



# Squelch Tales



*Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for January 2010*

## Happy New Year!

### A good time was had by all at year-end Dinner



The first snow storm of the year arrived on Saturday evening at the same time as the MARA's scheduled Holiday Year-End Dinner at the Kennebec Tavern on the waterfront in Bath. The weather and the H1N1 flu bug kept some folks home but for those brave individuals that slogged through the snow, a good evening was had by all.

The Tavern folks set up a nice seating arrangement for the MARA group in the dining room. In fact, the only folks in the tavern were from the MARA guests and restraint staff. The table setting was nice, weight staff pleasant and food good.

There was lots of social conversation through the meal and there was even conversation centered on Amateur radio.



After the meals were finished, Association President Harry McMelley, N1TTT took the floor to thank everyone for attending the dinner gathering and to also thank all the members for helping make 2009 a very successful year for our Association.

At that time Harry Announced the recipient of the Associations Ham of the Year. The award is presented to the member who the President and KS1R Trustee agree has gone the extra mile in support of the MARA, Mid Coast ARES and that Amateur Radio community on the mid coast. Several folks were considered for the award but the clear winner was John Monton, N1OIG



After the Ham of the Year presentation was made, Marjorie Turner, KX1I presented a Thank You card to outgoing President Harry McNelley for his effective steering of the MARA ship the past two years. He was given a new MARA ball cap to go along with the card.

All in attendance expressed that they had a very good time and a good dinner to boot. We hope to see you all again next year.

## Sagadahoc County rearranges public service frequencies

**Bath, Maine:** Over the past several months Sagadahoc County has been in the process of rearranging, deleting and adding new frequencies in support of police, fire and other first responder services. Several of the new frequencies employ Narrow Band Frequency Modulation (NBFM) which reduces bandwidth from 5 kHz to 2.5kHz. NBFM will facilitate opening up more and new channels for public service 2-way radio.

The following are the Sheriff and police frequencies:

- **Sheriff & Police BU = 155.6850 MHz(Tx & Rx)**
- **Sheriff Law South (Primary) = 155.0775 MHz (Rx) 153.8450 (Tx) (narrow band)**
- **Sheriff Law North = 155.6850 MHz (Rx) 153.8450 (Tx) (narrow band)**

The following are the County fire/Rescue frequencies:

- **County Fire (Alert) = 154.295 MHz (Tx & Rx)**
- **Fire South (Primary) = 154.2950 (Rx) 153.7850 MHz (Tx) (narrow band)**
- **Fire North = 155.9550 MHz (Rx) , 153.7850 MHz (Tx) (narrow band)**

*Note: The town of Topsham is not dispatched by the County comm. center but does have access to the countywide Law and Fire radio system.*

If you monitor Sagadahoc County frequencies on your scanner or VHF/UHF ham transceiver you may note that the volume on the new “narrow” channels will be a bit lower. This is because of the reduced deviation of the modulated

signal. However it has not been a reported problem. Some of the newer high-end scanners are designed to receive NBFM by using a narrow receiver IF filter when a NBFM frequency is programmed in.

You may also note that you can not program in the exact frequency such as the 155.0775 frequency because most scanners and Amateur FM transceivers only tune in 5 kHz steps. When you program in that frequency it jumps to 155.770 or 155.080. That is OK, you should still be able to monitor that frequency.

This process that Sagadahoc County is going through will be repeated and is now being done in other counties and municipalities throughout the state. The cities of Portland and Augusta are in the process of converting to P25 digital mode. This is another 2.5 kHz narrow bandwidth mode, but they are experiencing a lot of problems and glitches. To monitor digital P25 you will need a scanner designed to decode that mode. These scanners are in the \$300+ range.

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## MARA votes in new Executive Board members

At the November general meeting of the Association an election was held to replace three Executive Board members. Harry McNelley, N1TTT, Jim McIrvin, N1IPA and Marjory Turner KX1I's terms would expire on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2010.

