



MARCH 2010

Zero Beat

<http://www.hcra.org>

From the Shack...

March Meeting - Show & Tell

By the time you read this there will be a few days left to put the final touches on our project and bring it to the meeting. But hey, we work best under pressure, right? K1JAW will have some additional information elsewhere in this issue but I would like to touch on a few cool things about Show & Tell if I may.

I see a lot of interest in building things this year which bodes well for a good project turnout. From Rock-Mites to antenna launchers our members have been building up a storm. Showing off these creations accomplishes a lot. You may win a prize or get some recognition but most of all your efforts could convince someone to try something new. When all is said and done isn't that what it's all about? Every time we make an effort that expands another hams knowledge or use of our hobby we all become winners.

Speaking of winners, there will be prizes given out for the top project in both the Apprentice and Proficient categories. So besides spreading enthusiasm you could leave with an ARRL Basic Antenna Book or 2010 Handbook for your efforts.

In closing please accept a big thank you in advance for taking time to share with your fellow hams - your efforts really do make a difference!

Bylaw Revision

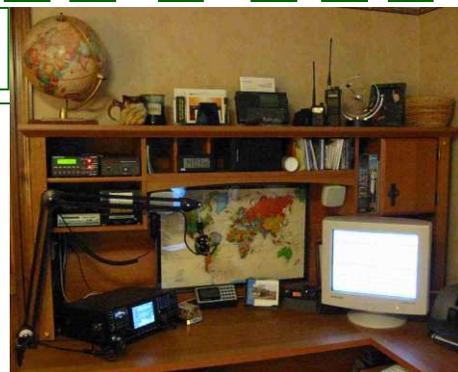
The bylaw revision will be up for ratification this evening. The hard work of the bylaw committee will be rewarded with your vote. If you haven't yet had time to review the changes please take a look at last month's Zero Beat for all the details. Can't find your copy? Just drive on over to the HCRA web site and click on: <http://www.hcra.org/zerobeat/feb10.pdf>. There you will find the proposed changes. The

present bylaws we are working under can be found at:

<http://www.hcra.org/hcra-by-laws.htm>.

Irv and George did a fine job on the

changes as you can see. We look forward to taking any question about the changes and will ask for the membership's approval before the start of Show & Tell. Thanks to the committee for their efforts and to the membership for your questions and suggestions during the review process.



Sunspots - they're back!

Have you noticed something about the bands lately? You can actually make some DX contacts on almost every band at some time during the day. I spent the weekend getting beat up by the real CW ops in the ARRL International DX contest. My bad CW aside there was a time on 15 meters that I was working Japan stations one right after the other! Now that's cool, I don't care what anybody says. Although we're only at the beginning of the uptick in sunspots this is a fantastic time to be on HF. 80 and 40 meters are still going strong and 20, 17 and 15 are opening up as well. As the cycle strengthens the higher frequencies will get better but 80 and 40 won't be as good as they are today. Right now you have the best of both worlds. If you haven't been on the air lately you may want to remove the cover from the rig, make sure the antenna is still connected and have some fun.

So stop reading this article and finish your project or get on the air - time's a-wasting!

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

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54' Rohn 25g fold over tower in great condition. It folds in the center so that the antennas can be worked on from the ground. It comes with the counter-balance, winch, screw in ground anchors, guy wires, turnbuckles.

