



ZERO BEAT

<http://hcra.org>

October 2019

Next Meeting: **Oct 4**

Rich, K2UPS LICW Group visit

Annual Dues—membership renewal

Fox Hunt Alert!!!

We (HCRA) will continue to try and get together to fox hunt. This is a great way to practice with the antenna / attenuator that was built earlier. Larry has been emailing, posting on the FB page and web page with proposed dates—keep an eye out for new dates!!

Bring:

- 2m HT (full battery)
- Antenna adapter to go TO BNC from your HT
- Fox Hunt antenna
- Attenuator from the build class.

RSVP to W1AST@arrl.net

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October Meeting

October Meeting: This month we have a visit from Rich Collins, K2UPS from the Long Island CW Group. They are big on all things CW—classes, setups, keys, projects, etc. Rich will be bringing some of his key collection.

Timing on this is great for us—as all the ARRL members know (p.74 of QST) the results of the ARRL QST key competition. Our own Treasurer—Juergen Malner, NV1Q won in the paddle category for his Opto-Keyer. So, in addition to Rich's keys, maybe some of our members will bring some of their interesting ones, especially the Opto-Keyer. Touch base with Larry to make sure we don't have 7 Benchers ;-)

The Swap / Sell table is back in action!— Bring your old stuff, get some new to you stuff. Check in / mark your stuff when you get to the meeting.

NEAR-Fest (the twice a year New England Ham Festival is the weekend of Oct 11 & 12 2019. Camping, vendors, swap meet, tech stuff, exams, etc. It's a 2.5-3 hr drive from our area. It's at the Deerfield NH fairgrounds, so it's kind of the country cousin to Boxboro vs at a hotel convention center. It should also be a nice ride since the leaves are starting to turn colors.

There are a couple of vacancies on the Board—Programs and At Large. There will be a change at Secretary after the end of this year. So if you are interested in becoming more involved in this group—contact Larry at the meeting and let him know you are interested.

And don't forget—membership renewal—dues are due!! See John K1VOI at the meeting.

73, John N1JIE

Hey—if you are going somewhere in radio world—whether it's to HRO in Nashua, ARRL headquarters, Boxboro or field day, and you have room for a passenger—let folks know on the FB page or Larry W1AST has agreed to be a clearinghouse via email (W1AST@arrl.net) for rideshares. If you are looking for a ride—the same applies. If ya don't ask, ya don't get ;-)

Let's look out for each other, and help others participate in our hobby. Thanks Larry for helping by being a contact point.

FROM THE SHACK

LARRY KRAINSON W1AST



October is fast approaching. It's barely 3 weeks away as I compose this. That means the fall contest season and more activity on the ham bands as people are inside more. More time for radio.

Our October 4th meeting brings my friend Rich Collins, K2UPS up from Long Island, NY to talk about all things CW. Rich is a dynamic, energetic and exciting guy who loves all things CW. He is one of the co-founders of the Long Island CW Club (<https://longislandcwclub.org/>) which teaches and trains on all aspects of CW. It's an online course with members from near and far. Rich is also bringing some of his CW key and Paddle collection to share with us. Many of his collection have some very interesting history tied to them.

Rich is also an amazing cook. He is bringing those cooking skills to the HCRA for the 2020 Field Day weekend next June. Forget the hamburgs and hot dogs, we are in for a culinary treat that will never be forgotten.

The HCRA is also holding a look and try at members own cw paddles and keys. There will be oscillators to test straight keys, single and dual thumb piece paddles and maybe a few other interesting devices. I will bring my Begali Traveler. I urge all other members that have a key or paddle to email me (w1ast@arrrl.net) and tell me what they are bringing so we don't have duplicates. This way we won't have 7 people bringing their Benchers in when just one will do. Most of us that do cw have more than one or two keys/paddles. Bring in at least one (or more) and let others try them. Hopefully it will get others interested in cw and maybe plant the idea of purchasing a new key or

paddle.

