



PCARA Update



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Goodnight, Irene

This is the spot where PCARA President Greg, KB2CQE usually takes up the presidential pen and provides inspiring words for each month's newsletter. Unfortunately, Greg reports that he had anything but a good night with Hurricane Irene, which flew up the east coast on Saturday August 27, headed across New York City on Sunday morning, and was last seen departing over Connecticut as a Tropical Storm on Sunday afternoon. Greg was up all night with sporadic electrical outages, and was combating the intrusion of water into his home as deadline approached.

So at this point your editor takes up the keyboard and hopes that everybody is able to fix their post-Irene problems. We heard of members with water in the backyard from rain and overloaded streams, plus other members with lengthy power outages. PCARA's 146.67



A falling tree limb bent over this utility pole and knocked out power to WA2MCR and NM9J.

MHz and 448.725 MHz repeaters suffered power cuts, so the standby two meter machine was brought into service. Our thanks to Bob for checking out these repeaters prior to the event. Your editor and Joe WA2MCR were also affected by power outages.

This has turned out to be a bumper issue of the *PCARA Update*, with a record length article by Karl, N2KZ. Karl has been doing so many remarkable things over the summer break that his article threatened to overload our normal newsletter size of around 10 pages. This limit was set in the days of snail-mail when

anything over 10 pages would require additional postage. Nowadays with PDF files, I try to limit the file size so we do not overload your mailbox and your attention span! A thank you goes out to *all* contributors who make this newsletter worthy of your attention.

Hamfest activity picked up in August with PCARA members attending the Ramapo Mountain ARC event



Ramapo Mountain ARC Hamfest on August 20th. Bob N2CBH (left) and Joe WA2MCR (right) contemplate purchases at the outdoor tables.

at its new location — Camp Veritans in Haledon, NJ. This turned out to be a pleasant summer camp with indoor accommodation and a winding, leafy pathway where the outdoor vendors were spread out. Upcoming Hamfests include the Candlewood ARA event in Newtown, CT on September 11 and BARA's Fall Hamfest in Washington Township, NJ on Oct 1.

Don't forget that PCARA will skip past the Labor Day weekend and hold its next meeting on **Sunday September 11** at the Hudson Valley Hospital Center. Be sure to come along, to tell us about your memories good and bad of summer and of that particular date.

- 73 de Malcolm, NM9J

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Adventures in DXing

- N2KZ

Hot, Hot, Hot

The Dominican Republic is the hottest, most humid place I have ever been in my life. Quite tropical in nature, nothing ever dries out. Bathing suits stay wet. Paper money in my wallet always felt like it had been in a swimming pool. You quickly understand how strong the sun is near the equator. Sunscreen and hats become necessities for survival!



Dominican Republic beach

Radio in the DR is just as unusually hot. Listen in and you can't stop dancing! I discovered about a dozen FM radio stations, all in Spanish, playing meringue, bachata and salsa music 24 hours a day. Very little talk and chatter is heard and the audio quality varies from professionally processed to what I could only call 'real interesting.' This is not the sound of slick American radio with endless financial resources for sophisticated equipment. You'll encounter lots of homebrew radio produced by local talent. It is very different from anything you might hear stateside. For a sample, tune into: <http://www.radiopuntacana.net>.

AM radio has its own distinct personality. From my QTH in the Punta Cana region on the eastern tip of the DR (directly facing Puerto Rico about 70 miles away across the water,) stations from Puerto Rico's west coast were dominant day and night, most notably WORA 760 Mayaguez and WABA 850 Aguadilla. WIPR 940 San Juan, the Puerto Rican public radio station, was my favorite with fascinating shows of nostalgic music from long ago and old men reminiscing about the good old days.

Although each and every AM broadcast frequency was popu-

lated day and night, there was very, very little programming to be heard in English. I could pull in three English-speaking stations from the beachfront during the day: WVTI 1000 from Charlotte Amalie in the Virgin Islands with very American-sounding talk radio, The Caribbean Beacon on 1610 from Anguilla with endless evangelical preaching and WDHP 1620 'The Reef' from Fredericksted, St. Croix. It's a very local station with a loose, casual format, truly a voice of the people, with lots of Caribbean music and refreshing Indies accents. You'll hear long, chatty phone calls and danceable music all day long. Take a listen at: <http://reefbroadcasting.com/>.