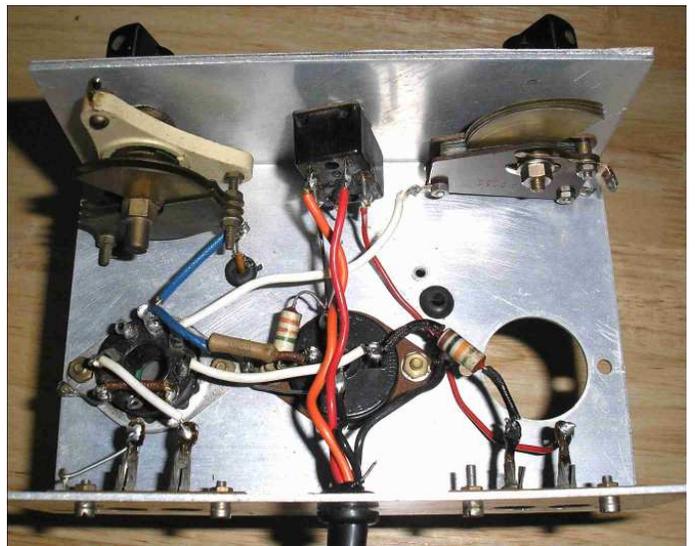
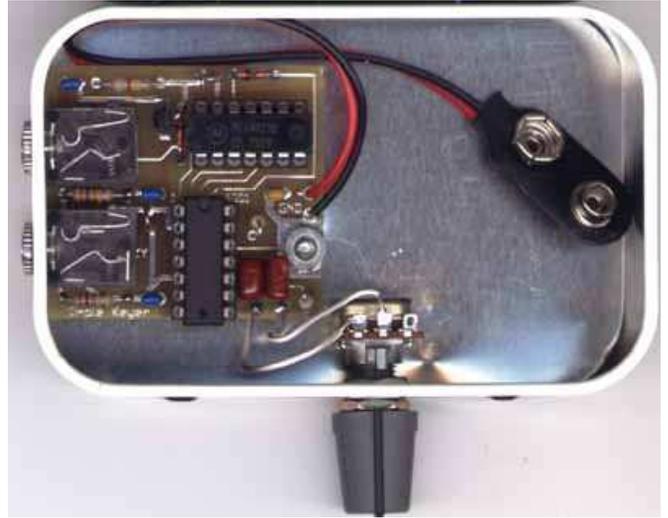
Bolts have been replaced with stainless. Everything needed to put the tower up. Asking for \$275 if you take it down. It will be taken down in late spring but the price will be higher.

Also Kenwood TS870S HF transceiver with very low hours and a TenTec Argonaut V with optional fan used less than 50 hours. Never used mobile. From a non-smoking household. Asking \$1100 for the Kenwood and \$575 for the TenTec. Prices negotiable.

Contact Steve; WA1EYF at 413 537-7335.

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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. Thank you, Larry, WB1DBY, Zero Beat Editor

Hampden County Radio Association
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Tuesday January 12th, 2010

Attendees : Irv Slitzky W6IS, George Collins KC1V, Michael Lavery KB1PKJ, Jim Mullen KK1W, Jim Whitehouse K1JAW, Ed LaCombe KB1NWH

Couldn't make it : Larry Krainson WB1DBY, John Pise KX1X, Dave Cain AA1YW

Meeting called to order at 7:08 pm, at Hampden Bank in Longmeadow, MA.

Officer Reports

Treasurer - George Collins KC1V

Current member count - 81

Club Balance - \$5593.12

Secretary - Michael Lavery KB1PKJ

Action item completed - EQSL club account access was reset.

Board reviewed December minutes as submitted. Motion to accept minutes - George, seconded by Irv. Board voted to accept minutes. Vote was unanimously accepted. Minutes will be sent to Larry and entered into ZB for January Issue.

Action item - check into the liability insurance renewal date (April).

Action item - pick up QSL cards from Ed.

Tech report - Dave Cain AA1YW (in absentia)
Otis, MA ham operator needs help getting on the air.

Zero Beat Editor - Larry Krainson WB1DBY (in absentia)

Submit articles to Larry by Jan. 23rd

USPS versions of the ZB will be sent out by Larry going forward (except for the by-laws revision issue)

Membership - Ed LaCombe KB1NWH

Let the record show there was one new member submitted for board approval. Member call sign - K1MZ Mark Camerlin. Motion to accept by Jim KK1W, seconded by George.. Board voted unanimously to accept the new member.

Raffle total - Net \$41

At Large - Irv Slitzky W6IS

Nothing of note to report. Comments reserved for new and old items.

Program - Jim Whitehouse K1JAW

Kits were ordered from Small Wonder Labs - 13 kits.
Good success. Hopes to see kits at the Show & Tell.

February speaker - Alternative power source.

MassCon QRP Conference - K1JAW, KK1W and KB1PKJ will attend first annual <http://www.masscon.org/>.

