



PCARA Update



Volume 11, Issue 9 Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association Inc. September 2010

Time for renewal

As Summer 2010 comes to an end, our monthly meetings start up again September 12th. Please feel free to bring your “What I did on my Summer vacation” stories with you. Hopefully some involved amateur radio in one way or another!

Have you sent in your 2010 membership dues yet? Renewal notices were mailed out back in May and we still have yet to hear from quite a few members. Please take a few minutes to fill out your renewal and mail it in with your donation. **Thanks** to all who renewed already!



The Tri-State ARA Hamfest on August 8, 2010 at Matamoras, PA was held in bright sunny weather, in contrast to last year.

There are a couple of hamsfests on the horizon. The Candlewood Amateur Radio Association’s Western Connecticut Hamfest is September 12 (<http://www.danbury.org/cara/Hamfest.html>), followed by the Bergen Amateur Radio Association’s Fall Hamfest on October 9, 2010 (<http://www.bara.org/>).

Remember that our next meeting is on **September 12, 2010** at Hudson Valley Hospital Center. I look forward to seeing each of you there.

- 73 de Greg, KB2CQE

NY QSO Party

The New York QSO Party is approaching rapidly. This event takes place on the third Saturday in October, Saturday, October 16, 2010: from 1400 UTC to

Sunday October 17, 0200, a duration of 12 Hours.



Full details are available at the website <http://www.nyqp.org/>. Remember, PCARA sponsors a plaque in this contest.

PCARA Officers

President:

Greg Appleyard, KB2CQE, kb2cqe at arrl.net

Vice President:

Joe Calabrese, WA2MCR; wa2mcr at arrl.net

Net night

Peekskill/Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association holds a weekly net on the 146.67 MHz W2NYW repeater on Thursdays at 8:00 p.m. Join net control Karl, N2KZ for neighborly news and technical topics.

Contents

Time for renewal - KB2CQE	1
NY QSO Party	1
Adventures in DXing - N2KZ	2
Seventh PC heaven? - NM9J	5
Antenna review - N2KZ	7
All things iPod - N2KZ	9
Apartment antenna	11

Adventures in DXing

– N2KZ

Join Today!

You may have noticed that it's hard to have a QSO without someone at the other end. One hand clapping can be pretty challenging. Our hobby is very communal. The more friends you have the better! Just like in real life, friends just don't happen. You have to get out there and meet people and share your interests and show off your kind of fun. Not a licensed amateur? We need you as a new recruit!

Some candidates find it much easier to succeed than others. A good friend of mine from work has been in TV his entire life and has just ended a long run as a chief engineer for a two-station UHF TV facility in Maine. He was a natural! Who could be more ready to join the world of ham radio? Another Extra Class ham, Glenn, N1XD, and I spent a few hours teaching our buddy Roy all about the world of amateur radio. Roy worked on practice tests in his spare time for a couple of weeks and passed his Technician test on his first try! Roy is now KB1UOA – and we like to kid him about his call: “U-O-A lot of money!” How great is that?

Getting licensed is just the beginning. I needed to find a low-cost way for Roy to start learning what amateur radio was all about. Radio Shack had a sale on analog scanners many months ago and one particular model was just perfect for a new ham. It had a dedicated button allowing you to scan FM activity on four popular amateur bands: 10 meters, 6 meters, 2 meters, and 70 centimeters in a continuous loop. Even better, I only paid about \$30 for mine. Where could I

find another one?

A little research and a few phone calls produced really good results. About a dozen Radio Shack stores told me they were all sold out. I wasn't surprised! After a few more calls, I got lucky. The Radio Shack store, near the railroad station in New Canaan, Connecticut, actually had one

listed in their inventory computer. The manager said he would look around for it and call me back.

Right after lunch, I received their call and it was

great news! They had the scanner with one proviso: It was just the scanner. No box, no accessories, no power supply, just the unit itself. I asked the manager for the price. He checked his computer for a few seconds and said \$7.64! Sold! I picked it up after work and it was in perfect condition.

I added a power supply and a small whip antenna and, instantly, I had a working unit. I tried it out and it worked perfectly. I left the scanner for Roy to discover when he arrived for his next shift. What a great present! Just a little bit of effort kept Roy's interest cooking. It became his favorite new toy! Even better, he brought it home and his wife started listening to it too! Could this be another ham in the making? Maybe!

This is what ham radio is all about. It really is one big community of about 700,000 friends nationwide and countless more around the world. There is never too much to ask when another ham needs a hand. Just like any other population, we always need to replenish our numbers. It's time to get your friends to join the fun! Let me suggest a few places to start...

