

# Messonger 2.0

November 2025

The

Volume 6 Issue 3



Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club's Quarterly Newsletter

W1DDD.org

## Tools to build success in your radio endeavors

By MATT PENTILLA—NA1Q

We haven't spoken about this often but, as amateur radio operators, we all have the desire to work as much DX and get those lovely certificates and QSL cards for the shack and bragging rights.

With that said, today's amateur has something that didn't exist over 20 years ago, and that is home internet. Yes, there was dial up internet, which was expensive at times, but most amateurs relied on either local radio nets or the Yankee Clipper Contest Club Packet Radio DX Spots. Even then that was slow at 300 baud on HF or 1200 baud on two meters. Packet Terminal Node Controllers, known as TNC's, hooked between your desktop and your radio. Crude but it worked.

Today, we have eQSL service, Logbook Of The World, and QRZ Logbook, along with the traditional QSL card. We also have instant access to the digital world through the internet, mobile phones, in your home, at work, even public spaces. Mobile phones have advanced to where they've replaced the digital camera, CD player, GPS, home PC, and many other items we had to carry. They are so advanced from the day of the \$2,000 bag phone and the \$5 a minute phone calls.

Now you have the internet, and a couple things which can help you get to DXCC and WAS fast, if you know how to be a bit tech savvy.

First, is the website QRZ.COM. Every amateur radio operator should know how to access this website, create a free account or pay the annual



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## BVARC CHRISTMAS PARTY

Saturday Dec 6 5-9pm

At Bella Restaurant

Tickets will be available at the regular meeting on November 24th and the November 3rd Consortium, deadline for purchasing the tickets.

**Please Pay by Check.**

Tickets are \$34 per person for members & guest

If you can't attend the meeting you can purchase tickets by mail sending your payment and information to either committee members:

Bob and Ginny Jones 49 Farmview Drive, Cumberland, RI 02864

Ray and Patty Vilnit 7 Park Street, Blackstone, MA 01504

fee of about \$36 a year to post on the swap meet, to sell gear or upload and download directly, and automatically, from your N3FJP Amateur Contact Log. It's also helpful for looking up call signs to find info about other stations, like name, QTH, as well as what type of QSL they prefer, LOTW, electronic, paper, and QSL bureaus.

Another website you should have is DXsummit.fi, a DX spotting page that lets you tailor the info on the page, like specific call signs, specific modes, and bands with the use of the site's filters. This is very handy as I am currently hunting the BIGFOOT Special Event Station. I loaded in the call signs W7B,I,G,F,O, and T and since I'm doing FT8/FT4, I set the filters to digital, and the specific bands my antenna is tuned for (80/40/20/17/15/12/10m).

Next, I refresh the page and it displays every spot for just those stations, but you can clear the filters and it will show all the latest DX Spots reported, and you are also encouraged to enter, DX Station info to the site. Therefore, if you worked NL8F on 80m you just put your call sign in as the reporter, their call sign, the frequency, and hit post. That's it and everyone on the page will know to look for them on that frequency.

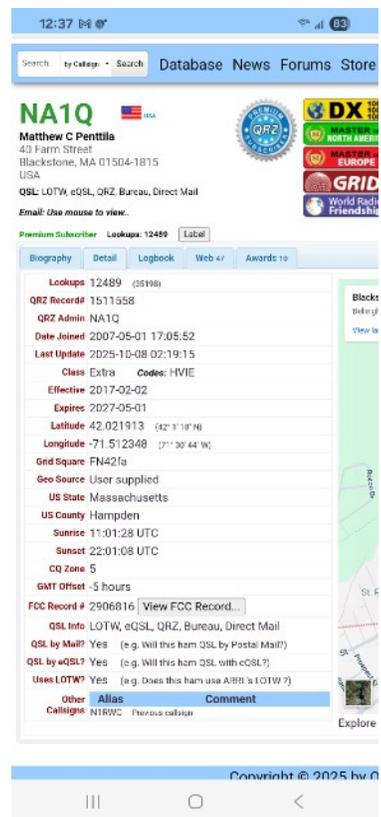
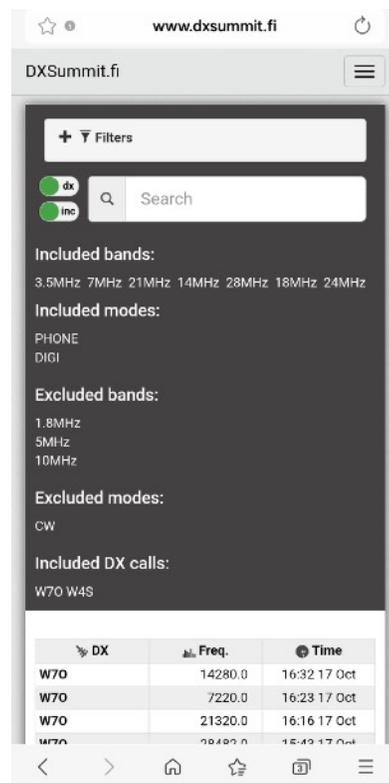
The third is a website and also an application called Ham Alert. It is HamAlert.org for websites, but they have an app for a phone also. Plus side is, like DXSummit, you create triggers to send alerts to your phone or computer listing the stations you desire to work. The trigger conditions are set in a menu, call sign, band, mode, and spotter state. This is important to have the spotter state listed otherwise you'll

