and his AECs. For all of you that participate. **MANY THANKS!**

goast in early January, thoughts of replacement was discussed by the tech committee. Bill Messier has several Airtron transceivers in good condition and a good supply of replacement parts to facilitate this happening. All that is needed it to invest in some inexpensive cristals and maybe some cabinet enclosure work to house them neatly in the rack. Stay tuned for more information on this project.

Back when the weatether was a little more accomidating, John, K1JJS, Harry, N1TTT and others started in a project to clean up and clear out the repeater building. The hope is to make room for easy repeater equipment access and set-up the official KS1R ham shack for members to use. More about this from John, K1JJS.

For which he received an award plaque.

Lefty has presented the Magic Band form at the Maine State Convention over the past years in Lewiston. In June of 1988, Lefty, assisted by Bruce, W1ZE, took New England 6 meter top honors in the ARRL VHF Contest that year from atop a hill in Madawaska. We hope to get Lefty as a guest speaker at one of the MARA meetings sometime this year. **Well done Lefty!**



First Ham Exam Session for 2008 set for February 9th

Bryce, K1GAX VE coordinator has advised that the first MARA sponsored Ham Radio license examination session will tak place on Saturday, February 9th at 10:00 AM at the Topsham Red Cross building at the corner of the 196 bypass and Community Way.

If you plan to show-up to take a test, please bring two forms of Identification, A copy of you existing license with any applicable current CSCE. Examination fee is cash only (no checks or plastic cards). Please be prompt.

MARA sponsored VE exams will take place at the Topsham Red Cross building, all at 10:00 AM on the following dates throughour 2008:

- Saturday, May 10th**
- Saturday, August 9th**
- Saturday, November 8th**

73, Bryce, K1GAX (VEC)

Do you want Cabin Feavor relief? try WINTERFEST

That's right folks, the first ham fleamarket and hamfest of 2008 will take place Saturday February 2nd at the Crystal Falls Dance Hall in Chelsie, just east of the VA hospital on Route-17. Doors open at 8:00 AM. Here is your chance to get out of the house, stretch those leg muscles and empty you wallet for that special boatanchor you can't live without. Word has it that if there isn't a blizzard, the event will be well attended. Hope to see you there.

KUDOs to Lefty



According the February issue of CQ magazine (pg.34), Maine's six meter Big Gun, Paul "Lefty" Clement, **K1TOL** of Turner took TOP honors for six meters in the 2007 **CQ World Wide VHF Contest** with a score of 91,143.

MARA
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