August 2020

The Messonger 2.0

Volume 02

Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club's Quarterly Newsletter

W1DDD.org

A Field Day Like No Other

BVARC Surmounts the Covid-19 Challenge

BVARC President Matt Penttila, NA1Q, sets up his station in the yard at the home of his late father, Lee, K1GTC, in Charlton, MA, with the help of Jerry Finkle, WB1GSO, under the umbrella, and David Penttila, K1COW, Lee's cousin.

Bob Janus, KA1EMH, gives a thumbs up after logging his first field day 1D contact Saturday working CW on 20 meters using his Kenwood TS-520SE. Bob logged two more QSOs (CW, 20 meters and SSB, 40 meters) during his brief time on the air.

ARRL FIELD DAY 2020

June 27-28, 2020

Lee Smith, K1LSR, joined by his wife, Deb, right, and daughter, Rebecca, logged 15 contacts on 40 meters utilizing a buddy pole antenna, in background.

Photo by Marc Caouette, W1MCX.

Jim Johnson, K1GND, works CW with Art Campbell, KC1IVI, watching the actioin, while Mike Kenney, K1ETA, right, and Tim Connell, WA1GLY, take a break in the background. The station was set up at the home of Mickey Callahan, K1WMC.

Ken Trudel, N1RGK works the rig and Teri Diiorio, W1PUP, logs with Mickey Callahan, K1WMC looking on.

From The President

Hi everyone, hopefully everything is getting better for everyone. This is the first time in club history that due to a pandemic, we had to switch to alternative ways of getting together, via the Wednesday night nets, and the teleconference I set up for the club meetings.

I'm looking forward to this fall, we should be back to as close to normal for meetings as possible, but the way the whole social environment has changed, it has gone from good, to bad, to ugly at times.

Now with that being said, I'm still planning for us having our monthly club meetings at the Slaterville Congregational Church the last Monday of the month from September through November.

We have club elections coming up, nominations will start at the September meeting and run through the October meeting, and elections will be held at the November meeting.

Also there's the ARRL VHF Contest in September.

There's no NEAR-FEST. It's been cancelled as the fairgrounds are still closed, with no plan on opening this year due to the New Hampshire regulations.

Good news is we're in phase 3 in Massachusetts, where we can gather in groups again.

On a side note, Lee, K1GTC, will have his ashes interned on Aug. 3, 2020 at 1 p.m. in Westridge Cemetery, behind the town library on Main Street, Route 31, in Charlton, MA. This will be his last ride on his trike from his house at 11a.m., kickstands up at 11:30 a.m. with a 35-mile ride through the area he lived and knew, arrival will be at around 12:40 to 12:50 p.m. at the cemetery. For anyone attending, please wear something red, it was his favorite color.

See you in September

73 Matt NA1Q

Across THE Spectrum

BVARC election is nearing. Nominations from September through October. Election is scheduled for November meeting.

Northeast HamXposition, ARRL New England Division Convention

Nov 6 to Nov. 8
HAS BEEN CANCELED.

CANCELED

ARRL September VHF Contest

Sept. 12 to Sept. 14. All legal modes permitted. All authorized frequencies above 50MHz (6 meters).

QSO Today Virtual Ham Expo

Aug. 8 and Aug. 9. Includes speakers and exhibitors. Attendance requires internet connection and computer, tablet or smartphone. More information at qsotodayhamexpo.com.