The key/paddle showcase and try out will run 7:00 pm to 7:25 pm right before the October meeting.

Vanessa, W1IRL is working on ideas for a pre-meeting information session between 7:00 and 7:25 pm time frame. These mini sessions are aimed at new hams and anyone interested. Some possible subjects are: the no-tangle way of coiling rope, cable, coax and wire; Chirp HT programming software, SWR and what it really tells you, basic soldering & unsoldering skills, building a dipole antenna and other ideas. As they get scheduled, the subjects will be announced so you can attend.

Near-Fest (<https://near-fest.com/>) is coming up the weekend of October 11th & 12th. This is New England's largest ham flea market. It's held up in Deerfield, NH. It's always an enjoyable trip and there is lots and lots of stuff there. Maybe something will catch your eye? I hope to be up there on Saturday the 12th and hope to see you there.

October and November also bring big DX contests sponsored by the ARRL and CQ Magazine. A good place to check and see what contests are coming up is: <https://www.contestcalendar.com/>

Contests are also a great chance to work DX that you normally do not hear. Once you have worked your DX and it's in your log, then upload your log to Clublog.com. It's free and you can compare your results to those of other HCRA members. That's always interesting and fun and a little motivator to go chase the next one too!

Once at ClubLog, if you're not already signed up, sign up for free. Then under League Tables, choose DXCC Leagues, in the drop down choose HCRA. Here is a screen shot of the menu options:

The screenshot shows the ClubLog website interface. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, Settings, Upload, QRS, Donate, Expeditions, and Help. The left sidebar contains a list of menu items: Your Log, DXCC Charts, Timelines, QSL Charts, Zone Charts, Log Inspector, Log Matching, League Tables (highlighted), DXCC Leagues, Zone Leagues, Club Leagues, CDXC Challenges, and Super League. The main content area is titled 'DXCC Leagues' and includes a sub-header: 'The leagues are rebuilt once per day. Only callsigns active in the last 12 months are included in the league tables. The maximum size of a league is 2500 participants.' Below this is a form with various filters and options. The 'No Mode Filter' is selected. The 'Rank by slots' option is chosen. The 'Rank by band' dropdown is set to 'Totals'. The 'Filter by club/continent' dropdown is set to 'HCRA - Hampden County Radio Association'. The 'Generate DXCC League' button is visible. The bottom of the form shows the text 'League for HCRA - Hampden County Radio Association'.

FROM THE SHACK CONTINUED

It's official! The HCRA 10m Net has returned! Marcel, AA1WH is the net control. The net starts at 7:30 pm / 22:30 GMT on 28.375 MHz. It's a chance to get on the air locally on 10 and learn about what everyone has been up to ham radio wise. It's a fun get together and we might try some SSTV or other modes that can be used on 10 too. Come join in the fun!

October continues the HCRA membership drive. We'd like to get everyone renewed at the October meeting. If you're a member or want to become a member, then please bring your \$15 dues with you on October 4th. Here is a membership application: <http://www.hcra.org/membership/>

The HCRA BIG raffle tickets are officially now on sale. The Honda EU2200i Inverter generator was the item that had the most votes in our Facebook poll. Years ago, when the club started doing a big raffle, we started with Honda generators. We run 2 of these generators for Field Day and they sip fuel. Running 3 rigs and computers, we barely use 8 gallons of gas total and they are so quiet. I'd love to own one myself! Here's some info on it: <https://powerequipment.honda.com/generators/all-new-eu2200i>

Last April we had a Fox Hunt Share the Knowledge session where tape measure 2 meter beams were built as was an attenuator. The session was a big success with 16 participants attending and everyone had great fun and also made some new friends.

