Mt. AIRY V.H.F. RADIO CLUB, INC.

CHEESE BITS

W3CCX
CLUB MEMORIAL CALL

ARRL Affiliated Club

Volume LXVI | June 2023 | Number 7

PREZ SEZ: July 2023

June Didn't Happen Quite That Way

In my last column, I chose June as my favorite ham month. One reason was the comradery available during the W3CCX operation on Camelback Mountain in the Poconos for the ARRL June VHF Contest. The second reason was the chance to participate in an outdoor effort on ARRL Field Day. Unfortunately, June did not quite work out that way for me.

The Friday morning leading into the June VHF Contest, George KA3WXV agreed to stop by my QTH to help me load up the Mighty Manly Minivan. His willingness to help me was welcome because of my current medical complaints. Due to a family scheduling conflict, George was not able to operate on the mountain this year. That morning, it was pretty clear that instead of driving up to Camelback with Jim KC3BVL, my next trip was to be an ambulance ride to Abington Memorial Hospital. The short report on my hospital visit was that I received a unit of blood that day and underwent an endoscopy on Monday. Ironically, the same physician who performed the endoscopy also performed my routine colonoscopy about a month earlier. So Dr. Frates has now scoped me from end to end.

I am proud of our club efforts during the VHF contest. Nick N3YMS, with help from other Packrats such as Bruce WA3YUE, secured, refurbished, and outfitted a bus large enough for W3CCX to operate from a single vehicle. Nick and Bruce also reworked the AC power cables so that coiling and rolling heavy AC power cables is now a past memory. George KA3WXV shuttled Jim KC3BVL to Camelback on Friday. Jim KC3BVL's friend, James Travis, came up for the weekend to take care the catering chores. We had two coordinators this year, Bill K3EGE and Jim KC3BVL.

Switching to ARRL Field Day: I had proposed to the Phil-Mont Radio Club that "Team VHF" would be willing to provide a tent, radio gear, generator, and set up a 6 meter dipole antenna at Fort Washington State Park. Team VHF consists of me, George KA3WXV, Guy WA3JZN, and Jim KC3BVL. Subsequently, Team VHF decided that it did not have the healthy manpower to set up the tent and dipole. As an alternative, I proposed to Team VHF that we operate from my QTH. Other than installing some software and purchasing some food, no special preparations were necessary. If we wanted to operate as a 1E station instead of 1D class, I could switch in the 20 KW Generac

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PACKRAT BEACONS - W3CCX/B
144.300 (FN21be), 222.300 (FN20tk), 432.300(FN20tk), 903.300 (FN21be), 1296.300 (FN20dh), 2304.300 (FN20dh—under repair), 3456.300, 5760.3 (FN21be under repair), 10,368.017 (FM29jw) **Note:** red = temporarily off the air; see https://www.packratvhf.com/index.php/on-air for details)

MONDAY / TUESDAY NIGHT NETS
VHF/UHF Monday:

TIME	FREQUENCY	NET CONTROL
7:00 PM	224.58R MHz	WR3P FN20kb Ralph
7:30 PM	50.150 MHz	N3RG FM29ki Ray
8:00 PM	144.150 MHz	K3GNC FN20ja Jerome
8:30 PM	222.125 MHz	KC3BVL FM29jw Jim
9:00 PM	432.110 MHz	WB2RVX FM29mt Mike

Visit the Mt Airy VHF Radio Club at: www.packratvhf.com or www.w3ccx.com

standby generator. The station was designated as KB1JEY.
Early Saturday morning, I headed over to Jersey Mike's for a catering box. Unfortunately George could only spend Saturday at the Team VHF station. None of the other Team VHF members were able to join us so I was eating a lot of left-over sandwiches during the week.

One advantage of operating from my QTH as a 1D station is that Team VHF could operate on the HF bands as well as VHF. I liked this part of the arrangement since there was no need to operate FT8 to keep the station occupied. A non-digital arrangement much better emulates the emergency aspect of the Field Day exercise. So what were the KB1JEY station results?

Band	Phone QSOs
40m	12
20m	5
6m	9
2m	2
432	1

Total QSOs 29

The 2 meter and 432 MHz QSOs were made with Packrats. I prefer operating the ARRL Field Day exercise outdoors in the company of fellow hams (in addition to KA3WXV). However, ease of set-up, take-down and the company of Drake the Cat offers some strong advantages.

Michael KB1JEY

JUNE (ZOOM) MEETING PICTURES

Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club, `The Packrats`
June 2023 VHF Contest

Total Logs: 33 **Club Claimed Score: 1,920,262**

Nr	Call	QSO's	Total-	Score	6M	2M	222	432	902/3	1.3	2.4	3.4	5.7	10	Laser
1	K1TEO	1104	388	599072	545 184	257 54	84 37	108 37	37 25	45 25	3 3	11 9	8 8	6 6	
2	WN3A	537	207	114264	400 152	122 43		15 12							
3	K1RZ	533	187	99671	362 132	171 55									
4	WA3NUF	363	149	72861	179 68	96 31	29 15	30 15	9 6	11 7	4 3	5 4			
5	WA3DRC	258	145	48140	150 82	52 25	18 13	21 13	6 5	10 6	1 1				
6	W9KXI	262	139	39893	172 95	70 28	8 7	7 6		5 3					
7	KR1ST	263	131	38645	161 86	75 28	10 6	12 6		5 5					
8	N2SCJ	286	118	36462	153 77	112 31	9 2	10 6		2 2					
9	WB2RVX	227	112	34272	151 66	23 12	16 8	17 9	6 5	8 6	2 2	2 2	1 1	1 1	
10	W2KV	255	95	27645	118 49	101 32		36 14							
11	W2BVH	201	103	26986	111 58	47 18	11 7	15 7	5 4	11 8	1 1				
12	K0BAK/R	202	88	20680	93 47	76 24	16 5	17 6							
13	KA3FQS	164	69	14904	79 36	48 17	10 4	15 4	5 3	4 2	2 2	1 1			
14	N3ITT	188	78	14664	103 47	85 31									
15	K3MD	168	88	14418	124 62	37 21		5 3		2 2					
16	WB3IGR	122	72	11952	46 32	44 19	9 4	13 8	4 4	4 4					2 1
17	NE2U	155	70	11340	75 40	73 26		7 4							
18	N4BRF *	122	80	10400	108 69	7 4	3 3	3 3		1 1					
19	N2DEQ	130	53	8162	75 26	39 13	3 3	7 5	2 2	2 2	2 2				
20	NN3Q	116	44	5104	116 44										
21	WA3GFZ	82	49	4459	67 37	9 6	1 1	3 3		1 1	1 1				
22	N3PLM	100	39	4056	73 27	23 9		4 3							
23	NN3Q/R	54	23	2668	10 4	9 2	8 2	9 2	5 2	4 2	2 1	3 2	4 2		
24	W3GAD	47	22	1848	11 5	11 5	7 3	8 3	3 1	5 3	2 2				
25	KB3MTW	38	15	765	18 7	7 3	7 2	6 3							
26	W3HMS	41	17	697	38 15	3 2									
27	K3WGR	26	23	598	24 21	2 2									
28	KA3WXV	32	14	546	17 7	8 4		7 3							
29	NE3I	27	11	352	14 6	8 3		5 2							
30	K2LNS	9	7	189						9 7					
31	N3FTI	13	11	143	13 11										
32	WF3W	18	6	108		18 6									
33															
34															
35															
36															

