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Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club's Quarterly Newsletter

W1DDD.org

Oh Happy Field Days!

Field Day 2021 – Behind The Scenes

What Happens in June, Actually Starts in February

BY KEN TRUDEL—N1RGK

New members to the Field Day Committee have expressed amazement that they didn't realize how much work goes into the planning and arrangements to put on our annual Field Day.

Given that last year's festivities were outright cancelled due to Covid-19, the 2021 planning took on a new urgency and purpose to get it right. When the planning started, the State of Rhode Island Department of Health still hadn't published guidelines for outdoor gatherings

Day and a very high level plan. Jim Johnson, K1GND also began a dialogue with Mickey as did several other individual committee members. While these conversations were preliminary, they set the foundation for ultimately our first meeting at Jim and Ann Johnson's home on Saturday, April 17.

What some new committee members thought would be an hour or two, at most, took close to four hours and was all work from its onset. Plans were made, responsibilities handed out and agreed too, and a draft budget discussed. We were set for the first opportunity to put it before the membership.

Initial Antenna Assembly: Once our plans and budget



of any number. A leap of faith was needed to begin planning despite the real possibility it would all be for nothing.

Back in February, Mickey Callahan, K1WMC and I began talking about Field



were approved by the membership, a dry run to assemble, erect and tune the tri-band beam antenna was set for May 1 at my home. This was assumed to be a few hours of work and then take it down the next weekend. Well, as our luck would have it, the day began at 8 a.m. and ended after 4 p.m. While it was a success, basically the 20-meter band was a focus of our tuning as time was running long.

From our President

Hello Fellow BVARC Members,

Hopefully you can feel the excitement in the air as the 2021 Field Day Committee lead by Mickey Callahan, K1WMC, is working out all the final details for another great weekend of operating and good old fashion fun. The Field Day committee is putting together the Town of Scituate, Chop Mist Hill site plan as well as operating schedules and a band plan to help better organize our FD activities. If you wish to help, please contact Mickey.

This Field Day should be one of our better ones that we've had in quite some time. I say this because the bands are beginning to open up a bit and this year we will erect a 3-element beam at 40 feet, a DX-CC multi-band fan dipole at 40 feet and an end-fed wire antenna. We should also have other operating surprises, but the main thing is to have fun, enjoy the friendship and make new acquaintances during the event.

During Field Day, BVARC will comply with all State of Rhode Island's latest Covid19 requirements. As of this letter writing, masks will be worn at all times unless you're eating. Should these requirements change, so too will the requirements of each participant change to meet state requirements.

In addition, except for the GOTA station, operator control stations will be free from open spectator conversation to allow the radio operators to focus on their operations and contacts and not be distracted by in the area unrelated conversations. We're asking everyone to please conduct all conversations in the picnic area or away from the control operators.

Again this year we will have a Safety Officer on site. Jim Johnson, K1GND has volunteered to help us all ensure we are following prudent safety practices. Please give Jim your full attention should he ask for your assistance during our event. Your safety and the safety of any guests who may arrive during our

event is our number one priority above all else.

Once Field Day is in the history books, as a club we should all consider getting involved in other activities, such as a field trip, as restrictions allow. Earlier in the year we talked about visiting South Wellfleet, Massachusetts on Cape Cod to operate at the site of Marconi's First Transatlantic contact. Maybe this could be an overnight visit where we could include a visit to the Chatham Marconi Maritime Center and operate the Ham Station at the center. Advance reservations will be required but if anyone is interested, let's start a dialogue!

A road trip to the ARRL is also another quick fun trip that can be easily setup once Connecticut and ARRL restrictions allow. Try getting together with one of our QRP operators for a fun filled morning operating with a Pac-12 antenna in some secluded location. This is just an example of some of the things that we can do if we can get people to volunteer a few hours of their time to help organize.

Personal health emergencies and accidents aren't something we schedule, but being prepared for these unexpected emergencies is something we can do. Toward that end, BVARC Vice-President Marc Caouette, W1MCX, has sent to all members an email asking for your emergency contact name and phone number. Should you ever be at a BVARC event, like Field Day, and suffer an emergency we will use this information to contact your emergency contact and advise them of the situation. This information will be safely stored in the membership master record maintained by our Secretary Ray Vilnit, KC1HQB. I strongly encourage each of you to answer this email immediately so you don't forget. Please, for your family's sake, if you haven't as yet sent in your emergency contact information, please do so today!

73, N1RGK
KEN TRUDEL
PRESIDENT, BVARC

“If we all do just one thing, there won't be anything left to do but to have fun!”



Field Day Prep-Meeting Assembling Antenna, Testing and Marking



A Second Antenna Get Together: My wife Carol and I again hosted a meeting on May 15 for the team to continue tuning the antenna or to take it down. Since I was using the antenna for both SSB, FT8, FT4 contacts on 20 meters for over two weeks with good SWR results, it was decided to keep it as is. The antenna was marked, labeled and disassembled.



