



Our 59<sup>th</sup> Year

# Zero Beat

A Publication of the Hampden County Radio Association

<http://www.hcra.org>

Meetings Held at: Feeding Hills Congregational Church  
21 North Westfield Street  
Feeding Hills, MA



December, 2004



Happy Holidays  
**Happy Holidays**  
to all our members from

*The Hampden County  
Radio Association*



**Good Friends, Good Food, Good Conversation**

**At our annual Holiday Dinner**

**6:30 PM, Friday, Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>**

*Catering by Pajer's*

*Bring a dessert if you'd like*

*Cost? FREE for each HCRA member and a guest*

**ALSO, a chance to win a HT!!! After the meal, Ham Jeopardy!!!**

*How is your "ham" trivia? There's room for 9 lucky players*



**Next Month's Meeting**

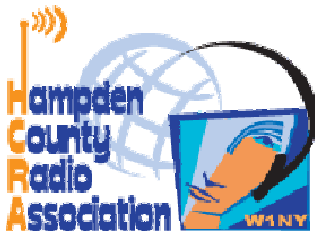
**John Ellsworth**

**Vintage Radio & Communications Museum**

**Friday, January 7, 2005**

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# President's Corner

## ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY!

December 3rd!

In just a few days our annual Holiday Party will be underway. I hope you have adjusted your busy seasonal schedule to include it. From the plans I have seen this year's party will be better than ever!



Happy Folks from last year!

December 3rd is the date and 6:30 is the time. Why so early? One reason is so you can spend more time with your friends without getting home too late. Another is to be sure your food is fresh & hot from the caterers. Pajer's market will be supplying the victuals again this year and they close at 6:00. Since the food will be there you probably should too!

On the menu will be the outstanding chicken Diablo, ziti & broccoli, salads, bread & desserts. HCRA will supply everything but if you have a certain 'special' dessert why not bring it along for everyone to enjoy? I'm sure your fellow hams will appreciate it.



Want another reason? Well, you will need time to play "Ham Jeopardy". What's that you say? Well, it's just like Jeopardy but with a ham radio flavor. John, Kx1x has created an electronic Jeopardy game complete with buttons and lockouts. Up to nine people can participate, the first one to "bash their button" gets to give the correct question. Contestants will be able to choose categories like 'ham history', 'know your prefixes', and the ever popular 'Q' signals', I think you get the picture. The game will progress from the start to 'double jeopardy' and then on to 'final jeopardy'. The winner of the final round will go home with a brand new Yaesu VX-150R HT. Pretty cool, huh?

Marty, W1MJB is organizing the party with help from Andy and Larry. If you would like to give him a hand, help set up the hall, wrap some raffle prizes or make some desserts please give him a call. I know he would welcome your assistance. You can contact Marty at 413-525-3717 or email to: w1mjb@arrl.net. Thanks in advance for your help.

The party is HCRA's way of saying thank you for your support throughout the year. There is no cost to you and you're encouraged to bring a guest. In addition to the fantastic food there will be many door prizes that are sure to be a lot of fun.

So mark your calendar, bring a friend, eat lots of food and have an enjoyable evening, all because you're part of the best radio club in the Valley. See you Friday...



## NEW LOGO DEBUTS

Thanks to WB1DBY

A special thanks to Larry, WB1DBY for the newest creation at HCRA. One of Larry's friends owns a graphic design and printing company. 'Somehow' Larry got him to volunteer his creative ability and create a new, modern graphic for HCRA. The new logo will become part of our stationary, web page and perhaps clothing in the months to come. Ordinarily it costs at least \$200 for a job like this but Abgraphics donated their time and creativity because of the value ham radio brings to the community via public service. I would ask that if you're in need of graphic services or web design you include Abgraphics (<http://www.abgraphic.net/>) on your shopping list. Does anyone out there have any ideas of how to best make use of our new logo?

## LOCAL HAMS ON NATIONAL NEWS!

Agawam HS debuts a 'pothole finding robot' !

