



Squelch Tales



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for November 2014



Twitter: another tool in the ham radio toolbox

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

It all starts innocently enough. You get a computer to do your logging, and before you know it, you're working digital modes. Then, you snake an Ethernet cable down to the shack or connect to your wireless router. Pretty soon, you can't do without having a browser window open to one of the DX clusters or ReverseBeacon.Net or QRZ.Com or all three simultaneously.

Well, now's there another Internet service that I can't do without down in the shack: Twitter! I get on Twitter all the time now when I'm in the shack, and I love it. It's truly enhanced my amateur radio experience.

One of the ways it's done this is by bringing me all kinds of interesting technical information. I not only follow @hackaday and @DIYEngineering, and @EDN.Com, but a bunch of hams who are doing fun things. I hate to list some, for fear of leaving some out, but I will give a shout out to @NT7S, @AA7EE, @mightyohm, @caulkstel, @LA3ZA. There's even @HiramPMaxim (the P stands for "parody"). If you go to my blog at KB6NU.Com and search for "From my Twitter feed," you'll find links to some of the most interesting Tweets that have found their way to me.

I'm also following a couple of amateur radio retailers. Today, for example, @DXEngineering is offering \$55 off the RigExpert AA-54 Antenna Analyzer.

I also use it to get information about weather conditions and band conditions. For example, I follow @edvielmetti, who is KD8OQG. He's always tweeting about local severe weather. A Tweet from him gets me to turn on my 2m radio to monitor the local SkyWarn net.

As far as band conditions go, I throw out a Tweet, asking about band conditions, and in seconds, I'll get reports from my followers here in the U.S. and around the world. I try to do my part as well. When I fire up the rig, I'll Tweet out a report of how the bands seem to me.

While all of this is great, it's really all about the people. I currently have more 2,200 followers and I follow more than 900. I would never have met some of these hams if it wasn't for Twitter, and I have since worked several of them on the air after first meeting them on Twitter. Last May, we had a "Tweetup" at the Dayton Hamvention. There were at least 20 of us there. How cool is that?

Twitter isn't for everyone, but I'd encourage you to give it a try. I'm having a lot of fun on Twitter, and I think you will, too. If you do set up a Twitter account, please follow me, @kb6nu. If you mention that you read this column, I'll be sure to follow you back.

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When not Tweeting about his latest amateur radio exploits, you'll find KB6NU working 30m CW or teaching ham radio classes. If Twitter isn't your thing, you can still follow him by reading his blog at www.kb6nu.com.



Haze Gray and almost underway

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE (newsletter editor)

It is that time of the year when yours truly and my guiding light Donna (XYL) start our annual pilgrimidge to the land of fruits-n-nuts. That's right, California, old W6-Land. This is the year we drive to and from the west coast and spend the Holidays decorating palm trees and cactus.

We plan to head out on the tenth of the month and take a semi securitous route to make the trip a bit more leasurly. The first day we head to Washington, DC to spend a few days at the Smithsonioun Museums. From there we start heading west through Nashville, then on to Tulsa, OK to visit an old family friend. We then head due west and hope to spend a day in Sante Fe, New Mexico to do a little more sightseeing. We also plan to spend a few days in Phoenix, Donna's old home town, visiting old friends before heading down to Yuma to pick up our new (used) 5th-wheel we purchased earlier this spring.



It is not a big unit, just 24-foot but big enough to house two senior citizens for few days adventures at the local campgrounds

and parks.

During the trip west I will have HF & VHF in the old F-150 and plan to make a few QSOs along the way.



We hope to arrive at the winter digs in Poway (Burbs of San Diego) around the 20th. Also, I hope to QSO with you on HF this winter, but if not, see you all next May.



Monthly Ham Trivia Question

A QSL from Hawaii counts as?

