



Capers

February 2011 Issue

Candlewood Amateur Radio Association - Post Office Box 3441 - Danbury, CT

Visit us on the Web at <http://www.danbury.org/cara>

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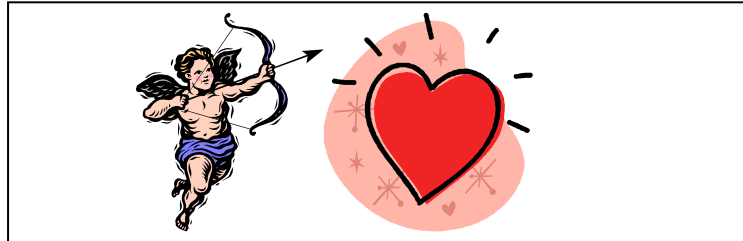
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Treasurer – Bill Webb – W1AFX - phone - 203-775-0536

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Meeting: Friday, February 11, 2011 8 p.m. @ Stony Hill Fire Station



From the President...

Hi Folks,

Welcome to Winter....in the Extreme! Sheesh, What a lotta snow!

I don't know if anyone else has (yet) but I've had to shovel off my roof! Water was dripping in my bedroom, and Dr;s orders...No Shoveling....my XYL was able to procure a Snow Rake, so now I can cope. Hope you all are too.

Our repeater continues to give us fits and will be dealt with when weather allows access to the site. Please be patient. In the interim, I suggest that all set up their radios to allow Simplex on the Output....that is, program a memory location for 147.300, NO DUPLEX, and no PL. We did this one Sunday for the Net and had pretty good results. Those that have 440 capable radios can still use the 447.775 repeater but will not hear someone on 2M simplex. 2M transmissions will be heard on 447.775 due to linking, but if the 2M output is down, range will be severely limited for 2M receive. Yep, it's a little confusing.

February's Program will be a presentation on VHF Antenna construction by Mark, N1MG. We can all learn some tips and tricks from him. I'm looking forward to his presentation.

73 and BE CAREFUL with those Ice Dams!

QH

CARA VE session schedule:

Sessions For 2011

Sessions are held at the Stony Hill Fire Station at 59 Stony Hill Road (Route 6) in Bethel, CT.

Registration begins at 11:30 a.m. Walk-ins are always welcome; pre-registration is not required.

For further info, contact Frank Sileo, N1PE, in Ridgefield, CT at 203-438-0218 or frsileo@att.net.

March 5, 2011
June 11, 2011
Sept 10, 2011
Dec 3, 2011

OPERATORS NEEDED FOR CARA SUNDAY NET!

Additional volunteer net controllers are needed for the 7:30 Sunday evening CARA net. Right now, Bill, N1TIW and Harlan W1QH are handling the lion's share of the work. Some additional volunteers – even for one or two Sundays a month – would be appreciated.

Any licensed club member can handle the net. There's a simple script to guide you and it's excellent practice in net operation for ARES work you may be involved in.

Don't be shy. Please get in touch with Harlan, "QH" to let him know your availability. You'll be added to a list so we can alert you when your help is needed to cover an upcoming net.

NETS...



CARA Weekly Net:

Sunday nights at 7:30 p.m. 147.30+ (PL 100)

Connecticut Phone Net (CPN) Monday through Saturday, 6 p.m., on 3.973 and Sundays at 10 a.m. on 3.965...

CW Connecticut Net, Nightly, 7 p.m., 3.533 (note correction to 3.533)

WestConn Net: Nightly at 8:30 p.m. 147.18+ (PL 114.8)

Tips Net: Tuesday evenings at 7:30 p.m. on 146.73- (PL77) (linked statewide).

R-Com Weekly Net: 145.47- (PL100) Thursday Evenings, 8 p.m.

ConnARES Local VHF Net: (now part of Area 5): Second Monday of each month, 8 p.m. on CARA repeater: 147.30+ (PL 100)

Conn ARES Issues Net: 3.965 mHz +/- on Thursdays @ approx. 6:15 p.m. (following CT Phone Net.)



“CQ DX, CQ DX, CQ DX...”



