



PCARA Update



Volume 11, Issue 11 Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association Inc. November 2010

Seasonal snippets

The PCARA Holiday Dinner will take place on the evening of December 5, 2010 at 5:00 pm, at *At the Reef* on Annsville Circle in Cortlandt Manor. Be sure to clear your social calendar for that date! **All are welcome** — family and friends, hams and non-hams, spouses and significant others. Please consider joining us, to enjoy each other's company and revel in the spirit of the season.

Another annual tradition at this time of year are the nominations for President, Vice-President, and Secretary/Treasurer which, are due at the November meeting. Please be sure to bring your nominations with you, and remember that we could really use a volunteer for the position of Secretary/Treasurer!

Last weekend we carried out a pre-winter inspection of the KB2CQE repeater "up on the hill." The Diamond antenna seems to have suffered some bending of its radials and the old antenna on the tower now has something snake-like wrapped around it. Despite this, all seems good for the duration on 449.925 MHz.

Remember that our next meeting is on November 7, 2010 at Hudson Valley Hospital Center. I look forward to seeing each of you there.

- 73 de Greg, KB2CQE

Scary fall

Publication of this issue of the *PCARA Update* falls on the same date as "All Hallows Eve" or Halloween. Your editor sees a strange reflection in a festival for the smallest members of the community that combines witchcraft and extortion in equal measure. Perhaps there is some connection with election day falling in the same week.

Only a few days later, it will be time to "fall back." Daylight Saving Time ends on Sunday November 7 at 2:00 a.m. in the United States, just one week behind the end of the European version of Daylight Saving Time.

Don't forget to move your own clocks back on Sunday, or you may arrive at the wrong time for the PCARA meeting!

PCARA Officers

President:

Greg Appleyard, KB2CQE, kb2cqe at arrl.net

Vice President:

Joe Calabrese, WA2MCR; wa2mcr at arrl.net

Net night

Peekskill/Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association holds a weekly net on the 146.67 MHz W2NYW repeater on Thursdays at 8:00 p.m. Join net control Karl, N2KZ for neighborly news and technical topics.

Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Seasonal snippets - KB2CQE | 1 |
| Scary fall | 1 |
| Adventures in DXing - N2KZ | 2 |
| IC-2800H - a late review - NM9J | 4 |
| Face up to Facebook - N2KZ | 6 |
| Grundig G4 review - W2CH | 6 |



Greg, KB2CQE adds a new label to the 449.925 MHz repeater on a recent maintenance visit to the site.

Adventures in DXing

– N2KZ

On The Air!

After being an amateur for eleven years, I have finally invested some time and effort into VHF mobile operation. I recently installed a power cord directly connected to my car battery (so I don't have to worry about keeping my batteries charged) and a large efficient two meter antenna. I'm spending a lot more time on the air to and from work. Considerable exposure to two meter FM has been an eye opener!



The N2KZ mobile installation features a huge Hustler CGT-144 antenna. [Picture: N2KZ]

Two meters has three main day parts: Morning and evening drive time for informal chats and mid-evening nets. Other times are often quite silent and deserted. Many repeaters have regular crowds that arrive and leave like clockwork. The award for most active repeater goes to the LIMARC machine on 146.85 MHz. If you don't hear anyone, give a call. You'll almost always get a reply. The LIMARC repeater site is high atop the very tall North Shore Towers apartment building in Eastern Queens. LIMARC holds super-repeater status, along with Westchester's PEARL (145.13) and WECA (147.06) machines, covering large portions of the New York City metro area and beyond.

Another world awaits on the national two meter simplex calling frequency at 146.52 MHz. Along with myself, three hams are regulars here: KB1RXA, Chris in Ridgefield, CT, N1XYE, Bill in Milford, CT and W2NCH, 'Big Al' in Manasquan, NJ. Many, many other hams drop by from day to day. Another group is active on 146.58 MHz based in central Fairfield County, Connecticut. It's fascinating to see just how far your signal can travel from point-to-point on two meters! My best

simplex catches have reached deep into central Pennsylvania. Give simplex a try! There are some great contacts waiting for you!

