



PCARA Update



Volume 6, Issue 12

Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association Inc.

December 2005

December meeting

The Annual Holiday Dinner is Sunday December 4, 2005 at *At The Reef* on Annsville Circle. If you are planning to attend, the cost is \$25 and please let Ray, W2CH know ASAP by e-mailing him at w2ch 'at' arrl.net. Just a reminder that Annual Elections will be held during the Annual Holiday Dinner. So bring along your votes as well as your appetite!

Hope to see each of you at the December 4th meeting. Happy Holidays!

- 73 de Greg, KB2CQE

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PCARA Officers

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Vice President:

Joe Calabrese, WA2MCR; wa2mcr at arrl.net

Secretary/Treasurer:

Jim Grefig, W2JJG; w2jjg at arrl.net



Why is Joe, WA2MCR raising a new, 160 meter dipole? Hint: check the contest calendar for Dec 2-4!

Holiday Dinner

As mentioned by Greg, PCARA's annual holiday dinner will take place at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday December 4. Venue is *At The Reef* restaurant. Ray W2CH and Marylyn KC2NKU have made the arrangements and provided the following menu choices.

MENU

Tossed green salad

Choice of entrées:

Prime Ribs of Beef

Chicken Cordon Bleu

Boneless Breast of Chicken Marsala

Broiled Stuffed Filet of Sole

Broiled Filet of Salmon

All entrées include: Baked Potato, Vegetable, Coffee, Tea and Cake of the Day.

Final total is \$25.00 per person, not including drinks. If you would like to attend the PCARA Holiday Dinner, please contact Ray, W2CH, e-mail: W2CH 'at' arrl.net.



At the Reef restaurant, on Annsville Circle, is situated at the junction of Routes 6, 9 and 202, near Jan Peek Bridge, Peekskill.

Adventures in DXing

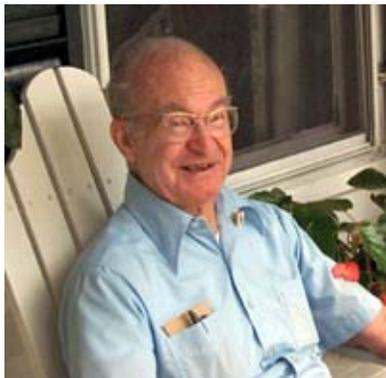
– N2KZ

Straighten Up!

It's time to polish your code key and exercise your fist! Straight Key Night is coming soon! Don't miss the fun! Once a year, on New Year's, the ARRL sponsors my favorite event. Hams of all ages return to the air without the aid of electronic keyers or computers and send code the old-fashioned way: pounding brass like our forefathers.

For me, the event is like going to Christmas mass. You see a lot of old friends and meet many new ones knowing that you are all brought together by a common passion: sending Morse. It's not exactly a contest. It's more like a large town meeting. Plenty of rags will be available for chewing. *(There's an image for you!)* Many hams take the next step and use vintage hollow-state gear on this night, as well. Tubes and pilot lamps will be glowing all over North America as we merrily chirp to each other in the language of the ancients.

There is a deep personal interest in this day, as well. On New Year's Day 2000, right after we weathered the storm of the Y2K crisis overnight, I completed



Harold, W1EES

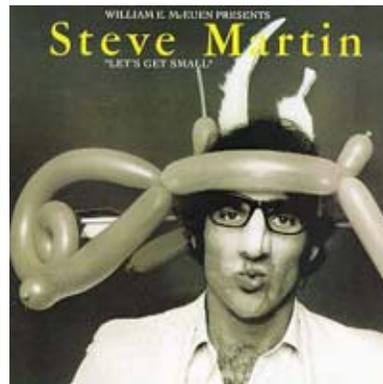
my very first amateur radio QSO. On January 1st, at about 4:30 pm, Harold Chase, W1EES, answered my feeble calls on the 80-meter Novice segment around 3700 kcs. It must have been a divine moment. No beginner could ask for a call sign easier to copy than his. My original call sign was

not quite ready for prime time as a CW operator: KC2FPM. Quite a chore to send for an infant fist! The QSO was short and sweet. Harold had to run off to join a net at 5 pm. I was satisfied and joyful. Someone heard me! It was a wonderful day. Every New Year's I return to my original dial position on 80 meters and celebrate my anniversary!

