

MARA W1⚡GaZette



Next Meeting

Wednesday, January 10, 7:30 pm, Lunenburg Library.

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Contributors To This Issue:

AB1GF, K1JHC, KD1YH, NZ1D, W1HFN, W1QED, W0TJP

The President's Corner

de Tom, AB1GF

We are now in a new year and with new opportunities ahead of us. Try new modes . Phone, CW, RTTY, FT-8, Meteor Scatter. Perhaps build something. That is how we learn. I myself want to use less of the microphone and more with the Key. We are just a out at the bottom of the solar cycle and it can only get better from here.

"We has met the enemy," Pogo said, "and he is us."

de Bill NZ1D

Disasters have a way of exposing the technological limits of the average consumer. During hurricane Irma, as I lay sweltering in my bed in 100-degree heat, the droning of distant generators drifting thru my open window, I couldn't help wondering about the generator hook ups being used. I may not be a generator expert (I had some experience with 50KW units in the military and I did a stint as an industrial electrician in my younger days), but seeing the generators flying off the shelves in the big box hardware

stores a week before Irma told me that some people may have been using a quick and potentially dangerous hook up.

Normally an approved generator hook up would be done via the installation of a cross-over or transfer switch whether at the main service entry panel or the a/c panel. Many of the "mature" houses here have two separate service panels fed by a common electric meter, one panel for the house (100 - 150A) and a second panel (50A) for the a/c. The a/c panel has no consumer accessible outlets, it is hardwired to the unit, which means they would have to open the panel or the a/c housing and splice in the generator. A similar problem occurs in the newer houses equipped with a single service panel. Access to the "mains" is still required. Some homeowners simply plug the generator cable into an unused electrical outlet in the house using a double-male "suicide plug" to maintain the appliances, lights, etc. Not only is this a code violation and fire hazard, it could cause you or someone else to be electrocuted – hence the name. (After about the third day sans electricity, if I had a generator, I might have been tempted to use clip leads!)

Of course hams know that a generator "makes" electricity, it doesn't use it. If you "feed" your house wiring with a generator and do not open the main breaker, you end up back-feeding power via the service entry cables to the outside. That's a hazard to anyone who comes in contact with a downed wire or electrical workers who may assume the lines are dead (yeah, I know they should check first, but in an emergency things tend to get hectic). A bigger issue is that many utilities now use automated, remote monitoring of lines; if you feed power to the outside, the remote monitor may assume your house or neighborhood has power and cause utility crews to bypass it. This happened in Florida in Irma's aftermath and resulted in unnecessary delays in restoring power to several areas.

Although electrocution by haphazard generator connection is a danger, carbon monoxide poisoning also occurs frequently in disasters. Several club members do use back-up generators and in the interest of enlightening some of our newer members who may not be familiar with their use, please feel free to email your critique and comments about your setup to the editor. Feedback received will be run in a subsequent newsletter.

December Meeting Report

de Barry Fox W1HFN, MARA Secretary

The traditional December meeting was the annual Holiday Celebration, held at the QTH of Gordon and Pauline, N1MGO and KB1JXJ on Sunday December 3rd. Attendees were: Gordon N1MGO & Pauline KB1JXJ, Charlie KT1I, John KK1X & Peg KC1EIV, Ray KB1LRL, Paul N1QDX & Mary Ann, Paul KD1YH, Tom K1JHC, Tom AB1GF & friend, Barry W1HFN & Paula. *[No official business was conducted and everyone had a great time. Lol, Ed.]*

State of the Repeaters

de Tom AB1GF, Paul KD1YH

Tom AB1GF and Paul KD1YH visited the repeater site on New Years day, after it was noted that the frequency on W1GZ (our 2 meter repeater) was slightly off (as reported by W1QED with the help of his new receiver). Adjustment was also made to the audio input to the controller.

The Old Timers' Lunch

de Tom K1JHC

Things have been a little slow lately for the Old Timers' lunches at the Airport Diner. Charlie KT1I was the only diner in December. At our January gathering three members, Charlie KT1I, Barry W1HFN, and

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Tom K1JHC made it for lunch. Part of the problem may be late notices and email notice issues. Remember, young or old, all are welcome to join us. Come out and enjoy a good lunch and some friendly “eyeball” chatter.

