SPLATTER

This Bulletin is printed from time to time and distributed to the members of the Tamaqua Wireless Association

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After the Smoke Cleared

By W3ZRQ President

A continuation of our previous article.

Well, a new year has arrived with everyone getting ready for new activities the club is dreaming up that will keep the months ahead quite busy. Although the weather will not allow outside activities at present, every member can start making a list of things that will need to be done as soon as the spring comes.



I, for one, have changes to be made to my antenna system. The R-5 vertical which was put up last fall will now be replaced with an R-6000 vertical which Santa put under our Christmas Tree.

As reported last issue, the R-5 was working great and the redesigned home brew tuner I made energized every smoke alarm throughout the house. After going back to the drafting board, I finally came up with a design and located components heavy enough to handle the power I put through it. So far this winter it has worked with no problem at all—AND NO SMOKE !

By the time you receive this issue we will have already started classes or about to. Yes ! W3TI was pressured into service and asked not to waist his 99 year teaching certificate. He has about 65 years left on it. So he agreed to teach an Extra Class for those of us who need to upgrade. (See elsewhere in this issue)

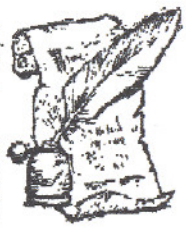
Another one of the activities that was discussed at the club meeting and is being scheduled for this year is VHF QSO Party in the early part of June. About 10 years ago the club had a ball operating the QSO Party. Elder members still talk about that activity and all the surprises we experienced. As plans progress we will keep you informed. So far we have a site confirmed and a lot of interest shown. Better yet ! Attend the meetings and keep abreast with club activities.

Another change this year is the relocation of our Field Day Site. Since last year, the water has been drained from the Owl Creek Reservoir and a member of the club has offered a new location. Some time early in the spring the club will be visiting KB3DYJ's picnic grove somewhere in Locust Valley to check things out and make plans for antenna locations and all that is needed for setup. At present, plans are to make it another three day affair and start setting up on Friday instead of Saturday.

For those who never look at the calendar, Field Day will be June 22, 23, and 24. Advanced reservations are never required to attend Field Day but it would be a big help for the set-up group to know in advance who they can count on and will be available to erect the antennas and arrange the stations. Head Chef, Ron, in charge of K. P. and feeding the troupes would also appreciate a head count. Anyone with an idea for this year's Field Day please share it with us. Until next issue, 73's

No One's That Perfect

TWA activity during the past year has been very commendable insofar as the members, committee chairman and officers. Each time we look back and take note of our faults and mistakes and we say, " We'll do better next time". If each project or program we participated in had always turned out 100 % perfect, no flaws, no mistakes. Then according to the laws of psychology we haven't learned or gained anything. If everything was perfect what additional knowledge would we have acquired, "Strictly Nothing". We would be just as ignorant as we were before.



*Editors note * The difference between Ignorance and stupidity. Ignorance is the lack of knowledge and can be taught. whereas, Stupidity is a lost cause*

On the other hand if we made a few blunders or something went wrong with our well laid plans and we had to stop in the middle of the stream to make corrections, then we will have learned something.

The main rule of Psychology is "We learn by our mistakes". You've heard it on the air at times when some one makes the statement, "I never made a mistake in my life ". STOP, check that persons background and you'll probably find he never did anything in order to error or make a mistake. That ancient cliché "To err is human" , there is no getting away from it.

You can put the batteries in your flash light backwards and it will still work but how many times have you accidentally put the batteries in your portable broadcast radio in reverse ? I hope you had the forethought to turn the set off before replacing them.

How about connecting the coax cables to the wrong SO-239 i.e. antenna vrs. transmitter. Or, trying to make contact with your 75 meter schedule with the rig connected to the 20 meter dipole. Better yet, how about trying to make a contact with a Florida ten meter beacon station. Or dropping the wrong antenna during Field Day.

Then there's the time when we talk into the back or wrong side of the Mic. Here we have justification. Has anyone ever seen written instructions anywhere that tells you which is the correct side of the Mic to talk into ? If you're a radio telephone operator you probably have more than one or two Microphones. How many times have you picked up the wrong one and pressed the push to talk switch and nothing happened.

