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BARA Facts

Newsletter of the Binghamton Amateur Radio Association
May 2005

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

President's Corner

What is cold and hot, cloudy and sunny? A newspaper — oops, wrong joke. A Hamfest! The 2005 edition of the BARA Owego Hamfest started out cold and cloudy and ended up warm and sunny — it was great day for a Hamfest. The early arrivals were greeted with a bit of frost on the ground but by the time things officially opened at 8AM the sun was out and the temperature had climbed 20 degrees on it's way to a perfect high 60s and sunny day.

We owe a huge thanks to the Cornell Cooperative Extension (4-H folks) and the Town of Owego Public Works Department. Marvin Park was four feet deep in water just a few weeks earlier, but the park was completely cleaned up and ready to go.

I want to thank Paul Slocum N2NCB, and Bob Mess WS2U, for all their up-front work. Paul has things completely under control every year, and Bob spends the months leading into the Hamfest spreading around our flyers to get the word out.

The muscle work happens Hamfest weekend. The setup crew spent Friday afternoon moving picnic tables and vendor tables, sweeping, cleaning. Then they do it all again after the Hamfest. The signs go up, the PA system goes up, antennas go up - then all this comes down. The ticket crew shows up in the frosty darkness and ends up with sunburned foreheads.

Our key vendors, KJI Electronics and John "The Weller Man" Kozlowski both reported brisk sales. Gene K2KJI and John spend hours driving, setting up and tearing down. Sure, they are in business, but they are important to the success of our Hamfest.

Initial input indicates that the attendance was down from last year. I suppose this is a result of high gas prices but most likely an indication of declining interest in our hobby. The declining interest is a big problem. Some facts: Ten years ago 75 people took

exams at the Hamfest, two years ago it was 3 people, last year it was *ZERO*. This year we didn't have an exam session — it simply didn't make sense to tie up three examiners all morning for zero tests.

It is up to all of us to keep our hobby alive: Mentor a friend, give a presentation at a local scout meeting, *COME TO A CLUB MEETING!* We are entrusted with radio spectrum that has enormous value — which means that there is lots of competition for it, competition that would take it away from us unless we constantly demonstrate our value through public service and constantly grow our numbers.

Thanks to all the members who helped out on the Hamfest. Thanks to the 4-H and the many Town of Owego staff that worked hard to get the site ready.

See you at Owego 2006 — the 47th annual hamfest. See you at a club meeting? — *73, Bill N2BC*

Field Days are Coming!

Mel, WE2K, is preparing for the biggest BARA Field Days presence in many a year. He reminds one and all that to block out 25 & 26 June (the last full weekend of that month) for some fun in the sun.

BARA will be operating from Town of Binghamton Field House with Kitchen and Toilet Facilities and plenty of room for relaxation, softball, and other activities. There will also be radios and equipment for operating and we'll have plenty of fun both on the air and off. Families, friends, and others are welcome and we hope that everyone will do his or her part to contribute to the turnout.

Anyone interested in attending, helping out, or loaning equipment should see Mel at the next General Meeting or drop a note to w2ow@arrl.net.

The Field House is on Coleman Road (go South

on Conklin Avenue to Burr Avenue, take a right up Burr Avenue to Murphy Road and then a left onto Coleman

Field Day — What Is It?

(Then and Now)

At the meeting a few months back when Field Day 2005 was first mentioned, a “What's That?” was heard coming from the audience. Because of that I thought it best to review “Field Day” for both the newcomers and those of us more experienced hams who may have forgotten.

Amateur Radio Filed Day is a 24 hour period during the last full weekend in June when HAMS get together to demonstrate and test their emergency communication skills from locations not usually used for communication purposes. It is a time when potential hams and hams with limited privileges can operate, under the guidance and control of a licensee with appropriate privileges, in those regions of the spectrum usually not available to them.

Temporary shelters, stations and antennas are set up. Electrical power from sources other than commercial mains are used. Attempt is made to contact as many other stations as possible using various modes and bands: A short message is exchanged and Points are awarded for each contact and for accomplishment of a variety of other tasks.