get alerts from all over the country, like Japan coming in on 10m into California, but we won't hear them because the propagation on 10m at the moment of the spot is West Coast to Asia, which doesn't help us here in New England.

For those in Massachusetts, remember the Bay State covers five grid squares, FN32, FN42, FN52, FN41 and FN51. So spotter stations can be in any of those grid squares nowhere near you. Personally, I use Rhode Island as my DX spotter state as I live 0.4 miles north of the Massachusetts-Rhode Island border.

So now armed with these three sites as a bonus, you can add one more if you're into CW or digital modes like RTTY/PSK31/JT65/FT8/FT4. That is PSKReporter.info, a site that has a real time map of every spotter station and shows the path and signal reports of every QSO made on any or all bands to or from a station call sign within a time period of the last 15 minutes to 24 hours. This is a handy tool as you can see where the signals are being heard, and where your signals are going. This can be helpful if you need to re-position your antenna to favor one location. You can see where your signals are being concentrated to make those adjustments. You can also see if your signal is reaching the DX stations. It may be undershooting or overshooting them, so you may be hearing them but they can't hear you due to propagation.

Again these are tools to help you to succeed in the hobby, and your experiences may vary, but starting out, these tools will make your operating time more enjoyable and productive.





## 2025 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT



*Alexander Campbell holds the 2025 BVARC scholarship he was awarded during the club's annual Field Day celebration in June on the grounds of the Scituate Senior Center. Participating in the presentation are, from left, Patty Vilnit, membership*

*committee, BVARC President Ray Vilnit, Lee Smith, scholarship committee, and the recipient's parents, Joseph and Jennifer Campbell. A 2025 graduate of LaSalle Academy, Providence, Alexander planned to enter Bryant University, Smithfield, in the fall to major in finance. He also intends to compete in the pole vault.*

## Bundle up for Winter Field Day

By *PETER SICHEL — K1AV*



It's not too early to begin thinking about Winter Field Day, which is scheduled for Jan. 24 outside the Polish National Catholic Church, the club's monthly meeting place.

A great way to prepare is to review the rules at <https://winterfieldday.org>. Operating begins at 11a.m. EST.

This event is a great opportunity to test your portable station under winter conditions while enjoying the camaraderie and support of fellow hams. If you're inspired by one of the suggested objectives like operating QRP, multiple antennas, or different modes there's still time to agree on a plan. If there's an experience you want to have with the club, please let me know (email: [psichel@sustworks.com](mailto:psichel@sustworks.com)). Volunteers eagerly accepted.

I expect we'll have a good size tent with some heat to stay comfortable, and at least one portable station. The rest is open to your ideas.

# 2025 FIELD DAY

ARRL FIELD DAY  
**RADIO  
CONNECTS**  
FDY25  
[www.arrl.org](http://www.arrl.org)





# CLARA REGER'S LEGACY: DEVOTION, INNOVATION

By *PATTY VILNIT-W1AUT*



Clara Reger, 1898-1980, received her Amateur Radio license at 35 years of age when Buffalo, NY, was in the 8th district, receiving the call sign W8KYR and later to W2RUF. She was a member of the YLRL, QCWA Chapter 65, ARRL and Amateurs of Western NY.

She managed disaster communications after WWII and was appointed official Red Cross station of Buffalo. Clara was a lifelong helper to those who were interested in radio and electronics. To receive one of her RUF and Ready Award Certificates was a high honor. Clara was also known for her proficiency in Morse code and her longtime efforts to teach Morse code to new operators. She could send 50+ words per minute. WOW! How impressive. She was named the outstanding ham in New York State in 1961. She also received the Edison Achievement Award, which honors individuals who have made a lasting impact on innovation and human-centered design.