Welcome 2006 in with style and honor! Please accept my invitation and give Morse Code a try! Straight Key Night runs 24 hours from 0000 – 2400 UTC on January 1, 2006 (7 pm New Year's Eve to 7 pm New Year's Day Eastern Time). I can guarantee that no one will be sending fast and we'll all be glad to hear you! More information can be found at: <http://www.arrl.org/contests/rules/2006/skn.html>

Let's Get Small!

I'm always ready for a Steve Martin revival, but this is a different kind of small. In fact, it really is a small wonder! A couple of months ago I heard through the PCARA grapevine (*mi amigo* Malcolm NM9J) that Mike, N2EAB, was



trying to sell a QRP radio kit at a hamfest and had no takers. Amazed, I felt a calling to come to the rescue. What better home could a QRP rig find than the QTH of the frugal homebrewer N2KZ! A few days later, my daughters and I took a drive across the county and met Mike at the PCARA watering hole outside the Radio Shack in the Beach Shopping Center in Peekskill. (Many foxhunts have begun here!) The deal was made and the goods were mine! It was only the beginning!

Mike had kindly sold me a Small Wonder Labs SW+40 kit, complete with its matching (and recently discontinued) enclosure

box. I was thrilled! I had used a similar rig, the SW+80, loaned to me by another friend Lonnie, NY2LJ, and had a blast with it. Now I could build my own!



Small Wonder Labs SW+40 QRP transceiver kit, showing enclosure and circuit board.

Small Wonder Labs is a magical place of business created through the wizardry of Dave Benson, K1SWL. Dave serves as a mentor, teacher, and inspiration to thousands of hams who have built his innovative designs. Simply put: You are in good hands with Dave. My little kit was missing one toroid and a single e-mail provided me with the missing part and an optional heatsink at no charge. Along with this brief exchange, I made a new friend. We wound up corresponding about all sorts of things. It was like your best QSO!



Dave Benson, K1SWL

The SW+ series are little one-band transceivers with an output of up to about two and a half watts. The design was derived from an earlier rig called the "40-40" transceiver promoted by

The New England QRP Club <http://www.qsl.net/wq1rp/>. Dave currently sells versions for 80, 40, 30 and 20 meters. You can easily hold one in the palm of your hand. The completed unit weighs just under 11 ounces. It's also tiny in price, and truly a wonder!

Building an SW+40 requires good concentration and good eyes. Dave's excellent assembly instructions treat you like an adult. You won't find a line-by-line list describing every single necessary move. He gives you the information you need, when you need it. You build the board systematically, in a clockwise fashion, to completion. Unless there is something unusual to note, Dave's pictorials simply show which group of parts to stuff next onto the one little PC board. It's up to you to get to it done! Bravo, Dave!

Without question, you need to take great care in building this kit. Be careful mounting each and every part. Use an ohmmeter to verify the color codes painted on the tiny resistors. There is some delicate soldering to be done. Take your time and you will achieve great things. All told (including a couple of good head



View inside the SW+40, with the circuit board mounted in the enclosure.

scratchers), it took me a leisurely 15 hours to complete the kit and get it on the air. Not bad!

Some detailed notes for future builders: Be very careful with correct diode alignment and mounting. Do not remove the two special-purpose diodes from their little

descriptive piece of paper until you mount them. Dave does not want you to mix them up! Toroid T4 requires about 4 ½ inches of magnet wire, not just an even four as described. Give yourself a little slack. On the same toroid, you must make a one turn secondary winding. Dave recommends that it should be "snug, not tight." Its sounds contradictory, but I got it.