Jim and Marjorie were re-nominated to the board and Dan Lindsley; N5AGG was nominated to fill the vacancy left by Harry who is stepping down. At that time an election was held and all three nominees were elected unanimously to a

two-year term. They will join Ed Wynn, N1WY, John Monton, N1OIG, Mark Potter, W1AUX and Brad Gebhardt, N1OMS the holdover board members.

Harry McNelley may be stepping down from the board but will be taking over the Activities Committee Chairmanship, plus he will be taking over the duties of ARRL Emergency Coordinator for Sagadahoc County from Steve Kercel, AA4AK. Lee Tribou, N1HOC will stay on as Assistant Activities Committee chairperson. Bruce Randall, W1ZE will remain the Associations KS1R Trustee and newsletter editor. He will also continue on Technical Committee with Bill Messier, K1MNW, Donnie, Dauphin, WD1F, Jim McIrvin, N1IPA and John Goran, K1JJS.

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## MARA sponsored ARRL-VEC Exam Sessions for 2010

Provided by Bryce Rumery, K1GAX  
MARA & PAWA VE Liaison

All MARA sponsored ARRL-VEC exam sessions for 2010 will be held at the Midcoast Chapter of the American Red Cross, 16 Community Way, and Topsham.

If you plan to take an exam, please contact and sign-up in advance with **Bryce K1GAX** at (207)799-1116 or email at **K1GAX@juno.com** prior to the scheduled exam.

. Here are the scheduled exam dates for 2009:

Monday, 1-Feb-2010, Time: 6:00 PM

Monday, 3-May-2010 Time: 6:00 PM

Monday, 2-Aug-2010 Time: 6:00 PM

Monday, 1-Nov-2010 Time: 6:00 PM

If you want to become a VE, or already a VE and want to help out at an exam session, please contact Bryce at the above telephone number or email address.

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## MARA Logo ready for ball caps



At the October MARA meeting the subject of association ball caps and jackets was discussed and that it had been many years since the Association made an effort to have them available for members. George Szadis, K1GDI one of the original members of the Association, who had just renewed his membership said, "I think I can get that done for you folks. My sister is in the Cap, Jackets and personalized products business in New Hampshire and maybe she could set it up for us." A collective "Go for it" order went out and George started the ball rolling. He found out that we could get ball caps with the Association logo on the front and the members name and call sign embroidered on the back and they would be \$15 each, after a one time only charge of \$75 to develop the embroidery machine program. At the November meeting George brought a sample ball cap with the MARA logo on it. Everyone was

impressed and at that time most of the members in attendance signed up for one.

The initial set-up cost was approved at that meeting. What is nice, if you want a fleece jacket or other garment with the MARA logo and your name and call sign embroidered on it, all you need to do is call the store, tell them you are from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association (MARA) and order what you want.

If you would like a MARA ball cap, let Bruce, W1ZE or George K1GDI know and we can get them made for \$15 each. The first orders should be ready for pick-up at the January meeting.

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## KS1R heard in ARRL Ten-Meter Contest

Topsham, ME. The weekend of 13 and 14 December had a group of MARA members gathering at the Topsham Red Cross building to try their hand in the ARRL's Ten-Meter Contest. Prior to that time it was discussed that it may be a good contest for newer hams not familiar with contesting to get their feet wet. This contest did not require round the clock participation and was basically a daytime contest.

The new MARA contesters under the tutelage of Steve Kerchel, AA4AK arrived at the Red Cross ham radio station early on Saturday morning to get the station configured for the 28 MHz band and get things rolling. Band conditions were very poor on Saturday with just a hand full of QSOs made, so at about 2:00 a collective decision was made to try it Sunday morning. Unfortunately that evening the band opened up is little to the south and

mid west but by seven o'clock the band was dead again.

The next morning the group gathered again at the Red Cross building around 9:00AM to give it another try. Harry, N1TTT took this opportunity to give his new K3 transceiver a workout. Prior to everyone's arrival Bruce, W1ZE reported that there was weak sporadic E-skip signals around 28.400 MHz leading to the hopes that Sunday's effort would be more fruitful. Unfortunately Sunday was no better than Saturday's effort so around 3:00 PM the KS1R effort was shut down in hopes the next year the sun spot Gods will be a bit more accommodating.

