



PCARA Update



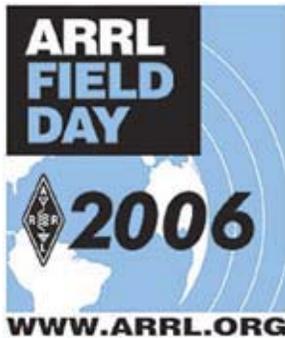
Volume 7, Issue 6

Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association Inc.

June 2006

Field Day decision

A final decision has been made as to the location of the 2006 PCARA Field Day Activities. This year PCARA will be returning to Perkins Memorial Point on Bear Mountain. The primary reason for choosing Bear Mountain over Muscoot Farm was the distance between the parking lot and the Field Day site. At Muscoot, it is a half mile hike over a hilly dirt road to the site. This one mile round trip trek would have proven difficult for some of our members. At this time, we would like to thank Ms. Sue Moga, Manager of Muscoot Farm for all of her help and support.



Visitors to Muscoot Farm inspect the PCARA special event station **W2F** on Sunday May 28. (Full report page 5.)



Joe WA2MCR and Greg KB2CQE examine the dirt road to the proposed Field Day site at Muscoot Farm's gazebo.

Please come to the June 4th meeting at Hudson Valley Hospital Center. We have a lot of planning to do in order to make Field Day 2006 another PCARA success. I look forward to seeing each of you there.

– 73 de Greg, KB2CQE

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Vice President:

Joe Calabrese, WA2MCR; wa2mcr at arrl.net

Secretary/Treasurer: *open.*



Bergen ARA hamfest took place in fine weather on May 27.

Adventures in DXing

- N2KZ

Thankful

May 6 was not just the day of the last PCARA foxhunt. It was a day of fun and revelation. I had a moment of grace and peace. All the participants of the foxhunt were gathered around a table at the diner on Route 202 after hunt's end. Looking around the table, it occurred to me how everyone was a part of my adventures that day. Bob, N2CBH, had given me the oversized 5-element Yagi I used to hunt the fox. He also gave me the mag-mount antenna perched atop my car attached to my trusty scanner. Mike, N2EAB, had loaned me his 80 meter QRP rig that I used to visit most of North America with (via QRP CW), and sold me a similar 40 meter rig I just love. Ray and Marylyn have also been great friends. I will always remember making magnificent Field Day VHF and UHF catches with them on the top of Bear Mountain. I can't believe some of the stuff we worked with their magnificent Yaesu rig! And Malcolm, NM9J, is my partner in crime, sharing all my adventures as the constant voice on the repeater and the captain of this newsletter. I have received so much more than a certificate of award!

How are all these memories relevant? It's just a small slice of the glory of amateur radio. We all share encouragement, equipment, camaraderie and important friendships to create joy you can't replicate. What a great experience it is! Bob, N2CBH, made a memorable comment to me a while back. We were talking about the people that we meet professionally and in the world in general. Bob noted that amateur radio operators had one powerful personality trait. It really doesn't matter if you actually know a fellow ham or not. All of us are part of a large fraternity always willing to help, support and inspire fellow hams in whatever they do. The term "professional" pales against the term "ham." We are thoughtful, inquisitive and always working towards the advancement of our art. We are responsible for the development of many devices and concepts that are now taken for granted as "high tech." Our public service changes fate and brings smiles decade after decade. I am very thankful to be a member of this club and to share friendship with all around.

Find Fox and Flee!

Foxhunt Saturday was a perfect day. The sky was bright and sunny and the temperature was in the mid 60s. The adventure started early. I was just leaving the house, saying goodbye to my wife and kids, when my goofy black Labrador retriever jumped on me and covered my shirt and pants with mud. I rushed to



Ray W2CH and Marylyn KC2NKU (pictured) checked in hunters at the Beach Shopping Center. (tnx W2CH)

change, but I was already 15 minutes late. Westbound Route 202 was a parking lot. I made it to the starting site, The Beach Shopping Center, with about 2 minutes to spare before the three o'clock start time. Ray and Marylyn were checking the hounds in. Moments later, Malcolm, NM9J, made his first transmission. A powerful signal seemed to arrive directly from Radio Shack! After five minutes, he dropped his carrier and we were off and running. Instead of taking the short road round to the Hudson Valley Hospital Center, I thoughtlessly took the Bear Mountain Parkway to get to the back of the Beach Shopping Center. What was I thinking?