Mountain hiking has become a very popular activity that combines well with amateur radio. Steve, WGOAT, is probably the most famous hill-topper often seen on YouTube with his buddies Rooster and Peanut,



Steve, WGOAT and one of his animal friends.

his pet goats. The April 2010 edition of PCUD featured the activities of SOTA (Summits on the Air) and all the fun Tom, N2YTF is having. Climb a mountain and bring a friend and your HT. Nothing could be easier than that! As your elevation improves you'll find a lot of friends on the two meter FM simplex frequency, 146.52 MHz, especially during the afternoon and early evening. They would love to hear from you!

One great place to start is Mount Ninham in nearby Carmel. It's an easy drive from anywhere in PCARA-land. Drive as far as you can up the hill and park your car at the base of the hiking trail. After an easy 20 minute uphill walk, the path opens up to an



Radio Shack PRO-2018 analog scanner has a “HAM” button that lets you search the receiver's pre-programmed amateur radio bands.

amazing vista. A very convenient fire tower awaits to lift you up even higher. I have worked a couple of people positioned on the fire tower who were using only a HT. Rest assured. With height like that, you may become very popular! What a great place to demonstrate ham radio!



The restored fire tower at the summit of Mount Ninham, in the Town of Kent, Putnam County. Tower is 90 feet high.

Teenagers are often looking for new diversions and ham radio can make their day. They might think that they have discovered a new world of video games when they see PSK-31 in action. Worldwide? No Internet? No way! Yes! Way! Let's get on 20 meters and I'll show you! You'll find more ideas at teenradiojourney.com and k0dxc.com. These guys are involved in exciting stuff!

Portable operation at low power often demands at least a little knowledge of Morse Code and using CW. Why not teach a friend or two a little bit about the craft? Newbies and rustys always appreciate the help! The FISTS club's Code Buddy program is a wonderful resource when looking for a friend or a partner to practice code without pressure. Drop a line to Nick, K3NY, for details ([k3ny 'at' arrl.net.](mailto:k3ny@arrl.net)) Even at slow speeds, code is a lot quicker than sending text messages on a Blackberry. Fascinating enough?

Make a pact with yourself and start telling people about amateur radio. Bring a friend along to a hamfest or contest activity. Invite folks over to your shack to see the magic you can create. Have them listen to PCARA's Old Goat's Net via the Internet on Thursday nights at 8pm. You can find us at radioreference.com! You and I are already familiar with the wonderful world of amateur radio. It's time to spread the wealth! Can you believe I talked to a guy in Brazil last night??

Sea and Hear

Mark your calendars! From a little island in the

South Atlantic, Radio St. Helena will again take to the airwaves for their annual broadcast on Saturday, October 9th starting at 3 pm Eastern Time transmitting towards Europe. At



4:30 pm, their beam will point towards India for an hour. Broadcasts to Japan follow from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm. Finally, their beam will point towards North America for 90 minutes starting at 7 pm Eastern time. All transmissions can be heard on a single frequency: 11092.5 kHz USB.

I know from experience that Radio St. Helena can be heard throughout its entire broadcast schedule in our area. Of course, the North American portion should be your best chance to capture their signal. This is a unique opportunity to add this rare island for your QSL collection. QSL cards for the 2010 broadcast will be sponsored by Danish Shortwave Club International (www.dswci.org)



The young lady next to the Radio St. Helena bulletin board is Miss Ashton Yon. She is a volunteer at RSH.

QSL cards can be obtained by sending a detailed reception report, along with three U.S. dollars to cover postage, to: Radio St. Helena, P.O. Box 93, Jamestown, St. Helena, STHL 1ZZ, South Atlantic Ocean. Please mark your envelope with 'via airmail' and 'via United Kingdom & Ascension.' Last year, 266 DXers received QSL cards from this rare island. Radio St. Helena operates a medium wave broadcast station daily on 1548 kHz using 1,000 watts. Logging them on good old AM radio would be an amazing catch!

Every One Is a Miracle

Last weekend, I heard a very, very weak station on 20 meter CW using my Small Wonder Labs SW+20

and a wire dipole. It was one of those challenges you just can't let go. I barely made out the station's call and replied using my mighty one watt battery-powered flamethrower (hi hi.) I actually heard my callsign come back! It was John, W2GW, operating battery portable at Sunken Meadow State Park on the north shore of Long Island. John was on the beach with other mem-

hours proved amazing!

The project took months to assemble. Several other hams, friends and relatives all pitched in to create the payload and prepare the balloon for launch. The results were spectacular. The 20 meter CW beacon was heard all over North America with good signals. Using my little Small Wonder Labs SW+20 as a receiver, I heard the balloon loud and clear using just a simple wire dipole up in the trees outside my shack. Hams in Maine, Louisiana, Oregon, Washington, New Mexico, Ontario, Pennsylvania and many more checked in with reception reports of the tiny QRP transmissions. We all watched the entire flight as it was tracked live via APRS.