* N4BRF (K1DS Op) EL96 Score and log count not added to club totals

Multi-OPS

Nr	Call	QSO's	Total-Grids	Score	6M	2M	222	432	902/3	1.3 GHz	2.4 GHz	3.4 GHz	5.7 GHz	10 GHz	La-ser	
1	**W3CCX**	997	288	397152	515 128	221 44	70 30	107 30	19 12	28 16	16 10	8 6	7 6	6 6		
OPS	**Ops: K3EGE K3JJZ KB2AYU KB3SIG KC3BVL N3EG N3RG N3YMS W2SJ W3JG WA3RLT WA3WUL WA3YUE WX3K**															
2	**N2NT**	913	258	267546	463 144	326 65	56 24	68 25								
OPS	**Ops: N2NT N2NC W2RQ WW2Y**															
3																
OPS																
4																
OPS																

Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club, Inc. `The Packrats`

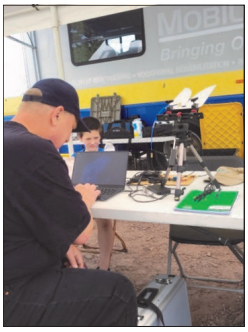
June VHF Contest: QSO's with Packrats + Nr. Of Packrats Worked

Nr	Call	Op	Pwr	QSO's	Total 'Rats
1	**W3CCX**	MO	HIGH	185	45
2	**WA3NUF**	SO	LOW	107	34
3	**K0BAK/R**	SO	LOW	94	18
4	**WB2RVX**	SO	HIGH	90	24
5	**N2NT**	MO	HIGH	80	32
6	**WA3DRC**	SO	HIGH	74	21
7	**KA3FQS**	SO	LOW	64	21
8	**W2BVH**	SO	HIGH	58	19
9	**K1RZ**	SO	HIGH	51	25
10	**W2KV**	SO	HIGH	50	21
11	**KR1ST**	SO	HIGH	50	23
12	**N2SCJ**	SO	LOW	49	27
13	**NN3Q/R**	RO	HIGH	43	3
14	**N2DEQ**	SO	LOW	43	19
15	**W3GAD**	SO	HIGH	41	11
16	**N3ITT**	SO	HIGH	41	26
17	**W9KXI**	SO	HIGH	40	21
18	**NE2U**	SO	LOW	33	22
19	**KA3WXV**	SO	LOW	21	10

Nr	Call	Op	Pwr	QSO's	Total 'Rats
20	**WA3GFZ**	SO	LOW	19	13
21	**N3PLM**	SO	LOW	19	13
22	**NN3Q**	SO	HIGH	17	17
23	**W3HMS**	SO	HIGH	12	11
24	**WF3W**	SO	LOW	11	11
25	**NE3I**	SO	QRP	10	4
26	**K2LNS**	SO	LOW	7	7
27	**N3FTI**	SO	HIGH	4	4
28	**K3WGR**	SO	LOW	4	3
29	**N4BRF**	SO	LOW	3	3
30					
31					
32					
33					
34					
35					
36					
37					
38					

Tnx **Dave W3KM** for processing log data used in the Contest Tables !

JUNE CONTEST CAMELBACK PICTURES



JUNE CONTEST REPORTS

From Herb K2LNS
Today I operated in two locations during the VHF contest. I only operated to find a good location for the future. The only band I used was 1296 MHz. Running about 6 watts at the antenna which was 25 elements about 10 feet off the ground. I first went to a location which is 2350 asl. I worked the guys at Camelback W3CCX and KR1ST plus W9KXI near Elmira. All prearranged with phone calls. I tried quite a few other hams with no results. The location is very high but tree lines off to the side slopes. The most amazing was W9KXI near Elmira. He was very loud. But in his direction, there were no trees and big drop offs. Stations to the east and south were being blocked with a tree line only 100 feet away. Moral of the story, microwave signals go to ground when aimed at trees. Even though being up on top of a mountain I shut down and then drove south 40 miles to a cemetery in Stairville Pa, elevation 1150 asl, about 10 miles south of Nanticoke. Still the same grid as earlier FN11. I made some calls to people I tried working from further north. This location even though much lower in elevation has no trees.
I quickly worked several stations in Connecticut, Long Island, New Jersey and Delaware. These are stations I tried working earlier. I'm sure the higher spot will be tremendous on the lower bands 6 - 2 - 222 - 432. Above 432 is a total waste of time, unless there was a portable tower 75 feet tall. From many years of contesting, I knew there would be some blockage, but never would I have thought this much. What a wonderful hobby with so many variables.

From Griff NE3I
NE3I QRP Portable Analog Only June Contest Operation. On Sunday, June 11th, I deployed with the RF Hill Amateur Radio Club “FEDS” to Franconia Community Park (FN20HH) for a 2.5 hour QRP portable analog only contest operation. The photo shows the NE3I push up mast with a “Ham Stick” style 6 Meter Dipole and 2 Meter Squalo at about 20 feet. The Squalo did double duty on 144 and 432 MHz following the “40 Meter Dipole Rule” of Novice days. The first station heard and worked was W3CCX on 2, 432 and then 6 Meters. Statistics for the short QRP operation were 8 Qs and 3 grids on 2 Meters, 5 Qs and 2 grids on 432 with 14 Qs and 6 grids on 6 Meters, (FN20, FN21, EM40, EL29, EM31 and EM53). My 352 points were submitted toward the Packrat Club score. Contacts were made on CW, SSB, FM and even one on 6 Meter AM. Unfortunately, during this short operation, no stations were on within the range of my 5 Watt 223.5 FM HT and Mag Mount 5/8th Wave Vertical. Nonetheless, the effort generated fun reminiscent of contest operations of yesteryear.

From Rick K1DS
I planned to operate for a few hours on Saturday and Sunday from our club station here in Florida. Bands from 50 through 1296 are available in the south side of the club trailer which is situated in a gated compound in a local park. The park also has facilities for radio-controlled airplanes, boats and land vehicles, picnicking, disc golf and bike riding. It was a warm weekend with temperatures close to 90^{o} and as Murphy lurks everywhere, the air conditioner was not working. Luckily a small fan kept things reasonable. I turned on all the gear and checked the beacons 150 miles north in

Reports cont'd...