Did you know a few members of VCDX have been instrumental in the design of a robot to search & destroy potholes? Andy, KB1FVL and Erik, KB1FSU, members of HCRA, VCDX and the Agawam HS robotics club have participated in just that—a pothole finding robot. Here's a brief excerpt from one of the newspaper reports:

*The Agawam High School Robotics Club devised the pothole predictor. Using money from an Massachusetts Institute of Technology grant they created a machine that can find hollow places under pavement, drill in and fill them. In other words, stop potholes before they form. The students are testing it now on a strip of road outside the school and they may try it on city streets next month.*

*"We want to give the students a taste of the modern corporate world. We are investigating all options. We are working on patents and stuff like that. We will see if we can sell them," said student Kristopher Kelly. "I did not expect to get this far, and shame on me for doubting us, because we did a great job."*

The students made the news in many ways including the Boston Globe and an interview on Channel 5. I don't know if amateur radio played a part in the design of the robot but I'll bet somewhere along the line it did. Isn't it nice to see our young people inventing neat stuff?

Congratulations to Andy, Erik and the rest of the Agawam robotics team, I hope you're successful.

## NEXT UP—ARRL 10M CONTEST

Can we beat last year's score?

Are you ready for another club contest? The ARRL 10M contest starts December 10 at 7:00 PM and ends December 12 at 7:00 PM. This is one of those contests that has a little for everyone. If the band is open it's a good way to work some new DX, you won't be up all night because there isn't much happening when the band closes down after sunset and you get to claim your personal score plus submit it for an HCRA club score too. Pretty neat, huh?

HCRA has done quite well in previous years. In 2002 we claimed over 925,000 points with 11 members participating. Last year was not as good, fewer participants and the band didn't cooperate. Still we ended up with over 200K points, not bad for a dead band!

Since last year quite a few new hams have come on board in the club. Anyone with a Technician Plus license or above can operate this HF contest. It's a fun 'test, doesn't require long hours and if the band is open doesn't require a lot of power either. A great way to get your feet wet in both HF operation and contesting. And... snag some new DX at the same time.

Last year we had six entrants for HCRA. Do you think we can do better this year? All you have to do is get on and operate. When you send in your log simply identify your club affiliation as "Hampden County Radio Assn" and both you and the club get the credit. We can discuss it further at the holiday party this week. Want to try computer logging? A great, freeware log is available at: <http://www.n1mm.com>. Remember, the more active you are the more fun you have and the stronger our club becomes.

See you at the party!

73... Jim, KK1W

## **HCRA CONTACTS**

Questions, Comments, and  
Suggestions Can Be Directed To:

### **HCRA OFFICERS**

#### **President**

Jim Mullen, KK1W  
(413) 245-3228 [jmullen@rockys.com](mailto:jmullen@rockys.com)

#### **Vice-President**

Marty Bowen, W1MJB  
[w1mjb@arrl.net](mailto:w1mjb@arrl.net)

#### **Treasurer**

Greg Stoddard, N1AEH  
(860) 668-5143 [gstoddard@rcn.com](mailto:gstoddard@rcn.com)

#### **Secretary**

Dave Isham, KB1MU  
(413) 596-6605 [kb1mu@charter.net](mailto:kb1mu@charter.net)

### **HCRA DIRECTORS**

#### **At Large**

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[jldhjr@verizon.net](mailto:jldhjr@verizon.net)

#### **Program**

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#### **Newsletter**

John Pise, Kx1x  
(413) 532-7474 [kx1x@arrl.net](mailto:kx1x@arrl.net)

#### **Technical**

John Stark, N1JIO

### **STATION TRUSTEES**

#### **W1NY Trustee**

Don Johnson, W1UPH  
(413) 566-3560 [w1uph2@juno.com](mailto:w1uph2@juno.com)

#### **WB1HOF Trustee**

Jim Mullen, KK1W  
(413) 245-3228 [jmullen@rockys.com](mailto:jmullen@rockys.com)

#### **IRLP Trustee**

John Pise, Kx1x  
(413) 532-7474 [kx1x@arrl.net](mailto:kx1x@arrl.net)

### **EMERGENCY COORDINATOR**

Dave Isham, KB1MU  
(413) 596-6605 [kb1mu@charter.net](mailto:kb1mu@charter.net)



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**Wear it Proudly!**  
HCRA Name Badges



Only \$6.00. Available for order at any club meeting, or call or drop  
an email for immediate service!

