



# Squelch Tales



## Newsletter by the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for January 2011



### On my way to DXCC

By Jim McIrvin N1IPA

For many years I lived in an area where I was not allowed to install too many antennas and a beam antenna was out of the question. I was only able to work with wire antenna and a couple of vertical.

In 2007 the XYL and I purchased a home in Topsham that had some land to go with it providing plenty of area to work with. It consisted mostly of a wooded area and not much area of real use for other than being woodland. I was able to string up some nice wire antennas. I was able to start thinking about installing a tower and a beam. Which of course is a very nice thing to have to work some of the bands cause your able to hear

things that you might not be able to hear on the other types of antennas due to gain, etc. In the late fall of 2007 I began collection of parts and pieces to work with.

Well with weather and work and then the economy working against us since the purchase of the home we have had to take it a little bit at a time and we were able to collect many of the needed things to work with to put the tower up. My original plan was to attach to the side of the house and have it at the height that the town would allow with out having to go and get a conditional use permit for the tower so kept it at there height 35-feet. Then we decide to replace the roof on the home from a asphalt shingle to a standing seam metal roof that would allow ice and snow come off the roof so that we would not have issues with snow loading. At that time I had to determine how that would effect the operation of HF beam. I figured that would not work very well so decide to dig a big hole and build a cage of re-bar and pour cement into the form that was set and set a pier pin in the middle of the foundation to hold the base.

That work was done in fall of 2009 and also had some help setting in the screw in anchors for the guy wires. Thanks goes W1AUX, Mark Potter for his help in getting them in.

At that time weather and events did not allow for the required work about the site to clear of the trees needed to be removed to give proper clearance for the turning radius of the beam. I purchased a used beam about 1 to 2 years earlier from a Ham who listed it on 146.88 machines swap net. I purchased the beam at a fair price, then traveled to the seller's location one afternoon with John, K1JJS and picked it up and brought it home. I stored it under the edge of the deck until we started to put it

back together and get ready to put on the tower.

I received word that a ham in my area had a 2-meter beam for the taking. I contacted him and went to pick that up. At that time he advised me that he also had a Yaesu G800SDX rotor for sale and it was in good condition and a reasonable asking price priced so I purchased it too. Those items sat in storage until the time to do the tower work.

During the spring of 2010 my work was very slow so started clearing of the ground area and as luck would have it, more rain and more rain. I was not able to work due to the ground was so wet that I was slipping and sliding about, as unsafe working environment. Then the weather improved I working on it again. Then with the heat of the summer and added working hours I did not really feel like messing with the tower project.

When the weather cooled down we were getting ready to chip the brush, the darn chipper would not run. I repaired that after getting parts then it started worked like a champ.

Again weather changed and we had to work around more rain. However we were able to get some of the work done to a point where we could start raising the tower.

I dug the tower and the base plate out and set them up and bolted together the base and the first 20 feet of tower and stood that up on my own and supported that with temp guys. Then put the other components together in a pile and got things ready to go. I called a few club members for assistance. The following weekend had great antenna party weather. Those folks came over to my tower location about 9:30am and we started to get things going and got the top section up in the air and installed the guys. With a little bit of work from the antenna/tower crew we cleaned up the beam connections where the elements attach to the boom and made up all the connections and then we commenced with getting the beam antenna up to the top of the tower and bolted to the mast stub then we called it a day.

The second day, Sunday, 2 of the 3 tower crewmembers were able to come up and assist with the work needed to finish the installation. We get the cables attached and did some testing of the new installation. I was quite surprising as to how well it worked.

Over the following weeks I made a few contacts. I had to work around the weather and finally got the things cleaned up on the tower and set up a few things for the winter to protect the cables until next spring when I will do the trench work and install some conduits to run the cables in them.

This is a nice addition to the home station to work with. I hope to enjoy this installation for years to come and hope to add to it in the future, but who know what that will be. As we all know there is always room for improvements.

Now to give you those names of the very kind group of gentlemen that assisted with my tower and beam installation:

Harry N1TTT, Bruce W1ZE and John N1OIG

This group of folks have done a lot of work to get this installation done and I would like to thank them very much for the help in getting the installation to the point that it is at today.

**73 de Jim, N1IPA**

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## **A fun time was had at the 2010 Year End Holiday Dinner**

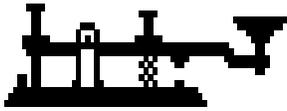
**Bath:** The evening of Saturday, December 4<sup>th</sup> had about 20 MARA members and guests arrive at the Kennebec Tavern for the annual year-end dinner. As usual the Tavern folks accommodated the gathering well and had a good selection of good food to select from.

During the dinner one could hear many conversation around the tables, and yes, some of the topics were about Amateur Radio. At the end of the dinner there was a special guest, Santa, in the form of George Szadis, K1GDI who had a Christmas Ham Radio quiz for everyone. Association President, John Munton, N1OIG gave a quick rundown of the years events and successes. The highlight of the evening

was the presentation of the "Ham of the Year" award and this year's deserving recipient was Harry McNelley, N1TTT of Brunswick. Harry, a past MARA President and now ARES Emergency Coordinator for Sagadahoc County has always gone the extra mile for the Ham Radio community here on mid coast Maine.