In 2002, Clara had not been forgotten for her exceptional devotion to her code classes and traffic net control operations. The W2PE Radio Room on the Cruiser Little Rock, the Navy's Memorial berthed in Buffalo, was dedicated in her honor.

Clara Reger was also known for developing her signature salutation "33," which meant love sealed with friendship to YL's and is considered sacred by female "hams." This "33" salutation code was adopted by the YLRL for exclusive use in 1939 and was officially adopted in 1940. YL, short for Young Lady, was first coined in 1920.

Here is a poem honoring W2RUF-Author unknown.

Clara had her ticket  
She also had a rig.  
Because she was just starting  
It wasn't very big.

She slowly tuned the crystal,  
And watched the meter drop.  
Then tapped the key a couple of times  
To be sure it wouldn't stop.

Now everything was ready.  
She called a short CQ  
And received an answer  
On thirty-six-sixty-two.

They chewed the fat 'bout stuff and things.  
'Bout dresses, work and dates.  
They finally sent eighty-eights.

Clara thought it mighty funny  
Whether it be Miss or Mrs.  
To end a perfect QSO  
By sending "love and Kisses."

It sounds a little too much "goo"  
To be sending "love and Kisses."  
To a girl the same as you.

For an entire week she pondered;  
Wouldn't even touch the rig'  
She pushed her slide rule by the hour,  
Employing "log" and "trig"

She added and subtracted.  
What could the answer be?  
To reach a happy medium  
Twixt eighty-eight and seventy-three.

Clara finally looked up from her work.  
All smiles and not forlorn.  
Twas July in nineteen-forty  
That thirty-three was born.

There's no real definition  
But its meaning is known well.  
It's how a YL says good evening  
To another friend YL.

# Why Your Voice Matters: Help Shape the Future of BVARC

By *KEN TRUDEL— N1RGK*

At the heart of BVARC is a strong, passionate community of amateur radio enthusiasts — and that community starts with you. As a valued member, your experiences and insights are essential to helping us grow, adapt, and better serve everyone in the club. That's why we're inviting you to take part in the BVARC Member Survey.

This isn't just another questionnaire — it's your chance to help guide the future of the club.

## WHY WE'RE ASKING FOR YOUR INPUT

The BVARC leadership team is committed to making sure the programs, activities, events, and resources we offer align with what our members truly want and need. As interests evolve and new technologies emerge, it's important that we stay in tune with your priorities.

## HERE'S HOW YOUR FEEDBACK HELPS US:

 Improve club meetings and presentations

 Plan events and activities that reflect member interests

 Enhance learning

opportunities and licensing support

 Identify areas for improvement in how the club operates

 Strengthen engagement across all experience levels — from beginners to Elmers

## YOUR FEEDBACK = REAL IMPACT

In the past, member feedback has directly led to:

- New types of events and public service activities
- Guest speakers and topics you've asked for
- Changes to how we communicate and keep members informed
- Expanded support for newcomers to amateur radio

Your voice truly shapes what BVARC becomes — and we take that responsibility seriously.

## QUICK, EASY, AND CONFIDENTIAL

We know your time is valuable. The survey is short and to the point — usually taking just 15

minutes to complete. All responses are confidential, and only used to help us better serve you and the broader BVARC community.

## HELP US BUILD A BETTER BVARC

By taking the survey, you're helping BVARC continue to be a vibrant, welcoming place for anyone interested in amateur radio — whether for learning, public service, emergency communications, Field Day, POTA, or just the fun of making contacts.

## TAKE THE SURVEY NOW!

Please bring your completed printed survey to the November 24th meeting and place it into the provided box. At our January meeting, a detailed presentation will outline the results of the survey. Member names will be redacted. After the presentation, all survey submissions will be shredded.

If you have any questions, or if need another copy sent to you, please let me know. You can call me (401) 484-4456 or email me [kdtrudel@gmail.com](mailto:kdtrudel@gmail.com) with your questions.

Thank you,

# Challenges Setting Up A Ham Shack In A Two Bedroom

## Apartment – Part 1

By MICKEY CALLAHAN –K1WMC

So here I am now in a two-bedroom apartment situated on the fourth (top) floor. My wife and I sold our four-bedroom house in Bellingham, MA in December 2024, and moved into a nearby apartment complex. I have to say that I do not miss the yard and housework. My days of mowing the lawn and raking leaves in the fall are now history. I had to stop using a 132-foot-long EFHW wire antenna and a 2M/70CM ground plane vertical antenna, both installed at a height of 45 feet above the ground. Both antenna feedlines ran conveniently into my basement shack.

