



# JANUARY 2010

# Zero Beat

<http://www.hcra.org>

## From the Shack...

### Happy New Year from HCRA

Well it's that time of year again, 2009 has been put behind us and 2010 is already here. This is the time we usually look back on the past year and list our accomplishments. Then we make a list of what we want to do in the New Year (those pesky resolutions) and start the cycle all over again.

Well I won't bore you with a list of HCRA's 2009 highlights. If you participated you know all about them - if you didn't that should be your 2010 resolution! I will say we have a pretty good set of activities and meetings already scheduled for 2010 that will knock your socks off. Great speakers, Show & Tell, an active kit program, special event stations, the tail gate party and of course Field Day lie just ahead. Take a look at the calendar on the HCRA website and pick a few things **YOU** want to be part of this year. You're guaranteed to have more fun!

### Skywarn + KD1CY = January 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Our January presentation is all about Skywarn and the National Weather Service. Rob Macedo, KD1CY will be visiting from NWS in Taunton, MA to talk about weather and amateur radio. It's been a few years since Rob has been out to see us. This is a perfect chance for our newer members to see how effective our hobby can be helping enhance public safety during weather emergencies. Although Rob will be talking weather with an amateur radio focus this is a great meeting for anyone interested in weather and public safety. Bring along a friend or family member, I'm sure they'll enjoy it. (hmmm, could that be a 2010 resolution?)

### 10 Meter Contest - 2009

This marked the 8th year we've participated as a club in this

fun contest. Sunspots were not in evidence but there was some magnetic activity that really caused enhanced propagation, but only for short periods of

time. If you were lucky enough to be on the air at those times there certainly was some fun. You're there, in front of your radio, struggling to hear a station in Connecticut and all of a sudden there's South Dakota coming in like your neighbor! See, there is fun in contesting, even if the band is perhaps 'not the best' at the time. Take a look at our results posted on the web page at: [http://www.hcra.org/arrl\\_10m\\_2009.htm](http://www.hcra.org/arrl_10m_2009.htm) and see how many of your fellow club members had fun in December. It's OK if you missed out in 2009; the 2010 contest will be along soon enough, maybe even with sunspots! Oops, there's another resolution for you!



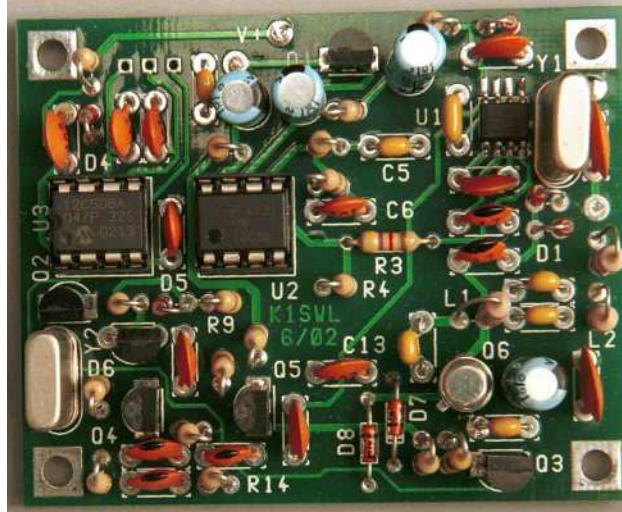
### Kit Program

We've had a great start with this program started by Jim K1JAW. Thirteen kits have been ordered and there's also a cadre of dedicated 'Elmers' waiting in the wings to provide a helping hand if necessary. Keep abreast of the activity on our web page at: <http://www.hcra.org/rockmite.htm>. Another facet of amateur providing fun, and at very little expense. (CAUTION -resolution follows!) Will you be part of the first HCRA Rock-Mite net?

'73... see you at the meeting,  
Jim, KK1W

## The Rockmites Are Here!

The Rockmite kits are here. Some have already been picked up. The remainder will be distributed at the January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. The response to this offering has been awesome and hopefully we will soon hear over a dozen of these little transceivers on the air.



