

PVRC Newsletter *October 2013*

President's Letter – Rich NN3W

From 24,000 feet above Raleigh, North Carolina, Greetings PVRC!

We're well into the heart of the fall contest season and PVRC is abuzz with activity. Unfortunately for me, it has not been radio activity, but work But, I digress.

We've started the fall season with quite a bang. The September VHF QSO Party was well subscribed by our short wavelength brethren and I noted a lot of really great scores out of that. The same weekend saw the much beloved (or much hated) Worked All Europe contest which gave us quite a show with rates on 15 meters that rival some of the larger CQ type contests. Be sure to tune in for the trifecta in the WAE contest with the RTTY event – set for the weekend of November 9 - 10. Unlike the WAE SSB and CW editions, everyone can get into the QTC craze. Don't know what a QTC is? Ask one of the WAE regulars. It's a novel twist on the standard 5NN xxx contesting.

Not all of the activity has been on the air. I have four important pieces of news to convey.

First, I neglected to mention it in last month's newsletter, but the Annual PVRC Fowlfest will be held on Saturday, October 5, at W3NRJ's QTH in Darnestown, MD. Based on responses thus far, it looks like it's going to be well-attended. Please let Jim know if you plan on going – he can fill you in on directions.

Second, the club Officers and Trustees are working towards finalization of a change to the fabled PVRC 5M program to include the North American QSO party events – starting in January 2014. We're close to reaching a consensus on how this will be managed, but believe that including these events will do well towards encouraging new and less "hardware wealthy" stations to get a nice piece of the 5M pie. That being said, the inclusion of the NAQP events is likely to be on a trial basis – likely two years – and will be re-examined to ensure that participation meets our expectations and goals.

Third, it is October, and that means that the annual election for PVRC's club officers and trustees is nearing. A slate of officers will be soon proposed, and nominations will be accepted. Please email me if you have an interest in overseeing the future direction of the club.

Finally, I'd like to congratulate Ken Low KE3X on being selected as a Team Leader for the 2014 World Radiosport Team Championship. We wish Ken well up in Massachusetts (as long as his team score is below mine!). While we're on that topic, I'd like to thank all the PVRCers who made Ken's ability (and, as it turns out, my ability) to serve as a Team Leader for WRTC. I did a quick analysis of my Sweepstakes, IARU, NAQP, and CQWW, and PVRCers were in the logs by the hundreds. Your participation helped tremendously. Additionally, it would have been difficult to qualify had it not been for the strong and stalwart support of guys like N3HBX and N4RV who open up their stations to guest ops. Thanks, one and all!

While we're on the topic of PVRC participation and guest operating, I'd like to remind everything of an annual tradition that is just around the corner – the **November Sweepstakes**. We have "owned" the gavel for four or five years in a row now. I have heard that our arch rival on the Left Coast (the Northern California Contest Club) is throwing everything they have at taking back the ARRL Club Competition gavel. I don't intend to let that happen. WX3B has already begun beating the drum; but Jim is but one in the tribe. We're going to need to bring out all the tools in the woodshed for this event. Please mark your calendars for November 2-3 for the CW leg, and November 16-17 for the SSB leg.

Go PVRC, beat NCCC (and SMC....)

73 Rich NN3W

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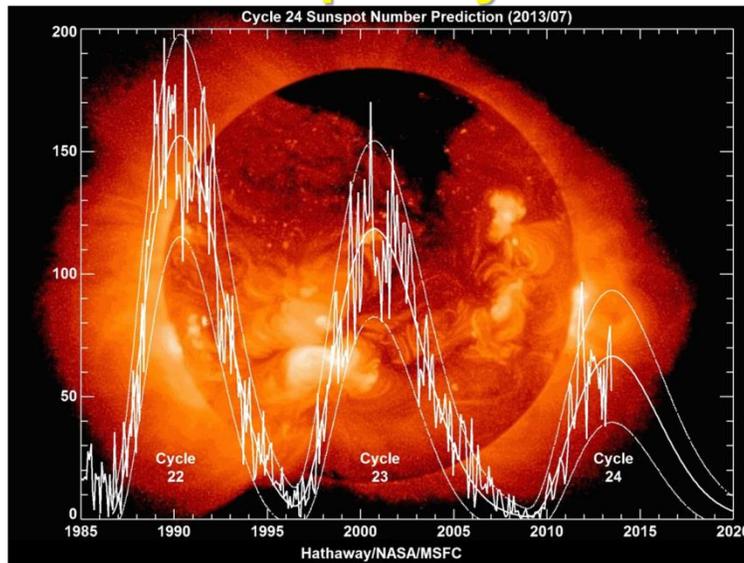
NASA Solar Cycle Update – Frank W3LPL