Club Members Pitch in for Annual W1 QSL Card Sort

If it's January it must be QSL card sort time for CARA, and that was again the case at the January 14th meeting. More than a dozen CARA members pitched in to help the ARRL QSL Bureau by manually scanning and sorting hundreds and hundreds of QSL cards headed for W1-call sign hams. The cards, representing countries and territories around the world, were carefully checked for their intended destination before being tossed in alphabetized boxes and bins and bound in bundles for return to the bureau.

In early years, paper bags with large Magic Marker letters served as the “high tech” means of separating the cards. But that method has gradually evolved into organized bins and a matrix sorting device—both of which help speed the task. Once again, pizza, beverages and good conversation helped the evening move along

quickly and smoothly during this annual service project for the W1 ham community!



What looks like a giant “tic-tac-toe” game is a foam-core matrix of alphabetized compartments that really helps speed card sorting.



Ken, KD1DD, conducts a table-top “mini-sort” that will later be dropped in appropriate alphabetized cardboard boxes.



Close-ups of some QSL cards destined for W1-area hams.



Deciding on the destination of dicey QSL cards sometimes calls for a group consultation.

(Photos and article by Barry Connolly)

Contribution from Dan KB6NU

Now, I have a favor to ask you. If you have space in your newsletter this month, I would like to ask you to mention the new e-book versions of the No-Nonsense Technician Class License Study Guide. There is both an Amazon Kindle version

(http://www.amazon.com/No-Nonsense-Technician-Class-License-ebook/dp/B004G8QVD2/ref=tmm_kin_title_0?ie=UTF8&m=AG56TWVU5XWC2&qid=1295917361&sr=8-1) and a Barnes & Noble Nook version

(<http://productsearch.barnesandnoble.com/search/results.aspx?WRD=kb6nu&page=index&prod=univ&choice=allproducts&query=kb6nu&flag=False&r=1&ugrp=1>). Both cost \$9.99. Of course, the PDF version is still free on my website at www.kb6nu.com.

Thanks & 73!

Dan KB6NU

Fractal Antennas: Hype or Hope?

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

QRZ.Com currently has a very interesting item on fractal antennas

(<http://forums.qrz.com/showthread.php?t=277623>). While the idea of applying fractals to the design and construction of antennas has been around for quite some time, very few hams have actually built them, and there are currently no companies building commercial fractal antennas for the ham radio market. The question, of course, is why?

Those that are hyping fractal antennas—most notably W1YW, CEO of Fractal Antenna Systems—claim several advantages. These advantages purportedly include wider bandwidth and smaller size

when compared to traditional antennas, such as verticals and dipoles. Those that are trying to debunk these claims contend that this is all just hogwash, and that there's no real scientific basis for these claims.

One thing that's confounding this debate is that there have been very few articles published on the topic. For commercial reasons, W1YW has made his articles unavailable. He says that he will be publishing something real soon now, but there is nothing definite at this point.

There is at least one article on the Internet that describes the construction of a fractal antenna for amateur radio use. "FYI:FYQ: Another look at the Fractal Quad Yagi" (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/18788401/FYIFQY>) was published in the October 1999 issue of 73 magazine. It describes the construction of a two-element, 10m antenna. Like most 73 articles, it's not incredibly technical, though, and doesn't really contribute to the technical debate, except to demonstrate that physically small antennas can be made using fractal design.

The PDF contains several photos of the antenna. It's a crazy contraption that looks relatively difficult to build. So difficult, in fact, that it makes me wonder if it's even worth it to try building one. After all, 10m antennas are not really all that big or all that difficult to build to begin with.

Even more interesting than the antennas are the personalities on both sides of the debate. The QRZ.Com discussion quickly devolved into a flame war, with neither side scoring a knockout.

Personally, I think the brouhaha is much ado about nothing. It seems to me that it's been demonstrated that you can build antennas using fractal design techniques. They are

physically smaller than traditional antenna designs, but you really don't get something for nothing. Overall, they don't have as much gain as yagis or quads, and they're more complex to build.