At night, English speaking programming was difficult to hear. I didn't log one stateside American station on AM. Some English could be heard on shortwave from powerhouses like China Radio International. I'm not sure I would want to spend much time listening to shortwave! The most palatable English was found on 20 and 40 meters in CW and SSB! There was no shortage of American amateur radio stations to be heard especially at night. One longwave station had a powerful signal: The non-directional navigation beacon station DDP from Dorado near San Juan on 391 kHz was dominant day and night.

Dominican cable TV was simply amazing. The local cable system, Silver Cable, offered a comprehensive collection of international services catering to tourists from all over the world. You could spend hours sampling Spain's TVE, RAI from Italy, DeutscheWelle from Germany, Cubavision Internacional, RTP Portugal and many others. There was even a channel in Russian! Many stations from The Caribbean and Central and South America were available. This was the first time I had ever seen Cuban and more distant Caribbean TV without the aid of E-skip!



American TV networks were delivered from nearby local affiliates and via satellite from New York City. It was odd to watch WABC-TV's Eyewitness News and Fox 5 News in the tropics! The NBC and CBS feeds came from stations based at nearby islands. Dozens of American cable networks were available, mostly in Spanish, pulled from the Dish Network satellite service. Thick rains and other bad weather would produce 'waiting for satellite signal' messages on multiple channels.

My advice to future American tourists: Bring your iPod! American-style radio and popular music simply doesn't exist here! Bring an umbrella. Daily rains are often fleeting but can be positively torrential. I was onboard a boat and got caught in a powerful squall, complete with dramatic lightning and thunder. I think I am still drying off! All in all, my trip to the DR was

940 AM



quite an adventure, but I was glad to be back in the USA!

Thumb Fun

I was not back in The States more than two days before my family and I headed out to mid-Michigan. Through a miracle of coincidence, I found myself in Michigan on the last weekend in July! Why is this exciting? The last Sunday in July is historically the day of the annual Thumb area amateur radio picnic and get-together at a roadside park along M25 in Forester, Michigan. Many members of the Lake Huron Amateur Radio Club (based in Bad Axe in Huron County) and the Thumb Amateur Radio Club (based in Sandusky in Sanilac County) gather for a few hours of great conversation and great food. You'll never find a lack of smiles here!



Thumb Area picnic

All told, about 35 of us came together the afternoon of July 31. In attendance were the two regular hosts of the Michigan Old Goats Net: Rick, KC8GQL and Chris, KC8ZMN. Great to see you! My daughter Sarah and I were especially glad to see Bob, WD8RJL and his wife Dorothy. I follow in Bob's footsteps. Bob researches and presents the question of the day on the Bad Axe edition of The Old Goats Net. A constant inspiration to me, his questions are fascinating and amazing! Almost all the Old Goats regulars attended along with many of the participants of the weekly Michigan Thumb Net on 75 meter phone. I can't tell you how much fun it was to be there!

While we are on our yearly visits to Huron County, Sarah and I will drive out to our favorite spot along Port Crescent Road to check into the Old Goats Net every morning. Using my trusty Icom IC-T7H HT, we listen in and delight in the conversation from the great variety of voices we hear. It always makes great listening, better than any local newscast or talk show. These are seasoned hams sharing lifetimes of experience and adventure. This is what amateur radio is all about! Many thanks to all the Old Goats for another great summer!

Radio reception in mid-Michigan is simply wonderful. This would be a great place for new amateurs



Karl, N2KZ and Bob WD8RJL

to begin their on-air careers. Since you are situated right in the middle of North America, your DX possibilities double from what you might expect here on the East Coast.

There is so much available from this vantage point and wide open spaces make for quiet noise levels to pick out those weak ones! Evenings on 40 meter CW are almost endless. Since you are 600 miles closer to the Pacific, you can easily reach way over to the West Coast later in the evening. Working Europe on 40m and 20m doesn't seem to be significantly harder. I have had great QRP contacts, across the pond, from Michigan very similar to my results in eastern New York. What a great place to operate from!

AM Radio also enjoys much better range due to enhanced ground conductivity and my proximity to Lake Huron. Dayside, you can easily hear full-powered stations from Chicago and Toronto and beyond. Night reception is a delight with all of the East Coast being nicely placed for strong skywave. I enjoy hearing the CBC from Winnipeg on 990 kHz so clearly. You'd have no shortage of things to listen to and log!

Should you ever be in the area, The Michigan Old Goats Net meets Monday through Saturday from 0830 to about 0915 on the LHARC repeater at 145.47 MHz -600 offset, no PL. The Michigan Thumb Net meets Sunday mornings at 0800 on 3950 kHz LSB and receives check-ins from far and wide (i.e. Indiana, Ohio and New York.) Not in Michigan? Please try the New York edition of The Old Goats Net, Thursday nights at 8pm on the PCARA repeater (146.67 MHz -600 offset with a 156.7 PL) Good times are had by all!