This solar cycle update was presented on August 17th at the Huntsville Hamfest by David Hathaway of the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center Science Office.

As he says, "Don't shoot the messenger"

http://solarscience.msfc.nasa.gov/presentations/20130817_Hamfest.ppt

The Incredible Shrinking Sunspot Cycle



Membership News – Bud W3LL

PVRC added one new member since the last newsletter. Please welcome Bud, W2RU who is moving from YCCC territory to PVRC-land in the Southwest VA Chapter.

Chapter leaders please remember to complete the [Meeting Attendance Report](#).

How Kids in Italy View Their Dad's Hobby – Eric W3DQ from Rick K8VK

This is the photo of the month from the Italian version of ARRL called the ARI: Associazione Radiotecnica Italiana.

The photo is entitled "there's a house in the woods, with daddy's antenna"



A New Operating Table at N4UA – Geo N4UA

Like N3RR (PVRC Newsletter, July 2013), and for some of the same reasons, I also decided that I needed a new operating table this year.

From my Novice days in the early 60's, my entire ham career had been spent in basements. I built a new house on our farm in central Virginia in the late 90's, and I was bound and determined to get rid of the space heaters that had always been necessary under my operating tables to keep my toes from freezing! Since I designed the house, I was able to include a room designated as the "Study" on the main floor, sandwiched between the Laundry Room and the attached Garage, at the end of the house furthest from the Master Bedroom. Curiously, it was also located directly above the entry point for mains power and telco in the basement. I was thrilled to finally have a

hamshack unworthy of the name. I equipped it with a cast-off office desk, threw my radio gear on that, and proceeded to have fun.

Well, one rotator control box became two, then four. Stackmatch boxes started appearing, followed by receive antenna controllers, multiple monitors – you know the progression – and finally, it was out of control. I wanted to add a second radio to see if my feeble skills could tolerate SO2R, but that meant additional boxes for filters and controllers and, even more importantly, many more interconnecting cables. There was **no more room!**

I decided to build a new operating table. I wanted to incorporate all the best features of every good shack I had ever visited, but I quickly concluded that I would concentrate on a short list of must-haves and see how it turned out.

- Room for two radios (K3/P3 in this case), installed at keyboard height. I have used radios on short risers above the table and I find it to be incredibly tiring to tune. (I know what you're thinking – so just run all the time...)
- Comfortable table height for keyboarding. I am not a tall person, and the standard desk height of 30" requires that I adjust the chair so that either my wrists or my legs are comfortable. My new table is 28.5" above the floor
- More horizontal equipment location and less vertical "stacking". The new table is 8' wide and 30" deep, with one full-width 18" shelf above the radios.
- Improved cable management and access. This really should have been #1. I have often been frustrated while trying to add/delete/troubleshoot a piece of equipment, reaching over a precariously stacked pile of equipment to snake one particular cable out of the rat's nest "back there" – why is it always a DB9 with jack screws that snag every #\$\$%^ cable along the way?, attempting to read the connector labels on the back of a box while using a flashlight and a mirror, knocking stuff over, all the while exercising my blue language skills.
- It should be not-ugly. I make no claim to be a great wood worker, but I was shooting for something above cinder blocks, bare 2x4s and unfinished plywood.