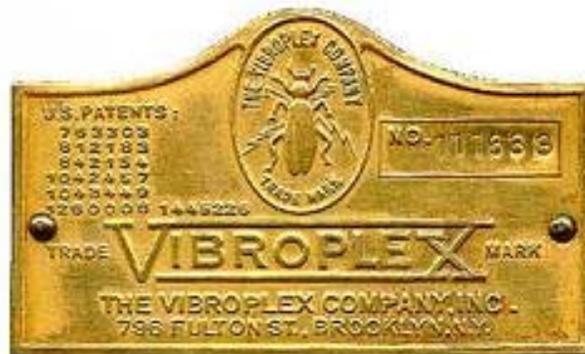


## 73 Years in Ham Radio: Still Going Strong and Staying Young

Phil Young, that is. W1JTH (*above, with XYL Dot, WITGY*). He is the Maine Sea Gull Net's Friday Night Net Control Station, and has been for the past 20 years from his QTH in Augusta. He was the young lad, who at seven years old, around 1924, became the designated radio technician with the family's broadcast radio set in Shirley Mills, Maine, some 85 years ago!

Read the whole story at Ham Radio Signals Downeast <http://www.n1ep.com>

Photo courtesy Phil Doggan, N1EP



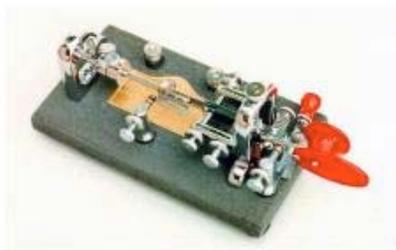
## W4PA, to Purchase Vibroplex

News Release from ARRL HQ, December 10th

Scott Robbins, W4PA, of Knoxville, Tennessee, told the ARRL that he has signed an agreement to purchase **The Vibroplex Company, Inc** from present owner Felton "Mitch" Mitchell, W4OA, effective December 21, 2009. "Vibroplex represents the great tradition of CW operation in Amateur Radio going back many, many years," Robbins told the ARRL. "I'm tickled to be able to continue the more than 100 years of history that has gone into this company."

Robbins -- who has been employed with Ten-Tec Inc since 1995 (he has been Product Manager for Ten-Tec's Amateur Radio equipment line since 1997) -- will leave his position in mid-December to take over full-time management and ownership of Vibroplex. "It's a great opportunity to continue the more than 100 years of tradition that the Vibroplex name represents," Robbins said. "I've known Mitch for quite a few years and it was an important consideration for both of us that Vibroplex continue operation building quality products for Amateur Radio long

into the future. Mitch's experience owning the company will be valuable as we proceed with a seamless ownership transition over the next few weeks."



Robbins told the ARRL that he would move Vibroplex from its present location in Mobile, Alabama to Knoxville, Tennessee during the last two weeks of December, with a planned opening date of January 5, 2010. Vibroplex's toll-free sales line (800) 840-8873, Web site and e-mail contact addresses will remain in continuous operation under the new ownership, he said.

"My first Vibroplex paddle was given to me in 1980 by my father, W2DR; when I left home to attend the University of North Carolina in 1988, a rig, some wire and the key went with me," Robbins said. "Close to 30 years later, it's still on the table -- along with two Vibroplex products I've purchased. I used a Vibroplex chrome iambic to win the 2006 ARRL DX CW contest from Barbados as 8P9PA and I will certainly be using one at the WRTC 2010 competition in Russia this July."

Robbins told the ARRL that he has enjoyed his 14-year career at Ten-Tec, calling it his first "real job" when he was fresh out of college. "I have met literally thousands of hams over the years because of Ten-Tec. All those exciting years when we were designing new rigs and I was writing the manuals for the Omni-VII and

Orion; I'm really proud of what has been accomplished there. I am sure that Ten-Tec and Vibroplex will have some common ground in the future -- both companies already did one commemorative key together back in 2002. Another one would be great!"

