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Almost, but Still Looking...

Over the last several years, I have been in pursuit of the perfect battery to power my rig at Field Day and other remote locations. It has been quite a challenge to find a battery that is light, powerful and easy to recharge. I thought that I had a good one with the Buddi Pole nano phosphate Li Ion battery pack. It was small, light weight and powered my HF rig most of a Field Day event. It was expensive but it did work fairly well. The draw back was it needed a special charger to efficiently charge the battery pack. I was able to make that work with a solar panel for a while, but it eventually failed.

Next I tried to build my own Li Ion battery pack, and mathematically it looked like it would work out well, but alas it too was problematic when it came to charging it and it didn't have much endurance.

Then I tried a Ryobi 40v Li Ion battery designed for lawn and garden equipment. Since I had several of these batteries for use in my various lawn and garden tools, and since they are usually just sitting in their chargers, not being used in those tools, I felt that they were an under utilized asset that could be put to use with my rig. In order to easily use this option I needed to pair the battery pack with an inverter which Ryobi also makes. and it does run my rig if I use it to power a switching power supply. It also was of limited duration and it was a bit cumbersome since it needed those extra devices to make it work. It still does work fairly well in spite of the added hardware that is required, but far from ideal.

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UPCOMING Events for February 2022

- ♦ RARC Sunday Night 2Meter Net is held on the 146.970 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control operators for February are:

February 5, 2023	Wayne w0wlo
February 13, 2023	Shawn kd9kgq
February 20, 2023	Mark kb9ofk
February 27, 2023	David kd9epn
- ♦ **Saturday** morning Rag chew, weekly on the 146.970 repeater, 8:00-9:00 AM.
- ♦ **February 6...** Post holiday party at Schmidtt's
- ♦ **February 20...** Trustee Meeting, Time: 5:30 PM, Fork and Fable (formerly Arterial Bar and Grill) All members are welcome to attend.

PRESIDENTS COMMENTS

Hello, Everybody,

We are in the midst of winter in Wisconsin. It is a good time to find indoor projects. I hope that you have some radio-related projects among the ones that you have on which to work. Time making radio waves is even better than making projects.

I've been putting plans together for Riverland Amateur Radio Club and its activities for 2023. We are increasing our operating activities this year. I hope you are able to join us, and bring a friend or two.

As the club has done in past years, we will operate a little of Winter Field Day. We'll have a station in the shelter at the park on Monica Lane in Onalaska. We'll start setting up by noon on January 28, and hope to operate starting at 1 PM for about three or four hours. It's a time to visit, so we encourage bringing a dish to pass, and certainly like to get newcomers on the air. They can get a taste for working SSB and FT8. We'll have both modes running.

Our Post-Holiday Party will be on Feb. 6 at Schmidt's. Cocktails at 5 with the meal at 6. The RSVP deadline will already have passed by the time this is published. Feel welcome to join us anyway. There will be food for you as each party will order off a limited menu, but there may not be a gift if we don't know you're coming. Please don't let that stop you.

Before you know it, we'll be heading into the busy season for our club's events. There will be more details to follow on each event, but here's a snapshot to fill your calendar:

March 11: St Patrick's Day Parade

Downtown La Crosse

March 12: Wisconsin QSO Party

A shorter event than Minnesota's.

May 13: MS Walk

Downtown La Crosse

June 10: Picnic

This year's picnic will include a fox hunt.

June 24 - 25: Field Day

The biggest event of our year.

July 15: NAQP - RTTY

A new event to try, and new mode for many of us. There will be a primer at the July meeting, but look ahead to learn what you can about RTTY beforehand. You can start today. GOTA!

August 5: RARC Swapfest

New venue - Bethany Church, 3936 Cty Rd. B, La Crosse.

September 16: WI Parks on the Air

We did this from Perot Park a few years ago and had fun. We even met a Cub Scout troop that was coincidentally passing by.

The year will also feature VEC testing sessions and our regular club meetings. There is an effort this year to make the meetings more practical and hands-on. Please bring your enthusiasm and your questions. The meetings are a good place to get and give Elmering. We will look for members to participate with a Shack Share, so think about how you might present your shack and what others might learn from it. Please let me know if there is something specific that you would like to see discussed at a meeting, or if you have something you would like to present.