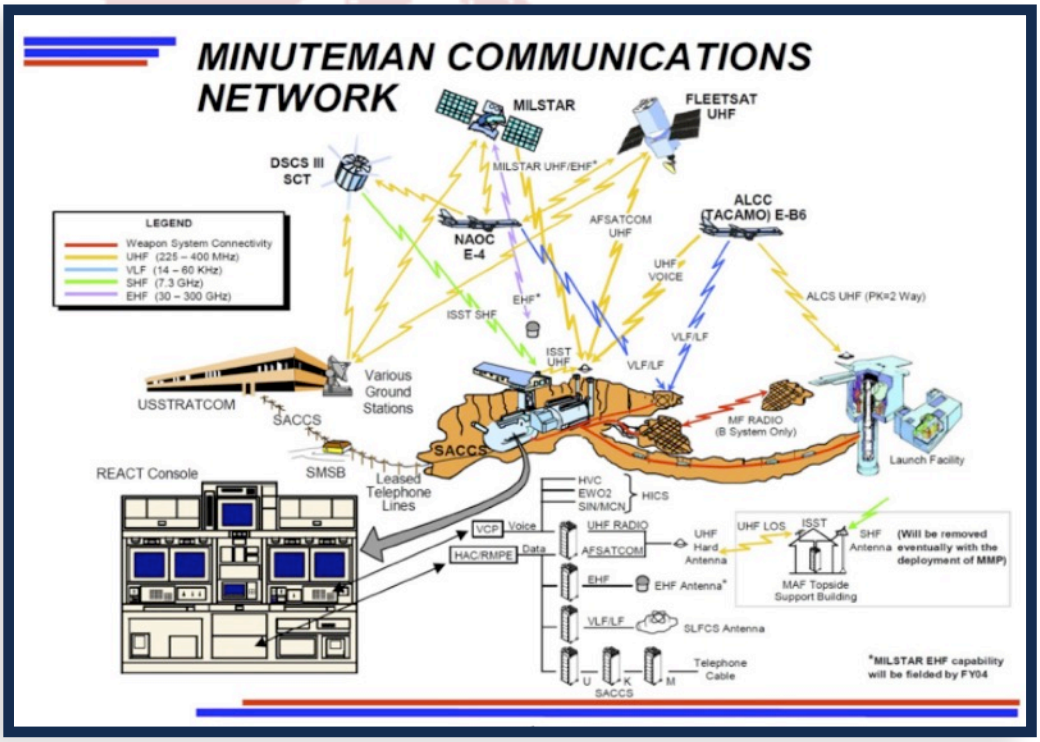
An Eyeball QSO With W1YAA, 100 Feet Below Ground

By Marshall Cross- W1HK

In 2006 and 2007 I worked on the Minuteman MEECN Program (MMP). Minuteman is an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) system located in several states, including Montana. MEECN, (Minimum Essential Emergency Communications Network), is the survivable national means for the command and control of both land and sea based strategic nuclear missiles. This includes very-low and low frequency (VLF/LF) links, from the National Emergency Airborne Command Post (NEACP/NAOC E-4) and the TACAMO (Take Charge And Move Out, EB-6) long trailing wire antennas (TWAs), to crossed-buried loop antennas at the underground Minuteman Launch Control Facilities (LCFs). The MMP included replacing the VLF/LF receivers in the LCFs but retaining the existing buried loops. My job was to assess how well the new VLF/LF capability would work using computer antenna and propagation models confirmed by on-site measurements.

During the mid 50's, I met Joe Wolenski (W1YAA) at the BVARC. Joe was a little older than me and was attending WPI, where I also went. We both belonged to the WPI Wireless Association, (W1YK).

The next time I saw Joe, we were both 100 feet underground in the "Foxtrot-01" LCF of the 341st Minuteman Missile Wing, about 40 miles from Malmstrom AFB in Great Falls, Montana. In other words, far away from civilization in "big sky country". At the time Joe was with a company called ASEC, and along with an engineer from Johns Hopkins University, they were there to also assess VLF/LF performance. I remember being with him in a space between the LCF's outer shell and inner capsule (about 3 feet wide) helping me to measure the impedance of the buried loops across the 14 to 60 kHz radio band. The capsule wall had chalk signatures of the Boeing employees who built the site in the early 60s. It was very quiet down there.



According to QRZ, Joe still has his W1YAA call and lives about 10 miles from me. I'm planning on contacting him for another "eyeball QSO," this time above-ground wearing my mask.

QSO Chronicles

A Peek Through the BVARC Archives

While mining through a mountain of QSL cards accumulated over the decades by her late father, Norm Thibault, Patty Vilnit, W1AUT, unknowingly unearthed a family gem.

The card, (pictured) bears the call sign, familiar to BVARC members, of Bob Beaudet, a BVARC charter member, who sent it to Norm, another charter member.

Upon perusing the card's content, Patty was taken aback. This, she quickly realized, was no ordinary QSO. This contact reached deep in her heart.

The card is dated July, 26, 1954, which, it so happens, was the day that Norm's wife, Jacquie, was at Woonsocket Hospital giving birth to the couple's second of four daughters, Patty, who, unbeknownst at that moment, would eventually follow in her dad's footsteps and become a second generation Thibault as a BVARC member.

Patty's first birthday card was a QSL card.

Beaudet's card offers another hint of that special day.

The time of the contact was 11:45 p.m. It was the era of no SSB, 2 meters, repeaters, cell phones or even telephone answering machines, Beaudet points out.