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## Downeast Symposium In Ellsworth



From noon to 4:00PM on March 14<sup>th</sup> after the 9:00AM VE session in Ellsworth there will be a Ham Radio Symposium. Two topics will be discussed:

- 1. Solar Powering Your Ham Shack & Portable Operations.**
- 2. Electronics Projects.**

Maine Solar Energy Association will put on a presentation on solar power to run the typical radio shack, and portable radio operations such as Field Day or backpacking trips.

There will also be a presentation and several demonstrations and displays of Ham radio homebrew and electronic kit projects.

Other symposium displays and demos include packet radio and much more. Maine packeteers please leave your systems up so a great demo can be had!

The event will be held at the Meadow View Apartments, Phase IV Dining Hall on Tweedie Lane in Ellsworth.

For more details and map directions, go to <http://www.n1ep.com>.

73,

**Phil Duggan, N1EP** (Symposium Coordinator)

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# Snow Bird Report

By Peter Russell, K1MJP/4

Seasons greetings from the land of lighted palm trees and no snow.

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One project you might consider for the new year is replacing your present incandescent bulbs with either fluorescent or LED equivalent fixtures. That said, you could run the numbers on paper, both for up-front cost of the new lower power bulbs and the power bill savings. Basic bulb type power ratings (watts) are given on the packages. For example, a 40-watt regular bulb replacement draws only 9-watts, a 60-watt old style replacement uses 13 watts, and a 100 watt rating uses 26.

Keep in mind, the fluorescence give off a different color of light than the incandescent (glowing gas instead of a glowing filament). For special applications there are different style lamps both in shape and color emission but they are pricey.

One place where the new bulbs will not work is where you have a dimmer installed. If the dimmer is no longer used, remove it and replace it with an on -off switch and use the new style bulb. They make three way bulbs i.e. 50-100-150 watts equivalents but the price runs around \$10 versus \$1.50.

Shopping for bulbs is important. Total up the number of bulbs in each of your wattage's ranges. I found if you buy bulk you save the most, example an 8 pack at Sam's Club of 40 or 60-watt GE lamps ran \$1.57 each. Lowe's had "contractor" packages of 20 bulbs that were about the same price each. For small candle style bulbs, there are LED replacements, there

again price them out. You can go up in wattage (lumens of light) because your light fixture is rated for incandescent wattage plus there is less heat generated from the fluorescent bulbs and their life spans are between 8000 and 12000 hours far greater than the old style. A fact to consider in figuring costs in the long run. I am saving \$60 a year and the new lamps will pay for themselves in 6 months.

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In an early December issue of the Florida Today newspaper, there was a picture of the last P-3 Orion from VP-26 leaving the Brunswick Naval Air Station. Folks were standing by the fence waving to the plane. The article said that the squadron was going on deployment for 6 months and then return to their new home at Jacksonville, Fl, about 200 miles north of my QTH. P-3's fly down my way and do touch and goes at Patrick Air Force Base, five miles away. While I believe the C-130 transport aircraft has the same turbo prop engines as the P-3, it does not sound the same when flying, perhaps because the C-130 is high wing, and the P-3 is low wing.

Having grown up in Brunswick, the base has always been an important part of the community, giving diversity to the culture of the area. Having shut down after WWII, but before reopening in 1954, I remember going with my older brother to the salvage dump where you could find nifty airplane parts. I found a hand operated hydraulic pump for lowering a landing gear if the other system failed.

Some of you old-timers may remember the ham station on the base. It was on the second floor of the old wooden building gym with an outside stairway leading up to the room. The

station call sign was W1YFC - Whiskey One Yoke Fox Charlie, as they would say. When I visited (several times) there initial rig was a Johnson Viking transmitter and a Hallicrafters SX-101 receiver plus a three-element tri-band beam on the roof. In later years there was a ham station set-up over at the Topsham Annex, but I am not sure if they had the same call. A civilian named Will Roy ran that station.  
**Happy New Year & 73's Pete K1MJP**

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## **Amateur Radio Bill Passes Senate, Moves to the House**

### **Newington, CT:**

On Monday, December 14, S1755 -- The Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Enhancement Act of 2009 -- passed the Senate by unanimous consent; the bill now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration. Sponsored by Senator Joe Lieberman (ID-CT), and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), S1755, if passed, would direct the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to undertake a study on emergency communications.