Orlando. The 144, 222 and 1296 beacons were easily heard, but 432 wasn't audible here. I needed to call George, WA2VNV, who set up the station for some technical issues to get all the proper settings for the radios. I started calling CQ on 144.200 as the contest started and found a few stations and made contacts on each of the bands. I turned the volume of the 6m ICOM 7300 down to focus on 2m and up for the first hour. I turned to 6m for the second hour and there was no activity noticeable. A local station tried to QSO with me and heard me fine, but I heard nothing and saw nothing on the waterfall. Made another call to George. We went through things systematically until he asked what position the squelch knob was in. I not only turned down the audio, but also the squelch. When I brought it back to the 12-o'clock position, the band was hot with SSB and FT8 signals. As I started to work the crowd on FT8, the UPS started to beep, indicating it was about to shut down power. Another call, this time to the club president who advised me to swap it with another unit in the trailer. When I returned to the club station Sunday, I brought a long extension cord with me and used it to get power from outlets closer to the trailer feed and had no more trouble from the UPS. All-in-all it was rewarding weekend, as short as it was. I had QSOs on all 5 bands available, using SSB, CW and digital modes. Caught 6m FT8 stations in Canada, Mexico, Curaçao, Guadeloupe, Trinidad & Tobago and Venezuela. Worked Ron WZ1V, Packrats Rick WC2K and Al N3ITT, while spotting others including K1TEO and NE2U. Final score here was 10,400 with 125 QSOs and 80 grids.

From Al W9KXI

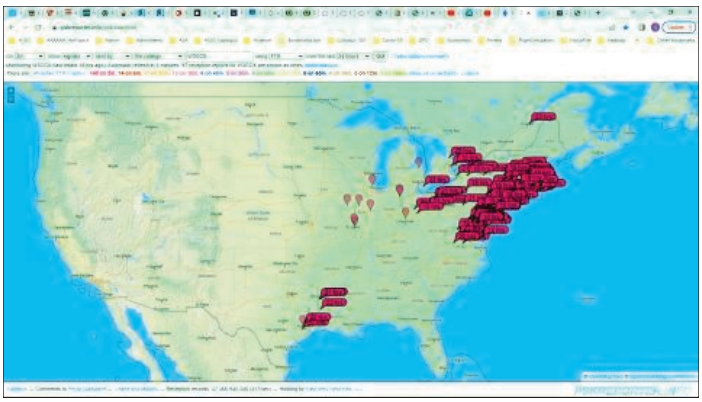
Everything worked pretty well here. My 6M antenna's life is in jeopardy as it is acting like an Omni. I hear signals off the front, the back and the back corners. The front seems to have a total beam width of 40 (or more) degrees. Unless there is a good opening, I hear very little in the way of SSB and what I do hear is extremely weak. On digital, it works pretty well. I don't have to move the beam to work stations off the back of the beam. Living in a valley in FN12ne, I was especially pleased with the 23cm performance. 5 total contacts is good for this location. My 23cm contacts: K2LNS FN11xm 101km,
WA3NUF FN20ke 266km
AF1T FN43cd 430km
W2BVH FN20up 275km
W3CCX FN20kd 270km

From John K3MD

FB condx on 2 and extended tropo on 2. 14418 Pts.

From George NE2U

Sunday evening the NJ/EPA 2 Meter E Layer opening to Texas and Louisiana during the VHF contest was likely to be a once in a lifetime event. Below is a screen shot of the opening as viewed on PSK Reporter.



From Allen K3WGR

From the RF Deck of NN3Q/r. I have a lot of experience in operating FT8 and always feel the VHF ops have not taken the time to learn all that is involved in operating. Found good conditions to the mid west, and occasionally South. Too many stations calling CQ and getting responses but never answer any station, and on it goes - frustrating, and taking two minutes or more to make one contact. NN3Q/r - Grids activated

FN10, FN11, FN21, FN20 around Hazleton as planned. My rove was set up to optimize grid locations close to W3CCX and run the bands from 6 meters to 10G. When I set up in FN10xa , this is a newly occupied warehouse and for the past 6 years I was parking in the vacant lot as the building was not being used. This time a wet behind the ears "security guard" wanted to know what I was doing and it was very obvious he did not comprehend any of it. I was asked to leave but I got 45 minutes on site. This was to be the grid I where I wanted to sit and operate for about 90 minutes. There was no one using the lot and for years I had the run of all the open space. Sheriff New Guy reminded me I had to leave. Sometimes you really have to wonder about how important people think they are! FN11 is along country paralleling I-80 and is right off the paved road. Nice shot to W3CCX. This was a short term rove but netted some other unexpected QSO's. FN21 rover site was on PA309 and while near the top of the hill, it was not on top so the lower four was all I did. Glitches with the laptops trying to keep the two K3's connected to N1MM was driving me nuts. Other anomalies with losing the monitor feature on the microwave K3 and the lower four K3 did not want to allow band change by using the mouse. More and more small things that drove me nuts. So I lowered the antennas and head for home grid FN10xi. It was about a 150 mile rove and I think it was successful just to give out Q's to W3CCX, however the score was low, about 2800 points.

From Jeff K1TEO

Here in the northeast we had some decent openings on 6 but were not in the hot spot this time around. Still the band was open on 6 much of the time. While I've heard from others in different parts of the country that the SSB/CW end was hopping, I never saw or heard many stations on the low end. There were never any runs at all except working 12 stations in 5 minutes on SSB Sunday afternoon. Basically, it was a slow but steady rate on FT8. I have a new noise problem that is quite bad on 6 so that added to the challenge. Without 6M SSB hopping, I never had any high-rate hours. The first hour had 65 and after that it was pretty much steady 30-50 QSO hours. With 10 bands it kept me busy for the entire contest. Just about 500 Q's the first day and 600 the second. In addition to the noise issue on 6, Murphy hit with loss of the PTT line on 2304 a few hours into the contest. Probably lost about 20 QSO's and 12-15 grids with the problem. The 2 meter amp had several shutdowns for hi SWR the first few hours. I thought I found the issue replacing the coax from the amp output to the wattmeter which was warm at the connectors. But 20 minutes later it recurred. More searching found the coax out of the wattmeter to the hardline really warm at the connector. Replaced it and all was fine. These coaxes had been in use for years with no issues. At least the issue was in the shack! Tropo conditions here were poor to the N and NE but about average for June elsewhere. I did work 4 stations on 2M Es in TX Sunday afternoon. K5QE was +15-20 on FT8 for about a half hour. Even got a new grid (EL19) on the band. With signals so strong I tried SSB for a while but didn't work anyone during the E skip opening. One new grid was worked on 6 which was nice. I saw 3 other grids I've never worked and called a bunch of times to no avail. I need about 45 for 6M FFMA so would have been nice. Thanks for the Q's and to the ARRL for sponsoring the contest. And to the rovers who went out and made the contest more interesting and fun for others.

From Michelle KB3MTW

Lower scores because I worked only the lower 4 and am using a vertical 2 meter / 70 cm antenna and 223 fm. Hopefully sometime in the future when I go back into debt and get the deck replaced I would like to get back onto 6 bands and have SSB for all bands. 765 pts.