After moving into the apartment, I needed to creatively plan my HF/VHF radio station and choose suitable antennas. This was going to be a challenge given the constraints I would encounter. Our apartment management prohibits attaching any objects, including antennas, to our balcony structure (railings, etc.). Furthermore, this arrangement is impractical because the feedlines would need to extend from the radio location in the spare bedroom, through the kitchen and living room, to reach the balcony.

I encountered difficulties in devising an adequate solution. With the loan and help of Matt NA1Q's magnetic loop antenna, I made several 20M contacts using 20 watts. Unfortunately, magnetic loops possess high-Q, need regular tuning, and tend to be costly. Not an optimum solution for me. Our spare bedroom serves as an office, including my radio setup. While being constrained in space, this room includes an exterior wall, so the HF signals have a good chance to radiate through the windows and outer wall. This was evident when using the magnetic loop.

I started looking at wire dipole antennas that I could string along the walls and ceiling. This seemed like a solution. The total wall length along the ceiling measures approximately 48 feet. This distance allows me to create a 20M

resonant dipole antenna. However, I wanted to be able to work 40M, 15M, and 10M. Hanging wires on the walls along the ceiling presents a problem, but a trip to the hardware store solved that with the use of plastic hangers that attach to the walls and can be easily removed later without damaging the walls. One problem solved.

As I was trying to solve my dilemma, along comes a book, *Ham Radio From Indoors*, written by Steve Ford, WB8IMY and published by ARRL. This book was a godsend. While this is not intended as a book review, it does cover some very important topics that represent the indoor challenges that I faced. He talks about various antenna designs, along with dealing with RF interference and safety. A must for anyone considering using an antenna in a tight space. Armed with new knowledge, I proceeded to make a loop antenna using 20-gauge wire that I had on hand. The wire was hung along the junction of the wall and ceiling with both ends terminating in one corner of the room where my radio equipment was situated. From this junction, I connected a small section of 450-ohm ladder line (thanks to Jim Johnson, K1GND) that acted as my feedline to each end of the wire-loop and routed to my antenna tuner. Fortunately, my antenna tuner (MFJ-949E) has an internal 4:1 balun and dummy load. These features would come in handy and are essential for this application. Coax cable (RG-8X) was used to connect the transceiver (IC-7300) to the antenna tuner.

Living in a densely populated environment presents other problems for hams besides antenna issues. RFI/EMI is ever-present in an apartment complex on the AC supply. This is because of being near many electronic devices like laptop and phone chargers. To combat this problem, I decided to run my radio equipment off a LiFePo4, 12 Volt, 50Ah battery instead of an AC power supply. Using the battery, my noise floor dropped from S7 to around S3 on 20M.

So, what have I learned from this experience? First, you can make contacts working with a highly compromised antenna and environment. When propagation is good, I can generally make contacts throughout the US, much of Canada, and parts of South America on 100 watts. So far, Europe has eluded me. The downside of this setup is that using it for 40M and other bands are going to take a little more effort to solve. In addition, I want to work on 2M which will require a different kind of antenna. I think I have

solutions, but that will have to wait for the next installment of my saga. 73



# Across Spectrum

## **BVARC simplex net**

Every Wednesday at 7 p.m. on 146.565.

## **RI SWAP AND SELL NET**

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

Website: [RISWAP.NET](http://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.

## **SKYWARN:**

Every Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. on the NB1RI repeater network.

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

## **RI ARES NETS**

Repeater net every First & Third Tuesday 7:30 p.m. on the W1RIA repeater network.

VHF Simplex is held every second Tuesday on 147.420 starting at 7:30 p.m. The Digital net is held the Fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Check [RIARES.org](http://RIARES.org) for details of the digital net

**ARRL audio news** can be heard each Sunday at 8 a.m. on Woonsocket radio station WOON 1240 AM and 99.5 FM.

**ARRL Rhode Island Monthly Newsletter:**

**ARRL RI Section News**



## CALLING ALL ELVES

**The BVARC Christmas party will be celebrated Saturday, Dec. 6, starting at 5 p.m. at Bella Restaurant, Nasonville.**

The meal will feature family-style chicken, including chicken soup, along with all the fixings. A cash bar in the banquet room will be available. Matt Pentilla (NA1Q) is donating the cake and Judson Mitsock (W1JMZ) is providing music.

The **cost is \$34 per person**, including tax and tip. Club members and their friends and family are welcome.

