



## Editorial

### THE ART OF LISTENING

*de Bill, NZ1D*

It was just a typical summer day on 6 meters. By that I mean that the band was essentially dead as far as Amateur Radio signals were concerned. I was puttering around the shack doing whatever you do when there's no one to talk to. The Yaesu sat parked and squelched on 50.110 MHz, the DX calling frequency. Two distant hams were on the frequency talking about how dead the band had been and grouching about not hearing any DX for quite a while when my attention was grabbed by a signal starting to build up out of the noise right on top of them. It sounded like someone talking in French. Apparently the two didn't hear anything.

Now I don't "*parle vous Francaise*" but I know enough to recognize the language, so I listened intently as the signal came up to about 4 x 4. As the old timers used to say, "See you all of a sudden." After a few seconds I determined that it was K1TOL in Maine speaking French to someone. After another "over" it became clear that the other side of the QSO was FY7AS, Jackie in French Guyana. I knew Lefty typically ran a kilowatt and a lot of aluminum but when he signed off, I said, "What the heck," and gave a call to Jackie. I figured my puny 20 watts into a modest 5-element beam was whistling into the wind but nothing ventured nothing gained – you never know what will happen on the "magic band". To my surprise Jackie came right back to me with a 4 x 3 signal report. Our QSO revealed that he was running 20 watts into a 5-element yagi as well!

After a short QSO we bade each other 73 and good DX. Shortly thereafter he disappeared back into the noise. The other two stations on the frequency apparently never heard anything.

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Contributors To This Issue:

K1JHC, KB1LRL, KD1YH, NZ1D, W1QED

## ***The President's Corner***

*de Ray, KB1LRL*

Hello all. Well, guess what, spring is here! APRIL FOOL! As I write this it is snowing like the dickens and the plows are burying the driveway, again! Mother Nature has been playing the role of torturer for the last 6 weeks. So frustrating seeing the ground and birds coming out with hopes of spring and then you hear a big raspberry in the sky.

I'm sorry my literary masterpiece was missing from last month's newsletter. (Did anyone notice except Bill?) That was a product of my not hitting the send button and much to my surprise when I did not see it.

So while we sit and ponder when we can go outside and rake the yard, plant the flowers, and repair antennas, club stuff goes on. The next meeting is our annual QSL card sort. I hope you can come to attend this fun event. Anywhere from 12-15 thousand cards will be sorted and we are having pizza when done. Thanks to Stan, KD1LE of the Nashoba Club for the use of the bins. NVARC and Mohawk have been invited as well. Hopefully we will have a great turnout which makes for quick work and good times in fellowship with fellow hams.

I do not mean to be a nag about this as we are approaching an important time for our club and that is nominations and officer's election for the upcoming year. As I mentioned previously, I have decided to step aside and play the role of pedestrian. It's time for a change. I urge all dues paying members to consider taking on this position or the others in this organization. All are open. It does have its challenges, but overall it is not rocket science. There is a nice core of people who can help if needed.

That's all for now, I have to sit and ponder warm thoughts. Arizona at 110 degrees seems real nice about now. We were getting 16 inches of snow and my mother said it was 92 there....thanks! Hope to see everyone at the next meeting which will get started about 7 pm.

## ***Public Service***

Just a few quick reminders of upcoming public service opportunities:

### **Boston Marathon – Monday, April 17**

### **Squannacook Canoe Race – Saturday, April 22**

Join Gary, K1YTS and his crew for the Squannacook River Canoe and Kayak race, Saturday, April 22nd. Meet at the West Townsend VFW at 9 am for assignments. "Pizza party" at the Pizza Parlor in the Harbor after the race.

### **Groton Road Race – Sunday, April 30**

This is the major Amateur Radio event in North Central Massachusetts. Join Ralph, KD1SM, Stan KD1LE, or John KK1X and the Squannacook River Runners (not to be confused with the Canoe and Kayak group!) for this large event.

Runners along with the Groton Police Department consider the Amateur Radio involvement to be a critical component for the safety of all and sincerely appreciate our presence.

## **VE Sessions**

*de Paul, KD1YH*

The MARA VE Team schedules license exam sessions monthly on the 4th Wednesday. Pre-registration is requested, contact Paul KD1YH [kd1yh@arrl.net](mailto:kd1yh@arrl.net). Sessions will be canceled if no one has registered by Sunday before the scheduled session. If the session is not canceled, walk-ins are welcome, so if you are interested in upgrading or know someone who is looking for an exam session, you may contact Paul at the last minute to see if the session is being held.