[Tom added the following for your Florida editor's edification and delight, “As I am writing this, the barometer is 28.13 inches and falling, 7.7 inches of new snow close to 2 inches per hour; a temperature of 26.5 F. with strong winds; I need to add Wind Speed to my Weather Station.” Brrr!, Ed]

Public Service

de Tim W0TJP

It's time to register to volunteer at the Boston Marathon. Sign up to volunteer on the BAA web site: <http://www.baa.org/races/boston-marathon/event-information/volunteer-information/volunteerregistration.aspx>

You don't need to specify any group name or passcode. Just make sure you request at least one ham radio assignment in your preferences. Once you get your application confirmation number, you're all set. If you're a returning volunteer, you'll be asked to provide your BAA Volunteer Loyalty Number. You should've received that in a separate e-mail from the BAA. There's also a tool to look it up on the BAA volunteer site. If you still have trouble finding it, or if you have any other questions about volunteer registration, or the 2017 Marathon generally, please get in touch: <mailto:contact@hamradioboston.org> anytime and we can help you out

*In the words of the BAA, **The Boston Athletic Association is proud of the dynamic volunteer corps that brings communities together and promotes the mission of a healthy lifestyle through sports, especially running. We see the passion and dedication of our volunteers at all B.A.A. events, most notably the Boston Marathon.***

It is your loyalty that lifts the spirit of thousands at each and every Boston Marathon. We hope you will join us again for the 122nd running on April 16th, 2018.

Register Now! The registration deadline is Wednesday, February 7, 2018.

Sunday Net Control operators needed

de Ray KB1LRL

We still need two (or more) people to serve as Net Control for the Sunday morning ARES net. This is great practice for operating in special events as well as emergency situations. Participation will be on an as needed basis but you will be guaranteed a slot so you can learn about this function. Just need one-half hour on Sunday. There are times when someone cannot do their turn. I will give up my time in favor of giving that person the experience. Give it a try!

[Please drop Ray an email if you're interested, Ed.]

Contesting/Operating

[See the ARRL Contest Calendar for more contesting information. For in-depth reporting on Amateur Radio contesting, you can subscribe to The ARRL Contest Update via your ARRL member profile e-mail preferences, Ed.]

January 20-22

ARRL January VHF Contest

February 17-18
ARRL DX Contest CW

March 3-4
ARRL DX Contest SSB

Erik's ICOM IC-R8600 Review

de Erik Tkal WIQED

In the 1970s I got my start in radio by listening to shortwave. My dad had a 1950 Zenith Trans-Oceanic, and I would stay up late at night in my dark bedroom by that radio. Tuning across the bands, trying to discern different languages that I could not understand, straining to hear what seemed to be words, voices from around the world.



I actually still have that radio, though it is a bit off in its tuning due to internal component changes over time. Some years ago, I bought a Sony ICF-SW7600GR, with the intent to perhaps attempt to calibrate the Zenith, though my spare time to perform that detailed adjustment has not yet been found.



The Sony is a decent portable receiver, though its lack of a tuning knob is a major shortcoming, IMHO, and its ability to tune SSB is sub-par. I have since given the Sony to my son to play with and more recently replaced it with a Tecsun PL-880 portable, perhaps a review on that to come.

This winter I decided to treat myself to a more capable desktop receiver, the ICOM IC-R8600. Merry Christmas to me, from me, love, me. True, it's not cheap, though the high end ICOM IC-R9500 weighs in

at more than 5 times as much, over \$12.5K, and the holiday sales this season had the IC-R8600 at \$200 off.



The IC-R8600 is a wide-band receiver, covering 10KHz to 3GHz, and can demodulate FM, AM and CW/SSB, as well as several digital modes, though I have not yet experimented with those. QST has a review in their November 2017 issue.

