



PCARA Update



Volume 6, Issue 11

Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association Inc.

November 2005

Issue of the month

The December meeting and Annual PCARA Holiday Dinner will be held *At the Reef* on Sunday, December 4. Arrangements have been made by Ray W2CH and Marylyn KC2NKU. The cost of \$25.00 should be prepaid at the November meeting. Nominations for office (President, Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer) can also be made at the November meeting.

Thanks to Jim, W2JJG and Mike, N2EAB for organizing an excellent Foxhunt on October 15. You can read about who won later in this newsletter. Incidentally, the *PCARA Update* has been awarded ARRL Hudson Division's "Newsletter of the Month" and is now eligible for a possible "Newsletter of the Year" award.

As President, there are several things I would like to see in PCARA's future. If you are interested in this topic, come along to the next meeting and let's talk! Hope to see you at the November 6 meeting at 3:00 p.m. at Hudson Valley Hospital Center.

- 73 de Greg, KB2CQE

Newsletter award



ARRL Hudson Division

(From the Hudson Beacon newsletter--)"The ARRL Hudson Division web site has a new section entitled "Newsletter of the month" with an attached PDF file of a club newsletter. The October award goes to PCARA and Malcolm Pritchard, NM9J, the editor of the October 2005 issue of the "PCARA Update" newsletter. PCARA is Peekskill/Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association, Inc. and they have a snazzy monthly newsletter with many really good color pictures and cartoons. It's a great example of what a club can do with a little creativity, hard work and the use of PDF files for distribution."

TNX Frank, N2FF! You can see recent winners of "Newsletter of the month" at the Hudson Division's web site: <http://www.hudson.arrl.org/newsawd.htm>. Congratulations to all contributors who helped gain the

October award for the *PCARA Update*!

In September 2006 the Hudson Division will announce the winner for "Newsletter of the Year" from among the twelve monthly awards and the club editor of the issue with the most votes will be awarded a plaque for his/her "efforts at keeping the club and the division informed and entertained."

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Secretary/Treasurer:

Jim Grefig, W2JJG; w2jjg at arrl.net



Who are those shady characters, skulking in a secluded spot? It's the PCARA foxes, N2EAB and W2JJG! Details on page 6.

Adventures in DXing

– N2KZ

W1WW – A World of Wonder!

Amateur radio is a lot like fishing. When you send out your line of CQs, you really don't know what will bite. One September evening, I sent my "come quicks" out into the 30-meter ether and received a prompt reply. What a great call sign! W1WW. I thought this was a routine call from New England. Well, it certainly wasn't routine and it certainly wasn't from New England!

Sending code at the other end of the circuit sat George Felber, heralding from Rock Hill, South Carolina, just south of the city of Charlotte, North Carolina. In our second exchange, George sent me news about his local weather and followed with "BN HAM 72 YRS." I thought he made a mistake in his numbers. Maybe he meant 32 years? I replied saying I was a newcomer with only about 5 years experience, all devoted to CW, and my age was 51. George replied that his age is 87 and he's been operating since 1933! I just about fell off my chair! Could I be time traveling into the mid-fifties?

We had a wonderful conversation about CW, licensing, and keys. George had many, many interesting tales to tell. A member of the A-1 Operators Club and the Carolina DX Association, George is also active in the Quarter Century Wireless Association. You need to be licensed for 25 years to be eligible for membership. George almost qualifies three times over! His DXCC record is remarkable. George currently has 358 countries with 156 countries contacted on 30 meters alone. To make the experience complete, George's QSL arrived a few days later complete with a classic 5 cent amateur

radio commemorative stamp on his envelope. His QSL will be treasured for a long time.

Maori Fun

It was a dark and stormy Friday night drenched in relentless rain. As the clock struck 11:15, I began a journey to the other side of the world with my trusty Icom IC-T7H HT and a recycled 7-element Yagi antenna. Using the node chart seen at <http://www.irlp.net> as a reference, I sent my DTMF tones to the PCARA repeater on 449.925 MHz and opened a doorway to adventure. At random, I picked node 6931 ZL2VH in Upper Hutt, New Zealand near Wellington. The Voice-Over-Internet connection worked instantly and sud-