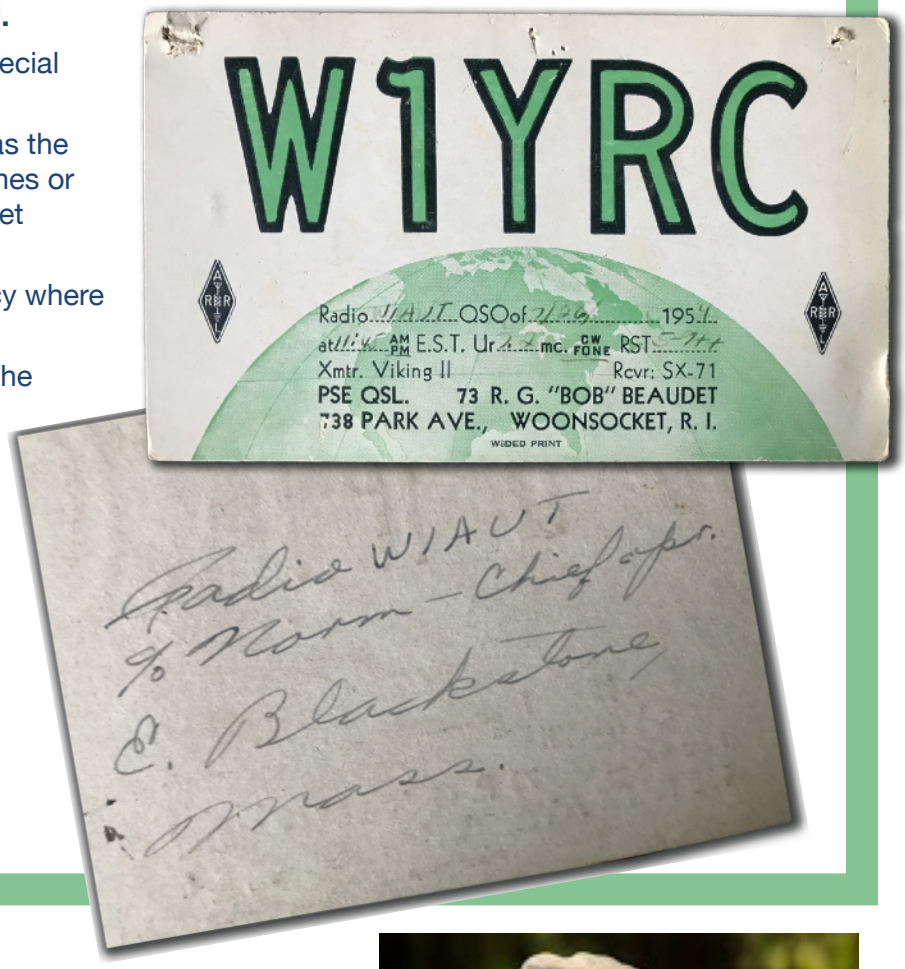
Back then, 29.0 MHZ was the local frequency where hams hung around and gabbed, he recalls.

Beaudet believes that at that hour, some of the day's excitement had subsided and Norm was on the air spreading the happy news of his family's growth with his radio family.

As for Patty.

“That really blew me away,” she said of her QSL discovery.

(If you have a similar experience, The Messenger invites you to share it with the BVARC membership. Send your episode to Teri Diiorio at w1pupteri@gmail.com or Ron Blais at KB1RYT@gmail.com.)



Warren Greene, W1DOR was a BVARC member dating back to the earliest days in the 1950s. He regularly drove Bob Jones, Marshall Cross, Nicky English and others to meetings and events because they weren’t old enough to drive yet.

Warren is a Silent Key today.

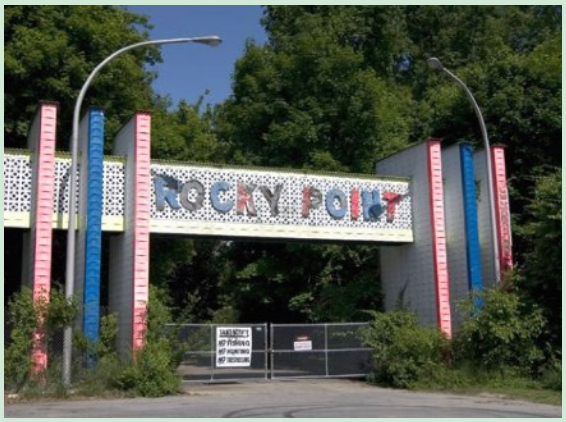
AN EXPERIMENT GOING WELL

By Jim Johnson - K1GND

This experiment started by asking the question, “How do you install a field day antenna-without using trees for support?”