Old Business

The bylaw committee (KC1V & W6IS) submitted their revisions to the board for approval. After review and discussion K1JAW made the motion to accept seconded by W6IS. The motion passed unanimously. The revised bylaws will be circulated to the members in February and a vote for ratification will be held at the March 5th general meeting. The board thanked Irv and George for a job well done.

New Business

Boxboro Van trip will be done again, we will seek a trip organizer. Ed will check on prices of the yellow van.

Monthly Breakfast was brought up and everyone thought it was a good idea. Other ham clubs have breakfasts.

Raffle volunteer - Matt KB1TCL will be the new raffle person. Ed will coordinate getting him the current inventory of prizes.

Web link to the tech director - tabled until next meeting.

Repeater was discussed - Possibly non 2meter/440 band repeater. 10 meter? Board was undecided at this time. We will discuss more at further meetings.

HCRA Jobs list - KK1W sent a list to the email reflector. Only one response was received. We need non-board members to get more involved.

Respectfully submitted on this date - January 17th, 2010 -
Michael S. Lavery, KB1PKJ

Field Day, the HCRA way! – June 26th and 27th

Yeah, I know the ARRL Field Day is in June and it seems like an eternity from our cold February nights to warm summer days having fun in the sun with your radios. But now is the time we need to plan so when June does come it all rolls off smoothly and efficiently. And of course it is even more important to have fun while we're doing it!

Like everything else in this world our 2010 Field Day will have some changes and some constants. Let's talk a little about what hasn't changed. The location once again will be Dufresne Park in Granby, MA. This park offers a lot, pavilion, gazebo, trees, fields and rest-rooms at a convenient location. Although an expensive site our searches to date haven't found a better location that can accommodate our activity efficiently. We still remain in search mode and are always open to looking at new locations. If you have any thoughts or suggestions for a new location please pass them along to the board.

Also not changing is our strong desire to have fun and showcase our hobby to the general public. By holding Field Day in a public park, issuing press releases and setting up an information booth we will make every effort to educate visitors to our site. By planning and executing well everyone will be confident their station will operate well and not interfere with others.

What's changed this year is the Field Day committee. It's been awhile since I've had the fun of chairing the event so I decided to do it again - probably so I could remember why I didn't want to do it the last time! But I'm not going it alone - nope - can't do that! Matt, W1MSW, volunteered to give us a hand. Matt is relatively new to the hobby but brings along a huge chunk of enthusiasm and technical ability. Between the two of us and the other volunteers I'm confident we will have, as usual, a great time this June.

But we do have some questions for you, the participants. We need to know what you want from Field Day. What will make you take a few hours/days out of your busy schedule and spend it with your fellow hams? Rather than follow the, "if you build it they will come" method we would rather "build to suit". Please allow me to ask a few questions, your answers will go a long way in creating a Field Day that is fun for everyone.

First, and always a big question. What do we do about food? Our past Field Days could also be called a club picnic. Every effort was made to provide breakfast, lunch and a great Saturday night dinner to participants and guests. We've been pretty successful over the years, but this success doesn't come easy. Good food for fifty or so people is both a lot of work and expensive. What do you think food at Field Day should be? Do you want it like a club picnic or perhaps something simpler? If a picnic with complete meals is desired, how much would you be willing to pay for those meals? What if HCRA provided hot dogs, burgers and soda at a minimal cost and everyone just fared for themselves? What would you do if you were in our place?

Second, should we have a GOTA station? Take a moment to read the Field Day rules and see what the ARRL's intention is for this station. It is supposed to be a station setup and mentored to teach new hams about HF operation. Yes, we get points for it but the whole idea is to get experience for new operators, not have the experts hogging up the transceiver racking up the points. To that extent it really requires an on-site coach, something we've not been able to reliably get in the past. That's why we didn't have a GOTA station last year - there were no volunteers for GOTA coach. Is there anyone out there want to set up and coach the GOTA station? You will have access to equipment, supplies and assistance so you won't have to go it alone.

Third, should we have VHF/UHF station? VHF operation can be great fun at FD, just look at what we did in 2005 as a good example. HCRA tends to be a more HF oriented group and it seems we just don't have any members interested in fielding (yes, it's a pun) a VHF station. Since HCRA Field Day is always open to everyone, members and non-members alike, this is a perfect opportunity for anyone to pitch in and have fun. You get the chance to work with an experienced Field Day crew and we get your VHF/UHF expertise. Interested? Drop us a note and let's get the ball rolling. Like the GOTA station you won't be going it alone, you'll have the backing of the FD staff and equipment.

