



Squelch Tales



Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association Newsletter for June 2008

Field Day 08

Just a few weeks away

A fun weekend project

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE

Last year at NEAR-Fest in Deerfield, NH I went into one of the exhibition building where a chap was demonstrating and selling a unique electronic CW keyer, Model 2K with a brand name of CW TOUCH PADDLES (clever marketing).

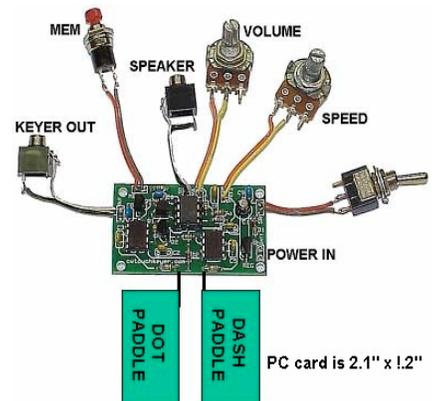
I had seen this type of keyer featured in a past issue of QST. It had no moving parts and just by touching the metal dash and dot paddles the keyer responds. I played with his demo models and they had good response and feel. Now, I have no shortage of keyers and key paddles in the shack but thought something like it would be useful in W1ZE/M. Oh yes, not while driving, only when I'm parked, even though I have done it before to land a quick DX contact while doing 60 MPH on I-95.

Around Christmas time the family always asks what I want for Christmas so I provide a short list of ideas to them that included the CW TOUCH KEYSER from the chap at

NEAR-Fest. Come Christmas Morning my oldest daughter gave me the pre-assembled keyer board with necessary switches and pots so I could assemble one. Good Daughter!

With other things going on here during the winter I did not get around to assembling it until late in April.

You can purchase the keyer already assembled in an enclosure but I like the building process and this one is about as easy as you can get. I needed an enclosure and I thought of a plastic construction box from Radio Shack. My local blister-pack store did not have a size I liked, either too big or too small. I then remembered that some



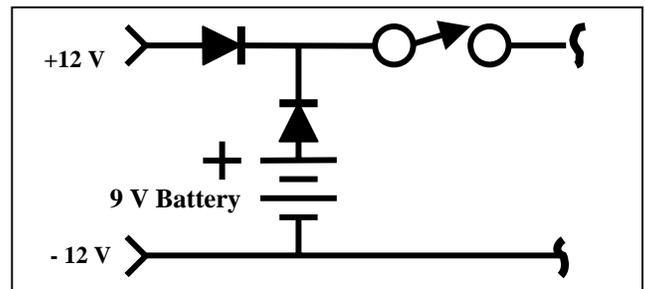
time ago Bill Messier, K1MNW gave me some salvaged molded aluminum boxes that at one time housed a small Ethernet terminal that were hit by lightning. I have used three of them before for keyer project, microphone/data switch boxes and a soundcard interface for digital modes. With a little metal work and a can of spray paint I made a good-looking keyer. The nice thing about the cast aluminum box is that with a 9-volt battery and a few parts installed in it, there is enough weight to stay put on the table if you employ four little rubber feet (avail at the hardware stores and RS).



Now, what to use for the two fixed metal touch-paddles. The finished models provided by CW TOUCH PADDLES are made from brass and they can purchased separately, but they were larger than I wanted. Back to the hardware store I went to see what I could use. I ended up in the fastener and bracket area and spied a 4-pack of 1x1 inch brass angle brackets for fewer than two dollars. I only needed two, so the remaining two went in my house supply box(s). The two paddle brackets just fit on the plastic front plate of the box enclosure with a half-inch separation. That is about the same spacing as my iambic keyer paddle on the desk.

The keyer comes with the external parts shown in the proceeding pictorial. The builder has to supply an enclosure, metal paddles, two small knobs, a small 8-ohm speaker and a 9-volt battery with battery clip. I mounted the speed and volume pots on top along with the memory push-button. The keyer output jack, on/off switch and external 12-volt input RCA jack is mounted on the rear apron.

I employed two power sources for the keyer. It can be powered by an internal 9-volt battery or from an external 9-to12 VDC source via the rear apron jack. The 12 volts is fed through a 1N4148 or 1N4001 diode. Another diode can be placed in the positive lead of the 9-volt battery to isolate the two sources from each other.



If you are interested in this little Touch Paddle keyer check out the following web site: **www.cwtouchkeyer.com**. The site also offers just the K3 electronic keyer without memory.