Last month's session tested two candidate's, resulting in one new tech and one upgrade to General. We recently received the following thank you note:

*Gentlemen,*

*My thanks to all of you who provide the resources, time and energy to assist hams like myself who want to upgrade or for those just wanting to get started by taking the Technician exam. I have now traveled to Lunenburg twice for testing and appreciate the friendly, efficient and professional atmosphere.*

73

## **Antennas For Sale**

AB1GF still has several antennas for sale including: Cushcraft A4S with 40m add-on \$250. Mosley TA 53 5-band with 40m add-on, 6 bands total \$300. Telrex tb5em Tribander \$200. Interested? Contact AB1GF.

## **The Old Timers' Lunch**

*de Tom KIJHC*

The Old Timers meet on the first Wednesday at noon for lunch at the Gene & Steve's Airport Diner on Hamilton St in Leominster. As usual topics are many and interesting. All are welcome, so come in out of the cold and have some good food and camaraderie. Being "old" is not a requirement! The Old Timers will meet for lunch noon Wednesday 5 April at the New Airport Diner on Hamilton St in Leominster. Hope to see you there.

## **Product Review**

### **BaofengTech UV-5X3 Review**

*de Erik WIQED*

OK, I have to say I'm spoiled, as my first HT was a Yaesu VX-8DR. I bought the UV-5X3 as a second HT to throw in the vehicle for emergency use in case I forgot my other one, knowing full well it was no Yaesu.

Programming the UV-5X3 is not too bad with CHIRP; I installed that and retrieved all the settings from the VX-8DR, then was able to paste those into the UV-5X3, except for the out-of-band channels that I also occasionally listen to (800 MHz State Police and local 122 MHz Air band). The frequency range on the UV-5X3 is RX: 65-108 MHz (FM), TX: 130-180 MHz, 220-226 MHz, 400-521 MHz. Out of the box it can transmit outside the Amateur VHF/UHF bands, e.g. police/fire, so you need to be very careful if using as a scanner or in VFO mode. The CHIRP software does let you program a channel as RX-only, so that is highly recommended. For VFO mode you can program band limits via CHIRP, but that also means

you cannot enter frequencies manually outside those ranges; you need to use programming software to get there via programmed channels. Not too bad, but this means you can't add an RX-only frequency in the field. The Yaesu has full wide-band RX and already has proper Amateur band limits for TX. Manual programming via the menu is convoluted, as are most HTs, but at least the Yaesu has the menu items in alphabetical order, and has the thumb wheel for scrolling.

Normal operation of the UV-5X3 is a little clunky. There is no volume indication on the display so you have to hold MONI to hear the non-squelched signal and adjust. Changing channels/frequencies is the opposite of the Yaesu in that you use the up/down buttons instead of the top wheel, so it's slower at scrolling to find your desired channel. At first I didn't like the Yaesu's volume adjust, which requires pressing a button and turning the wheel, but I find that's OK since I actually rarely adjust the volume. However, the UV-5X3 wins on overall volume, at 1W so it's much easier to hear than the Yaesu, though the audio quality is not as good. I think part of the reason the Yaesu has low volume is that it's waterproof so has different speaker construction.

As for scanner use, channel scanning speed is "much" slower than the Yaesu, so running the same channel set (2m and 70cm calling frequencies, 5 local repeaters and 5 local police and fire frequencies) I often miss traffic on the UV-5X3.

At first I thought the radio was also picking up or generating internal interference. It seemed that two of my repeater frequencies were triggering RX where I heard nothing on my VX-8DR or FTM-400D. I experimented more with that by using my SDRplay on my desktop and found an interference source just north of 224.340. It turns out that CHIRP set all the imported channels to Wide FM so next time on my laptop I changed them to Narrow FM and I noticed I could not hear the interference. Sunday I thought maybe I'd try to figure out the source of the interference so I set it back to WFM for that channel but didn't hear it. I fired up the computer to run CubicSDR and then suddenly I heard the interference! Hmmm, turned off the monitor and it stopped. Started CubicSDR and saw a definite line just up from 224.340 as well as several others. So with CubicSDR running I turned off the monitor for a few seconds and then back on, and I could clearly see that the lines disappeared and reappeared. I guess it's time to look for a new monitor!

Another quirk is that the tri-band UV-5X3 doesn't come with a tri-band antenna (it has a dual-band 2m/70cm and a separate one for 220), so if you want to work repeaters in all bands you either need to swap antennas every time you switch bands or buy another antenna. I bought the Nagoya NA-320A, but it turns out it's a big antenna for the UV-5X3. On the Yaesu I use a Diamond SRH-320A which is lighter and much better SWR on the three bands than the Nagoya. But of course BaofengTech uses an SMA-female antenna instead, meaning an SMA-female to female adapter is needed to use other antennas like the SRH-320A.