Fourth, who wants to be 'Band Captains' this year? We have a core of experienced people that bring their equipment and expertise to the table every year. Would they like to try anything different? It's always easy to say, 'hey, KK1W always does the 40 CW station, he wouldn't be happy doing something else". I'll bet most of the band captains volunteer for the same band/mode every year because it is easier. How about it, do any of you folks want to try something different? And to those of you who have 'wanted' to try your hand setting up a station at Field Day. Were you afraid to "step on someone's toes" so you never raised your hand. Hold up that hand, maybe one of those other folks wants to do something different this year! Sometimes it is all about moving outside of our comfort zone and taking the plunge. We do need to know your intentions early because station location and antenna planning are an important part of producing an operation that offers opportunity to everyone without creating inter-station interference that detracts from the fun.

These are just a few of the important questions on our minds, I'm sure you have more. Now is the time to get them all out in front of everyone so we can make good decisions and adequate preparation. Only by doing so can we insure everyone has an exceptional time at Field Day this year. You can email your questions or better yet your intentions to either email address at the end of this article

HCRA expends a lot of time, effort and dollars to make every year's Field Day an event to remember. Between twenty five to fifty percent of our members participate at some level which makes FD an integral part of our club's personality. Because of the size and complexity of Field Day now is the time to take a look at your calendar and if possible mark off one of both weekend days at the end of June to get out of the house and have some fun. Field Day offers something for everyone; operating, logging, antennas, cooking, setup and teardown, generators, traffic handling, publicity, scorekeeping, photography, writing and so on. There must be something here that will put a smile on your face!

Although an operation of this size stresses our club's members and treasury each and every year we always make Field Day open to everyone and anyone that wants to participate. Never will anyone ask you to join HCRA or donate to the cause to be part of this or any club activity. This is because we believe exposing as many folks as possible to all aspects of our hobby will provide needed growth in amateur radio. And when amateur radio grows in the Pioneer Valley then we will all become the benefactors of our efforts.

So as they say, "stay tuned, film at eleven". There's a lot more to come concerning Field Day, this is just the beginning. Keep an eye on Zero Beat, the HCRA website, the mailing list and the Field Day yahoo group for starters. Tell your friends, talk to folks from other clubs and organizations and get the word out the place for fun in the sun is Dufresne Park at the end of June. Two days of playing radio in the great outdoors is an opportunity you won't want to miss.

'73 for now from your Field Day Chairpersons,

Matt, W1MSW (ex KB1TCL)

Jim, KK1W (ex WA1ZUH)

westcoastbayou@gmail.com

kk1w@charter.net

SHOW & TELL !

Come and connect with the HCRA WORLD. This annual event will take place on March 5th in Feeding Hills.

Do you have a favorite gadget or an especially inspired ham radio related creation? Bring it with you to Show & Tell! Let people touch and discuss it!! Then we will invite you to come up and tell us about it.



FRIDAY MARCH 5TH ~ FEEDING HILLS ~ 7:30PM

ARE YOU GOING TO BE A WINNER?

DISCLAIMER: Participation in this event may be addictive. Please do have your spouses calling the president complaining that you “had” to go out and buy more “stuff”! (His telephone number is 413-jim-made me do it). Participation may also result in damage of eyesight from looking at small parts, baldness from scratching your head, and sore throats from yelling at your dumb mis-steaks. Second-degree burns to fingers are not uncommon so buy some ointment before initiating any activities, and we don’t want to hear ‘bout it!. Organizers of this activity shall

be held harmless from all actions and decisions. (meaning that you cannot beat up on the judge).

Oh Yeah! Don’t forget to unplug the soldering iron!!!!



The ARRL New England Convention

at the Holiday Inn in Boxborough, Massachusetts

AUGUST 26-27-28-29, 2010

Every two years during even numbered years the New England Convention aka Boxboro is held. This has been going on for a long time as many of us know. Now that 2010 is here, it's a Boxboro year!