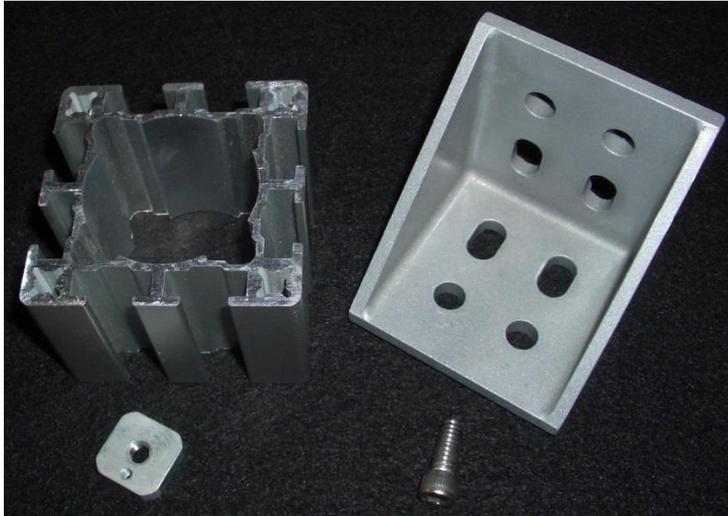
When I first set down with a sketch pad last winter, I drew the floor plan of the room and placed the new table along one wall, allowing space behind the table for personnel access. This would have worked, but the thought of that "wasted" space behind the table bothered me. The breakthrough came in a discussion with one of my sons, who described his method of moving his metal and wood working equipment around: he mounts everything on total-locking casters. These casters lock not only the wheel on the axle; they also lock the vertical axis of rotation. I googled "total lock casters" and found several sources. I ordered 4" casters, capable of supporting 300 pounds each, from <http://www.needcasters.com>.

Now that I knew that the table would be pulled out from the wall for access, I set about deciding what the table should look like. But first, a detour:

I retired last summer after 40-some years of designing radio electronics. Along the way, I developed a love for metal working and, once I moved out to the farm, I had room for a rather complete machine shop. Now, all of you wood workers know how hard it is to throw away a piece of wood that might be useful someday. It's no different for metal workers, and I long ago took to heart the words of a machinist I knew: "There's no such thing as scrap, only oddly-shaped raw material". This accounts for breakthrough number 2.

Several years ago, the company was retiring a couple of pc board stacking machines (that feed and retrieve circuit boards from the wave-solder line). I grabbed one of them just because they

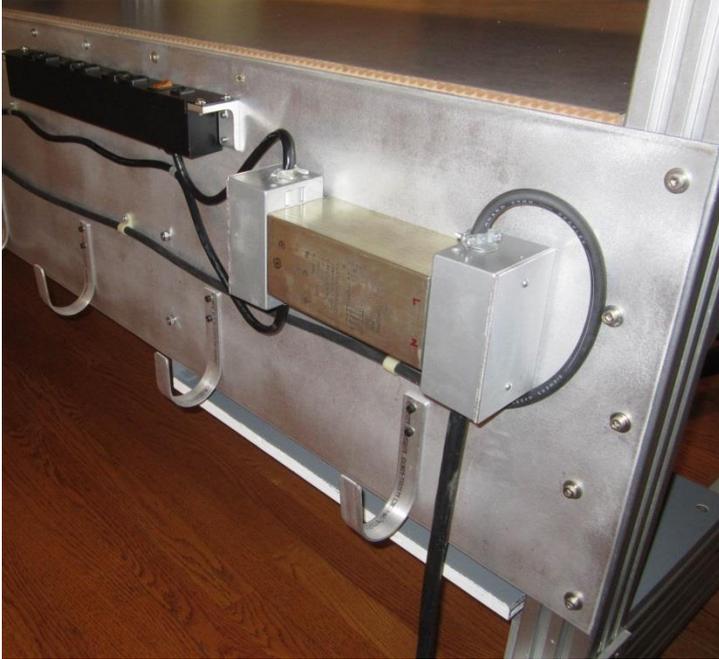
had cool motors and gear trains and stuff. The “bones” of the machines were what is referred to as 80/20 aluminum extrusion. It comes in many sizes, but basically it’s a stock extrusion with an assortment of nuts and brackets that can be used to join and attach stuff in all sorts of ways – I call it Erector Set for adults. I had a pile of the stuff out in the tractor shed just because I thought it was too good to scrap out. When I looked at the pile last winter, I no longer saw scrap: I saw my new table.