Show the world you belong to the oldest club in the Pioneer Valley.

Jim, KK1W

: [jmullen@rockys.com](mailto:jmullen@rockys.com) or (413) 245-3228

OUR  
SUPPORT  
PLEASE

## **WE NEED YOUR SUGGESTIONS**

We are asking for your suggestions and ideas for future HCRA meetings. The recent success of HCRA has been, in part, because of its interesting and timely key speakers and topics.

If you can help, please contact

Larry, WB1DBY, 567-3505, [wb1dby@arrl.net](mailto:wb1dby@arrl.net)

### *Have you tried IRLP yet?*

IRLP is the Internet Radio Linking Project, connecting radios over the Internet. With your 2m radio, you make contacts all over the world.

HCRA sponsors an IRLP node, in South Hadley, MA.

It is there for your use, please give it a try

(at least turn it on and listen)

146.46 simplex, 114.8hz PL

Kx1x, Node #7270,

S.Hadley, MA



## Dr. DX

The first ski turns of the season have been meted out; that means we are waist-deep in contest season, and consequently neck-deep in DX. This month, a lot of good things are happening including the ARRL 10-meter contest on December 21<sup>st</sup>. Since the CQWW CW contest is going on just as your editor is placing this edition in your mailbox, some of the DX'peditions will stay around for a bit and see who they can work. So far, the month looks like:

Start	End	Entity	Call	QSL
2004 Dec03	2004 Dec31	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	VU4	
2004 Dec07	2004 Dec12	Antarctica	VP8ROT	GM0HCQ
2004 Dec09	2004 Dec29	El Salvador	YS	
2004 Dec11	2004 Dec23	Marquesas	FO/m	Home Call
2004 Dec21	2004 Dec22	Acension Island	ZD8ZA	G3ZAY
2004 Dec24	2004 Dec30	South Cook Islands	ZK1GND	VK2GND
2004 Dec24	2005 Jan01	St Helena	ZD7ZA	G3ZAY
2004 Dec26	2005 Jan04	Cayman Islands	ZF2PD	N2LM
2004 Dec26	2005 Jan09	Mauritania	5T5DY	F6GDC



As propagation steadily increases and people become more active during the winter months, you will notice many more un-announced DX stations that are equally rare and will boost your DXCC totals. With the new technology of processors and of the transmitters themselves meshing with higher performance of more feasible antenna systems, the pileups are becomes more exiting and more obtainable every day.

The moral of the story before it even starts for December is to get on the air and make some contacts. It does not matter how open the band is if no one bothers to use it.

73' es good DX,  
de Mike DeChristopher, KB1FWN

## Ray Lenzioszek N1RLX, SK

(de N1MUV)

Ray was licensed over 10 years ago, and held a General class. Ray made use of his amateur license to broaden his public service.

He was a member of Holyoke Emergency Management, and was an appointed RACES operator for Holyoke. As an active member of Western Massachusetts ARES he held an ARRL appointment as an Emergency Operating Station (EOS). Several years ago he was elected to the MTARA board position of EC Emergency Coordinator. One of the responsibilities of the position is to provide communication support for non profit public events assisting local agencies such as: American Diabetes, Multiple Sclerosis, Mass. Senior Olympics, Westfield Boys Club, area High, School & Colleges. to name a few.