From Dave K1RZ

2 and 6 meters were very good through the weekend. Near continuous E-Skip on 6m. And some E-Skip on 2 meters too, which always adds to the fun. Worked KE5FN EL19, W5EME EM32, N5EKO EM20 and WB5TUF EL29 on 2m FT8. Rovers were out in good numbers with K0BAK, WB0POH, N2ZBH, WR7Z, KD1RX, VE3GKT, KE4WMF, W8BRY, AC0RA,K0AXX, NV4B, W5TN, KF2MR, VE3OIL and K5TR adding many QSOs and Grids to the log. Thanks Rovers! And Alex W1FET/MM in three grids (FL64, FL66 and FL67) He said he ran "Along the rhumb line from St. Thomas, USVI to Buzzards Bay, MA on my 44 foot LOA "yacht" ". Thanks Alex. Fair Winds and

Following Seas to you. Thanks to all those on the air this weekend, and particularly those I was fortunate enough to work. :) Thanks to ARRL for sponsoring and reporting on this event.

From Jeff WN3A
Missed the first hour and a half of the contest - setting up always takes longer than it should. Spent the start of Saturday morning dismantling the remains of the antennas destroyed by ice last winter including a 2m yagi, 6m yagi, and a Diamond VHF/UHF omni (see pic of scrap pile). Ice is brutal at this site; the long- term plan is to install a crank-up tower, mount the antennas in the spring, then take them down and put them back in storage for the winter after the September contest. For this outing I used the ex-K3IPM ex-WA3DRC trailer-mounted tower, trying out three EAntenna loop-fed yagis for the first time. Constant 6m Es from start to finish. Only DX worked other than VE and XE was a single EI3. K3XY stopped by for a visit Saturday afternoon. Had fun except for the Monday teardown in the pouring rain, ha.

From Pete K0BAK/R
Barely got the rover vehicle ready after damage over the winter. But all the frenzied work was

worth it, I had my best RL score ever by a good margin. Spent most of Sunday harvesting mults on 6m FT8. With a couple of exceptions, all my contacts above 2m were skeds ... not good IMHO. I **really** miss being able to make SSB contacts on 6m or 2m, then moving those contacts through all my bands without skeds. Activated FM19(x2), FN10, FM29, FN20, FM18, FM28 in SE PA and NE MD. Got contacts in 5 countries, including Trinidad, Cuba, Mexico; I don't think I got father than Canada in all my other VHF contests. [See Pete's extended report elsewhere in this issue].

From Alex KR1ST
Following in the footsteps of Hisen, KD2TAI, I built a portable station with a Pluto+ SDR using SDR Console, capable of working 2m-6cm. I used a FT -817 for 6m. Since I do not have any microwave capable stations nearby I took the opportunity to work the W3CCX multi-op station who were on a nearby mountain top for the contest.

From Phil WA3NUF
Good activity with 6M open the entire contest and even a few bursts of E's on 2M. The only local issue was that a number of higher band stations were not available since the ops were on Mt Pocono operating the W3CCX club station. FT8 dominated 6 and 2. 222 and 432 activity was a big drop-off. The lack of an easy means to get stations to QSY up is still a major detriment to getting the most out of the higher bands. My station held up fairly well but definitely needs work and a lot of TLC. 2304 was intermittent most of the contest. My 2M AMP developed a thermal issue which caused power to fade 3 dB when activity was heavy on the band. At the end of the contest my headset fell apart leaving me holding the pieces in my hand while making the last few contacts for the weekend ;-) Overall, I enjoyed the weekend and added several new grids to my totals. Thanks to the rovers and everyone else that got on the air and make it a fun time.

From Dave W2KV
Operated analog only from FN20 in central NJ. Activity was pretty good with 6 open both days. 6 meter CW was very busy. Never heard the 2 meter e-skip, maybe next time. There was a bit of coastal tropo on Sunday. Best DX on 2 was AA4ZZ EM95 at 474 miles and VE3ZV EN92 at 331 miles on 432.

Field Day in Rhode Island

Rick Rosen K1DS

Precious little time do we have to do all the things we like during our summer vacation. In only three weeks heading north from our home in Florida, we traveled to Illinois, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, visiting family and friends, celebrating life events and making our doctor visits. What a better way to see the gang at the Providence Radio Association than operating Field Day with them as we scheduled the Saturday date.

The PRA got permission to use the Masonic property youth camp in Warwick, RI, that overlooks Narragansett Bay and the set-up was all done by the time I arrived at noon. Four trailers, each with its own quiet generator, radios, antennas and computers were tuned and ready to hit the airwaves at 2PM with call sign W1OP. After greeting all my buddies and meeting some new members, we had a bite of lunch and chatted about everything under the sun.

K1DS and PRA president Dave Tessitore K1DT

W1GS and I got going on 20m CW with John at the key and me on the logging computer. Plenty of activity and the QSO rates were adequate, but the band noise was S9. We swapped positions after an hour or so and as things started to slow up a bit. We then switched to 40m CW where we had a whole new group of stations to work. It was fun to slowly fill in the section map, especially with the new Canadian Ontario designations.

We finally found a Vermont station after a few hours. After that we started to work out West with Colorado, Texas and Utah in the log. Andy was at the key for a stint with me logging and then we switched positions for a while.

N1BAQ had the satellite gear ready, but the first pass we tried we heard nothing. Later on, we found out that particular bird was turned off! Hopefully the other satellites would deliver. The chow bell rang and we joined the whole team for burgers and sausages on the grill, complete with all the fixin's. Back to the rigs with Andy at the computer and I put in a last CW hour until Jani came to pick me up and head back to our hotel.


Tribander on military mast

What has this got to do with VHF? We did have a 6m station that was active, using 4 elements of a 5-element beam. It seems that the donor of that set-up left the reflector home! And of course, satellite QSOs on 144/432. It was great to reunite with my ham buds at the PRA, share our family adventures and successes of our harmonics. The club has grown, attracted young new hams getting licensed, and after 105 years since establishment and 104 years of continuous ARRL affiliation, The Providence Radio Association is a proud, active and vibrant club.

K0BAK/R June VHF Rove Report

As reported here in Cheese Bits last month, my rover van was damaged two ways by my rental garage. After more than a week I managed to get the station batteries charged and the entire antenna and relay system rebuilt and to replace damaged mast clamps. While the lack of rain over those weeks wasn't good for our lawns and flowers, the dry weather was lucky to have for all that rover work. I was frankly surprised I got the batteries back to normal voltage (it took three days each), but I was also certain that having been run down to under 9 volts they would have less energy capacity…which turned out to be proven true during the contest.

Contest Prep

After my surprise at getting the station operational again, I was pleased to be able to get on all four SSB Packrat nets on the Monday before the contest to verify the station's four bands and the ability of the rotator to be operated by software. With the limited operation on the nets, I still didn't know how the batteries would hold up for a full operation day, but at least they didn't run down quickly during the nets. The 6m Moxon was still well matched and its amplifier wasn't shutting down for high SWR, which has been a problem before. 432 had lower max power than it should have, which was also a problem before the rebuild, but since I could only run 100w as a Limited Rover that wasn't a problem for June.