The Next Step –

And You Can Help:

The next Field Day preparation event is scheduled for Saturday June 5 at 9 a.m at the Field Day site at Chopmist Hill in Scituate, RI. Our plans call for the antenna to be again erected and tested on the air. We really could use your help if you have a few hours to pitch in and help us. We plan to erect the antenna and take it down in a single day.

The dedication and hard work of the Field Day committee clearly demonstrates their dedication to BVARC and our biggest annual event. I want to thank each and every one who has already participated and those who will participate in bringing this event from the planning stages into reality in about four short weeks.



DXing for the Beginner II

BY BOB BEAUDET — W1YRC

I hope you read and enjoyed Part I of this attempt at documentation of DX material useful for the beginner DXer. I try not to repeat myself too much in Part II of this article, but I can promise. Also, regardless of how much I write, there will be plenty more that you must know, things that you only learn by experience. But, hopefully what is offered in Part I and II will get you started in the right direction. Questions are welcome but see if what I have offered here answers it first. If not, contact me at w1yrc@arrl.org.

One of the side notes I made while writing Part I was to provide more details about DX Bulletins. Before giving you a list of which ones are better than others, let me say that before we had DX spotting, DX Heat and all the bulletins that are now being provided by e mail, serious DX chasers maintained rather close ties with a few close friends and regularly exchanged DX news, rumors and tid bits of info by telephone, 2 meter links, postal mail and personal contact. In my early days of DXing, we had no email, cell phones, Internet, Facebook, Twitter or any of the personal communications vehicles that we take for granted today. We spent hours just listening. We might go for days without transmitting anything at all. Gathering "intel" is vital to a military operation and it is also important to a DXer who wants to capture the rare one, just a little before the rest of the world is chasing it or even knows about it. There were two popular DX newsletters published in the US weekly during the 60s, 70s and early 80s. The Long Island DX Bulletin and the West Coast DX Bulletin were mailed to subscribers each week

with the latest news regarding the DX of the day. Some of it was rumor and some was fact that the authors gathered through their large network of contacts. But it was useful. I don't recall what the cost was, but it really wasn't very much over the postage cost. I found the information useful much of the time. But I still spent hour after hour listening up and down 20 CW.

Currently, there are several DX Bulletins published on the Internet. Some are free for the asking, such as the ARRL, OPDXA, DARC, 425DX and others. But one of the very best and most reliable is the Daily DX and Weekly DX published by Bernie McClenny, W3UR. His website is <https://www.dailydx.com/>. You may request a free sample issue and a two week subscription also free. If you find it useful, purchasing Daily DX for a year will cost you \$49 or 19.6 cents per day. But try the samples first and see if it seems to be worth it to you. I have been a subscriber of Daily DX for many years.

Having this fresh info every day lets you know much of what DX operations are coming in the next month or two or more. Good stuff!! Of course, sometimes good DX will suddenly pop up without any warning also. DXers are always searching and ready for logging a new one.

Setting goals for yourself adds to your enjoyment. Reaching DXCC (100 different entities confirmed) is challenging but really not terribly difficult. It requires some work but that's the fun of it. There are 340 entities and getting all of them is challenging for sure but lots of fun. My advice is to not think that you'll get all 340 or even 250 of them quickly. Some folks have spent their

lives working their way up the DXCC ladder.

As I said earlier, bagging the first 100 is difficult enough to make it interesting but not so hard to be discouraging and cause folks to quit halfway up the climb. Well, some do but they probably weren't serious in the first place. Reaching 100 does not require much special skill, an enormous level of experience or a world class station. The second hundred is certainly tougher and the road to 300 and above is admittedly very difficult, but possible. There are four living DXers in RI who have made it to the top of the DXCC Honor Roll by getting them all confirmed in their logs. I know each of them very well and can certify that they are hard working skilled operators.

I asked my "Elmer", W1FH, many years ago if wanting to make contacts with DX stations was practical or even possible while we were at the bottom of a solar cycle. I didn't understand what he gave me for his answer until many years later. He said that he made some of his best DX contacts when he was at the bottom of a cycle and I would too. How could that be possible? There were nearly no signals to work. Charlie, W1FH, was my mentor and the person who taught me just about everything I know about being a DXer. I only wish he was living to see how far his student got with what he taught me.

When we are operating on the traditional DX bands while at the bottom of a solar cycle, we obtain little benefit of any reflection of our signals off the ionosphere. The propagation we realize is extremely weak. I mean VERY weak, often so weak that we don't really know if we hear or just think we hear the signal.

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Home-Brewed Crossword

BY BOB JANUS—KA1EMH

ACROSS

- C6 Has layers, refracts radio waves
- E3 Perf or printed circuit
- H7 A vacuum tube pioneer
- F8 Unit of capacitance
- K1 Soda, coffee or type of receiving antenna
- L9 Unit of relative power
- O6 ARRL HQ location
- Q2 Repeater operating mode
- R9 Type of field or personality

DOWN

- M2 Type of battery
- E3 Impedance matching device
- K4 Transmission to the moon and back
- I6 Imaginary component of impedance
- B10 Acting award or HAM satellite
- K12 A large static discharge
- A14 Operating without a linear amp

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The Ladies of



W1AUT - Patty Vilnit

Editors note: From its' 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.