Ray was always willing to volunteer time for Walkathons, Cross Country Bicycle events, Foot races, 5k to 1/2 marathon, triathlons & regattas. Each event was a challenge that Ray would see to the finish line.

Amateur Radio & the MTARA can be very proud of Ray and the work he had done.

As a veteran member & official of the Western Massachusetts Courtesy Patrol, he had been involved in community service for many years.

On the Internet  
<http://www.hcra.org>  
Updated often to bring you timely Amate  
news and info

IRLP Node #7270  
146.46 Mhz -- PL 114.8  
A free service of HCRA  
See [www.hcra.org](http://www.hcra.org)

Next Meeting:  
**Friday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005**  
**John Ellsworth**  
Vintage Radio & Communications  
Museum

## Get Your Zero Beat Electronically each month

HCRA members can receive their monthly club newsletter in any or all of three ways!

- 1) First Class Mail, just like you always have. This costs HCRA approximately 75 cents per copy. This is one of the benefits of your membership with HCRA.
- 2) E-mail. If you would like to get on our e-mail list, just write [eZB@hcra.org](mailto:eZB@hcra.org) from the account that you wish to receive your copy from, and request that you join our list. HCRA respects your privacy and will not under any circumstances give your e-mail address to ANYONE.
- 3) [WWW.HCRA.ORG](http://WWW.HCRA.ORG). Our new web site carries the latest copies of Zero Beat. Just click and read.

NOTE 1: You will need Adobe Acrobat ® installed on your computer to read electronic copies of Zero Beat. Just click the button on the [WWW.HCRA.ORG](http://WWW.HCRA.ORG) website, and follow the directions to get your FREE copy of Adobe Acrobat ®.

NOTE 2: There is a cost savings to the HCRA if you receive your Zero Beat electronically only. If you prefer to NOT receive your newsletter by First Class Mail, please contact John, Kx1x, Dave, KB1MU, or Jim, KK1W, to be added to the eZB only list.

## Get On The Air

(all times local)

Mon., Tues, Thur, Fri	19:00	National Traffic Sys (NTS) Net	146.94 (W1TOM)
Sundays	08:45	Western Mass Emergency Net	146.94 (W1TOM)
Mondays	19:30	<b>HCRA 10m Net</b>	28.375
Wednesdays	19:30	MTARA Info net	146.94 and 147.000 (link) (W1TOM)
	20:00	MTARA Swap net	
Thursdays	21:00	Weather Net	2 <sup>nd</sup> Week of the Month 147.09 (All other weeks 147.000)

### Club Meetings & Testing Sessions

1 <sup>st</sup> Friday of the month	19:30	<b>HCRA Club Meeting</b>	Feeding Hills Congregational Church 21 N. Westfield St., Feeding Hills
3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday of January, April, July, and October		KD1XP License Exams	Amherst Machine Amherst, MA
		Contact Richard, KD1XP, 413-665-2211 or 145.130 Repeater	
		<a href="http://www.kd1xp.org">http://www.kd1xp.org</a>	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month	19:30	MTARA Club meeting	Red Cross building 506 Cottage St, SPFLD, MA
		<a href="http://www.mtara.org">http://www.mtara.org</a>	
4 <sup>th</sup> Friday of the month	18:00	MTARA License Exams	Holyoke Hospital Auditorium Beech St., Holyoke
		Contact Dave, W1FAB, W1FAB@arri.net	
4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month	19:00	NOBARC club meeting	Pittsfield MA (146.91 for talk-in)

# W1NY ON THE AIR

## Join us each week on the HCRA 10m Net!

Join NCS, Tom Doyle (n1muv), each Monday night at 7:30 PM (local) on 28.375 Mhz (+/- QRM)

Get the latest local word, join good friends, take part in good conversation each week!!!

Anyone (with HF privs) can join in, don't be shy!!!