BARA has always made Field Day a social event. Different sites have been utilized over the years (and, more often than not, the Milk's Road location was the venue of choice). Some in the group would begin to gather early Saturday morning and commence site preparations. By noontime, some antennas would be erected and a picnic, party, family fun type atmosphere would soon develop. Participants would bring foodstuffs to satisfy their own needs and always a bit extra for the visitors or those who forgot their tidbits. Someone would fire up the grill when and as many times as necessary. Operating positions in tents, campers, cars and pickups would be spaced strategically so as to take advantage of the living antenna support structures.

Electrical extensions would snake from each operating position to a central location where the generator(s) were placed. In case of fire, a tub filled with ice and the pressurized fire retardant keg guarded by a “Blue Nun” were kept in readiness near the oil and gas cans.

Ten or twelve stations would start operating on

Road). The building is about a half mile on the left.

the stroke of 1400 and the expected interference and gripes among neighbor stations would commence. The Field Day Coordinator would have to act as referee for RFI disputes and pick the station that would have to go silent for a period of time. He or she would also make the operating schedules for those HAMS waiting in line to get their hand on a key or mike. The midnight to 6 AM hours seemed to be more easily scheduled.

Operators, new, old or otherwise would come and go throughout the 24 hour period. Some strange people might show up at 3 in the morning. Others would stay on, get tired, nap and snooze. The diehards would stay in there getting the last of the last contacts. Someone would forget to refuel the generator and — at the most inopportune Camp BARA would go dark. The silence would be deafening. The search for the flashlight would be a challenge. The walk to the generator with the cold dew slinking over the sandals would be “refreshing”. In the complete darkness, the sky with its full panoramic points of light would be fantastic sight. The fascination with the sight would punctuated by a growl, “what's taking so long to refuel blah blah blah....”

The event would be revitalized on Sunday morning with the arrival of fresh operators and food. Valid contacts would become fewer and fewer. It seems that all the stations have been worked. Many “dupes” (duplicate contacts) would be logged.

Finally, at 2 PM on Sunday (plus or minus, dependant upon rule nuances) it's over. The tear down starts, clean up begins. Log sheets are collected, though beverage and food stains make reading difficult. In the following weeks a summary report is generated and sent to the ARRL. It records the number of participants, contacts made, and other pertinent information; but it can't even begin to mark the camaraderie, the fellowship, and the memories scribed.

For Field Day 2005, BARA has a site, the Town of Binghamton Community Center Veteran's Park on Coleman Road. Now BARA needs to have commitment of operators, equipment and housing in order that the coordinator (Mel, WE2K) can arrange placement and scheduling. Please start now get the info to Mel. You know: Who (your name), What (6 Meters SSB), When (Saturday only, etc). Mel and I will work to schedule the necessary actions based on the information received. At the June BARA general meeting details will be available and only fine tuning

will have to be made.

Oh, by the way. I understand that if one goes to the old hilltop during the early evening on Field Day Sunday and listens very closely one might still hear the fading echo of “no one leaves until the keg floats” shouted by Freddy Frieberg, WA2MSQ. He always made certain the “Blue Nun” had a ride home. Ah, time is long gone, but the memories are here forever. Come this year and create some of your own memories. — *DE*

Jack Connors, WB2GHH

Homebrew Story

No, not beer. This story starts in 1968 or so. I attended an auction of electronics goodies, most items were way out of my price range. The auctioneer kept skipping over a table full of assorted small parts, I suppose because it was a table full of small parts.

Finally, all the recognizable equipment was sold and the entire table of stuff was put up for auction. \$2, \$5, nothing, \$6, long delay, \$7, delay, going once, going twice, \$8, no more bids, SOLD to the kid in the back. Oops, that's ME!

Oh boy, how am I going to get all this “stuff” into my car? What I mess I made in my shiny new Firebird. The trunk was full of 400 cycle transformers and leaky capacitors, the back seat held musty boxes of resistors, rusty coffee cans full of nuts and bolts, moldy electronics magazines bound with twine. Tubes, dozens of tubes were scattered on the floor and front passenger seat.

Many pieces of my \$8 purchase went straight to the garbage can. But there were treasures. The best was a collection of 8 matching panel meters. These meters found their way into multiple projects. Three went on my first amplifier project, circa 1975. They looked wonderful! All lined up, matching

appearance. That project looked great but was never completed and it was sold off in 1980.