If you want to use the little keyer with an older tube type transmitter/transceiver with grid-block or cathode keying you can not use it as is. You will need an interface device such as a "KEYALL" kit provided by Jackson Harbor Press at:

<http://jacksonharbor.home.att.net/keyall.htm>.
Happy building! 73, Bruce, W1ZE

Association By-laws revision proposed



Over the past several months the discussion on whether or not to make the Association dues payable on the member's anniversary date or everyone pays at the same time was a sometimes long discussion at the club meetings.

Several months ago a Rules Committee was established to ponder that question. The committee was made up of:

1. President, Harry McNelley, N1TTT
2. Board Member, Jim McIrvin, N1IPA
3. Secretary, Steve Kercel, AA4AK
4. KS1R Trustee, Bruce Randall, W1ZE

They discussed whether or not to make such a change in the by-laws Dues and Fees section. No one on the committee had much of a problem with changing the dues schedule but there was concern that in the future if the Association deemed it necessary to change the fee (dues) schedule again, another rewrite of the by-laws would be required.

It was the recommendation of the committee that rather than cast in cement the due date, that Article IV of the by-laws be rewritten to make the Executive Board responsible for setting fee amount and payment schedule with the vote approval of the General Membership.

This recommendation was presented to the General Membership at the April meeting. At that time President McNelley they asked Bruce, W1ZE to draft the by-law change so it could be presented to the membership at the May meeting for vote approval.

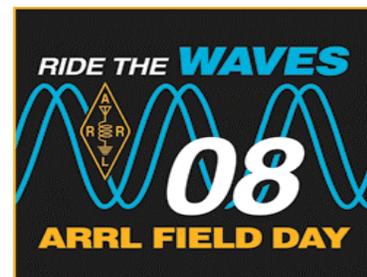
The proposed change reads as follows:

ARTICLE IV ***DUES & FEES***

Section 1: Annual Membership Fee (dues) and payment schedule shall be proposed by the Executive Board and approved by a simple Majority vote of the General Membership in attendance at an open general meeting.

Section 2: The Executive Board may propose Special assessments that will require approval by a simple majority vote of the General Membership in attendance at an open general meeting.

(Note; changes are printed in red)



Steve Kercel, AA4AK

Field Day is June 28-29, 2008. As everyone in the Association will recall, our Field Day operation tends to be a major social and educational event in the Club's calendar. We've also have been highly successful in the competition. In 2006 we had New England High Score, and in 2007 we were second place in New England for our 2F operation.

At the April meeting of MARA, the membership settled several decisions. Steve, AA4AK, will remain in the role of Field Day coordinator. The operation will take place at the Red Cross Chapter House

in Topsham and we will run another 2F operation.

The “Get on the AIR” (GOTA) operation will use the NITRC HF station as in previous years. In addition, the Red Cross now has a permanent PSK31 station up and running on 20/40 meters; thus, one of the two KS1R stations is already there.

Although we will need to discuss the situation in further detail at the May meeting, the rest of the configuration will probably be a lot like previous years. We will need a SSB/CW transceiver/antenna for HF, and equipment for 6/2 meters for our “free” VHF station.

Significant rule changes:

1) Any operator who operated at a GOTA station in 2007, cannot operate the GOTA station in 2008. Fortunately, we have a lot of newcomers. Everyone needs to encourage them to take on a bit of GOTA operation.

2) Non-traditional modes bonus is dropped. It is replaced by an educational activity bonus. The educational activity must be organized. It must happen during the Field Day period. It must have an instructor and actual students (more than one student preferred). The students are actually expected to learn something about ham radio, and the learning is supposed to be “by doing.” There are no limits as to who can be the instructor, or the students, or the topic of the training, or its duration, or the number of training sessions. There is a single 100 point bonus for “Educational Activity.”

(Note: We will try to reach a decision on the nature of the educational activity at the May MARA meeting. One suggestion by Michele, KC7LIF, has considerable merit. John, K1JJS, has been contemplating doing a soldering class. This might make an

excellent choice for the educational activity.)

Although we’ve scored very high the past two years, we can easily do much better. The critical item is to reach a goal we that have not met in previous years: **RUN TWO TRANSMITTERS ROUND-THE-CLOCK FOR 24 HOURS.** Most critically, we need PSK31 operators, especially for the overnight shift.