John W2GW operating QRP with Elecraft K1.

bers of the Long Island QRP Club (<http://www.qsl.net/liqrp/>) using his Elecraft K1 at five watts and a dipole consisting of two Hamsticks lashed up to a painter's pole held up by a picnic table! I



The balloon is prepared for launch at Ottumwa Industrial Airport.



received his nifty QSL card just a few days later. Considering this QSO was

probably all ground wave, it was a miracle indeed! Is ham radio a lot of fun? You bet!

Up, Up and Away!

Every ham knows that, when it comes to antennas, height is everything. What would be the ultimate height for an antenna? 200 feet? 2000 feet? How about 84,000 feet! On Saturday morning, August 28th, Marshall Dias, WOOTM, and several of his friends launched a remote controlled balloon from a meadow in Ottumwa, Iowa headed for a predicted goal of 90,481 feet. The on board payload consisted of a Styrofoam cube fitted with an APRS transmitter for tracking, a remote-controlled camera, a GPS and a one and a half watt 20 meter CW beacon complete with an auto-keyer. Was the flight a success? The next five

The helium-filled balloon rose slowly into space for the next five hours. Up and up it went until it reached its maximum height at 84,400 feet, burst, and fell to Earth landing in a cornfield. On-board camera pictures were posted on line right after its payload was recovered completely intact in an Iowa cornfield. All the contents of the payload were retrieved unscathed. It was a most perfect journey!

Until next month, get on the air! I'll see you there!

- 73 de N2KZ dit dit



Seventh PC heaven?

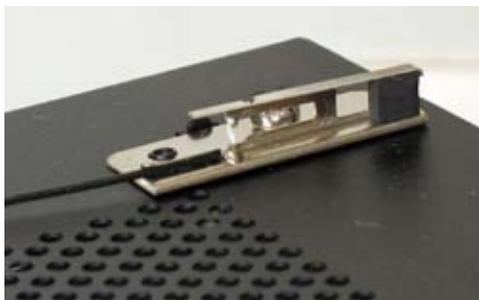
Longtime readers of *PCARA Update* may remember an article “Twisted Vista” from the October 2007 issue. There, I described unhappy experiences with upgrading to a new PC running Microsoft Vista. Some memories of the unloved Vista operating system include the lack of drivers for common hardware, long startup times, and the inability of Vista to run software that worked perfectly well with Windows XP.

Three years later, it was time to repeat the experience. My speedy desktop PC of 2007 was now a slow old horse, exhaling too much hot air into the warm summer shack. I studied available models and picked a



Inside the new PC. The four-core AMD processor is underneath the fan.

high-end desktop PC from the same high-priced stable as before. This time the processor had changed from an Intel Core 2 Quad CPU to an AMD Phenom II 945. This four core AMD processor is able to adjust performance and power consumption on the fly. It was also my first 64-bit processor.



One of two 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi antennas hidden under the plastic top cover of the new PC.

The new PC is the same size and shape as before, but with significant changes. Gone are the PS/2-style round sockets for keyboard and mouse.

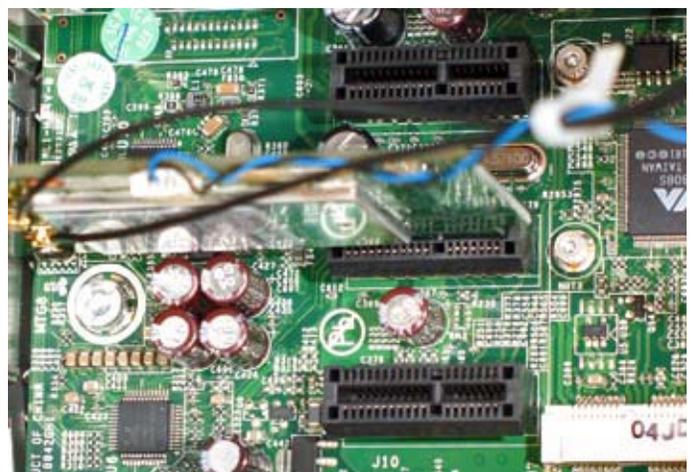


Connections on the rear of the new PC. Round PS/2 connectors for keyboard and mouse have been replaced by two more USB ports (bottom left). VGA connector for the display has been replaced with HDMI ((High-Definition Multimedia Interface) or DVI (Digital Visual Interface) connectors (right).

Instead there are a couple more USB (Universal Serial Bus) connectors. Serial, parallel and VGA connections are long gone. This PC has WiFi networking completely built-in, with the antenna hidden under a plastic cover. If you connect the computer through wired Ethernet like I did, then it's advisable to turn off the WiFi adapter with its default settings — for security reasons.

