



PCARA Update



Volume 9, Issue 2 Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association Inc. February 2008

Going, Going, Gone!

(or Going once, twice, sold!)



Going... going... gone!

At the January 2008 meeting, Sotheby's of Peekskill/Cortlandt held the first *PCARA Bring and Buy Auction*. Everyone who attended said it was a bid success! Members brought their electronic surplus to the meeting, where Malcolm, NM9J our auctioneer, whipped the crowd into a frenzy!

Several times, bidding wars broke out over items being offered. For a grand total of \$16.00, I went home with a USB FM radio, a Fluke 1953A Frequency Counter, and a Standard C7800 UHF Mobile radio!

Seriously, everyone had a great time and had the opportunity to pick up some good quality equipment at really incredible prices. We will definitely be holding these auctions again.

Bring your ideas for future activities to the Febru-



Malcolm, NM9J moves the merchandise. [Photo W2CH]

ary 3rd meeting at 3:00 PM at Hudson Valley Hospital Center. I look forward to seeing each of you there.

- 73 de Greg, KB2CQE

New net night

Peekskill/Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association holds a weekly net on the 146.67 MHz W2NYW repeater. Please note that our net control Karl, N2KZ has changed net night from Wednesdays to **Thursdays** at 8:00 p.m.

PCARA Officers

President:

Greg Appleyard, KB2CQE, kb2cqe at arrl.net

Vice President:

Joe Calabrese, WA2MCR; wa2mcr at arrl.net



Greg, KB2CQE inspects the goods on offer at PCARA's first 'Bring and Buy Auction'. [Photo W2CH]

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Adventures in DXing

- N2KZ

Small Wonder!

Sony is offering a nearly-free gift. For fifteen dollars, you can purchase a phenomenal AM and FM Walkman radio complete with headphones. Light as a feather, the SRF-59 is so sensitive that Internet groups have popped up just to discuss its use. Sony's radio has become the standard in a new category of 21st century portables known as ultralights. Hobbyists who relish exotic long-distance reception have heralded the SRF-59 as a technological miracle.



Sony SRF-59 AM/FM tuner

The unit houses a little printed circuit board with two integrated circuit chips. One is a self-contained complete AM / FM tuner and the second is the audio amplifier to drive the headphones. Due to its concise design, its single AA battery lasts for over 100 hours. The SRF-59's performance is comparable to other radios costing hundreds of dollars. Sony's ultralight Walkman has been compared favorably to legendary units such as the GE Superadio, The Sony ICF-2010 and the Sangean CC Radio. If you are looking for the ultimate receiver to hear distant ball games or talk shows, this is it.

Seasoned DXers, the skilled sophisticated listeners who often homebrew their own equipment, have devised several modifications for the radio itself along



Diminutive Sony Walkman SRF-59 AM/FM Radio leaning against a 'full-size' GE Superadio II.

with ideas to augment its circuitry with powerful outdoor antennas. Even as a stock unit, right out of its plastic bubble packaging, SRF-59 owners have heard AM radio stations all the way across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans from places like Japan and Saudi Arabia. The SRF-59 truly has enormous ears.

The SRF-59 can be your ticket to amazing DX. For many years, Gil, NN4CW, has built remarkable crystal radio apparatus, including large and intricate coils, to achieve superior efficiency and high Q. Gil wanted to take the basic SRF-59 Walkman to the next level. He designed and built a clever inductive loop as a passive



External ferrite loopstick antenna for use with Sony SRF-59 by Gil NN4CW.

preselector-booster and then added a lazy Susan for easy nulling and a larger tuning knob. His hot rod Walkman has become a welcomed addition to his radio collection. Read all about his work at: <http://www.dxr.ca/content/view/57/1/>. Other homebrewers have improved the bass response and sensitivity of the unit, as well.

After using Sony's miracle for several years, only a few criticisms can be made. The headphones are only average quality. Tuning the Walkman is a little fussy. The knob provided to adjust what station you are listening to is pretty tiny even for petite thumbs. With ferocious abuse, you can wear out the radio. After about a year of pounding during train commutes and walking across Manhattan, I had to buy a new one because I wore out the tuning capacitor. The SRF-59 is worth the price of admission. I used to listen to WWKB in Buffalo, New York, on AM radio, while sitting in an electronic noise nightmare (a steel Metro-North commuter train) on my way to New York City. WWKB was 300 miles away!

