



BARA Facts

Newsletter of the Binghamton Amateur Radio Association

July 2002

Website: <http://www.wtsn.binghamton.edu/bara>

President's Corner

EXPLORING NEW FRONTIERS: Our exam sessions have produced quite a few ham licenses over the past year. Interest in amateur radio is still there and our hobby is alive and well. Most of these new licenses are Technician Tickets that carry privileges on VHF frequencies and above. Although Technicians can use TV, RTTY, SSB, PACKET, SATTELITE, FM Repeater and other Modes on their allotted frequencies; FM Repeater Operation is — for most new licenses — the only Mode used.

A CHALLENGE TO TECHNICIANS: Rather than limiting your operations to 144/440 MHz FM, consider using other bands — 6-meters, 220 MHz, or even 1296 MHz. Equipment for these bands is easy to come by and. If you want to work DX, most low band transceivers now include 6-meters as a “bonus”. You can work a lot of countries on 6-meter sideband when the band is open.

CONSIDER EXPERIMENTING: Hook your computer up to your FM rig, run some packet, try some RTTY, hook a camera to your computer and feed some slow scan TV into your Rig. Use a local Repeater to set up a Simplex Schedule with another Ham or hang out on one of the “standard frequencies” for these new Modes. If you have fun, tell others about it. As interest grows, perhaps BARA can run programs these other Modes! — *DE George, K2CM*

Repeater Items

The BARA Repeater has been one of the agenda items and the subject of discussion and motions at several Board and General Meetings. During the last General Meeting there was a motion to suspend the Autopatch as an experiment, but several members have since suggested that this motion was unwise.

The Repeater is a subject on which many members have strong opinions and neither the Officers nor the Board want to shut off discussion. In view of this the action to suspend the Autopatch is on hold and Repeater issues will be a main agenda item for the Board and General Meetings in September. Several specific proposals are being discussed:

REPEATER LOCATION: The Repeater is located on commercial property and the club has limited access to the site. The Repeater

Bill took off to cover “graduation duties” intending to return later and Ed watched the clock for the magic “1400 Local”. 1400 came and nobody heard W2OW! After some

Antenna is damaged and must be repaired. Restoring the Antenna to its former position (on a live commercial tower) is not feasible and replacing the present Antenna (on the building where the Repeater is located) is the only available option. With the view of resolving the siting problems the Board has authorized Ford, AB2HS, to investigate siting of the repeater at the BARA Shack (using the unused tower that BARA is negotiating to obtain) and the possibility of coordination for that location. Note that this investigation is not a statement that the Repeater will be moved, it is simply a feasibility study; however if results are positive the Board would ask the Membership to vote on a motion to move the Repeater Site and to change the Repeater Frequencies to a newly coordinated pair.

AUTOPATCH AVAILABILITY: The phone line for the Repeater Autopatch is a significant item in our club budget. It is also a feature that would not be available at the BARA Shack site without considerable expense. Given the availability of cellular phones, expense vs. usage, as well as certain “control issues” many Repeater Owners have turned off or reevaluated the Autopatch on their machines. The Officers and Board would like to have an open discussion of this matter so that the Membership can make their views known and guide the Club to a reasonable conclusion.

These are the two Repeater Issues and the Officers and Board look forward to hearing the views of the Membership at the Board and General meetings.

Field Day at the Shack

Field Day at the Shack was a “mixed bag”. N2BC and KB2SCF arrived Saturday morning for setup and found WB2GHH in the woods getting ready for the fun. After exchanging stimulating and friendly remarks (see Jack’s notes below) Ed and Bill got down to work and set up in the Shack. Murphy was there to help and the Icom 706 would not power up although a solid 12V DC was present at the DC input. No big problem, the Kenwood 440 was designated the Field Day Radio and after getting the Logging Program up W2OW 1D WNY was ready to go on the air.

frantic debugging Ed found that Murphy was on the 440 as well and no RF was coming out in any mode or Carrier setting. Not to worry — the SGC 2020 was in the car “just in case” and it

was pressed into service for 45 seconds before it too went dead — but that was due to Ed leaving a 2A fuse in the Power Supply.