Be an Ambassador

Amateur radio can be lots of fun but you always have to remember that you are on the air! You are not just talking to your friend across town or a great DX catch around the world. Lots of other people may be listening in! It is so important to keep in mind! Back in 1928, Paul Segal, W9EEA, wrote The Amateur's Code. These are great words to live by!

The Radio Amateur is: CONSIDERATE... never knowingly operates in such a way as to lessen the pleasure of others. LOYAL... offers loyalty, encouragement and support to other amateurs, local clubs and the American Radio Relay League, through which Amateur Radio in the United States is represented nationally and internationally. PROGRESSIVE... with knowledge abreast of science, a well-built and efficient station and operation above reproach. FRIENDLY... slow and patient operating when requested; friendly advice and counsel to the beginner; kindly assistance, cooperation and consideration for the interests of others. These are the hallmarks of the amateur spirit. BALANCED... radio is an avocation, never interfering with duties owed to family, job, school, or community. PATRIOTIC... station and skill always ready for service to country and community.

Just like the world of e-mail, say only things that you wouldn't regret seeing on the front page of The New York Times! More than anything, be a good ambassador for the hobby! Welcome newcomers, be helpful and thoughtful and have a great time.

Old FM New Again

Dust off your really old wideband FM receivers and wideband scanners! Broadcasting from The



The Armstrong tower in Alpine, NJ will host a commemoration of the birth of FM broadcasting.

Armstrong Tower in Alpine, New Jersey, WA2XMN will be back on the air Saturday, November 6 starting at noon on 42.8 MHz in the original FM broadcasting band. A beautifully recreated 250 watt Phasitron transmitter will be on the air to commemorate the 75th anniversary of FM Broadcasting. Previous broadcasts have been heard at a distance of 100 miles and more. You will be able to hear WA2XMN on a regular narrowband scanner with reduced fidelity. Give it a try! Complete information and pictures can be seen at: <http://www.wa2xmnm.ar88.net/>.

Up In the Air

The sophomore flight of the Iowa High Altitude Balloon was another amazing success. Released from Ottumwa, Iowa, iHAB II flew for over four hours on Saturday, October 2, and rose to a height of 87,100 feet before falling back to Earth. On board was a 1.6 watt CW beacon on 20 meters heard all over North America and even in Germany, Scotland and New Zealand. Amazing pictures and videos and full details can be found at: <http://www.ihabproject.com/>.

I tracked the balloon's 20 meter beacon from about ten minutes after launch through touchdown. I have convinced myself that I heard the mini-transmit-



Panorama shot from IHAB II

ter until the end when volunteer trackers turned it off. It abruptly went silent around 2:15 pm Eastern. One fascinating point: The beacon seemed strongest at a height of 30 to 40 thousand feet. I wish I knew why this was so! Live reception reports posted on qrpspots.com, combined with APRS data from the spacecraft at <http://aprs.fi>, transformed many ham shacks into comprehensive tracking stations for iHAB II. What a great event! Another launch is being planned in the next few months.

Video Radio

Most shortwave listeners have heard of Digital Radio Mondiale, the digital radio system adopted by leading worldwide broadcasters such as the BBC World Service and DeutscheWelle. When signals are clear and strong, DRM can provide crystal-clear multi-channel audio and on-screen text information to receivers thousands of miles away. A new DRM feature was unveiled at a technical conference in Amsterdam in The Netherlands last month demonstrating transmission of MPEG-4 video over the same system. Using a



Diveemo receiver for DRM-TV.

special 'UniWave' receiver, DRM can now transport 176 by 144 pixel, 8 frames per second, TV programming using medium wave, shortwave or VHF/UHF radio transmissions. 'Diveemo' has already been successfully broadcast by the BBC on medium wave, seen all over Europe on battery operated handheld receivers.