While listening in Palm Beach, Florida, the tiny SRF-59 brought in 810 ZNS from the Bahamas and Cuba's Radio Reloj on 570 with nearly local quality sitting in a Hertz parking lot at about 11:00 a.m! Ground conductivity certainly improves when

you are only a few miles from the Atlantic Ocean, but this reception is still remarkable. The sunspot minimum certainly adds an added boost to AM DXing fun. Using



the SRF-59 after dark, you can easily hear stations from St. Louis, New Orleans, Minneapolis, Atlanta and Des Moines with reliable regularity. The SRF-59's sensitivity can prove deceptive. At my QTH, 900 CHML from Hamilton, Ontario often arrives twice as strong as 50 kilowatt WCBS from City Island!

Whenever you need a little casual entertainment, the SRF-59 can't be beat. Leave one in your purse or coat pocket or in your attaché case. The SRF-59 is low maintenance. You don't need to download to it. It almost never needs a battery. You can hear amazing things nearly everywhere you go. It weighs so little, you'll have to feel into your pocket just to know it's there. For in-depth information, take a look at two radio hobbyist web sites: www.dxe.ca and www.fixup.net/tips/srf49/srf49.htm. As a dyed-in-the-wool AM broadcast band DXer, I couldn't recommend a purchase more highly! At this incredibly low price, you can't miss!

Coming Soon!

Fellow ham, Dennis, K1QHV, has been granted a construction permit for a new non-commercial FM radio station to be built (nearly) in my backyard! Broadcasting on 90.1 FM with 100 watts from North Salem, New York, Foothills Public Radio will serve the very northeast corner of Westchester with some additional coverage into small portions of Putnam and Fairfield Counties.

The frequency is relatively clear. A casual study of 90.1, driving around in my car, has logged the sister station of eclectic WFMU (WXHD Mt. Hope, NY in the Catskills) and a low power translator for Connecticut's Sacred Heart University WSHU (W211AI Stamford.) It will be interesting to see how far Dennis' station will be heard and what programming will be offered.

Dennis also has four applications for other new stations pending with the FCC. Two one kilowatt stations have been proposed for Great Barrington and Lee, Massachusetts which would probably be the cornerstones of the network. Durham, New York (near Albany) would be the QTH of a low power three watt station. The fourth station would be located in Edgartown, Massachusetts on Cape Cod with 150 watts.

Dennis also owns a FM translator in Greenwich, Connecticut on 103.1 (W276BV) which currently repeats classical WMNR from Monroe, CT. I wouldn't be surprised if this translator flips to repeating his new station in North Salem, New York when it comes on the air.

Never Say Never!

The unpredictable nature of 6 meters never ceases to amaze me. One recent Wednesday morning, I was casually tuning between 50.090 and 50.200 looking to see if anyone might be skipping in. I heard a very weak station holding court on 50.135 USB. Stations from all

over the East Coast were working a faint, fluttery signal way in the distance.

I patiently waited and the signal slowly came up in strength. I caught the unusual call and grid: It was C6AGN from Maidenhead grid FL16 in the Bahamas. Holy cow!

I called and called trying to nurse my measly ten watt signal into the Caribbean. Finally, the crowd whittled down and I had a chance to call in the clear. Bill, C6AGN actually heard me! "The N2 - I just barely hear you. Try again." "QRP? Try again! Try again!" The band suddenly lifted. Bill was way up in signal and I presume I was too. He heard me!

"Karl in FN31 with ten watts. QSL! QSL!" I was thrilled. FL16

is a very rare grid with just a sprinkling of tiny sandy resort islands.

Wow! He heard me!

Follow the golden rule:

Call no matter

what. It can't hurt to try! I'm waiting by my mailbox for Bill's QSL! Six Meters really is a magic band!



TV Time

A couple of new views to see: WNYE-DT on Channel 24 is broadcasting a unique virtual channel (25-2) showing a round-robin of live cameras situated around New York City provided by the Traffic Department.

Is Big Brother watching you? Why are they putting this on the air? There must be a reason, but we can't see it!

Another interesting and quirky excuse for television broadcasting is about to change formats.