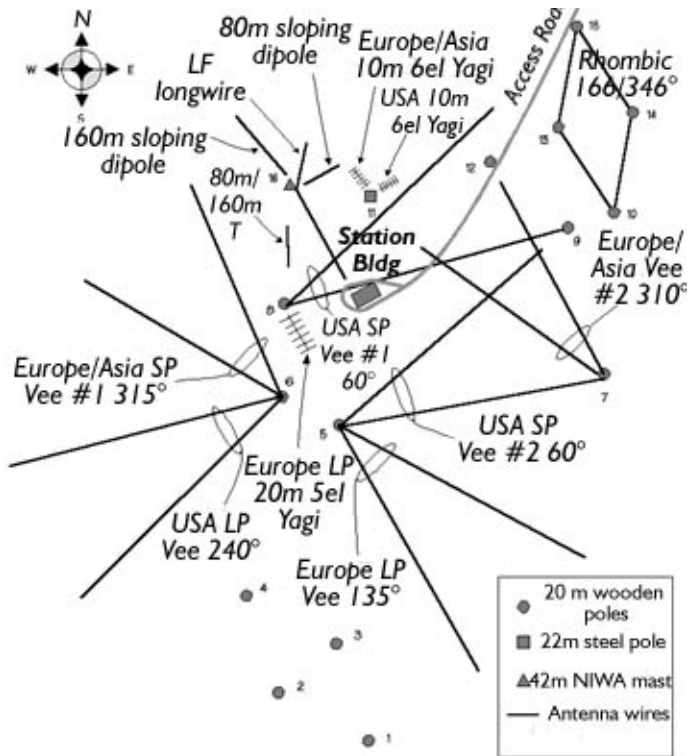
"Aerial" view of Quartz Hill, home of ZL6QH.

denly I was chatting with Rich, ZL2TCU. This IRLP node is owned and operated by the Wellington Amateur Radio Club, (<http://www.zl6qh.com>) an amateur radio club just like the PCARA. I listened with fascination as Rich told me all about his club and their amazing DX facility known to DXers worldwide as ZL6QH.

WARC was blessed in 1997. Shortwave broadcaster Radio New Zealand International was discontinuing use of their extensive monitoring station on Quartz Hill. Through a series of events, the radio club obtained a lease to restore, maintain and operate this amazing facility. The WARC membership worked long and hard to convert the old RNZI station into an amateur radio dream. You have never seen an antenna farm like this! You'll find six expansive V-beam antennas, a longwire for 160 meters, a T for 80 and 160 meters, huge Yagis for 10 meters and 6 meters and a monster Rhombic as icing on the cake. The location is remarkable: a 240-acre flat meadow in a remote region far away from man made noise. On idle frequencies, their signal strength meters often show a true zero. Imagine a world where background noise is non-existent! ZL6QH is always the first to be heard and the last to fade during an opening. It is a remarkable



W1WW QSL card arrived with a classic Amateur Radio stamp from 1964.



Quartz Hill amateur radio station antenna farm, near Wellington, New Zealand. Based on drawing by Brian Miller, ZL1AZE. "SP"= short path, "LP"= long path. 20m = 65 ft, 22m = 72 ft, 42m= 138 ft.

station in a remarkable place. You can visit the land of the Maori right now! Sign on to our 449.925 repeater and identify yourself. Transmit 6931 through your transceiver's keypad and away you'll go! When you are all done, send 73 via your keypad and the link will close. It's that easy! And remember, bring me back a kiwi!

You're In Good Hands!

Recently PCARA member Mike, N2EAB, sold me a Small Wonder Labs kit for a SW+40 40-meter QRP transceiver. This unit is extremely compact, weighing in at just a few ounces and it fits in the palm of your hand. I had already enjoyed operating with its 80-meter counterpart, the SW+80, and was eager to try the 40-meter version. I'm not quite ready to give this rig a complete review, (I'm only about half done!) but a few initial observations are worthy of note.

This is not a beginner's do-it-yourself kit. The instructions are clear and straightforward, but the assumption is made that you have worked on many kits before this one. You must think! Instead of the Heathkit approach of writing a couple of lines of type to describe the installation of each and every component, designer Dave Benson (K1SWL) shows a small pictorial and says: Install these parts! To some, this may be a bold approach. I had no problem with it whatsoever. My digital multimeter has been quite helpful verifying resistor value colors and diode polarity. You just need to be v-e-

r-y careful!

I don't think there is another project on this planet that has more documentation available than the SW+40. I have filled an entire CD disk along with some hardcopy printouts of my Internet finds all about this QRP kit. It is a seasoned classic! It's very interesting to see how several different people approached building this kit. I learned a lot from all of them.

