PCARA Update

Volume 27, Issue 5 Peekskill/Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association Inc. May 2026

Mayday weekend

The PCARA membership meeting on April 4 at Putnam Valley Library had fourteen people in attendance. PCARA Treasurer David KD2EVI reported that there has been limited financial activity but there will be upcoming expenses associated with Field Day. David has filed the club's annual taxation and 501(c)(3) paperwork. Membership fees become due at the end of June, reminders will be going out shortly.

Joe WA2MCR has submitted paperwork to request the Field Day site at George Washington Elementary School for June 27-28. Meanwhile Jay NE2Q with David KD2EVI has been investigating a possible alternative site with the Town of Yorktown.

The April meeting featured a presentation by Jasper NK2Y on traffic handling using the National Traffic System. Jasper explained the ARRL format for radio messages and offered to introduce short radiograms from those in the audience to the NTS. Rob AD2CT has made a recording of Jasper's presentation.

The meeting was followed by a VE Test Session at Putnam Valley Library. There were two candidates, with one successfully upgrading from General to Extra.

Warm weather in mid-April tempted sixteen members to venture outside for PCARA Breakfast on Saturday morning, April 18 at Uncle Giuseppe's Marketplace. It was cooler than expected at the outdoor tables but nonetheless a pleasant change from the indoor breakfasts during a rough winter.

Jasper NK2Y explained the National Traffic System during the April 4 meeting.

Members ventured outside for breakfast at Uncle Giuseppe's on April 18th.

Activities for May have been planned to accommodate a **Foxhunt** at FDR State Park — before the Park starts charging the weekend vehicle entrance fee and to avoid a clash with Dayton Hamvention®, May 15 – 17. Lou KD2ITZ has obtained permission for a PCARA Foxhunt in FDR State Park on Saturday morning, May 2nd. This date is also "I Love My Park Day". The Foxhunt will be preceded by a PCARA Breakfast at adjacent Downing Park — remember to bring your *own* breakfast to the park — and do practice with your tape-measure Yagi before the Foxhunt event.

Thanks to Joe W2BCC,

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Contents

PCARA should have a **club table** at the Orange County ARC **Hamfest** on Sunday May 3. Location will be once again at the Black Rock Fish & Game Club in Mountainville, NY. PCARA members are welcome to bring along equipment for sale from the club table.

Please mark your calendar with the following events on and around Mayday weekend:

- Saturday May 2 – **PCARA Breakfast**, 9:00 a.m. Downing Park, 2881 Crompond Rd, Yorktown Heights, NY.
- Saturday May 2 – **PCARA Foxhunt** 10:45 a.m. and "I Love My Park Day", FDR State Park, 2957 Crompond Road, Yorktown Heights, NY. The Fox will be hidden by Malcolm, NM9J and Greg KB2CQE. See Foxhunt rules on page 6.
- Sunday May 3 – **Orange County Amateur Radio Club Hamfest**, 8:00 a.m., Black Rock Fish & Game Club, 5 Pleasant Hill Rd., Mountainville, NY. [PCARA **Club Table**.]
- Saturday May 16 – **PCARA VE Test Session**, 11:30 a.m., Putnam Valley Library, 30 Oscawana Lake Rd., Putnam Valley, NY. (Note: no membership meeting at 10:15 a.m. on Saturday May 16).

PCARA Board

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Greg Appleyard, KB2CQE; kb2cqe 'at' arrl.net
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Net night

Peekskill/Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association holds a roundtable net on Tuesday evenings at 8:00 p.m. and a directed 'Old Goats' net on Thursday evenings at 8:00 p.m. Both events take place on the 146.67 MHz W2NYW repeater, offset -0.600, PL 156.7 Hz.

Join the roundtable to find out what members have been doing or join the Old Goats with net control Karl N2KZ for news and neighborly information.

April VE Test Session

PCARA's latest VE Test Session took place on Saturday April 4, 2026 after the 10:15 a.m. meeting. There were two candidates, with one being successful. Matthew Ryan W2MJR of Livingston, Texas passed Element 4 and upgraded from General to Extra — well done. Matthew's upgrade to Extra was processed by the FCC on April 6, 2026.

This ARRL VEC test session took place in Putnam Valley Library's "Fireplace Room" using tablet PCs, notebooks and Smartphones to administer tests and sign paperwork through the ExamTools system.

April 4 VE Test Session took place in the Putnam Valley Library fireplace room.

There were five Volunteer Examiners: Lou KD2ITZ, Rob AD2CT, Joe W2BCC, Joe WA2MCR and NM9J.

PCARA's next VE Test Session is scheduled for Saturday May 16 starting at 11:30 a.m. at Putnam Valley Library. Candidates should contact Lou, KD2ITZ, radiocassetta'at'gmail.com. Note — there is no Membership Meeting at the Library on May 16.

Dues for the upcoming year – KD2EVI

As you know, the PCARA membership year runs from June to May. I will be sending Greg KB2CQE's letter via email to the membership after you receive this issue of the *PCARA Update* asking you to please renew your club membership. Some members have already paid their 2026-2027 dues and will not receive the email.

We still can only accept cash or checks for your dues. Our dues have not changed: $25.00 for full membership, $10.00 for senior (age 65+) membership, $30.00 for family, and student membership is free. You can send a check made out to PCARA to:

PCARA
PO Box 146
Crompond NY 10517

— or I will take cash and checks at club meetings and events such as our June meeting or at Field Day.

