

Zero Beat

DECEMBER 2010

<http://www.hcra.org>

Hey Folks!

The arrival of your December *Zero Beat* heralds that time of year when the winter holiday sights and sounds begin a not-so-subtle change in the atmosphere of our New England countryside and we begin to think of hearth, home and holidays past with a childlike reverence and anticipation of what the holidays bring for each of us. So, come join us on Monday December 6th at the **Steaming Tender Restaurant** in Palmer Massachusetts for an evening of fine food, drinks and the company of good friends - the greatest holiday treasure of them all.

I hope you have received your reminder postcard in the mail and if you're planning to attend and have taken the time to fill it out and return it to the HCRA along with your check for \$15 for each person attending. We will be able to take reservations until November 29th - after that date we will be unable to add anyone - so don't procrastinate, get your reservations in now!

In addition to the ambiance and fine table

fare of the **Steaming Tender**, we have a few surprises in store for you. Mum's the word, but in the spirit of the upcoming holidays, I'll let one out of the bag - - - we have, through the generosity of Alex Lentini of Lentini Communications (<http://www.lentinicomm.com/>) in Newington, Connecticut and the efforts of Larry, WB1DBY, a donation of a TYT dual band HT that will be raffled off at the party. Your party ticket will be automatically entered in the raffle. The other surprises will remain just that - surprises - and you'll just have to be there on December 6th to see what they are.



For more info, and to see the menu, go to http://www.hcra.org/holiday_party.htm or If you have any questions or concerns , please call me at 413 525-3717.

Hope to see you at the Steaming Tender on December 6th .

73, Marty, W1MJB



From the Shack

What's happening at HCRA — December, 2010



All Aboard for the Holiday Party

Have you made your reservation?

What better way to celebrate the holidays than to spend time with your friends in a turn of the century railroad station? Huge windows, varnished paneling, trains rolling by - do you have your ticket?

By now everyone should have made their reservations and marked December 6th on their calendar for a great time. What, you didn't? Oh no, now what! We always aim to please at HCRA so if your plans have changed and you can make it, we will put every effort forward to fit you in. Most importantly you need to contact Marty/W1MJB so he can put your name on the list and add you to the restaurant's head count. You can contact Marty by phone at: 413-525-3717. He'll take it from there and you can pay when you check in just before the party.

Win a dual band HT and programming software just by attending! Thanks to generous donation from our friends at Lentini's and the efforts of WB1DBY we are able to offer a great door prize for one lucky partygoer. Every paid reservation will get one ticket and yours may be the lucky one!

There are other door prizes and surprises as well. Don't miss out on our last big bash or 2010 - make your reservation now!

HCRA ranks 1st in WMA for FD 2010

And scores high in other categories too!



The results for Field Day 2010 are out. Once again HCRA's W1NY station garnered first place in the ARRL's Western Massachusetts Division (WMA). Here's a breakdown of where we landed in a number of other categories.

Our total score was 9938 points, made 2874 QSO's and we operated as a Class 7A station. You can see a complete

breakdown by band/mode on our website at: <http://www.hcra.org/fd2010.htm>.

Here's the results of our efforts in various categories:

First Place WMA Section (out of 13 entries)

Third Place nationwide in Class 7A (out of 15 entries)

Seventh Place for all of New England (out of 154 entries)

44th Place in our power multiplier 2 class (out of 2241 entries)

53rd place NATIONWIDE out of all 2617 stations reporting.

I think these scores pretty much tell it all. When a little radio club in Western Massachusetts finishes in the top 2% of the country it says a lot for our members and their accomplishments! Now we have a goal for next year, are you folks ready to do it all over again - only better?

Thanks to everyone that made this happen, from the folks on the ground doing the erecting, operating, cooking and cleanup to those that supported us with equipment loans, contacts and the moral support needed to keep us going for 24 hours and of course to all 2874 stations that worked us during the event. A team effort that really spreads beyond our nation! We're starting Field Day planning now, would you like to be in on the ground floor?

Auction 2010 - Another Success

Thanks for all the donations!

This year's auction marks another successful year for our annual event. With the help from many volunteers, piles of donations and the usual hundred or so buyers/sellers how could it be anything but successful.

Of course the first question you hear when someone asks about the auction is, "how much did we make?" True, this is an important factor but our auction can be successful on many levels, not only income. Every year at HCRA I see one or two new hams go home with enough gear to actually get on the air, something they may have had to put off for budgetary reasons if they were forced to purchase a new rig.