Working on the popularity of that session, I would like to see the club start doing some fox hunts. We can start small to get everyone more familiar with taking readings, plotting those readings and finding the fox. It's a heck of a lot of fun! I've sent out a poll via email and on the HCRA Facebook page for the best day and time to do hunts. Please take the time to either email me your best times or select on Facebook. I'm hoping we can get a few hunts in before the end of the year. My goal is to have at least a few of us participate in the New Years Day Fox Hunt put on by the Bears of Manchester. New Years Day 2019 had myself, WA1OJN and WM1B as well as NT1K out hunting and we all had a blast. I'm hoping more for HCRA participation this coming New Years. A few practice hunts growing into regular hunts will help.

That's all for now. So many exciting ham radio things going on, there's something for everyone.

Larry/W1AST

W1AST@arrl.net

SCHEDULED MEETINGS AND SPEAKERS:



Everything you wanted to know about Mag Loop Antennas by Ted Robinson, K1QAR

OCTOBER

Rich Collins, K2UPS of the Long Island CW Group & showcase his key collection



The Amazing Transatlantic Feat of 1901 by Marconi – K1ZM, Jeff via Skype as he is in PEI



The annual HCRA / MTARA Holiday party



Bob Hassett Springfield emergency preparedness & EOC facility



Bob, K1YO – ARES and it's recent come back in Western MA



Rob Macedo KC1DY talks all about Skywarn and how important it is for weather tracking



Show & Tell — members bring in their projects and show them off!!



Marty Sullaway, NN1C: Team Exuberance – teens and contesting



Elections, Field Day and more?

ARRL STUFF

Things are happening in the world of Amateur Radio. ARRL is our advocate for Government, education and organization. I hope everyone that is a member of HCRA is also a member of ARRL.

Technical competition

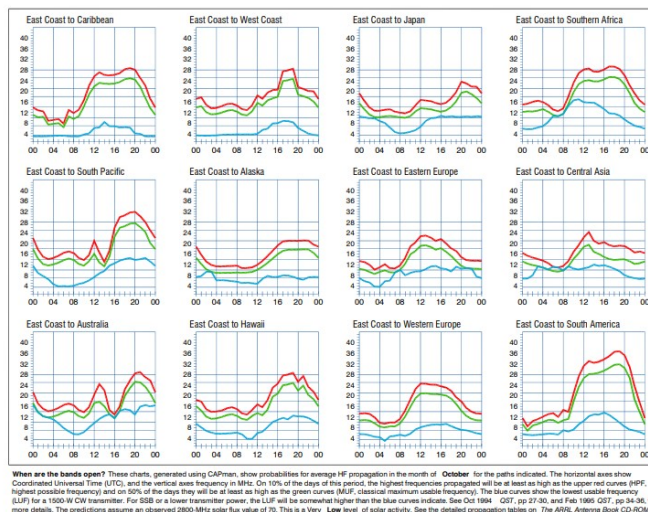
A lot of us know of, and participate in radio contesting. ARRL also works at technical competition. The very well known Antenna issue—where members submit plans and technical information on antenna designs, and are judged on the effectiveness and completeness of their work. This month was the key competition. Juergen, NV1Q win in the paddle area, but all of them were great—the steampunk themed straight key of W6FIF was beautiful—as ornate as Juergen’s was clean and functional. There was also an honorable mention for the “Frank-in-key”, a Halloween themed straight key using a lot of 3d printing for parts. So while the competition is all about technology and effectiveness, there is room for individuality and fun.



Propagation information

Propagation is a funny thing, and quite honestly, even with an Extra ticket, it’s something I don’t understand well. But hey, the ARRL does! And each month publishes a chart for each region, for each band, for the month letting you know the probability of good propagation. Kinda like the weather forecast, but for radio!

The link here: <http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Propagation%20Charts/10east70.pdf> will get you something like this:



There are other propagation sites—Carol W1LGU puts up the Space Weather Woman (<https://www.facebook.com/spaceweatherwoman/>) periodically on the FB page and there is always VOACAP for individual custom calculations and predictions. But as a barefooter with a wire—100w and a folded dipole at 30 ft—propagation info is helpful—tells me whether I should fire up the radio or sit by the fire ;-)

Membership is just \$49/yr, less than a weekly coffee at Cumbys...

