

Zero Beat



Our 55th Year

A Publication of the Hampden County Radio Association

February, 2001

<http://www.hcra.org>

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

Don't miss this month's topic
Satellite Operations
With Gary Thomas, AA1UE

The Next HCRA meeting is Friday, February 2, 2001
Doors Open at 7:PM
Meeting Starts at 7:30 Sharp!
Hope to see you there!!!

This issue of *Zero Beat* was also sent to the general membership of the
HCRA via e-mail.

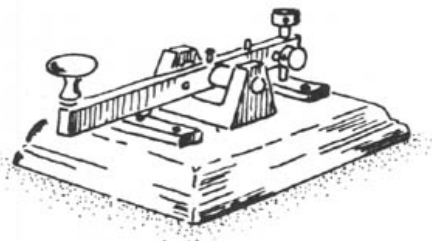
If you would like to be included in our monthly e-mailings, see page 5 for details.

Visit our new website at: <http://www.hcra.org>

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President's



Corner

Look to the sky!

This month's speaker is our own Gary Thomas, AA1UE. Gary came back to ham radio after a few years off and has jumped into the satellite game with both feet. Gary will bring us up to date with the latest news about AO-40 and some tips on pacsats and other satellite operation. You may remember Gary from last year's Field Day. He and his partner Bill, N1WGX, made satellite contacts at FD on Sunday morning, giving us 100 bonus points for their accomplishment. Be sure to get there early so you don't miss any of the meeting, and be ready to ask questions about this exciting mode. But be careful, Gary's infectious excitement just might have you on the phone to HRO Saturday morning!

ARRL Board Meeting

As promised, the ARRL held their board meeting in Texas January 22nd. And also as promised they did make decisions about a few important things.

1. The board voted to raise the ARRL dues from \$34 to \$39 a year, starting July 2001. Their stated reason was the need for additional funding for the "big project" and other initiatives.
2. The board voted to support the IARU at the next WRC in 2003 that might call for the elimination of the Morse requirement from the international Radio Regulations. But, they also voted to support CW in the US, and want the FCC to keep CW in this country's requirements, even if it's not required by the IARU. Looks like a perfect case of standing on both sides of the fence to me.

Check out the ARRL web site for all the details, it's at <http://www.arrl.org>.

www.hcra.org

While you are on the web, click over to the HCRA web site. I think you will be surprised at what you find there. I don't want to give it all away, but be sure you have a sound card and speakers hooked up, you'll be amazed at what you hear.

If you like what you see, why don't you drop Larry, N1URE, our webmaster a short note. He's been working hard to give us a great looking site and I'm sure he'd like to hear from you.

Also, Larry is looking for content for the site. If you have any unique QSL's, shack pictures, project pictures etc. send them along. They would make a great addition to the web page.

Tell you friends to check out the site also, it's quite interesting and worth the look.

Swap Table

Well, the first month's swap table was a little sparse! But I know this is only the beginning. Do you have anything you would like to sell or swap? Bring it along to the club meeting and put it on the swap table. Just put your name & call on it and if you sell it, donate a little something to the HCRA (10% is suggested) for making the table available. I'm going to bring some more stuff this month, please don't let my great junk feel so lonely, bring it some company.

Field Day

Yes, I know June seems like a long way away, especially with all this white stuff on the ground. But if we don't plan now, it's going to sneak up on us really fast!

It looks like we will be combining efforts with the MTARA again this year. Interest seemed pretty high among the crowd at the last MTARA meeting. I saw quite a few hands raised in support of both FD and the joint effort.

What is most important now is to secure a site. Getting that picked and under our belt will make the planning much easier. Mt. Tom has been suggested, and John, KX1X is looking into a nice site in Granby, MA. If you have any suggestions about a great site, please let me or Paul, N1FI, know your thoughts. It would be great to get the site picked and approved by the time the MTARA flea market in March rolls around.

