SPLATTER

This bulletin is printed from time to time and issued to the members of the Tamaqua Wireless Association a Public Service non-profit organization

July-August-September | Summer Issue | 2003

Things You Should Know

By the club President, W3ZRQ

By now practically every member of the club has been informed about our acquired 21-foot Travel Trailer that has been relocated to Weicker's Grove. The idea of getting a trailer for the club has been a thought and in the works for many years and has now become a reality. We acquired it through the generous donation of Peter Trudich who lives in Owl Creek, next door to our old Field Day site Owl Creek Reservoir..



The trailer was towed to the Grove one Thursday evening and since then has been stripped of all non-essential equipment such as the bathroom, gas stove, heater, water heater and water tank. The next item was to check the roof and recoated with aluminum asphalt roof coater to give it a good seal. The tires and wheels were checked and are in excellent condition and road worthy in case the unit is required to be moved for actual emergency communications.

When the word went out a work party was scheduled, members came crawling out of the wood-work from all four corners of the county to help. As of this writing, plans are to clear an area at the Grove to park it. Install a new floor, new wiring, electric heater, panel the walls where needed and construct an operating area to the rear. A 12 volt marine type battery was purchased to use as back-up power and a gasoline powered AC generator will be available in the event of A,C. line voltage failure.

Most of the material needed to remodel is being donated by members and interested people in the Tamaqua area. When completed, hopefully by next June, the trailer will serve as an operating station for the VHF QSO Party, Field Day and a portable Emergency Operating Station (EOS) or command post. It will be available for transporting to an emergency setup on a need to be situation.

As mentioned above, "crawling out of the wood-work", I would like to thank all the members who showed up to help. It's this dedication and donation of time that makes a club survive and flourish. While working last Saturday I heard someone say, "This isn't work, this is fun". As for the rest of the summer, the club still has many activities to keep us occupied. Look elsewhere in this bulletin for further details on up-coming events.

Why I Belong to a Club

By Guest Editor, KB3FSU

The last issue of Splatter was a real mind blower, why ! "Well why belong to a club". I started to count how many words the well titled as well as a written article had in it and after 200 or so I said to myself, why waste time. My guess is that W3TI wrote it. He , as well as many others of us have much more to do with our time.

"Playing Radio" was always one of my favorite sayings, however I never really knew the real meaning of that phrase until after November year 2000 when I found out.



An Amateur Radio Operator spends many long hard hours to comprehend all those test questions and discriminate the difference between the correct and wrong answers. I, as well as many others know it was not easy.

For me, at age 55, it certainly was not easy but with the consistent pressure and instructions from the club "Elmers" I passed my test and now was able to operate my own station. It was then that I found out the real meaning of why it was called "Playing Radio".

When I went on the air for the first time my mouth felt so dry, my hand so shaky and the Mic button was so hard to hold in. I even forgot what I said during that first contact. Two meters was my worst evil.

After several more contacts my heartbeat settled down and was back in its socket in my chest again. I also found out there was a whole lot more to learn beside getting a license. The next phase was How, when, where and what to do in operating your radio station. Again, it was the guys in the club who came to the rescue with their answers and valued years of experience. I love my radio club and think of them as my extended family, as well as those with whom I QSO with over the air ways.

Now and then I recall the first Amateur Radio station I ever heard belonged to a sailor who was on leave while his ship was being repaired in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. He picked up the microphone in his mobile unit, gave a call and spoke to his family in Florida. His name was Vick Foggie, and I'll never forget all he told me about radio at that time.

Continued inside

At that time I knew I wanted to get into Ham Radio, however until now I didn't realize you have to be willing to work for that license. Anything this much fun is great but will be difficult to come by. That is what I hear my friends say and I have to admit they are right. This Radio Stuff is one of the greatest things since the invention of sliced bread.

Meanwhile the years went by and from time to time I tried for a license but those "Dits and Dahs" were in the way as well as other items popped up that were more important.

Time marches on and this time I had friends in the form of a Radio club to help put me on the right track. With their assistance and a little determination they helped me over the barriers and high spots. I tried C.W. as a "Loner" and failed several times. Thanks to the club and others I made it.