Rhode Island

My summer adventures continued with a short trip to Providence and Newport, Rhode Island. Providence is a beautiful and fun city with a collegiate air. It is the home of Brown University and its sister school, The Rhode Island School of Design. It is also a place where you can delight in sampling all the fresh seafood

and other culinary delights. Lobster? Yum! We also toured south to see the magnificent estates and dramatic shorelines of Newport - the home of sailing's America's Cup. I have never seen sailboats so big in all my life! The Breakers mansion, built by the Vanderbilt family, amazed us: a domestic version of the French palace at Versailles.

One thing that always amazes me about Rhode Island is its amazing ground conductivity. Sitting in a hotel room, surrounded by concrete and steel, most every major AM radio station from both New York and Boston could be heard without effort. Listening right on the beach, the world opens up to your receiver. With a little knowledge and skill, you can hear stations all up and down the eastern seaboard during the day. At night, the possibilities are limitless. Seasoned AM DXers pull in worldwide catches from Rhode Island and Cape Cod. It is no wonder Marconi chose Wellfleet on The Cape as a site for one of his remarkable early telegraphy stations! What a delight it must be to operate lowband HF from these locations!

Skip It!

American analog TV may be long gone but the hobby of TV DXing is not dead yet! Viewers nationwide are seeing new and exotic stations from Central and South America, the Caribbean and Canada on VHF channels 2 through 6. It's a unique situation. Reception like this would have never been possible with American TV stations on the air. Low VHF channels are now free and clear allowing occasional visits from international stations through the miracle of E-skip.

Another landmark date in the history of analog TV is about to take place. On August 31st, major stations in Canada's 'critical markets' (large cities) will convert permanently to digital transmission. Many will be flash cut from analog to digital without any overlap. In a completely different approach than the American digital switch, Canada will only convert its largest transmitters in major markets to digital. All other transmitters in smaller cities and the hundreds of repeater stations that provide coverage to outlying areas will remain analog or be turned off entirely.

Quite a few full power Canadian analog TV stations will remain on the air and will continue to be targets for E and F2 skip reception hundreds and thousands of miles away. New stations are bound to be logged as soon as others disappear from the air. There is no limit to where these signals may travel. DXers in Spain and Portugal have logged Canadian TV time and time again.

Locally, Canadian E-skip can often be quite powerful. I recently noticed a huge lift in six meter skip into the Canadian maritime provinces. I quickly scanned the low VHF analog TV channels and found strong signals on channels 4 and 5. In just a few

minutes' time, using just a rabbit ear antenna, I logged a CBC TV station broadcasting a soccer game and NTV from Newfoundland often in full color. It can be so exciting and entertaining to watch as the signals randomly overlap one another and fade in and out. Who knows what you might see!

Typically, during periods of high sunspot activity, E-skip signals travel 500 to 2000 miles by bouncing off the ionosphere. Think of it as a huge electronic mirror, with thousands of broken pieces, hovering above the Earth. The results are totally random and unpredictable. You never know what might appear on your screen! If you hear activity on 6 meters, turn on your old analog TV and you may see amazing things!

Spot Off

Wouldn't it be nice if you could listen to nearly every song ever recorded on-demand instantaneously? A new Internet service called Spotify strives to deliver an enormous music library to your mobile device or PC for free, but there is a catch!

With overwhelming media hype, Spotify launched in America on July 14th. I immediately signed up to be invited to join their beta site to see what they were all about. Several days later, I was given permission to sign in and I joined the ranks to begin to Spotify. It was quite a ride!

Spotify looks very well developed and thought out like a glitzy and elaborate version of Apple's iTunes. It became obvious, nearly immediately, what I had gotten myself into. Membership to Spotify requires full two-way interaction between your PC and their servers. They immediately take a complete inventory of every audio file already stored on your device. The application then tries to augment and suggest new material for you to purchase along with loading commercial content galore. Horrors!

This may sound like a great idea to some but I was uninstalling Spotify just as quickly as I joined. Their approach to music delivery was just a little too intimate for my liking. They really want to look within your PC and examine its entire contents. I can't remember an application that was more invasive than this. It certainly is the next step in the music-delivery legacy started by Napster back in 1999. The basic version of Spotify may be free, but users beware!