Alignment of the SW+40 was a breeze. Peak two ferrite cans for maximum RF output into a dummy load. Peak one ferrite can for maximum receiver sensitivity. A tiny trimmer pot will set your final output power. And, away you go! It took me about two minutes to align. I built another kit that took two days! I must have done something right. My SW+40 worked

on my first try and I was happily working stations left and right in the heart of the 40-meter band. I'm burning holes in the ionosphere with my SW+40 set conservatively at a mighty watt and a half! The frequency range came out right on target: 7015 to just over 7050 kHz. Perfect!

Operation of the SW+40 is a joy. All I need is this tiny box, eight AA batteries, a dipole and a straight key and I'm ready to go. There is plenty of room to add an inboard keyer into the rig's little box, if you like. The offset is a little high for my personal taste. I prefer a pretty low offset at 300 cycles or so. I can't say I have perfect pitch, but I think the SW+40 is designed for about 600 cycles offset. I've gotten used to it. My classic Heathkit HW-7 has a 40-meter offset of about 35 cycles. You need a good set of headphones and concentration to conquer that! The SW+40 offers continuous tuning via a full-sized potentiometer and adjustment is silky and nice. I often get comments about the rig's note. Aaah, the note! Dave Benson got it just right. It's not mechanically sharp and it's not sloppy or whoopy. Many people immediately comment about it in wonder. It's musical and beautiful and rounded off ever so softly. It's a Pimm's and champagne on a hot beach under an umbrella in the Caribbean sun. Paradise!

Why bother operating with QRP power? You'll gain a rewarding sense of achievement and skill. I built my little SW+40 and it worked the first time I powered it up. My fourth contact was Andy, F3NB, in southern France who gave me a 479 RST report. Even better, work someone QRP to QRP. Both operators skillfully pull each other's signals through the mire with homebrewed gear. To me, this is the true spirit of amateur radio at its finest!

Dave Benson also markets the five watt DSW-II series and the famous Rock Mite and High Mite milliwatt QRPp transceiver kits. Read all about them at <http://www.smallwonderlabs.com>. I have used all three varieties and recommend them all for value and extended happiness. If you are lucky, maybe Santa will bring you one!

Star Wars

January 9th is almost here! What's January 9th? It's the big day when Howard Stern arrives on Sirius Satellite Radio. This could be the silliest media event the public will experience since the marriage of Tiny Tim to Miss Vicki on The Tonight Show in 1969. Sirius has devoted two channels to their 500 million dollar investment including a nightly newscast covering all things Howard. Will Stern's fans elevate Sirius above XM in subscribers? Sirius is serious about Howard. Will the American public agree? It certainly will be a pivotal moment in satellite radio history!

Both Sirius, and competitor XM Satellite Radio, have dramatically lowered the prices of their hardware

to increase their chances in this battle for business survival and subscribers. XM's compact Roady2 receiver is now available for as little as \$24.99. Sirius has just introduced their answer to the Roady2 called Sirius One. At \$49.99, the Sirius One is a unusual design also primarily for use in a car. The tuner's display is on one of the edges of the contraption with the controls 90 degrees away on its long rectangular face. You can mount it on your dashboard, sun visor or windshield. This design, along with its accompanying remote control (also with tiny buttons,) seems challenging to operate especially when driving.



Sirius One satellite receiver.

Like the Roady2, the satellite signals are sent to your car's AM/FM radio via a built-in FM modulator in the Sirius One. Here's a new twist: The Sirius One allows you to preset five transmit frequencies for quick recall. Life will be so much better when satellite radio reception is a standard feature in car radios. Remember the good old days when FM converters were needed to bring in those new FM stations to your AM car radio? The more things change, the more they remain the same!

Other things celestial: XM now offers a second-generation wearable satellite antenna called the Clip XT. It claims to be the best XM satellite antenna yet, bringing needed extra sensitivity to the XM MyFi and similar portable satellite receivers. Maybe so, but this device looks just as geeky as a plastic pocket protector! Just a little shorter than a pencil, with the diameter of a lipstick tube, it's not exactly something that will blend into your wardrobe! Also available: rubberized skins to protect your MyFi for \$14.99.