I arrived at Route 202 just as Malcolm returned to the air. Completely panicked, I pulled into a small parking lot on Arlo Lane and got a miserable reading. I was surrounded by buildings with aluminum siding. Help! Not getting a distinctive bearing, I jumped back in my mini-van and headed down to the Hudson Valley Hospital Center for the next broadcast. Malcolm's signal was truly weak here and with the same bearings I had



Karl, N2KZ prepares the 5 element yagi antenna donated by Bob N2CBH.

had before. I scooted by Malcolm's house and Bob's house, just to be sure, before I took another bearing. I was making progress. This time, my reading was east northeast instead of southeast. I made one more bearing before I headed to Croton Avenue heading south. I tried a site atop a high hill on Apple Hill Drive and saw that the fox was now southwest and very strong. I headed further south into a brand new subdivi-



Fox vehicle NM9J/M, with horizontal dipole mounted on a fiberglass CB whip, radiated 5 watts on 146.565 MHz.

vision and entered into the "OK, where are you?" mode. Malcolm's signal was solid on the 70cm harmonic. I made three quarters of a round trip through a circular street pattern and caught Malcolm's car

and signature horizontal whip antenna atop his car. Aha! The fox was found!

My opening comment to Malcolm was humble: "Hi Laddie! I can't be the first person here!" Through some miracle, I actually was first. I was astounded! It wasn't until many minutes later that I remembered that the first one to catch the fox becomes the next fox. Oh, no! Now I have to find a new hiding place in time for the next foxhunt!

Life in the fast lane!

I quickly left Malcolm and set off to Wal-Mart to get pool chemicals requested by my missus. The next goal was to rush to meet my family for Mexican food in Brewster followed by a movie about owls just before seven. I was in manic mode as I stole a few minutes and ran into the diner on Route 202 with Bob for a quick greeting and a couple of pictures with Malcolm sharing my first place certificate. How I wished I had more time to spend. I appeared for family dinner late, but all was forgiven when I displayed my award! What a wild and fast-paced afternoon it was! Our Mexican dinner was delicious and the owl movie, "Hoot!" wasn't bad either.

Live and Learn

During the foxhunt I learned some important practical lessons about front-to-back ratios and Yagi element spacing. When searching for an allegedly weak signal, that just happens to be stronger than you think,

your back lobe can throw you for a loop, especially when using a high gain antenna. I was one confused puppy trying for a bearing on Arlo Lane. Surrounded by aluminum siding, my ungainly 5-element Yagi brought in a pretty decent signal off the back of the beam. In hindsight, the bearing wasn't bad at all. I was simply 180 degrees off!

The 5-element Yagi worked very well. It showed fine directivity and gain and made all the difference during the hunt. I now think the small, repurposed Yagi I had been using in previous foxhunts has one too many elements. I literally pulled this antenna out of the trash and tried to reconstruct it. There was a hole in the main beam that I thought once held a missing element. I took a piece of metal stock and cut and mounted a replacement element thinking I was making the array whole. I now think this is an unnecessary element that actually detunes the directionality of this small Yagi. Like I said, live and learn!

Post script: What must "normal" people think when I whip a huge 5-element Yagi out of the back deck of a mini-van? Am I a deranged seeker of gray aliens or a disturbed human looking for an odd-ball TV station?

Maybe I am a little of both! (but it sure was fun!)



Karl, N2KZ accepts the first place fox hunt certificate at the New City Diner.

Field of Fun

We are only a month away from ham radio's famous on-air nationwide convention we call Field Day. This is a great opportunity to join with friends, old and new, for a weekend of passionate operating and adventure. It's also a wonderful time to invite people to not only learn about ham radio, but witness just how much fun it can be. Please join the PCARA gang as we participate in America's number one time to radiate!