Turning White

I have an extensive set of screwdrivers and nutdrivers that I store in my basement. Over time, several decades, the handles and cases for these tools have turned from clear to white on nearly opaque. I am not alone! I recently saw an item on a Heathkit





Karl's moldy (?) screwdrivers

Internet reflector regarding the same topic. I found the comments and opinions quite interesting:

The conversation began with this question: *What is the preferred method for removing that white mold that loves to grow on plastic in damp basements? Especially plastic knobs and tool handles?* The answers were fascinating:

From Mike KC4IMK: The "white mold" is mildew, and the problem with it is that

you need to kill the spores that burrow into the crevices in the plastic, Bakelite, rubber, leather, wood (and almost anything else). Diluted chlorine or peroxygen bleach will remove the mildew, but you really need to take steps to remove the moisture that the mold thrives on. Do a Google search for "remove mildew" and you will find lots of advice for commercial products and "natural" remedies. Here is a typical search result: <<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/GH5928>>

From Gary W5GW: TSP or trisodium phosphate can be obtained from the paint dept. at Lowes or Home Depot. TSP is a very strong alkaline solution. Don't use it on metals, especially aluminum. It can damage many metal and painted surfaces and can stain woods. It is not recommended for use on glass either, since it will leave a filmy residue. TSP can be mixed with bleach, but be careful. Use gloves, eye protection and avoid breathing fumes. There are many sites on the internet that describe its use. Rinse well with hot water followed by cold water to remove the slick residue typical of an alkaline.

As someone else said, killing the mold spores is a challenge. Sitting in direct sunlight before and after the cleaning for several hours may help as the UV rays will likely penetrate some of the plastic surface and may kill them. A better long term solution: don't keep them in a damp basement, or install a dehumidifier in the basement to get the humidity under control.

From Neil Morrison: We used to look for a household cleaner that said it contained weak caustic soda. We'd try it on the inside to see if it would damage the plastic, then use it on the outside. It also helps with yellowing.

From Frank McCowan: I had that problem in my last shed...wash knobs with soap and water (Spic-N-Span works well) and a soft brush for crevices and a sponge for the rest. Rinse well and then soak the parts in a bucket of a 5% solution of bleach and water (5 gallon bucket works well) over night,

then rinse well (don't let the bleach dry on the parts)...worked for me...

And from our own Malcolm NM9J:

I would say that if the white material "growing on the plastic" really is a mold then the methods mentioned in the article should be effective. Chlorine-type bleach, diluted with water to a safe-for-humans concentration, should kill any organisms on the surface.

Mold is most likely to be found on plastic articles that contain plasticizer. Flexible PVC shower curtain is an example. Manufacturers often include a mold inhibitor in PVC sheet for shower curtains (e.g. organotin or OBPA). But the examples of mold that I've seen are usually brown spots, not white.

As mentioned in the June 2011 *PCARA Update* article by yours truly, plastic articles made of cellulose acetate/butyrate can decompose when stored, especially in a warm, damp place with limited ventilation. The decomposition product – butyric acid – smells like rancid butter or vomit.

And this particular polymer – "CAB" or "Tenite" – has been used for both knobs and tool handles. It usually contains some plasticizer to make it moldable.

Another reason for material "growing on the plastic" could be some component that is migrating out of the body of the plastic to the surface, where it then appears as a white film or powder. When I was working with PVC in the UK, we would expose flexible and rigid PVC to UV light, or leave it out on the roof in a test rack, then inspect it after weeks or months of exposure. Sometimes, pigment or filler would migrate to the surface and form just such a white film.

So... I would be cautious about branding all white films forming on the surface of plastic as "mold". If a stain appears on paper or leather or on plasticized PVC, then mold is likely... but on other products with nothing to sustain growth of the mold, I would be more cautious. Time to pull out the microscope and take a closer look.

P.S. - I would add my recipe for cleaning up filthy, old ribbed control knobs taken from used Pye equipment. Give them a good scrub with an old toothbrush and a little toothpaste to act as detergent and abrasive. Then wash with water and dry thoroughly.

I think it is time for me to start polishing my old tools! Thanks, Malcolm (and everyone else, indeed!)