Probably the finest asset of the SW+40 is its creator. Dave Benson should give seminars teaching his methods of customer service. In the middle of building the circuit board, I discovered I was missing a toroid core. I wrote a quick e-mail to Dave asking if I could buy one and also asked about an optional heat sink for the output device. He returned my e-mail nearly immediately with a warm timbre of fraternity and interest. I feel like I have discovered a new good friend! In a couple of days, I received a little padded envelope in the mail with the core and the heat sink at no charge. My experience has been echoed by many other hams commenting all across the Internet. You are in good hands with Dave. Regardless of your expertise, he will insure building your SWL kit will result in a fine rig you will enjoy for years.



Small Wonder Labs SW+ 40 meter CW transceiver kit, complete with currently-discontinued enclosure kit.

You have to be amazed that all these little parts work together with such grace and style (and tiny current drain!) The SW+40 emits a really sweet CW note at about 2 watts output. It features full QSK and a

three-crystal filter section. It does not include a keyer, but I prefer straight keys, so this is perfect for me. (There is plenty of room inside the case to add a keyer board and other mods when you are done building the basic rig.) I can't wait to complete my kit! I'll report back next month with a progress report and full review of the rig. Look for all the details about the SW+40 at <http://www.smallwonderlabs.com>.

A Stealth Lurks In NYC

Have you seen cellular towers disguised as bad renditions of trees?

How about communications antennas pretending to be light poles? I have discovered a really interesting fiberglass stick antenna neatly mounted at the top of what appears to be a light pole in midtown Manhattan. My best guess is that it is a typical multi-radiator array encased in fiberglass for VHF or UHF communications. The antenna is right near a workstation for the New York City Subway system, so maybe it serves as a repeater antenna. The antenna was manufactured by Shakespeare, known



Cell-phone tree.

primarily for its military and marine antennas.

Shakespeare also offers a full line of fishing tackle along with utility poles and railings! A query to Shakespeare resulted in no further clues to its identity. Without a model number, they would be just guessing they told me. I tried to capture the details of the antenna's ID label with my digital camera, but I need a better telephoto lens! I really admired the craftsmanship of this antenna design. It fit seamlessly into the urban landscape. Only someone with trained eagle eyes would ever reveal its true identity! Look for it on 53rd Street between 6th and 7th Avenue on the south side of the street!



Stealth antenna discovered by N2KZ on 53rd Street in New York City.

It's high and in the 70s!

Traveling to New York City? A new, powerful

repeater has just returned to the air. The Broadcast Center Amateur Radio Society operates NY2TV/R located on the 65 story Viacom building in the heart of Times Square. This 70cm powerhouse can be accessed by anyone using a 445.075 MHZ output / 440.075 MHZ input using a 114.8 Hertz PL encode. The repeater offers phenomenal coverage, serves the entire New York City metropolitan area and is open for all to use. This repeater was originally established by PCARA member Bob N2CBH. NY2TV/R shares the same utility room and structure used by WCBS-FM for their auxiliary transmitter site. It's dozens of stories high above MTV's panoramic windowed studios. The view is spectacular, giving you the experience of flying over Times Square without sprouting wings! It is quite possible to hit this repeater from many locations in Westchester. Try it out today!

Calling outer space!

Looking for a new way to impress your extraterrestrial friends? Headed for a Coast-to-Coast AM convention? Delphi offers a new solution to receive messages from the satellites above! Everyone needs a set of

headphones incorporating an S-Band satellite antenna. Now Delphi, the leading designer and manufacturer of XM satellite radios, answers your dreams. If you've had spotty reception with your MyFi or Roady2 receiver, you can now purchase a set of "cans" that incorporates a mini-mouse satellite antenna in the headband. You'll enjoy the best possible reception of XM Radio and you'll continue to be well connected! And when the space-ships finally land, you will fit right in. Tell them Art Bell (W6OBB) sent you!



Delphi headphones set for XM Radio features satellite antenna built-in the headband.