The Rockmite is a CW only transceiver with a built-in keyer, or provision for use with a straight key. Nice feature. Output power is only  $\frac{1}{2}$  watt with a 12V supply and can be run on as little as a 9V battery at a reduced power. For more detail, here is their web site.

<http://www.smallwonderlabs.com/Rockmite.htm>

Their very good manual is on-line can be found on our web site thanks to Jim KK1W and NE1RD who authorized the duplication. Go to: [HCRA.org](http://HCRA.org) and click on Rockmite at the top of the page.

Several Elmers have signed up for this project. Steve N1SR, George KC1V, Jim KK1W, and myself should anyone need it. For those who do not have hookup wire, let me know and I will bring some to the meeting on Friday. I have already set up one pack for one builder.

After building the Rockmite, the chal-

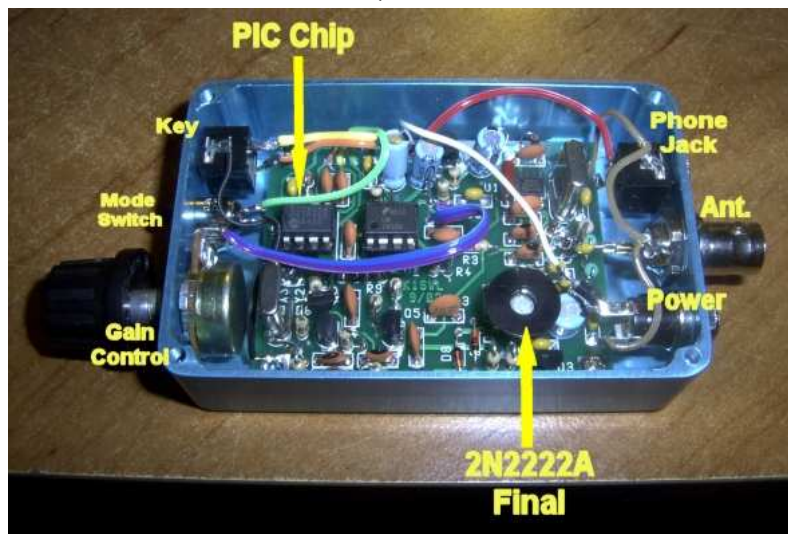
lenge will then be to individually package the radio into its final packaging. This is where the fun begins. Every person will have his/her own idea of the best way to accomplish this. Will it be a custom case? An Altoid case? Or somewhere in between? Who knows, but I hope that everyone takes pictures before, during, and after for sharing with the

other builders, and interested members of the club.

Regarding CW. Everyone has their favorite web site to help folks learn/practice the code. My favorite is <http://lcwo.net/>. This site uses the KOCH method, has multiple options, and tracking of your progress. Check it out; you may like it. And when you are ready to test you transceiver, let one or more of the Elmers know and we will meet you on the air!!

Finally, it would be nice to see some of the final projects at our annual Show & Tell on March 5<sup>th</sup>. You could win the cost of your project back!!!

And if not, still have a lot of fun showing your expertise off. Look forward to seeing you this Friday night for a little coffee, a little social, a little fun, and a discussion on Skywarn.



# What Should Every Ham Know How to Do?

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

On the HamRadioHelpGroup mailing list, there was recently a discussion about using modulated CW on 2m. One fellow pointed out that MFJ sold a unit that would do this. When I pointed out that this box cost \$100 and that they could do exactly the same thing with the \$18 PicoKeyer from HamGadgets.Com, I got some flack that the PicoKeyer was a kit, and that some people might not be able to build it.

I pointed out that a couple of years ago our club held a construction night, and that several people who had never soldered before successfully completed the kit. I also pointed out that even if the ham didn't have the proper tools, he or she could purchase a soldering iron, needle-nose pliers, and diagonal cutters, in addition to the kit, for less than \$100.

I don't know if that convinced him, but it got me thinking about what a ham should be able to do. This is the list I've come up with so far:

1. Solder. Every ham should know how to solder a connection, and by extension, build small kits and cables. Over the course of one's ham career, this skill will save you a ton of time and money.