- 73 de David, KD2EVI

Adventures in DXing
- N2KZ

Big Tree Falling

Every tree eventually falls back to earth. It is unfortunately inevitable. Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust. All the leaves in the crown will slowly brown and fall leaving just an ashen-colored remain of barren branches. Small branches break away. Limbs weaken and fall. Gravity or landscapers finish the job. A *fait accompli*.

A very big diseased tree has been slowly deteriorating for several years on my front lawn. Years ago, it was majestic and healthy, rising up 60 or more feet as a dominating point in our landscape. It also served as the long-standing far-side pivot of my once elaborate wire dipole antenna system.

The tree's disease worked slowly. First, small and medium sized branches would break away, sometimes acting like natural spears that I would have to tug on hard to pull them out of my lawn.

A truly fatal blow was delivered one afternoon, without notice, by a NYSEG work team. They spent many months last year trimming back every tree they could find in our neighborhood to reduce the multitude of power outages we have become accustomed to. I came home one night to see the remains: a very odd-looking half tree. One side had been completely removed away from the power poles and lines. The other side remained completely lopsided and very odd looking indeed.

Odd-looking half-tree. [N2KZ pic.]

Over the next few months, all the little branches fell off my remaining half-tree. Only great big limbs remained and would slowly deteriorate to become rotten to the core. Woodpeckers and rain water encouraged the limbs' wood to rot further into a mushy mess and break apart and fall as irregular quite heavy waterlogged logs. Once on the ground, the bigger the limb — the harder it would be to move even with a good saw. When you heard a single-note low-frequency thud, you knew exactly what had happened. More heavy wood to part-out and remove from the lawn.

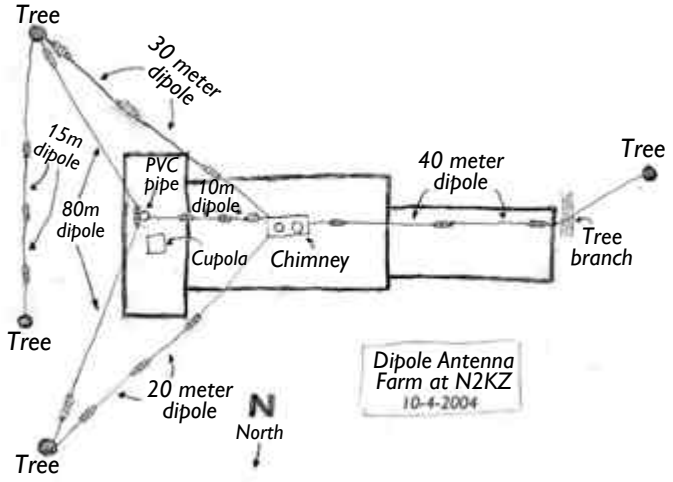
This winter, many other old trees on my property fell. Thankfully, all of them were far away from my home and did not create direct physical damage.

In addition thick bark at the base of my large front lawn tree was now falling away resembling large medieval sword shields. The very base of its trunk was beginning to weaken, I feared. Soon it will become a stump and be ground to wood chip dust.

I was quite respectful of the fact that what still remained vertical had quite considerable weight and girth. It was now a hazard: If it falls north it will wind up leaning on the high-tension power lines running past my house. No matter which way it may fall, it is dangerous and unpredictable. Let's get the remainder down, under controlled conditions, while we can. Step one? Removing the support ropes to my antennas!

Antennas Down

Building my all-band antenna farm began back in 1999 after earning my first amateur license. At its peak, seven wire dipoles covered every band from 80 meters to ten meters — the 30 meter and 60 meter bands included. After 26 years of sun, rain and snow, almost all of them have now fallen away.



Original layout of HF dipole antennas at N2KZ as described in PCARA Update *for December 2004. [N2KZ sketch]*

The saddest part of this saga, from this amateur's eyes, is the removal of what remains of my wire antennas. Releasing the ropes from the big tree brought down my beloved 20-meter dipole and my useful 40/15 meter NVIS dipole, as well. Now I am left with a compact ten meter dipole (entirely mounted on my roof) and an older original 40 meter dipole (that no longer loads up well.) The other anchor of this system is my chimney — that's still there! (I also have a 300 ohm flat cable QRP folded dipole in my attic for six meters and my VHF Yagi and Comet GP-3 for Old Goats Net and simplex use on two meters.)

It wouldn't be so bad if I still had the strength, stamina and balance to climb up on my roof to rebuild my dynasty. I would be constructing *en masse* gladly, if I could. Unfortunately, those days are more than over. Although I maintain a religious daily physical workout

regimen, I feel way too insecure to stand on steep roofs with authority. My very best advice: Don't get old! Don't fall!

BOOM!

The downing of the tree — April 8, 2026

Now you see it...

Bringing down a large tree is a humbling experience. It provides you with immediate genuine respect for just how massive and enormously heavy an established and hardy tree can be. When it was healthy and full, I estimated that it stood about 60 feet tall. At its base, this tree had a girth of a full 32 inches across. My house was built in 1963 and I am guessing this tree was probably first planted at that time — coincidentally 63 years ago.

The arborists felled the tallest long, vertical limbs one at a time — progressively trimming it down to a thick vertical stump now standing at about 25 feet tall.

Long vertical limbs felled by the arborists. [N2KZ pics.]