Catching Carolina

October 2nd was a DTV day to remember. Potent tropospheric skip sent me about 340 miles down the eastern seaboard. Around 9:30 pm, I scanned my set top box and came up with two new stations: WPXV, a Pax affiliate, and WHRO, a PBS outlet. Broadcasting from the Virginia / North Carolina border near Portsmouth and Virginia Beach, both stations offered four virtual channels apiece. WHRO DT15 sends their HD signal on virtual channel 16-1, a digital rendition of their analog feed on 16-2, WHROU (PBS You network)

on 16-3, and WHRO Kid (PBS Kids) on 16-4. Look for their translucent logo in the upper left hand corner of the screen. WPXV DT16 also transmits four virtuals similar to most Pax outlets across the country. You'll see WPXV come up on your display as channels 49-1 through 4 referring to their analog signal. To see crystal-clear perfect pictures from hundreds of miles away is miraculous and magical! Keep your eyes on nationwide weather maps. When tropical storms bring huge, dense moisture paths up along the east coast, VHF and UHF reception will open wide and you will see amazing things. Point you antenna southbound and keep scanning! My best UHF TV analog reception has been from South Carolina, so there are still a few DTV DX challenges to be met! My next stop is North Carolina! Stay tuned!

Fly the Carpet

Ready for a carpet ride? The winter equinox is arriving soon and medium wave reception is reaching peak conditions. A wonderful indicator of greyline reception deep into the Middle East is a mammoth broadcaster from Saudi Arabia. With two solid megawatts from the city of Duba on the shores of the Red Sea, The Broadcasting Service of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (BSKSA) sends out signals to the world on 1521 kHz. It's known as "The Call of Islam" in Arabic with long segments of traditional chanting. It's hard to miss!



Tune to 1520 kHz any day between 4:00 pm and 5:30 pm EST. If you start hearing a 1,000 cycle tone floating over WWKB Buffalo and/or WTHE from Mineola, Long Island the sounds of Arabia are about to arrive. The Saudis broadcast on a channel which fits the 9 kHz band plan used in Europe and the Middle East. American DXers refer to this kind of offset channel as a "split." The combination of the American broadcasts on 1520 and Saudi Arabia on 1521 creates an often powerful one kilohertz heterodyne to your speakers that sound like a relentless test tone. With good filtering and good luck, you should be able to hear chanting and low key talking in Arabic. You'll have a fine catch, indeed! If you can't pull through their broadcasts over the air, try their Internet audio feed at: <http://www.saudiradio.net/radio-ch1.php?id=2>

Until next month, have a very Happy Thanksgiving! 73 de The Old Goat, N2KZ – Karl. dit dit



Holiday Dinner

PCARA's annual holiday dinner will take place at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday December 4 At The Reef restaurant. Ray W2CH and Marylyn KC2NKU have been busy making arrangements and they have sent the following menu choices.



MENU

Tossed green salad

Choice of entrées:

Prime Ribs of Beef

Chicken Cordon Bleu

Boneless Breast of Chicken Marsala

Broiled Stuffed Filet of Sole

Broiled Filet of Salmon

All entrées include: Baked Potato, Vegetable, Coffee, Tea and Cake of the Day.

Final total is \$25.00 per person, not including drinks. If you would like to attend the PCARA Holiday Dinner, prepayment is requested at the November 6 meeting, or you can contact Ray, W2CH, e-mail: W2CH 'at' arrl.net.



At the Reef restaurant is located on Route 9 at Annsville Circle, in Cortlandt Manor. The circle lies at the junction of Routes 6, 9 and 202, near Peekskill.

Foxhunt - the British are coming

PCARA's fall foxhunt took place on October 15, 2005. Rain had been pouring down for the past week, but Saturday was dry and the sun's rays were beaming across the Beach Shopping Center as hunters gathered. At 3:00 p.m. the sound of Jim, W2JJG's voice filled the airwaves on 146.565 MHz and the hunt was on.



Ray W2CH and Marylyn KC2NKKU prepare for the Fall Foxhunt in the Beach Shopping Centre car park.

First bearings from the Beach indicated a westerly direction – this was unusual because previous foxhunts have usually headed east. The signal was quite strong – indicating somewhere close or somewhere high. The rules set a limit of 5 miles from the starting point so there was the intriguing possibility that our foxes were located on the west bank of the Hudson...

Your editor set off through Peekskill to Riverfront Green while Ray W2CH and Marylyn KC2NKKU headed north toward Bear Mountain Circle. The plan was to see where the next heading came from – if the direction was still west then the foxes really were across the river.