You need to make time to attend! The sunspot cycle is on the upswing, more DX is coming in, more exciting HF contacts are to be made. To do that you need to listen in on a seminar for the latest techniques, maybe upgrade and buy some new gear, string out those antennas, talk with the big name reps.

Boxboro is about 80 minutes from the Springfield area. But if you don't feel like driving, take the HCRA van instead. Let someone else do the driving while you sit back and chat with the others. Enjoy a nice sit down dinner (tbd where) on the way home. It's a fun and exciting trip and not to be missed!

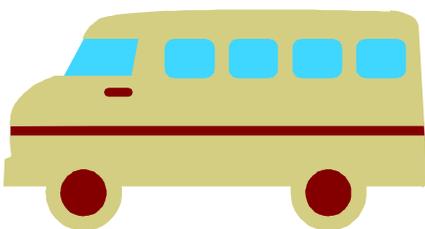
When: Saturday, August 28th.

Cost per person: \$30

The fare includes your ticket into the convention, plus chauffeured round trip van transportation.

Seats will fill up fast, so do not delay!

Please make reservations with Ed KB1NWH. E-mail KB1NWH@ARRL.NET or see him at the HCRA meetings!



Show and Tell

The show and tell event is coming in less than two weeks and I hope many of you have an idea and maybe even finished a project. I look at this event as a place to share ideas with others, offer mentoring where needed, and have a little fun in the process. I know that the collective intelligence of our group is high so how about sharing some of your ideas? You may never know that your "widget" gave the inspiration to someone for another idea and that is what it is all about. You may someday get a thank you from someone that you didn't even know that you helped. I know that others have helped me!

I have just finished wiring and testing my new QRP solar regulator, and now charging the batteries before I begin putting it into an enclosure and conducting a full test. The batteries were originally a 9.6v NiMH blister pack plus I added two more providing me with twelve volts. When I am finished, I hope to run for a full week on this setup.... For me, this is a useful project and is actually the second one that I built.. The first one was a power hog and was quickly abandoned. Some of the parts however have found their way into the new and (hopefully) improved one.

However, the purpose of this writing is that I thought it would be good to let you know what the scoring criteria is, and a few comments on the procedure. It is not that complex but I committed to write something for zero beat and forgot all about it..... The score sheet;

There are usually two categories that this year are called "Apprentice" & "Proficient". Your placement will be solely at the discretion of the organizing committee which means whomever is running it on Friday night. Judges are picked at random and cannot have a winning project in the presentation.

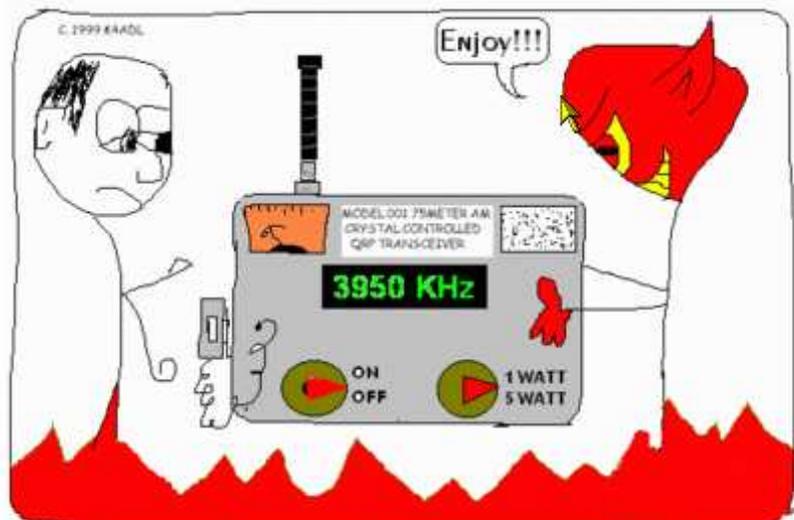
There are five sections on the score sheet: Originality, Construction Quality, Usefulness, Documentation, and Presentation. The first three are rated one thru ten, and the last two are rated one thru five. Maximum score is 40. There is usually some serious discussions between the judges in making their decision. Hint: your verbal presentation showing your apparent knowledge, or what you have learned by the experience goes a long way in the judges decision making. So practice a one to two minute spiel-it helps.