My opinion on this is that if W1YW can build antennas that radiate a signal and can sell those antennas to someone, then more power to him. In the end, his company will live and die by how well, his antennas work and how much they cost when compared to antennas from other companies.

As for me, I think I'll stick with the more traditional HF antennas. If I need to make my antennas smaller, I'll use loading coils or designs such as the Moxon. I may not be on the leading edge of technology, but I'll certainly avoid a lot of headache trying to figure out who's right.

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When not avoiding flame wars on QRZ.Com, Dan, KB6NU, operates CW on the HF bands, writes and publishes license exam study guides, and teaches ham radio classes. You can find his ham radio blog at www.kb6nu.com.

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Dues Notice

CARA dues are due in January. If you have not renewed your membership yet, please do so at the work meeting Jan 28 or the next regular meeting on Feb 11.





Candlewood Amateur Radio Association
P.O. Box 3441, Danbury CT 06813

2011 CARA Membership/Dues Application

Name: _____ Call: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Class: _____ Phone: _____ VE: _____ ARRL: _____ e-mail Capers: _____ (default Yes)

e-mail address: _____

Full Member
\$30 _____

Family (2 members)
\$52.50 _____

Family (3 members)
\$65.00 _____

Family (4 members)
\$75.00* _____

* \$10 each additional member

Senior (65+)/College Student \$23.50 _____

Associate Member (Non-Ham)
\$15 _____

Student (Under 18)
\$5 _____

Send this form and a check in
the appropriate amount to
Club Treasurer:

**Bill Webb, W1AFX
12 Stage Road
Brookfield, CT 06804**

(w1afx "at" arrl.net)

CARA Meeting Minutes for January 14, 2011

This was our usual January DX QSL card sort “square dance” and pizza party.

Overseas amateur radio stations take advantage of the ARRL QSL card bureau as a low cost way to send their cards confirming contacts with United States operators. The successful operation of the system relies upon volunteers at all levels who sort the cards by call sign so they (eventually) reach their destination. It isn't fast, but the price is right. After the cards are sorted, you only have to pay domestic US postage.

Our piece of the puzzle is to take several hundred QSL cards, that have been forwarded from the “W1 QSL Bureau” (run by the Yankee Clipper Contest Club, www.yccc.org), and sort them by first letter of the call sign suffix. For instance N1TIW would end up in the “T” bucket. After sorting the cards, which are now in packs according to first letter of the suffix, they are returned to the Bureau to be further sorted and finally mailed to the operator. Each of the ten Bureaus (plus others for US Possessions) have slightly different ways of handling the mailing and postage. Those details may be found on the ARRL website.

The actual sorting is very labor intensive but we are helping the ARRL with one of their services, socializing over pizza, and seeing some very interesting QSL cards.

During a break in the action, we held a short business meeting.

Treasurer Bill Webb, W1AFX, reported a current balance of \$10,711.69.

The CARA 2 meter repeater is an important part of our service to the community and, of late, it has failed several times.

To ensure uninterrupted 2 meter coverage, it was proposed that we purchase a backup repeater. John, W1JMA, made the motion that we allot \$1,000 for this equipment. The motion was seconded by Gene, KL7CE, and since it is a rather large expenditure, this proposal will be presented to the membership for discussion at our next meeting.

A second item of business concerned the Special Event Station celebrating the 80th anniversary of CARA. We are looking at two possible locations in Bethel. Since we would have to reserve the site before our next meeting, Ken, KD1DD, made the motion that we appropriate up to \$125 (the cost for the more expensive of the two locations) for this purpose. The motion was seconded by Bob, AC8O, and passed by a voice vote of the members present.