It took two transmissions from the fox to reach the river front, but the strong signal was not coming from across the river – the direction was now southwest,



View from China Pier car park at Charles Point, Peekskill.

down the east bank of the Hudson. By the time of the next transmission NM9J had reached China Pier at Charles Point and the source had swung further round toward south. There are several businesses with car parks along nearby John Walsh Boulevard that needed investigation, but none of the vehicles looked familiar, and there was no sign of unusual antennas. Another unusual feature was the lack of any other hunters in the vicinity.

By the 3:40 p.m. transmission your editor had reached Lents Cove Park in Buchanan. By now, signals on 146.565 MHz were extremely strong and it was time to switch to the 440 MHz antenna, listening for the fox's harmonic on 439.695 MHz. Looking around the car park, there was no familiar vehicle visible, so I set off over a little knoll in the direction indicated by the 440 antenna. On the other side, close to shore, I found Jim W2JJG and Mike N2EAB operating from a collapsible table with a 3-element Yagi beamed at Peekskill.



The British are coming! Malcolm, NM9J/G3VNQ approaches the foxes.



Jim W2JJG and Mike N2EAB had set up their fox station in a secluded corner of Lents Cove, Buchanan.

This sheltered location had been put to good use by British on the hunt in historic times. On March 22 1777, in the Revolutionary war, British forces landed at Lents Cove and attacked Peekskill. Later that year, in September the British landed a force at Peekskill, then burned barracks and stores. Today, Lents Cove is a more peaceful place, with a launch ramp for



Buchanan residents and, across the water, Crystal Bay Caterers, which is housed in the old Fleischmann's Gin building. Views across the Hudson from the shore of the Cove are quite spectacular.

By 4:30 p.m. no other hunters had arrived so W2JJG announced the end of the event and the location of the post-hunt gathering — at the NY Firehouse Grille, on Welcher Avenue in Peekskill. There we met up with Ray and Marylyn again. They had first diverted north in case the fox really was across the water, but after checking out the area they had headed down-river as the fox's direction became clearer.



Reminder of al fresco operating during Field Day 2005.



Jim W2JJG (L) and Mike N2EAB (R) present certificates.

Certificates were presented to first and second place teams, then the event finished with an excellent meal and a discussion of hunting techniques.

According to the rules, the next foxhunt in 2006 will provide a second opportunity to track down Malcolm, NM9J. See you then!

- de NM9J

Field Day results

Full results of Field Day 2004 appeared on the ARRL members-only web pages in mid-October. See <http://www.arrl.org/members-only/contests/results/2005/FD/>. Additional dupe-checking caused a small downward adjustment to the preliminary PCARA score reported in the July newsletter:

Peekskill/Cortlandt ARA, W2NYW

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
QSOs:	450	718	733	968	853
Power			2 (<150W)		
Participants:	16	15	11	12	10
Total score:	1,540	2,096	2,328	2,996	2,798

Publication of the complete results allows a comparison of our score with the efforts of neighboring groups in the ENY section and Hudson Division. Overall PCARA's position was very similar to 2004.

In Field Day 2005, PCARA was...

- **Second** out of 4 entries in Category 2A, ENY section.
- **Eleventh** out of 25 entries in the entire ENY section.
- **Seventh** out of 18 in Category 2A, Hudson Division.
- **29th** out of 97 in the entire Hudson Division.
- **174th** out of 454 in category 2A nationwide.
- **611th** out of 2206 entries total.

Here's how PCARA fared in comparison with some of our friends and neighbors in East New York section:

#	Call	Points	Cat	QSOs	Club
1	W2MU	11122	5A	3488	Hudson Valley
2	AE2F	8304	4A	2686	WECA
5	K2AE	4596	5A	1322	Schenectady
6	K2QS	4218	3A	1165	QSY Society
8	W2YRC	3470	3A	947	Yonkers ARC
9	K2PUT	3116	2A	742	P.E.A.R.L.
10	W2HO	3104	5A	908	Orange County
11	W2NYW	2798	2A	853	PCARA
12	W2RZS	2568	2D	702	RZS ARC
15	WA2GUG	1858	3A	313	RECWA
17	K3TSA	1532	2A	308	Tri-State ARA

Compared with 2004, our position in the ENY table slipped from 8th to 11th. A few hundred points would have pushed PCARA up several places. Closer examination of the results shows that WECA, Yonkers and P.E.A.R.L. all had "Get on the Air" (GOTA) stations for Novices and Technicians operating HF that contributed more QSOs and possible bonus points. ARRL reports that one in three class A & F stations had a GOTA contribution. In addition, one half of all stations claimed the new "Youth Participation" bonus for involving youngsters aged 18 or below in making QSOs. PCARA needs more youngsters – especially for Field Day!