1. A country for DXCC
2. A State for W.A.S.
3. Oceania Contentant for W.A.C.
4. For 1, 2 & 3
5. For W.A.S. only

Answer on last page



Six-Cavity Duplexer purchased at NEAR-Fest

Friday October 10th Deerfield, NH:

At the NEAR-Fest Jim, N1IPA and Harry, N1TTT picked up the tuned and ready to go six-cavity duplexer that Jim earlier made arrangements to pick up from a 2-way radio dealer who attended the event. The duplexer comes with Type "N" connectors



which is a must have for our repeaters. Plus the two additional cavities will increase the 600 kHz split isolation and narrow up the

bandwidth making the 2-meter repeater less suceptable to adjacent channel and out of band IMD products.

Thanks go to Jim McIrvn for locating the cavities and at a very good price and arranging to pick it up at the hamfest. Thanks to Harry McNelley, N1TTT for hauling them back to Phippsburg for installation into the KS1R/R two meter repeater.





Midcoast ARES/CERT team does show-n-tell at Brunswick & Freeport fire stations



On October 9th members of the Midcoast ARES/CERT team set up an information table at the Brunswick and Freeport fire stations. The team has participated in the Fire Prevention Week Open House at the Brunswick Cook's Corner Fire Station for the past several years, but this year the Town of Freeport invited the team to set-up an information table at their firehouse at the same time.



The Ham Radio tables at both locations received lots of visitors and the Ham volunteers answered lots of questions about the hobby ARES/CERT's ability to assist first responders with back-up and auxiliary communications capabilities via the ARES and CERT volunteer programs.



NEAR-Fest will be FREE-Fest next May

Reported by John Goran, K1JJS

That's correct. The spring NEAR-Fest extravaganza in Deerfield, NH will have a "FREE" general admission. The Fest is tentatively set for May 1st and 2nd at the Deerfield Fairgrounds.

Other fees for vendors and camping inside the gate will stay the same but there will be NO general admission fee. This will allow patrons to spend an additional ten dollars on the radio treasure or that coveted sausage sandwich.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=BPYiOrptbRQ

See you at the Fest in May and bring a friend.



Leixen VV-898 Dial-Band 10-watt transceiver, cheap, and it works



First we had the BAOFENG and WOUXUN handheld transceivers that you could buy very cheap and after figuring out the cumbersome programming they worked pretty well. Now there is a new Chinese kid on the block named Leixen who is marketing the VV-898 dual-band 10-watt FM transceiver that you can pick up on line for just under 150 bucks and it will be shipped to your door from China in less than two weeks.

It does most of the things the higher priced rigs do and reviews say the receiver sensitivity and transmit audio are pretty good. Like the Chinese HTs, the front end of the receivers is a bit broad. If you are driving past Oak Hill in Brunswick or Munjoy Hill in Portland you will hear all the pager transmitters and other IMD mixes, but any FM transceiver that will receive everything from 88 to 470 MHz will do the same.

Ten watts, is that enough? - You bet. In the 1960s when two meter FM started to become popular, almost all the commercial (Icom, Midland, etc.) Ham FM transceivers just ran 10-watts. That seemed to be more than adequate to work your favorite repeater.

The VV-898 is physically small and should fit in most small compact cars easily. It comes with a microphone (looks like the Yaesu mic.), mobile mounting bracket, microphone clip, programming cable and a user's manual.

For more info on the new Chinese entry into the Ham Radio market, check out:

- <http://www.radioaficion.com/hamfiles/viewdownload/25-chinese-two-way-radio/1415-leixen-vv-898-user-manual>
- http://leixen.com/user_e/user_c.htm
- <http://www.eham.net/reviews/detail/1817>

This little transceiver could get you on the VHF and UHF bands cheaply and it would be a good rig for those of you that just use an HT and want something with a little more output from the shack or mobile.



<p>The answer to the monthly Trivia Question is:</p> <p>4</p> <p>Hawaii (KH6, WH6, NH6, AH6 & KH7) QSL card counts for WAS as a US state, WAC as the Oceania entry & as a DXCC country</p>

**Have a wonderful
Thanksgiving
Holiday**