## ZeroBeats from the Past

Note! The following is a reprint from an older issue of ZeroBeat dated September 1990. The original article, of course, is much older. Percy Noble was very active in both the HCRA and the NTS; He is one of those individuals who would be in the HCRA Hall of Fame if such a group existed. (Dave Isham KB1MU)

### The Time I Met HPM

By

Percy C. Noble W1BVR

(At my request, Percy wrote this letter. This was originally printed in the June 1979 issue of Zero Beat. As I read old, and I mean OLD QST's, there was my friend W1BVR listed for traffic handling while he was away at college. W1KK was also listed, but that was Hank Baier or Tom Chapman, not Art Zavarella. There's a story there, but you'll have to wait to hear it. Jeff - K1BE)

Here's Percy's letter:

Dear Zero Beat,

I had the pleasure at the Springfield ARRL convention in 1935 of introducing Hiram Percy Maxim to the group there. I talked with him for quite a few minutes. That was during my very first term as Western Massachusetts SCM. He radiated enthusiasm and knowledge. That was one of the highlights of my radio experiences!

You may not know this: HPM, (then ARRL President) died in February of 1936. The League Vice-president, Mr. Stewart, died at about the same time. Dr. Woodruff, of the University of Pennsylvania, became the ARRL President. George Bailey, W1KH, our New England Director, became ARRL Vice-president. Hence, an election in New England for ARRL director. The result of that election: W1BVR (209); W1EAO (182); W1ASI (140); W1LFI (109); W1CAB (60); W1EPH (34); W1BSJ (22). That was the start of my 18 years as N.E. Director! So many moons ago!

73,

Percy W1BVR

Percy was a League official for many, many years. I had the pleasure of calling him my friend and I am still inspired by his sterling example today. I regard his passing as a loss to all that is good in amateur radio.

## Mt. Tom Amateur Repeater Assn. News

[www.mtara.org](http://www.mtara.org)

Info Net, Wednesdays at 7:30 PM local  
146.94 (-) or 147.000 (+)  
with Joe, NA1X, net control

Meetings on the  
3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the Month, 7:30  
Red Cross Building, Cottage St., Spfld



Mount  
Tom  
Amateur  
Repeater  
Association

**MTARA Holiday Party**  
**Friday, December 17<sup>th</sup>**  
**At the Red Cross Building**  
**\$5 donation per person**  
**Catered Dinner**  
**Contact Elaine, KB1LEZ 547-0393**  
**or Chris, N1JSK, 593-6516**

## KD1XP Repeater Group News

53.350 (-) PL 71.9 Amherst, MA  
145.130 (-) PL 173.8 Amherst, MA  
442.200 (+) PL 162.2 Deerfield, MA (near Greenfield)  
443.450 (+) PL 173.8 Leyden, MA (near Greenfield)  
443.700 (+) PL 71.9 Belchertown, MA

*The next ham radio testing session will be on Monday,  
January 19th at Amherst Machine on Cows Road in  
Amherst, MA. ALL test elements given. Contact Richard,  
KD1XP at 665-2211 for details*

*Breakfast meetings every first Saturday of the month at  
Bickfords in Northampton.  
Talk in on the 145.130 repeater.*

[www.kd1xp.org](http://www.kd1xp.org)

**KD1XP**  
repeater group

## Art Zavarella, W1KK – SK

(de KK1W)

The area has to say goodbye to a ham of eighty years this month. Art Zavarella, W1KK joined the ranks of the 'silent keys' on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Art was a life member of HCRA and was a guiding force for the club throughout much of its history. Always a proponent of ham radio Art was an 'Elmer' to many of Pioneer Valley's hams. I remember back in 1976 when I first got my ticket coming home and getting the message from Ann that someone named W1KK called to congratulate me on my accomplishment.

Art had a 'super station' just across from Riverside Park in Agawam well before 'super stations' were popular. His shack was always open for people to use and he delved into all of amateur radios facets. W1KK remained active well into the early 1990's and was heard occasionally on the nets from time to time after that. I've been told that Art was even known to be climbing towers when he was 80 years old.