We are still looking for a few people to work as a FD committee to plan the necessary stuff for the event. Contrary to popular belief, this is not a terribly nasty job. Both clubs have been doing FD for years, and many of the participants are almost automatic in their station setup etc. If you think you could be of assistance please, let me or Paul know and we will make sure you get a place on the team.

Upcoming Speakers

Irv has arranged some great speakers for March, April and May that you won't want to miss. Wayne Mills, N7NG and Steve Ford, WB8IMY, both from the ARRL will be out in March and April respectively. May's speakers will be our own Chet, W1HGJ and Larry, N1URE speaking about ATV. I don't think you'll want to miss any of them!

In closing, I would like to thank Betty and Norm for volunteering to help with the coffee and donuts at the meetings. I've been terrible at it, Irv won't even let me make the coffee! Thanks to Betty and Norm, you will have good coffee to drink, on time, from now on!

Jim, KK1W



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Questions, Comments, and Suggestions Can Be Directed To:

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Emergency Coordinator Dave Isham, KB1MU (413) 596-6605

ON THE AIR

Please remember to join our Monday evening 10m Net

Join NCS Tom, N1MUV, On Monday nights, 7:30PM local for the

HCRA/W1NY 10m Net 28.375 +/- QRM

Vermont & New Hampshire QSO Parties - 0000z Feb 3 to 2400Z Feb 4
Minnesota QSO Party - 1400Z - 2400z Feb 3
Delaware QSO Party - 1700z Feb3 to 0500z Feb 4 and 1300z Feb 4 to 0500z Feb 5
ARRL International DX Contest (CW) - 0000z Feb 17 to 2400z Feb 18
North Carolina QSO Party - 1200z to 2400z Feb 24 and Feb 25
CQ 160m Contest (SSB) - 2200 Feb 23 to 1600 Feb 25
ARRL International DX Contest (SSB) - 0000z Mar 3 to 2400z Mar 4
CQWW WPX Contest, SSB - 0000z March 24 to 2400z March 25



DX Clips **de** ***Jordy, W1JK***

I just returned from 2 weeks of skiing in Stowe & I am not current on DX happenings. I brought a Laptop Computer with me, but only utilized it for Email.

This month I will discuss DXing and its many variations. There is more than one way to chase DX. The all important attribute is MOTIVATION. Station limitations should be upper-most in mind when setting your goals. DXing can be very satisfying to anyone if their goals are consistent with their capabilities. Just remember that it is not a "level playing ground". The most sophisticated stations will almost always get through the pileups first. They usually work the DXpeditions in the first day or two, and then the natural "pecking-order" applies. It is usually easy to work even rare DXpeditions on the last day or two. If you are running 100W and a modest antenna system do not frustrate yourself by trying to crash a pileup on the second day-be patient and wait. If you don't get through this time, wait until the next one. Persistence always pays-off. Pileups with 10 - 20 KHZ listening spreads can be a "crapshoot". Some DX ops. are difficult to figure out. They don't-for example: 1. tune low to high or vice versa; 2. listen for tailenders; 3. have favorite listening spots, etc. They simply twirl the dial & work the strongest signal. The driving force is to make the most QSOs during the allotted time-frame.

Some Hams obtain their DX thrills by operating QRP and amass amazingly large DXCC totals with 5 watts. Others play the Game with a different set of objectives - for example: How many DX countries can you work on one band, SSB, in a 1 year period? The primary object should be to enjoy oneself. I personally have a much higher regard for the low power or QRP DXer. They are doing it the hard way. I confess that I do not possess the patience for that type operation. Operating skills and efficient use of ones time are essential ingredients.

It is unfortunate that DXCC does not have multiple categories based on power as they do in Contests. One could argue that there is no way to certify the accuracy of claimed power levels; but, that is the case in contests also-the "honor" system. I have suggested a new DXCC award with power categories to ARRL. The existing DXCC Award would remain, of course. Too many people have spent many years attaining their standing and it would be grossly unfair to require them to start all over. This would simply be another Award with a current starting date which would allow everybody to "start the race" from the same "starting gate". New DXers would not be at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the "old timers". I believe this would encourage many would-be DXers to become more active and increase activity on the Bands. Unfortunately, ARRL does not seem interested in the proposal for many reasons. In fairness, they are not seeking additional operating costs (expense of administering another Award) in an Organization with stagnant growth.