Can You Tattoo?

Some people will do anything for attention – and money. Back in 2000, radio station KORB, serving the Moline/Davenport/Rock Island market in Iowa, claimed it would pay \$100,000 to anyone brave enough to tattoo KORB's logo on their forehead. David Winkleman, and his stepson Richard, took the challenge seriously and became walking billboards. Of course, the station balked when they saw these two saying it was just a joke. Even worse, the station has now adopted a new callsign, KQCS, and a new format – adult contemporary light rock.

Winkleman sued the station claiming that the station sought to have listeners permanently marked so that they "could be publicly scorned and ridiculed for their greed and lack of common good sense." The case was dismissed when Winkleman did not show up for hearings. Ten years later, he still has the tattoo!

Goodbye, Sweden

Saturday, October 30th, will be the last day that Radio Sweden will be heard on shortwave and mediumwave. Broadcasts began on December 10, 1939 and were heard for generations of radio listeners. When I first started to listen to shortwave in 1965, Radio Sweden was always a welcome logging. Shortwave expert George Wood



was a regular in my headphones with his ‘Sweden Calling DXers’ originated by Arne Skoog back in 1949. All of Europe and beyond will hear silence on 1179 kHz where Radio Sweden’s half-megawatt transmitter has resided forever. Although they are leaving the air, Radio Sweden will continue via daily free podcasts. You’ll now find them only via iTunes and at <http://sverigesradio.se/rs/english/>.

Remember!

Watch our new PCARA Facebook page for the latest news and conversation regarding our club and all of amateur radio. Listen and join in to The Old Goats Net on Thursday nights at 8 pm on the PCARA repeater at 146.67 MHz. Have a great month!



- 73 de N2KZ, The Old Goat.

IC-2800H - a late review

Have you seen the price of dual band VHF/UHF FM mobile radios recently? I’ve been keeping an eye on available models with two band-simultaneous receive, and the prices are quite high...

| | |
|------------------|-------|
| Alinco DR-365T | \$389 |
| Icom IC-2820H | \$629 |
| Kenwood TM-V71A | \$389 |
| Kenwood TM-D710A | \$589 |
| Yaesu FT-8800R | \$399 |
| Yaesu FTM-350R | \$579 |

I’ve tried most of these brands over the years... some models certainly had their problems. Alincos are no-frills radios — my Alinco DR-610TQ ran warm, and left its fan on continuously after transmitting. The Yaesu FT-7100M would lock up after a short time, while my FT-8000 keeps popping RF stage GASFETs and runs down its lithium battery. The Kenwood TM-V71A has scratchy noises in the left-side receiver. The one brand I’ve had the least trouble with over the years is Icom — see the *PCARA Update* for May 2003 for a positive review of the IC-2720H. Unfortunately, Icom’s current model, the IC-2820H is *very* expensive.

With all this in mind, I was wandering around the aisles at the BARA Hamfest in October when — two strides away from Ray and Marylyn’s table — I spotted an Icom IC-2800H. The IC-2800 was a dual band VHF/UHF radio that went on-sale in 1999 for \$569. The most memorable feature of this radio is the large, color display on the separate control head.

Nowadays high resolution color displays are everywhere — on cell phones, cameras, iPods, GPS

navigators and even on Internet radios. But in 1999, a bright, backlit color LCD display was very unusual — and for added versatility, Icom allowed the panel to work as a composite video monitor.