The very last tall vertical to come down took three men — pulling on a rope wrapped around the limb with all their might — to begin its fall. As it started to fall, they quickly scrambled out of its path. It hit the ground with an authoritative low-frequency **BOOM** as it broke into dozens of pieces. You really could hear the weight as it crashed.

Arborists pull down last tall vertical section of Karl's tree.

The wide and stubby remaining grand main trunk was cut away from its base at ground level and also required quite a persuasive all-hands-on-deck rope pull to bring it down.

Main trunk of Karl's tree after being brought down by the arborists. [N2KZ pics.]

Very difficult long-time sawing followed. Working with an extended-blade Stihl chainsaw, it took at least a full half hour to slice up the base of the tree into manageable lengths to be removed by their truck. Again, four men had to push and pull just to free the slices into single pieces. Very impressive to watch. Each slice required two people to carry and place the pieces onto the truck bed. From beginning to end, it took four men and five hours of hard work, until the entire tree was removed.

Admiring the final stump cut to ground level reminded me of the remaining massive concrete antenna base anchors at the site of the legacy Marconi site at South Wellfleet on Cape Cod known as 'Old CC.'

Final stump cut to ground level measured 32" diameter.

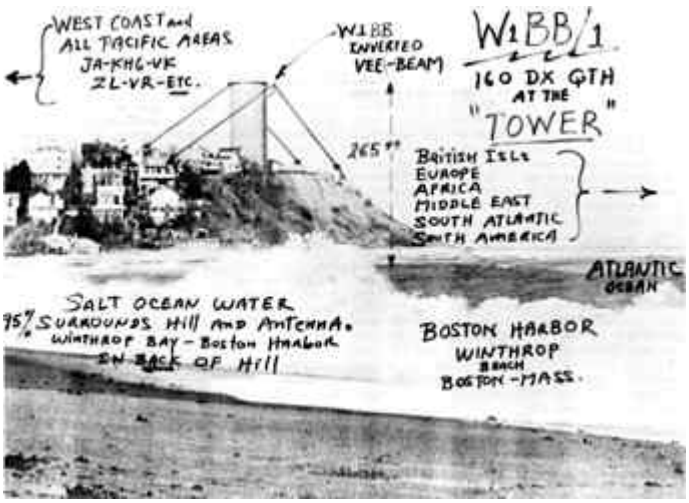
Although there is only one stump at my QTH and, certainly, my station can't hold a candle to a majestic historical Marconi station, this Morse devotee can't help to come to this association: both sites now have memorial monuments commemorating places where great radio was once made. Delusions of grandeur? Not for me!

Now you don't...

Where do hams with no nearby trees go? My future aspirations bring me dreams of returning to the low bands: 80 and 160 meter CW. What antennas I can build and mount to meet these goals are still under consideration. (Your suggestions would be gratefully received!)

Stew Perry W1BB (SK) — one of the best-known DXers on 160 meters.

For inspiration, I recall the tales of the grandfather of 160 meter operation: Stew Perry, W1BB. In his eyes, all you need is a site with an expansive lookout to the Atlantic Ocean — and — a tall and sturdy water tower from which you can hang your 160 meter band antenna.



W1BB secondary station with wire antenna suspended 265 feet above the Atlantic Ocean on a water tower.

I dream of working grayline on 160 meters in the height of winter! Inspiration can be found in Stew's ancient archived newsletters. You can sample some of them here: https://www.w8ji.com/160%20History/hist160dx.pdf.

SUMMARY of this seasons OUTSTANDING events, follows, and is noteworthy for the large number of FIRSTS!!!

#1 -"FIRST!!" - DL/W QSO when 'Shely' W3RGQ worked DL1FF, (Who secured special permission to operate on 160 from Dec. thru FB December 8th at 0510 GMT!! -- Followed by W3FYV, W8GDQ,W1BB same morning -- DL1FF was on whole season, with other DLs.

#2 -"FIRST!!" - YN/W QSO, December 15th when W2QHH worked YN1AA, (Joe Fatts) for FIRST Phone/CW QSO, on 1805 Kcs. YN was #59.

Extract from "History of 160 meter DX by W1BB" for the 1955-1956 season.

Please also visit the encyclopedic website of the curator of Stew Perry's legacy: Tom Rauch, Jr. W8JI: https://www.w8ji.com. Tom has created an amazing station and a fine collection of ephemera!

Internet Connections

This is not to say that my show is completely over. I am leading quite a busy amateur radio schedule using nearly no antennas at all!

I participate in a daily net based in Central Michigan using the **RCForb** Windows Client by RemoteHams.com (https://remotehams.com/) — I interlope onto the air via the remote transceiver of a long-time friend in Deckerville near the shores of Lake Huron. It's almost like being there.

Twice a week, I visit with my Scottish friends by voice via DMR digital radio and over the Zoom app in full color video free-of-charge. I also use a handheld Yaesu FT-60 (analog FM) or digital phone app Echolink to reach the CBS Retirees Net Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 9:00 a.m. on the WECA repeater at 147.06 MHz. No QRN or QRM will taunt you while on the digital modes!

Still in existence is the remarkable and simplistic CW-COM system allowing you to send Morse code over the Internet using your computer's down arrow key as a straight key. Retired Royal Navy telegrapher, Gerry Emson, (using the self-assigned faux callsign G3MS,) is the administrator and mentor of this system monitoring from his home near Portsmouth, U.K. facing the English Channel. CWCOM has quite a community of participants and Gerry is often around to greet you in. His operating prime time is from about 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. U.S. Eastern time. Introduce yourself to this long-standing entertaining miracle at: https://morsepower.blogspot.com. You don't need RF or an antenna for this one, either!