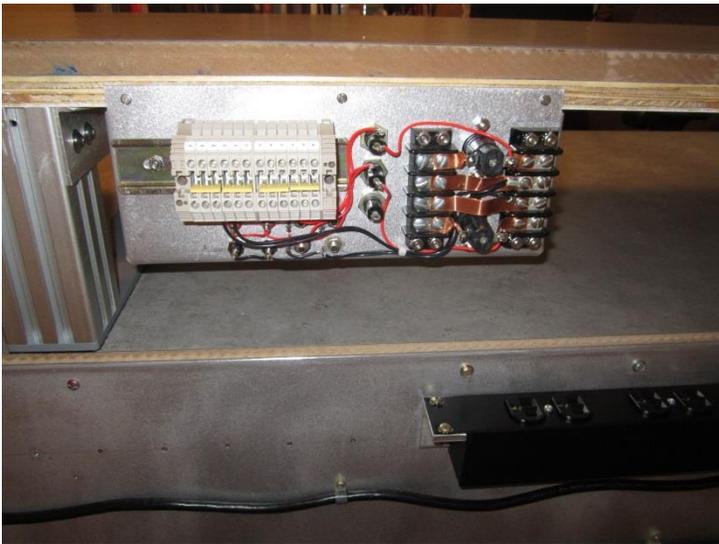
The design really started to take shape now. I knew the overall dimensions, I knew the framing material, and I knew it was going to be on wheels. I started cutting aluminum and piecing the sides together. I added a 8' x 16" x 1/8" aluminum plate to the back to tie the ends together (a chunk out of an aluminum sign that had been sitting out by the barn – oh, sure, like you don't keep junk around just because it might be good for something, someday!). I made the table top and shelf out of 3/4" plywood laminated to 3/4" MDF, overlaid with a gray laminate for appearance.



I added two small shelves underneath for power supplies and such. The back wall has dedicated power outlets and a mains filter, all controlled by one master switch on the front leg. In addition, I fabricated some wide aluminum hooks to aid in cable management.



There is a centrally located, fused, 12V power distribution panel on the back of the shelf.



Once the table was finished, I had to disassemble it and move it from the basement to the upstairs shack. But first, I had to tear down the existing station and give away the old desk (thanks KK4XX) and find a strong back to get the new one moved (thanks N2QT). My "high tech" operating table was in place.

You can see the master power switch on the left leg, just in front of the old HB 3CX1200 amp.



It took darned near all of March to get the new table wired and everything running again. I took another step towards automation by remoting all of the antenna switching to a KK1L 2x6 box in the basement, so it seemed like I had to re-make every cable I touched.





Here's the finished product:



Everything fits and, so far, the layout seems about right. The ability to unlock the front two casters and roll the table out a few feet has come in handy one or two (dozen) times, and it does provide for a clean installation. While I do not expect anyone to duplicate this table, I hope a few of the features will appeal to others.

One non-radio accessory visible in this picture is the Ergotron dual-monitor arm. It's not inexpensive, but I highly recommend it; it's stable and it allows fingertip relocation of the monitors.

For instance, during contests I slide the left monitor down a few more inches but can quickly move it up if I need to access something behind it.

While I do not expect anyone to duplicate this table, I hope a few of the features will appeal to others.

Upcoming Contests and Log Due Dates

Contests This Month

- Oct 5 – EPC Russia DX
- Oct 5 – Oceania DX SSB
- Oct 5 – CA QSO Party
- Oct 12 – Oceania DX CW
- Oct 19 – Worked All Germany
- Oct 26 – CQ WW SSB

Logs Due This Month

- Oct 4th – CQ WW RTTY
- Oct 10 – SARTG RTTY
- Oct 31 – All Asian DX SSB

See WA7BNM's [Contest Calendar](#) for more detail and the latest information.

Pictures of the Crowd at W3LPL Open House – Paul N4PD



Eyeball QSO Directions

The latest info on local club meetings and get together will always be sent out on the [PVRC reflector](#) and posted on the PVRC [web site](#).

NW Region: Meetings are generally held on the third Tuesday of each month at the City Buffet, 1306 W. Patrick Street, Frederick, MD. (301) 360-9666. It's in a small shopping center. Most arrive about 6 PM for dinner and informal discussions. The meeting begins at 7:00 PM.