BY RONALD R. BLAIS — KB1RYT

The genesis of Patty Vilnit's, W1AUT, amateur radio odyssey can be pinpointed to the exact moment of her birthing cry. Although unbeknownst at that time, ham radio was, nevertheless, as much a part of Patty's DNA as her hair and eye color.

She inherited this trait from her father, Normand Thibault, W1AUT, an avid ham spanning more than six decades and a founder of the Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club (BVARC).

Yet, despite possessing such a strong family tradition, Patty did not immediately embrace her father's passion for radio.

"I just didn't have any interest in it at all," she remembers. She had other priorities.

Instead, Patty focused her energy on navigating through life's labyrinth, with its attendant twists and turns, peaks and valleys. As she progressed on her journey she acquired the roles of wife, mother, homemaker, and now, a grandmother of six. She also contributed to the family's finances by acquiring periodic part-time jobs.

Patty and husband, Ray Vilnit, KC1HQB, were devoted to raising and educating three children. Family obligations superseded other pursuits. Any interest in radio remained dormant.

"Life was always in the way. Bringing up three kids, you're busy," she explains.

Patty's ham radio metamorphosis finally emerged in June, 2008, as she started a new chapter in her life. With her children grown, educated and pursuing their own destinies, the time had arrived. The future was now, and



Patty Vilnit, W1AUT, recently reached a personal milestone in her amateur radio experience by earning ARRL's Worked All States and DXCC, worked 100 countries, certificates. It took years of determination, persistence and patience to gain the awards.

Patty earned her FCC Technician's ticket.

"Once I set my mind to it, I did it," she says of her eventually joining the ham radio family.

It was difficult to determine who was more excited regarding her achievement, herself or her dad.

"He was so excited I got my license," she recalls.

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Flush with enthusiasm over his daughter's licensing, Norm wasted no time in helping Patty set up her shack and was always available whenever Patty needed help.

Norm proved not only a mentor, but motivator as well.

"He pushed me," Patty says.

The father-daughter radio team would prove short-lived, however, as Patty lost her special Elmer in 2009, when Norm lost his battle with cancer. In his memory, Patty acquired his W1AUT call sign.

A continuous quest to improve her operating skills and acquire new knowledge is the foundation of Patty's radio credo. She earned her General license in October, 2008, and reached ham radio's licensing pinnacle by acquiring her Extra ticket in August, 2018, a feat she considers her "biggest accomplishment."

Her thirst for knowledge is quenched by regularly attending The Consortium, BVARC's monthly tutorial program.

Patty recently notched two significant personal milestones by earning ARRL's Worked All States and DXCC certificates, the latter signifying working 100 countries.

Despite garnering great personal satisfaction in earning both certificates, chasing awards and recognition has never been the essence of her foray into radio.

"I wasn't necessarily looking for awards. I just wanted to be on the radio," she explains.

Her quest for WAS and DXCC catapulted to the forefront after she perused her logbook and learned she was on the threshold of both awards.

Her recipe for achieving both awards included large portions of determination, perseverance and patience with an occasional pinch of luck.

"It took me years," she says of her effort.

While past accomplishments are gratifying, Patty prefers focusing on the journey ahead, rather than gazing in the rearview mirror.

"CW. That's my next challenge," she says of her desire to master Morse Code.

Inside the shack, Patty describes her operating style as one of a pursuer. She prefers making contacts by dialing across the spectrum rather than

calling CQ and having contacts find her.

"I like getting caught up in the chase," she says.

She also relishes pileups.

"It's the challenge to get through," she explains.

She shuns FT-8.

"It's not the same as talking to someone and getting the (QSL) card," she believes.

She considers her BVARC membership an essential and rewarding component of her radio experience.

The club's "camaraderie is unsurpassed" and the membership is very welcoming.

"There's always someone willing to help you," she points out.

She would, however, "like to see more YLs (ladies)" counted among the club's ranks.

Another joy of club membership, she finds, is participating in club activities, singling out Field Day and Christmas party.

Patty and Ray also serve as members of the club's leadership team. She's served on the Board of Governors for about a decade and Ray has been club secretary for three years.

Outside her shack, Patty enjoys photography, especially shooting wildlife. But pictures are not the only shooting she pursues. She and Ray are handgun enthusiasts and enjoy target shooting at their rod and gun club.

The Blackstone couple also enjoy hiking, antiquing, traveling, time with the grandkids and attending an occasional New England Patriots and Boston Red Sox game.

While she considers amateur radio an enriching personal experience, Patty also harbors in her heart a special dream.

"I'm hoping one of my grandkids gets their ticket and I can pass on my dad's call sign to one of them at some time. It would be nice if someone in the family kept it."

It's easy to imagine that in his heavenly shack, Normand Thibault is beaming with pride.

Across THE Spectrum

BVARC FIELD DAY

June 26 and 27, set up day, June 25, on the grounds of the Scituate Senior Center, Route 102, Scituate.