We also need various volunteers to help us earn the bonus points:

- Emergency power: 200 points if we crank up the Red Cross generator during the Field Day period.
- Media publicity: 100 points
- Public location: 100 points; we get this for free at the Red Cross
- Public information table: 100 points; Marjorie, KX1I, has handled in past
- Message to SM: 100 points. This year, we’ll try it on the Pine Tree Net (CW)
- NTS traffic: 100 points. We need 10 formal messages to send via the Pine Tree Net
- Satellite contact: 100 points (Are Donnie, WD1F, and Brian, AA1WI, available?)
- Alternate power: 100 points for 5 contacts. (Is WD1F available?)
- W1AW bulletin: 100 points
- Educational activity: 100 points. Looking for ideas, as previously discussed.
- Visit by politician: 100 points. Very easy to attract them in an election year.
- Visit by served agency rep: 100 points; get for free at Red Cross
- GOTA contacts: 20 contacts => 20 bonus points, up to 100 per GOTA OP, double if coached full-time
- Web submittal: 50 points easy.

- Youth points: 20 points for operator 18 or younger making one contact. Up to 5 youth operators allowable for credit.

Other improvements that we can make from lessons learned in 2007:

- **Trash can at each position**
- **Wall clock in conference room**
- **Monitor 147.21 MHz repeater**
- **Higher performance GOTA antenna**
- **Operate data station round-the-clock**
- **Delegate MARA members to leadership slots**
- **Try 1.8 MHz**

We will take up Field Day planning in more detail at the May MARA meeting.

73, AA4AK, Field Day Chairman

- **Demonstrations = Packet, 2-meter antenna, Echolink, APRS, etc.**
- **ARRL VE Exams, all levels**
- **CW Proficiency tests for 5, 13 & 20 WPM certificates.**

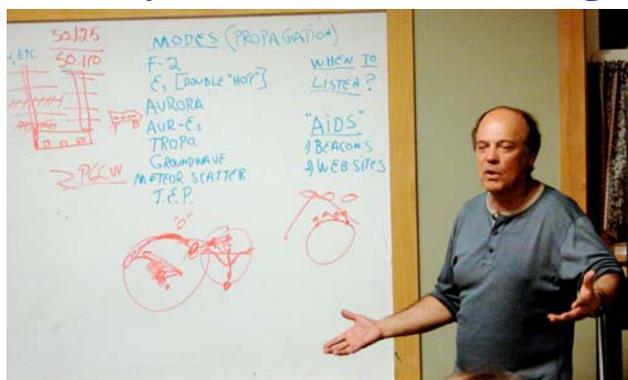
Talk-in on 146.34/94 (pl=100.0) & 146.52 simplex

For additional info, contact Roger W. Dole, KA1TKS at 207-848-3846, rdole@herman.net or club web page at: www.n me.com.

Hope to see you there!



Lefty does MARA meeting



The April MARA meeting had six-meter “Top Gun” Paul “Lefty” Clement, K1TOL doing his traveling road show on the magic of 50 MHz. His experience and knowledge of the ins and outs of six meters kept the attendees attention throughout the presentation.

Lefty had some great stories to tell. He described his impressive antenna farm QTH on the ridge in Turner is a must-see. If you are ever in turner, take a drive up Bryant road to the top of the ridge and take a look at his two 100-foot + towers with stacked wide spaced six-meter beams on them. As they say in Mainer speak, *“Mr. Man, that is some wicked good lookin’ pile of steel and aluminum, let me tell’ya”*.

21st Annual Bangor Hamfest



Rain or Shine

(plenty of room inside the Gym)

June 7th 8 AM to 1 PM

6:30AM for dealers & Tailgaters

Admission \$5.00 Children under 12 Free

Directions: I-95, take Exit 180 (Cold Brook Rd.). North to Rte.2. Left on Rte.2 travel 1½ miles to the Herman High School on right.

- **Prizes for Tailgaters & Vendors**
- **Door Prizes**
- **Tailgaters & Vendors Prize = \$25.00**
- **Food by the Herman HS Freshman Class**



K1TOL antenna farm, Turner, ME



NEAR-Fest, a lot of fun

if you went on Friday

A report by Bruce Randall W1ZE

On Friday morning, May 2nd I set the alarm for 6:00AM so I could get on the road to Deerfield, New Hampshire for NEAR-Fest. Since my flea-market sidekick, Bill “from the Hill” Messier, K1MNV was feeling a bit under the weather and did not feel like a long ride, so I took the XYL’s new Prius to save a few bucks in gas.