The rest of the week was dedicated to normal rove preparations: 1) updating all the software that hadn't been used from October to May, 2) loading a fresh VHF station history file (so I can turn the rotator to the station showing in N1MM logger with one key combo), 3) composing a rove plan, 4) reestablishing permission for this year from the owners of private property I operate from around Gap PA, 5) having the rove plan available in a live spreadsheet on Google Drive as well as static versions in a printout and text file on my phone, 6) inviting Packrats to ask to be sent a text when I started operating at a new grid (no takers), 7) taking back my battery powered floor fan from my son and putting it back where it belongs in the van as the operator cooling device, 8) printing fresh copies of my start and end of operations checklist and taping them up inside the van, 9) entering my plans into our club database, 10) using the database to print out phone numbers for the closest club members for each contest day planning to operate in the contest, 11) buying and testing a temporary cell phone signal booster antenna (the original one was damaged and removed),)12) buying and testing a flashing light bar that I would use if I had to operate from the side of a rural two-lane fast road. Whew!! I was again surprised that on the Thursday before the contest, I couldn't think of anything else to prepare or fix, a decidedly rare experience.

Contest Saturday

My default VHF rove is to the grid intersection near Gap PA. Naturally my first stop was the farthest from home at a relative high spot in FM19xx among rolling farm hills a couple miles south of Route 30. I stayed on SSB for the first half hour; I got N2NT and I'm pretty sure CCX on my 4 bands. After listening and calling on 6m and 2m FT8 but logging just a few contacts over more than a half hour, I gave up on unassisted contacts and called Mike WB2RVX on the phone, when we easily made my 4 bands (with Mike's station of course doing most of the work). After that I found 2m and 6m FT8 more active and made two >500km 2m

contacts including my first Canadian contact of the contest. My plan was to spend up to 2 hours at each grid; before I left about 20 minutes behind schedule I noticed the 12v station battery voltage was significantly lower than it had been in previous contests at this point—which confirmed that the batteries' lives were indeed reduced by the rental garage's carelessness.

In the September contest on the way to my FN10xa location, I almost had an accident with two farm horses. This year the drive was drama-free, and I set up in the flat, open, but low school parking lot. This time the first thing I did was to call Bill K3EGE at CCX to request their attention, and made all but 6m contacts quickly and easily; 6m came soon thereafter with a couple other contacts in-between including a phone-initiated contact on K1RZ's two bands. My next call after the 4th CCX contact was to Mike again to make my 4 QSO's. 432 was a minor struggle. I spent another half hour on 2m FT8 to make slow but steady Qs. At this point I was seeing battery sags to less than 12 volts on transmit, so I decided to spend less time on 2m at the next stop in favor of 6m whose amplifier uses a separate 50vdc lithium battery.

My FM29ax location at a private business is almost ideal: one of the highest points in FM29 in the Gap area, only 100 yards off Route 30, and open & high enough that I don't feel the need to fully extend my pneumatic mast. This was reflected in the ease of making strong contacts with CCX, RVX, and K1RZ. After the phone-initiated contacts were done, I switched to and stayed on 6m for 20 steady unassisted contacts with a good proportion of them being 1000-3800km long, including what turned out to be my farthest contest contact to CN94 in Oregon. Among those were exciting contacts to XE2JS and 4U1WB (alas, 4U1WB doesn't count for a U.N. DXCC). Before leaving I looked only for new mults on 2m FT8, and indeed found two. At this point, my batteries were sagging to under 11v; I sadly made the decision to skip my planned stop at a high point in FN20 north of Coatesville on the way back home in favor of charging my batteries overnight before using them again.

On the drive back home, I was considering changing Sunday's rove plan to only activate grids I didn't visit Saturday to reduce the total draw on the batteries. Then I had a sudden revelation to try to use a small generator to charge my batteries at rove stops. I bought a small lightweight kilowatt generator for charging my batteries overnight during my week-long CNPOTA rove to the Canadian Maritimes in 2019 (see May 2020 QST), but hadn't used it in a couple of years. While I knew the generator should work fine for charging my main batteries, I never used it during a radio operation so had no idea if it or my charger would interfere with RF. While I was hoping to fill the generator when I got home to be ready for a test when I woke up Sunday morning (did I mention the generator is also quiet?), I was so tired by the time I arrived home all I could do before bed was to start charging the station batteries from home power.

Contest Sunday

Waking up sore and stiff from the day before, I moved at a slow but deliberate pace. The first item on the morning task list was to gas up the generator and carry out breakfast from Wawa. After filling the genny and me, my first test was looking for RF noise from the battery charger while it was powered from the house—no sense in going forward with the generator idea if the charger makes noise. Given that I knew

the inverter side of the device generated significant but not overwhelming noise on 40m, I was pleasantly surprised that the noise I found on my four VHF bands was minimal even on 6m with the antennas lowered. Next, I raised the antennas and checked again with the same result. I started the little generator and was pleased to see a minimal effect. While it would have been much better if I had thought of this generator charging idea earlier in the week, I did feel good about following the motto “improvise, adapt, and overcome”.

While the antennas were raised in my driveway, I thought I should get FN20 activated while I’m here. My home has 180° of 100’ close hills to the north so I would have rather activated from a better location, but this was the fastest way to get it done since I still had a full day of driving ahead of me. I found N3NGE, W3CCX, and K1RZ naturally on 2m FT8 a little before 8 AM, and after contacting K1RZ on 2m I called Dave to make an SSB contact on 6m. After a quick session on 6m then 2m FT8, my final act before leaving was to call Bill at CCX to help me complete the other 3 bands on SSB (thanks to Bill and CCX for operating early on Sunday).

My planned trip to the grid intersection near Centreville MD involved overcoming a bit of fear. After too many breakdowns in rural areas hundreds of miles from home (including a cold night in French-speaking Quebec), I vowed to only use the TV van close to home, meaning only grids in Gap for VHF contests. My plan was to first activate FM19 again since Sunday mornings typically have low contest activity. So it would be better for me to start in a grid I already activated. The nearly three-hour trip was interrupted when it looked like my Moxon was hanging farther off one side than the other as seen in my side mirrors. Pulling over at a closed weigh station, I couldn’t make a correction because I had inexplicably left my U.S. socket set out of my road toolbox. I needed a socket and a wrench to loosen the DX Engineering “genius clamps” that fastened my 90° PVC Moxon sub-mast to my steel rotator mast. Oh well, it looked like the rotation was due to rotator or mast twisting not the clamps, so I shrugged and continued, hoping the twist wouldn’t get worse.