This question has many viable answers. To answer the question, I decided to set some ground rules for myself.

The antenna would be configured horizontally. It should cover multiple bands without the aid of an antenna tuner (except for the one available internally to the



transmitter). It should be at least forty feet high and easily moved to take advantage of directivity and propagation.

I selected the HyEndFed 5 MK3 end fed wire. This antenna covers 5 bands 80-40-20-15 and 10 meters and can handle 200 watts of power. It is approximately 75 feet long.

For the transmitter, I selected two. First the KX3 QRP rig by Elecraft and the IC-7300 by ICOM. Each of these rigs was capable of reaching full output power using a Bioenno Lithium Iron Phosphate 20Ah battery.

For the antenna support, I selected a JacKite 31-foot pushup pole and a 41-foot Spider Beam pushup pole. With this setup I was not sure how much sag would occur with the 75-foot antenna.

SEE FIGURE 1 75' TEST

I tried a 35-foot wire first just to gauge the result. The 35-foot antenna remained almost fully horizontal. With that test result, I decided to go ahead with the 75 footer.

FIGURE 1 75'

The feedline (RG-8X) length was chosen so as not to be harmonically related to any of the bands being covered. During the construction phase, I was in contact with KC1HQB Ray Vilnit, K1ETA Mike Kenney and K1WMC Mickey Callahan.. Their suggestions facilitated construction of the PVC push up pole supports. Mike had already completed a support system and his input made my assembly go quickly without many retries.

SEE FIG 2 PVC SUPPORT

Next, Ray, Mike and myself chose Rocky Point State Park in Warwick R.I. (park

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FIG 2 PVC SUPPORT

designator K2879) for a full-blown test. We arrived at the park located on upper Narragansett Bay. It was sunny and very warm and a gentle breeze was moving from east to west (enough wind to allow a kite flyer an opportunity to launch his octopus kite).

The antenna setup went smoothly and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Using the KX3 first we tested the SWR and reception. Both proved to be excellent.

Contact using the KX3 proved to be too much of a challenge because of band conditions. We substituted the IC-7300. We began to make contacts almost immediately using the increased power.

The contacts included stations activating POTA (Parks On The Air). Using Mike's skimmer, we were able to make contacts as far west as Missouri and as far as 300 miles north of Toronto, Canada.

In summary, the experiment achieved all of the original goals except one. That one was the antenna height above the ground. We settled for about 31 feet instead of the 40-foot height. The additional height will be attempted next time with some minor changes to the original configuration.

During the testing we were approached by many of the park goers wanting to know what the antenna setup was all about. Ray provided excellent explanations along with complimentary pens and brochures explaining ham radio and the BVARC activities.

Can U BELIEVE...

…That the German physicist Heinrich Rudolf Hertz proved radio waves existed in 1888. The unit of frequency, cycle per second, was named the "hertz" in his honor.

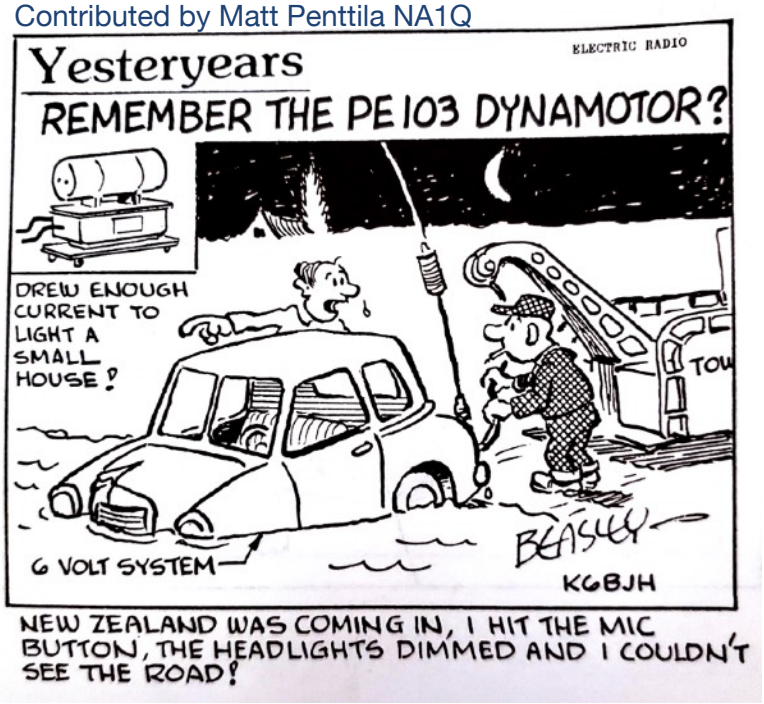
…That in 1908, students at Columbia University formed the Wireless Telegraph Club of Columbia University, now the Columbia University Amateur Radio Club. This is the earliest recorded formation of an amateur radio club, collegiate or otherwise.