Then there's the folks that are looking to 'stock up' for future building projects. Where else can you get big boxes full of all kinds of stuff for a buck? Ever price a metal cabinet? If you have you realize you could expect to pay \$25 to \$50 for one - or you could go home with one from the auction for a \$1 or \$2. Trays of components, switches, all kinds of things you never know you'll need until you need it. All at our auction.

Once again this year we had a large donation from a local silent key's family. Their generosity really spiced up the offerings and contributed to our bottom line at the same time.

Oh, did someone ask how we did? The final report isn't printed yet but it appears we made close to \$1,000 between the auction and the raffle. And had a good time doing it too. How cool is that.

As usual we couldn't have done it without the support of many of our dedicated volunteers. Ed/KB1NWH took care of tables and tear down, Bob/W1SQ once again supplied our point-of-sale system (and ran it too) and also brought the great sound system, Marty/W1MJB took his turn with the gavel (we don't have one of those, do we?), and many folks worked hard to keep the stuff moving toward the auction block.

Rounding out the event was the Venture Crew's snack bar, serving up hot dogs, snacks, home made desserts and beverages. They did a great job and we're looking forward to seeing them back again next year.

Happenings at HCRA

What's ahead for 2011?

Scott Anderson/NE1RD will be our January speaker. He's an active ham that will get you re-invigorated with our hobby. From QRP to DXpeditions he's done it all and will share some of his adventures.

ARRL's Ten Meter contest is this month. Starting at 7:00 PM on Friday, December 10th and running until 7:00 PM Sunday December 12th. More info on our website at <http://www.hcra.org/tutorial.htm>.

March is our Annual Show & Tell. Have you started your Show & Tell project yet? Did you get what you needed at the auction to complete it? Don't delay, start it today!

Happy Holidays!



73... Jim, KK1W

HCRA PowerUP Raffle

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- 2000 watts (16.7 A) of Honda Inverter 120V AC Power
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- Inverter - stable power for computers and more



\$10/Ticket - Only 200 tickets will be sold!

Drawing will be by June 3rd, 2011

Contact Matt - W1MSW (w1msw@arri.net) to purchase tickets

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.

Larry, WB1DBY, Zero Beat Editor

Upcoming Flea Markets

4 Dec Windsor CT VR+C Mus 115 Pierson LN
@8AM Indoor John 860 673 0518

26 Feb Colchester VT HAM-CON @Hampton
[\\$8@8](#) [\\$15@6:30](#) Mitch W1SJ 802 879 6589

HCRA Holiday Party

Join your friends for a relaxing evening at the Steaming Tender Restaurant in Palmer, MA. Absorb the charm of a turn-of-the-century railroad station while savoring award winning cuisine with your best friends from HCRA. The perfect way to escape from the holiday rush!

When & Where

December 6th

Cocktails at 6:00 PM – Dinner at 7:00 PM

Steaming Tender Restaurant

28 Depot Street, Palmer, MA 01069

Holiday Buffet

Fresh Garden Salad with choice of house dressings

Chicken with Cranberry Sage Stuffing

Baked Haddock with Lobster Sauce

Roasted Sliced Pork Loin with Caramelized Apples and Cider Sauce

Roasted Red Bliss Potato

Chef's Selection of Vegetable

Steaming Tender's Signature Whiskey Bread Pudding

HCRA Holiday Cake

Coffee, Decaf or Tea

New This Year

Door Prizes, Award Presentations and more!

Cost

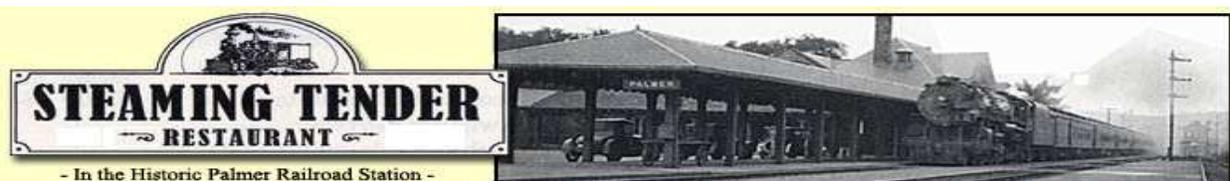
HCRA Members or guests - \$15/person

Please mail the total number of attendee(s) and your check to:

HCRA, P.O. Box 562, Agawam, MA 01001

It would be great to receive your payment by 11/26!

This event is a major effort to provide a fantastic Holiday Party for our club. Please help make this a success and register early so we can ensure everyone has a great time.