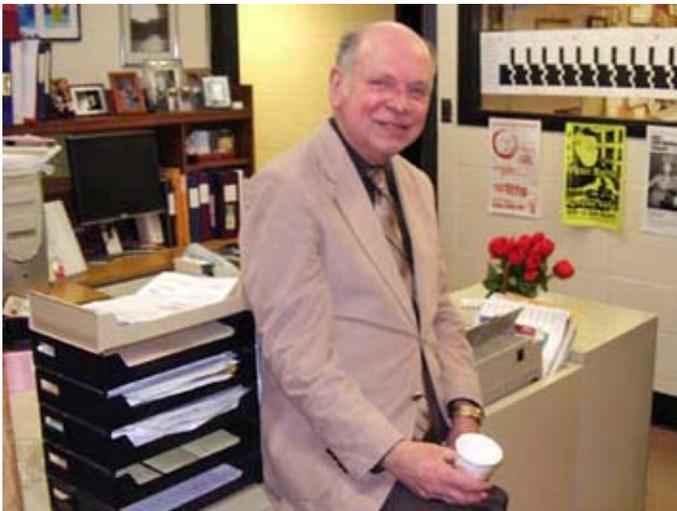
Heathkit Returns?

A small posting at  heathkit.com recently announced a brand new line of do-it-yourself kits soon to be available by mail order. Available in late August, the first kit is a novel 'Garage Parking Assistant' which will help you guide your car into the perfect parking spot using ultrasound and a LED display. Next up will be a 'Wireless Swimming Pool Monitor' kit. Heathkit is looking for suggestions for other new kits and wants to know what you would like to build. Will this be the beginning of a new chapter in the Heathkit legacy? Visit their site today!

God Bless Bruce

Dr. Bruce Elving, author of the FMedia! newsletter and the authoritative FM Atlas station guide, passed away in California on July 24, 2011. His research and level of incredible detail were amazing. Every newsletter was a delight to read! Bruce was a great champion of SCA converters and encouraged FM radio modifications to receive reading services for the blind and a myriad of other programming via these FM subcarriers. He was also one of the founders of the University of Minnesota's FM station KUMD 103.3 Duluth. I had the honor of interviewing Dr. Elving during my tenure as a monthly columnist for *Monitoring Times* magazine. We were always good friends with great mutual admiration.

One thing was always certain about Bruce. He was from the old school: A gentleman first and always - and - encyclopedic about all things FM. He studied and knew every iota and nuance about FM station transactions and history. What a fascinating person he was with such a great mind! Bruce had such a kindred soul and was always family-oriented. No matter how well he knew you, he always took time to welcome



Bruce Elving

your questions and always encouraged you to enjoy the hobby of DXing. This is someone I will truly miss. God bless you, Bruce and may you rest in peace.

Until next month, remember every day is a gift. Get on the air and enjoy our hobby!

73s es dit dit de N2KZ, The Old Goat.



Radio notebook

If you came along to past PCARA Field Days, you may have noticed some elderly notebook PCs for logging and digital modes. I have a Sony Vaio FXA49 notebook which is nine years old and still hanging in there, running Windows XP. One reason I originally chose this model was that it included a 3½" floppy drive, serial port, parallel port and space for a PC Card modem. You'd be hard pressed to find a notebook PC with any of those items nowadays.

The Sony Vaio is showing its age, with a fading battery, a 1.2GHz single core AMD Athlon 4 processor, and a mere 512MB RAM. The USB ports were the slower USB-1.1 type. The hard drive was a miserly 30GB unit running at 4,200 rpm. Switch the Vaio on, and it would take a *very* long time to boot up, download the latest antivirus definitions and check for Microsoft patches. Yawn!

I decided to find a replacement for the Vaio. The Sony's versatile configuration had fulfilled a lot of radio-room requirements — so the new PC would have some big shoes to fill. After lots of comparisons, I settled on HP's Pavilion DV6 range of notebooks and my mind was made up when one of these models went on-sale at BJ's in late July. (\$100 off!)

Sandy core

The new notebook contains an Intel Core i5-2410M processor. This is a second generation "Sandy Bridge" CPU from Intel, featuring dual cores running at 2.30 GHz. With Intel's "Turbo Boost" it can jump to 2.6 GHz when needed and with "SpeedStep" technology, it can also drop to lower speeds and voltages to save power.

The PC arrived with 6GB memory, a 640GB hard drive and Microsoft Windows 7 Home Premium - 64 bit. The

operating system was a concern because some amateur radio software will only run with Windows XP — and

Microsoft no longer allows XP to be sold with a new

PC. (There was the possibility of upgrading to Windows 7 Professional and running "XP Mode" in Windows Virtual PC, but I wanted to see how far I could get without that added complication, not to mention



New notebook PC – 'fresh out of the box' – had some of the ugliest desktop wallpaper I have ever seen.

the additional cost.)