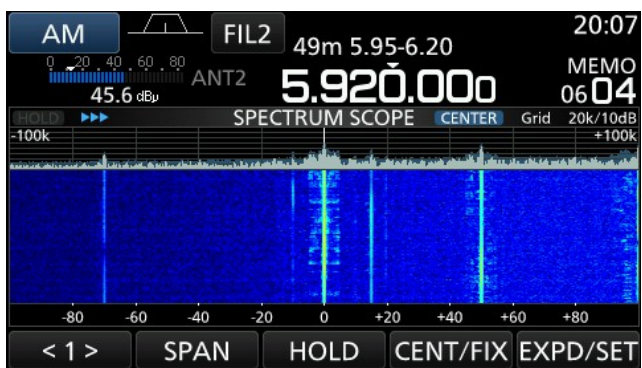
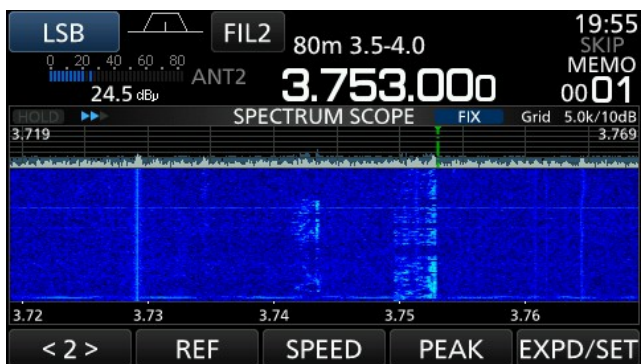
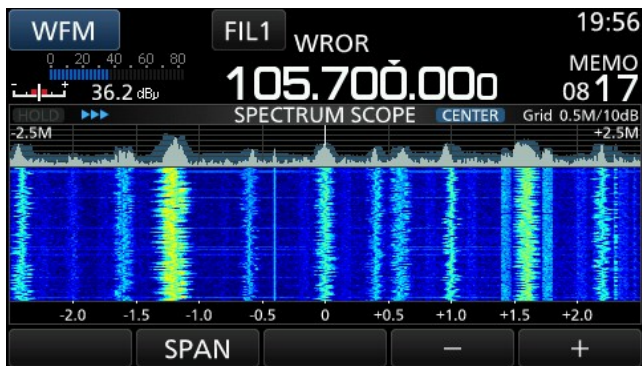
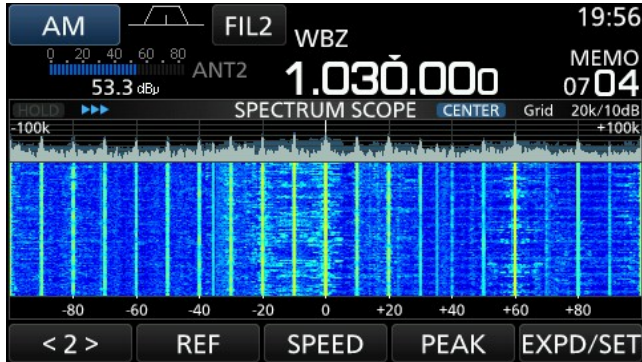
I decided to couple the radio with a discone antenna for beyond HF. Instead of the 100MHz-3GHz ICOM AH-8000 I chose the cheaper Diamond D3000N, which handles 25MHz-3GHz. I installed the D3000N in my condo loft, replacing my dual band Diamond X50A mounted on a camera tripod, as it also handles transmitting on VHF/UHF; the inferior transmit gain is not a significant detriment for accessing the local repeater.



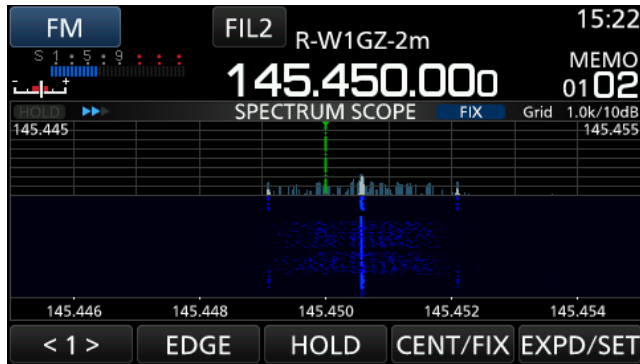
I found that the IC-R8600/D3000N combination performs quite admirably across its range, and I have no problem pulling in police and fire departments from 25 miles away quite clearly, as well as air band frequencies for Logan in Boston and Hanscom AFB. It also works well for the CB channel range and FRS/GMRS. For HF I have a Cobra UltraLite Junior shared with my HF radios.