You can, however, set your own course in this regard and derive tremendous pride and self-satisfaction from "doing it the hard way".

It is obvious that when you hang your DXCC Award with stickers in your shack that you are the only one who knows how you worked it. If you only had time to work DX on Sundays when the Bands are most crowded, or you did it QRP, or with 100W and a Dipole or Vertical....you know that you can be proud of yourself; and, most important you attained your goal. The unethical DXer with 10KW knows he has cheated. Truthfully, he has cheated himself more than his fellow DXCCers. He will never know where he really stands among his peers.

LOOK FOR

3C1-Equatorial Guinea:Erik,SM0AGD will be there from 1/23 thru 2/5. All bands, all modes. QSL home call.

3C0- Bouvet: Chuck will be there until Mar 2. He is leaving earlier than planned. Mostly on 20M, but also 17,15,12 & 10M

4W-East Timor: 4W1CW & 4W1UN are active & heard on 24907 & 10106 0200230Z.

9M6-East Malaysia: Don,K6IPV & Dave,W6AQ will operate station 9M6AAC Feb 1022nd.They hope to get to Brunei(V8) for 2-3 days.

A5-Bhutan: The whole Johnson family awaits you on 80,40,30,20M-mostly CW, but plenty of SSB also.

CE0X-San Ambrosio Island: Marco,CE6TBN is team leader & plans ops. during 2nd week of Feb. Try to get this one.

D6-Comoros: Using calls D68BT & D68WL - EA3BT & EA3WL started ops. Last week. also, D68C, DXpedition will be active from Feb 8-28.

J2-Djibouti: Look for David,F5THR active as J28EX until Jan,2002 on 16010M. QSL via FB1BON.

See you next month.

de Jordy - W1JK wijk@earthlink.net

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 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. 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 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, WA1ZUH to be added to the eZB only list.



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Jim, WA1ZUH: jmullen@rockys.com or (413) 245-3228

What's Happening???

On The Air

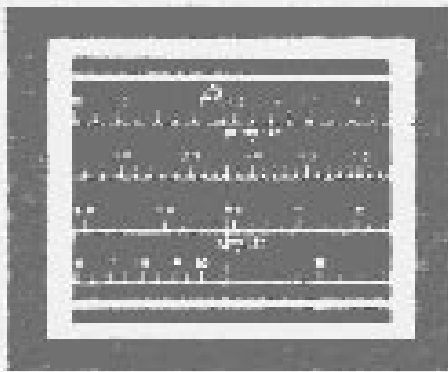
Mon., Tues, Thur, Fri	19:00	National Traffic System (NTS) Net	146.94
Sundays	08:45	Western Mass Emergency Net	146.94
Mondays	19:30	HCRA 10m Net	28.375
Wednesdays	19:30	MTARA Info net	146.94 and 147.000 (link)
	20:00	MTARA Swap net	
	20:30	MTARA Tech net	
Thursdays	21:00	Weather Net (ncs K1PAI Roger)	1 st Week of the Month 147.09 Every other week 147.000

Club Meetings & Testing Sessions

1 st Friday of the month	19:30	HCRA Club Meeting	Feeding Hills Congregational Church 21 N. Westfield St., Feeding Hills
3 rd Friday of the month	19:30	MTARA Club meeting	Red Cross building 506 Cottage St, SPFLD, MA
4 th Friday of the month	18:00	MTARA License Exams	Holyoke Hospital Auditorium Beech St., Holyoke
4 th Sunday of the month	19:00	NOBARC club meeting	Pittsfield MA (146.91 for talk-in)

Please forward additions and suggestions to: Stan Bates, n1inb seb@wca.com

(All times Local)



Across the Ham Bands

By **HERB S. BRIER**, W5EGQ
Amateur Radio Editor

VERTICAL ANTENNAS: STRAIGHT AND SIMPLE

THE long sunny days of summer are obviously the ideal time to refurbish your old antenna, put up a new one, or to experiment with a different type. If you've been using a horizontal antenna, for example, you might like to try a vertical. At the very least, your results will be different.