From W. Patrick Street, turn up McCain Dr. (the Mountain View Diner is on the corner), then turn right into the shopping center, then turn left and search for a parking place. The City Buffet is tucked back in the left corner of the shopping center behind the Mountain View Diner. You can't see the City Buffet from W. Patrick Street. Contact: Jim [WX3B](#)

Central Region: Meets monthly the second Monday of each month, except June, July & August). The location alternates between the below MD and VA locations. Pre-meeting dinners start at 6:00 pm and meetings start at 7:30 pm.

VA LOCATION: Anita's, 521 E. Maple Ave, Vienna, VA. Tel: 703-255-1001. Meets at this location during the months of February, April and October.
Contact: Rich [NN3W](#)

MD LOCATION: Max's Café. 2319 University Blvd W, Wheaton MD 20902. Tel: 301-949-6297 People usually begin arriving at the restaurant around 6:30. Meets at this location during the months of January, March, May, September and November. Contact: Art [K3KU](#)

The Laurel, MD Region: Bill N3XL The PVRC get-together is held at the first [LARC](#) meeting each quarter at the clubhouse.

The Annapolis Crew: Dan K2YWE Meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month at Broadneck Grill in Annapolis. We gather at about 5:30 PM and order dinner about 6. We break up usually before 8 PM. E-Mail [K2YWE](#) to be put on the e-mail reminder list.

PVRC-NC: The PVRC NC-East chapter meetings are held at [Manchester's Bar and Grill](#) on the 9100 block of Leesville Rd. in North Raleigh, with "QRM" beginning at 6:00pm and the dinner meeting following shortly thereafter. The meeting is held monthly on the 1st Thursday of most months, cancellations or changes usually announced on the [PVRC-NC website](#). [The PVRC NC-West Chapter](#) holds its meetings on the 4th Monday of each month at [the Mellow Mushroom](#), 314 W. 4th St., Winston-Salem, NC. Ragchew at 7:00pm, dinner meeting starts at 7:30pm. All contesters and interested guests are invited!

Central Virginia Contest Club: Ed NW4V Meets the first Tuesday of the month at St. Martins Church, 9000 St. Martin Lane, Richmond VA, (between W. Broad St. and N. Parham Road). Our meeting begins at 7PM.

Over the Hill Bunch: The group meets for lunch at noon alternately in Maryland at the College Park Holiday Hotel Route 1 and the Beltway or in Virginia at the Parkview Marriot near route 50 and the Beltway. Meetings generally are held on the last Wednesday of the month and are subject to change. Meetings are announced by E-Mail. All PVRC members, non-members interested in membership and guests are welcome. For information contact Roger Stephens, K5VRX, 703-658-3991 for Virginia meetings; or Cliff Bedore [W3CB](#) or get on 147.00 for Maryland meetings.

Downtown Lunch Group: Meets on the 3rd Wednesday or Thursday of the month in the downtown area of Washington, DC. Locations occasionally change, but are always Metro accessible. Details are sent out on the PVRC reflector. Feel free to contact Eric W3DQ or Brian WV4V for details and directions.

Southwest VA Chapter: The Southwest VA group meets each Wednesday at about 8:30 AM at Hardees at 20265 Timberlake Road in Lynchburg, VA. This is an informal gathering, but normally has about 10-12 attendees..Contact Mark Sihlanick N2QT, Tel: 434-525-2921

SOMD Region Meeting: The Southern Maryland Chapter meets at 6:30PM on the first Tuesday of even numbered months. We meet in the vicinity of Charlotte Hall, MD, with the specific location (usually a local restaurant) to be announced several weeks prior to the meeting (keep an eye on the reflector). These meetings are open to all PVRCers, guests, and those interested in joining PVRC. Contact Tom AB3IC for information: e-mail: GL1800Winger@verizon.net - cell: 240-434-3811

If you'd like to add or correct a listing, contact K3TN for inclusion in the Newsletter!

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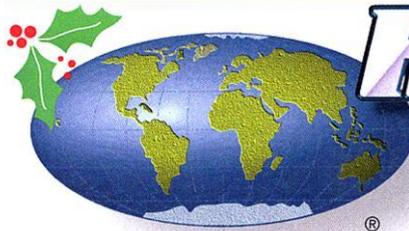
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