NORTHEAST HAMXPOSITION

Sept. 10 to 12 at the Best Western Royal Plaza, Marlborough, Ma.

BVARC SIMPLEX NET

Every Wednesday at 7 p.m. on 146.565.

AMATEUR RADIO LICENSE TEST SESSION

Aug. 14 at 9 a.m. in the downstairs room of the Polish National Catholic Church, 500 Smithfield Road, Route 146A, Woonsocket. For more information, contact Bob Jones at bjones949@gmail.com. Complimentary coffee and donuts available at 8:30 a.m.

RI SWAP AND SELL NET

Net: Saturdays 9 a.m. on the NB1RI repeaters

Website: RISWAP.NET

A place where RI amateur radio operators can swap and sell items free!

The net runs on Saturday mornings at 9 a.m. on the NB1RI network.

Weekly listings of VE sessions, club meetings, nets on the air, bulletins, flea markets, used and wanted ham radio equipment for sale and weekly ARRL audio news.

SKYWARN:

Every Wednesday at 7 p.m. on the NB1RI repeater network.

Open to all licensed operators

Website: <http://www.wx1box.org>

RI ARES NETS

Repeater net every Tuesday 7 p.m. on the W1RIA repeater network.

VHF Simplex is held every second and fourth Tuesday on 147.420 starting at 7:45 p.m.

The HF net is held every first and third Tuesday of the month at 7:45 p.m. on 3.980 MHz +/- 5 KHz

Website: www.riares.org



... By 1917, World War I had put a stop to amateur radio. In the United States, Congress ordered all amateur radio operators to cease operation and even dismantle their equipment. These restrictions were lifted after World War I ended, and the amateur radio service restarted on Oct. 1, 1919.

... BVARC's call sign, W1DDD, was obtained by Ray St. Onge, W1HW, after he was appointed a trustee of the fledgling radio club in 1953.

... Sometime in early December, 1915, the first issue of a new "Amateur Wireless Magazine" went from the printer to the post office and on across the country to more than 600 members of the not quite two-year-old American Radio Relay League. QST was born.

... On 13 May, 1897, Marconi sent the first ever wireless communication over open sea – a message was transmitted over the Bristol Channel from Flat Holm Island to Lavernock Point in Penarth, a distance of 6 kilometres (3.7 mi). The message read "Are you ready".

... In the U.S., the first commercially produced wireless telegraphy transmitter/receiver systems became available to experimenters and amateurs in 1905.

Building of “QSO-a-Go-Go” – A Ham Shack on Wheels

BY MICKEY CALLAHAN— K1WMC

Traditionally, most ham radio operations have been confined to a room and table in a home known as a “shack.” Since first being licensed in 2015, I have managed to put together a pretty adequate “ham shack,” along with several antennas attached to my house and backyard trees.

However, there are times I really wanted to break free of my home station and seek other challenges by operating portable. Although operating QRP offers many challenges and enjoyable experiences, I decided to up the game by constructing a radio station on wheels capable of pumping out more electrons!

My inspiration came from a number of sources. I first realized that the club could benefit from having a portable station, especially during Field Day. It would also give the members a chance to hold periodic events and programs similar to a Field Day exercise and of course, satisfy my own desire to build a station capable of being towed



behind most vehicles.

As some of you know, I’ve been a professional furniture and cabinet maker for over 30 years. I decided to apply my woodworking skills in building the “QSO-a-Go-Go.”

The base is a 4 ft. by 4 ft. two-wheel, steel-framed trailer purchased from Harbor Freight. The wood structure is primarily constructed of marine-grade plywood, along with mahogany trim. For the most part, the hardware is

stainless steel, and the wood finish is a marine-grade varnish. All wood seams have been sealed with silicone, and all access doors and panels have been waterproofed using rubber gaskets.

The box consists of four main compartments: one in the front

for general storage with room for a spare tire, and one in the back that houses the radios, 30 Ah, 12 volt LiFePo4 battery and associated support electronics. The third sits below the radio compartment and offers space to hold antenna masts, etc.

On one side of the trailer, the fourth compartment provides room for storage of a 50-watt solar panel. On the opposite side is a 2-1/2-inch-diameter PVC tube that can be used to support an antenna mast. The tube is hinged to allow for a mast to be lowered up or down as necessary.

Also connected to either side of the trailer box are electrical access ports providing A/C power feed and solar panel input for battery charging. On the opposite side is a panel covering three antenna coax connections, along with a ground terminal. In order to carry additional equipment when necessary, I built two rails on top of the trailer where items could be secured using hold-down straps.



We call those ESP signals, where you need to decide if you really hear the signal. Charlie's wisdom in telling me that he made some of his best DX contacts during solar minimums was simply to tell me that only serious DX operators are on the air. Normal competition is gone. The "fair weather crowd" is off chatting on 80 meters or a 2 meter repeater or possibly inactive entirely. Some of these are the folks who must receive a signal loud and clear or he cannot make you out. But band activity is low, QRM is low and you have time to spend digging out character after character of someone's call sign in the mud, without a hundred other stations calling and covering up the DX. It trains you to become a good operator.