Radio Shock

To my dismay, Radio Shack has quietly discontinued carrying electronic project and study books in their retail stores. Only their Police Call directories remain. Radio Shack previously served as a first point of contact in the recruitment of new electronic hobbyists and CB and ham radio operators. Their stores were nearly the

only place to find publications from the ARRL, Gordon West's amateur radio study guides and classic educational handbooks by Forrest Mimms. Especially missing are copies of the ARRL's "Now You're Talking" and amateur radio study guides for Technician, General and Extra Class licenses. Let's hope stores like Barnes & Noble and Borders continue to carry at least some titles!

High Up High Def

Fox affiliate WNYW, Channel 5, is experimenting with a new remarkable newsgathering tool called Skyfox HD. Channel Five has outfitted one of their helicopters with a sophisticated high definition camera complete with a superb lens capable of incredibly crisp and rock-stable images of New York City. WNYW-DT Channel 5-1 recently switched on a test of Skyfox HD during a bad Saturday afternoon TV movie. Both Malcolm, NM9J and I independently caught the test on



Skyfox HD helicopter will bring high definition news pictures to WNYW viewers.

the air, which ran about fifteen or twenty minutes. I managed to take a few snapshots of the screen as an exclusive for the *PCARA Update*. Skyfox HD's zoom lens has amazing reach and stability. One can only speculate that Channel 5 is gearing up to become New York City's first HD newscaster. Skyfox HD will be a unique cutting-edge newsgathering tool and the envy of their competitors. Stay tuned!

Have a wonderful holiday season (and Straight Key Night) and a very Happy New Year.

VY 73 de N2KZ The Old Goat,
dit dit.



KJI Weekend

While there are no Division-wide hamfests or events until January you might want to think about attending the “Fourth Annual Customer Appreciation Weekend” at



KJI Electronics on December 2, 3 and 4 at 394 Bloomfield Avenue in Caldwell, NJ 07006. Manufacturers reps from Icom, Kenwood, West Mountain Radio, MFJ, Heil Sound, and Alinco will be on hand. There will be in-store demos and hourly drawings in addition to light refreshments. Friday Dec 2, 1 to 9 PM. Saturday Dec 3, 10 to 5 PM and Sunday Dec 4, 12 noon to 5 PM. See <http://www.kjielelectronics.com> for directions.

— from ARRL Hudson Division *Beacon*, Nov 2005.

If you would like to receive the Hudson Division *Beacon* newsletter, you will need to access the ARRL members only web site. After becoming a member you must edit your profile and elect to receive bulletins from the Section Manager and Director. If you are already a member on the ARRL site (<http://www.arrl.org>) from the "Members Only" box click on "Member data page" and then under email notification options set "Division/Section notices" to YES. You will receive the next bulletin sent. Past Bulletins are available at <http://www.hudson.arrl.org>.

Radio Communication Handbook

The Radio Society of Great Britain recently published the 8th edition of their “Radio Communication Handbook”. One of the more interesting items in the Handbook is a table of transceiver and receiver strong signal receive performance, extracted from twenty years of equipment reviews, mostly by Peter Hart, G3SJK, originally published in the RSGB’s monthly journal, *Radio Communication (RadCom)*.

If you want to see the complete table, you’ll have to splash out on a copy of the Handbook — it’s available from the RSGB for £29.99 or from ARRL for \$54.95. However, here’s an extract to whet your appetite. It lists HF receive performance in order of “Spurious free dynamic range” (SFDR) at the relatively narrow spacing of 5kHz. SFDR is also known as “two-tone dynamic range”. Receivers at the top end of the listing have the very best performance in terms of immunity to third order intermodulation products from strong signals close to the one you are trying to hear.