Art's contributions to our hobby and the people that make it up will be missed but always remembered.  
Thanks Art and '73...

# HCRA board Meeting

## November 10, 2004

Held at the home of Larry WB1DBY

Members present: Jim KK1W, Larry WB1DBY, Greg N1AEH, Dave KB1MU, John N1JIO, John KX1X, Jim KB1JVF, and Marty W1MJB.

### Vice President W1MJB:

Marty is proceeding with plans for the holiday party. Pajers, the same place that supplied it last year, will supply the food. Marty will need some help with setup before the party. The "Ham Jeopardy" is being organized. The first prizewinner will receive a Yaesu VX-150R HT! Three people have been designated as judges, Jim KK1W, Marty W1MJB, and Dave KB1MU. John, Kx1x, is looking for ham related questions. Groups of five questions are requested. Please forward these to John.

### Treasurer N1AEH:

The current club balance is \$4888.00. The club received \$120.00 in donations. The Icom 703 raffle received \$426.00. \$55.00 of auction donations was specified to the Venture Crew. The receipts from the auction were \$1153.00. Thanks to the generosity of all auction attendees, a donation of \$400.00 will be made to the ARRL Foundation in the name of Jim Allen WB1Z.

### Secretary KB1MU:

Membership total at present:

Courtesy	7	Family	26
Life	2	Regular	86
Venture Crew	8	Prospect	5

A total of 28 members from last year have not yet renewed.

### Program WB1DBY:

The program line-up is in pretty good shape. February is still open. Some suggestions are being considered.

November: Annual auction, no speaker required  
December: Holiday Party, Food and Ham Jeopardy.  
January John Ellsworth from the Historical Radio Museum  
February Open  
March Annual Show and Tell Meeting  
April CTRI Contest Group  
May Harold Ort, N2RLL – Editor of Popular Communications  
June Tailgate Party

### Membership KI1I: (Not Present)

Jim KK1W has the signup list from the Big E. He will make a copy of this list and mail a copy to Peter.

### ZeroBeat KX1X:

Cutoff date for ZeroBeat submission's for the December edition is Nov 20.

### Technical N1JIO:

John will restart the Tech Corner program; the first session will be during the January meeting. The subject will be PSK from a beginner's viewpoint, including a live demonstration. Suggestions for future presentations are welcome.

### At Large KB1JVF:

Jim is working on a listing of local public TV address to facilitate placing announcements on these channels. Jim is also working on a flyer announcing the next Ham Class.

### Venture Crew:

Not present.

### Old Business:

The collection of club logos presented last board meeting has been refined, and one logo has been selected. This selection will begin appearing in the ZeroBeat and on club correspondence in the near future.

The annual report to the state of Massachusetts has been filed on line and accepted by the state

### New Business:

Marty will attempt to reserve Dufrense Park for Field Day 2005. Last year the Town of Granby would not accept reservations until after Jan 1.

A check for \$400.00 will be donated to the ARRL Foundation in the name of Jim Allen WB1Z. A copy of the letter will be forwarded to Jim's widow.

A request has been made to help provide communications for a Square Dance Convention planned in Springfield in 2006. The item was tabled, and will be reconsidered when more information on the exact requirements are more specific.

The secretary will send thank you notes to those who supported the auction with donations.

Respectfully submitted by

Dave Isham KB1MU Secretary.





