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# **BARA** Facts

**Newsletter of the Binghamton Amateur Radio Association**

**June 2002**

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

## **President's Corner**

### **It's the Antenna that Really Matters**

I really do enjoy operating QRP (low power - 5 watts or less). QRP operation gives me a double thrill! There is the excitement of working a DX station, perhaps several thousand miles away, and there is the astonishment when the DX contact finds out that you are running QRP. Most stations just can't believe it and many request a QSL card from you.

At our Hamfest I bought a Yaesu FT-817 QRP rig that runs 5W or less, to use in hilltopping. I also bought some 12V-7AH batteries so I could take my rig to a hill, rig an antenna, and work stations from some rare county or elusive geographical location. As a dry run, I took my little rig and batteries to the shack for the recent WPX contest. I connected the rig to one of our beam antennas and set the power level to ½ watt. I began calling DX stations and I ended up working about 110 stations in 44 countries. All contacts, except two, were made on CW, one of my two SSB contacts was a station in Jorden.

I could claim that my success was due to *my* superior operating skills, but the reality is that our fantastic antenna farm made the difference. We have a full size 20 meter beam at 100 feet, and that's just one of our antennas! Point the beam toward a station across the big pond and they *will* hear you! The power level really is of lesser importance when you have good antennas!

Our shack is a fabulous club resource and recent updates to the equipment there make operating a real pleasure. *When you call a station from our shack, you will be heard!* And when you fill in the log, keep in mind that the updates were donated to the club and that the shack is maintained by volunteers. Many thanks to Ron, AA2EQ, Bill, N2BC, and the others who have worked to update the shack.

The shack is available for your use 24 hours a day. If you are not familiar with the shack and our equipment

and would like to do some operating, please contact me at 760-2775 and I'll take you to the hill and show you how connect the antennas and use the rigs. Everything is easy to use and there is a set of written instructions on the desk to help you. — George, K2CM

## **Updates at the Shack**

A big "*thanks*" is due to Ron, AA2EQ, who rounded up a whole pile of new equipment for the shack. Thanks to Ron the Computer/Packet Spotting Network at the Shack has been updated with New computers, new software, new VHF radios, a new UHF radio, a new VHF/UHF antenna, new packet TNCs, and a new all-mode TNC. Ron also spent many hours integrating all these goodies into a pair of first class operating positions.

The computers are top-of-the-line PCs (at least they are top-line for the next few months) with the Windows ME Operating System. They replace some rather old and increasingly cranky jobs that served the club for ages. Standardized configurations and a choice of two Logging Programs (DX4WIN and WRITELOG) will make our Club Shack a contesting station to be reckoned with!

The key objective in Ron's choice of new equipment was to provide a consistent set of hardware and software to serve both casual operating and the club's contesting needs. With the addition of the radios and TNCs, there is now no need to move equipment from one operating position to another. In fact, only the Rotor Control, Beverage (Antenna) Control Box, and HF Amplifier should be considered "portable". Likewise, don't change, install, or modify the software without discussing the matter with Ron first — it's hard to chase down problems when too many hands are in

the pot.

Each operating position is capable of independent operation in almost any mode desired (SSB, CW, RTTY, Packet), with complete rig control and automated logging. For contesting, the positions are networked together which allows the software to completely manage logging and spotting. If you want to use your own rig and it is "Computer Ready" there are ways of setting up a configuration for your rig under your call sign (see Ron for help, you make your own interface cables).

Ron has developed a detailed set of documentation which will quickly orient the user to the capabilities of the total system and we urge club members to wander up to the shack and check out our new equipment and its capabilities. Ron stands ready (aa2eq@juno.com/AA2EQ on 444.22 MHz or 224.48 MHz) to help any member learn how to use our new toys. — *From Bill, N2BC, with some additions by your editor*

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### **2002 Esther Valky Scholarship**

It is with great pleasure that the BARA Board of Directors announces that Andrew Schaefer, KB2ZWZ, is the winner of the 2002 Esther Valky Scholarship.

Andrew submitted a very impressive application and the Board voted unanimously to award him the scholarship. Andrew is a student at Chenango Forks School and an Eagle Scout. Licensed since age 13 he worked his way from a Novice to an Advanced ticket and he is directing an interest in Electronic Technology towards studies in Electrical Engineering.

As an Eagle Scout, Andrew was active in the Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) and encouraged other scouts to become Amateur Operators. He is active in Church and other organizations and BARA wishes him success in his studies.

The scholarship will be presented to Andrew at the June BARA meeting.

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### **The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street**

If you are looking for a fun summer movie with a Ham Radio twist you might want to check out *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street*. Based on actual FBI Files this 1945 Academy Award Winner is the story of a Nazi spy ring in the United States that is penetrated by a loyal German-American recruited by the Nazis and trained as their Radio Operator and Money Man.

Although the plot might seem a bit dated, the

characters are memorable and the "documentary style" is effective and well done. Radio gear plays a prominent role and Boat Anchor fans will have great fun in identifying the vintage gear.

Spies, agents, atom bomb secrets, and the mysterious Mr. Christopher blend with microdots and coded messages. A regular pace builds the action to a suspenseful conclusion and a Ham can't help but love a movie in which one of the bad guys remarks "you can't contact Hamburg on that thing" because "anyone can see that the coil is for 2 ½ meters!"

If you can't rent the tape, you can order it in the Fox Studio Classic series (ISBN 0-7939-8670-2).