…That the Radio Act of 1912 marked the beginning of U.S. federal licensing of amateur radio operators and stations.

…That the origin of the term "ham," as a synonym for an amateur radio operator, was a taunt by professional operators.

…That Guglielmo Giovanni Maria Marconi of Italy is credited as the inventor of radio and he shared the 1909 Nobel Prize in physics with Karl Ferdinand Braun "in recognition of their contributions to the development of wireless telegraphy."

Contributed by Matt Penttila NA1Q



The Ladies of

N1WWG - Ginny Jones

By Ronald R. Blais - KB1RYT

Editors note: From it's dawning at the turn of the Twentieth Century, amateur radio has proven a predominantly male pursuit. According to Wikipedia, a paltry 15 percent of licensed hams in the USA are women. BVARC counts several women members and, periodically, The Messenger will profile one of these Ladies of BVARC.

Pausing for a moment of reflection, while seeking refuge in her home's air conditioning to escape a mid-July heat wave packing torrid temperatures and stifling humidity, Ginny Jones, N1WWG, searches through the catacombs of her memory back to 1996.

History reveals that in 1996 the Summer Olympics were held in Atlanta, Ga., Ebay started its online auction and web site, and a mere 100,000 websites were on the internet compared to today's more than one billion.

It was also in 1996 that Ginny marked a watershed moment in her life by earning her FCC technician's ticket, catapulting her into the worldwide pool of amateur radio operators. She currently holds her general's license.

Ginny took her test prior to 2006, when prospective hams were required to clear two FCC hurdles before being licensed, a written test and the more challenging five words per minute Morse Code component.

Waiting to take her test, Ginny recalls a blend of emotions, anxiety, trepidation, fear and even confidence, churning within her. She also confides feeling a tinge of intimidation at the prospect of joining the male dominated amateur radio community.

"I was one of the few females getting into the venue of radio," she explains of her momentary apprehension. Ginny brimmed with confidence while taking the written test, earning a perfect score of 100. Morse Code proved a more daunting challenge.

"It was the code I was really worried about. It was nerve wracking. It's like learning another language," she remembers. "It's probably the hardest test I had to pass, even going back to college."

Having vanquished the code, Ginny released a huge sigh of relief. She was officially a new ham.

The seeds of Ginny's ham radio quest were sown in the soils of practicality and prudence surrounding a family need.

It was the era before the ubiquitous cell phone and she and her husband, Bob Jones, WB1P, were apprehensive regarding their daughter Susan's well being while commuting to Providence College, especially at night. The solution, the trio agreed, was amateur radio. By passing her test, Susan, and her parents, now had a means to reach each other whenever and wherever the need arose.

With two members of the Jones clan now licensed hams, Ginny decided it was her turn.

"I had the incentive the join them," she recalls of her own motivation, "I didn't want to be left out."

With ticket in hand, one of Ginny's first acts as a new ham was joining her husband as a member of the Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club (BVARC). Having

Notched more than two decades membership, Ginny holds the title of club matriarch.

Husband and wife also hold administrative posts in the club. Bob is treasurer and, for the last three years, Ginny has served as health and wellness chairwoman, which she prefers to call the Sunshine fund.

Amateur radio is honeycombed with numerous spheres of interests which hams may pursue.

Ginny shuns numerical statistics, such as number of states or countries worked or awards earned, in measuring her ham radio experience, preferring a more humanistic approach centered on cultivating interpersonal relationships.

"I love the camaraderie of the people in the club," she emphasizes, adding she cherishes the BVARC friendships and acquaintances she's developed through the years.

She's also fond of the club's cornucopia of events.