YES ! I made it "I". It would never have happened without the encouragement and loyalty from a great bunch of guys in our hobby. I was told, work at it, practice, practice, practice. I didn't think I would ever make it but I persevered and finally passed the Morse code test.

I had to take the code test twice to pass. But ! Thanks to a very mean look from one of my mentors I skipped a few letters and then began to copy. Yes, I passed the code test due to those nasty looks I got.

I do time out the repeater a lot, but that's me. Sometimes I say nothing much, then other times I say a lot but not much makes sense. But I have a great time doing it, isn't that what the amateur radio is all about.

From the information just given you can tell I'm just new in the hobby. In our club we have the blessing of Expertise of some truly wonderful people at age of 83 years young to 17 years old. It matters not who your are or how old you are, if you're a person who wants to advance, learn and care about others. We, as a club, surely welcome you to join with us.

Now that I passed my Morse code test "Thank God and many others" I wanted to get the General Class license and all those many extra band privileges. Again I repeat! Why belong to a club", the results speak for itself. Sure, a "Loner" can do the same thing but with the assistance of others it makes the undertaking, such as the electronic theory, so much easier.

It took me some time to learn and I have a few more gray hairs to vouch for it. There for a time I wanted to quit and stay on the two meter band, but my friends kept nudging and spurring me on until success was in my favor.

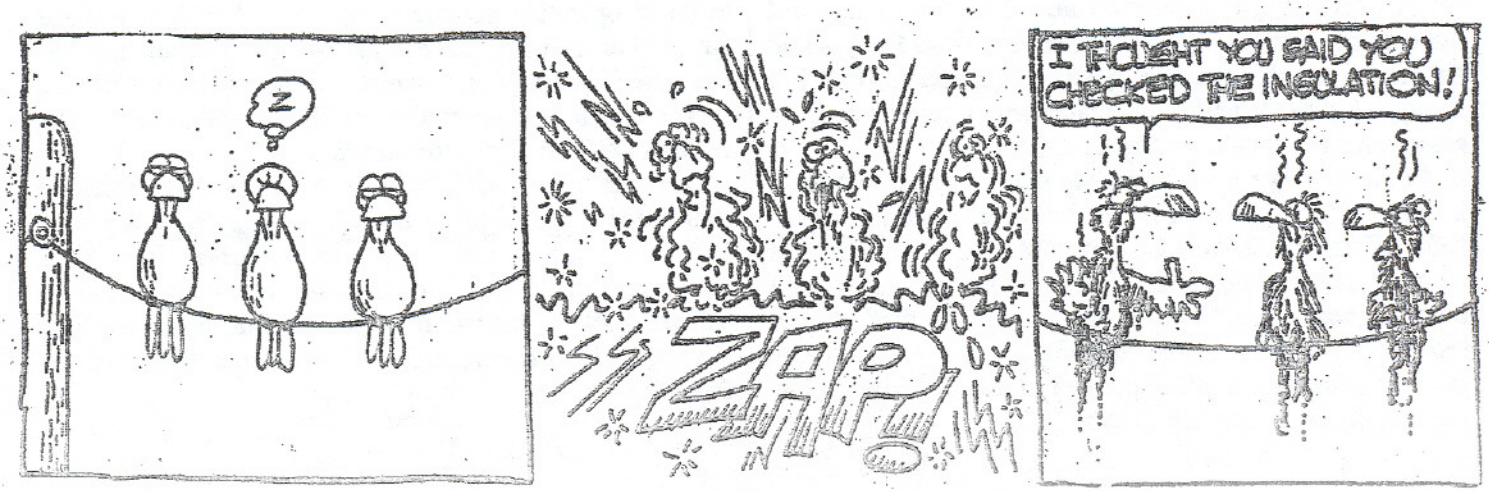
Even though I have General class now, there will always be those higher level questions and someone will be in the club membership to help me with the answers. At times I feel foolish for asking these questions and then others in the group will smile and say " I also asked that same question, how do you think I got advanced to where I am".

So look out Guys, thanks to you all, I'll soon be studying for those really special uncrowded frequencies that come with the Extra class license. Why would I try it ? Perhaps it's the challenge or because I have the best people I've met in almost 60 years of my life. I'm sorry, the list of names would consume to much space in this article.