Drew, AB9NE



That Elusive First Contact

I've been involved in ham radio in one way or another since my early teens. I used to go to the local club meetings of the Spokane "Dial Twisters." As a teen, however, I was unable to learn the Morse code. I tried tapes but would memorize the tapes before leaning enough of the code. In retrospect, what I needed was someone to practice with, but nobody offered, and I didn't know at the time to ask.

Fast-forward to 1983 and my first duty assignment in California. A new-found friend with similar interests told me of a local class for novices and invited me to go. About three weeks later I passed the Morse code test. (I had someone to practice with), and the only major hurdle was overcome. I don't think I studied at all for the written but I aced it easily; after all, I'd been reading the handbook for at least five years!

I don't remember how long it took, but sometime later I get the call KB6AOL; yeah, it would be funny to have that call today. At any rate, at the time I didn't own a radio, and while I had access to the club station, I had other things on my mind so I left California without making a single contact.

When I went home on leave I spent most of the month building a forty meter QRP transceiver from a combination of articles in QST and the handbook. I think I used the tuna tin two transmitter and one of the mountaineer series receivers along with various other things.

I strung up some wire, did a quick review of the code, and called CQ a few times, but, as might be expected when one combines no experience, 200 milliwatts, a direct conversion receiver, and a substandard antenna in an urban environment, no real results were obtained. The transceiver eventually became parts for other, more pressing, projects. I still have the audio filter though; it's in my SW receiver.

After returning from Germany I bought an Eico 753 at a yard sale and tried hooking up some wire antennas, but my code was too rusty and my interests were being pulled strongly in other directions. KB6AOL had never made a contact; I let my ticket lapse....

....until now.

A recent need for a kindler gentler morning wakeup led me to construct a one-transistor FM broadcast transmitter so my alarm clock would play streaming audio instead of nasty broadcast FM. That project woke up something else, however, the thrill I get from building RF projects.

A short diversion into part 15 experiments was interrupted by the realization that I could just get a new ham ticket. A few phone calls later I was scheduled to take elements one, two, and three the following Saturday.

Computers make studying Morse code a LOT easier, I managed to learn enough in that week to pass the code test both ways, i.e. 25+ straight copy and seven or more questions right. The only thing necessary for me to pass the other elements was read every question, yes, all 900 of them, once.

Less than a week later, on the day of the power outage no less, my call showed up in the database, KC8YGZ, that's a mouthful no matter what mode you say it in. The following day, my FT817 showed up at the door. By the evening, the power was restored, the batteries were charging and I was futzing with some hastily made dipoles. The following afternoon, I chased down the mailman to get my LDG Z11 kit, built it that evening and by 10pm Saturday night I was sending out a signal on 40 meters.

....sort of....

Several hours later I was hoarse, metaphorically that is; my CQs went unanswered. To make matters worse, I'd call CQ only to hear someone else calling CQ on the same frequency. Much faster than me of course; no point in trying to answer. They didn't hear my CQ in the first place, and although I knew they were calling CQ, I sure couldn't copy the call.

Well, of course, nobody could hear me. After all, I only have five Watts, and my antennas are substandard. This calls for (drum roll please) ANTENNA EXPERIMENTATION!!! Well, for the next few days I tried dipoles, long wires, the rain gutter, verticals made of this that and the other thing, I even loaded up the window frames. I tried almost every stealth antenna trick I could find on the net. I live in a first floor apartment, so I must use a stealth technique. To be clear, I am hearing people, and in fact, there hasn't been a significant variation in my ability to receive. The full length, but bent, forty meter dipole seems to work about as well as anything I can get away with putting up outside, at least on receive.

After much reading about the challenges and successes of others I settled on a couple of antennas that "should" work, built them carefully enough so that they would work without the tuner on at least some portion of the band and sat down to focus on making a contact.

Well, let me tell ya, after you call CQ and your own call about seven hundred and fifty times you get really bored and start to send too fast. Yes I tried listening for others calling CQ, but someone would always beat me to answering, or, more often, they were sending too fast for me.

I felt it best to hang out on the novice bands as that should be where slow CW ought to be tolerated, and besides, I'm trying to live that missed novice experience.