# BSA Venture Crew 510

NE1C - New England's #1 Crew

BSA Venture Crew 510 is chartered by the Hampden County Radio Association

Visit Crew DX's 100% youth designed website:

<http://www.qsl.net/crewdx>



## BSA VENTURE CREW 510 Contacts

Youth President

Adult Advisor

Adult Advisor

Luke Dyson, KB1ISP

John Pise, Kx1x (413) 532-7474

Dave Cain, AA1YW

luke@penguinia.net

kx1x@arrl.net

aa1yw@arrl.net

## BSA VENTURE CREW 510 – CALENDAR

*HCRA Meeting – December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Holiday Party*

*Trip to ARRL Headquarters – week after Christmas*

*HCRA Meeting – January 7th*

*Demo for Pack 570, West Springfield -- Friday, Jan 21<sup>st</sup>*

*NAQP Contest, QRV VT -- Jan 21, 22, 23*

## **Ham Radio Demo for Pack 207, Easthampton** de Luke, KB1ISP

On Thursday November 21 Steve (KB1GHC), his father, and I arrived at the Easthampton Episcopal Society Parish Office after a short drive around to find the building. We quickly unloaded our equipment and entered into the room where about 80 people (mostly scouts) were getting ready for a meeting. As we walked in with our armloads of cables and boxes we were greeted by many curious stares. I was told by someone who seemed to know who we were to go to the front of the room and talk with Dave Bernier the CM for Pack 207. I spoke with Dave and he asked me if we could be ready for 7:30 and I assured him it would be enough time. I asked him a little concerned where the best place to set up a 100 foot long antenna would be and he told me that the backyard would probably have enough space.

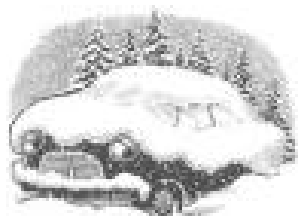


Steve and I quickly got to work setting up our G5RV in the small playground outback. At first we thought that two trees that were opposite one another in the yard would do the trick but the twine ended up getting tangled in a maple tree with our baseball attached and we had to cut our losses and the twine with a leatherman. We then came up with an alternate configuration that involved securing the center of the dipole on the small play structure while using a metal pole and a hemlock tree to secure the legs. The long wires angled back toward the building and the feedline ran over the yard to the back door. We had set up a workable dipole in an arrow configuration that we felt would serve the purpose of a few quick QSO's with some of the scouts.

As we returned inside we set up our rig and Astron power supply on a small table close to the back door. Soon Brian(KB1IGM) and Jeff(Nx1x) arrived. I attached the coax connector feeling confident in our work. However it soon became clear that we were receiving no signals on any HF bands. We thought it might be the tuning but after trying 40, 80, 20 and 15 meters we were still unable to come up with a contact. Soon came time to present.

As we stood in the corner listening to the meeting coming to an end I was asked by Brian if he should make the introduction and I said sure. Soon Brian was up in front and called all 3 of us up with our titles and introduced the crew. I started off by introducing our hobby as a means of communication and recreation that people all over the world could enjoy. I directed attention to the rig and I explained the different functions and told about how it was set up. Meanwhile Steve and Jeff were wrestling with the radio to try and make some kind of contact but to no avail. I tried to make it interesting by telling them that we have talked to many different countries all over the world and to people who are right near by who are friends and acquaintances. The kids seemed to be very engaged and every few seconds a hand would come up with a question and soon Brian and I were both fielding questions. The presentation wrapped up with a couple of VHF repeater contacts on the Crew's dual band HT. We were able to get about 4 kids on the air to talk with Jim( KK1W) and Steve (N1SR) many thanks to both. We were not able to do HF but we got at least the very interested involved. We later found that a poorly soldered PL-259 connector to the ladder line had come undone and left us with no connection.





## *As Winter Deepens and The Snow Piles Up.... Keep Snug in the Shack by a Warm Radio!*

### THE SOUNDS OF OUR HOBBY... ANNOUNCING THE 2005 ARRL STRAIGHT KEY NIGHT

Let's journey back to years gone by when an aspiring young amateur was being coaxed by his Elmer to "go ahead, put your hand on the key and try sending a few letters." As the youngster gathered his courage, he gets the feel of the key. "You don't literally have to 'pound' brass to send code" the Elmer admonishes after the death grip the kid has on the keyer nearly forces it through the desktop. "Relax, take it easy. You know the letters in your mind. Now, let your fist transfer the characters to the key."

