The Modulator

Newsletter of the Newport County Radio Club, February 2016

T'ain't Necessarily So

An interesting thing happened on the way to the Glen. Take a close look at this photo and see if anything jumps out at you:

The Boys of the Glen.

How about that ladder line *lying on the ground*? (Note the caution tape tied along the run.) Just about everyone coming by our setup had the same reaction—that's a dead short! Everything we've ever read makes the strong point that ladder line makes a low-loss antenna feeder, but you have to isolate it from any conductors. Yet here is the antenna feeder lying on the ground, while the station makes contacts at a terrific rate, how can this be?

John King, WA1ABI, took measurements that show that line loss was negligible. The key is that because of grass, thatch, and dry soil, this ground was not much of a conductor! When you think about it, that's why we need ground radials for verticals, but seawater makes such a great ground plane.

Winter Field Day

New Challenge

Every ham knows about Field Day—the emergency communications simulation that takes place in June. Winter Field Day is a new activity that takes place in January.

Like Field Day, the emphasis is on improvisation with the added burden of winter conditions. Generators that run well in early summer stumble and even drinking water freezes in its containers.

Paul, N1PSX, and Rob, KB1ZZU, set up at the Glen.

Fortunately for this first effort, El Niño provided moderate temperatures and the tents went up on soft green grass rather than last year's deep snow.

Safety Officer

An additional new feature was the formal designation of a Safety Officer, Paul Mankofski, KC1AQP, with final authority over all operations. This represents a change in organization, but not operations, as John King, WA1ABI, has always served as Field Day Safety Officer.

Simple Antenna, Big Results

Willy, W1LY, used his incredible potato gun to rig a simple dipole antenna that performed very well.

No tower?—No problem!

Paul's crew made 766 contacts over the January 30th-31st weekend, with a multiplier of 16, plus 3000 additional points for operating outside and without grid power. We won't know the final results until March, but certainly that's a fine score and continues our excellent record.

Paul thanks all of the operators and volunteers who worked to make this a great first outing.

Dave Neal, W2DAN, works the ether.

Modern Power Piggies

We expect our transmitters to use power, but shouldn't receivers be a bit more dainty? Bob Beatty, WB4SON, reports that ain't necessarily so either!

"I used my IC-9100 fairly heavily during Winter Field Day for 2.5 hours. Of the 9.3 AH consumed, 7.5 AH was on RX alone. That's three times as much energy as was consumed by transmitting!"

"Here are some modern gear RX draw examples:"

Icom	
IC-7000 or 7100	1.5 amps on RX
IC-7200	2.0 amps on RX
IC-9100	4.5 amps
	(Mine isn't quite that bad)
Kenwood	
TS-590	1.5 amps
TS-480	1.5 amps
TS-2000	2.5 amps
Yaesu	
FT-857/897	1.0 amps
FT-450	1.5 amps
FT-817ND	0.5 amps (QPR)
Elecraft	
K3s	0.7 amps
KX3	0.2 amps (QRP)

"That should be an indication of how valuable a low current draw RX is for field operation. The QRP folks understand that. The fancy-screen bells & whistles HF vendors clearly aren't worried about that."

The take-away here is that as our activation teams have looked at portable power, considerable time and money has been applied exploring battery technology. But we need to look at transceiver specifications too.

Got Code? Owls Do!

"That's unusual." Doubt heavy in the guide's voice. Her college classes had taught that Great Horned Owls are solitary apex predators and three in the same area would be unlikely.

Great Horned Owl.

"Yeah, unusual woods." I didn't stretch her imagination by adding that they communicate by Morse Code.

Our house sits on the edge of the former Hamilton Web pasture where mill workers were allowed to graze animals as part of their compensation. Where grass had grown a hundred years ago, now stands a young forest. The shade oaks are still there, but their heavy limbs drop with each storm.

Young trees around an old oak.

These old oaks are the foundation of our unusual owl population. The downed limbs decay producing myriad insects to feed countless small rodents, who in turn, are fur burgers for these owls. Woodpeckers work the resulting limb scars and eventually the owls build nests in the hollows.

Decaying trees are insect factories.