Gerry Emson "G3MS".

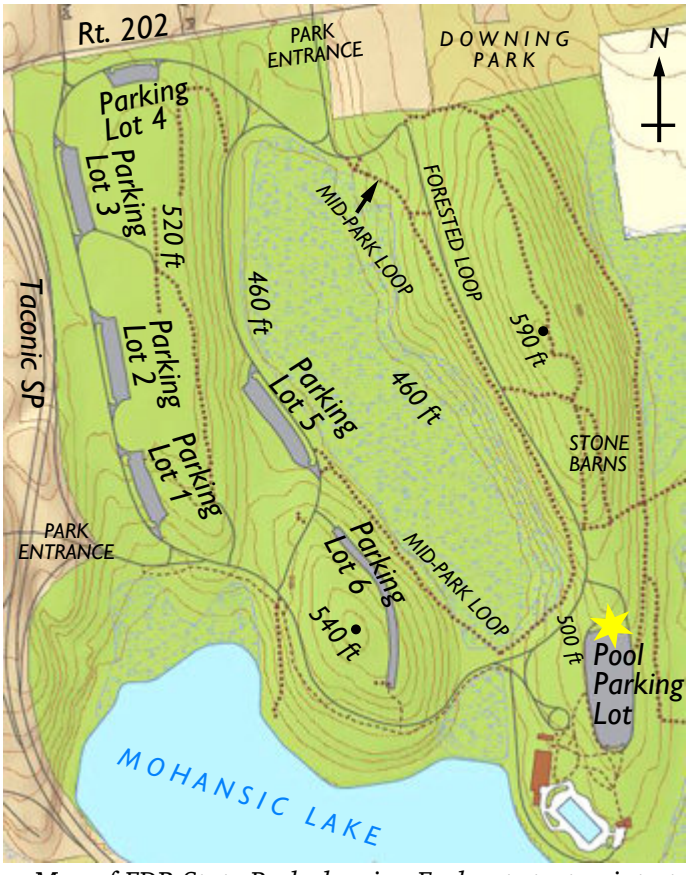
As time passes, more and more digital modes and Internet options become available for our use. Each one is a modern miracle. Are these digital applications really 'radio'? When all else fails (including the Internet) will amateurs still be able to communicate point-to-point? Will technologies like Meshtastic® be used to develop a secondary and instantly available data web when it is most needed?

Only time will tell! Stay tuned and stay away from big dead trees! 73 de N2KZ 'The Old Goat.'

Spring Foxhunt May 2

PCARA's next Foxhunt is scheduled for 10:45 a.m. on Saturday May 2nd, 2026, following the 9:00 a.m. PCARA Breakfast at Downing Park. The rules will be similar to previous PCARA events in FDR State Park. Here are the **Foxhunt rules** courtesy of Lou, KD2ITZ:

- Transmission: FM simplex on 146.565 MHz.
- Transmissions start at 10:45 a.m.
- All are welcome to participate.
- Participants must start in the Pool Parking Lot.
- Participants are not allowed to enter FDR Park before 10:30 a.m.
- The transmitter will be hidden within the confines of FDR Park.
- Please be mindful of other events scheduled for May 2nd including "**Steps2Cure NF**" walk (9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.) and "**I Love My Park Day**" (10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.) when volunteers will be assisting with preparations for FDR's warm-weather season.
- Once the event begins, participants must remain on foot, without assistance of vehicles of any kind.
- Participants are encouraged to work in groups of two or three.
- Participants who locate the transmitter should discreetly inform the event coordinator who will note the time. Avoid revealing the site to other participants who are still hunting.
- The participant who locates the transmitter in the least amount of time will be invited to assume the role of fox at the next event.
- Any changes due to weather or unforeseen circumstances will be posted to the PCARA Google Group and Facebook Page.



Map of FDR State Park showing Foxhunt start point at north end of the Pool Parking Lot. [Base Map NYS Parks.]

NY QSO Party 2025

The most recent New York QSO Party took place on Saturday October 18, 2025. Results were published on April 8, 2026 — see the NY QSO Party web site, https://nyqp.org/wordpress/ for details. Joe WA2MCR had been planning to host PCARA's club entry using callsign W2NYW. Unfortunately, Joe's son was in hospital and club-entry plans had to change. Members were encouraged to submit individual entries and have their scores accumulated for the combined "NY club high score."

Joe's operating time was limited — he had a score of 10,586 points from 158 QSOs and was listed 13th out of 25 entries in the Low-Power Mixed Mode class. Scott KE2CNS submitted an entry for the Low Power Phone category and scored 1,598 points from 47 QSOs, for 29th place out of 43. When Scott's points and Joe's points were added together, they gave a total of 12,184 points for two entries by Peekskill/Cortlandt ARA. This produced a position of 30th out of 78 Club Results.

David K2WPM had been planning to operate from Donald J. Trump State Park in Westchester County (WES) and Fahnestock State Park in Putnam County (PUT). David reported "I didn't really participate, just an hour or two."

Meanwhile Mike W2IG had been operating from Donald J. Trump State Park on the border of Westchester County and Putnam County. He made a commendable 618 QSOs for a score of 43,878 points, earning second place out of eight entries in the Single-Op Low Power Phone category. According to the report from KI2D and NK2Y operating N2Y: "We started at Bear Mountain… then after 4 pm we moved across the river to Shrub Oak, where W2IG had already been operating since the morning but was ready to call it a day, so we took over and activated as PUT/WES and POTA US-2048 until the end of the Party."