I pulled into the fairgrounds about 9:00AM and after visiting the porcelain facility (two cups of coffee ride) I started in on my exploration rounds. Within 15 minutes I ran into John, K1JJS and Jim, N1IPA. They had arrived about 8:00AM

since John is an event volunteer. At my arrival almost all the commercial vendors were set-up in the various exhibit barns and the fairground area did not have an open spot to park a car with so many folks there setting up their tables for swap, sell and trade.

Most years I do not buy much. This year was a supply parts re-stocking run. I picked up a small bag of odds and ends from doorknob HV capacitors to Teflon tape. So far I had not spent much money. On one of my rounds I spied a 1970s vintage Midland 13-509 crystal controlled 222MHz FM transceiver in A1 condition. I already had one with the intent of turning it into a 222 MHz repeater to add to the KS1R arsenal of VHF/UHF repeaters. After a few minutes of negotiations we came to a fair and acceptable figure of \$40.00. The rig had the manual and all 12 channels had transmit and receive crystals. So now I can operate on one of the three or four 222 MHz repeaters in southern Maine. Oh yes, maybe get started on a 222 MHz repeater.

Before heading out that morning, Bill asked me to find Harry, WA1VVH and pick-up a 10-GHz slotted waveguide omni-directional antenna he had built for Bill. Bill is putting up a 10-GHz propagation beacon on Oak Hill. I took at least three laps around the area and could not find Harry anywhere. It was 1:00 PM and I wanted to start heading home. As I was walking to the exit gate, in drove Harry. I followed him back in to where he could park his truck and unload. He presented me with the 10-inch long waveguide antenna. I then headed out the gate and home.

In my opinion, the NEAR-Fest folks did another great job and I had a very good

time, on Friday. However, according to John and Jim, as in many past Deerfield Hamfests, Saturday turned into a rain and drizzle event. That took some of the excitement out of the festivities. Like we have said for years, there is always the October NEAR-Fest event just around the corner....

73 W1ZE



K1MNW/B, up and running



Harry Chase, WA1VVH built a 10 GHz slotted waveguide antenna and gave it to Bill Messier, K1MNW at NEAR-Fest. Since Bill is what you would call a microwave enthusiast, he has wanted to build a 10 GHz propagation beacon for some time. With the acquisition of the antenna from Harry, Bill was off and running. He assembles the beacon transmitter from old telephone company surplus microwave modules, made up a minus 16-volt power supply and attached the antenna.

On May 8th, Bill took the beacon



transmitter housed in a 99 cent plastic shoe box to the top of the 80-foot repeater tower, lashed it to a corner post. Applied the power and the unit started transmitting

a whopping .069 watts. With the slotted line antenna exhibiting 10 dB of gain the transmitter had an Effective Radiating Power (ERP) of 3/4 of a watt.

Bill could hear the signal in his down-converter almost everywhere on Oak Hill and the local neighborhood.

The following Saturday (10th) Bill and Bruce, W1ZE drove to the top of Fuller mountain in Phippsburg with Bill's down-converter & receiver to see if they could hear the flea-powered beacon. They pointed the open waveguide feeding the converter in the direction of Oak Hill, thirteen air miles away and there was the CW signal about S6. Placing a 10-dB feedhorn on the end of the waveguide brought the signal up to S9. Bill had an old RCA Direct-TV dish so they pointed the dish at Oak Hill and the feedhorn at the dish and the beacon signal jumped up to 10 dB over S9.

Bill wants to add a CW beacon keyer that will continuously transmit in CW ID of, **“VVV DE K1MNW/B FN43 BRUNSWICK ME.”**



Bits and Pieces

By Peter Russell, K4POR

A follow up to the two articles on digital television that was published in last months Squelch Tales so the ending to the first does not apply.

The Fox Network on channel 23 is not yet digital, but has a construction permit to go digital in February 2009 on the same UHF channel 23. Therefore, at that time they will switch over to their new transmitter. It should be noted that both channel-10 and channel-8 (WCBB and WMTW) broadcasting in analog are now on UHF channels in digital but will revert

back to channel-10 and 8 in Feb. of 2009 with digital only.