*Update:* I then bought a Smiley 27000 with Female SMA, though it requires manual telescoping for different bands - fully extended for 2m 1/4 wave, 2 segments down for 440 5/8 wave, full down for 440 1/4 wave, and 4 segments down for 220 1/4 wave. Fully down it's nice and compact.

Lastly, the radio I received came with a European power adapter, and I didn't happen to have any other 10V adapters handy. I ended up using my power supply turned down to 10V to charge the batteries. I sent a comment via the BTech web site and they did respond fairly quickly that they will send me a replacement, though when it arrived there was insufficient postage so it cost me \$1.70... :-). So overall I'm not unhappy with the UV-5X3 given its \$60 price, and I'm sure it will get use!

*UV-5X3 photo by WIQED*





## ***NEQP 2017***

*de Tom/K1KI*

New England QSO Party [<http://www.neqp.org>] is May 6-7, 2017. Whether you've never worked the NEQP or if you're a veteran, the NEQP is a great time to check out antenna systems and offers a moderately paced opportunity to work new states and countries. You'll find a wide variety of participants, from newcomers to experienced contesters, all interested in making contacts with New England stations.

We're working to make sure that all of the New England counties are active again this year and would appreciate your help. Get on for at least an hour or two and join in on the fun. Please let me know if you can put in any time at all so we can work on activity from the rarest counties. Will you be QRV? Let us know which county you'll be operating from with a message to [info@neqp.org](mailto:info@neqp.org)

Oh yes, the NEQP is also lots of fun when mobile. Every time you cross a county line the action starts over again. It's amazing what a 100w radio and mobile whip can do.

The QSO Party is 20 hours long overall, in two sections with a civilized break for sleep Saturday night. It goes from 4pm Saturday until 1am Sunday, then 9am Sunday until 8pm Sunday. Operate on CW, SSB and digital modes on 80-40-20-15-10 meters. For each QSO you'll give your call sign, a signal report and your county/state. Top scorers can earn a plaque and everyone who makes 25 QSOs and sends in a log will get a certificate.

Last year we had logs from 179 New England stations and 300 more from around the country and world. The 2016 results were posted over the weekend and the results since 2002 are also available at <http://www.neqp.org/results.html>. The full rules are here -> <http://www.neqp.org/rules.html>

It's just about a month until the 2017 NEQP. Please make some QSOs even if you don't want to send in a log.

Thanks! Tom, K1KI

*[I've looked forward to the NEQP for many years, especially after I relocated to Florida, it's a lot of fun and a good way to reconnect with old friends. Give it a go, Ed.]*

### **The MARA W1/GaZette**

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The deadline for materials to appear in the W1/GaZette is noon on the Sunday before the first Wednesday of the month.

#### **NEWSLETTER/PUBLIC RELATIONS STAFF:**

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## Montachusett Amateur Radio Association

### **MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:**

Club Secretary: Bruce Wilbur KB1YRS

Annual Dues: Regular \$25

Family \$30

Fixed income \$15

Meetings: 2nd Wednesday, 7:30pm September to June

Mailing address: MARA

PO Box 95

Leominster, MA 01453

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### **OFFICERS:**

Ray Lajoie, KB1LRL President, rplajoie@comcast.net

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Gordon LaPoint, N1MGO Treasurer, n1mgo@arrl.net

Charlie Cayen, KT1I Trustee, kt1i@arrl.net

MARA owns and operates three FM repeaters co-located on Burbank Hospital in Fitchburg. W1GZ on 145.45 (CTCSS 74.4), AB1GF on 224.34 MHz (CTCSS 103.5) and W1HFN on 927.5625 (-25 MHz) (CTCSS 74.4). The 2m repeater is also reachable via IRLP node 8433 and Echolink node 688832.

## ***WATT'S HAPPENING***

### **Sundays, 0800 local 5330.5 (ch 1) USB**

Western Mass Emergency 60M Net

Alternate frequencies are 5346.5 (ch 2),  
5366.5 (ch 3), 5371.5 (ch 4), and 5403.5 (ch 5).

### **Sundays, 0830 local 3944**

Western Mass Emergency Net. Alternate frequency is 3942 in case of QRN, QRM, or frequency in-use. Also a good idea to scan up and down 10kHz if you cannot find the net.

### **Sundays, 0900 local 145.45-**

Montachusett Emergency Net

### **Tuesdays, 1930 local 145.37-**

WMEN Templeton Emergency Net

### **Wednesdays, 1900 local 145.37-**

Gardner/Templeton Emergency Net

### **Nightly, 2100 local 146.97-**

Central Mass Traffic Net

## Montachusett Amateur Radio Association

**First Monday, 1900 local 3943, 7245**  
RACES Net

**Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, 1800 local 3978**  
Western Mass/RI Phone Net



*We have a winner! Pam, KC1CHC shows off her new toy. (KDIYH photo)*