Inside the case, all connections to the hard drive and CD/DVD/Blu-Ray player now use SATA (Serial ATA) connections, with thin, red cables replacing the wide ribbon cables of the past. Power cabling for the SATA devices uses narrower connectors in place of the fat, four pin Molex connectors in vogue since the earliest PCs. But in this particular PC, there were only enough SATA power cables for the two built-in drives. In order to add more disk drives, I had to find some Molex-to-SATA adapters at Radio Shack.

One thing that has completely disappeared from inside the new PC is the 'old-style' PCI slot. These



Three PCI-Express x1 expansion slots. The center slot is occupied by the built-in Wi-Fi adapter that connects to the two hidden antennas via subminiature coaxial cable.

traditional slots with their long, multi-pin motherboard sockets for 32-bit and 64-bit adapters have been completely replaced by PCI Express (PCI-E) slots, based on serial links rather than the parallel bus of earlier adapters.

The move to 64 bit processors brings an increase in the maximum RAM (random-access memory) that can be addressed. The old 32 bit PCs could only deal with 3-4 gigabytes of RAM, but 64 bit opens up the limit. My new PC arrived with 8GB of RAM installed.

Wide windows

Never mind all the fancy hardware, what about the latest operating system that came with it? The new PC arrived with Microsoft Windows 7 Home Premium edition installed. This latest version of Windows has been on the market for less than a year, and was released roughly 3 years after Vista appeared. Windows 7 has gained a much better press than Vista, receiving high marks for start-up speed, device driver compatibility and basically fixing all the things that Microsoft rushed to market in Vista.

My own experience on the new PC was that Windows 7 is a big improvement over Vista. Start-up and shut-down times were much improved. Hardware



Windows 7 desktop with the Start Menu open (bottom left). The wallpaper is from the Windows 7 “United Kingdom” theme, showing Conwy Castle in North Wales.

drivers were available for all the external devices that I plugged in, including an old Netgear print server that gave me plenty of problems before with Vista.

A new operating system — especially a 64 bit one — usually needs new versions of essential utilities such as antivirus and disk backup, not to mention WinZIP file compression and Spam filtering, as well as the usual e-mail and productivity packages. These were all installed without too much trouble, with updates downloaded from the Internet.

But one troublesome application continued to cause me problems three years after Vista’s arrival. I still use Adobe Pagemaker for composing the newslet-

ter and other layout work. This software ran perfectly well under Windows XP, but gave me a terrible time under Vista. Sad to say, the problems persisted under Windows 7. The Pagemaker application will just about run, but it will not close without crashing. The accompanying Acrobat Distiller software for producing PDF files is even more troublesome. Unfortunately, Pagemaker has reached the end of the line at Adobe, and there will be no more upgrades or new versions issued. Thankfully, Windows 7 has a solution for these problems, though it required a little research and some more expenditure.

The virtues of virtual

The solution offered by Microsoft is to allow other operating systems to run on top of Windows 7 in what is called a “virtual machine” — in other words the environment of the desired PC and its operating system is entirely simulated in software. The version of Windows on my new PC was “Windows 7 Home Premium”. This is perfectly adequate for non-business situations, where the computer is not connected to a corporate network. But in order to take advantage of “Windows XP Mode” with “Windows Virtual PC” it is first necessary to upgrade to “Windows 7 Professional”, where Microsoft throws in a free copy of Windows XP SP3 and all the tools needed to make it run seamlessly alongside Windows 7. Here are the steps required for the upgrade and installation.

Painless upgrade

Apart from the cost, the upgrade to Windows 7 Professional is quite painless because Microsoft includes all the necessary software on a new Windows 7 PC. All you need to do is pay for the upgrade at a retail store and receive a pretty plastic case containing — lots of empty space plus a new product key. Follow the instructions to run the “Windows Anytime Upgrade” on your Windows 7 PC, enter the new product key and five minutes later, your PC will boot up with the Professional version. That’s all there is to it!

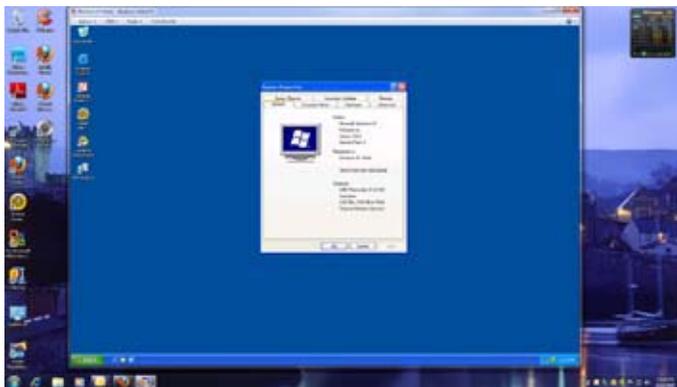


Windows Anytime Upgrade from “Home Premium” to Windows 7 Professional.