So if you haven't started, why not take a look around at that something that you have been promising yourself that you were going to finish and do it. You do not need science fair boards, or handouts, just you and your project. Hope to see you there....

Good luck and 73
Jim k1jaw

Here is a well known myth with the history:

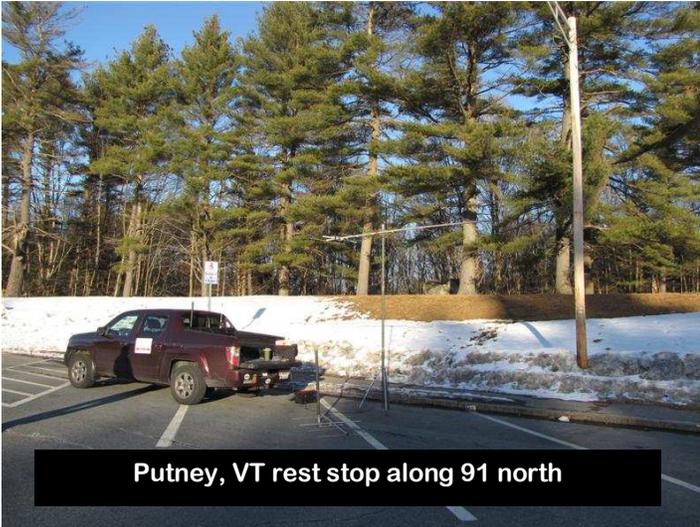
Myth: The old myth about not storing batteries on concrete floors is just that - a myth. This story has been around for 100 years, and originated back when battery cases were made up of wood and asphalt. The acid would leak from them, and form a slow-discharging circuit through the now acid-soaked and conductive floor.