As an incentive, study hard and ask questions because someone in the club will have your answers. Keep trying brother because Amateur Radio is one of the largest fraternities there is. I'm a Master Mason and proud of it, but I even found Amateur Radio more fraternal and many times more helpful.

So take that first test because you are never too young and absolutely never too old to learn for the exams. You just have to want it and willing to put the time, work, and effort it takes to make the grade. I admire the younger set, much more luckier than I, who have many more years to enjoy this great hobby.

Our club bulletin editor asks for an article or a few words for Splatter. Well Al this time you got a book in sentence form and very poor spelling. This is going to a very good and very highly respected friend, one of many others.
"Why Join a Club" 73, Signed *Bud Kane* KB3FSU



New From WRC-03

Following info just received in time for SPLATTER

It is well past ten years ago the ARRL legal beagles were trying to get the International Amateur Radio Union IARU to negotiate with the World Radio Conference 2003 to do something with the Amateur 40 meter band regarding the interference from European broadcast stations. Believe it or not, they finally got some recognition and results at the World Radio Conference 2003.

Yep ! Ten years later it was stated, "They carefully crafted a compromise" which calls for **the broadcasters to vacate 7100 to 7200 Khz by March 29, 2009.** So, we have to wait another six years to get rid of all that garbage on the 40 meter band which will be right in the middle on the up-side of the next sun spot cycle.

Regarding Morse code requirements, "One matter on which there appears to be no disagreement is the Morse code requirement". It will be left to the discretion of each countries administration whether or not to have a Morse sending and receiving requirement. In our case it will be left up to the FCC.

At present, Japan has the highest number of radio amateurs on the globe with over 90 percent of them being no-code license operators. The United States ranks second highest number of radio amateurs with more no-code technicians than General and Extra class combined total. However, if it ever comes from push to shove, I'm sure the FCC will be pressured enough to retain the Morse code requirements.

Now for the Good News. About five years ago the FCC hinted we could be in line to get additional ham band frequencies some where between 75 and 40 meters. As of July 3, 2003 we got to use five channels in the new 60 meter band. At present the only frequencies available for amateur use are; **5332, 5348, 5368, 5373, and 5405 Khz.**

The only legal mode is upper side band (USB) with a power of 50 watts ERP. Since it will most likely be assumed an extension of 75 meters, permission is granted to General and Extra class license operators only.

The TWA Oath

We the Willing
Led By the Unknowing
Are Doing the Impossible.
In the Interest of Public Service.
We Have Done So Much
For So Long
With So Little
We Are Now Qualified
To Do Anything
With Nothing

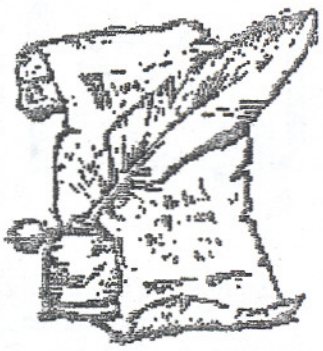
TWA Officers for 2003

President Al W3ZRQ
Vice Pres. Darryl N2DIY
Sect-Treas. Al W3TI
Trustee Chip NI3H
Activities Mgr. Ed KB3DYJ
COMMITTEES
EC & VEC Bill WY3K
RFI Bud KB3FSU
Antenna Crew Steve KB3FJJ
Awards Darryl N2DIY
Bulletin Al W3TI
TWA Web site Shane KB3JFK

One Step at a Time

By W3TI

We relinquished our spot on the front page for a very informative story about getting started in amateur radio and I noticed the writer made comment a number of times, " You have to be interested enough to want an amateur radio license". He also stated, "Trying to make it alone is rough", yet from time to time we come across an aspiring young person who had no difficulty whatsoever in passing those exams.



Our first experience with this was 1991 while teaching 17 candidates for the Novice class.. One of the students attended the first two class sessions and skipped the rest of them. One month later he announced he had an Extra class license.

By memorizing elements 2, 3, 4a .and 4b he was able to pass the Novice, Technician, General, Advanced, and Extra class exams. Passing the 20 word per minute code test automatically gave him the Extra class.

This was great, all the members applauded and gave him a pat on the back for such an astonishing achievement. However having all that book learning he was lacking experience and practical application so it was not as great as it seemed. A great deal is lost if you don't really know "Why 2 times 4 equals 8". Is it just because the book sez so ? How about the real reason why 2 times 4 equal 8.