Because of Charlie's training, I'm able, even now in my elder years, to hear and accurately copy very weak CW or SSB signals when much younger operators are unable to do so. I have demonstrated that many times at Field Day, being able to tell the operator the call sign of the two or three stations calling W1DDD. The on-duty operator often could not because he/she is unfamiliar with copying signals that are not loud and in the clear. Copying very weak signals or signals through interference is something that is essential to DXing and comes from years of practice and concentration. Having fancy filters on your radio is not a substitute for having proper training. Charlie advised me when I asked him what filter to buy for my radio, to not buy any filter until I have learned how to use the one that God gave me. I asked what filter that was and he told me that it was, "the one between your ears". Professional operators and military trained ops are able to focus mentally on one signal amongst several that are all transmitting and ignore the rest. They generally listen with the receiver fairly widely open so they won't miss something. Doing this is difficult but very effective.

Much of the DX you will work is not 5 by 9 and very loud and clear. In fact, many will not be easily readable. The

new FT8 and FT4 modes largely eliminate this issue for modern operators. Its WSJT program, created by Dr. Joe Taylor K1JT is able to decode and accurately decipher the call and data being transmitted when the rest of us cannot even hear, let alone decipher the signal.

In an article published earlier, I detailed how some good DX operators have called this cheating since it draws upon operating ability that the operator does not have. However, authorities well above my pay grade have called this advanced technology legitimate and accepted it to stand along with traditional modes such as CW, SSB, RTTY, etc. I realize that this article is titled "DX for Beginners" and if you are also a new ham and trying to grasp all these things that we do, you must be a little overwhelmed. Chasing DX is hardly something that a new ham coming out of the chute should be diving into. However, we have many choices in our great hobby and in my estimation, DXing is the best way by far for us to spend our time.

DXers sometimes find fun in participating in some of the many on air contests that are hosted throughout the year. There are literally hundreds of contests, some small and some others, world-wide and huge. You may review a listing of them at <https://www.contestcalendar.com/>.

Clicking on the contest name will bring you the details you need to participate. Many folks who enjoy contesting consider themselves DXers as well.

Over the years, I have thought about this quite a lot and I don't think the two can be equated to any significant extent. DXers and contesters don't fundamentally think about the contacts they make in the same manner. They don't even build their stations in the same way. Their goals are fundamentally different.

Contesters are concerned with the number of contacts they make per unit of time. A DXer will spend

whatever time is required to make a single contact if it a new entity. I believe rather strongly that they are basically very different operators. That doesn't mean that one cannot enjoy the other pursuit, but when the default key is pressed, I believe that the operator will fit more comfortably in one or the other, whether he/she admits it or not.

Simply trying to contact every one of the 340 entities is very enjoyable. But, an avid DXer in Providence, Armand, W1WKO, used to do his DXCC chase quite differently from the norm. After first attaining DXCC and reaching the Honor Roll, he decided that in each succeeding year, he would try to contact as many different DX entities as possible, trying to exceed his score of the previous year.

Armand didn't seek QSL cards for his competition. It was a personal matter which he continued every year until he became a Silent Key in 2008. He never had a tower or a KW amplifier. He usually operated on SSB and AM before that. Armand was known to make an occasional CW contact but very infrequently. He had a three element Yagi for 10 meters on the roof of his home, however, and he was often on 10 calling CQ, even when there was little chance of any DX being heard.

In addition to English, he spoke fluent Italian and Spanish and some Portuguese. He was a Brown University graduate, majoring in Chemistry. He usually reached the mid 200s by New Year's Eve after which he reset to 0. He did this year after year. He would make a serious push in the fall by entering the CQ World Wide contest. That alone would usually fetch a few dozen different countries. When 10 meters was hot, Armand would work a hundred to a hundred and fifty on that band alone.

In my early years as a DXer, I found it productive to take part in the major DX contests. In addition to making a few hundred DX contacts, I usually logged a few new entities.

Contests seem to draw some

stations out of the woodwork. Of course, you must be ready to answer many QSL cards that will come your way from Italy, Germany, Spain and other relatively common countries. They often want your card from RI, a fairly rare state for those chasing the Worked All States award.

Many send their card to you through the QSL Bureau, a rather slow but inexpensive way to send QSL cards around the world. If you plan to be even moderately active, you should open an account with your incoming QSL Bureau. We have different bureaus for each call area. If your call has a 1 in it, you will be served by the First Area Bureau, if it has a 2 in it, the Second call area bureau will serve you, etc. Review details about the incoming bureau system at <http://www.arrl.org/incoming-qsl-service> .

Sending your QSL card to the DX stations you contact is a little more involved. Not every country accepts mail or has an incoming bureau. You may check for the countries who provide service and will accept you mail, along with more details of how to go about sending your cards through the system at <http://www.arrl.org/outgoing-qsl-service> .

You will notice that a fee is charged for sending your cards. BVARC members enjoy unlimited use of this service, free of any charge to them, but non-members must pay.

Active DXers or contesters can easily totally offset their annual club dues with the savings delivered by this benefit. Regardless, it is far less expensive than individually mailing your cards by international mail.