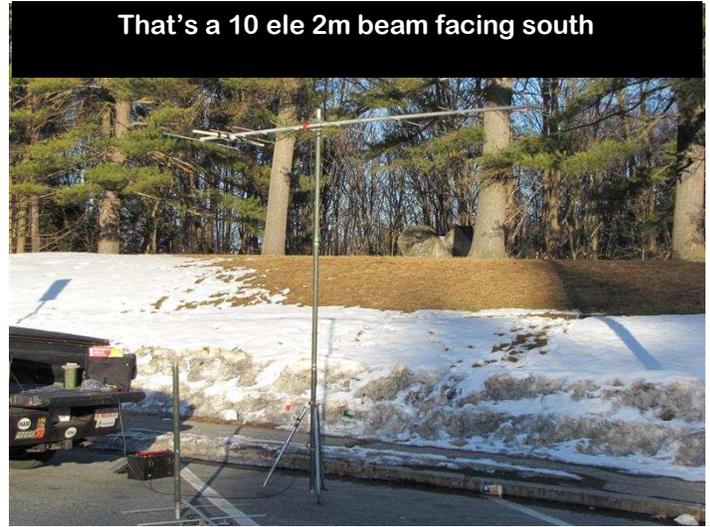
STANDARD EQUIPMENT ISSUE IN HAM HELL

January 2010 VHF Contest Pictures

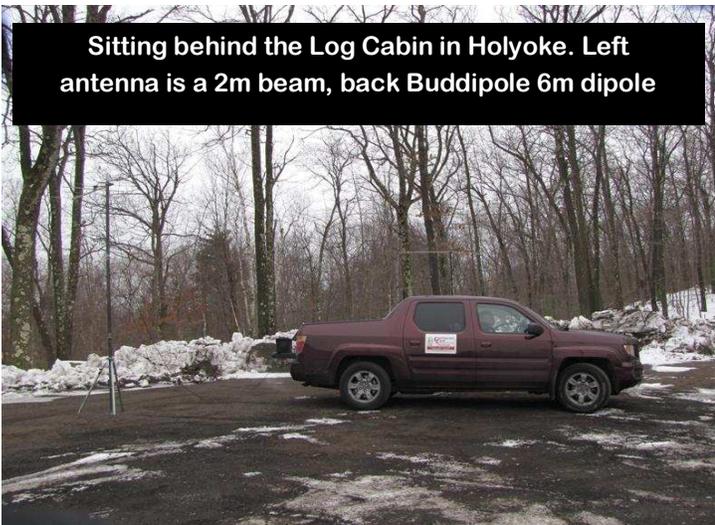
By WB1DBY & N1FJ



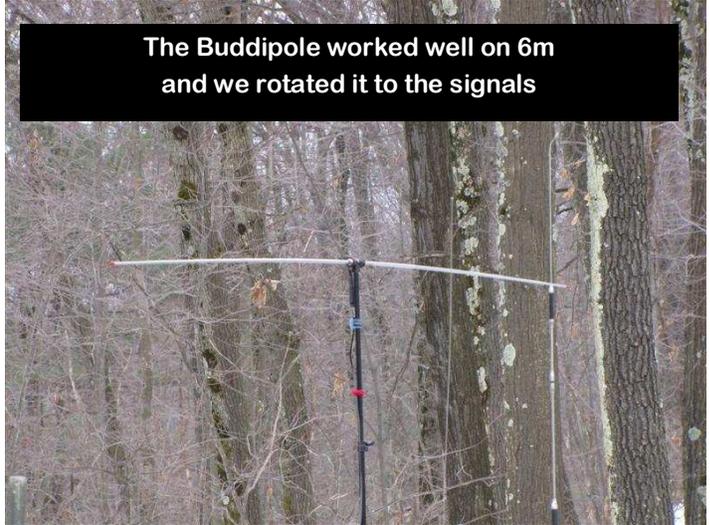
Putney, VT rest stop along 91 north



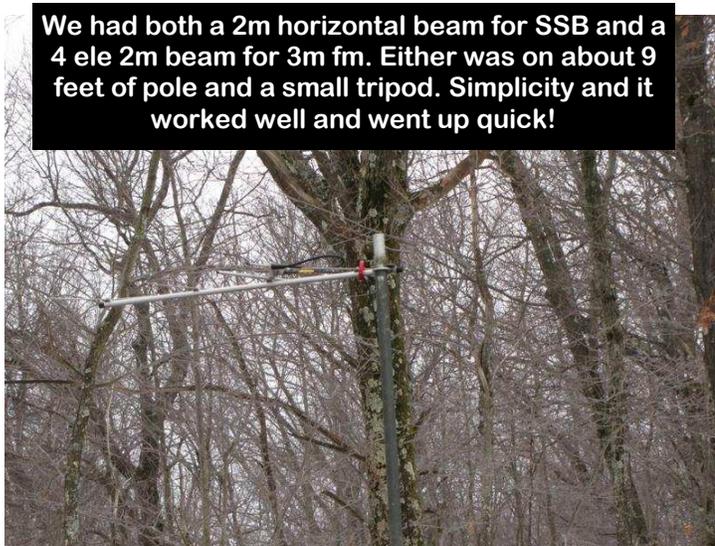
That's a 10 ele 2m beam facing south



Sitting behind the Log Cabin in Holyoke. Left antenna is a 2m beam, back Buddipole 6m dipole



The Buddipole worked well on 6m and we rotated it to the signals



We had both a 2m horizontal beam for SSB and a 4 ele 2m beam for 3m fm. Either was on about 9 feet of pole and a small tripod. Simplicity and it worked well and went up quick!



The Buddipole on the right is on a 8 foot collapsible pole and tripod. It all breaks down to a bag that's about 30 inches wide by 4 inches deep!
Visit www.buddipole.com for more info

Frandy (N1FJ) sat in the passenger seat with the laptop on his lap. It was powered by a battery w/converter in the back floor. Here he's tuning the Yaesu FT-100D.



We were a "rover" station. While roving on Saturday we averaged about 15 miles per QSO. We did better Sunday. The stuff fit easily and accessible in the back of the truck.



We did have a visit on Sunday from Rich, N1KXR. While it looks like he is napping, he seemed to really enjoy our operation. We're hoping to work the contest again in June & will appreciate the MUCH warmer wx!



Meeting Location:

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



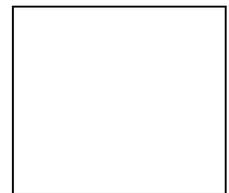
Next Meeting:

Show & Tell

March 5th @ 7:30pm



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



PLEASE HAND CANCEL