I arrived at my first operation site at a run-down truck stop, chosen for its ease of exiting and returning to U.S. 301. During planning I was picturing a typical truck stop where the parking lot is large enough and customer traffic frequent enough to be able to get away with a quick activation. In this case, I thought I should ask the lonely cashier for permission since I wasn’t going to be easily ignored. Luckily he was accommodative, and I chose a location to minimize the effect of artificial hills at the highway intersection. After finding just one signal on 2m FT8, I called local Packrat Ed WA3DRC to make four quick contacts at 58 to 59+40 signal levels. After calling K1RZ for his two bands, I made 3 more on 6m FT8 before packing up. I didn’t bother to try the generator at this quick stop. Before I left, I bought a couple items in the convenience store mostly to leave the cashier with a good tip and my thanks.

The trip to my FM18xx location was quick. The community college where I’d set up has a distinctive circular shape on satellite view, but having never been there I didn’t know if I’d be allowed to operate. The gates were open, which was a good start, and I found the northern most parking lot I was aiming for was also the flatest I saw. While setting up without the generator to first make a few quick contacts, I got a call from an unknown number that was not flagged as spam…I had forgotten to turn off my iPhone setting to ignore all unknown callers so it could have been a contester looking for a real-time sked.

I finished setting up and made a couple SSB contacts, set up the generator for charging the station batteries during operation, then returned the phone call. Dale AF1T in New Hampshire was looking to try 2m CW, but he was busy running bands with another station and would call me back. I think we exchanged two more phone calls before finally being able to try a contact. I don’t know Morse code, but I can recognize my own callsign and standard exchange patterns, so an attempt at a likely weak CW contact was going to be interesting. While his signal was indeed very weak and I strained my ears, after a couple tries with the help of a Morse cheat sheet and a 50Hz CW filter setting I was able to confirm my longest 2m contact of the contest to FN43, about 750km (take that FT8). Thanks to Dale for calling me and for your patience.

Next, I called Bill then Jim KC3BVL at CCX to try to get 222 and 432. Although we ought to have been pointing at each other when I listened, I was disappointed that I couldn’t hear CCX well enough to make an exchange. While I was more than 100km farther away than Saturday, still I thought I should be able to hear them. At least I got CCX on all bands at all four grids the day before. Next, I ran through my list of reliable stations

taking my phone calls, and rapidly made SSB contacts on all bands to DRC, RVX, K1TEO, and K1RZ. 2m FT8 was next where I made a good string of contacts including 3 at over 600km. On 6m FT8, I found the opening others talked about. Since I have so little experience working openings (no home VHF station), it was strange to see decode after decode showing the same heading to 243° +/- 20°. My low-gain Moxon wasn't worth moving so I just kept it toward the money direction; most contacts were well over 1,000km.

My operating site in FM28aw was at the Tuckahoe State Park ranger station, about the only parking area in the park not tightly surrounded by trees. Tuckahoe is a new POTA park for me, so my contest contacts also enabled me to add to my unique activated parks total. After getting permission from the park office to operate and to use my generator, my first phone call was to Ed WA3DRC, my prime goal at FM28 because Ed had expressed frustration with not getting his own grid as a mult in contests. Ed was unavailable, so calls to K1TEO and WB2RVX again yielded 3- and 4-band contacts, with TEO now 350km away. I was glad TEO and RVX were as loud on 222 as they usually are, because I faced a strange ~20db elevated noise floor which briefly dropped to normal when I pushed my TX footswitch, even with the 222 amplifier off. With marginal cell service, I was glad I bought a new albeit small cell booster antenna, which I temporarily "installed" on the van roof; even with the booster I had difficulty being understood on the phone.

Action on 6m FT8 wasn't as frenetic as it was at my previous stop, but I still mostly made contacts well over 1,000km. Included in these were my second contest contact to Cuba, and one to 9Y4D in Trinidad at ~3400km which was my fifth country of the contest. 9Y4D also confirmed on LotW, so that's a new one for me on 6m. At this point I was over an hour late on my schedule, and called Ed just before I packed up. I was happy he was available and that I was able to give him his own grid on my 4 bands.

My intention was to make a fourth stop in FM29aa, also at a new-to-me POTA site, but I checked travel times and realized that I'd be back home by 9:30 only by driving directly home. Skipping the final site was disappointing, but I didn't regret the fun of making distant contacts on 2m and 6m in the last two grids.

Summary, Observations, and Thanks
With a claimed score of 20,680, I blew past my previous best of 13k and shattered my typical scores of 4k to 7k. Six grids activated (FM19, FN10, FM29, FN20, FM18, FM28), 337 miles driven, ~22 hours on the road, 202 QSOs (131 FT8, 70 SSB, 1 CW).

· After the good performance in this contest, it's hard not to think again about my decision to sell the van. I'm still going to try to sell it, but I might be less disappointed if I don't succeed in the sale this year.

· Thanks to the stations I phoned or texted often during the contest: K1RZ, K1TEO, WB2RVX, WA3DRC. I've always been reluctant to call busy successful stations especially since I can't offer higher bands, but I tried harder this time. Appreciate you all taking the time to run my humble four bands.

· With the lack of SSB signals on 2m and 6m to ask to run bands, and the dominance of FT8 on those bands: I now realize the only way IMHO to have a competitive rover score is to have a good FT8 station on 2m and 6m, combined with the ability and willingness to call local Packrats to run all bands quickly. But, there's a limited ability for a single rover op like me to do both. I need a second op in the rover to either manage phone contacts or to operate the radio while I manage the phone.

· Thanks to the W3CCX low band coordinators Bill K3EGE and Jim KC3BVL, as well as all the hard-working captains, build crew, and operators there. They provided the most effective CCX coordination effort yet from my perspective. I've been trying to contact CCX in June on all bands from my rover since 2014, and it has been quite frustrating at times in the past compared to running bands with some other large multiops in the region. Thanks again.

The Wayback Machine
In CHEESE BITS, 50 Years Ago

Nibbles from July1973. Vol. XV Nr 7 de K3IUV Bert
(*author's comments in italics*)

"**Our Prez Sez"**. Prez Walt, **K3BPP** thanked all the participants that joined the recent club operation at Hilltown, as well as the chairman, Tony Souza, **K1SFF/3** (*now **W3HMU***). Since Walt's term was expiring, he also thanked those who chaired or served on other committees and "made my job much easier."

Calendar. July 18, club auction and first outdoor meeting at the QTH of Dave, **W3ZD** (*another club tradition*). August 5th, **WA2LTM**, Doug, reports the East Coast VHF group will again sponsor an antenna measuring contest at Trenton State College. (*Nice to see Doug this week at the annual **K2UYH** get-together*.) August 12th, Packrat Picnic at Fort Washington State Park (*another tradition, now downsized and held at member's property*). And then on August 15th, another outdoor meeting at the QTH of **K3IUV**, Bert (*that's me*), with movies, slides and refreshments for a social evening. October 7th, planning started for second Packrat Hamarama.

New Products of Interest to Hams. **W3NSI**, Lynn's always interesting article offered up the following new items: 1). Icom released the IC-30 432 FM Transceiver. 1-watt or 10-watt output selection, and supplied with two crystals. Price not available. 2) Janel introduced the 144CC Two Meter converter. Operates from 12-vdc, priced at $49.95. 3) Heathkit announced the HM-2102 wattmeter, calibrated for two power maximums, 25 watts and 250 watts. Covers the range of 50 – 160 MHz. Priced at $30.