– NM9J



Recharge for fall

It's that time of year again... the last Sunday in October (October 30, 2005) when we say goodbye to Daylight Saving Time, move the clocks back one hour and prepare for five months of dark evenings.

It's also the time of year to check your smoke detectors and change the batteries if necessary. Don't forget the carbon monoxide detector, which is keeping an eye on the air quality — if your home has one.

In past issues of *PCARA Update*, I've suggested that clock-change time also provides an opportunity to check the batteries in other appliances around the home. In our increasingly digital lives, there is no shortage of battery-powered devices. The list includes flashlights, handi-talkies, cell phones, wireless phones, cameras, remote controls, notebook PCs, PDAs and iPods.

It really is a mistake to ignore battery-powered appliances that are only used occasionally. Zinc-carbon and alkali batteries can corrode through if left too long, and the chemicals inside will leak out and attack the battery contacts plus any nearby circuitry.



When good batteries go bad... heavily corroded AA cells.

Recharge time

If you're like me, you've probably replaced your nickel-cadmium batteries with nickel metal hydride types, for more milliampere-hours and lower toxicity. NiMH batteries can replace most NiCd applications, with the advantage that you can also use the same charger as before. My own experience is that the higher expense of NiMH batteries compared to NiCd is a small price to pay for the higher electrical capacity and longer life.



Don't forget to charge up your spare nickel cadmium and nickel metal hydride batteries.

But NiMH and NiCd batteries still discharge themselves over time, so it does no harm to check the state of the batteries in your seldom-used radios — and recharge if necessary. Don't forget those standby batteries that are stored in the drawer... they are discharging as well.

Let's recharge everything at the end of October. Be sure to use a 'smart-charger' that will cut out when the battery is fully charged.

Latest lithium

While you and I have been getting comfortable with nickel metal hydride batteries, another type has come along — and that's lithium ion. Li-ion batteries have been popular in notebook PCs for several years, and are also featured in modern handi-talkies. Lithium-ion batteries are light-weight and store a surprising amount of energy for their small size. Disadvantages include the need to be recharged carefully and a tendency to burst into smoke and flame if abused. (No kidding!)

Lithium-ion batteries have special electronics to control the recharging. Unfortunately, the circuits can sometimes get confused, and you can end up with a battery that cannot be charged or a battery that charges forever. The answer (from my own experience) is to discharge the Li-ion battery, followed by an immediate full recharge.

The only problem is — how do you safely discharge a Li-ion battery? You certainly should not place a short circuit across the battery terminals. The gentlest way to carry out the discharging task is to drain the battery in the equipment it was designed for. If you have a notebook PC, switch it on without any AC power connection and set the screen to maximum brightness. Start some



Compaq lithium ion notebook battery has its own circuitry to indicate state of charge and regulate charging current.

task that will continually exercise the hard drive or the CD-ROM drive... for example carry out a lengthy virus scan or play a CD or DVD. You may need to turn off the computer's screen saver and adjust the power saving. As soon as the computer shuts itself down for lack of voltage, it's time to recharge the battery.

If you have a modern handi-talkie with a Li-ion battery, you'll probably find that it takes a very long time to drain. That's because the receiver may only monitor the channel for short periods of time while no carrier is present, and there may even be a battery saver that switches everything off after an hour or so. Try opening the squelch so the receiver is constantly producing white noise, then leave the receiver in this state until the battery is drained. (In the interest of good family relations, I'd recommend placing the radio

well out of earshot for this step.) As soon as the radio stops working because of low battery voltage, start the recharging procedure.

Back in time

From the modern lithium-ion battery of today, let us step back in time to the year 1881 when the lead acid accumulator was first developed. This design was based on lead electrodes immersed in diluted sulfuric acid. Lead acid batteries have

provided a rugged way to store electricity ever since, and are still going strong today. They can be found in all sorts of places, from the large battery stacks that keep telephone switches operating in power emergencies down to the diminutive UPS that keeps your PC running long enough to shut down gracefully when the power dies. If you take good care of a lead acid battery, it can last for decades... and this applies to older-style batteries with openings to top up the cells as well as to more modern sealed units and unspillable gel-cells.