Getting back to reality, the Volunteer Exam session of March brought forth another such prodigy who studied the book for one month and passed element 2. We were happy to see Shane Heck KB3JFK join our group as the newest Technician in the club. Oh Yes! Lest we forget, his lady friend, Lauren Kuklis KB3JFJ, studied along with him and also passed the Technician class requirements. June 7 brought forth the usual number of candidates for exams and among those was Shane. This time he passed the 5 WPM Morse code test and element 3 which upgraded him to General class.

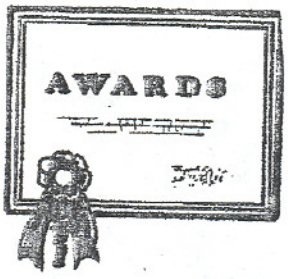
KUDOS and congratulations are in order for Shane. Both Lauren and he are not going it alone. They attend Wednesday evening teck sessions and have the usual beginners questions. We suggest you stay tuned to "Splatter" for the future adventures of Shane and Lauren.

In the "New Member Department" we welcome Robert Culp KB3IDV from Lehighton who recently upgraded to General class. Other additions to membership are Tim Brady, KB3D, Cressona and Eugene Mason KZ5V , visiting from Texas, temporarily stationed in Pottsville

The Future belongs to those who believe
In the beauty of the Dream

What Haven't We Done YET !

Your amateur radio club has just about completed "Full Circle". So far we've had our hands (*and feet)* involved in just about every facet and activity amateur radio provides. Our membership consists of innovators, inventers, and experimenters. Young people, middle aged, and "Nobodies That Old". Blue collar and White collar workers. Students, mechanics, professional, and the retired. Yes, from age 17 to 83, and all in between who will try anything once, even twice.



We just modified the By-Laws in time to welcome our first student members, Lauren Kuklis, KB3JFJ and Shane Heck, KB3JFK from Tamaqua. Another new member we'll see a lot of is Robert Culp KB3DIV from Lehighton and Tim Brady KB3D from Cressona.

Our own Volunteer Examining team is quite busy, hasn't missed an exam session since it was organized in 1983. Other committees not listed in other radio clubs is our very knowledgeable antenna crew and another good group is for sniffing out unwanted RF. Although the elder members are not as agile in climbing trees or towers, they do their share as "Elmers". They are also good at holding on to tie off ropes at field day and dropping the wrong antennas.

Unlike the ARRL, our club has awards such as DXL and WAD certificates available to the members free. The awards committee is working on a new one," Worked All Neighbors". At various times during the year TWA members help Tamaqua Borough with Geological and Radiological surveys required by the DEP in Harrisburg. Special Emergency operator's photo identification badges were made available and signed by Borough Manager himself.

The club's Video Tape library is available by just filling a sign-out application. Tapes vary from Basic electronics for the beginner to the higher level digital electronics for the more experienced.

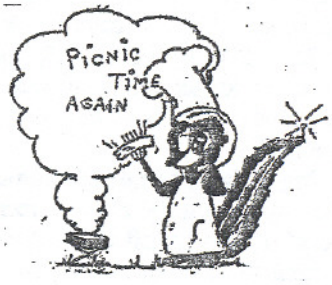
When you attend a club meeting you'll hear about the latest DX worked or all about PSK- 34, and how not-to load up a 40 meter dipole on 20 or 80. Do you know which bands and frequency to use for Slow Scan TV.

The club secretary added another activity for the beginner by sending Morse code practice over the 147.345 repeater. W3TI uses a computerized system whereby club bulletins are sent via tone modulated CW on Saturday evening at 8 p.m. Code speeds vary from 5 to 13 WPM.

It seems we filled the whole column with on going activities for the Tamaqua Wireless Association and we still haven't covered everything. One thing we haven't tried yet is a Fox Hunt.

TWA Annual Family Picnic

Yes, summer is just about over, July is here and gone and our next big event is planning for the annual club picnic to be held Saturday September 6 at Weickers **Wackie Woods on Chee Street in Locust Valley.** This event is for members and family only. To meet each other and have a final fling before sheding the straw hats and Bermuda shorts for the long Johns and heavy insulated overcoats.