VHF Report. Joe, **W2EIF** noted that band conditions were poor during the last two months. The contest weekend did have a brief aurora on Sunday afternoon, during which Joe worked Michigan, Ohio and Indiana. He predicted some better conditions near the end of June, and pointed out that very short skip on six meters is usually a tip that 2-meters conditions would be good.

Ladies Night 1973 report. A brief report on the Ladies Night banquet held in May noted that 57 members and their ladies were in attendance at the Buck Hotel event. A one-man band entertained the group, and member Herm, **K3GOZ** played a few songs on his Mummers Band Mandolin! **W2EIF** made beautiful ceramic plaques for the Monday night net control stations, and Man of the Year award went to Dave, **W2ZD**. A good time was had by all.

Membership. New member voted in was Tom Scheid, **WA3AXH**, located in Norristown. Applied for membership, **WA3JUF**, David Mascaro (now **W3KM**, our longggg serving treasurer!). (*50 years this year, Dave!*) Dave was located in Warminster at the time. Visitors included future member **K3ACR**, Rich Pattison.

Hilltown Report. W3CL, Harry, provided some additional information on the club Hilltown operation this year. 50 Packrats participated in the event. 9-stations were set-up, including the erection of 6-towers and a 6-foot dish. 3 additional antennas were set-up for 2 and 6 FM and for the 221.4 MHz

intercom. An "expeditionary force" (*now we call them rovers*) consisting of Walt, **K3BPP**, Don, **W3CJU** and Dan, **WA3NFV** went to North and South Jersey and installed a 2300 MHz station (including 2-meter FM for dish orientation). This effort made it possible to include three sections in our scoring for 2300 MHz. Well done, gang.

Photos. Another page of photos was included in this issue. Seen in some of the candid shots (*taken at Hilltown*) were Bill Olson, **K1JDY/3**, Harry Brown, **WA3NGK** (later **W3IIT**), Joe Kilgore, **W2EIF**, Ron, **WA3AXV** (now **W3RJW**) and some of the antennas used at the site. You can see these historic photos on our web site in the scanned copy of this edition.

Tidbits. A number of Packrats (**K1SFF/3**, **K3BPP, W2AXU, WA2WYE**, **K3IUV, K3GAS**, and **W2EIF**) helped Al Katz, **K2UYH**, remove a 20-ft dish which he then donated to the club for our moonbounce project. **WA2LTM** and **WA2ZZF** of the East Coast VHF group were also in the work party. Al has a 30' dish ready to go up soon. A number of club members will assist Al with that installation shortly. (*Footnote. I saw that 30' dish at Al's house this week, still in place and operating, 50 years later*!)

Swap Shoppe. By W3ZRR. *(Always nostalgia. Now we use the club reflector*. A 6-meter, Gonset II, mint condition with 4-crystals. $75, from BB Wentzel, **W2HX**. From Will Power, **WB2OAD**, a Heathkit HX-30 plus a 144 MHz Heterodyne unit and a 2-meter amplifier using a 4X150 as a complete package, $175. Also, a 220 MHz station compete and working for $45. Wanted, by Sharon Beck, a Heathkit HG-10B VFO.

Electronic Exchange Ad. This interesting full-page ad was again included from Electronic Exchange. This was a new store located in North Wales, PA. They listed a large number of new and used items for sale, with prices that seem reasonable. The list included receivers, transmitters, test equipment and a lot of miscellaneous electronic gear.

Ads. The July 73 issue included the half page back cover ad from club member Ham Buerger. (A HAM-M rotor for $109. 95! And a phone patch - *remember them - for $14.95.*) The usual 23 *business card ads were included in this issue. I note the current Cheese Bits Ad complement includes only 4 small ads, a ¼ page from Beko and a ½ page from Down East. If you'd like to join them, contact the ad chairman, Bob,* ***W2SJ***.

Miscellany. *Postage for this issue was a single 8-cent "Flag" stamp. (7 double sided, 8-½ x 11" sheets). (**Don't forget**, current postage goes to 66-cents in July), and a penny postcard now will cost 51-cents!) As usual, many other "folksy" comments about members, their families, and activities were included in this edition of Cheese Bits. If interested, or for more detail on any of the above items, visit our website (**www.W3CCX.COM**) and read the full issue scanned by **K3IUV** (me), and posted on the website by **WS3O**, our webmaster. I have also posted the club Officers history, club Membership history, and Packrat Inventory (updated frequently) on the **W3CCX** website. These files are password protected, and only accessible to registered members. Are you registered? I hope*

Wayback cont'd

you enjoyed reading these bits of nostalgia as much as I did in writing the article. If yes, you might let me know. Thanks to those that did.

thirty, de **K3IUV** (comments or corrections to: **K3IUV@ARRL.net**)

Assembling and Operating a 122 GHz Station

Here's a nice 45 minute YouTube video presentation on assembling and operating a 122 GHz station: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jI214AzyIHc. The station is relatively inexpensive, but (as you would expect) attention to detail at these frequencies is important. Similarly, attention to weather conditions (humidity is an important factor) and geography needs to be studied carefully.

Looks like a fun and do-able project. —W2BVH

The Central States VHF Society invites you to attend our 55th annual conference in Little Rock, Arkansas July 27-29, 2023.

Beginning in 1965 as an informal get-together, the first formal conference was held in 1967 and has grown to one of the most notable and respected VHF conferences in the United States.

Formal events begin Thursday evening with a social gathering. Friday morning will offer a range for 50 through 10 GHz antenna measurements, a noise figure workshop for preamps & transverters, a "Rover Row" display of VHF rover stations and a "Microwave Dish Row" display. Technical presentations begin at noon Friday and continue through Saturday afternoon. A Friday evening swapfest and Saturday evening banquet round out the conference activities.

A ladies/family luncheon has been organized for Friday.

Registration is now open. Details can be found at http://2023.csvhfs.org/

73 Joel W5ZN

Tracking the Voyager Space Probe

Here's a 3-part YouTube video on how they are still tracking the Voyager space probe at a distance of (give or take) 3 times the distance to Pluto.

https://youtu.be/586Zn1ct-QA
https://youtu.be/vUvzgZt1Vug
https://youtu.be/vfZz4EnhJBE

This is all done at S and X band using a 4000 ton antenna floating on an oil bearing on a 4000 ton base. It's located at the NASA tracking station in Tidbinbilla Australia. Many interesting (and mind boggling) details in these videos. (Signal levels in the –150 to –160s for instance.)

—W2BVH

Events

For inclusion, please direct event notices to the editor.

(For contests, see Ray's "2023 VHF and Up Contests.pdf" document at the "Contest Info" tab on the club web site. Many repeated here for convenience)

Sussex County (NJ) Hamfest - July 16, 2023. See http://scarcnj.org for details.