Current letter rate for international first class mail is currently \$1.20 per ounce. Then add the envelope for a few cents more. That adds up for each card you are mailing. Before long, you have run up quite a large bill.

Some active DX stations partner with a QSL Manager, an amateur who serves as the DX station's secretary. He/she will receive and maintain logs of the DX station and provide a QSL card to you if you send your card with return postage. It's advisable

that the QSL Manager lives where he/she has a reliable postal system. Delivery of mail has become a serious problem in many countries. Thieves within the handlers of mail in many countries make delivery very uncertain, something that we enjoy here in the US.

There's much more to sending for QSLs and probably something to be covered in detail at a later date. I have said to many fellow hams that it is very much easier to make the contact with the DX station than it is to get it confirmed. You must have your contact confirmed in order to submit it for DXCC credit or toward most any other award.

Electronically confirming your DX contacts has become popular. In fact, it's not difficult to imagine that someday, all our contacts will be logged and confirmed electronically. The most popular as well as most well received system presently is Logbook of The World (LoTW), a logging program offered at no cost by the ARRL. There is a fee assessed for using confirmations provided by LoTW but far less than the cost of individual mailing the cards. You will have a confirmation good for DXCC or WAS purposes, but no card.

But some DXers love to receive QSL cards, so they prefer the old way with mailing cards around the world. That's fine but it's more expensive. It's your choice. LoTW is lightning fast and avoids the postal thieves. If the other station uploads his logs regularly, you can obtain your confirmation for the contact within minutes of the contact and without spending a cent for a card, envelope or postage.

Here in 2021, we're just starting up the slope of Sunspot Cycle 25. Band conditions will improve over the next several years until 2025/26 when the peak is reached and we'll start down again. Between now and 2026, the 20, 17, 15, 12 and 10 meter bands will improve to the peak when we'll be working plenty of DX every day on those bands. The 6 meter band will eventually treat us to some world wide DX. It would be wise to have a

rotating 6 meter gain antenna ready to enjoy these openings. I have a 5 element Yagi for 6 meters at 95 feet ready to go.

Becoming an effective operator is something learned over many years. It requires patience and experience to make contacts in all sorts of conditions. Remember, the DX station may not be running much power or have much of an antenna. He will be weak and may not be hearing you very well either. He/she may also not be a very experienced operator. You need to take command and decide where and when to place your call to attract his response.

If it's a rare DX station, you need to figure out how to bag the contact before the rest of the world knows he is there and joins in with thousands of others who blindly call and cover the DX's weak signal completely. You cannot take your time.

Expeditions to uncommon places will generally ask callers to call them "up" or "up 2" or some other instruction. **DO NOT EVER CALL ON HIS FREQUENCY!** Doing so ends the game for everyone, because no one will be able to get through, including you. Occasionally, the DX station will ask you to call on his frequency but that's quite unusual.

Whether on SSB or CW, the DX station will likely have a fixed response entered in his software memory which transmits "up" or "up 5" when he finishes one contact and is ready for another. But, don't just go up precisely 5.000 khz. from his frequency and sit there calling. It's important to call the DX where and in a way that he can hear you. You must be able to receive on the frequency where you will be transmitting in addition to the primary frequency where the DX station is.

Check "up 5" and hear what it sounds like, how spread out the callers are. Maybe look a little higher (not lower) and see if it's a little more clear. It might be up 6, 7 or 8 khz. That's why there's a knob on your VFO. Saying "up 5" or "up 10" is simply a starting point. It's likely that in practice, the DX station will listen

DX Continued from Previous Page

5khz and up from there.

Listen to where the last station worked was. You might want to call there **immediately** after he signs with 73. That's called "tail-ending". Or you might move up a few hundred hertz or more and call. Saying "up 5", he may respond to a call made up 7-8 khz or more if it was a sharp and well timed call. In a "pile-up", you will often see extremely poor operating shown by some callers. These folks were never taught how to do it or are just not very smart. Being a good operator will always pay dividends. In Part I, I emphasized getting a copy of Bob Locher's book on working DX. It is important that you learn how to go about chasing DX so you do it efficiently and effectively while not causing interference to other operators trying to also log their share of DX.

Being a good DXer invariably means that you are a good listener. You know how to study the band and know how to use that information effectively. You will listen MUCH more than you will transmit. Just switching to 20 meters and immediately calling CQ is not the best or smartest way to run up your DXCC totals. First, learn what the band is telling you. Then decide how to best apply the resources available to you.

Earlier in this article, I mentioned that some DX stations use a QSL Manager, someone who essentially does the paperwork needed to confirm contacts with the hundreds or thousands of stations around the world that make contact and want confirmation of that contact with a particular DX station. Normally, someone who wants a QSL card makes out his/her own QSL card and sends it to the QSL Manager. In return, the manager sends a card from the DX station confirming the contact. The sender should always include either a self addressed stamped envelope if the QSL Manager is within the US or payment of some useful type if the manager is in another country. It has

become customary to include two or three single US dollar bills or "green stamps," regardless of which foreign country it is. US currency is quite welcome for payment of return postage.