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Ripple & Noise <15m Vp-p



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Input voltage AC110V/220V
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Ripple & Noise 80mVp-p



SWR & Power Meters

LTS-101X **\$89.95**
Frequency 1.8-200Mhz
Power range: Forward 20/200w
Input/Output impedance: 50 ohms



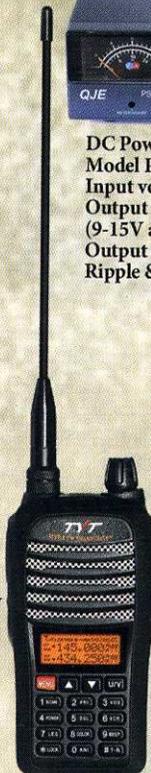
SWR & Power Meters

LTS-201D **\$109.95**
Frequency: 1.8-200Mhz
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Input/Output Impedance: 50 ohms



TYT TH-F5 **\$84.95**
Single Band HT
144-148 MHz (TX)
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FCC Certified

Includes: LiON Battery & drop-in charger



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- Turn left onto Christian Lane.
- Take your first right, at white and green sign that says Christian Lane Industrial Park, and follow up the hill and around to the FRONT of the building. (Back of building faces the street)
- We are Unit A (Far Left)

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Is Ham Radio Dying?

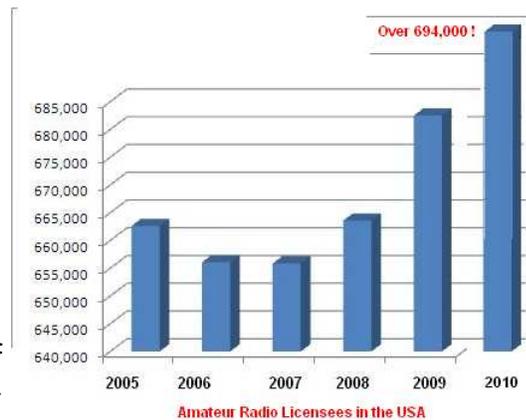
Is Ham Radio Dying?

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

If you've been around ham radio for even a year or two, you've no doubt heard or participated in the debate as to whether or not ham radio is dying. The question is as perennial as the grass.

Recently, this was a topic of discussion on the ARRL PR mailing list. Allen, W1AGP, the ARRL's Media & PR Manager, generated a chart to show that ham radio is NOT dying. It showed the number of licensees in the U.S. every year from 2005 to 2009:

2005: 661,000
2006: 655,000
2007: 655,000
2008: 662,000
2009: 681,000
2010: 694,000!



This chart as drawn a good example of how you can lie with statistics. The y-axis started at 640,000, so the rate of increase in the number of licensees looked quite dramatic. Even so, the good news is that the number of licensees is quickly approaching 700,000, and should surpass that number shortly.

Upon seeing this chart, Jerry, N9TU, did a little statistical analysis of his own. Of the 83 licensees in his zip code, nine are deceased and one has expired. There are four Novices, 36 Techs, 18 Generals, 5 Advanced and ten Extras.

From this data, he deduces, "If this is an average sampling of deceased members, expired members and club licenses, there are roughly 90,000 fewer licensees than shown in the data nationwide. I have no clue of the error rate involved with my data. Your results may vary." My guess is that his zip code is probably pretty typical, and that his analysis is essentially correct.

There's also the question of activity. It's my guess that nearly half of all licensees are inactive, and that if we could figure out a way to activate those hams, then we'd really be able to say that our hobby is not dying. It's something worth thinking about, but there's certainly no easy answer to this problem. As Yogi Berra is purported to have said, "If people don't want to come out to the ball park, there's nothing you can do to stop them."

Overall, though, I think the numbers are headed in the right direction. Ham radio is NOT dying. Let's all keep up the good work.

When not pondering whether the reports of ham radio's death have been greatly exaggerated or not, Dan operates CW on the HF bands, teaches ham radio classes, and blogs about ham radio at www.kb6nu.com. All comments welcome and appreciated. E-mail them to cwgeek@kb6nu.com.

10m Anyone?

Howdy Fellow HCRA Members,

We are only a few weeks away from the ARRL 10 meter contest and as many of you know, it's an HCRA tradition to participate as a club. I've (been) volunteered this year to organize the club's participation. Please, right now, mark the dates below on your calendars and let's all try to put some operating time in that weekend.

Here's the nitty-gritty:

Objective:

For Amateurs worldwide to exchange QSO information with as many stations as possible on the 10-meter band.

Dates:

Starts 0000 UTC Saturday December 11th (8:00 PM, Friday, December 10th) and runs through 2359 UTC Sunday December 12th (8:00 PM, Sunday, December 12th).