WNYZ-LP broadcasts nothing but a video test pattern for visual programming. Their audio, on 87.75 MHz, feigns being a broadcast radio station complete with wideband FM deviation and FM stereo. Their format is currently ethnic with a heavy dose of Russian language programming. It's about to become a hip-hop and rap station in English called Pulse 87 featuring DJs Star and Buc Wild.



Digital TV station WNYE-DT features traffic cams on virtual channel 25-2.

This television-turned-radio station is licensed for 3 kilowatts visual and 300 watts aural with a bi-directional signal beaming northwest and southeast from the top of a tall building in Long Island City, Queens. It is supposed to be a translator, so it should be rebroadcasting the programming of another station (but it isn't!) It certainly sounds a lot stronger than 300 watts, and its owners recently gained a construction permit to continue using the frequency for a digital TV station. Why the FCC allows these shenanigans is beyond us, but it is interesting to watch. It is a station like no other!

Calling Shortwave Listeners

Glenn Hauser's authoritative program *World of Radio* can be heard on Bridgeport, Connecticut's WPKN 89.5 FM Saturday mornings at 6:00 am. Glenn has long been the guru of all things broadcasting on shortwave. If you want the very latest news about the world between 3 and 30 MHz, tune in! Glenn's show can also be heard on WRN via shortwave or Sirius Satellite Radio, Radio For Peace International, New Orleans' WRNO and many other stations. See <http://www.worldofradio.com/> for details.

Possibly the world's greatest assembly of shortwave listeners and writers and personalities is about to convene once again outside Philadelphia. The annual SWL Fest will be held on March 7 and 8 in Kulpville, Pennsylvania. See <http://swlfest.com> for all the details.

Please remember that the PCARA holds a weekly net on our two meter repeater every Thursday night at 8:00 pm sharp. All licensed amateurs are welcome to join in. We encourage all the shortwave listeners to listen in with their scanners or other radios! Look for us at 146.67 MHz with a minus 600 kHz offset and a 156.7 PL. A grand time is guaranteed for all! And until next month,

73 de N2KZ "The Old Goat."



Queen Mary visit

-Ray W2CH and Marylyn KC2NKU

A while ago we decided to spend a vacation in San Diego, California, which we had briefly visited before on the way to a Hawaii cruise in March 2003. We vacationed in San Diego from January 7-21, 2008. The journey began at JFK with JetBlue, for a six hour flight to San Diego, going against the jet stream. After we arrived, we picked up our rental car and drove to The Paradise Point Resort on an island in the Mission Bay area of San Diego.

Though it is wintertime there, the daytime tem-

peratures were comfortable, in the 60's and 70's. This was very pleasant while we were traveling, out at the pool or at lunch. However, at night it dropped into the 40's and a jacket was good to have. They do have heaters for dining outside at night or in the morning. We were fortunate that a large storm had just left California when we arrived, and it did not rain again until the day we left. The bad weather has continued out there since then.



Former ocean liner Queen Mary permanently moored at Long Beach, California. [Photos by W2CH.]

While we visited many places in the area, such as the San Diego Zoo, La Jolla and Tijuana, Mexico, we spent a day trip on our first Friday, driving up to the ocean liner *RMS Queen Mary*, in Long Beach, near Los Angeles. It took about two hours for the 112 mile drive, and we were glad to have rented a Garmin GPS along with the car. It certainly helped us find our way to the *Queen Mary* through the heavy Los Angeles area traffic, to make our turns and not get lost.

I will digress here in that I wanted to see the *Queen Mary* again, as my parents and I immigrated to New York City, from London, England in February 1949.



Amateur radio station antennas on the Queen Mary.

I had briefly seen her in 1976, when my parents and I lived in Phoenix, Arizona, and we made a trip to California. Although we did not stay to tour the ship, it was the first time that we had seen it since arriving in NYC.

Historically, the *Queen Mary* was built between 1930 and 1934, followed by her sister ship the *Queen Elizabeth* between 1936 and 1938. The *Queen Mary's* last voyage to NYC was in 1967. There was bidding by various cities to purchase her. Long Beach had the winning bid of several million dollars, and The *Queen Mary* was set up there in 1967. Today, it is a hotel as well as a museum.