After installing the more reasonable 5A fuse W2OW was finally on the air and having fun.

Things were moving along, but with one person logging, one person taking notes, and one person running the radio things were pretty hectic for that one person and Ed was happy to hear the gentle step of WB8RAE in the Shack. With two Hams on deck operating was much easier and Ed and Bill were running steady and having fun until it was time for a break and a visit with WB2GHH.

Soon K2CM showed up and powered up the 706 with a “magic touch”. Ed was ready to head home for dinner so he left the station to the team of Bill and George and headed off into the sunset.

Thanks to N2BC, WB8RAE, and K2CM for their help and to WB2GHH for moral support. It was fun on the hilltop and it's too bad that there wasn't more of a showing from the club, but those who came operated and those who operated had fun!

Field Day 2002 — Jack's View

Ah, the last full (this year not RAINY — at least at my site) weekend in June. Amateur radio field days. A time designated to demonstrate emergency operating skills and more. I decided early in June that regardless of environmental conditions I would do Field Day in the field. All I had to do was gather up my “emergency preparedness stuff.” Easier said than done. It took me a day to assemble my “HF field station” and all the other stuff needed to operate and survive on my own for two days.

I guess I should point out that in years past I was a Field Day “regular”. Even the kids participated (maybe that's why the oldest daughter now has such a disdain for camping, but she did surprise me with a Ticket — KE4LIH — a few years back). Oldest son, N2KIW, is an experimenter and hiker. He stomps around places like Haystack and Marcy and was on top of a pile of rocks somewhere in Catskill Park Field Day weekend. Our attempt to communicate via the Walton repeater was unsuccessful. My other son has no interest in radio or camping, just family and work. I guess he has yet to get his priorities straight. Youngest daughter is an adventurer. Hell, I borrowed her tent this year's activity.

My plan this year to camp out on the Hilltop with the car close at hand. At 0700 Saturday I found the right spot at 1800 feet MSL in the woods about 50 yards from the BARA shack and I set to work erecting my 20 foot antenna mast. First used about five years ago, I learned that I should have used some of that NO-LOX goop on the sliding portion to keep the sections from bonding to each other during storage. I had to use a smaller diameter section of EMT as a plunger to drive the aluminum apart. *Note to Self & All: use the goop on any aluminum contacting surfaces.*

The 20 foot mast held up the center portion of my low band antenna and was topped by a steel TV snack table top for a Ground Plane and attachment point for my mobile magnetic mount 5/8 wave 2-meter antenna.

You might ask, “How the hell do you get that thing to stand up?” Well, I used a floor flange with an 18-inch bit of threaded pipe on 4-foot piece of 2x4. A 3-foot sleeve over the pipe completed my base. With a front tire resting on the 2x4 I erected the mast by “walking it up” toward the car. When the mast was almost vertical (and the top was wobbling like a plate-

juggler's shaft) I lifted the whole thing up and slid it over and then into the sleeve. Strange — aluminum gets heavier each year.

This was about the time Ed, KB2SCF, showed up. (Could he have been parked down the road watching and waiting for me to finish? Bill, N2BC, followed a few minutes later). Comments and banter followed (some of which I could have done without). Regardless, the companionship and camaraderie that followed is also an important part of Field Day and other club activities. Ed gave me a hand getting the tent erected -- I don't think I would have figured it out on my own and later in the afternoon Bill, WB8RAE, and George, K2CM, showed up and each recorded the scent on film.