The action usually starts around noon and goes until— Who knows when. Since the club invaded Weickers grove there are all kind'a lights and receptacles installed for our convenience. The only thing lacking is seating, therefore we suggest you bring your own favorite folding lawn chair. Otherwise, you might have to stand all afternoon.

The club supplies the Hot daugs and Hamburgers, it's been past practice for the balance of foodstuffs to come from each family group with the donation of a covered dish.

Saturday September 6

It would assist greatly if you would inform the picnic committee in advance what you plan to bring so we don't end up with three or four bowls of the same thing. Dish donations usually consist of Potato Salad, Macaroni salad, Baked beans, Mixed fruit bowl, pretzels & chips, Deviled Egg platter, jar of pickles and olives, Red Beet Eggs, or be innovative and invent something different.

Regarding the liquid refreshment, there was a time when the club purchased 5 or 6 various brands for the individual who didn't care for the brand consumed by the majority. This put quite a kink in the treasury. Therefore, a vote taken indicates the majority will be satisfied with Lager brew on draft and Pepsi Cola for soft drink. However, there is no harm in bringing your own brand.

One of the afternoon activities has been the club auction of good, usable, amateur radio parts or excess equipment from your junk box. As usual, we might have a few "White Elephants" for sale.

It's Never to Early

If you were an active member this year you will have noticed the club sponsored a bunch of activities whereby some required us to dip into the treasury to defray expenses. The judiciary made a long range view into the budget for year 2004 and see no reason for an increase in dues. The new 2004 cards are printed on blue card stock and ready for distribution. The Secretary-Treasurer will have them available at the club picnic.

Field Day Nostalgia

By W3TI

It's Saturday morning and we're awake two hours earlier that any other Saturday. The sun is trying hard to break through the cloud cover. While sipping our usual cup of black coffee we go over the check list one more time for anything else we may have forgotten. Yes ! it's the beginning of another *Field Day Exercise.* We have the two meter rig on the local frequency so we can swap notes with the rest of the crew and find out what time the safari will take off for the hinterlands Field Day site. We remind them not to forget to bring as much rope as they have, make sure you have your favorite lawn chair loaded. Well I guess its time to roll,

Field Day here we come !

Field Day 2003 is now history and all we can do is spin yarns about all the action and reactions of those who attended. To most, Field Day is just a weekend out in the country air where we gather to set up equipment and operate. To others its an excuse to get out of town for a few days. There may be other reasons or explanations of why "You" - "We" hold Field Day each year at the end of June. However, since I experienced my first Field Day in 1946 I have had plenty of time to catalogue and characterize the attendees into various categories. **(Please note** * *Personal health, Family problems, and Shift workers are automatically excused from this listing. The Bread and butter pay check comes first)*

Nr.1 . The F.D. Committee chairman , he'll be there early from start to finish. He'll have an itemized list an arm and a half long and see that each item is properly placed.

Nr.2 . Then you have each Committee in charge of various items, e.g., Erect the 80 meter antenna. Secure the latrine so the wind won't blow it over. Keep the generator gassed up and full of oil, and several other groups. They are the people who have had previous experience in setting up the site.

Nr.3. Then there are the *Wantabees* who show up at the most opportune moment right after all the antennas, Tents, and all the wires are strung out.

Nr.4. Along with the *Wantabees* we have *Freddy the Freeloader* who will make his grand entrance during the erection of an antenna or setting up one of the stations and asks, 'When is the keg going to be tapped ?

Yes, this is what Field Day is all about , - - But not quite, let's backtrack about 48 hours. What about all those items that make up a Field Day station, where does it all come from. The tent, table and chairs for the operators. The Hell box of emergency parts, small tool kit, Antenna matcher, Rig, SWR bridge, coax cables, Automatic Keyer, pencils, pencil sharpener, scratch pads, UTC Clock, log sheets, scratch paper, extra head phones, AC Tapaline, Scotch Tape, Bug Lites, Sun Block, Bug Spray, American Flag, Cooling Fans. beverage coolers, ice for the coolers. Where does is all come from, some one or two or three, and many more gather the parts and pieces to put it all together.