The next steps to install the virtual machine are a little more complicated. First, in my new PC's BIOS I adjusted the setting for "Virtualization technology" to be enabled. Next, I visited the Microsoft Virtual PC web site and downloaded — then installed — each of the following three items in turn:

- "Windows XP Mode" (469 MB)
- "Windows Virtual PC" (10 MB)
- "Windows XP Mode Update"

After all this activity, a new item appeared on my Start Menu — "Windows Virtual PC" — with more choices underneath. Clicking "Windows XP Mode" brought up a familiar-looking window on the Windows 7 desktop — it was good old Windows XP!



Windows XP Mode window after installation on Windows 7 Professional.

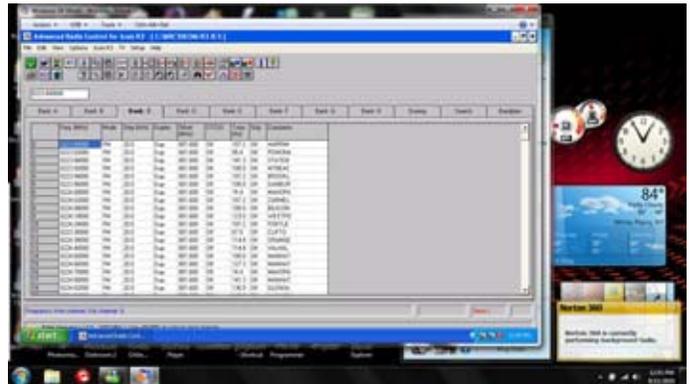
To all intents and purposes, I now had a Windows XP machine running on the same hardware alongside Windows 7. I could install applications — in fact the very first item that needed installation was antivirus software, since the virtual machine is not protected by the antivirus on Windows 7. I was also able to install PageMaker without any problems, and the vintage software ran without crashing. Windows XP Mode has its own "C: drive" and its own "My Documents" folder, but it can also share disk space with the underlying Windows 7 operating system.

Better still, any application installed in Windows XP also appears on the Start Menu for Windows 7. This makes it possible to start and run individual XP applications in their own window, without the XP Desktop. This is incredibly convenient! Copying and pasting to and from Windows 7 applications is perfectly possible, as well as opening and saving on the shared disk drives.

Are you eXPerienced?

Windows XP Mode gives some (limited) access to the PC hardware, including printers and serial ports. This can be helpful if you have older amateur radio

applications written for XP that communicate through the COM ports or USB ports. I have an external USB to serial adapter for connecting with a modem, and this worked equally well from Windows 7 and from within Windows XP Mode. Ray, W2CH has also been investigating the possibilities of Windows XP Mode, and he was able to install the BUTEL ARC-3 radio control software that he originally purchased in 2002 for use with his ICOM IC-R3 wideband audio/video scanner.



Butel "Advanced Radio Control" program for the Icom IC-R3 scanner, running in Windows XP Mode with Windows 7 on the W2CH Toshiba notebook PC. {Picture courtesy W2CH}

Another thing that Windows XP Mode can do is share the existing wired Ethernet connection from the underlying Windows 7 PC, using the exact same IP address. This works fine for everyday web browsing, but I found that other network activities such as pinging a node or FTP file transfer failed, without explanation. The fix is to install the actual network adapter once again in Windows XP — the adapter picks up a second IP address and the other network protocols then start working correctly.

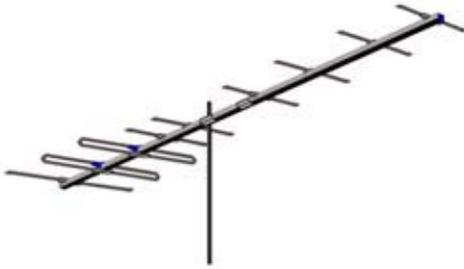
Windows XP is not the only type of virtual machine possible. Windows Virtual PC can also support Vista, and with limited blessing from Microsoft, some versions of Linux and even Windows 98. If you have a need to run older software or other operating systems on a new PC, then Windows 7 Professional with Windows Virtual PC is well worth a look.

- NM9J

Antenna Review - N2KZ

The Antennacraft Model Y10-7-13 is marketed as a Yagi design for high VHF TV reception. It defies standard conventions of antenna design. You'll find one reflector, two driven folded dipoles of slightly different lengths followed by seven evenly spaced same-length directors. In all respects, it is a compromise antenna. How this can be efficiently resonant

over a broad spectrum of frequencies is beyond me. One would think a log periodic for this frequency range would produce a tighter nose with better linearity. I'd enjoy talking to its designer to understand the logic



Antennacraft Model Y10-7-13 Yagi antenna covers channels 7-13 for VHF TV reception. Claimed gain is 9.4 dB.

behind this product.