With a little practice the kid is finally ready to try a QSO on the air, under the watchful tutelage of the faithful Elmer. With a "cheat sheet" in hand -- the text of what the young operator will send carefully written out -- the painfully slow first letters -- "C" "Q" are transmitted. The side tone of the radio mesmerizes the new operator as he realizes "WOW... I just sent my first CQ...." And the kid was hooked...

We tap the code out in our licensing classes as we learn "dits and dahs." While sitting in traffic, we translate the words on billboards or the letters on license plates into Morse. The short and long sounds become easy to distinguish at slower speeds, with some practice. As we gain some confidence in our skill to copy, we speed up. And the music of the key becomes our anthem. We tune across the bottom 50 KHz or so of any of our HF bands. Like the rhythmic cadence of drums in the distance, the almost ominous sound of a weak CW signal beckons those that love "the code".



In this era of digital communication, keyboarding, FM and electronic keys, once a year many excellent operators bring the past to the present and participate in the annual **ARRL Straight Key Night**. The object of this friendly event is to enjoy some good, old fashioned QSO fun, using straight keys. The emphasis is on rag-chewing rather than fast contest-type exchanges. **SKN 2005** begins at 7:00 p.m. EST December 31 and runs for 24 hours through 7:00 p.m. EST January 1 (**0000 --2400 UTC January 1, 2005**).

In many circles **SKN** has been expanded to encompass vintage radio equipment as well. Reminiscing about their early days in our hobby, many operators use **SKN** as the "excuse" to refurbish their old Viking, Heathkit, or Scout. You will hear as many vintage radios on the air during **SKN** as you will variety of keys. And you will hear signals generated using old-fashioned bugs, a variation of the straight key. **SKN** is the time amateur radio recalls the past, transporting it to the present.

When participating in **SKN 2005**, instead of sending RST before sending the signal report send the letters **SKN**, to indicate your participation, and to clue in passers-by who may be listening that **SKN** is going strong. After **SKN**, send the Contest Branch a list of stations worked, plus your vote for the best fist you heard (it doesn't have to be one you worked). Also, include your vote for the most interesting QSO you had or monitored.

Don't forget to post your comments and interesting photographs from your **SKN** adventure to the **ARRL Contest Online Soapbox** at [www.arrl.org/contests/soapbox](http://www.arrl.org/contests/soapbox). Entries should be emailed to the Contest Branch at [StraightKey@arrl.org](mailto:StraightKey@arrl.org) or may be sent via regular mail to SKN, ARRL, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111. The Soapbox becomes an on-line album of stores and photographs to share with others.

Entries for **SKN 2005** must be received by January 31, 2005. Votes for 'Best Fist' and "Most Interesting QSO" will be tabulated and included in the April 2005 issue of *QST*. If you have questions about **SKN**, please visit the Contest Branch Web Page at <http://www.arrl.org/contests> or contact [contests@arrl.org](mailto:contests@arrl.org)

Last year we had 227 entries submitted for **SKN** -- the most ever for Straight Key Night. Why not dust off the key, clean the contacts and light up the ether with the beautiful melody of hand-created CW? Sweeter music is hard to find.

*Contest info courtesy ARRL web site, December 2004*

This month:

*Hampden County Radio Association's  
Annual Holiday Dinner"*

will be on Friday

**December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004**

At 6:30 p.m. at the  
Feeding Hills Congregational Church  
Hope to see you there!

In case of inclement weather,  
check: [www.hcra.org](http://www.hcra.org)  
or the 146.94 repeater.

*Meeting cancellation information will be  
given out by 6:00 PM.*



*Please have a Safe & Happy Holiday Season!*

HCRA

P.O. Box 562

Agawam, Massachusetts

01001

**PLEASE HAND CANCEL**

*Hampden County Radio Assoc.*

**Annual  
Holiday  
Party**

**Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>  
6:30 PM  
HAM  
JEOPARDY!**  
You could win  
a HT!!!