Transceiver	SFDR at 5kHz
Ten-Tec ORION	93dB
Elecraft K2/100	91dB
Ten-Tec CORSAIR	90dB
Ten-Tec OMNI-VI	88dB
Icom IC-7800	88dB
Kenwood TS-950	83dB
Yaesu FT-1000MP	82dB
JRC JST-245	80dB
Icom IC-737	80dB
Yaesu FT-747	80dB
Icom IC-725	79dB
Yaesu FT-990	78dB
Kenwood TS-930	77dB
Icom IC-746	77dB
Icom IC-707	77dB
Kenwood TS-940	76dB
Drake R8E (RX)	76dB
Icom IC-736/8	76dB
Kenwood TS-850	75dB
Kenwood TS-480	75dB
Ten-Tec JUPITER	75dB
Icom IC-751A	75dB
Alinco DX-70TH	75dB
Icom IC-756PROIII	74dB
Icom IC-756	74dB
Icom IC-756-PROII	73dB
Icom IC-756-PRO	73dB
Icom IC-7400	73dB
Icom IC-703	73dB
Yaesu FT-1000MP mk5	73dB
Icom IC-775DSP	72dB
Yaesu FT-920	72dB
Kenwood TS-50	69dB
Yaesu FT-900	69dB
Yaesu FT-890	69dB
Kenwood TS-2000	68dB
Yaesu FT-817	68dB
Yaesu FT-100	68dB
Yaesu FT-847	67dB
Yaesu FT-897	65dB
Yaesu FT-857	65dB
Yaesu FT-1000	65dB
Kenwood TS-430	62dB
Icom IC-729	62dB
Kenwood TS-870	61dB
Yaesu FT-767	59dB
Icom IC-781	57dB
Yaesu FT-757	55dB

Some telling figures there, don’t you think? The full table also includes SFDR at 50kHz spacing and reciprocal mixing at 10kHz. Transceiver rankings for these other parameters can be quite different from the 5kHz SFDR. Pick up a copy of the *Radio Communication Handbook* for full details!
- NM9J

Wet wet wet

Cast your mind back to October – you may remember a particularly wet period when it rained day and night for a week. The Saw Mill River overflowed and the Saw Mill River Parkway was closed as usual around Pleasantville. Fortunately, the rain stopped just in time for the PCARA Fox hunt on October 15 – and I thought there was nothing more to worry about.



Technics ST-S6 tuner with CDE rotator controller.

Later on I noticed that my trusty old Technics ST-S6 tuner was misbehaving. I keep the 24 year-old ST-S6 in the shack because its performance as an AM/FM stereo tuner far exceeds anything built-in to modern Hi-Fi equipment. Unfortunately the ST-S6 seemed to have lost its memory and the fluorescent frequency display was showing all segments lit.

The next thing I noticed was a small pool of water on top of the tuner — as I pulled it off the stack of equipment, a stream of water poured out of one corner. This is not the sort of thing you want to see when troubleshooting electronic equipment!

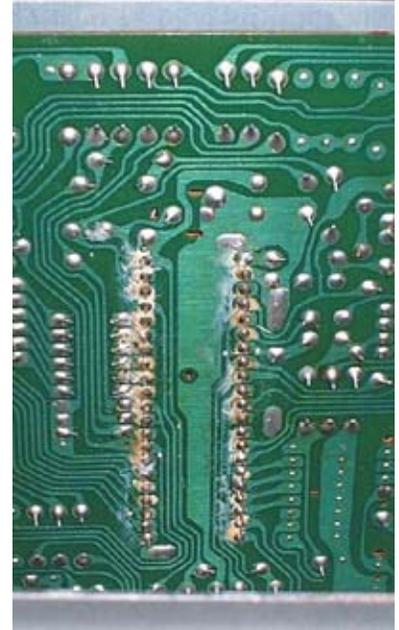
It was clear that the tuner had filled with water – but where was it coming from? Having eliminated all other possibilities, the only remaining source was the CDE antenna rotator that normally sits on top. The position of the pool of water and stains on the back of the rotator suggested that water had been driven down



Water must have run down the cable for the antenna rotator — seen here from behind.