Obviously, mailing currency is risky and, in some cases, against postal regulations. You are hoping to obtain a card in return from that station you are mailing to for a contact you had with him/her or the mailing is to a QSL Manager to confirm a contact made with a DX station represented by this addressee, you must provide your completed QSL card, an addressed envelope back to yourself and acceptable payment to cover postage back from that country.

Remember, a US Global Forever stamp will not be valid in another country. Do not send it to a QSL Manager who is outside the US. It is a US stamp and good for us to send to any country but only if mailed from the US. It has no value outside the US borders.

Between the mid 1960s and mid 1980s, I served as a QSL Manager for more than a dozen active DX stations, including a few rare ones. I processed well over 25,000 cards for XV5AC alone. QSLing can be done incorrectly without even realizing it. If in doubt, a reader of this should contact me at w1yrc@arrl.org for specific assistance.

In Parts I and II, I have attempted to detail some of the facts, tips and guidance that have helped me to reach the top of the DXCC Honor Roll, WAZ, DXCC Challenge and be selected to serve as New England representative to the DX Advisory Committee. My current DXCC score stands at 371 overall entities and 340 after deleted entities are removed. Deleted entities are formerly recognized entities which now do not exist. They have been merged, taken over or simply don't exist any longer.

If you plan to become a DXer, you must become a bookkeeper. If you

are asked how many entities you have, you shouldn't respond but it is very helpful in helping keep these records current. After attaining DXCC, you may always access your records and those of all DXCC members in the world at www.arrl.org/dxcc. This URL will also bring you a wide variety of DXCC program information. No password or fee is required.

On this site, you may learn details concerning field checking your QSL cards and who your closest checker is. In Rhode Island, our only card checker is Jim Spears, N1NK, in Tiverton. I know Jim very well. He is a great guy and always does very careful work. You may personally bring your cards to him in Tiverton. Whether you mail your cards or hand carry your cards and paperwork to Jim, be sure that you have followed all the rules spelled out for DXCC endorsement submission.

Of course, as I am writing this, we are still under rather restrictive rules imposed upon us because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Please be sure to always follow all of them. During normal times, we could hand carry our application for new DXCC award or endorsement to ARRL HQ in Newington and get it processed while we went down the road to Yanni's restaurant for a nice lunch, after which we could pick up our papers and return home. We'll be able to do that again soon, not soon enough for me. See you in the pile-ups.

Let me leave you with a final thought, listen, listen and then listen some more. Try not to call CQ DX. Instead listen, listen and listen some more.



The radio compartment at the rear of the trailer has an access panel that lifts up and is supported by chains that anchor to the top of the box. Inside are radios that are

housed in a Gator equipment rack-case. The radios consist of an Icom IC-7300 and a Yaesu FT-857D. Both radios are capable of all HF bands with the addition of VHF and UHF using the 857D. In addition, there is a



30 amp, 13.8 volt DC power supply, a LDG YT-100 auto tuner and SWR/ power meter for the 857D.

The Gator case also has an A/C power conditioner/ distribution unit mounted above the radios.

Coupled with the radios, there is the 30 Ah, 12 volt LiFePo4 battery, a solar power controller, a DC power panel and several USB and auxiliary power pole jacks. The three coax jumpers for the radios are routed to a rear panel on the Gator case where they terminate into coax connectors that are already connected to the radios. If necessary, the radio case can be removed to work independently of the trailer.

Included with the radio compartment is a pull-out drawer that acts as a small desk and has a hinged top that covers a shallow storage compartment. Lastly, there is a strip of LED lights used to illuminate the radio compartment that can be turned on/off and dimmed using a remote hand-held controller.

All in all, the construction took the better part of a year during the worst months of the pandemic. If I had to do it over, would I make any changes? The answer is no.

I feel pretty confident that I set out and accomplished all the goals I initially established. I constructed the trailer in the shop where I work as woodworking instructor at the Woodcraft store in Walpole, MA. One side benefit was the number of curious customers and students who took the opportunity to talk to me about the trailer and ultimately about ham radio.

I was amazed at how many people thought it was “cool” to be making it. Just maybe I lit a spark of interest leading them to becoming new hams.

The “QSO-a-Go-Go” is for the benefit of all members of BVARC. I look forward to many exciting and fun-filled outings with my fellow hams.



Home-Brewed Crossword Answers

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
A														B		
B										O				A		
C							I	O	N	O	S	P	H	E	R	E
D											C				E	
E			B	O	A	R	D			A					F	
F		A						F	A	R	A	D			O	
G		L													O	
H		U						D	E	F	O	R	E	S	T	
I		N				R										
J						E										
K	B	E	V	E	R	A	G	E					L			
L				M		C				D	E	C	I	B	E	L
M		N		E		T						G				
N		I				A						H				
O	C						N	E	W	I	N	G	T	O	N	
P	A					C							N			
Q		D	U	P	L	E	X						I			
R										M	A	G	N	E	T	I
S													G			

BVARC HAS A New Ham Kit FOR VE EXAM SESSIONS

BY NORM DERAGON—W1CVC

It's a common occurrence. A candidate passes the Technician exam, walks away with a copy of Form 605, waits for the FCC to issue a call sign. Then what?