2. Build a dipole antenna. The dipole is the simplest and most versatile antenna. Knowing how to build one and use one is an essential skill.

3. Check into a net. Net operation is one of the most basic operating skills.

4. Use a multimeter to measure voltage, current, and resistance and know what those measurements mean. This is the most basic skill used in troubleshooting, and at some point or another, you're going to have to troubleshoot something.

This list does, of course, imply that a ham is physically capable of doing them. I would not expect hams that are physically disabled to be able to do everything on this list.

After I posted this to my blog ([www.kb6nu.com](http://www.kb6nu.com)), I got several good responses. Jeff said, "I believe hams should know how to install RF connectors, particularly the three most used in our hobby, the PL-259, the BNC, and the N connector." Blair, WB3AWI, replied, "Another thing that hams should know how to do is to measure the SWR of an antenna."

So, now I ask you, What do you think every ham should know how to do? Feel free to post a comment to my blog or e-mail me at [cwgeek@kb6nu.com](mailto:cwgeek@kb6nu.com).

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When not analyzing the abilities of amateurs, KB6NU pounds brass on nearly all the HF bands and teaches various ham radio classes in Ann Arbor, MI. You can read his other musings on our fine hobby at [www.kb6nu.com](http://www.kb6nu.com).

Hampden County Radio Association  
Board of Directors meeting minutes  
Tuesday November 10th, 2009 (USMC 234<sup>th</sup> Birthday)

Attendees : Irv Slitzky W6IS, George Collins KC1V, Michael Lavery KB1PKJ, Jim Mullen KK1W, Jim Whitehouse K1JAW, John Pise Kx1x, James D. Machia NN1Y

Eight people receive printed copies of Zero Beat which is a single sheet of paper printed on both sides.

Jim called the meeting to order at 7:18 pm, at Hampden Bank in Longmeadow, MA.

Membership - Ed LaCombe KB1NWH (in absentia)  
Let the record show there were no new members submitted for board approval.

Officer Reports

Vice President - John

At Large - Irv Slitzky

Tech classes - Three out of seven technicians passed the VE exam on Sunday. One general student passed their General. We will hold another class in April if the desire and interest is there.

Nothing of note to comment about. Reserved his comments for the Old and New business.

Treasurer - George Collins

Program - Jim Whitehouse

Speakers through the end of the HCRA year (July - June) have been booked

Food Sales - \$65.37

Auction profit - \$2,243.30

Christmas Party pre-sales - \$75.00

Raffle sales - \$113.00 + \$100 (October) = \$213.00

Membership Renewals - \$75.00

Possible September 2010 speakers were discussed

Old Business

NN1Y was in attendance to discuss Holiday Party. The date of the Holiday Party is set for December 4<sup>th</sup>, which is a Friday and is the regular meeting day. The venue will be Alexander's restaurant in Feeding Hills, MA.

Secretary - Michael Lavery

Action item - check on SSC status with the league.

ARRL Special Services club designation - still pending submission via arrl.org website. The designation will expire in January 2010.

An invitation will be mailed out to all members the week of November 16<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>. Once a head count is determined, NN1Y will contact the Alexander's. The deadline for mail-in of checks and attending names/callsigns is November 27<sup>th</sup>.

Board reviewed October minutes as submitted and one correction was made. Board voted to accept amended minutes. Vote was unanimously accepted. Minutes will be entered into ZB for November.

Door prize for one lucky attendee will be an HRO \$100 gift certificate.

Reported on the auction raffle results. Previous month \$100 collected, another \$113 was collected at the auction evening. Total \$213 collected.

The room can seat 150 persons.

Technical - Dave Cain AA1YW (not present)

Someone will get a cake and bring it to the party. Possibly a "cupcake" cake.

Zero Beat Editor - Larry Krainson WB1DBY (in absentia)

Submit articles to Larry by Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>

By law revisions - Irv and George. Irv made changes and George will review once more. Tabled until next month.

Plan to follow up with non-renewing members - George to

## HCRA Minutes Continued...

send a list of those members who chose not to renew. We will split up the list and contact them to see where we have room for improvement. KK1W to take first pass at marking up the list, then distribute it to the board for follow-up.