So when we arrived at the *Queen Mary*, we paid our admission fee and went onto the ship. First there is a narrative and photo display depicting the history of the *Queen Mary* and there are display models of Cunard ships. We then went to the "Haunted Tour" of the ship, after viewing a short film about the *Queen Mary*. The tour had light, smoke, water, and sound effects to make it "scarier". We did not see any ghosts ourselves. The tour guide showed us the engine room — engines and boilers are removed. He told us that one boiler did blow up and then we went to the front of the hull, where the *Queen Mary* had once struck a smaller military ship in World War II, which was split in half and sunk quickly with many casualties. The *Queen Mary* was repaired.

After the tour we went for lunch on the ship and then toured on our own, visiting the gift shop and some other areas of it. As we went topside we saw a sign for the Radio Room, and then a number of Amateur antennas for HF, VHF, UHF and Satellite, above it. We came upon the W6RO "Ham shack", which is closed in with glass windows.

We managed to take some photographs of the W6RO station equipment and a display of older receivers near the Ham station. They have quite a bit of equipment there. We saw

a TV set showing the recent ARRL video about Amateur Radio, presented by Walter Cronkite, KB2GSD. The W6RO station is provided by the Associated Radio Amateurs of Long Beach, which does operate from there.

Later, before we left the ship, we took some photographs up front, where I have a photo of my



W6RO operating position. [Photos by W2CH]

parents and I just before we sailed in 1949. It's almost 59 years since I was at that spot. As Marylyn said, "I came on the ship as a boy, and I went back as a man."

- Ray, W2CH

Moving maps

If you would like to see the lie of the land in our area, or any other place on earth, take a look at the latest improvement to Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com>). Zoom and pan to your favorite spot, then click on the new button that has appeared top-right labeled "**Terrain**". Instead of the usual street map



you will see a picture with contour shading, letting you view the rolling hills further upstate or the glacier-scoured terrain of our own area of the Hudson Valley. Incidentally, the "Satellite" button now has a "Show labels" check box to turn the road display on and off.



Sign for the Wireless Room.

Kenwood control and TravelPlus

You may remember in the January 2008 issue of *PCARA Update* a review of Kenwood's latest dual band FM mobile transceiver, the TM-V71A. At the time, I had not received the PG-5G serial programming cable, so I could not describe the Kenwood programming software.



Kenwood TM-V71A 144/440 MHz transceiver.

Shortly after publication, the PG-5G cable arrived, followed by an additional item that made programming more interesting. Until January 12, Kenwood had a special "mail-in" rebate offer on their TM-V71 and TM-D710A transceivers, offering a free copy of the ARRL "TravelPlus for Repeaters™" software. I received the TravelPlus CD-ROM a week later.

Kenwood's PG-5G programming interface cable has an 8-pin mini-DIN connector on one end, which plugs into the "PC" socket on the rear of the TM-V71A. The other end of the cable has a DB-9 connector for connection to the serial port of your PC – assuming your PC has one of those increasingly rare 9-pin COM ports.

Kenwood's amateur radio software is available for free download from the company web site... so my next task was to download a copy of the

MCP-2A memory control program from www.kenwood.com. A firmware update for the TM-V71 was available from the same site — firmware updates are installed using the same PG-5G programming cable.

I installed the MCP-2A software on my notebook PC and was able to communicate with the TM-V71A. The menu choice "Program → Read data from the transceiver" transfers a copy of the various memory channels previously entered into the radio, as well as menu settings that might have been changed. It was straightforward to modify these settings within the MCP-2A software then write the data back to the transceiver through the serial cable. It was also possible to save all memories and settings in a single ".mc2" file for future use, or for transfer to another radio.

By now the free "TravelPlus for Repeaters" CD-ROM had arrived, so the next step was to install the TravelPlus software on my notebook. The installation was a little strange as it seemed to start up and add most of the data files (700 MB) to the hard drive without asking. I had an earlier version of this software