Unless the newly minted ham has an Elmer to provide guidance, it might be challenging for a newbie to get on the air. The BVARC VE Team has a solution: a "New Ham Kit."

An article in the February 2021 QST by the East Greenbush Amateur Radio Association in New York detailed what they did for new hams. BVARC members Norm Deragon (W1CVC) and Roland Sasseville (WA1RHS) created a similar kit targeted to new hams in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts.

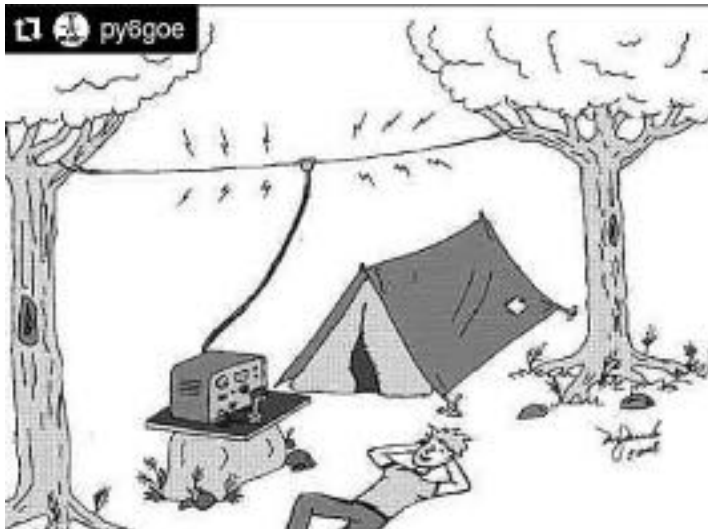
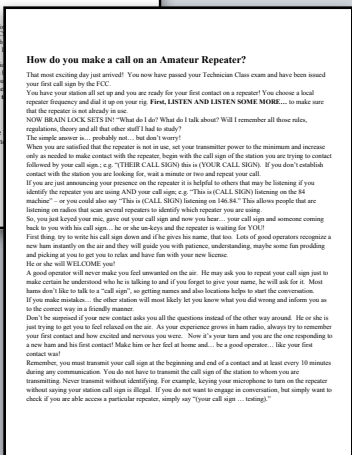
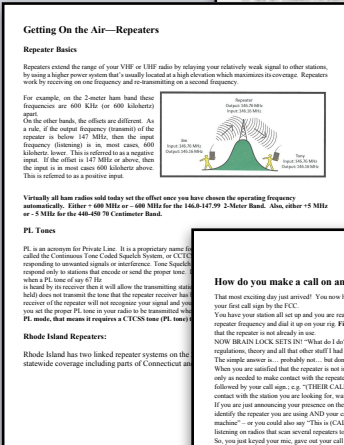
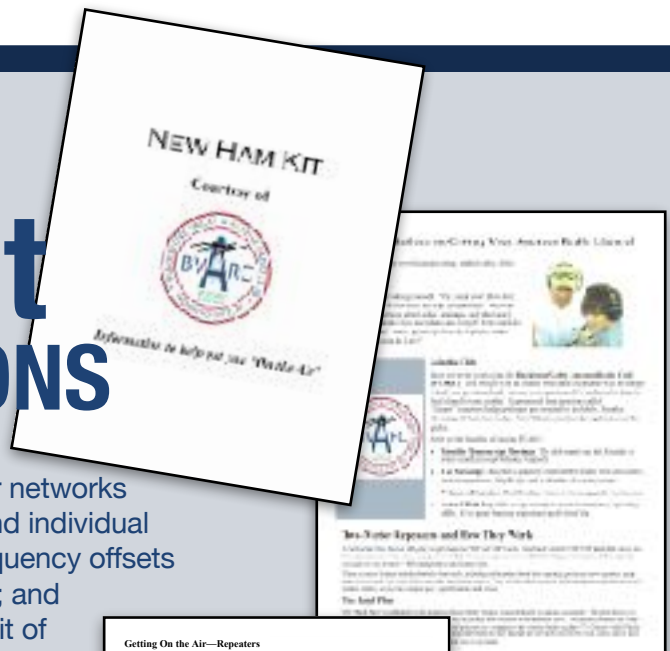
The seven-page kit is in a pocket folder and has sheets that encourage readers to join BVARC; explains two-meter repeaters and how to make contacts; has a page

listing the repeater networks in Rhode Island and individual repeaters with frequency offsets and CTCSS tones; and explains the benefit of upgrading their license.

Although not a function of BVARC, the kit has a section describing the Consortium and its goal of helping hams "learn the basics."

There are membership applications to BVARC and the ARRL as well as league information flyers and a band chart.

The cost per kit is about a dollar. The first kits were distributed at a VE session in May. The goals are to grow the club's membership and to recruit younger operators to keep our hobby alive. The kit will be uploaded to the BVARC website and will be downloadable.



THE END