- Until next month, 73 de N2KZ "The Old Goat"

Foxhunt 2006

(From the Fox's point of view)

Following the result of last October's fox hunt, your editor was in the happy position of playing fox for PCARA's latest May 6, 2006 event. Contestants had checked in at the Beach Shopping Center with Ray W2CH and Marylyn KC2NKU. In addition to Ray and Marylyn, Mike, N2EAB; Karl N2KZ and Armen N2PLZ were present at the start.

At 3:00 p.m. transmissions began and hunters took their first bearing. The direction was southeast from the Beach Shopping Center, on a track that some hunters drew straight through the NM9J home-QTH. Was your editor being extra cunning (or extra-lazy) by hiding on his own property? A visit to Tamarack Drive soon dispelled that notion. Signals were still coming from the southeast, so the hunt continued, heading in the direction of Croton Avenue.

Transmissions from the fox continued at ten minute intervals and a few clues began to appear. One historic reading explained how during the Revolutionary War, colonists enlisted the aid of remaining Mohicans in fighting the British at the battles of White Plains, Barren Hill and *Cortlandt's Ridge* in Yonkers. Another hint described how the Town of Cortlandt had completed a new play area off Croton Avenue, paid for by V.S. Construction Corporation – a request of the town for approval of the *Cortlandt Ridge* development. A further clue was a newspaper article from the November 9 *North County News* describing how developer Val Santucci spent \$275,000 to build a tennis court, basketball court and children's playground near his *Cortlandt Ridge* development, located on property once occupied by an emery mine and rock-crushing operation run by Mr Santucci.



The Cortlandt Ridge housing development is located off Croton Avenue.



The fox was located at Cortlandt Ridge, between the show house and piles of construction material.

The reason for the **Cortlandt Ridge** references was that fox station NM9J/M was located at the new development's show house in Chiusa Lane. The location is approximately 480 feet asl, with high ground near Rick Lane and Chardonnay Road blocking the direct path to the Beach Shopping Center. The development's three new streets — Sassanoro Boulevard, Monto Drive and Chiusa Lane — are not yet shown on any maps — including the recently published 2006 edition of Hagstrom's Westchester County Atlas. (*Sassinoro* and *Chiusa* are towns in Italy, north of Naples, while *monto* means "I assemble" in Italian.)



First to find the fox was Karl, N2KZ.

First to find the fox at 3:53 p.m. was Karl, N2KZ. Karl was using a giant 5-element Yagi to track down the station and had taken a tour south of the municipal water towers at Croton Park Colony on his way to Cortlandt Ridge. Next to find the fox was Mike, N2EAB, followed by Ray W2CH and Marylyn KC2NKU.

All competitors then moved on to the New City Diner on Route 202 to compare experiences and enjoy a meal. Unfortunately, Karl had another appointment,



Second place went to Mike, N2EAB.

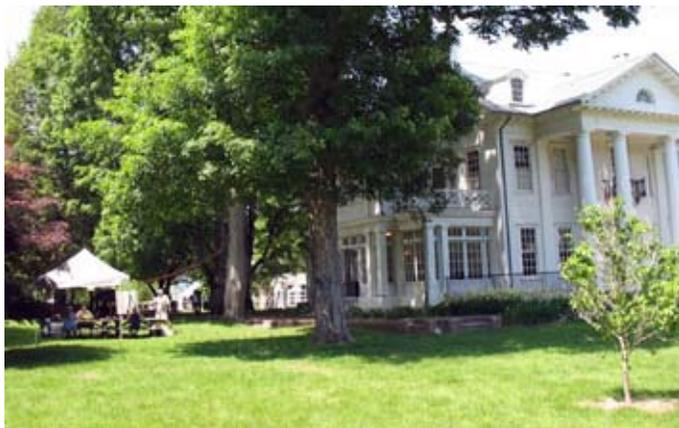
but he was able to drop in to the restaurant and pick up his first place certificate. *Congratulations Karl. Your turn next!*

- NM9J

Special Event Station

PCARA's first special event of 2006 took place on Sunday May 28 at Muscoot Farm. Unfortunately, there was no pre-erected tent with chair and tables thoughtfully provided by 4-H. Instead, there was a conveniently-sited picnic table, and in no time at all, Joe WA2MCR's new "E-ZUp" Instant Shelter was erected over the table.