S 1755 points out that "There is a strong Federal interest in the effective performance of Amateur Radio Service stations, and that performance must be given -- (A) support at all levels of government; and (B) protection against unreasonable regulation and impediments to the provision of the valuable communications provided by such stations."

Members of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee considered S1755 on

December 10. After it passed through Committee, it was placed on the Senate's calendar to be voted on. "We are grateful to Committee Chairman Lieberman and Ranking Member Collins for sponsoring the bill and arranging for its swift consideration and passage by the Senate," said ARRL Chief Executive Officer

David Sumner, K1ZZ.

Similar in language to HR 2160 (also called The Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Enhancement Act of 2009 that was introduced this past April by Representative Sheila Jackson-Lee [D-TX-18]), S1755 calls on DHS to undertake a study on the uses and capabilities of Amateur Radio Service communications in emergencies and disaster relief and then to submit a report to Congress no more than 180 days after the bill becomes law. The study shall: Include a review of the importance of Ham Radio emergency communications in furtherance of homeland security missions relating to disasters, severe weather and other threats to lives and property in the United States, as well as recommendations for enhancements in the voluntary deployment of Amateur Radio licensees in disaster and emergency communications and disaster relief efforts and improved integration of Amateur Radio operators in planning and furtherance of the Department of Homeland Security initiatives.

Identify impediments to enhanced Amateur Radio Service communications, such as the effects of unreasonable or unnecessary private land use regulations on residential antenna installations; and make recommendations regarding such impediments for consideration by other federal departments, agencies and Congress.

In conducting the study, S1755 directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to "utilize the expertise of stakeholder entities and organizations, including the Amateur Radio, emergency response and disaster communications communities."

S1755 makes note of the fact that Section 1 of the Joint Resolution entitled Joint Resolution to Recognize the Achievements of Radio Amateurs, and To Establish Support for Such Amateurs as National Policy -- approved October 22, 1994 (Public Law 103-408) -- included a finding that stated: "Reasonable accommodation should be made for the effective operation of Amateur Radio from residences, private vehicles and public areas, and the regulation at all levels of government should facilitate and encourage amateur radio operations as a public benefit."

The bill also pointed out that Section 1805(c) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 757(c)) directs the Regional Emergency Communications Coordinating Working Group of the Department of Homeland Security to coordinate their activities with ham and Amateur Radio operators among the 11 other emergency organizations, such as ambulance services, law enforcement and others.

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## Goodies for Sale

**TenTec OMNI D with matching power supply. The Rig works great!**

I'm looking for a new home for it. OMNI D No. 546 has been checked out and works just fine.



I have remanufactured the tuning dial assembly with a Ten-Tec dial repair kit and it functions just like it should. Also, it comes with a Ten-Tec microphone, which I have just received from Ten-Tec. **I'm asking \$275 plus \$25 for shipping.** There is no paper manual but there is a CD that has the manual on it.

-----**Plus**-----

I have two gasoline powered Generators for sale:

**No.1 is a whole house 9000-watt (9KW)** with a battery key start brand new on wheels, **Asking \$3000**

**No.2 is a 4000-watt (4KW)** with a pull start- used for one field day...**Asking \$400.** Both ready to go.

**Happy New Year!**

*John, K2LOT at 207-882-7439 in Edgcomb or [k2lot@roadrunner.com](mailto:k2lot@roadrunner.com)*

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**We the Members of the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association Executive Board and the KS1R Trustee want to encourage all of our Squelch Tales newsletter readers in the year 2010 to promote Amateur Radio, encourage others to join the hobby and help those people become Ham radio operators..  
Happy New Year to you All**