A couple meters went here, a couple went there. The last meter, dirty and damaged, ended up in a box marked “Meters” - original, huh. It was joined through the years by other meters collected at hamfests and from cannibalized equipment. It lived in 4 different basement workshops. It was quite content being the first inhabitant of the box marked “Meters”, skipped over countless times when I needed a meter for something.

Three decades passed. Meter #1 wasn't looking any better than it did in 1968. It almost went into the garbage in the “great basement purge” of 2000.

2005, I've been working on a big homebrew project for 3 years now, a big transmitter. A couple days ago it produced its first RF and there wasn't even any smoke! The transmitter needs a meter for one of its circuits. I found a nice 500mA meter right next to that sad looking 1968 meter. It works OK, but I really need a 200mA meter as the circuit will typically only be drawing 70mA or 80mA. Back to the meter box

I find a 250mA meter, kind of ugly but it will clean up. I test it, oops, way out of calibration. There's my old 1968 meter again, sharp design and a perfect 200mA scale but the case is cracked and the glass is broken. Keep looking. I keep coming back to #1. Boy, that set of meters from 1968 were classy! Too bad the one remaining is so busted up. Hmmm. maybe I can fix the case.

I take it apart. I pour out the bits of glass. It looks like the glass from the off-spec 250mA will fit. The case is cracked, epoxy might hold it. Time to test the movement. WOW! No way this movement is 200mA, nope, more like 12mA - missing shunt resistor.

Time to break out ohms law. Some quick measurements, a little math, all I need is a 0.21124 ohm resistor - probably not a value in stock at Unicorn. Where is my ARRL handbook? Some more math, some #26 wire, a ruler. A quick test, a snip, another test. BINGO - my meter reads 200mA full scale again. I scrub the case, carefully pry open the crack and push in some epoxy. Squeeze it gently in a clamp - hey, it looks pretty good! Next day a bit of epoxy to hold in the glass that was donated by the 250mA meter. Looks really nice.

A little bit of refitting on my project transmitter and out goes the 500mA meter and the great looking 'new' 200mA meter sits proudly in its place.

The ugly duckling meter that has occupied a box labeled "Meters" for 37 years has joined my most recent creation. It looks great. It cost next to nothing but it's worth many times the \$75 or so for a brand new meter.

Now there's an out of calibration 250mA meter that needs a piece of glass sitting quietly in a box marked "Meters". It's waiting, possibly for years, for a project that needs it and it will then come back to life.

This is homebrewing! Now it's time for a beer. — *Thanks to Bill, N2BC*

We understand that our program for the May General Meeting will cover some interesting aspects of DX from the other end of the pileup. Stop by the Town of Binghamton Hall at 7:30 PM on the 18th of May and learn about what some of our members have been up to. Even if you aren't a DXer, our meetings are fun and an opportunity to renew friendships!

May Meeting Program

Club Officers and Committees			
President	Bill Coleman	N2BC	748-5232
Vice President	Bob Handel	K2FU	693-4310
Secretary	allen Iutins	KC2KLC	729-4817
Treasurer	Paul Slocum	N2NCB	687-2057
Directors	Steve Orzelek	N2MSB	775-0281
	Mel Snitchler	WE2K	723-9612
	Jack Connors	WB2GHH	724-8822
	Jim Lawson	KC2JED	797-1583
W2OW Trustee	Mel Snitchler	WE2K	723-9612
Newsletter	Ed Plesnar	KB2SCF	754-3810

BARA, The Binghamton Amateur Radio Association

e-Mail Address: w2ow@arrl.net



is an ARRL Affiliated Club

Next General Meeting

7:30 PM, Wednesday, May 18th

Town of Binghamton Town Hall, 279 Park Avenue, South of the Ross Park Entrance

Board Meeting

7:00 PM, Wednesday June 1st

Broome Community College Campus, Office of Emergency Services (West Side of Campus)

Exam Session

7:00 PM Monday, May 23rd (Note Change)

Vestal Public Library, Route 434 Vestal

BARA Dues

\$18/year Single Member; \$27/year Family

DX Cluster

W2OW on 145.070 MHz with a Data Rate of 1,200 baud; questions to n2bc@stny.rr.com

Local Repeater Nets

146.73 MHz STAR Net (NTS Feeder) Monday-Friday Evening at 6:30 PM Local Time

146.82 MHz BRAT Net (Informal BARA) Sunday Evening at 8:00 PM Local Time