After a little negotiation, the transceiver came home with me from the BARA Hamfest. I plugged it in with a certain

amount of trepidation — I’ve purchased hamfest bargains in the past that had major problems when tested in the shack. But this time, everything worked fine, with the radio transmitting and receiving well on both bands. One reason for picking the IC-2800 was its excellent immunity from cross-modulation. The following figures for two tone 3rd order IMD dynamic range at 10MHz separation are taken from recent *QST* reviews of dual-band radios:

| Transceiver | IMD at 146 MHz | IMD at 440 MHz |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Yaesu FT-8800R | 94dB | 79dB |
| Icom IC-2800 | 88dB | 74dB |
| Icom IC-2820H | 84dB | 80dB |
| Alinco DR-365T | 78dB | 68dB |
| Kenwood TM-V71A | 78dB | 68dB |
| Kenwood TM-D710A | 77dB | 69dB |

As explained in a previous *PCARA Update*, the first column of numbers shows how immune a 146MHz receiver would be to strong signals on e.g. 156 MHz and 166 MHz mixing together in the receiver front-end to produce a $2f_1 - f_2$ intermodulation product at 146 MHz. The higher the dynamic range in dB, the better the immunity — and the IC-2800 still delivers a very creditable performance.

Before putting the radio to use, I performed a little light housekeeping. The control head and microphone were gently treated with antistatic cleaning



The Icom IC-2800H dual band FM transceiver has a diecast main unit, a separate control head with LCD color screen and an HM-98 hand microphone.

wipes to remove some of the years of grime. I popped the cover off the heavy, diecast main unit and blew “canned air” through the fan and vents to clear out accumulated dust. The cooling fan is designed to pull air in at the back of the unit and blow it over the heat sink and out of the front vents during transmission. While the cover was off, I was pleased to see no obvious modifications to the main circuit board such as snipped diodes or jumpers. Some owners love to “open up” their radios to enable transmission outside the amateur bands, but that’s not a road I like to follow.

One of the advantages of modern FM transceivers is “cloning”, or the ability to reproduce the program-



View inside the main unit of the IC-2800H with the cover off. The cooling fan draws in air from the rear.

ming on multiple units. In order to program the IC-2800H, Icom’s CS-2800 cloning software and OPC-478 cloning cable are needed. Luckily, I already had an OPC-478 serial cable from an earlier Icom radio, and a copy of the software on floppy disk was included with the radio from BARA. I connected the OPC-478 mini-jack to the UHF speaker socket and pulled out my vintage notebook computer which still has a serial COM port and diskette drive. The software loaded without difficulty and was soon communicating with the radio. The Icom CS-2800 software is basic, but it does allow programming of memory channels and various operating parameters much faster than using the radio’s front panel controls. I cleared the existing memories to factory defaults, then proceeded to load my own favorite frequencies, complete with 8-character description for each memory name.

With the radio cleaned, programmed and tested, I mounted it in the shack. The control head is fastened into a metal mounting bracket which I screwed to the shelf. The control head contains its own small loud-speaker, with surprisingly good quality. Two external Motorola speakers provide even better quality, one for two meters on the left and the other for 440 MHz on the right.

The HM-98 microphone is nicely backlit for

nighttime operation. The previous owner had made an elegant modification to the microphone by widening three holes in its snap-on cover to let a little more sound reach the electret element. Under the snap-on cover is a numeric pad which can be used for DTMF tones, and to control certain functions of the transceiver. The microphone connects to the main unit with a curly cord and 8-pin RJ-45 connector, while the control head can be mounted up to 11 feet from the main unit using a cable with six-position modular connectors at each end.

That control head with its 3 inch color display really is a great feature. There is a choice of four color schemes, plus contrast and brightness settings, which are reached through the menu system. Each band has a seven-segment S-meter in multiple colors and there is a menu option to display the “memory name” as well as the frequency. Text is large and easy to read from most directions. Surrounding the display are eight multi-function buttons whose action is indicated alongside on the LCD. There are separate tuning controls for each band, which is far more convenient than a single control that needs switching between bands. The control head does run rather warm, probably thanks to the cold cathode lamp that illuminates the liquid crystal display.



Close-up of the IC-2800H remote control head. Both frequencies were in use at the time of this photo!

The receiver in the IC-2800 seems to be more sensitive than the Kenwood radio that it replaced. I was hearing carriers from devices around the shack, strong enough to open the squelch on various channels in the 146 and 440 MHz bands. Some of these noises were traced to a wireless weather station, to an AT&T speakerphone and to my TS-870 HF radio. They were fixed by moving the weather station further away, by replacing the phone and by turning up the squelch control.