W2IG's mobile set-up for POTA.

This year's New York QSO Party is scheduled for Saturday October 17, 2026 starting at 1400 GMT, 10:00 a.m. Eastern. Joe WA2MCR is hoping to host PCARA' s club entry once again.

New rigs for old

According to Alfred, Lord Tennyson: "In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love" — and an active amateur's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of a **new radio**. This spring, at least two members have put this thought into practice.

March Mark II

For a number of years, Joe WA2MCR has been using his Icom IC-7410 HF/50 MHz transceiver at his home station and for PCARA activities such as ARRL Field Day. This spring, Joe decided to go modern with a brand new Icom IC-7300**MK2.**

The original IC-7300 was announced at Japan Ham Fair in 2015 and became available ten years ago in 2016. The IC-7300 pioneered RF direct sampling in a compact, self-contained 100 watt HF/50 MHz transceiver, with RF signals converted to a digital data stream then processed in a field-programmable gate array (FPGA). The 4.3 inch color TFT touch-screen could display a high-performance real-time band scope. Standard features included an internal antenna tuner (max VSWR 3:1) and USB-connected audio adapter suitable for digital modes such as FT-8. Portable operation for POTA and SOTA activations helped to drive sales of this popular, compact transceiver to over **100,000** units worldwide.

In August 2025, Icom announced a new IC-7300**MK2** HF/50 MHz transceiver. Improvements over the original (Mark 1) model included better RMDR (Reciprocal Mixing Dynamic Range), improved phase noise performance; reduced adjacent-signal blocking; receiver current consumption reduced by 23%, lowering heat generation. The radio now incorporates an HDMI port for connecting an external display and a built-in CW decoder. There are separate SMA×2 antenna connectors for a second antenna, filter or preamp; a USB Type-C connector for digital modes and rig control, plus a built-in RJ45 Ethernet connector for remote operation.

The IC-7300MK2 became available in January 2026 and Joe obtained his model in late March. He had initial problems with connecting the internal USB adapters via USB-C to an older notebook computer for contest logging, but largely overcame the problems with a newer notebook.

Joe WA2MCR's recently-acquired Icom IC-7300MK2.

A major surprise is the compact size and light weight of the IC-7300Mk2 (9.4" × 3.7" × 9.4", 9.0 lb) compared with Joe's earlier Icom IC-7410 (12.3" × 4.6" × 13.5", 22.4 lb)!

Mobile optimization

Meanwhile Ray W2CH has acquired a new radio for mobile use. His previous installation of a Yaesu FT-891 HF/6m mobile transceiver in his Jeep Renegade was described in *PCARA Update* for June 2025, pp 12-13. This radio has now been replaced by a Yaesu "**FTX-1 optima**" transceiver.

Yaesu's FTX-1 SDR radios cover all modes on HF/50, 144 and 430 MHz. The "FTX-1 Field" option is intended to be a replacement for the popular FT-817 and FT-818 all-mode portable transceivers, with maximum output power of 10 watts on a 12 volt power supply, or 6 watts on the attachable lithium-ion battery. The "FTX-1optima" option includes an attachable SPA-1 power amplifier capable of 100 watts HF output — with built-in ATU for HF/50 MHz.

Ray explained that the FTX-1 option he purchased was the "Optima" which includes the SPA-1 100 watt amplifier (50 watts VHF/UHF). It was discounted with a -$150.00 manufacturer's coupon, offered by most dealers until May 30. If the SPA-1 amplifier was purchased separately for addition to the less expensive "Field" option, the amplifier would have cost about $600.00 extra. The SPA-1 amplifier is in the Jeep's trunk, connected to two separate antennas on the Jeep's rear hatch for operation on all frequencies.

Yaesu FTX-1optima's SPA-1 amplifier mounted in the trunk. *[W2CH pics.]*

Ray has the field control head part of the FTX-1 mounted at the front of the vehicle using a cup holder mount by Lido. (See https://www.lidoradio.com/collections/yaesu-ftx-1.) Ray reports that his mount is made to hold

several different models, though the FTX-1 field head is heavier than most control heads as it is also a 6/10 watt portable transceiver with 10.8 V 6400 mAh battery.

Yaesu "FTX-1optima" field head unit supported on a Lido ball-and socket cup-holder mount. [W2CH pics.]

Ray explained that the field head unit can be charged from a 45 watt USB-C wall charger cabled to the USB port on the FTX-1 Field, similar to a cell phone. As an alternative, the cable from an external DC power supply can be connected to the 2-pin round input socket to power or charge the unit. Ray has the heavy-duty DC power cable fitted with Anderson Powerpole connectors, allowing an external 13.8 V DC supply to run the transceiver at 10 watts output or plugged into the 12 V cigar lighter receptacle in a vehicle.

Ray has two separate antennas mounted on the Jeep's rear hatch. The HF mobile antenna is a Tarheel Little Pro, previously used with the Yaesu FT-891. It is a mobile screwdriver-type antenna, with control cable to a supplied rocker switch, for adjusting tuning up or down. The switch has been substituted with an MFJ-1922B controller, DC powered off the cigar lighter outlet. Unfortunately, this outlet is inactive when the ignition is off, so Ray needs to arrange a power source which is always powered on.