I have operated the YAESU 757GX many times from the car (usually on ten-meters with and a converted CB antenna in the mag mount). A power strip under the dash is fed by a piece of RG8-U that is fused on both leads and run direct to the car battery. The lead from the power strip is long enough to allow operation outside the car. A card table positioned next to the passenger door makes a comfortable operating position. I loaded my 40-meter Dipole through my MFJ 941B tuner and noticed that my “40 Meter antenna” is actually 120 feet long. It is marked “40 MTRS,” but I guess I must have meant 40 meters each side of the center insulator. Regardless, it loaded on 80 meters and I soon made contact with Shelly, AA2Y from Claverack, NY. A few other contacts and then MURPHY showed up.)

My digital display started “going dark” on voice peaks. Starting and reving the car engine seemed to eliminate the condition and analysis by the “A Team” suggested that the battery might not be fully charged. I had very recently noticed a whine on the audio of the various radios in the car and closer inspection revealed that the panel lights flickered. I may have a loose belt, a sick alternator or a soft battery. With my luck I may have all three and/or a marginal solder joint in my power strip that allows the receive current to pass but not the larger transmit current.

I decided to try my “emergency back up” portable power source. It's one of those gel cell power packs assemblies intended to provide portable power to jumper stalled cars, etc. When I clipped the Prestone “Portable Power Jump It” to the FG757GX fused power cord of the rig the glitch was gone.

At 1400 Field Day started. I decided to operate on 40 meters and the antenna loaded fine through the tuner. I picked off the usual close-in EPA stations and began to get into the swing of things. I began calling others with surprising success.

Later I decided to hang on one frequency and call “CQ Field Day De WB2GHH.” To my surprise I had to clean out a pile up of about 30 stations. I think I got stung by the contest bug (as well as every other type of bug on the hilltop; now I remember why I used to operate from inside a tent). One contact said it was great hearing an old call on field days, but I gritted my teeth and carried on. More than a few young-sounding HAMS were operating and the number of young YLs was a pleasant reminder that HAM radio is of interest to — others. Although many station identifiers indicated a one or two transmitter operation the average seemed to be around 5. One Virginia station, W3AO, had 31 transmitters in use. Fantastic!

The gel cell set up worked great on HF SSB and I ran about 80 watts from 1400 to 2200 hours on Saturday with a

one hour break at about 1700 for a gourmet dinner (Spaghettios warmed over a propane stove, an energy bar, and a soft drink).

At 1800 I checked 3.925 MHZ for the New York State Phone Traffic and Emergency Net (NYSPTEN) and ended up as Net

The extremely warm, muggy day made for a rather damp clothed evening, but I always pack a change of under duds in my "A" bag (day pack) and a full change of clothing in my "B" pack (back pack). The lack of any additional souls within a half mile allowed me freedom of movement during my wash up and change process (only the animals scattered).

Despite weather proof matches, butane lighter, and magnesium striker block the propane lantern did not want to light and I finally had to devise a wick to reach the mantle. Bedtime finally came and I turned in for a good nights sleep, but I couldn't find a spot with less than three rocks under the sleeping bag. Ah, a night in total darkness, full overcast, storms in the area. All alone. Quiet, with the exception of a few rumbles of thunder in the distance, distant firework blasts, and the near constant whistle of the winds in the trees. Later on, the crunching of dry leaves by the animals — whatever they were — was evident. Beautiful!

A sleep punctuated by tossing and turning, and those damn rocks. Awoke at 0500 on Sunday, rolled over once or twice then out of the sack. Dressed by 0545 for gourmet bacon and eggs (unfortunately a dehydrated packet brought to life — almost — with boiling water), bagel, and coffee. I'm certain that the degree of goodness is proportional to the degree of hungries. While seated and sipping the last of the coffee the rustle in the bushes 15 feet away gave way to a good sized deer. It finally noticed me and swaggered down the road toward the stone wall. I hope the picture I took comes out.

With the weather threatening I decided to "break camp" first and operate later from inside the car. On the air by 0630 and operated through 0930 when I started to have the display intermittent problem again. I figured the gel cell must be low and I decided to call it quits with 100 contacts in the log. Down came the mast, packed things up, policed the area and brought out more than I brought in.