My second-hand IC-2800H was well worth the outlay and has found a valued place in the shack. I’m just sorry that it took eleven years to acquire one and write a review.

- NM9J

Face up to Facebook

PCARA now has its own Facebook page. It's a great place to read ham radio news and post your thoughts, upcoming events, items for sale or swap and technical discussions. There's already lots of interesting information waiting for you with new posts every day or two. Try it! You'll like it!



If you are not familiar with Facebook, here's a quick primer so you can enjoy the PCARA page. Just reading the page is easy. Go to this link: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Peekskill-Cortlandt-Amateur-Radio-Association/140173842695229>. When you get there, make a bookmark with your browser so you can find your way back easily and instantly. It's our goal to update news items continually, so check back often. You should see what's already been posted!

Homepages on Facebook are known as 'walls.' The PCARA wall is open to public posting, so if you have an item you'd like to publicize you can add it to our wall. Please keep your content relevant to the world of ham radio! We reserve the right to delete anything we deem inappropriate.

Only people registered with Facebook are allowed to post. It's easy to create an account for yourself, but it does require you to divulge some personal information to establish your identity. Simply go to: www.facebook.com and give it a try. If you feel uncomfortable with all the questions, just cancel out of the registration.

After you create your account, sign in. Your account name is your e-mail address. Your password is up to you! In the 'Search' tab at the top of the Facebook page, type in 'Peekskill Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association.' Our page and logo will probably pop up before you type out the entire name. Click on our logo and you'll instantly go to our page. Click your mouse on the tab at the top right of the page that says 'Like.' You like us, so we like you! Now you can look at our page *and* post your own news. Write your comments, post your pictures or suggest a link (or all three) and hit 'enter.' Congratulations! You did it! Use it often!

- Karl, N2KZ

Grundig G4 review - w2CH

On October 25, Sony announced the end of Japanese production for the Sony Walkman cassette player, some thirty years after the original model became a success.

I like the show on The History Channel, called

Modern Marvels — there was an episode "80's Tech" about 1980s technology in electronics and the Sony Walkman was included, along with brick-size cell phones and the first music CDs. After the original Walkman's arrival, AM/FM and short wave radios appeared with built in cassette recorders that could record off-air. The cassette-based Walkman was followed by the CD-based Walkman. But both these technologies are fading... let's look at what's available nowadays.



The Sony Walkman cassette player from 1979 was the first personal entertainment device.



Sony ICF-SW1000T from 1996 combined a SW100 receiver with a Walkman cassette recorder, built-in to the back (left).

I recently sold my Radio Shack DX-398 shortwave receiver and purchased a Grundig/Eton G4 MW/FM/SW-MP3 Player/ Recorder/Receiver from HRO in Delaware. I have seen various prices from \$47.00 at Newegg to \$300.00 on Amazon. The Grundig G4 has 1 GB built-in flash memory and will accept SD or MMC cards in a side slot, for up to 2GB additional playback/record capacity. As I have seen with Kaito equipment, the manual is not too great a help to read about the details of operation. Incidentally, the Grundig G4 does not have a BFO for SSB/CW, which may be a disadvantage if you were hoping to receive amateur band signals.

While the size is not pocketable, it is quite small for traveling (5½" × 1" × 3.5") and it does come with a carrying case. The G4 has a good "feel" for its construction and finish.

The receiver is quite sensitive and selective on the FM broadcast band, and seems pretty good on MW/SW. However, I have not used it extensively to compare reception on these bands with my other receivers. It runs on 3 AA batteries or the usual external "wall wart" power cube. The external antenna jack allows one to use other FM/SW antennas for improved

reception.