Bill Thoren, N1TIW, Secretary



Repeater Committee Update

At the January business meeting (Jan 28), there was a discussion about the club's repeater operations. As many members are aware, it's been increasingly difficult, not only to access repeater equipment and antennas, but also, to keep the various pieces of equipment tuned and maintained. To help with this, Gene, KL7CE, and Steve, W1SMS, have stepped forward to offer their services -- supported by Ken, KD1DD; Bill, N1TIW, and others -- to coordinate Club repeater operations and ongoing requirements. Gene and Steve plan to spearhead a standardized on-line database of equipment, specs, operating instructions and protocols that can readily be accessed by all club members. They also have offered to develop and implement a long-term plan for the club's repeaters, covering operation and maintenance, equipment needs, budget, site requirements and related support. Any club members, who currently have information about the club's repeaters, including history, operating manuals, schematics, site wiring diagrams, history of modifications or repairs, repeater coordination documents, FCC or local government authorizations and/or agreements etc. are encouraged to send either originals or electronic scans (PDF, Word documents) to Gene (genegregory@sbcglobal.net) who, with Steve, will collect and organize all repeater-related information within the integrated Club database. Any club members who would like to be directly involved in this project are invited to contact Gene or Steve. Further discussion will take place at regularly-scheduled club meetings. —
Barry, KA1JDD, for Bill, N1TIW

Pocket Tazer Stun Gun, a Great Gift for the Wife

A guy who purchased his lovely wife a pocket Tazer for their anniversary submitted this:

Last weekend, I saw something at Larry's Pistol & Pawn Shop that sparked my interest. The occasion was our 15th anniversary and I was looking for a little something extra for my wife Julie. What I came across was a 100,000-volt, pocket/purse-sized Tazer. The effects of the Tazer were supposed to be short lived, with no long term adverse affect on your assailant, allowing her adequate time to retreat to safety.

WAY TOO COOL! Long story short, I bought the device and brought it home. I loaded two AAA batteries in the darn thing and pushed the button... Nothing! I was disappointed. I learned, however, that if I pushed the button and pressed it against a metal surface at the same time; I'd get the blue arc of electricity darting back and forth between the prongs.

AWESOME!!! Unfortunately, I have yet to explain to Julie what that burn spot is on the face of her microwave.

Okay, so I was home alone with this new toy, thinking to myself that it couldn't be all that bad with only two AAA batteries, right? There I sat in my recliner, my cat Gracie looking on intently (trusting little soul) while I was reading the directions and thinking that I really needed to try this thing out on a flesh and blood moving target.

I must admit, I thought about zapping Gracie (for a fraction of a second) and then thought better of it. She is such a

sweet cat. But, if I was going to give this thing to my wife, to protect herself against a mugger, I did want some assurance that it would work as advertised. Am I wrong?

So, there I sat, in a pair of shorts and a tank top with my reading glasses perched delicately on the bridge of my nose, directions in one hand, and Tazer in another. The directions said that: a one-second burst would shock and disorient your assailant; a two-second burst was supposed to cause muscle spasms and a major loss of bodily control; and a three-second burst would purportedly make your assailant flop on the ground like a fish out of water. Any burst longer than three seconds would be wasting the batteries.

All the while, I'm looking at this little device, measuring about 5" long, less than 3/4 inch in circumference (loaded with two itsy, bitsy AAA batteries); pretty cute really, and thinking to myself, "no possible way!" What happened next is almost beyond description, but I'll do my best.

I'm sitting there alone, Gracie looking on with her head cocked to one side so as to say, "Don't do it stupid," reasoning that a one second burst from such a tiny lil ole thing couldn't hurt all that bad. I decided to give myself a one second burst just for heck of it. I touched the prongs to my naked thigh, pushed the button, and...

HOLY MOTHER OF GOD.
WEAPONS OF MASS
DESTRUCTION. WHAT THE... !!!

I'm pretty sure Hulk Hogan ran in through the side door, picked me up in the recliner, then body slammed us both

on the carpet, over and over and over again. I vaguely recall waking up on my side in the fetal position, with tears in my eyes, body soaking wet, both nipples on fire, testicles nowhere to be found, with my left arm tucked under my body in the oddest position, and tingling in my legs! The cat was making meowing sounds I had never heard before, clinging to a picture frame hanging above the fireplace, obviously in an attempt to avoid getting slammed by my body flopping all over the living room.

Note: If you ever feel compelled to "mug" yourself with a Tazer, one note of caution: There is NO such thing as a one second burst when you zap yourself! You will not let go of that thing until it is dislodged from your hand by a violent thrashing about on the floor! A three second burst would be considered conservative! A minute or so later (I can't be sure, as time was a relative thing at that point), I collected my wits (what little I had left), sat up and surveyed the landscape:

My bent reading glasses were on the mantel of the fireplace.