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## Straight key night

By Dan Henderson, N1ND

In my early days in amateur radio, I was privileged to have three top-flight Elmers. Each shared with me new interests and enthusiasm for different parts of the hobby. The first, Col. Frank, WB4JMG was special because we shared the same birthday and he taught me most of what I learned in those early days about electronic theory. The second Everest, W4DYW was special because not only because our families were so close – he was my principle mentor for on-the-air operations, especially CW traffic nets.

Unless your Elmer was one of your parents, you probably can't say what my third Elmer could say about our relationship. Dr. Mac, WA4VNV (later N4IX) would honestly say he knew me my entire life. Not only was he a dedicated amateur operator – he was my mother's OBGYN and was the man who literally "delivered me" to the world, and helped me find the world of amateur radio in later years.

I had been attending club meetings with the old Asheville Radio Club (which merged with the Buncombe County VHF Society to later form the Western Carolina Amateur Radio Society) for months before I was first licensed. And being the precocious teenager that I was, I jumped in with both feet. In mid-1971 I agreed to take over as editor of the ARC's monthly newsletter, known as Smoketest from Dr. Mac. He agreed to help me as a regular contributor, but slyly with one caveat: he would only provide news

stories for me for the newsletter if I would copy them over the air using CW, since I was only a novice and had no phone privileges during those years. I accepted his offer, and began two years of almost daily QSOs on 3725 kHz– because that was one of the few crystals I had for the Heathkit HW-16, which Col. Frank had been commissioned by my parents to build for my Christmas present in 1970. It was a unique experience, but one which served to continue building what became my passion for Morse code. In later years I would follow in Dr. Mac's footsteps once again when I became the ARES EC and RACES Radio Office for the county (but that's a topic for another article).

Between the efforts of my three Elmers, my CW speed quickly increased from the nervous 5 WPM necessary to earn my license to being able to conduct a coherent rag chew in the 25-30 WPM range. And the mantra of all three was simple – If you want to be competent in CW, you have to use it.

So each year from 0000 UTC to 2359 UTC PM January 1st I have the chance to pay a small bit of homage back to the Elmers when I have the opportunity to participate in the annual ARRL Straight Key Night. This 24-hour event is not a contest; rather it is a day dedicated to celebrating our CW heritage. Participants are encouraged to get on-the-air and simply make enjoyable, conversational QSOs. There are no points scored and all who participate are winners.

It has been a decade since I wrote my first SKN announcement for QST; I have seen marvelous metamorphosis occur. The number of entries has grown almost ever year, even with the elimination of CW as a licensing requirement in the US. Participants have also used this popular annual event for more than just demonstrating their prowess pounding a brass key. Numerous participants use SKN to test out and "show off" their vintage equipment. Some will plug in their old CW "bugs" and join in. The common bond for all of them is to have fun in a more relaxed setting. You will even find CW enthusiasts who get on to enjoy the rag chewing. And

that's the purpose of this popular operating event, so don't key hung up about the equipment.

When participating in SKN instead of sending RST before sending the signal report send the letters SKN, to indicate your participation, and to clue in passers-by who may be listening that SKN is going strong. After SKN, send the Contest Branch a list of stations worked, plus your vote for the best fist you heard (it doesn't have to be one you worked). Also, include your vote for the most interesting QSO you had or monitored.'

Don't forget to post your comments and interesting photographs from your SKN adventure to the ARRL Contest Online Soapbox. Entries should be emailed to the Contest Branch at StraightKey@arrl.org or may be sent via regular mail to SKN, ARRL, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111. The Soapbox becomes an on-line album of stores and photographs to share with others.

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## US Charges K1MAN of Belgrade, Maine with Failure to Pay Fine

From ARRL HQ Newington, CT

### Commission's Rules, Communications Act, FCC rules, Part 97, pecuniary interest 11/01/2010

Two US Attorneys have filed a Complaint in US District Court against Glenn Baxter, K1MAN, for not responding appropriately to an order that he pay a \$21,000 fine for violating several sections of Part 97. The Complaint was filed October 25 in the US District Court for Maine.

The civil action was brought under Section 503(b) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, and Section 1.80 of the FCC Rules and Regulations.

The fine had been levied, according to the Complaint, "for defendant's willful and repeated violations of Sections 97.101(d) [commencing transmissions on top of existing communications on 3.890 MHz] and

97.113(a)(3)[transmitting communications in which the station licensee or control operator has a pecuniary interest] of the Commission's Rules, and for the defendant's willful violation of Section 97.105(a) [exercising control over station] and 97.113(b) [broadcasting] of the Rules, and for failure to file requested information pursuant to an Enforcement Bureau directive." [information in brackets added]

The Complaint seeks to force payment of the \$21,000 fine along with a filing fee and "such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper." Additional FCC actions are anticipated.

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## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

*The Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association (MARA) Executive Board and Newsletter Editor want to wish all of you a very Happy and Healthy New Year. May 2011 be filled with your continued enjoyment of the great technical hobby of Amateur Radio. In the New Year we hope that you will continue to promote the hobby and if possible help someone become a Ham Radio Operator*