Tickets will be available at the November Consortium and November club meeting. Checks should be made out to BVARC. If using cash, exact change is appreciated. The party committee includes Ray, KC1HQB, and Patty, W1AUT, Vilnit as well as Bob, WB1P, and Ginny, N1WWG, Jones. **Please Pay by Check.**

## From the Workbench of NA1Q ...

(Yup another what in the @%#&\$\* is he building again)

By MATT PENTILLA—NA1Q

### TURNING SCRAP PARTS INTO BALUN FOR POTA ANTENNA

I was bored one evening and decided to rummage through junk boxes. You never realize what's been buried in them through the years, but over time we all have one, two or a couple of rooms full of these boxes depending on how long one's been in the hobby.

I found some magnet wire and a BNC chassis mount, along with a torroid, some shrink tubing, some 550 Orange Paracord, Zipcord and speaker wire and a bag of Wago 221 wire connectors. This would make a good balun project for a POTA antenna dipole or L shaped antenna depending on setup choices.

The concept is simple. The Zipcord can be used as wire elements, cut to different lengths for different bands.

Let's start with the balun. First take five feet of enamel coated magnet wire. I used 22 AWG because that's what I found in

the box. Fold it in half, keeping both untwisted. It is critical neither wires cross. Then starting from underneath and holding a couple inches of the folded wire, fold out under the torroid. Wind counter clockwise counting turns on the inside of the torroid to five. The two wires should now be almost halfway around the torroid. For turn six you will go through the torroid and then come out on the opposite side next to the folded wire starting point.

This is now turn six and we need to go to 11 turns, making sure 1) both wires are not twisted but parallel to each other, and 2) none of turns six through 11 cross over the wire going between turns five and six. If that



is all set, you need to cut the tip of the folded wire off to make two wires, and scrape the enamel off the ends of the wires to test with a multimeter. You need to have continuity between one wire on either side of the torroid, as one will be the BNC and one will be the antenna. You need to make sure you have two separate circuits as one is for the center feed of the coax and one for the shield because we don't want any shorts. If that tests OK, figure out how long you need the wires to connect into the WAGO connectors, shorten them and scrape the enamel off for an electrical connection, then test with the meter again to make sure you're good to go.

Now the BNC chassis mount side is similar except one wire goes to the center and one goes to the ground of the chassis mount. Solder those on after figuring out how long you need them and scraping the enamel off the wires. Then test to make sure you have continuity between the center of the BNC and one of the WAGO connectors and continuity



between the shield side of the BNC and the other WAGU connector. There should be no continuity between the BNC center to shield and no continuity between the WAGU connectors.

Now the final test, the SWR. Use a 47 to 50 ohm resistor inserted into the two WAGU connectors and check with an antenna analyzer for SWR. It should be around 1 to 1 or maybe 1.15 to 1. If it is more than 1.3 to 1 you need to investigate it, as something isn't right. It's usually a crossed wire somewhere or bad scraping of the enamel.

Now at this point it seems a little floppy, but there's a solution. Carefully cut some shrink tubing long enough to go between the middle of the WAGU 221 connectors and the edge, where the chassis mount of the BNC is covering the threads but not where the BNC cable connector will lock on. (Flip the open end levers up to use as a stop.) Then using a heat gun or a lighter, heat the shrink tubing and it will compress down and lock everything into place.



Now we have a balun, but how to support it? This is where the paracord comes in. Cut a piece to make a loop double the length of the balun from end to end of the loop. Lay it around the balun. Slide another little smaller length piece of shrink tubing over the cord and balun, and shrink it. It will now be locked in, and if you do the loop correctly you have enough loop at the top to hook on a pole or throw line over a tree branch, and the bottom can be used for a strain relief for the coax cable.

As for the wire elements, the 234/f for the zipline works. Cut a few inches longer and then split the wire and you now have both legs of your dipole. Just strip one end of each leg and insert in the WAGU and lock it in place, then trim for perfect SWR. I suggest different sets of wires bagged and labeled for different bands, like one for 20m, another for 40m, 80m, etc.

So that's part one of this installment..... part two coming shortly.

## Welcome Aboard

BVARC has welcomed a new member to its roster since the last newsletter. If you meet them at club meetings or functions, please say hello.

### *Our New Member:*

*Anthony Davis — KC1WJH*

A Special Thank to Greg Gruenenfelder-KC1NTI for donating a new warming mat for Field Day.

It will keep our Field Day  
Pot Luck Dinner  
warm for many  
years to come.



## The Messenger<sub>2.0</sub>

*The Messenger Is Produced  
3 Issues a Year  
End of March,  
Beginning of June,  
And Beginning of November*

*Editorial Contributions  
Are Done by our Members*

*Edited by Ronald Blais*

*Produced by Teri Diiorio*