To learn more about membership, and how it can help you—<http://www.arrl.org/membership>

Speaking of contesting—here is a great writeup by one of our nearby parts suppliers—Quicksilver Radio of Meriden, CT.

The arrival of Autumn means it's also time for the **major Ham Radio contests**. The biggest of all is the CQ World-Wide contest. This year the Phone (SSB) portion is October 26-27, and CW is November 23-24. Visit www.cqww.com for info. Another biggie is the ARRL Sweepstakes. CW is November 2-4, Phone is November 16-18. Visit www.arrl.org for details. Now I'm, at best, a casual tester. My modest station includes a 100W HF rig and a wire antenna up about 30 feet. Squarely in "Peanut Whistle" territory, for sure, compared to many others. But **I do enjoy getting on the air and working stations all over the US and the world**. With just a bit of effort, you can often get your Worked All States, or DXCC Award, in a single weekend. If you're new to HF, or contesting, here are **ten tips for you**. But before we even get started though, now is the time to inspect your station and antenna system. Replace old and lossy coax and frayed support ropes. Clean up connections and shack wiring. Or finally install that Bandblaster you keep meaning to put up. What?? You still haven't passed your General Class License test? Take a look at my tips for passing [here](#). Find an exam session, and join the fun.

#1. Read the contest rules. Understand what bands you can use, what your entry category will be, and what the "exchange" is. Simply, that's the information you will give to the other station and he/she will give to you. In the CQWW, for example, you send them a signal report and your CQ "Zone". Since I live in the Eastern US, I'm in Zone 5, so I would send "59 05". Note that by tradition, in a contest everyone has a 59 or 599 signal.

#2. Get with the program. Specifically, a logging program. There are quite a few options out there. My personal choice is the [N1MM Logger](#). It's free and has an amazing array of features. It's updated regularly, and has an extremely active online support community. It also interfaces with just about any modern HF radio you might own.

There is a bit of a learning curve involved, so **you don't want to wait until the last minute** to install it and familiarize yourself with it. Get it now, connect your rig, and spend a little time with it. You might want to start a "fake contest" -- select CQWW, for instance, and enter some calls. Get to understand the entry window, and what other windows you might or might not want open during the contest. After you enter a few dozen fictitious contacts, make sure that the program will produce a Cabrillo file with an accurate score and summary. **Hint: If it doesn't, the problem is in your setup, not the program itself.** And finally -- don't get into the habit of hearing a station, writing his call and info down on paper, and then entering it in the computer. This only wastes time and leads to more mistakes. Enter it straight into the program. And if you already have logging software installed, **make sure you have the latest upgrades and support files installed and working.**

#3. More Butt-in-Chair-Operating-Time = more contacts. Turn off distractions like texting, Facebook, e-mail, TV, broadcast radio, etc. Concentrate. But don't forget to take breaks. For 5 minutes every hour, get up, stretch, get some fresh air and a glass of water or a cup of coffee.

#4. Set an achievable goal. Face it. If you're not an experienced tester with a "Big Gun" station (yet!) you're not going to win. But you can certainly try to beat your score in last year's contest. Or work DXCC in a weekend. Or outscore your buddy across town.

#5. Study propagation, and get a sense of what bands are likely to be open to areas you want to work, and at what times. This will help you come up with a basic plan. But remember that band openings can occur at any time, so if you're operating in a category that allows it, keep an eye on the DX cluster because those openings can often be brief but intense.

#6. Don't waste time in pileups, especially early in the contest. Particularly if you have a Little Pistol station like mine. Sure, give those rare ones a call or two, you may get lucky. But you're competing with guys running plenty of power into big antennas. Go back to them later in the contest, after they've worked all the Big Guns. Often enough they'll be begging for contacts and you'll work them easily.