"I enjoy all the activities. I enjoy being with the amateur radio people," she says. Her favorite?
I love field day," she says unhesitatingly.

Outside the shack, Ginny's

Continued on next page

pursuits include cooking, knitting and reading, enjoying her role as an armchair detective while reading mystery novels.

The Cumberland couple also share a mutual interest in traveling, having returned earlier this year from a trip to England to visit Bob's cousin, and pick the Emerald Isle as their favorite destination.

“We loved Ireland the most. The countryside was beautiful,” Ginny reminisces.

Bob and Ginny also relish sharing quality time with family, which has grown to include grandsons Christopher and Michael, at either their Cumberland property or at their second home in Narragansett.

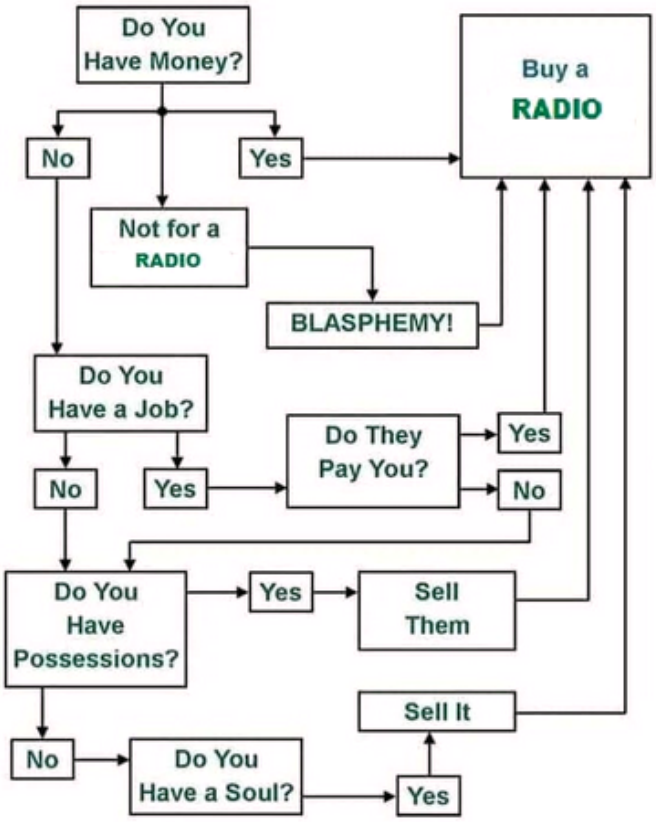
In negotiating the twists and turns of her life's journey, Ginny has juggled the responsibilities of wife, mother, working mom and grandmother.

She chose education as her career path, earning her bachelor's and master's degrees from Rhode Island College. Her career spanned 33 years teaching kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 in the Cumberland and Catholic school systems.

She summarizes the essence of her ham radio odyssey with a simple proclamation,

“I've made a lot of friends.”

*This came from **Ken Tata K1KT,** a member of the Fidelity ARC and several of our members sent this as contribution to the newsletter. I'm sure you will love it too.*



How do Radio Manufacturers Determine and Assign Model Numbers to Their HF Radios?

By Mickey Callahan-W1WMC

Being home and self-quarantined because of Covid-19 and not having ideal band conditions to make DX contacts, I'm forced to think of things that others might think as being trivial or non-essential.

In my case, I started to wonder how radio manufactures determine and assign model numbers to their line of radios. (May be you thought about this at one time or another but didn't want to be laughed out of the room!) Of course, I went immediately to Google and asked the question. So far I've found nothing to satisfy my curiosity. I find this strange and after all, doesn't the Internet hold all the answers?!! Stop laughing.

Let's take for example the IC-7300. You would think that it would be made and sold before the IC-7400. But it's not the case. The 7400 was released in 2001 and the 7300 in 2015. Am I missing something? Now take the example of the new IC-705 available from the manufacturer later this year. Currently there exists older models labeled IC-703 and a 701 but I've yet to find a 702 or 704. So what happened to the 2 and 4? Is someone at ICOM against these numbers? What gives?

If you look at some of the other radios made over the years from Kenwood and Yaesu, to name a few, there's been an attempt to label their radios using a logical sequence. This sort of makes sense and then suddenly there's a deviation.