Programming the receiver allows you to create groups of frequencies, e.g. I have local scanner frequencies, local repeaters, air band, ham bands, shortwave bands, AM and FM broadcast (though FM is of excellent quality but not stereo).

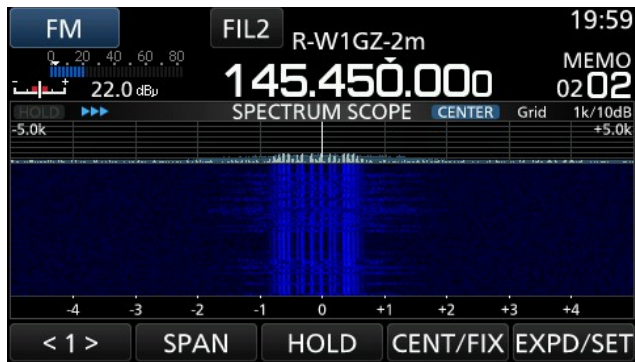
The real-time spectrum scope is excellent, similar to that on the IC-7300, though it would be nice if it had an ability to set a fixed frequency range for specific bands as the IC-7300 does. You can also save display images to an SD card, as well as saving and scheduling audio recordings.



One convenient use of the spectrum scope is analysis of transmissions. The other day I happened to be monitoring local signals and noticed that our repeater was a bit off, by about 700Hz north.



This past weekend Tom AB1GF and Paul KD1YH went to the site and made some adjustments to get it back into spec.



The IC-R8600 also has an ethernet jack, and supports time sync via NTP, as well as remote control via their IC-RS-R8600 software. I find that the remote software works quite well, and I experimented this past week connecting to the radio from work over VPN and I was able to easily control the radio as well as clearly hear the audio. The only quirk was that I had to text my XYL to have her toggle the antenna switches to the receiver from my transceivers...

All in all, I find the IC-R8600 an excellent receiver, with intuitive controls and very good reception capability. The built-in speaker has good audio quality, better than any of the transceivers I currently have, and is pleasant to listen to without an external speaker. The controls are similar to the IC-7300 and are intuitive and fairly ergonomic. I highly recommend this to anyone wanting to supplement their shack with a good all-band all-mode receiver, for scanning the airwaves, and for late-night experimentation.

VE Sessions

de Paul, KD1YH

The December VE session was held on the 27th with four candidates and four volunteer examiners. As a reminder, the MARA VE Team schedules license exam sessions monthly on the 4th Wednesday. Pre-registration is requested, contact Paul KD1YH 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.

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:

Newsletter Editor: Bill Wornham NZ1D, 352-751-4682 nz1d@arrl.net

Public Service: Tim W0TJP

Webmaster: Paul Upham KD1YH

Community Facebook page administrator: Pam Jodrey, KC1CHC, kc1chc@yahoo.com

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:

Club Secretary: Barry Fox W1HFN

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

VE Team: KD1YH@arrl.net

Web site: <http://www.w1gz.org/>

OFFICERS:

Tom Antil, AB1GF President, thantil@comcast.net

Erik Tkal, W1QED Vice President

Barry Fox W1HFN, bwfox@comcast.net

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).

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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

First Monday, 1900 local 3943, 7245

RACES Net

Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, 1800 local 3978

Western Mass/RI Phone Net

February 16-18

WCC Chatham Radio Transmitter Site 70th Anniversary Celebration, 80, 40, 20 meters

For Sale/Ads

de Tom AB1GF, Ab1gf@arrl.net, 978 467-6658 .

10 Rohn 25 ft sections	\$50.00 each
EZ Way HD40 40' Crank-up tower	\$200.00
Hygain TH-6 Tribander, complete	\$150.00
Tarheel 100A-HP continuous coverage HF Antenna, with MFJ Memory tuner	\$475.00
Mosley CL 33 WARC, needs insulator kit	\$175.00

Mohawk ARC has a used MFJ-1798 HF vertical for sale. Operate 10 bands -- 75/80, 40, 30, 20, 17, 15, 12, 10, 6 and 2 Meters with this antenna and get full size performance with no ground or radials. All proceeds will go towards the DMR repeater project. \$150 or BO
Contact Bill Leger, N1UZ@ARRL.NET