#7. Work those mults! Most contests include "multipliers" in their scoring system. Basically, your score is calculated like this: You get a set number of points for each contact. Then, depending on the contest, you get one mult for each country, or each state, or each something that you work. Multiply your points by the number of mults, and that's your total score. You can see that each mult makes a much bigger difference in your score than another contact in the same country or state. Again, read the rules for the contest you're operating in.

#8. Know those Knobs! Try to familiarize yourself with the controls on your radio. Just about every rig has an attenuator, a pre-amp, an RF Gain control, and a noise blanker. Most also include an IF shift or pass-band tuning adjustment. An old trick that QRP (very low power) operators use is to turn OFF the pre-amp, and turn ON some attenuation. That may seem counter-intuitive. But now if a station is loud to you, the chances are much better that you're also loud to him. Let his big antennas and high power do the "heavy lifting". Similarly, turning down your RF gain can knock down a nearby (in frequency) Big Gun so you can work a weaker station.

#9. Use standard phonetics. My call is N1GNV. Years ago, I enjoyed having a small vegetable garden. It was kinda fun to announce my call as No One Grows Nicer Vegetables on the local repeater or among Ham Radio friends. But in a contest, that only causes confusion and mistakes -- and is considered poor practice. November One Golf November Victor is what the other guy is expecting to hear. In noisy or otherwise difficult conditions I might say "Golf November Victor, Germany Norway Victoria" but that's about it. Standard Phonetics in contests, always.

#10. Listen before you call. Make sure you've got the other station's call and exchange. You can even pre-enter it in your logging software. Listen to his pattern. Does he say "QRZ?" after each contact? You want to make sure you're transmitting when he's listening. Work him (making sure he's got YOUR call correct!), hit enter, and he's in your log. Move on to the next one.

#11. Bonus Tip: Many Hams travel to rare locations and assemble stations just for the major contests, particularly CQWW. In the days leading up to the event, they'll be testing their equipment on the air. That can be a great opportunity to test your own setup and snag a few more countries at the same time.

Finally -- **this is a hobby. It's supposed to be FUN!** Enjoy the contest, and I hope to work you on all the bands.

Autumn means the leaves are coming off the trees, but there's still plenty of daylight and no snow. It's **the perfect time to do antenna repair and maintenance**, or finally get that upgrade up in the air. Coax degrades when it's outside. It's usually a slow process, so you don't notice it. But now's the time to **give your old feedline the heave-ho** and replace it with premium quality cable. I'm proud to say that all of my coax is American made. Sadly, there's a lot of inferior grade cable out there. When you see those "bargain bin" specials on Amazon and Ebay, think twice. You spent good money on your rig and put a lot of effort into your antenna. **Don't let lossy coax eat up your power!** The same holds true for your antenna support rope. My double-braided Dacron/Polyester rope is designed for antennas. It's UV resistant with low stretch and very good abrasion resistance. **Get the good stuff!**

That's all for this one, folks. Be careful out there...

73, John Bee N1GNV
www.qsradio.com

DOTS & DASHES:

Things I can't think where to put, but are interesting.

INTERESTING HAM RADIO WEB SITE:

Any other HAM Radio club website:

Got an email from a former coworker that retired to TN, Had a link to his club page (he's the secretary) and it got me to thinking. There are a lot of clubs around, most have a web page, or FB page, and all have information and links to information, They all have their own flavor and focus—be it UHF/VHF, HF, Contesting, Licensing, ARES, etc. There are some very well known ones—Long Island CW, Yankee Contest Club, Nashua Area Radio Society, etc. But there are lots of smaller clubs, that have interesting info on their pages.

So next time you get bored—do a search for Ham Radio Club. Google will start you with ARRL club search, and that is a start. But look at the independent clubs too. You may find something on there you didn't know.