Antennas mounted on Jeep Renegade hatch are (left) Tarheel Little Pro and (right) Diamond CR320A. [W2CH pic.]

There is a separate tri-band Diamond CR320A antenna for 144, 220 and 440 MHz installed on a Diamond K400 mount on the right side of the rear hatch.

The separated SPA-1 is powered from the vehicle battery. Ray had the 12 volt power cable professionally installed five years ago by radio communication supplier Beltronics of Nashua, NH. This company is owned by Bernard N1IMO and Dorothy N1IMN. They have a second store in Framingham, MA and a network of linked amateur repeaters located around New Hampshire. See: https://n1imo-n1imn.us/.

Ray's MFJ-1922B screwdriver antenna controller allows exact retuning of the adjustable HF antenna.

Year of the Club 2026-POTA event

From ARRL Section News for ENY

Saturday June 13: POTA event initiated by the Albany Amateur Radio Association (AARA), here are the details:

So the idea here is that since 2026 is the ARRL Year of the Club, our [Hudson Division] Vice Director Dave KM2O came up with the idea of promoting a "Flash Mob" POTA event where any participating club would use the club call for one station and personal calls for other participating stations and try to work a bunch of hams from various parks. Each club might try to activate several nearby parks.

The idea is also to invite interested hams and public to these events to show what we can do as Amateur Radio operators.

Some hams have mentioned that they are interested in POTA but don't know how to get started, so here's an opportunity! Let's see how many ENY Section Clubs we can get on the air! I will suggest any time between 12 noon and 4:00 p.m. After the event, let's compare notes and see who worked the most ENY clubs; there might be some kind of award, (hint, hint).

- ARRL Eastern New York Section Manager,
John Fritze, K2QY:

Hints and links

For many years, ARRL has included a column in *QST* entitled "Hints & Kinks". Its modern title is "Hints & Hacks". ARRL has also published collections of these tips and projects in book form — the two latest are:

"**Hints & Kinks for the Radio Amateur 19th Edition**" covering *QST*s from 2012-2016, https://home.arrl.org/action/Store/Product-Details/productId/2016994471

"**Hints & Hacks for the Radio Amateur First Edition**" covering *QST*s from 2017 to 2023, https://home.arrl.org/action/Store/Product-Details/productId/2028191323

Here are a few "Hints and Links" from my own experience with amateur radio equipment in particular and electronics in general.

Control knob hints

There is a tendency for modern radios to substitute **touchscreen** controls in place of knobs and buttons — but control knobs are still important.

Push-on tuning dial knob (VFO/memory) for Icom IC-2100 2 meter transceiver.

There are several ways for a knob to be secured to a rotary control behind the front panel. The simplest arrangement is a push-on knob that is held in place on the control shaft by an internal plastic molding, sometimes reinforced with a metal clip. The only drawback is that steady pressure after the knob is pushed onto the control shaft may crack the knob's plastic molding. On my Kenwood TS-870 HF transceiver the **Filter** controls **Lo/Width** and **Hi/Shift** suffer from this problem. I ordered replacement knobs from Kenwood, but they also cracked after a few months.

Cracked push-on control knobs on Kenwood TS-870 HF transceiver.

Temporary repair may be possible using cyanoacrylate "Krazy® Glue". Hint — Krazy Glue "singles" are better value for single-use projects than a larger tube of adhesive that will polymerize when exposed to moisture after opening. Even when unopened, cyanoacrylate adhesives only have a limited shelf life.

Krazy Glue singles.

Another arrangement for securing control knobs relies on a headless **set screw** (grub screw) that fits into a threaded metal insert within the knob and tightens up against the control shaft. You may come across set screws with a conventional screw slot or a hexagonal recess for adjustment with an Allen key. If the control incorporates a mechanical switch, frequent use may loosen the knob and the set screw will require re-tightening with a small screwdriver or Allen wrench (1/16").

Top: control knobs with conventional slotted set screw. Below: knobs with hexagonal set screw, requiring an Allen key.

Beware of rotary controls on manual antenna tuners where the metal shaft of a variable capacitor is *not* grounded. In this case, the set screw of the control knob may be at some RF potential during transmit and capable of giving an RF burn to your fingers. This was the case for an MFJ-948 antenna tuner as reported in *PCARA Update* for June 2022.

'Antenna Matching' control of MFJ-948. The arrowed 3/8" mounting hardware and Allen hex screw are all 'hot' to RF.

Some rotary controls — such as capacitors and digital encoders — can be rotated continuously without restriction. Others like volume and squelch controls have stops that limit their range of adjustment, perhaps to 270°. The latter can benefit from having a **pointer**

on the knob to indicate where the control is set. A sympathetic manufacturer will provide control knobs with a dot or line molded on the front or side of the knob and filled with contrasting paint — usually white or red.

A less kind manufacturer will mark their dark-colored knobs with an indentation but **no paint**. This type of control is difficult to see, especially in a dark shack or vehicle. Hint: you can try filling the control knob's indentation or stripe with contrasting paint yourself, but you will need a steady hand and a fine brush. If you do not have suitable paint available, use "Wite-Out®" or "Snopake®" typing correction fluid. Be ready to clean up any surplus paint with a cloth and suitable solvent.

Control knobs on IC-7410 have a white paint stripe to indicate position.

Volume and squelch controls on IC-2800 filled with white paint.