For example, take the Kenwood TS-590 which has evolved into the 590S and now 590SG. However, now Kenwood's recent top of the line models are the TS-890S and 990S. I guess they skipped using the 6 and 7 as leading numbers because they were used on older models and still used the leading number 5 even though it was used in their hybrid HF radios over 25 to 30 years ago. Huh? Maybe the 5 was the marketing director's favorite number. Only his bookie knows.

In my best attempt to find legitimate answers, I am now turning to my fellow BVARC members to see if they can shed any light on this confusion. It seems like ICOM has created the biggest confusion for me.

Lastly, there may be no explanation. If you think I'm crazy, I'll accept that answer as well! But no laughing.

The first one to come up with a viable answer will be given a free subscription to the BVARC newsletter with a shout out at the next club meeting or whenever. Then we can all have a good laugh together.

All answers and comments can be sent to me at mickc@comcast.net.

Definitely, a Unique One!!

By Bob Jones - WB1P

As I sat operating in the "1E" class this past Field Day from my garage, my roving mind brought me back to the mid-fifties when I participated with the BVARC in my first Field Day operation as a club member.

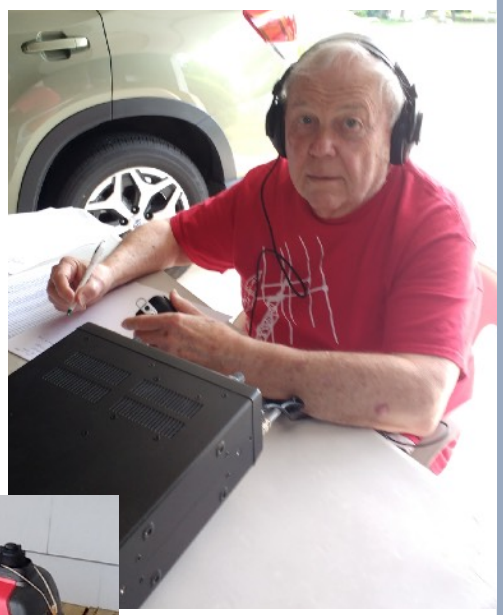
The club operated from a location which was probably the worst transmitting site one could find in the entire Blackstone Valley – a quarry. Though I didn't see any, I'm sure there were snakes in that old quarry. It was located on a hill to the rear of what is now the home of the Ice Cream Machine on Diamond Hill Road in Cumberland.

From what I remember, we were supposed to operate from the state park across the street, but for whatever reason, that deal fell through at the last minute. All gear had to be hand-carried up the hill to the quarry. My close friend, Ray, K1EJH, now deceased, and I certainly carried our share. Of course being young teenagers, I guess that's the way it's supposed to be.

Ray and I were not yet licensed — no, there was no such thing as a GOTA station — but we were trained to log contacts. Boy, was that special!

The following year, the club moved to a location off Route 7 in North Smithfield, a site which later became single-family homes. The problem there was tall grass and plenty of mosquitos. A few days before the event, members arrived with grass whips to do some cutting.

During that process, Dave, W1HW's uncle, who was a member of the North Smithfield Fire Department, arrived driving one of the department's fire trucks filled with a mixture of water and DDT. You remember DDT, that substance — which today is banned worldwide. Dave's father (the original W1HW) stood on the front of the vehicle with hose in hand and sprayed as the truck circled the entire area. Some of the mixture went into the grass, but with the wind, much of it ended up throughout the town. But it was an ideal operating spot for Field Day until new homes were built next year.



In the following years, BVARC used two sites in Woonsocket – one off Mendon Road in East Woonsocket and one from a small vacant lot directly across from Mount St. Charles Academy on Logee Street.

The following year, we got a little classy. Rick Fairweather, our club president at the time, received the OK to use the area at the base of the Buck Hill Fire tower in Burrillville. That area worked well and was utilized for a number of years.

However, when the field day committee visited the area in 2002, in preparation for Field Day, there sat a partially constructed new home. During the course of that year, the state had apparently sold the property and we were again without a home.

By chance, one of our club members was driving past the Scituate site in early June and saw town employees working on the Chopmist Hill Inn property. The property had been recently purchased by the town and was being developed as a senior citizen center. An inquiry was made to the public works director about our possible use of the site and permission was granted. As the expression goes, the rest is history.

So now because of site construction and the Covid-19, here I sit in my garage making Field Day contacts, listening to the purr of my Honda generator outside the garage and still enjoying Field Day. Though this year was the most unique in my memory, it was nevertheless enjoyable — which is why we all look forward to this annual event.