Basically, whether they're vertical, horizontal, slanting, or bent, there are two kinds of simple antennas. One type requires a connection to an actual or artificial ground system for its operation; the other needs no ground connection. In the grounded type, the ground acts like an electrical mirror and doubles the antenna's effective length.

Even when operated "against ground," a full-size vertical antenna for 80 or 160 meters is quite a tall stick—60 or 125 feet high. But many amateur locations can easily accommodate the 33-foot length of a 40-meter vertical, or one of the commercially available 40-through-10-meter verticals which are approximately 27 feet long. These antennas will radiate most of their power at the low angles above the horizon most desirable for working DX.

For best results, it is very important to install any vertical antenna well away from

utility wires, buildings and trees; otherwise, such obstructions will absorb much of the power radiated by the antenna and distort its theoretical circular radiation pattern. In addition, unless a grid of wires is buried just under the surface of the earth around the base to reduce ground losses, a large percentage of the r.f. power fed into the antenna will be wasted in ground having average conductivity.

This is where an artificial ground system becomes helpful. It is often possible to mount a vertical antenna on the roof of a building to get it above many power-absorbing objects. Then, four $\frac{3}{4}$ wave wires ("radials") can be connected together under the base of the antenna and extended away from it like the spokes of a wheel to form an efficient "ground plane" for the antenna. The end of each "radial" is supported and insulated with a standard antenna insulator, and the antenna is fed with 50-ohm coaxial cable.

Compared to a horizontal antenna 30 to 40 feet high, the vertical antenna will usually perform better over the longer distances—say beyond about 700 miles—but the horizontal will usually do better over the shorter

Novice Station of the Month

You don't need elaborate equipment to pile up contacts. Gordon Walford, WNBUXF, New Carlisle, Pa., worked 29 states with an AMLCO AC 1 one-tube, 15-watt transmitter; a three-tube home-built receiver; and a 16' high 40-meter dipole. Gordon will receive a one-year subscription to POPULAR ELECTRONICS for submitting this winning photo in our Novice Station of the Month contest. If you would like to enter the contest, send us a clear picture of your station—preferably showing you at the controls—along with some information about yourself, your equipment, and operating achievements. All contest entries should go to Herb S. Brier, Amateur Radio Editor, POPULAR ELECTRONICS, Box 678, Gary, Indiana 46401.



Hampden County Radio Association
Board of Directors Meeting
January 11, 2001
Held at Greg Stoddard's home, Suffield, CT

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Board members present were: Jim, WA1ZUH; Greg, N1AEH; Irv, W6IS; Betty, KB1CPZ; Les, K1DNX; Stan, N1INB. Also present were Norm, W1BMK and Larry, N1URE.

OFFICER REPORTS:

Vice President: Not present. Greg filled in the board on the outcome of the January raffle. Irv volunteered to purchase the raffle prizes for the February meeting. The board hopes Jordy had a nice vacation, and looks forward to seeing him at the next meeting.

Treasurer: Present bank balance \$3459. Net from January raffle, \$34. All bills are current, the club remains in a great financial position.

Secretary: Not present. Irv suggested that telephone numbers be added to the next version of the roster. It was agreed this should be done. Larry, N1URE, would like a copy of the .mdb file from the database. He will use this to place a current roster on the web site. The board approved, with the stipulation that phone numbers would not be included in the web page roster. The board hopes Dave had a nice trip to Canada (at his employers expense) and looks forward to seeing him next month.

MEMBER REPORTS:

Zero Beat: Not present. In John's absence, the board set the Zero Beat deadline date of January 26th for submissions. It was also suggested that the address of the meetings be placed on the Zero Beat masthead or info page. See you at the next meeting John.