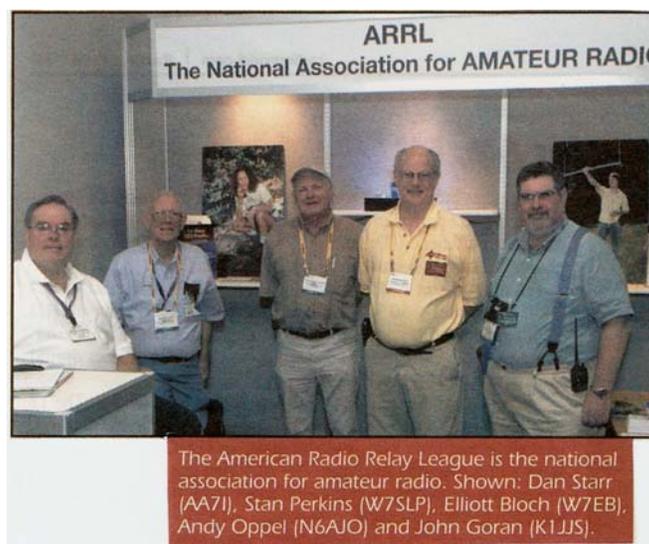
Another point is that most digital channels are not at full power because of economics i.e. they are running two channels simultaneously with the same programming and they have no idea how many are watching on the digital channels, but the watt-hour meter still spins. Check the FCC website (www.fcc.gov) under TV channels, put in Maine, submit and look for STA, instead of LIC or CP. STA means special temporary authority and you will see less power in their permit. My point is that they will come in many betters after February 2009 when they crank up the power.

The MARA has two members (one past and one present) in the newspaper called Radio World. It is a publication for owners and engineers of radio stations and goes all over the U.S. I have been receiving it since 1986. In the April 23 issue, Chuck Bullett has an article on what to keep in the public file required by radio stations, which was nicely done. Chuck works for Cumulus, a multi-station broadcaster in San Francisco. He grew up in Brunswick and was first licensed as WB1AEK and now W1AEK. Chuck was a broadcast engineer in Portland before setting off for other places.

Chuck and I first came up with the idea of a repeater for the Bath-Brunswick area in 1979. Fortunately, Bruce, Randall, W1ZE came along with some better equipment than the



old tube equipment we initially had. We also traveled to the Farmington, Maine with “stuff” that the club donated and came back with \$350 for the duplexer that we needed. By the way, that duplexer is still in service on the 147.210 repeater. The Radio World newsletter website provided no link so that you might read Chuck’s article (cheapskates). In the May 7 issue, there were pictures of folks attending the National Association of Broadcasters Convention held in Las Vegas, Nevada. Since many radio and television engineers are also hams, the ARRL has a booth as well as programs, plus a get together for the hams, promoting the hobby and attract new members. So pictured in a group photo is John Goran, K1JJS.



In the April issue of CQ magazine, is a story on the New England super hamfest NEAR-fest now held at Deerfield, New Hampshire in May and October. The author, W1RC has a side column on the former Hosstraders net and hamfest that started in Seabrook in 1973 at a small campground, then moved to the Deerfield Fairgrounds in 1976, then to the gravel pit at Kingston, the Rochester Fairgrounds and

then to the Hopkinton Fairgrounds. My XYL and I traveled to Seabrook in 1975 to the gathering, had a good time and sold some stuff. We also enjoyed many delightful times at Deerfield. On one occasion, we had a convoy coming from Brunswick to New Hampshire. 146.520 MHz was the working frequency for the “navigators” in the vehicles. Roger, KA1USA was riding in the other car, and somehow they missed the turnoff from Route-4 onto the Deerfield Road. When they announced they were lost, Roger spoke up (which we could hear over the radio) that he would have to come up front and drive!!!

If you read the article in CQ, they have a photo from Oct. 1992 of some of the attendees, and there is the guru of AM, Tim “Timtron” Smith, WA1HLR, the infamous expert on all things AM in ham radio. If you know Tim, enough said.

Try to get out to Field Day this year and try out some different operating or assembling of the stations.

MARA rules! 73's Pete

May VE session had low turnout

Topsham: On Saturday May 10th the MARA VE team, with assistance from VEs from the Androscoggin and Portland clubs, assembled at the Topsham Red Cross building for this quarters Amateur Radio license examinations. There was a 2:1 ratio of examiners to test takers. The group was so small that the small conference room near the Red Cross radio room was used in lieu of the big



conference room. The big room was being used for a Red Cross class anyway.