The older style transmitters would key the cathode to ground for CW operation and if you accidentally had your left hand on the receiver dial *(ground potential)* and touched the bare metal of your J-38 telegraph key, you would get the surprise of your life. Just another lesson on the potential and the flow of an electric current.

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Volunteer Examiner Sked

Starting with the new Millennium 2001 there will be a number of changes for those who plan to take an exam for new or upgrade license. First, the VEC cost has been increased to $ 10.00. The FCC eliminated the ceiling on exam fees and left it up to the VEC to set the price. Since the Novice class is eliminated there are no Free-bees anymore.

Other changes will be made to each element in the written exam. Answers to the questions will still be from a multiple choice list. Letter and number characters for the 5 WPM code test will still be sent at 13 WPM but spaced at 5 WPM. The multiple choice list in the code test has been eliminated and the answers will have to be entered from your code test copy sheet.

The Tamaqua VE team will be available at 9 a.m. in the Tamaqua Municipal building on Saturday March 3rd, June 2nd, August 4th and November 3rd. Prior registration is not required. You must have some means of personal identification and don't forget to bring pencils for the exam and a pen to fill out the FCC 605 application. For additional info contact TWA.

President Signs CB enforcement act

President Bill Clinton signed legislation that permits the enforcement of certain FCC Citizens Band regulations by State and Local governments. Amateur Radio operators are exempt from the provisions of the law . PL 106-521. The FCC will not yield its authority to regulate Citizens Band or other radio services. In short, the measure authorizes states and localities to enact laws that prohibit the use of unauthorized CB equipment consistent with FCC regulations. This would include linear amplifiers or equipment that is not FCC certificated.

FCC licensed stations in any radio service including the a Amateur Radio service are excluded from such state or local enforcement.

Working DX

Whenever you have a QSO with a station outside the confines of the United States or with another country it is considered to be a DX contact. At present there are over 330 different countries throughout the world. The Technician who just upgraded to General class opened the door to that vast opportunity and is able to make such contacts, providing of course they have the station equipment to do so.

Such is the case with one of our club members who recently took that step. With the sun spot cycle on the rise it has become very easy to make contact with foreign countries with just a hundred watts or less and a simple dipole or vertical antenna.

It so happens our club president W3ZRQ got bit by the DX bug using a zepp antenna which tends to be more directional north and south. The vertical on the other hand is omni directional. He soon learned that a vertical antenna is a bit tricky to load but when mastered does a fantastic job pulling in the DX stations.

Then I remembered we had printed an article in the 1994 April issue of Splatter about the U.S. Signal Corp and the problem they had transmitting military information from North Africa back to England. *Note During WW-II all amateur frequencies were used by the military.*

The U S Signal Corp would copy Rummel's Afrika Corp maneuvers who operated on ten meters and then relay the data back to England on 15 meters but at times had a difficult time getting through to England.

Those of us who recall, during the war we had to make use of a lot of substitutes and the Johnsons Wax company came out with a product which was used to water proof canvas. It was found out if it was spread or wiped on telephone cables and wires prevented them from shorting out when they got wet.

The Signal Corp heard about it and decided to use the compound on their coax cables and even went so far to spread it on their mobile vertical antennas. Much to their surprise both the transmit and received signal strength increased greatly. The word was passed on to the top brass and every unit was informed to do likewise.

Our story now shifts to 1975. It was during one of our safaris to Harrisburg surplus when we came across a pallet of one quart cans marked "*Johnsons Wax* MILH-5606-A" and our eyes lit up like roman candles. That was the Military specification number the Signal Corp used in WW-II. So we purchased ten dozen cans.

The basic theory of why this concoction works, it decreases the radiation resistance of the antenna by 0.8 percent, resulting in a 5 percent increase of the Velocity Factor . Therefore giving the emitted radio signal a 15 db. gain and increases the force for it to penetrate the heavy side layer and skip zone resulting with an increase in signal strength at the receiving station.

I suggested W3ZRQ, spread some of that *Antenna Wax* on his vertical and see if it would help. Well, the rest is history. We hear the story at every club meeting how well he is working the elusive DX. If any of the members are interested the club still has twenty cans of this special *Antenna Wax*.