Program: Irv reported we have speakers for February and probably April. These will be Gary, AA1UE speaking on satellites in February and Wayne Mills from ARRL speaking in April. We still have two spaces to fill before the end of the year. Suggestions are welcome. Larry, N1URE, offered to do an ATV demonstration, perhaps in May, for the club.

Membership: Betty submitted the VE handouts she created and printed. These will be given to VE candidates at the local VE sessions. Jim gave Betty the league information about new hams and will get her on the mailing list when he receives the next mailing from ARRL. Betty turned in the balance from the Holiday Party to Greg. Final cost on the party was \$218.52. Thanks Betty and Norm for your efforts.

At Large: Les offered some pricing information on W1NY QSL's and eyeball cards from a local printer. It was agreed Les would bring samples from a few QSL printers and of eyeball cards for approval at next months meeting.

GUESTS

Larry had comments and questions about what the club desired for content on the web page. He has asked for scans or pictures of unique QSL cards for inclusion on the site. Everyone agreed the website is spectacular and the board is appreciative of the effort Larry has put into this project. It was also mentioned that inclusion of the Hall of Fame event would make a nice addition to the web page.

Norm volunteered to do the coffee and donuts at the monthly meetings. Greg advanced Norm \$20 to keep the start the kitty out for the rest of the year. Thank you Norm! (I guess he got sick of my miserable coffee!) Somehow Norm also convinced Betty to help out with this project.

OLD BUSINESS: The Field Day discussion continued, with no immediate resolution. We are waiting to hear from John about the possibility the Granby location. It was agreed that a FD with MTARA would be good, but probably not at the Mt. Tom reservation. The bulletin board and PA system approved for purchase at the last board meeting have not been purchased yet.

NEW BUSINESS: Dave, KB1MU, has found it difficult to do justice to both the secretary and emergency coordinator position. He has asked if he may remain in the EC position, but with the caveat of not writing a monthly column. This was approved by the board. The board would entertain someone for the position if a volunteer comes forward. Any takers?

The swap table was not well stocked at the meeting. It was agreed to keep it going for the rest of the year. All HCRA members are welcome to bring in stuff to sell/swap at the meetings. Some discussion was put forward concerning the HCRA's position when we attend the ARRL Cabinet meeting on January 13th.

Larry led a discussion about a possible ATV repeater in the local area. He will keep the board and club informed as details become available.

Fund raising ideas were discussed. Irv suggested we hold a "tailgate party" at a club meeting. It sounded like a good suggestion and the board approved the event for June, 2001. Stay tuned for more information. Anyone wishing to "participate in a fun event" should give Irv a call! A bake sale was also mentioned as a good fund raiser. Perhaps this could be part of the "tailgate party"? As always, suggestions are welcome.

ACTION ITEMS: Jim, WA1ZUH: Order bulletin board, PA system and wireless mic; minutes of meeting; attend ARRL meeting.

Dave, **KB1MU:** E-mail .mdb file of database to Larry, N1URE; include telephone numbers in next roster; forward label file to John by January 26th.

John, KX1X: Zero beat info by the 26th, print and mail by January 29th; review current eZeroBeat list with Dave.

Irv, W6IS: Order raffle prize(s) for February (we have an Antenna Book CD); confirm AA1UE for February; PA system info.

Betty, KB1CPZ: Follow up on ARRL list; staple VE handouts.

Les, K1DNX: Get sample QSL's and eyeball QSL's, submit an assortment for approval at next board meeting.

Stan, N1INB: Work with Larry concerning ATV repeater.

Larry, N1URE: Keep up the good work!

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

The next meeting of the
Hampden County Radio Association
Will be on Friday
February 2nd, 2001
At 7:30 p.m. at the
Feeding Hills Congregational Church
Doors open at 7:00 PM

Hope to see you there!

*In case of inclement weather, tune to TV Channels 22 or 40, or on the
146.94 and 147.105 repeaters.*

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

HCRA
P.O. Box 562
Agawam, Massachusetts
01001

PLEASE HAND CANCEL

Satellite Operations

A presentation by

AA1UE, Gary Thomas

This Friday, February 2nd, 2001