Another concern was that this notebook is limited to modern input and output connections... there was a network jack, sound card I/O, HDMI and VGA video — plus four USB ports — and that was it! No serial, no parallel, no modem, no PC card slots and no floppy disk. This was going to pose a few problems.

Functional flash

I went through initial setup of the new computer, including the usual installation of anti-virus and all Microsoft's latest patches. One thing I noticed was that out of the box, the twelve function keys F1 - F12 across the top of the keyboard were configured as "Action Keys" that performed HP-specific actions such as dimming the display or muting the audio. Turning the Action Keys off required a visit to the PC's Setup utility. The Function keys then operated normally, and required holding down the "Fn" key to activate the special HP functions.

Another change I made to the standard hardware was to add "ReadyBoost" memory. In Vista and Windows 7, flash memory can be designated for "ReadyBoost" to reduce the time for random disk reads compared to the built-in hard drive. I added an 8GB SDHC card, formatted for NTFS and saw a useful improvement in performance. On a notebook PC, an SD card pushed all the way into the media card slot is less likely to be damaged than a USB flash drive, sticking out of the side.

Sound of software

I made an inventory of all the radio software that had worked under Windows XP on the Sony Vaio and started to reinstall it on the new PC. First came the soundcard software for digital modes. I transferred my "Signalink USB" radio interface to the HP notebook. This Signalink device from Tigertronics features a built-in USB sound card as well as circuitry to isolate audio connections to the transceiver. Use of a second sound card for digital modes in place of the built-in adapter is a great idea, since it allows levels to be set once and prevents Windows' audio bleeps and bloops from being transmitted accidentally over the air. The Signalink USB only had to be plugged in to the new notebook and Windows 7 found the correct drivers automatically. Once the second audio adapter was installed, default audio for the Windows sounds had to be changed back to the built-in audio adapter.

Digital modes

I tried installing the HamScope software (<http://www.qsl.net/hamscope>) that had worked well on the Vaio. I was able to configure Hamscope 1.56 and the accompanying MMTTY for the Signalink's USB audio adapter. Transmit and receive devices had to be set to

the external USB Audio adapter. In order to view Hamscope's .hlp help files, I had to install the old-style Windows Help program from Microsoft — for further details, search for KB917607. After all this work, operation of Hamscope was still unsatisfactory until I made the entire Hamscope program folder read/write.

Hamscope was good for its day, but it has not been updated since 2007. Officially, the software is not even supported on Windows XP, though it seems to work. Support for Windows Vista and later is not planned according to Glen KD5HIO's site.

So the hunt was on for a HamScope replacement. I studied some recent reviews of digital mode software and settled on the program "FLDIGI" (Fast, Light Digital). This software by W1HKJ covers an impressive number of digital modes, from the standard CW, RTTY and PSK-31 to the more exotic MFSK16, Domino, and Olivia. There is a relatively small download file available from <http://www.w1hkj.com>. The program installed under Windows 7 without any problems. Once the new software was configured to use the Signalink USB external sound card, reception of various digital modes became possible. I was especially impressed with the CW reception, which seemed to be much faster and more reliable than the old HamScope. If you try FLDIGI, just remember to save each of your configuration changes, they are not saved automatically.



Screen-shot of FLDIGI receiving RTTY alongside the Signalink USB radio interface.

The operating window for FLDIGI is well laid out with the usual receive and transmit text area, plus a waterfall display. Just double-click a received callsign to record the call in preparation for a QSO. There are macro buttons for frequently-used QSO phrases, which then make use of your own call and the recorded callsign. Another fascinating feature of FLDIGI is the "Signal Browser" which can decode multiple PSK or RTTY signals within the passband of the receiver.

Stumbling around

The next item of radio software that had worked on Windows XP was not strictly for amateur radio — it was "NetStumbler" (<http://www.netstumbler.com>),

intended to scan local Wi-Fi signals in order to check which channels are in use and to view their signal strengths. Even though NetStumbler installed on the new Windows 7 PC, it failed to find the built-in wireless adapter. The solution was to install "Vistumbler" (<http://www.vistumbler.net>) which works satisfactorily with Windows Vista and Windows 7.

Serial tale

The old Sony Vaio had "cloning" software installed in order to program various radios remotely. Some of these radios are even older than the Sony computer, but I decided to check them out with the new notebook anyway. The Icom and Kenwood transceivers employed a serial COM port for programming, so the first thing I

needed was a USB-to-serial converter. A quick check on the Internet revealed that some serial adapters are more compatible than others with radio software. I settled on the Radio Shack "Gigaware" USB to serial cable, 26-949. In order to install the driver, I bypassed the supplied CD-ROM, and turned on Windows 7's "automatic updating". This allowed the computer to find the correct driver automatically. The device installed at 9600bps on port COM3, though this was adjustable.