When it was all said and done, a young lady from up the coast is now a new licensed ham (Tech) and a chap from Oxford County has a new Extra Class ticket.

For all you Technician, General and old Advance class folks out there, break open those study guides, go online and take the practice ham test then go to a VE test session near you. Those **sunspots are improving!**



KS1R Repeaters & Nodes

- 147.210/147.810 (pl-100.0) FM repeater
- 444.400/449.400 (pl-88.5) FM repeater
- 447.575/443.575 (experimental) repeater
- 1284.0/1272.0 FM repeater
- 145.010 FM “BRUNS”KS1R-2 packet node
- 144.380 FM KS1R-10 APRS node (inactive)

MARA Officers & Officials



- President = Harry McNelley, N1TTT
- V. President = Michelle Briggs, KC7LIF
- Treasurer = Marjorie Turner, KX1I
- Secretary = Steve Kercel, AA4AK
- Exec. Board Member = John Goran, K1JJS
- Exec. Board Member = Lee Tribou, N1HOC
- Exec. Board Member = Jim McIrvin, N1IPA
- KS1R Trustee = Bruce Randall, W1ZE

N1MHC wants to establish MMA net

The following article appears in the Massachusetts Maritime Academy Alumni Association (MMAAA) newsletter

Are You a Ham Radio Operator? Al Sirois '55 Would Like to Hear from You.

Al Sirois '55 is a retired Chief Instrument Engineer who worked at Maine Yankee Nuclear Power Plant in Wiscasset, Maine. He is also an avid Ham Radio Operator.

Now Al, who lives in East Boothbay, Maine, would like to organize a Mass. Maritime Academy Radio Net Schedule on one of the Amateur Radio Bands.

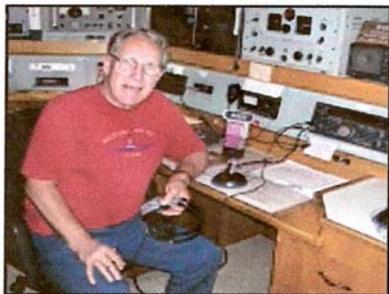
"We could meet on 40 meters in the morning, 20 meters in the afternoon, or 80 meters in the evenings, Eastern Time," he explained.

Al Sirois is currently Coordinator for Emergency Management in Lincoln County, Maine, and is involved with a number of Nets.

He became interested in forms of communication at age nine. While at a YMCA day camp in Salem, MA, he learned Semaphore and Wig-Wag.

While at MMA, he learned the Flashing Light communication system at 8 WPM, passed the Coast Guard Exam and received his Third Mates Licence (any tonnage any waters).

If you're interested in learning more about Ham Radio, you can contact Al Sirois by e-mail at N1MHC@ghi.net. You can also read Al's complete bio at www.QRC.com. Just type in his call sign "n1mhc" in the upper left hand corner of the home page.



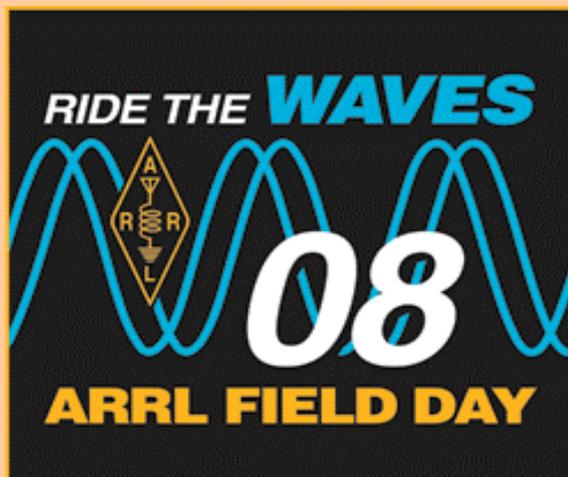
Al Sirois '55 is looking for other alumni who are Ham Radio Operators.

Were you licensed prior to June 1983?

If so, you are eligible to join the National & Maine Chapter of the Quarter Century Wireless Association (QCWA)



For additional information contact
Bruce Randall, W1ZE at
(207)442-9630 or W1ZE@arrl.net



Hope to see you at
the MARA Field Day 2008
site at the Topsham Red
Cross building.
Come join the fun!