I purchased this antenna as a very inexpensive solution to replace reception of WTNH-DT, from New Haven, CT, RF channel 10, formerly supplied via Cablevision. The

antenna was about \$55 delivered, fitting into a petty cash budget. Our local Cablevision recently cut over to all-digital transmission and I could no longer use their feed of this signal for our in-house TV distribution system. The antenna was mounted about 50 feet above ground level without pre-amplification. Its signal travels through about 100 feet of Belden 1694 RG-6 type cable to an 'Access HD' ATSC converter (granny box) that delivers baseband video and audio to an analog Channel 8 modulator (the old WTNH analog channel) for inclusion in our house RF system.

My office location is about 40 air miles from the WTNH-DT transmission site near Hamden, CT. It is a straight shot without a lot of attenuating terrain. Remarkably, when aligning this 'Yagi,' a spectrum analyzer showed a signal 28 dB above the grass. Panning the antenna widely from its peak heading I noticed that the nose of this antenna was very broad. It was hard to decide the best bearing. Its front-to-back ratio is quite poor at less than 10 dB. New York City, at 30 miles away, is almost directly opposite of our

bearing towards Hamden, CT. The Antennacraft pulled in NYC signals equal to the WTNH signal off the back of this beam.

The WTNH-DT signal varies noticeably during the day. Reception seems best in the early morning hours between 5 and 8 am. The primitive signal strength display, via the 'Access HD' converter, shows continual variation between a full '100' to the high '80's, all well within the 'good' signal area. The result is a solid signal. I have not seen it drop out or pixelate once.

Physically, this Antennacraft 'Yagi' is feather weight and seems fragile. The antenna was delivered damaged. The long box had been crushed in shipping and I had to bend both halves of the boom back to true leaving two noticeable dimples. This is not on the level of construction you would expect from Winegard or Channel Master. Assembly took only a few minutes. I was sent back to my youth remembering installing inexpensive consumer grade TV antennas. The elements turn and snap into place. One element had to be persuaded to lock in correctly. Time will tell when it comes to long-term longevity. I guess we will see!

A word about our ATSC converters: I had a hard time finding Zenith DTT901 converters unless we reverted to eBay via PayPal. I had to use vendors accepting standard credit card payment. The 'Access HD' converter, sometimes marketed as 'MicroGEM,' comes out of a factory in China. About half the size of the Zenith DTT 901, they rely on a wall wart power supply and produce either baseband video and stereo audio or a pretty ratty Channel 3 or 4 analog NTSC conversion. This is a very low price device with low price feel. It is one tiny PC board mounted in a plastic box. The only display is a front panel LED: green for 'on' and red for 'off.' You need to use the complex remote control for anything more than on/off and channel selection. The audio defaults to a very low volume. Remember to turn it all the way up. While you are at it, turn off the auto-off setting that defaults to four hours! If you are very undemanding and have better than average signal, this may do the job for you. They seem to be the only ATSC converters that are currently being produced. 'Access HD' granny boxes are available for about \$30 and produce just barely passable signal quality in SD only.



Access HD 1080D Digital to Analog TV Converter.

It was fun and effortless to install this antenna. They should all be this small and light! Even better, I got paid to do it! I'll be curious to see how this antenna endures. My office is located right at Stamford Harbor on salt water Long Island Sound. It will make a



Antennacraft Model Y10-7-13 as installed by Karl, N2KZ at his work location.

wonderful roost for seagulls and other flying beasts. Plenty of sun, wind and corrosion will follow! I've got to go. It's time to watch Dr. Mel's weather in letterbox 4x3 'HD!'
 - Karl, N2KZ

SWR and power meters

- W2CH

I was checking out some repeaters on the 440 MHz band, and took some photos of my two recently acquired SWR/PWR meters, which cover VHF/UHF. The Jetstream JTWXVU was purchased from George at Radio Oasis. It's quite large and easy to read. There is an input for 12V DC to nicely light up the display in the dark. It has three settings for power levels of 2, 20



Jetstream JTWXVU VHF/UHF power and SWR meter

or 200 watts and can be switched for FM or SSB. I went to the lower power setting to read my 1¼ meter band power, where the 1 watt output from the Yaesu FTM-350R is enough to register. SWR and power readings can be made simultaneously from the crossed



Elecraft W2 wattmeter with the VHF/UHF remote sensor sitting on top.

needle design.

The Elecraft W2 is a nice unit too. I ordered it as factory built, about \$60.00 more than for the kit. It uses LEDs for a kind of "digital" display, and will handle up to 200 watts on VHF/UHF, with one sensor included in the price. A second sensor can be added for HF or a second VHF/UHF sensor can be connected. HF sensors are available to handle up to 200 watts or up to 2 kW.

The Elecraft W2 includes a "silver satin" flat cable with RJ45 connectors to mount the sensor

unit away from the meter, which requires a DC input of 9-16 volts for the display.