Now I recall more vividly the good, bad, and interesting things about Amateur Radio Field Days. I made notes as to what I should add or take out of my "A" and "B" packs. What did I miss most? The crowded site; schedules and lists as to whose going to operate when; the arguments as to who is causing interference to whom; the kids; the camp fire; the Blue Nun at the generator hut; the keg that had to float before anyone left on Sunday. And I recall most, with a tear in my eye, the Sunday afternoon visits from the Milk's with a chocolate cake or tray of brownies. Will I "do it again" next year? I hope so. *DE Jack, WB2GHH*

Lighthouses on the Air

Joe, KB2AVB, Nels, KA2ZLT, Marty, KC2CWN, and John, KA2CNG, spent Field Day 2002 at the Cape Vincent Light at Tibbits Point, NY. Combining Field Day and Activating a Light was a lot of fun and the four of them enjoyed themselves so much that they plan to repeat the activation on 16-18 August (with the possibility of activating one or more Canadian Lights that weekend).

If you are interested in joining the crew, please contact Joe Brown, KB2AVB, at 748-7082 (after 5PM).

Control Station (NCS) with about 6 stations and 4 pieces of traffic passed. Not bad, but then back to CQ Field Days until 2200.

Meeting Reminders

Please remember that the General Meetings for July and August will be held at the BARA Shack.

In July we will be doing yard work on the hilltop so come in the afternoon in old clothes with "implements of destruction" at the ready. Hamburgs, Hotdogs, or whatever will be served later with a Shack Tour/General Meeting at 7:30.

August is the BARA Picnic with fun for all on the Hilltop.

As usual we begin with the traditional Mini-Hamfest in the parking area, so bring those goodies and be ready for some high-powered "horse trading" before the Picnic followed by food and fun. The Shack will be open for business. Bring the family and a dish to pass. Bring chairs and a table if you have one to spare. There will be a *very brief* Board Meeting/General Meeting to cover any outstanding business.

July VE Exam Note

There will be no July VE Session at the Vestal Public Library. The Vestal Sessions for the Last "Business Monday" of the month resume in August.

Tom George, K2CJ, SK

BARA extends its sympathy to the family of Tom George, K2CJ, who became a Silent Key in June. Tom was one of the "Grand Old Men" of radio in our area and will be greatly missed. Returning a call from Tom would always lead to a pleasant conversation and for new Hams he always had a word of encouragement.

A New Harmonic

Congratulations to Bob, WB3IOU, and Heather Bryla on the birth of Baby Boy Evan MacLaclury who made 3-year-old Ryan a Big Brother on 11 May.

Policing the Shack

Please remember that the Garbage Policy at the Shack is "what comes in must go out". Garbage should not be left in the can and if you use the can, empty it and take the stuff home when you leave. For Field Day we found the can pretty rank and disgusting with well-fermented crud. It's clean now (thanks to a brave Club Member), but please remember to clean up when you use the Shack.

Estate Sale

Claire Curtis, widow of Lloyd (Curt) Curtis, K2ANL, would like to sell some amateur equipment from the estate of her husband. The available items include: two transceivers (a Kenwood TS-940S and a Kenwood TS-430S) and two Transmatches (an MFJ 949 and MFJ 969). The condition of the equipment is unknown, but it looks good and there are no obvious problems. Claire can be contacted at 748-2989. — *Charlie Zingerline*

Operating and Other Events

15 JULY: BARA GENERAL MEETING. Yard work at the Shack in the afternoon followed by the General Meeting, no meeting at the Church!

3 AUGUST: ITHACA HAMFEST. Tomkins County ARC at the Tompkins County Airport.

10 AUGUST: ROME HAMFEST. Oriskany New York.

11 AUGUST: MATAMORAS HAMFEST. Tri-State ARC at Matamoras, Pennsylvania.

14 AUGUST JUNE: SVARA MEETING. 7:30 PM. Office of Emergency Services.