There is also a three position DX/Normal/Local switch on the side of the receiver. It has an “SRS Sound System”, for different 3D sound effects plus a 7-



Here is what you get with the Grundig G4 receiver. There is a carrying case, manual, stereo cable for connecting an external device, earbud-style headphones and external power supply. [Photo: W2CH]

setting equalizer. The FM band has a stereo/mono selector while on AM the same switch selects between wide (6 kHz) or narrow (4 kHz). There are a 1000 memories with up to 100 memories in each bank. The receiver can be hooked up to a PC with a USB cable for downloads/uploads to the built-in flash memory or external SD card.

There is a line-in jack for connection to other devices. A small pair of earphones are provided for the earphone/speaker jack.



Close-up of Grundig G4 MW/SW/FM receiver with built-in digital recorder. [Photo: W2CH]

There is no mention of the recording rates, unlike the C Crane “Witness” or Kaito KA-1121 with its MP3 player/recorder which detaches from the receiver. The G4 only records a WAV file, probably at a low 32 kbps which is ok for MW/SW, but is low for FM which

sounds better at 128 or even 256 kbps rate. This is probably why this receiver was not a hit on the market. MW/SW sounds better recorded at 64kbps on my other receivers, which let you select the recording rate. This lack of bit-rate selection is also true for the smaller Kaito receivers, KA-800 for MW/FM/WX or the KA-801 for MW/FM/SW, which only record off the air at 32 kbps.

However, MP3 files for music, for example, downloaded to the flash memory or SD card sound fine as on an MP3 Player. There is also a relatively short delay when you switch from listening to the broadcast bands to the player/recorder, whether from flash memory or the external SD Card. I think these Chinese manufactured receivers have a lot of similarities in good and bad qualities.

The Grundig G4 Receiver/Player/Recorder from Eton Corp is very similar to the Kaito KA-1102 receiver, which does not have the player/recorder, but is capable of SSB reception. There isn't a real S meter, but the display is quite readable with a light for various items to be seen. The function buttons have multiple uses and it takes a while to master them.



Kaito KA-1102 receiver

The Kaito KA-1102 receiver is a much less expensive receiver at about \$70.00. The Newegg web site shows it discontinued and sold out. Comments by reviewers show that Newegg sold them out for \$47.00. (I have seen comments that those might have been reconditioned receivers.)

Another experience with the Grundig G4 is that the receiver became “noisy” and then cut out completely on FM/MW/SW. Removing and reinstalling the three AA batteries seemed to fix reception on the broadcast bands. So far, the problem has not reappeared. I have read some reviews that other purchasers ran into a similar problem. This may be another reason that Grundig/Eton was not successful in marketing this particular receiver, while the less expensive and simpler “cousin” Kaito KA-1102 has a good reputation.

I guess these Chinese receivers are the new “rice boxes”, as we used to disparagingly call Japanese-manufactured amateur radio equipment during their introduction to the US market.

- Ray, W2CH

Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association

Mail: PCARA, PO Box 146, Crompond, NY 10517

E-Mail: w2nyw@arrl.net

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

PCARA Update Editor: Malcolm Pritchard, NM9J
E-mail: NM9J @ arrl.net
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 7: PCARA monthly meeting, Hudson Valley Hospital Center, 3:00 p.m.

Hamfests

Sun Oct 31: LIMARC Indoor Hamfair, Levittown Hall 201 Levittown Parkway, Hicksville, NY. 9:00 a.m.

VE Test Sessions

Nov 7: Yonkers ARC, Yonkers PD, Grassy Sprain Rd, Yonkers, NY. 8:30 a.m. Contact Daniel Calabrese, 914 667-0587.

Nov 11: WECA, Westchester Co Fire Trg Center, 4 Dana Rd., Valhalla, NY. 7:00 p.m. Contact Stanley Rothman, 914 831-3258.

Nov 15: Columbia Univ VE Team, 2960 Broadway, 115 Havemeyer Hall, New York NY. 6:30 p.m. Contact Alan Crosswell, (212) 854-3754.



Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association Inc.
PO Box 146
Crompond, NY 10517