First we start in the garage and locate the antennas rolled up neatly from last year., ground stakes, step ladder, long coax cables, 450 ohm ribbon feedline, Red marker flags, Garbage bags, Big refrigerator with Ice, Rope Folding Lawn chairs, First Aid kit, And lest we forget, our eating utensils, one never knows what the cook has prepared for chow.

If you happen to be a part of the commissary cooking and food department you might need some or all of the following items. Large frying pans and pots, Coleman stove, charcoal, charcoal grill, long handled forks, and ladles. Paper cups , plates, eating utensils, and don't forget the food itself has to be purchased in advance. Yes, this is all part of Field Day.

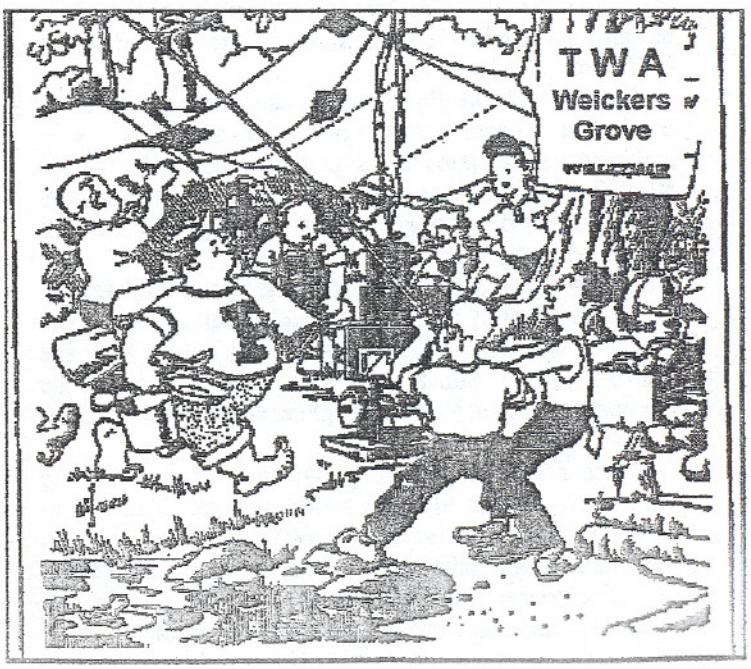
One thing for certain, the same group, Category's Nr 1 and 2 will also be there when its time to dismantle the stations and drop the antennas.

Then its back to the home QTH and store all the gear, wire, oil and wipe down the pots and pans so they don't rust, and after you attended a few such outings you will make up a log and list every item and where you put it so you can find it next year. Or you might have to get it out sooner for a real emergency.

Now we come to the final question, Why Field Day, what is the sense of it all. One has to be crazy or half cracked to do all of this just for one week end.

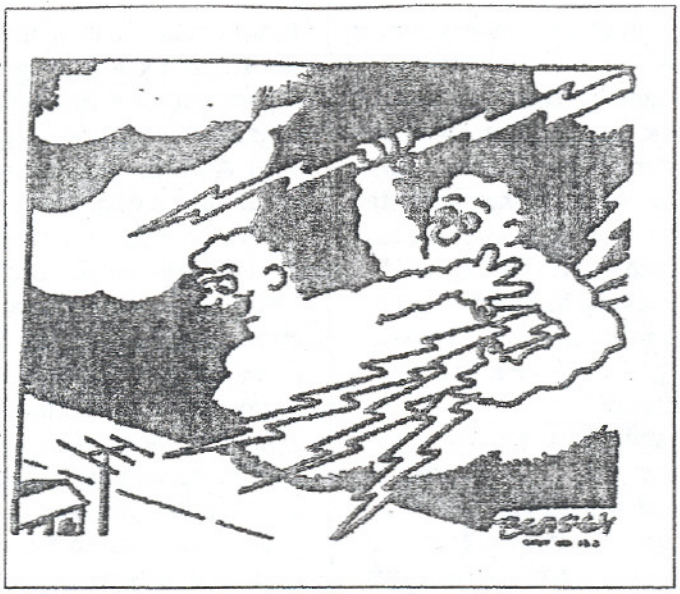
It all began during the damaging floods in the early 1930's when Amateur Radio operators came forward and volunteered the only source of emergency communications. That is why it always rains on Field Day. Amateur Radio exists because of the service it renders. You don't have to be nuts to be a Ham operator, but it helps.