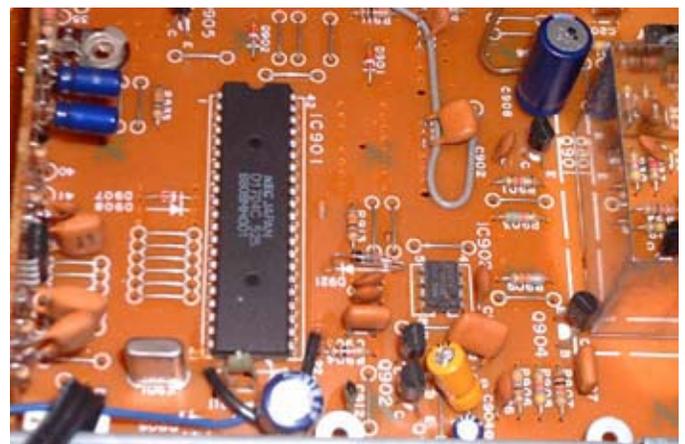
the inside of the rotator's multi-core cable during the heavy rain. Ugh!

The next step was to try to fix the misbehaving tuner. With power removed and the cover off, it was clear that water had entered through a hole in the top cover and dripped underneath the circuit board. By disassembling the front panel, it was possible to ease the circuit board away from the metal case and inspect underneath. There was a great deal of corrosion on the solder connections for the 42-pin IC-901 integrated circuit. This NEC D1704C IC is in the controller section of the tuner's circuitry and was probably powered up to maintain contents of memory, even when the front panel power control was switched off.



Corrosion on the solder pads for the 42-pin synthesizer controller chip.

The corrosion products surrounding IC-901's pins were no doubt providing a conducting path where none should exist. I cleaned the corrosion away with a combination of eyeglass spray and isopropyl alcohol applied with a paper kitchen towel. After several minutes of gentle rubbing and scrubbing, the solder



Controller integrated circuit IC-901 seen from the component side of the circuit board.

pads and shiny metal pins of the large integrated circuit were all exposed again, with nothing but circuit board in-between.

After reassembling the tuner and cautiously

applying 120 volt power, I was relieved to see the fluorescent display light up as normal. Pressing a few controls showed the tuner was functioning once again. I programmed some frequencies into memory and made sure the contents were retained, even when power was removed.

So — my classic Technics ST-S6 tuner had a close call. Past experience with occasional floods at the works-QTH suggests that electronic equipment that gets wet can be rescued — provided it is **not** powered up at the time. This is one reason why I encourage everyone to connect electronic equipment to a surge-protected power strip and switch off at the strip when not in use. This applies equally well to computers, Hi-Fi, and amateur radio items. The only exception to the switch-off-strip rule is equipment that *must* be left on continuously, such as satellite TV set top boxes, cable modems and telephone answering machines.

- NM9J

Book Review

Passport to World Band Radio, edition 2006. \$22.95

“Passport to World Band Radio” is an annual book for short wave listeners. I usually pick up a copy every couple of years and the latest edition for 2006 has just appeared. I have to say that there have been some significant changes since my last copy! The emphasis this time round is on radio from China.

One of the more interesting sections – for me – is the review of short wave receivers. This covers everything from tiny pocket portables all the way up to tabletop and full size professional receivers. What is significant is the growing number of models from the Far East, especially China. Most of the new models – and many full page adverts – are for Eton Corp., now spelled with an accent: “Etón”. Eton Corp. is a licensee of the Grundig name in the North American market, and some of its products are still sold as Grundigs. There are only two other “big names” in the U.S. shortwave market – Sony and Sangean – and neither is showing any new products in the 2006 *Passport*. Several popular Sony models are actually obsolete now. In contrast Eton offers its shiny, new, top of the line “E1XM” portable model, combining AM, FM shortwave and now XM satellite radio. *Passport*’s review gives this radio high marks and points out the latest addition is **passband tuning** — also known as IF shift in amateur radio circles. *Passport* reports that this particular model is assembled in India, rather than Eton’s usual Tecsun factory in China.