The W2 has three power level settings with the 200 watt sensor and works with 1 watt on VHF/UHF from my transceivers. The Elecraft W2 also has a setting to allow automatic switching of the power level.

The readings for power are a bit difficult to compare between the two meters as one is analog and the other is more incremental with multi-colored LED's for the power and SWR displays.

- Ray, W2CH



Ray's test setup for the VHF/UHF power meters, using a Yaesu FTM-350R mobile transceiver as the RF source.

All Things iPod - N2KZ

Not since the advent of FM radio, (remember radio?) has technology changed the way we listen to music like the Apple iPod. White earphones are everywhere and the era of purchasing music that you can hold in your hand is over. Music now arrives by download and it comes in a variety of style choices. One thing for sure: iPods are enormously popular and they're here to stay.

From a technical point-of-view, an iPod is simply a fancy USB memory stick. (You might call them flash drives or jump drives.) The latest generation of iPods are particularly amazing – maybe even magical. They can entertain you with movies and music, tell the time and display your event calendars. Built-in pedometers

can measure your walking and some of them even have FM radios (of course, they are linked to the Apple iTunes store!)

The heart and soul of iPods are actually in their host computers and not the little device in the palm of your hand. You do all your asset management, downloading, adjustments and set your preferences with your mothership computer (your desktop or laptop.) When you're done, the iPod stores a transportable copy of the results. It truly is a hand-off!

Lo-Fi

An iPod can sound very, very good with professional headphones or connected to a superior quality sound system, but this is often not the case. I think my first AM-only transistor radio sounded better than iPod headphones. If you really want to reach new lows in fidelity, crank up your iPod and try using these ear buds as teeny tiny speakers. The only way you can get worse sound is to damage the mini-headphones and still use them — or go out and buy cheap knock-off ear buds. Physics holds back the fidelity. You need a good-sized transducer to produce good sound. Tiny headphones just don't have it!

Boom boxes designed for iPods have not proved to be anything but loud. Few are worthy of serious listening. Most everything you listen to or watch on an iPod is digitally compressed, so it will never be full fidelity or full quality. Still, it's a good trade-off. Did you ever think you could carry your entire music library and movies in the palm of your hand? Solve the problem. Use good headphones or hook up to your old stereo system. You are worth it! Your ears deserve it!

Your Personality Profile

iPods are also a very, very personal reflection of your taste in music and your personality in general. Would you really want other people to know what's on your iPod? Do you have Alvin and the Chipmunks or

other embarrassing guilty pleasures in your collection? Dating someone special? If you looked at their iPod, would your opinion change? What podcasts do they listen to? What artists dominate their music? What are their playlists like? Have they been able to find 1,500 or more 'good' songs that you like too? It really is like peering into someone's psyche!

I thought I had a pretty big collection of music until I bought an iPod. My entire music library didn't even come close to filling it up. Years later, I am still adding more and more material and trying to whittle down the clunkers in favor of the songs I really like. My iTunes music registry now has passed 5500 tunes. It would take over 15 days to play them all back to back. I still see room for improvement! Many more tunes need to be added and new artists are discovered all the time.

Your iTunes library can be derived from many sources. Initial entries usually originate from your own CDs. Legal MP3 files can be found on the Internet and are easy to trade through e-mail, iChat and AIM. If you are into music, building an iTunes library can become a passion that can last years. I also have great fun adding pictures and graphics to display while playing my songs. You can spend a lot of time with iTunes!

Radio is no longer a good source for music discovery. Stations only play songs that are painfully familiar. Even songs from the 80s are now 30 years old. That's a really long time! If I find an artist I like, I research their influences and their universe of friends. The more you know, the deeper you'll get and the more you'll find. (Don't forget MySpace Music and Amie Street.) It's like digging for gold! Great gems are out there!

I don't really care if a song is unknown if I really like it. Some of my absolute favorites will probably never be heard by the masses. It doesn't matter to me if it's been heavily promoted and marketed. Good music is good music! Also, don't be afraid of leaving the country. There are great grooves being recorded all over the world ready for your experimentation.

Add podcasts, movies and video clips and the possibilities are endless. Why just listen to music when you can watch it too? I don't really consider iPods as being gaming centers, but many people do. Even a little iPod Nano can keep you occupied with multimedia for extended periods of time while waiting for a plane or an appointment.

You've Got a Case!

If you have always been looking for the ultimate iPod carrying case, may I offer this simple solution: If you wear glasses, chances are that you have at least one hard-shell case for your spectacles that has never been used. An iPod Nano or Shuffle fits perfectly into your clam-shell case for glasses and will prevent it



Hook up your iPod to your old stereo system.

from being crushed or scratched. I find the popular rubbery-plastic overlay cases for iPods have their merits, but if you are looking for a hard road case for your tunes, nothing beats an old case for glasses. One has kept my Nano looking new for years and has saved its life many more times than once.