So I'm sending my CQ in a very blas' manner and out of nowhere, holy cow, someone starts to transmit as soon as I stop and it sounds like they might be talking to me. I copy "something something something DE WJ0C WJ0C something." I wasn't sure, was he talking to me? All of a sudden I got very very nervous, and simply sent WJ0C WJ0C DE KC8YGZ KC8YGZ. At least I think that's what I sent; I might have made some mistakes. After I stop, here comes a flood of code. I started copying, but it's too fast; I get flustered, Lost. I got something of the QTH, but didn't here my own call anywhere. He stops, was he talking to me; I still don't know. I copied hardly anything of what he sent and if he wasn't talking to me, well, I didn't know what to send, I panicked, froze, right there. Yes, I'm a grown man, and yes I panicked about something so trivial. Anyway, I waited a minute for something else and then just started calling CQ again, this time much more slowly.

I tried for several more hours moving between 7110 and around 7040, but no more contacts or "possible contacts" where had.

Jim, if you were talking to me, I apologize for not giving you much of a conversation.

It's been almost thirty years since I first became excited about ham radio, and I still haven't made that first HF contact. I have no intentions of giving up. I might try building a fifty wattish tube PA, or, what the heck, just getting my hands on a more powerful transmitter. But ultimately, I want to succeed with low power because building is what I enjoy, and low power stuff is far more approachable.

So, if you hear my anemic CQ on 7110, could you perhaps send a quick email to KC8YGZ@planetp.org saying "Daryl, I heard your CQ from [fill in your QTH]". At least that way I'd have some idea of how far my signal was reaching. The way it stands now, it looks like I might get my extra ticket before I ever make a single HF contact. I'll be taking element four in September.

You can be sure I'll be asking for a systematic call change, at least that way if Jim was talking to me, I might get a second chance.

73
Daryl
KC8YGZ



Almost, but Still Looking... (Continued)

Another thing that I tried to eliminate the need for the inverter and the switching power supply was a means to drop the 40VDC to 12VDC. To drop the voltage of the battery from 40VDC to 12VDC I needed a Buck voltage convertor that could drop the 40VDC to 12VDC. This all fit nicely in a 50 cal ammo box with added Anderson Power Pole connectors that made it very portable and fairly easy to use. The Ryobi battery only has 6AHRs of power so it only works my rig for a short time, requiring me to swap batteries to continue operating. Since I had several batteries, this was an inconvenience but it did work. Still not the most efficient use of resources, so I again looked around.

I found several different makes of Lithium Ion Battery packs that might just fill the bill. After researching the various makes and types, I settled on the EcoFlow River Pro power station. It has 720Watts of capacity and it has ports for powering USB devices, 120 VAC devices, and a 12VDC port. It is a bit heavy, about the size and weight of a 12 pack of soda, it is well designed and can be monitored and controlled remotely from an iPhone, it did look promising.

73
Carl

KC9HGS



BUY-SELL-TRADE-ISO



Wanted: Articles for The Key

Please submit your Article by the 26th of the month and include "The Key" in the subject line.

Send your Amateur related classified ad(s) to Scott, NLT noon the 26th of each month to kb3mkd@arrl.net. Please Include "The Key" in the subject line.

Looking for items for this space

CLUB INFORMATION



Riverland Amateur Radio Club

PO Box 621

Onalaska, WI 54650

- * The Key is published monthly and e-mailed to members and friends of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club by the 28th of each month. The newsletter focuses on news, announcements and activities of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club. It may also consist of news and information of interest to the Amateur Radio community as a whole. Guest editorials and articles related to Amateur Radio are welcome. Contribution articles should be submitted NLT the 26th of the month. Address any correspondence or anything that should be included in the newsletter to: Scott Cross KB3MKD@arrl.net. Please include the word "Key" in the subject line of your submission.
- * The Riverland Amateur Radio Club maintains a website at rarc.qth.com. More information about the club can be found there as well as past copies of The Key.
- * RARC also maintains a Facebook page where members add information and share their Amateur Radio adventures. Please friend us at Riverland Amateur Radio Club—RARC.
- * RARC maintains a repeater that is located on the WXOW television tower above La Cresent, MN. 146.970 pl 131.8.
- * RARC holds a weekly 2meter net on Sundays at 8:00 PM on the 146.970 repeater.
- * Trustee Meeting is held the 3rd Monday of the month at Fork and Fable at 5:30 PM, all club members are welcome.
- * Program evening is held the 1st Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM, elmer session at 6:30 PM at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 401 West Avenue in La Crosse.
- * Weekly "Breakfast Club" Ragchew on the 146.970 repeater on Saturdays from 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM. Stop by to say "hi".

Below are listed your RARC 2022 Board of Trustees and contact information.

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