AREA SWAP/HAMFESTS:

Oct 11-12	NEAR-Fest	Deerfield, NH	https://near-fest.com/
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SPECIAL EVENT STATIONS:

Oct 18-19	Mickey Mantle Day	QSL card—14.225 / 14.250 / 7.220 / 3.860
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Oct 18-20	80th Anniv USCG Auxiliary	Multiple regions / districts
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UPCOMING CONTESTS (just a few...)

Ongoing (all year)

Jan 1-Dec 31	Canada POTA (all year)	https://cnpota.ca/	All
Jan 1-Dec 31	US Islands 25th ann (all yr)	http://usislands.org/	All

October

Many QSO parties—a couple every weekend—a good chance to setup your rig, tune up your logging program.

Oct 26-27	CQ Woldwide DX Contest	www.cqww.com	Ph
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Many more contests listed at: <http://www.arrl.org/contests> or <https://www.contestcalendar.com/contestcal.html>

Don't forget special event stations— <http://www.arrl.org/special-event-stations> These are fun contacts, usually with a special QSL card or certificate.

Local happenings

Sundays: 0845: Western Mass Emergency Net 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R

First Monday: Southwick Regional RACES Drill, 1845, 146.49 Simplex

Mondays: 1930: HCRA 10m Net 28.375

Tuesdays: 1930-2000: 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R - Hampshire County Emergency Net

Wednesdays: 1930: MTARA Info net 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R - includes NTS Net

2000: MTARA Swap net: 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R

2000: MTARA Simplex Net - starts on 146.94 - PL 127.3, then goes to 146.42 direct (simplex) Usually starts immediately following the swap net.

Thursdays: 2100: Weather Net (Roger, K1PAI Net Control), 1st Thursday of every month: 147.090 MHz, All other Thursdays: 147.000, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R

2nd and 4th Fridays: 1200: BB's (Brown Baggers Luncheon)
Munich House
13 Center Street
Chicopee, MA 01013

Expect between 6 and 12 attendees every Friday. Good food, great company!

Join the ARRL or renew your membership!

ARRL members enjoy:

- QST Magazine
- Members-Only Web Services
- Technical Information Service
- Member Discounts
- Outgoing QSL Service
- Continuing Education
- ARRL as an Advocate
- Regulatory Information Branch
- Public Relations for Amateur Radio
- ARRL Field Organization
- ARRL-sponsored contests
- Operating Awards
- Local Clubs
- Amateur Radio Emergency Service
- Hamfests and Conventions
- Volunteer Examiner Coordinator Program



<http://www.arrl.org/membership>

HCRA contact list

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Web Page, Vanessa Oquendo W1IRL
webmaster@hcra.org

There are openings on the Board—please contact a Board member if you are interested in becoming more involved in the club.

Club meetings & VE sessions

1st Friday of the month 7:30 PM, HCRA Club Meeting, Holyoke Hospital Auxiliary Conference Center, 575 Beech St. Holyoke MA 01040 (no meetings held in July or August.)

<http://www.hcra.org/meeting-location/>

3rd Friday of the month 7:30 PM, MTARA Club meeting, Red Cross building, [150 Brookdale Dr. Springfield, Mass.](#) (no meetings held in July or August)

4th Friday of the month 6:00 PM, Technician, General, and Extra Class License Exams, Holyoke Hospital Auxiliary Conference Center, 575 Beech Street, Holyoke, Mass. Hosted by the Western Mass VE Team (WMVET). Contact: David Cote, w1fab@arrl.net

Second Monday of the month 7:00 PM, Franklin County Amateur Radio Club meeting, Greenfield Community College, East Bldg. Rm 110 (no meetings held in July, August, December—check website) <http://www.fcarc.org/>

4th Monday of February, May, August, November 7:00 PM, FCARC VE Exams, <http://www.fcarc.org/>



**Here is your exciting copy
of Zero Beat!**

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