The recliner was upside down and about 8 feet or so from where it originally was.

My triceps, right thigh and both nipples were still twitching.

My face felt like it had been shot up with Novocain, and my bottom lip weighed 88 lbs.

I had no control over the drooling and, apparently, I had crapped in my shorts, but was too numb to know for sure, and my sense of smell was gone.

I saw a faint smoke cloud above my head, which, I believe, came from my hair.

I'm still looking for my testicles and I'm offering a significant reward for their safe return!

PS: My wife can't stop laughing about my experience, loved the gift and now regularly threatens me with it!

If you think education is difficult, try being stupid!!!!

Two CW Stories

An Army buddy of mine recently sent me a link to a video he found on the Internet. I'm sure that everyone has seen this video by now. It's a video taken from an old Jay Leno Show in which Jay wanted to find out which mode of communication was faster: Morse code or texting with a blackberry device.

He got together with four young men in the studio: Two men were amateur radio operators and the other two brought their blackberry devices with them. Then Jay had these two 2-man teams sit at two different tables and gave them each a piece of paper with a message on it. At the signal "Go!" each "sender" sent his message to his "receiver" partner. One sender worked his texting skills on his blackberry; the other sender sent CW on a telegraph key on this table. The "winner", of course, was the telegraph team. It was an interesting experiment and I knew that the CW team would win.

However, here is "Side Story" about my friend and CW: My Army friend, who sent me this link, is a Vietnam Veteran and was, at the time, what the Army called a "Ditty Bopper" which is a slang term for a High Speed Radiotelegraph Operator.

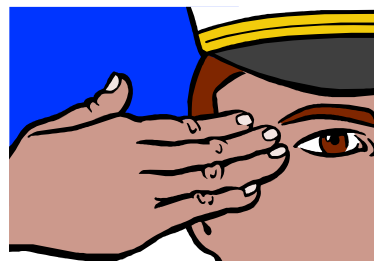
It was his job to monitor certain radio frequencies and listen for enemy CW radio traffic. He would copy code at speeds of up to 20 WPM. He would copy code using a MANUAL typewriter. This was called copying CW "By Mill".

The CW was sent in "code", that is, scrambled letters and numbers. This printed text would then be sent to cryptographers ("code breakers") who would then try to decipher the message hidden inside these groups of scrambled "gibberish".

These guys were so good that they could copy CW and carry on a conversation with the "station" next to him both at the same time.

"If You Love Your Freedom, Thank A Vet."

Tom Buckley WB2TRY
U.S. Army Military Police Corps
(1964 – 1966)





This picture is related to the above story and shows a typical Army Morse code training class where the “students” are learning how to copy CW, via manual typewriter, at speeds up to 20 WPM. (Circa 1960). The course was given at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, which was about 35 miles due west of Boston. While copying the code, they would type 5 letters; leave a space, 5 more letters, space, 5 more letters, space, etc, etc, until they had ten 5-letter groups across the page on the first line. Then, drop down one line and do it again for the next 4 lines. At the end of the fifth line, they would then drop down two blank lines and start the next five-line group. The code is all sent in random letters and numbers, so, you can’t guess what the next letters will be. This CW course runs about eight weeks. The typewriters, called “Mills”, are specially made typewriters that have only capital letters in them. Numbers and punctuation are all on separate keys. You will notice that these men are working with their shirts off. There was no such thing as air conditioning, or heat, in these wooden so-called classrooms which were, basically, just large wooden shacks with just enough wiring for lights and power to run the Morse code sending machine. The passing grade for the course was 18 WPM. My Army friend tells me that, after he had gotten his code speed up to 18 WPM, and he could do it WITH A PENCIL, the Army changed their minds about where they wanted him to be, pulled him out of the class, and re-assigned him to a different kind of unit! The “cans” that were on the student’s heads were “field grade” units (hard plastic), left over from WW II, and not too comfortable to wear.

Tom Buckley