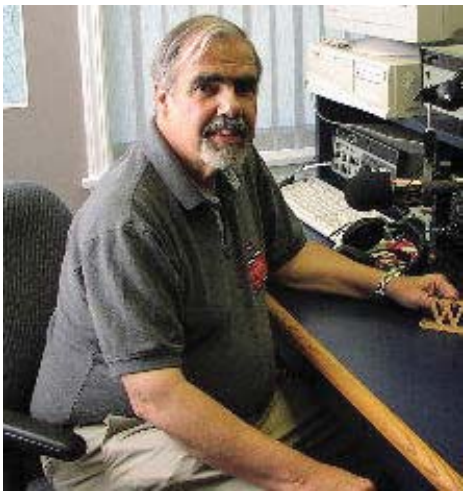
One January night many years ago I heard a Great Horned Owl hooting nearby. I had not considered owl calls before; Disney always had them *hoo-hooing*. But this was different, *this owl stuttered*!

The expected *hoo* was preceded by several *hu-hu* sounds—dits and dahs by any measure! This first op quickly became EITT—hu, hu-hu, hoo, hoo. Soon it was apparent that the other owls had different call signs, but all fit within a four-character pattern: E and I groups followed by Ts.

It appears that individual owls keep the same call and transmit from the same general QTH, often for many years. EITT operated for nine winters! This winter revealed a new unusual call—ESIT—first three-hu group observed. Morse is alive and well among owls!

Who is Bob Beaudet?

That name has popped up in numerous issues of the *Modulator*, but many of our newer members may not know our ARRL Section Manager, Bob Beaudet.



Bob Beaudet, W1YCR

Bob lives in the dark forests of Cumberland, Rhode Island, and is a founding member of the Blackstone Valley Amateur radio Club. Note that at 15, Bob wasn't old enough to sign the club's charter application, so his dad had to sign as his representative.

Bob has a proud history of service to Amateur Radio. He has held every office (except Treasurer) of BVARC and has served as Rhode Island's Section Manager since 2001. Some of you will remember Bob as one of your Volunteer Examiners when you sat for a license exam. Bob and his Spaniel Baxter are frequent visitors to Field Day operations.

An Amateur Extra, Bob prefers CW, but also operates SSB and RTTY and is well-known in the DX community. His antique key collection, some over 100 years old, is 50 strong and growing.

Bristol's Parade and Amateur Radio

The oldest 4th of July parade in America

Bristol's 4th of July parade is thought to have originated in the early 1800s. As a nationally recognized celebration, it attracts visitors from across the country.

Parade float with live enactors.

You can imagine the logistics involved to produce a pageant of this magnitude. Rhode Island Section Manager, Bob Beaudet, W1YCR, has forwarded a request from the parade committee for volunteers to provide Amateur Radio communication links during the parade.

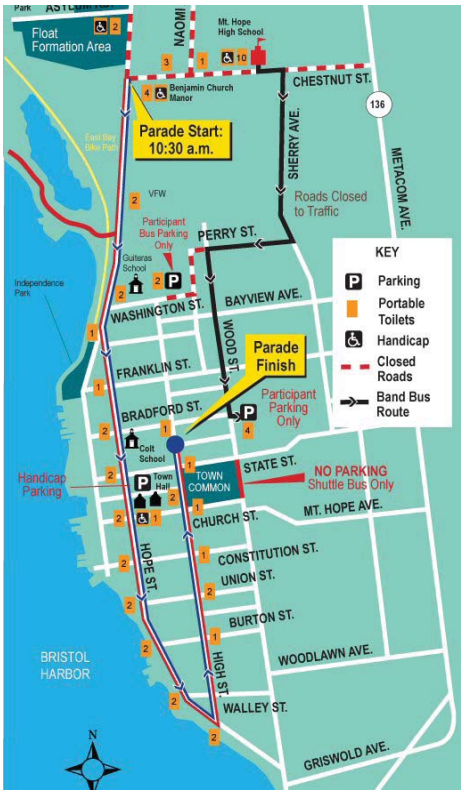
Good beat, easy to dance to.

This is at once an honor and a challenge. The specific skills and equipment are not special; anyone who has checked into our weekday 2-meter net has experienced the basics. The challenge is to insure accuracy and reliability.

The first step for NCRC is to access interest. Are there enough members who would be willing to accept the commitment, prepare, and follow through for this event? If that should be the case, we will start the preparation process.

Here are the biggest points to consider:

- You will need several hours of training.
- There will be at least one pre-event meeting.
- The day of the parade will begin very early.
- Your personal needs will be second to your assignment.



The Parade route.

Why would anyone sign on for such a daunting obligation? The satisfaction that <u>you</u> made a difference is very rewarding.

If you would consider becoming a part of a communicator team and would like more information, please e-mail before February 20th.

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