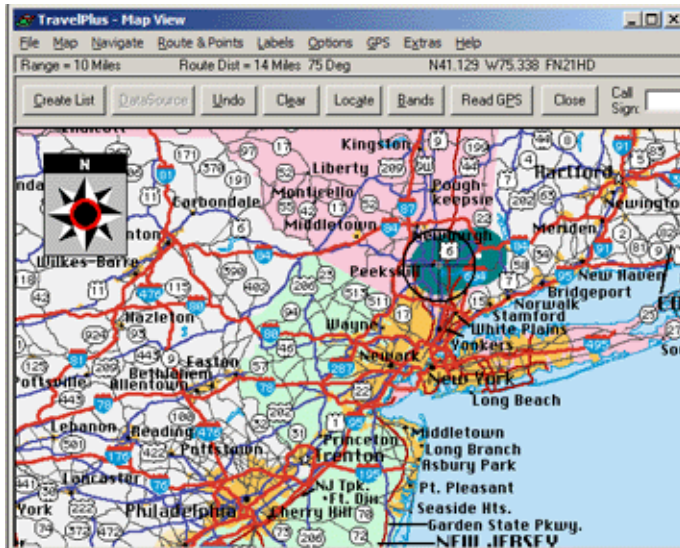
PG-5G programming cable has an 8-pin mini DIN and a DB-9 connector.



ARRL "TravelPlus for Repeaters" CD. Current version 11 covers 2007-2008 while older version was for 1997-1998.

ten years ago, and was unimpressed then with its map interface. Sad to say, the maps have not really improved. There is a map of the United States that can be panned E-W and N-S using a compass rose to find one's location, but you cannot zoom in to see greater detail. Although Peekskill appears on the map, it is not on the "City, State" list available using the "Locate" button. The map is insufficiently detailed to position the start point of a route accurately, and it is difficult to trace a route as only major highways are shown.

Once a route has been drawn, the program improves. Click on "Create List" and the software draws



TravelPlus software in “map view”. Blue circles indicate a route from Peekskill to Brewster, NY.

records from the ARRL repeater database, collecting information on all the repeaters that are within a specified distance of the route. The results are presented in a separate “Repeater List” window. This list can be printed out or exported to various file formats.

In order to export data from TravelPlus in a format that is compatible with Kenwood’s MCP-2A software, you may have to first download a software update from ARRL’s web site. After a suitable repeater list has been generated, the next requirement is to specify exactly which data fields are to be included. You must also modify the maximum width of the exported columns so the column headings are not truncated, and specify “comma delimited file” format (CSV) — even though the file extension has to be “.TPE”.

The resulting file contains all the data required by Kenwood’s MCP-2A software to program memory channels in the TM-V71. All that is needed within MCP-2A is to specify “File->Import->TravelPlus file” then specify the location of the TravelPlus .TPE file on the disk drive.

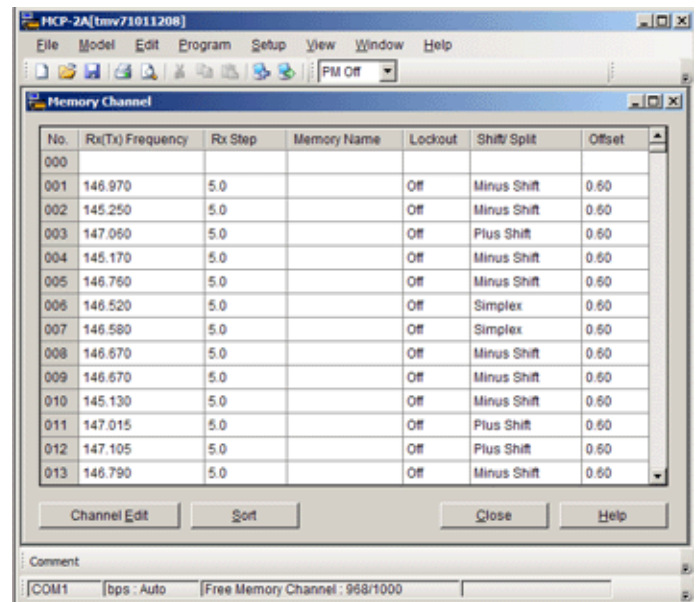
There is a warning asking if you would like to first save unsaved data, then the new memory channels are read into the MCP-2A software. Unfortunately, any existing memory channels *have just been wiped out*. The MCP-2A software simply starts at memory 000 and fills successive channels with the contents of the TPE file. Writing data to the transceiver using the PG-5G serial cable then overwrites all its existing memory channels. Program scan memories and any menu items that you might have changed are all reset to defaults.