Karl's got a case - for his iPod.

I've Got Your Back

The iPod was first introduced in October of 2001. In the beginning, iTunes had a nasty habit of dropping everything you had added in one button press. Poof! Gone! I remember spending days loading a Classic, complete with individual pictures for each song instead of just album covers. One day, I made the fatal mistake and started iTunes fresh. It was all lost in a heart-beat. Thankfully, iTunes is now much improved. Each and every updated version has me shaking my head about some of the 'refinements,' but it continues to serve as an impressive database and storage solution for all your media.



Removable storage is now inexpensive. This USB bus-powered external hard drive costs around \$70.

very inexpensive. Periodically, save your entire iTunes folder to an external hard drive. Don't let your life's work slip through your fingers. (While you are at it, copy all your family pictures and anything else you value.) Archiving my iTunes now takes about an hour of patient waiting. It is a worthy investment! Should a hard-disk crash ruin my main laptop, I won't be back to square one. I love music and it's important to me.

Back it up!

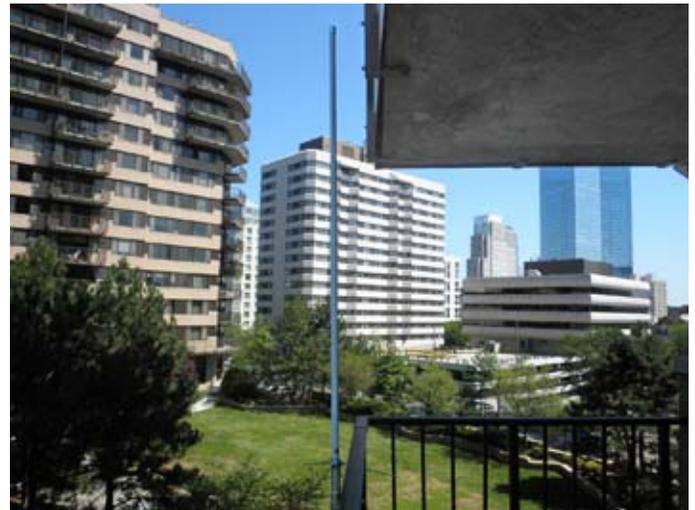
Look to the Future

As time goes by, iPod technology will continue to improve. More and more features are bound to be added. For example, the latest fifth generation of Nano brought back the bass response lost a couple of years ago due to the need for component miniaturization. I look forward to the day when compressed music and video formats will not be necessary. Beyond the technology, iPods have restored the world's interest and passion for music — especially independent music. Posted on-line, a digital song file can be included instantly in anyone's library. Start-up bands and solo performers now have opportunity to be heard and succeed via millions of iPods worldwide. Ready to be heard? We are listening! Thanks, iPod!

- Karl, N2KZ

Apartment antenna

Ray, W2CH and Marylyn KC2NKU are now radiating RF from their location in White Plains. Ray recently installed a Diamond X50A 2 meter/70cm



Ray's new antenna is a Diamond X50A. Diamond claims 4.5 dB gain on 144-148 MHz and 7.2 dB gain on 440-450 MHz from this 5' 7" tall antenna.

vertical antenna, clamped to the balcony railing of their apartment. This has resulted in a significant improvement in signal strength, so keep an ear open for W2CH on the PCARA repeaters.

Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association

Mail: PCARA, PO Box 146, Crompond, NY 10517

E-Mail: w2nyw@arrl.net

Web site: <http://www.pcara.org>

PCARA Update Editor: Malcolm Pritchard, NM9J

E-mail: NM9J @ arrl.net

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 Sept 12: PCARA monthly meeting, Hudson Valley Hospital Center, 3:00 p.m.

Hamfests

Sun Sept 12: Candlewood ARA Western CT Hamfest, Edmond Town Hall, 45 Main St (Rt. 6), Newtown, CT. 8:30 a.m.

Sun Oct 3: Hall of Science ARC Hamfest, NY Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Flushing Meadows, Queens. 9:00 a.m.

Sat Oct 9: Bergen ARA Fall Hamfest, Westwood Regional High School, 701 Ridgewood Rd., Washington Township, NJ. 8:00 a.m.

VE Test Sessions

Sept 5: Yonkers ARC, Yonkers PD, Grassy Sprain Rd, Yonkers, NY. 8:30 a.m. Contact Daniel Calabrese, 914 667-0587.

Sept 9: WECA, Westchester Co Fire Trg Center, 4 Dana Rd., Valhalla, NY. 7:00 p.m. Contact Stanley Rothman, 914 831-3258.

Sept 20: Columbia Univ VE Team, 2960 Broadway, 115 Havemeyer Hall, New York NY. 6:30 p.m. Contact Alan Crosswell, (212) 854-3754.



Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association Inc.
PO Box 146
Crompond, NY 10517