In conclusion, there may be portions of this article that you may not agree with or not to your liking, but if you've been to as many Field Days as ye writer, you will get the picture.



Tips on Lightning Protection

By AB7RG



There is no "sure thing" that will assure or guarantee that you will not lose any of your radio equipment when there is a lightning strike in the close proximity of your shack. These are just a few tips that have been seen and heard from other hams using it should help minimize the risk to your equipment. Remember, there's never a guarantee when it comes to lightning.

One of the first things I advise hams to make up some sort of quick disconnect box for their coax. Mine is outside just a few feet away from where it enters the house. It's a closed in metal box with copper buss going to ground. The coax enters the top of the box from the antennas and hook onto some "All thread" barrel connectors. Some people just disconnect the coax from the equipment inside their house and put the end in a glass jar. I don't like this idea , if there is a direct hit you will have that lightning ball coming right down into your house.

My grounding box, as I call it, also has drain holes in the bottom but shielded from the rain. A small battery powered light is located inside the box for those "midnight disconnects". It keeps the hands free as you quickly disconnect the coax and not having to hold a clumsy flash lite. My station ground is also in this box and hooked to the buss bar by a PL-259, I can disconnect and isolate the line from the shack. This box is then connected to two 8 foot copper clad ground rods driven into the soil.

After you completed constructing the grounding box it is a good idea to get some various colored tape and color code your cables. Write the code system on a piece of paper and put one inside the box and another in your wallet for future reference.

Keep in mind nearby lightning can destroy your radio equipment, it doesn't need to take a direct hit. I have seen and heard static jump the center core conductor to the outer shield on a piece of coax when there was a nearby storm. This is not very good when your equipment is still connected to the coax.

Another thing, one that most people tend to forget is your rotor control cable. I have mine set up with DIN plugs, it is the last thing I disconnect, after I turn the beams into the wind. It does not necessarily have to be DIN connectors, any low voltage disconnect type connectors will suffice.

Please notice my station ground and coax grounding box are not connected to my tower grounds. I wanted to make the lightning more "attracted" to the tower's ground than the coax grounding box. The tower is grounded itself to 8 foot copper clad steel ground rods. The tower guy wires are insulated from ground by using porcelain strain type insulators. The reason for that, if someone would be foolish enough to be hanging on to a guy wire during a storm, they wouldn't get nailed while holding the wire. Most people are smart enough not to do this, but there are always a few exceptions.

Now that you have effectively isolated your shack from lightning, to the best of your ability, you will want to think about some indoor antennas. One 1/4 wave two meter mag mount on a piece of metal should do nicely. That and a J-pole half wave will also do the job and a marine deep cycle battery will do for emergency operations.

These are a few things I personally use to help protect the radio gear. I hope this gives you some ideas to think about when next thunderstorm season arrives.

TWA "Editors Follow-up"

The above article is well written and gives you some ideas to think about in grounding your shack from lightning strikes. However there are a few items we wish to draw your attention. The article was written by Clinton AB7RG who resides in Cottonwood, Arizona where the average all year-around temperature is around 75 to 90 degrees. Mounting his grounding box outside is okay, his midnight disconnects never need to be made through ten or twelve inches of snow and 5 or 10 degrees above zero like we have here in the North Temperate zone of Eastern Pennsylvania.

Clinton is a firm believer in using lots'a ground rods and says nothing about running radials for additional grounding. He overlooks another point of grounding, and states he wants to keep his coax and tower grounds separate which cannot be so. Any beam antennas he has mounted on his tower will have the braid (ground potential) part of the coax connected to his tower via the aluminum boom. Which means, his antenna ground and shack are both one and the same ground potential.

His suggestion on putting insulators on his guy wires are only necessary when you have extra long guys that might be resonant with one or more of the ham bands you operate. The idea is to cut the guys into lengths that are not a multiple of 8, 16, or 32 feet. In addition, anyone stupid enough to hang on to a guy wire during a thunder storm deserves to get nailed

The lesson to be learned from such articles are; first look at the system; second, check out the locations where it is adapted. Then, again, everybody has their own ideas about how to ground their communications system.

W3TI , Editor