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### **More Secrets and Spies**

For most of the twentieth century Amateur Radio was "shut down for the duration" of armed conflicts. In a day when world-wide communications are just a click away this might be hard to understand, but "enemy agents" for both sides used the ether to pass communications during both World Wars and the Cold War as well. An example of this is the Sebold case upon which *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street* drew, but there were many other examples in North and South America where United States Counter-Intelligence located and foiled Axis Communications Networks that were using Amateur and Commercial frequencies. Much of this activity took place during the period before actual hostilities were declared and in the analysis of Mr George Sterling, W1AE, "there was no Radio Pearl Harbor" for the United States.

Mr. Sterling should know, he was Chief of the FCC Radio Intelligence Division from 1940-1945 and his experience in Radio Intelligence dated back to World War I. As a member of the Old Old Timers' Club (OOTC) he transcribed his memoirs and they were published over several issues of the Spark-Gap Times back in the 1960s.

The OOTC has generously scanned the issues and made them available over the Internet (<http://users.ticnet.com/ootc/RID.HTML>). If you would like to learn more about this period from one of the participants, you might want to check out the site. The scans may be fuzzy at times, but they are well worth the effort of reading them.

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### **Summer Projects**

When you are making your list of Summer Projects please consider adding a couple that might change a life: Consider taking a son, daughter, relative, or neighbor under your wing and introducing him or her to Ham Radio or Short Wave Listening.

If you have memories of the magic of listening to the world on an old receiver, then dust one off as gift. Even better, get a hold of one of the TenTec or other

Maybe a Technician Study Guide could be the ticket to relieving summer boredom and focusing curiosity and energy in a positive direction. BARA does have an Elmer program, so ask one of the Officers how you can get a Study Guide.

We never really know the effect that our actions have in this world. A little attention now may shape a life or change a kid's future and memories of someone who cared and who "took the time" will remain even if the radio is put away or the license expires.

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### **ARRL Field Day**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of June the 69<sup>th</sup> ARRL Field Day will take place. Although BARA participation was sparse the past few years, KB2SCF and N2BC would like to invite one and all to come up on the hill for some operating fun!

We plan to be there from the first CQ with plans for eatables and drinkables as the day unfolds. We'll keep the effort going as long as operators show up and W2OW can stay on the air. This will be a great chance to scope out the new equipment and get on the air to boot. You can stop by any time, but Ed, KB2SCF, would appreciate a call if you plan to be there at a specific time. Give him a ring at (607) 754-3810 or drop him an e-Mail ([eplesnar@stny.rr.com](mailto:eplesnar@stny.rr.com)).

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### **Islands on the Air**

The Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB) reminds everyone of the RSGB Islands On The Air (IOTA) Contest 2002 (1200z-1200z, 27-28 July 2002).

Many islands and DXCC countries will be activated for this event, which has grown into one of the major contests of the calendar. Entrants can be from an island or a continent, with awards in several categories. Complete rules can be found at <http://www.rsgbhfcc.org> and IOTA Information is located at <http://www.rsgbiota.org>. — Via George, K2CM

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### **July Meeting Location**

Please note that the July Meeting will be held at the BARA Shack. Stop by some time in the afternoon with tools and gloves to participate in YWOTH 2002 (Yard Work on the Hill). Participants can stop in anytime that afternoon and begin working the Ground Wave in any needed mode! The Beverage(s) will be available and a pizza run will occur sometime before the meeting.

The General Meeting will start at 7:30 or

available kits and help someone build a radio. You will give them a thrill that the Internet can never offer because they'll know what's inside the magic box!

thereabouts and we can plan on a tour of the new setup in the shack plus some real operating (Bands permitting).

### **Proposed Change to BARA Constitution**

At the June Meeting we will have the first reading of a proposed change to the BARA Constitution. The Board has voted to amend the constitution to: open membership on the Board to BARA Officers, to permit the officers to vote, and to count the Officers in computing the quorum.

This change is intended to avoid situations where the absence of two (or more) Board Members due to business or personal commitments effectively prevents any action of the Board. Please attend the General Meeting for discussion of this issue.

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### **Repeater Item**

At the June Board Meeting the BARA Board accepted a report by Ford Drake, AB2HS, on the state of the Repeater with a proposal for moving the Repeater to a new site. At the June General Meeting the Board wishes to open this issue for discussion by the membership.

All BARA Members are encouraged to attend the General Meeting to hear the proposal and to offer their comments and suggestions.

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### **June Program — Antenna Behavior**

Ford Drake, AB2HS, has agreed to present a follow-on to the excellent introductory programs on Antenna Construction that Bob, KC2DSS, presented at earlier meetings this year.

Ford's presentation will concentrate on Antennas, Feedlines, their interaction, and the behavior that can be expected if the relationship between Antenna and Feedline is not optimal.

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### **Board Meeting Notice**

***All BARA Members are advised that the Board Meetings for July and August are moved. For these two months, the Board will meet at the BARA Shack at 6:45 PM on the night of the General Meeting. As usual, all BARA Members are welcome.***

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### **Operating and Other Events**

**15 JUNE: CORTLAND HAMFEST.** Skyline Amateur Radio Club, Cortland, NY.

**19 JUNE: BARA GENERAL MEETING.**

**22-23 JUNE: ARRL FIELD DAY!**

**7 JULY: MURGAS HAMFEST.** Wilkes-Barre Hamfest held in Dallas, PA.

- 17 JULY: SVARA MEETING.** 7:30 PM, Office of  
Emergency Services.
- 20 JULY: BATAVIA HAMFEST.** Genesee Radio Amateurs,  
Alexander, NY.
- 20 JULY: JONESTOWN MOUNTAIN REPEATER  
ASSOCIATION HAMFEST.** Beach Haven (near  
Berwick), PA.
- 27 JULY: UTICA HAMFEST.** Utica Amateur Radio Club,  
Frankfort, NY.