The first radio I tried to program was my Icom IC-2720 dual band FM transceiver. The original cloning software supplied on CD-ROM

installed satisfactorily. I connected the Icom OPC-478 serial programming cable between the USB-to-serial adapter and the radio's speaker 2 jack, set the COM port and all was working well.

I decided to try some of my other radios. The IC-



Gigaware USB to serial cable



Icom OPC-478 serial cable plus Icom's programming software on CD-ROM for the IC-2720 FM transceiver.

2800 software had to be copied from diskette via a USB memory stick, but it also worked. For my Kenwood radios, I was able to download the software from Kenwood's site on the Internet. Then, using a Kenwood PG-4P or PG-5G serial programming cable, communication with the radios was successful.

Next I tried one of my older Icom radios, the eight-year old IC-W32A handi-talkie. Icom's CSW32 programming software from 1996 worked fine under XP but would not install or even run on Windows 7. Next, I tried a copy of RT Systems' Windows Cloning Software version 2, but that would not run either, even though I tried all the compatibility options in Windows 7. There is more up-to-date software available from RT Systems, but I decided to just leave a copy of the original on the old Sony Vaio.

Modern modem

Unlike the Vaio, the new notebook computer has no built-in telephone modem. This probably reflects today's widespread availability of high-speed Internet using wired Ethernet or Wi-Fi connections. In the past, I had successfully used a dial-up modem card, but there was no place to plug this in on the new PC.

I decided to buy a USB-modem and settled on a Zoom 56k Dialup USB Modem from one of the local office supply stores. Automatic driver detection did not work too well, so I had to first install the driver off the accompanying CD-ROM, then update from the Internet. I tested the modem by dialing up my old Internet Service Provider and connected at the "historic" speed of 26 kbps.

I had another reason for needing a modem in the new notebook — one of PCARA's repeaters occasionally needs to be remotely administered by modem. I tried installing the software from CD-ROM that accompanied the controller, but without success. I then tried copying the installed files from the Sony computer onto the Windows 7 PC and this time the software would run.

The next step - which is always tricky - was to configure the new modem to work with the controller's modem. There are very specific requirements for this connection, and I had to first install a trial copy of HyperTerminal in order to communicate directly with the Zoom modem and try out various modem initialization strings. I had almost forgotten how to issue modem commands such as



Zoom external USB modem

“AT+MS=V32,0” -- it’s been a long time. Eventually I found a setup string that worked and was able to store it in the controller’s software. Connection to the repeater was then successful.

Nifty notebook

So what is the bottom line on the new notebook? After purchasing a couple of USB adapters, and experimenting with a lot of software, functionality of the HP notebook with Windows 7 is almost as good as the old Sony Vaio with Windows XP. The only failures were with older software that has not been updated in a while.

If you find yourself replacing a similar radio room PC, be prepared for difficulties with ancient software written for DOS or Windows 3.1. You may also find a few problems with software that was previously compatible with Windows XP, though you might be lucky. There is plenty of advice available on the Internet, so don’t be afraid to search for solutions. And as a last resort, you could always upgrade to Windows 7 Professional with Windows Virtual PC and XP Mode.

- NM9J

Original thirteen

Ken, W1YJ reports that he participated in the 13 Colonies Independence Week Special Event (<http://www.13colonies.info/>), which ran from July 1st through July 5th in 2011.

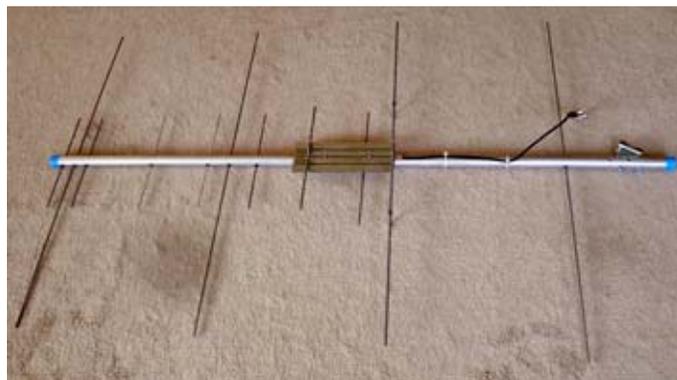
The thirteen colonies are the original English/British colonies on the Eastern seaboard that declared their independence in 1776 and became the very first

the 13 colony states during Independence Week. For example, New York had station K2A, Virginia had K2B, Rhode Island had K2C etc. all the way to Pennsylvania, K2M.