Another useful section of *Passport* is the listing of interesting programs airing from “ten easy catches” and later on from other broadcasters around the clock. BBC World Service has cut back its service to the Americas even further than the earlier cuts to North America and

the Pacific in 2001. The short wave relay station operated by Caribbean Relay Co. on Antigua ceased operation and closed on March 31, affecting both BBC and Deutsche Welle. This was one of the last sources of strong signals into our part of North America. BBC World Service can still be heard at certain times in the

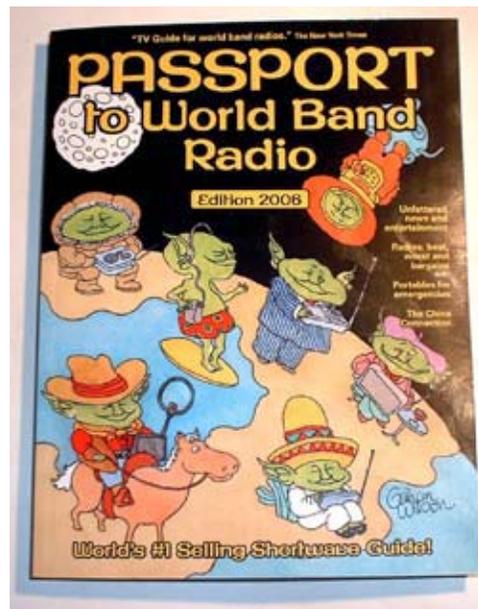
evening on 5975 kHz but with much weaker signals from the RFI site at Montsinéry in French Guiana or from the VOA site in Delano, CA. For best reception, it now looks like XM is the only way to go! Incidentally, XM Radio music is now carried on DirectTV, channels 800-872, but without the BBC or any other news/discussion stations.

Amongst other cuts, BBC World Service also reduced shortwave broadcasts to South America to a couple of hours per day in March. Not surprisingly, the BBC’s last survey of its worldwide audience showed a drop of 4 million radio listeners compared to 2003’s estimate of 150 million. Commenting on the World Service policy of finding local FM partners to carry the broadcasts, acting director Nigel Chapman said “It is sometimes difficult to find suitable FM partners in some countries or to overcome regulatory obstacles, like bans on international news broadcasting on local FMs.” Sounds like a good argument for keeping a shortwave solution to me! Past experience suggests that whenever shortwave service to overseas countries is cut back, problems will develop with international understanding, possibly leading to conflict.

Returning to the *Passport to World Band Radio*, if you are trying to identify a station on a particular frequency, then you need to turn to *Passport*’s “Blue Pages”. This is a listing by frequency of all the stations using each particular short wave channel around the clock. There’s a lot of other, useful information in these tables, including power level and precise transmitter location. Once you have identified where a particular broadcast is coming from, you can find further details of the station listed by country in the “Addresses Plus” section. Somewhat surprisingly, the U.S.A. has over 50 overseas broadcasters listed!

Passport to World band Radio is a very useful book if you are a serious or casual short wave listener. Recommended, at \$22.95.

- 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 Dec 4: PCARA Holiday meal, elections, *At the Reef*.

Hamfests

Sun Jan 8: Ham Radio University/Section Convention, Briarcliffe College, 1055 Stewart Avenue, Bethpage NY, 8:00 a.m.

Sun Feb 26: LIMARC Long Island Hamfair, Levittown Hall, 201 Levittown Parkway, Hicksville, NY. 9:00 a.m.

VE Test Sessions

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

Dec 12: Split Rock ARA, Hopatcong HS, Rm C-1, Hopatcong, NJ. 7:00 p.m. Contact Sid Markowitz (973) 724-2378.

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



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