North American Meteor Scatter Sprint - Contest - August 2023. Details will be found at https://kv5w.com/na-meteor-scatter-sprint-digital-rules/-digital-rules/

ARRL 222 UP Distance Contest— August 5-6 2023. Details to follow.

ARRL EME 2.3 GHz & Up (round 1) Contest — August 12-13, 2023. Details to follow.

ARRL 10 GHz & Up (Round 1) Contest— August 19-20, 2023. Details to follow.

Fall VHF Sprints—Schedule to follow

ARRL EME 2.3 GHz and Up (round 2) Contest — September 9-10, 2023. Details to follow.

ARRL September VHF Contest -- September 9-11, 2023. Details to follow.

ARRL 10 GHz & Up (Round 2) Contest— September 16-17, 2023. Details to follow.

ARRL EME 50 MHz to 1296 MHz Contest — October 28-29, 2023. Details to follow.

ARRL EME 50 MHz to 1296 MHz Contest — November 25-26, 2023. Details to follow.

ARRL January VHF Contest— January 20 –22, 2024. Details to follow

1296 MHz Activity Night

There's an informal 1296 activity night in the NY/NJ/PA/CT region (and beyond) every Monday night starting around 9:30 pm (or so) on 1296.110. No coordination, just jump in and say hello W2BVH

KC3BVL UHF+ Wednesday Net

Packrat, Jim KC3BVL conducts a Wednesday night net with schedule as follows: 7:30PM—903.100, 8:00PM—2304.100, 8:30PM– 432.160, 9:00PM—1296.100

KC3BVL VHF Friday Net

Packrat, Jim KC3BVL conducts a Friday night net with schedule as follows: 7:30PM—144.160, 8:00PM—50.160, 8:30PM– 222.150

Reminder: there are 3 FT8 VHF / UHF Activity Contests each month. For info see: http://www.ft8activity.eu/index.php/en/

For those interested in an online "Contest Only" event calendar for VHF+, see https://www.qsl.net/n2sln/contestcalendar.html

Meteor Shower Calendar

Here's a Meteor Shower Calendar showing the dates for all the Meteor Showers in 2023. They're correct for our location in the Northeast. https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/meteor-shower/list.html

222 MHz Activity Night

There's been an informal 222 activity night in the Northeast (and beyond) every Tuesday night starting around 7 pm (or so) Eastern Time. ON4KST is being used by some to coordinate Q's when direct CQ's are weak. W2BVH

PLEASE SEND IN 2023 DUES

Club dues are due as of Jan 1st, 2023. Go to https://www.qsl.net/w3km/MtAiryRC_Dues.htm and use the "check here" link to see if you already paid. If not, enter your callsign and click on "PayPal"

AS OF 7/10/23 9 DUES REMAIN UNPAID !

Dave ***W3KM***

Cheese Bits
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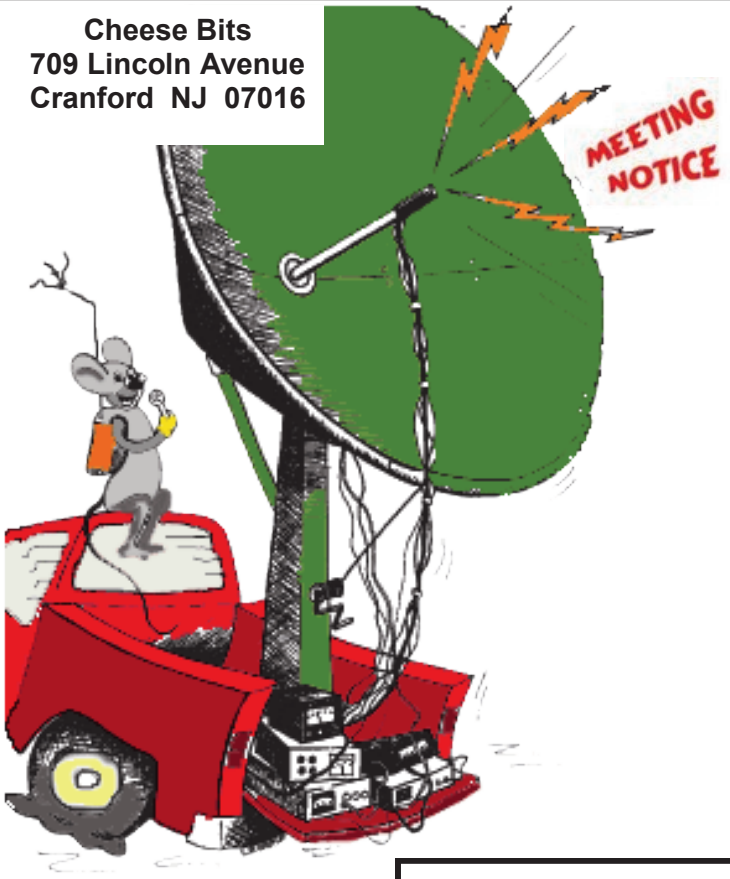
Cranford NJ 07016



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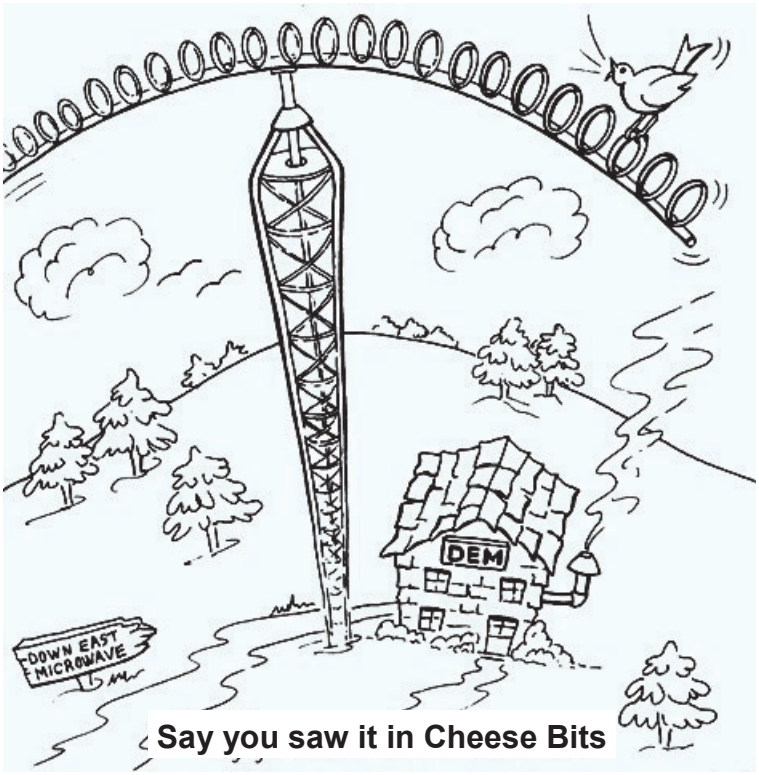

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