Ken was able to contact all 13 colony stations K2A through K2M (Clean Sweep) and received a special endorsement on the certificate for contacting station WM3PEN. This station, named after William Penn, was celebrating the 4th of July week Special Event, representing Independence Hall in Philadelphia, PA.

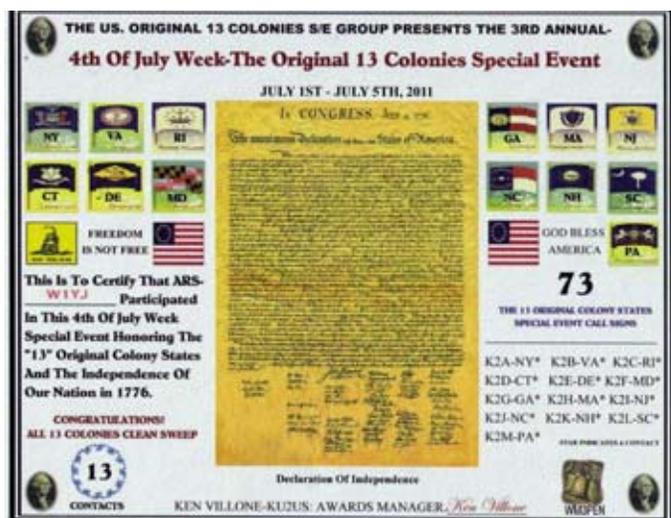
Dual-band antenna

Ray W2CH, recently purchased the MFJ-1768 Dual Band 144/440 MHz antenna from AES. This model has 4 elements for 144 MHz and seven elements for 440 MHz. Unfortunately, when Ray received the antenna, the feeder plate and matching cable with the SO-239 connector were absent from the box. Ray contacted the salesman at AES Cleveland, where the antenna had been purchased, but unfortunately AES had no more in stock. (This model must be popular, at a reasonable price of \$100.00.) The salesman suggested calling MFJ for the parts, which Ray was able to do, and MFJ supplied the missing items just in time for the CQ WW VHF Contest. Ray had to purchase a couple of screws and nuts to fasten the feeder plate matching device to the antenna boom.



MFJ dual-band 144/440 MHz Yagi antenna after assembly by Ray, W2CH. [W2CH photo]

Ray reports that the antenna works well on both bands. He used it in the CQ WW contest, mounted on a piece of PVC pipe, fastened to the balcony railing, facing south from the terrace.



Certificate received by Ken, W1YJ for contacting all thirteen of the “Original Colonies” special event stations. [W1YJ pic]

United States. The “13 Original Colonies Group” arranged individual Special Event stations in each of

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

N2CBH: 448.725MHz -5.0, PL 107.2Hz

PCARA Calendar

Sun Sept 11: PCARA monthly meeting, Hudson Valley Hospital Center, 3:00 p.m.

Hamfests

Sun Sept 11: Candlewood ARA Hamfest, Edmond Town Hall, 45 Main St (Rt 6), Newtown CT. 8:30 a.m.

Sun Sept 25: LIMARC Hamfair, Levittown Hall, 201 Levittown Parkway, Hicksville, NY. 9:00 a.m.

Sat Oct 1: BARA Fall Hamfest, Westwood Regional HS, 701 Ridgewood Rd, Washington Twnshp, NJ. 8 am

Sun Oct 2: HOSARC Hamfest, NY Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Flushing Meadows, Corona Park, Queens, NY. 9:00 a.m.

VE Test Sessions

Sept 4: Yonkers ARC, Yonkers PD, Grassy Sprain Rd, Yonkers, NY. 8:30 a.m. Contact Daniel Calabrese, 914 667-0587.

Sept 8: WECA, Westchester Co Fire Trg Center, 4 Dana Rd., Valhalla, NY. 7:00 p.m. Contact Stanley Rothman, 914 831-3258.

Sept 16: Orange County ARC, Munger Cottage, 183 Main St, Riverlight Park, Cornwall NY. 6:00 p.m. Contact Thomas R. Ray, (845) 391-3620

Sept 19: Columbia Univ VE Team, 2960 Broadway, 115 Havemeyer Hall, New York NY. 6:30 p.m. Contact Alan Crosswell, (212) 854-3754.



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