An alternative to a thin line of paint is use of a short length of **vinyl adhesive tape** — as used to mark electrical cables. Cut a thin sliver of good-quality white or red adhesive tape then apply carefully to the indented stripe in the control knob.

Final hint — well-used control knobs with years of ingrained dirt can be cleaned off with an old toothbrush to remove dust and grunge from their intricate moldings.

Volume and squelch controls on Icom IC-2730 marked with short strips of white vinyl tape.

FM transceiver hints

If you are operating through a repeater, don't rely on the "**VFO**" mode of your FM transceiver. It is too easy to have a setting incorrect or accidentally switched off. Instead prepare all settings in VFO mode then **store** those settings into a programmed memory channel — including transmit frequency, offset frequency, offset direction (DUP– or DUP+), frequency offset (600 kHz, 5 MHz), subaudible tone (aka CTCSS or PL® tone) encoder on/off, subaudible tone frequency and tone decode on/off (tone squelch). Consult the radio's user manual for details. Then operate through the repeater in memory recall (MR) mode.

It can be helpful to listen on the repeater's input frequency to check an incoming signal and whether the other station is within simplex range. Some FM transceivers have a simple 'monitor' function to reverse frequencies and listen on the repeater's input. If you forget to turn this function off, your next transmission will then be on the repeater's output. Hint: program a different memory channel purely to listen on the repeater's **input** frequency to handle this situation.

If you have a modern FM transceiver with choice of standard or narrow deviation setting, remember that the standard setting (with ±4.5 to 5 kHz max. deviation) is usually most appropriate for North America. The "narrow" choice (FM-N) should only be chosen for areas and countries where 12.5 kHz channel spacing is in use, with ±2.5 kHz FM deviation.

*Menu setting for Icom IC-2730 transceiver allows **Operating Mode** choices of "**FM**" (±5 kHz max deviation) or "**FM-N**" (±2.5 kHz max deviation).*

Some FM transceivers have a variable microphone gain available through a menu setting. Depending on how quietly you speak and the distance that you hold the microphone from your mouth, the microphone gain may need adjustment from the default. Consult the transceiver's user manual for how to accomplish this. Check the result by monitoring your own transmissions on a separate radio or ask for a report over the air. Keep the microphone 1" - 2" from your lips and talk *across* the microphone opening rather than straight into it for best quality. (See: https://www.taitradioacademy.com/topic/microphone-manners-how-to-use-your-radio-microphone-1/)

Mobile transceivers usually have small, built-in loudspeakers mounted in the lid that can have their audio muffled by an obstructed path. For better quality, connect an external loudspeaker — as explained in "Speak-er out", *PCARA Update,* February 2026 pp 6-8.

Final hint — an inexpensive hand-held transceiver with a stubby, manufacturer-supplied antenna might be sufficient for working through a nearby repeater, but in our hilly area you probably need a better antenna or an external antenna, especially if you are also working simplex. Low power output from an HT could also be holding you back — you may need a more powerful

mobile transceiver running off a 12 volt vehicle battery or an external 12 V DC power supply.

Test equipment hints

Some test equipment such as volt/amp/ohmmeters, L-C-R meters, antenna analyzers, frequency counters, audio level meters, Kill A Watt etc. may only be used occasionally — but we expect these items to work perfectly when needed.

Very important: For test equipment with an internal battery, or batteries, check the state of the battery on a regular basis. Change the battery before it starts to leak or remove batteries altogether. This is especially important for "safety-of-life" test equipment such as a non-contact voltage tester (sometimes known as Fluke VoltAlert). Leave a Post-It® note attached to the tester to remind you to replace batteries before use.

Klein Tools non-contact voltage tester indicates the presence of AC voltage with a red light. Green light shows that the internal AAA batteries are operational.

For any test equipment with removable batteries — usually 9-volt, AA or AAA sizes — clean the battery terminals with a dab of Deoxit™ contact cleaner before inserting cells into the battery holder.

Check the battery or batteries in test equipment regularly. Clean battery terminals with Deoxit.

Hint 1: Analog volt-ohm meters such as a Simpson 260 may have *two* separate batteries for measuring high and low ohm ranges.

Hint 2: Attached test leads are always getting tangled up with other cables on the work bench. Roll up the test leads and insert them into the small cardboard tube from a roll of toilet paper.

Wrap up test leads in the cardboard tube from a roll of bathroom tissue

Hint 3: Be extra cautious with modern test equipment that contains a built-in lithium-ion battery. Charge the battery only when there is a responsible adult nearby to keep an eye on the process. Disconnect when fully charged. Switch off and remove to a safe location at any signs of a problem such as unusual odor, excessive heat, popping sounds, swelling or change in color. Only use lithium-ion batteries and chargers from a reliable vendor.

Some test equipment contains an internal lithium-ion battery.

Anything with a battery

Similar advice applies to *any* equipment that contains batteries including handi-talkies (HTs), portable receivers, remote controls, cameras, flashlights, wall clocks, weather stations etc. Check the state of the battery on a regular basis and/or remove batteries before they start to deteriorate. For equipment in an awkward location such as an outside weather sensor, consider use of expensive lithium AA-size batteries in place of alkaline cells for longer life. (See *PCARA Update*, September 2019, pp 13-16.) For frequently-used equipment, substitute nickel-metal hydride (NiMH) AA cells which are rechargeable.