Antennas took a little longer to arrange. A half-size G5RV was pulled up between trees at the front of the farmhouse, while the multi-band dipole for 40 - 10 meters was raised at the side of the main house courtesy of tall trees alongside the building.



E-ZUp canopy was erected alongside the farmhouse.

Under the canopy, two HF stations were soon assembled. Ray W2CH's Yaesu FT-897 was assigned to 20 meters while NM9J's Icom IC-706 MkIIIG was initially connected for use on 40 meters. Our special event callsign was **W2E**, "Westchester's Two Farms".

Muscot Farm was originally established in the 1880's by New York City businessman Ferdinand T. Hopkins as a "gentleman's farm". In 1924 the Hopkins family began to use the house year-round and remod-



Ray W2CH and Marylyn KC2NKU operate 20 meter station.

eled it in 1925 from a Victorian farmhouse to the Colonial-style mansion that stands today. Westchester County acquired the farm property in 1968 and subsequently opened it as a County Park, showing how farm life was lived in earlier times. Muscoto Farm celebrated its 30th anniversary as a public park in 2005.



Joe, WA2MCR and Muscoto farm manager Sue Moga watch Mike N2EAB operating 40 meters.

Despite the low sunspot count, plenty of contacts were made around the eastern states on 40 meters. On 20 meters, activity seemed to be centered around the mid-west and south east. Later in the afternoon, several CW contacts were made with DX stations — including Hawaii — during the CQ WW WPX CW contest.

- NM9J

Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association

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Newsletter contributions are always very welcome!

Archive: <http://home.computer.net/~pcara/newslett.htm>

PCARA Information

PCARA is a **Non-Profit Community Service Organization**. PCARA meetings take place the first Sunday of each month* at 3:00 p.m. in Dining Room B of the Hudson Valley Hospital Center, Route 202, Cortlandt Manor, NY 10567. Drive round behind the main hospital building and enter from the rear (look for the oxygen tanks). Talk-in is available on the 146.67 repeater. *Apart from holidays.

PCARA Repeaters

W2NYW: 146.67 MHz -0.6, PL 156.7Hz

KB2CQE: 449.925MHz -5.0, PL 179.9Hz

(IRLP node: **4214**)

N2CBH: 448.725MHz -5.0, PL 107.2Hz

PCARA Calendar

Sun May 28: Special Event Station W2F, Muscoot Farm Spring Fest.

Sun Jun 4: June meeting, 3:00 PM. HVHC.

Sat Jun 24-Sun Jun 25: Field Day.

Hamfests

Sun June 4: Hall of Science ARC Hamfest, NY Hall of Science, 111th St., Flushing Meadows, Queens NY. 9:00 a.m.

Sun Jun 11: LIMARC Hamfair, Briarcliffe College 1055 Stewart Ave, Bethpage, NY. 9:00 a.m.

Sat Jun 17: Raritan Valley RC Techfest, Piscataway High School, Piscataway, NJ. 7:00 a.m.

Sun Jul 9: Sussex County ARC Hamfest, Sussex Cnty Fairgrounds, Plains Rd., Off Rt. 206, Augusta NJ.

VE Test Sessions

Jun 4: Yonkers ARC, Yonkers PD, 1st Precinct, E Grassy Sprain Rd, 8:30 a.m. Contact D. Calabrese, 914 667-0587.

Jun 8: WECA, Westchester Co Fire Trg Center, 2 Dana Rd., off Rt 9A, Valhall, NY. 7:00 p.m. Contact Stanley Rothman (914)831-3258.

Jun 12: Split Rock ARA, Hopatcong HS, Hopatcong, NJ. 7:00 p.m. Contact Sid Markowitz (973) 724-2378.

Jun 16: Bergen ARA, Westwood Regional HS, 701 Ridgewood Rd, Washington Township, NJ. 7:00 p.m. Contact: Donald C Younger, (201) 265-6583.

Jun 19: Columbia Univ ARC, Watson Labs, 612 W 115th St. New York, NY, 6:30 p.m. Contact Alan Crosswell, 212 854-3754.



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