Some Facts:

The 10 meter contest is more laid back than most contests and is a great opportunity for new operators or those who would like to try "contesting" for the first time. Last year (2009) the contest was my first opportunity to operate an HF radio. It was hook, line and sinker from then on.

All license classes can participate in this contest. Technicians have voice and CW privileges in the 10 meter band so no excuses for not participating. It's going to be cold outside and the weather is going to be cruddy so get on the air and operate! If you don't have a 10 meter capable station at home, let me know and I will see if we can find a station where you can put some time in. If there are some Elmers out there who have been participating in the contest for a while and would like to open their station up for newcomers who don't have a 10 meter capable station, please let me know. As I mentioned

above, this was my first experience on HF and it made a big impression. So far KK1W and KB1NWH have volunteered to open their homes to guest operators. Watch the HCRA website for more as we get closer to the contest.

Propagation has been getting better over the last 6 months and we have some potential to really improve our scores this year. During the CQ Worldwide SSB contest, weekend before last, I worked 38 DX 10 meter contacts mostly to the Caribbean, South America and Central America. That's pretty good compared to last year and to be honest I could have spent more time on the band.

I know there are a few members out there (like myself) who have been learning CW. I'd like to carry on a tradition that Jim, K1JAW (SK), started. At a pre-determined time and on a predetermined frequency, Jim would send out a nice and slow VVV CQ TEST DE K1JAW K calling for those of us who were a little intimidated by the faster code used during a contest, but who also wanted the CW endorsement on our HCRA 10 Meter Contest Certificate. I thought it was a great idea and I'll do my best to take on Jim's role this year. Let's celebrate what Jim did for the club by making some slow contacts during those scheduled times even if you can copy and send 30wpm. More details on that as the contest date gets closer.

OK that's all for now, but expect more reminders in the near future as the date gets closer and please please please put a big "BUSY" on the calendar that weekend right now (if you didn't do it when I asked you earlier in the email!)

For more information on the contest and results from years past, please go to the next page..

Thanks & 73,

Matt - W1MSW

ARRL 10 Meter Contest: An HCRA Club Competition Tradition

This will be HCRA's 9th consecutive year participating as a club in the ARRL 10 Meter Contest. Last year we had eight stations and eleven operators on the air scoring a total of 72,258 points. With the sun finally starting to wake up and propagation on the rise, let's set a goal this year to double our stations, operators and points! It can be done. If you're new to contesting, the 10 meter contest is very laid back compared to others and a great place to start. If you're an old hat at contesting, put your skills to work and help keep the club on the map. Remember, technician class operators have voice and CW privileges in the 10 meter band, so no excuses for not participating!

Once again HCRA will be offering certificates for club members achieving different levels of scores.

For more information about the contest and certificates, please see the 10 meter page on the HCRA website: <http://hcra.org/tutorial.htm>. If you have any questions, please contact Matt - W1MSW (w1msw@arrl.net) Reminders and additional information will be posted on the club reflector soon.

2010 ARRL 10 Meter Contest



0000 UTC Saturday, December 11 – 2359 UTC Sunday, December 12

World-class operators Hector Garcia, XE2K, and Ramón Santoyo, XE1KK, lead the charge of Mexican amateurs who will be handing out new multipliers during the 2010 ARRL 10 Meter Contest! Hector's antennas appear below.



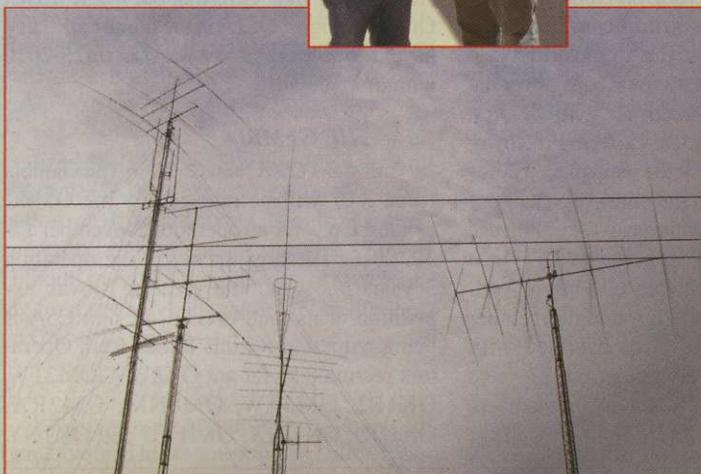
COURTESY: HECTOR GARCIA, XE2K

- The highest band in the HF spectrum is the place to make contacts in the second of the ARRL's three December competitions. Solar Cycle 24 has finally begun, and that could mean good openings. Enter only SSB, only CW or a mixture of both.