This is not a very desirable situation, especially if you have a large number of channels stored in the radio that you want to retain, while temporarily adding extra channels for a special trip.

The only solution I have found for this memory

overwriting problem is to use external software to combine the two different memory lists. The technique I used was to first read data into the MCP-2A program from the radio’s memory, then export the memory contents to a Kenwood .hmk file (File->Export->HMK File). The second step involves reading the TravelPlus file into MCP-2A then exporting those memory contents to a second .hmk file. The resulting files are in comma separated variable format (.CSV), and both can be opened using — for example — Microsoft Excel. It is relatively easy in Excel to select a group of records in one sheet, use Windows copy and paste commands to transfer data to the end of the records in another sheet, then renumber the second set of memory channels so there are no duplicates. The combined sheet is then saved from Excel in “comma delimited” format with a .HMK extension, ready to be imported back into Kenwood’s MCP-2A software.

This is a convoluted way to achieve the desired aim. In my opinion, it would be better if TravelPlus or MCP-2A would provide improved table editing facilities to accomplish the same goal.



Kenwood’s MCP-2A memory control program can be used to transfer memory channels and menu settings between a PC and the TM-V71A/E or TM-D710A/E transceivers.

Despite these shortcomings, Kenwood’s MCP-2A software provides excellent facilities for the price (free!) and if you want to populate your radio with frequencies for an upcoming trip, ARRL’s TravelPlus CD-ROM provides one way to do it.

- Malcolm, NM9J

Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association

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Newsletter contributions are always very welcome!

Archive: <http://home.computer.net/~pcara/newslett.htm>

PCARA Information

PCARA is a **Non-Profit Community Service Organization**. PCARA meetings take place the first Sunday of each month* at 3:00 p.m. in Dining Room B of the Hudson Valley Hospital Center, Route 202, Cortlandt Manor, NY 10567. Drive round behind the main hospital building and enter from the rear (look for the oxygen tanks). Talk-in is available on the 146.67 repeater. *Apart from holidays.

PCARA Repeaters

W2NYW: 146.67 MHz -0.6, PL 156.7Hz

KB2CQE: 449.925MHz -5.0, PL 179.9Hz
(IRLP node: **4214**)

N2CBH: 448.725MHz -5.0, PL 107.2Hz

PCARA Calendar

Feb 3: PCARA February meeting, Hudson Valley Hospital Center, 3:00 p.m. Tentative - presentation by Bob N2CBH.

Hamfests

Sun Feb 24: LIMARC Indoor Hamfair, Levittown Hall, 201 Levittown Parkway, Hicksville, NY. 9:00 a.m.

Sat Mar 1: Splitrock ARA North Jersey Hamfest, Parsippany Police Athletic Lg Bldg, 33 Baldwin Rd, Parsippany NJ. 8:00 a.m.

Sun Apr 13: Mt Beacon ARC Hamfest, Tymor Park, LaGrangeville NY. **9:00** a.m. (Note new opening time!)

Sat Apr 26: Orange County ARC Spring Hamfest, Town of Wallkill Community Cntr, 2 Wes Warren Rd., Middletown, NY. 8:00 a.m.

VE Test Sessions

Feb 3: Yonkers ARC, Yonkers PD, 1st Precinct, E Grassy Sprain Rd, 8:30 a.m. Contact D. Calabrese, (914) 667-0587.

Feb 14: WECA, Westchester Co Fire Trg Center, 4 Dana Rd, Valhalla NY. 7:00 p.m. Cntct: Stanley Rothman, (914) 831-3258.

Feb 18: Columbia Univ ARC, 2960 Broadway, 115 Havemeyer Hall, New York, NY. 6:30 p.m. Contact: Alan Crosswell, (212) 854-3754.

Feb 22: Bergen ARA, Westwood Regional HS, 701 Ridgewood Rd Washington Township, NJ. Contact Donald Younger, (201) 265-6583.

Feb 23: Mt Beacon ARC, Poughkeepsie Galleria Community Room, Rt 9, Poughkeepsie NY, 8:30 a.m. Andrew Schmidt (845) 462-7539

Feb 29: Orange County ARC, Munger Cottage Riverlight Pk, Hudson St, Cornwall NY. 6:00 p.m. Contact Ronald Torpey, (845) 783-1692.



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