10 meter contest - published in Zero Beat. Will follow up with emails on the reflector. Jim K1JAW will print out certificates. Also send email to Zero Beat subscription list. Set a goal of 20 contacts. Put info on the website - hcra.org.

WB1Z award presentation - Board decided to create a new award, called the WB1Z award. Present to an HCRA member at the Holiday Party. Board will decide the first award recipient. To be popular vote amongst the members based on work done to promote the ham community and/or the club. Subsequent years popular vote will be from the HCRA members.

### New Business

Auction Recap - is the church available on a Saturday daytime?

Field Day 2010 - Need to reserve Dufresne park by the end of the year or we will lose it completely (KK1W to mail out payment). Even if we change the location of field day we should reserve Dufresne since it only costs \$50. George will call Agawam.

Rock Mite kit - Emails will be sent out . Once a list of interested members is collected , K1JAW will make the purchase. \$30 per kit.

Respectfully submitted on this date - December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 - Michael S. Lavery

## 2010 Flea Markets February to April

| 2010      | Contact  | Source                                      |
|-----------|--|---|
| 6 Feb     | Chelsea ME AARA @Crystal Falls<br>K1NIT 207 623 9075 A+                                | Bill  |
| 13 Feb    | Marlboro MA AARC @MiddleSc<br><a href="#">T@6:30</a> Tim KA1OS 978 333 1329 F+         | <a href="#">\$5@9</a> <a href="#">\$20/</a> |
| 27 Feb    | Colchester VT HAM-CON @Hampton<br><a href="#">\$15@6:30</a> Mitch W1SJ 802 879 6589 W+ | <a href="#">\$8@8</a>                       |
| 28 Feb    | Hicksville NY LIMARC @LevittHal<br><a href="#">\$20@7</a> Richard K2KNB 516 694 4937   | <a href="#">\$6@9</a>                       |
| 20 Mar    | Dayville CT ECARA @StJoseph Ch<br>Paul KE1LI 860 928 2456 +                            |   |
| 21 Mar    | Southington CT SARA @HS<br><a href="#">T@6:15</a> Norm W3IZ 860 584 1403 F             | <a href="#">\$5@8</a> <a href="#">\$20/</a> |
| 21 Mar    | Henniker NH CVRC @CommSch<br>Donald Curtis N1ZIH 603 717 2086 A+                       |   |
| 27 Mar    | Lewiston ME AARC ME<br>Conv@Ramada Cory N1URA 207 514 0202 A+                          |   |
| 10 Apr    | Middletown NY OCARC @Walkkill<br>ComCtr Bruce K2ULZ 845 562 4226 A                     |   |
| 17 April  | Lindenhurst NY GSBARC ** CANCELLED<br>** John W2HCB 631 669 6321 A+                    |   |
| 17,18 Apr | Wakefield MA Photographica @AmericalCtr<br>~photo~ John 781 592 2553 F                 |   |
| 17 Apr    | S Portland ME PAWA @AmLegion<br><a href="#">T@6:30</a> Bryce K1GAX 207 799 1116 W+     | <a href="#">\$5@8</a> <a href="#">\$10/</a> |

## Zero Beat Contributions:

Anything of interest is welcome. This is YOUR Newsletter. It's not interesting without YOUR ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS.

Please submit your ideas, articles and more to [wb1dby@comcast.net](mailto:wb1dby@comcast.net). Thank you,  
Larry, WB1DBY, Zero Beat Editor

## Meeting Location:

*Feeding Hills  
Congregational Church  
21 North Westfield St.  
Feeding Hills, MA 01030*



## Next Meeting:

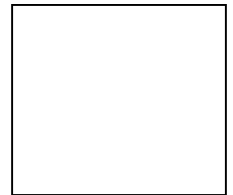
**Rob Macedo  
KD1CY**

**“The National  
Weather Service +  
Skywarn”**

**Jan 8 @ 7:30pm**



The Hampden County Radio Association  
P.O Box 562  
Agawam, MA 01001



PLEASE HAND CANCEL