- NM9J

DXtra coverage maps

The web site: https://dxtra.com/ made a number of improvements in April 2026. They include the addition of USA amateur repeater stations with computed Longley-Rice model coverage maps for three situations… HT (5W rubber duck antenna); Mobile (50W mag-mount antenna); Base station with Yagi (50W, 13dBi gain). There are similar coverage maps available for Public Safety radio, NOAA Weather Radio, TV and FM stations. Pay the site a visit and check out the coverage map for PCARA's W2NYW repeater. See: https://dxtra.com/repeaters.

Dr. Robert M. Schwartz W2AIO obituary - KD2ITZ

PCARA was recently informed that Dr. Robert M. Schwartz MD passed away last year. Not only was he a licensed amateur radio operator with the call sign **W2AIO**, he was a physician, a pilot, and a pillar of our community. Below is a short excerpt from his obituary that can be found at the Clark & Giordano Funeral Home Website. (https://www.clarkfh.com/obituaries/Robert-M-Schwartz?obId=42256413)

Dr. Robert Martin Schwartz, a dedicated pediatrician with over six decades of service, passed away on April 25th, 2025, at the age of 94. Born in 1931, Dr. Schwartz graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wesleyan University and earned his medical degree from the Albany Medical College of Union University in 1960. He proudly served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps from 1963 to 1965 supporting the Army's Missile Defense Command, based in Huntsville Alabama.

Dr. Schwartz joined Yorktown Pediatrics, where he was a partner in the practice from 1965 to 1998, offering compassionate care to children in Yorktown for over three decades. His commitment to the community made a profound impact, and his legacy lives on through the many families he cared for across generations.

Dr. Schwartz served as Director of Pediatrics at Northern Westchester Hospital in Mount Kisco, NY, from 1978 to 1983, and later became Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics, where he provided leadership, mentorship, and direction to the pediatric team. From 1997 to 2002, Dr. Schwartz worked at Columbia Presbyterian and St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospitals, contributing to pediatric teaching and shaping the careers of many aspiring doctors.

In addition to his work in medicine, Dr. Schwartz was an experienced pilot, taking to the skies on numerous occasions to fly from New York to his beloved Cape Cod, Nantucket, Montauk, and other picturesque destinations. His ratings included Private, Commercial, Instrument and Instrument Instructor certifications. His passion for aviation reflected his adventurous spirit and desire to explore life from new heights.

Dr. Schwartz's son Steve has very generously donated several fine pieces of equipment from the W2AIO station. This includes a Kenwood TS-870S HF transceiver and Kenwood TM-V7A FM transceiver. There are also numerous CW paddles and a Kenwood power supply. These items will be tested and offered for sale in the near future.

Kenwood TM-V7A dual-band mobile transceiver for 144 / 440 MHz as seen at April 18 PCARA Breakfast, Uncle Giuseppe's.

I would have enjoyed meeting this amazing individual. Not only do I share an interest in amateur radio, we have many coincidental overlaps in our professional careers. Please feel free to reach out to me with stories of any encounters you may have had with Bob W2AIO (SK)

- 73, Lou KD2ITZ

Spring Foxhunt reminder

Graphic courtesy of Lou KD2ITZ. See Spring Foxhunt rules on page 6.

Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association

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Archive: http://nm9j.com/pcara/newslett.htm

PCARA Information

PCARA is a **Non-Profit Community Service Organization**. PCARA meetings take place every month (apart from July/August break). See http://www.pcara.org for current details.

PCARA Repeaters

W2NYW: 146.67 MHz -0.6, PL 156.7Hz
KB2CQE: 449.925MHz -5.0, PL 179.9Hz
N2CBH: 448.725MHz -5.0, PL 107.2Hz

PCARA Calendar

Sat May 2: PCARA Breakfast, 9:00 a.m. Downing Park Pavilion, 2881 Crompond Rd, Yorktown Heights.
Sat May 2: PCARA Foxhunt, FDR State Park, Pool Parking Lot, 10:45 a.m. start time.
Sun May 3: PCARA club table at Orange County ARC Hamfest, see below.
Sat May 16: PCARA V.E. Test Session, 11:30 a.m., Putnam Valley Library, see below. (No monthly meeting, May 16).

Hamfests

Check with organizers before leaving.
Sun May 3: Orange County ARC Hamfest, Black Rock Fish & Game Club, 5 Pleasant Hill Rd., Mountainville, NY. 8:00 a.m. **PCARA Club Table**.
Sat May 16: S. Berkshire ARC Hamfest, Goshen Fairgrounds, 116 Old Middle St., Goshen CT. 8:00 a.m.
Sun May 31: Splitrock ARA Tailgate Hamfest, Hoseshoe Lake RecreationComplex, 72 Eyland Ave., Succasunna NJ. 8:00 a.m.

VE Test Sessions

Check with the contact before leaving.
May 3: Orange County ARC Hamfest, Mountainville NY. 9:00 a.m. Contact VE, w2bcc'at'arrl.net.
May 14: WECA, Westch Cnty Fire Trg Center, 4 Dana Rd Valhalla NY. 7:00 p.m. Contact VE, rcasino48'at'gmail.com.
May 15: Orange County ARC, Munger Cottage, 40 Munger Dr., Cornwall NY. Contact VE, w2bcc'at'arrl.net.
May 16: PCARA, 11:30 a.m., Putnam Valley Library, 30 Oscawana Lake Rd., Putnam Valley NY. Must contact VE Lou KD2ITZ, radiocassetta'at'gmail.com.

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