- New for 2010 is the addition of the 31 Mexican states and the Federal District as multipliers. This will definitely bring new excitement to this great event!

- US Technicians have 10 meter SSB privileges from 28.3-28.5 MHz and are encouraged to get in on the fun! W/VE/XE stations (including Alaska and Hawaii) send a signal report and their state or province; DX stations (including Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands and Pacific territories) send a signal report and sequential serial number.

- Complete rules and a map of the Mexican states can be found at www.arrl.org/10-meter. Cabrillo-formatted logs can be e-mailed to 10meter@arrl.org. All logs must be submitted or postmarked by 0000 UTC Wednesday, January 12, 2011.



Zen and the Art of Radiotelegraphy

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

One thing that I find amusing about Morse Code is that the more people claim that it's dead, the more people there are that rise up to defend and promote it. Note that I said "defend and promote it," not actually use it, but that topic is for another column.

Having said that, let me direct you to a new tome on our ancient art, *Zen and the Art of Radiotelegraphy* by Carlo Consoli, IK0YQJ. This book is available as a free download in the original Italian

http://www.gsl.net/ik0yqj/enu/ZART_ita_v20100826.pdf and in an English translation

http://www.gsl.net/ik0yqj/enu/ZART_r20101008m.pdf.

What makes this book different from others is that instead of concentrating on the mechanics of learning and using Morse Code, the author spends a good deal of time talking about the psychology of learning this skill. To succeed in learning Morse Code, Consoli advises that we need to change our approach to learning:

"When learning CW, therefore, we must establish a new component in our self-image and, when doing so, we need to be relaxed. Always practice during the same time of day and in a place where you can experience positive feelings of comfort and pleasure. When we make a mistake we are always ready to blame ourselves. This is the way we learnt from our environment during childhood, often accepting any fault as our own error or weakness.

This potentially destructive mechanism can be used to build a positive self-image, rather than demolish it. A mistake must be considered a signal, pointing us in the right direction. If you fail, let your mistake pass away, with no blame or irritation. Learn CW in a relaxed mood, enjoy the pleasure of learning something new, repeat your exercises every day and be confident in the self-programming abilities of your self-image. Just a few minutes a day: you can take care of your 'more serious' stuff later on."

Consoli also has some interesting things to say about getting faster. He agrees with me that it's essential to

abandon pencil and paper and start copying in one's head. We also agree that at this point, you need to start using a paddle instead of a straight key.

He has analyzed the situation a lot more than I have, though. When hams ask me how I learned to copy in my head, all I can do is to relate my own experience, which is that one day, I just went cold turkey. I put down the pencil and paper and never copied letter-by-letter ever again.

Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to work for a lot of operators. If that doesn't work for you, Consoli says that what you need to do is to program yourself to copy in your head. You do this, he says, by relaxing and visualizing. Visualize yourself as a high-speed operator, and one day, you will be one.

That seems to have worked for him. He is a member of the Very High Speed Club (VHSC), First Class Operator's Club (FOC), and has been clocked at copying over 70 wpm.

Will it work for you? I'm not sure, but if you haven't been successful with other methods to improve your code speed, then Consoli's methods are certainly worth a try.

When not pondering the psychology of operating CW, Dan actually operates CW. You'll find him almost every day on either 40m, 30m, and as we transition to winter here in North America, 80m. You can e-mail him with comments or questions at cwgeek@kb6nu.com.



HCRA Tech Department

Hello All and welcome to the HCRA Tech Department,

The phone has not stopped ringing since I took over as Tech person. The calls have ranged anywhere from programming issues with new radio purchases, to antenna installation and tower erection. I am glad to see that people do use our wealth of information and just the amount of help that is out there just by making a phone call.

Let's see... here are just some of the projects and questions going thru the tech department. KB1RID: programming, KD1RV: tower, N1INB: TVI, W1MJB: tower, KB1USX: antenna, KB1OPV: RFI, and others. Plus making my receding hair line further, I am trying to get Packet working with sound card simulated TNC and/or a standalone TNC.

Well back to the research lab. If you have any questions Tech or not just give a call. I am on most of the major repeater networks, 000, 94, 79. You can E-Mail KB1NWH@ARRL.NET , Call 250-3137. Even if you want to do an on air test I am usually near a radio of some sort.

73 & Happy Holidays,

Ed; KB1NWH



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



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(Newest issues at the bottom)

Holiday Party

December 6th