Lead acid batteries should be recharged before they discharge completely. They should never be completely drained. A discharged battery is likely to suffer "sulfation", in which the lead electrodes react with sulfuric acid in the electrolyte and become covered with insoluble, non-conducting lead sulfate crystals. Sulfation destroys the battery, making it unable to hold a charge.

Lead acid batteries can be recharged rapidly or slowly. If you recharge rapidly, using a high voltage, you must take care to stop as soon as the battery is fully charged. Leaving a fast charger's high voltage connected to a battery will destroy it – unless the charger switches automatically to a trickle charge.

Lead acid batteries will last the longest time when kept fully charged. Remember this when you put away your gel-cell after Field Day. Recharge the battery before you store it away. If you store the equipment for more than 12 months, check the voltage from time to time to see if the battery needs a top-up.

Take good care of your rechargeable batteries and they'll be ready for work when you next need them.



You can drain the battery of a handi-talkie like this Kenwood TH-F6 by opening the squelch.

More on DTV

If you have been following the articles by Karl, N2KZ on HDTV reception, you will recall that October's issue mentioned the Radio Shack Accurian 16-3499 external receiver for over-the-air digital TV.

Monitoring of UHF digital TV signals over the past month by Ray, W2CH and myself has revealed that signal levels from the New York City stations can vary significantly. Some of the variation is caused by improvements and accidents at the transmitter sites, and the remainder is caused by variations in propagation -- which at UHF is heavily weather dependent.

I found out that the signal varies with time-of-day and with the passage of high/low pressure fronts, but it also varies with high wind, as the nearby trees wave around, producing reflections and nulls.

You and I — or our fathers — found out about these problems 20 years ago when conventional analog broadcasts on UHF proved equally troublesome over long, hilly paths. The answer then was to give up adjusting giant antennas on the roof-top and switch to cable. A welcome side effect was that as the neighbors also changed to cable, TVI complaints declined.

Unfortunately, the Accurian set top box is only equipped to receive 8VSB (8-level vestigial sideband) over-the-air digital television broadcasts and cannot pick up the QAM (quadrature amplitude modulation) employed by the cable companies for its more efficient performance over the better-controlled environment of a 75 ohm coaxial cable.

Good news — in our Peekskill/Cortlandt area, HDTV broadcast signals are also available unscrambled over Cablevision's "Ossining Westchester North" cable TV service. You will need a digital-cable-ready TV set or an external DTV tuner capable of QAM (e.g. Samsung SIR-451) and you should be able to pick up several unscrambled QAM channels.

A recent check on KB2CQE's 'built-in DCR' (digital-cable ready) TV reveals 170 digital channels, with 18 available for viewing without an external decoder. HDTV (1080 line) and DTV (480 line) stations from the NYC area appeared on the following digital channels:

HDTV (1080)		DTV (480)	
702	CBS HDTV	94-29	CBS
704	NBC HDTV	94-30	NBC
705	FOX HDTV	94-31	Fox etc. to 94-37
707	ABC HD	107	WABC+
711	WB HD	131	Kids Thirteen
713	Thirteen HD	132	Thirteen World
721	WLIW digital	133	WLIW Create

If you wanted to watch other digital TV channels offered by Cablevision, you would need a digital cable box or 'CableCARD' TV.

- NM9J

- 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

Sun Nov 6: PCARA Nov meeting, HVHC, 3:00 p.m.

Sun Dec 4: PCARA Holiday meal, elections, *At the Reef*.

Hamfests

Sun Jan 8: Ham Radio University/Section Convention, Briarcliffe College, 1055 Stewart Avenue, Bethpage NY, 8:00 a.m.

VE Test Sessions

Nov 6: Yonkers ARC, Yonkers PD, 1st Precinct, E Grassy Sprain Rd, 8:30 a.m. Contact D. Calabrese, 914 667-0587.

Nov 14: Split Rock ARA, Hopatcong HS, Rm C-1, Hopatcong, NJ. 7:00 p.m. Contact Sid Markowitz (973) 724-2378.

Nov 18: Bergen ARA, Westwood Regional HS, 701 Ridgewood Rd, Wash Twnshp NJ. 7:00 p.m. Contact Donald C Younger, (201) 265-6583.

Nov 21: Columbia Univ ARC, Watson Labs, 612 W 115th St. New York, 6:30 p.m. Alan Crosswell, 212 854-3754.



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