



Potomac Valley Radio Club Newsletter April-May 2008 Edition

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*Congratulations to All PVRCers for a Great
2007-2008 Contest Season!*

From The President

from Ken K4ZW

It's great to see all of the WPX SSB scores reported on the club reflector. If you haven't shared your score or thoughts on this or any other contest you've participated in, please do! After a busy fall/winter contest schedule, the good news is that next big event is not until the end of this month May (WPX CW). I'm sure many of you have enjoyed the downtime!

For those of you who haven't seen it already, Tim Duffy, K3LR has posted the Dayton Contest Super Suite web page at <http://contestsupersuite.com/>. The PVRC is the Friday night pizza sponsor. I hope to see you there.

I am also pleased to announce that Steve Bookout, NR4M will host an open house on August 23, the weekend after Fowlfest. I've fielded a number of questions about the station Steve is building at "The Farm", so here's your chance to check it out for yourself. More details will be provided later.

Editor's Musings

from Eric W3DQ

As the contest season and the heat generated in the ionosphere winds down, heat on the various contest related email reflectors, blogs and bulletin boards heats up. This season's topic de jour started out as contest cheating and morphed into CW Skimmer. The subject – or subjects – brings out the emotions in all readers and posters. In this writer's opinion, today's political climate promotes shouting versus listening and emotional versus thoughtful debate and discussion. I hope this changes, as I plan to add more on both subjects (contest cheating and CW Skimmer) in future newsletters.

In the meantime, I encourage you to visit Jamie Dupree's (NS3T) <http://www.radio-sport.net> site for objective news reporting on all aspects of the radio-sport hobby. Another publication that covers all aspects of radio-sporting, from direction finding contests through

regional and international "traditional" contesting is *RadCom*, the monthly magazine published by the Radio Society of Great Britain. And don't forget the *Contesters' Rate Sheet*, available for free from the ARRL or The *National Contest Journal*, also from the ARRL. There are lots of other interesting and valuable resources,

Thanks to this issue's contributors. Keep sending those articles and pictures go to your editor at [pvrc at his.com](mailto:pvrc@his.com)! Enjoy the change of seasons. See you in the pileups!

Mark Your Calendar

May 12: PVRC Central Meeting
May 16-18: Dayton Hamvention
May 21: PVRC Downtown DC Lunch
May 24-24: CQ WPX Contest (CW)
June 7-8: PVRC On-Air Reunion
June 21: W3LPL Open House
June 28-29: ARRL Field Day
July 12-13: IARU HF Contest
August 16: FOWLfest

PVRC Toroid Group Buy Wrap-Up

Thanks to all of the PVRC members who participated in the Spring 2008 Toroid Group Buy.

Members purchased approximately \$2500 worth of toroid material in order to build common-mode chokes for antennas and to remedy RFI and interference issues.

While there are no "leftovers", it's likely that those who purchased toroids may have some items they are not needing. Don't expect another group buy until this time in 2008... *at the earliest!*

CW Skimmer News

from Pete N4ZR

Reverse Beacon Network - April 18

The reverse beacon network has started to take off. As I write this, we have 8 CW Skimmer reverse beacons active, and 14 have been on the network in the last 24 hours. 20 and 40 meters are currently covered, and stations are active in the US east coast and midwest, as well as northern and southern Europe. The US west coast came on last night, and will be back. I have a promise that a station will be activated in VK-land soon.

Reverse beacons come and go at will. The network is constantly changing. You can find out which reverse beacons are active by going to <http://skimmer.dxwatch.com/skimmers.php>. See the spots pour in at <http://skimmer.dxwatch.com>.

Felipe, PY1NB has also activated a pretty sophisticated query capability on the main site at <http://skimmer.dxwatch.com/> With a little thought, you can find out what is being heard by a given reverse beacon, by whom, on what bands, etc. For example, you can see what European stations were heard first on a given band on a given day in the US - F5RRS opened the 20M band today, all up and down the East Coast.

A couple of notes for prospective participants:
-- A wide-band receiver is not absolutely required to try out the reverse beacon idea. Download and install a trial copy of Skimmer 1.1 (you can do this again even if you downloaded a trial copy of version 1.0) from www.dxatlas.com. Download the "aggregator" from http://skimmer.dxwatch.com/downloads/skimmer_aggregator.zip. Connect a cable from the audio of your transceiver to the Line In jack on your sound card (any old sound card will work for this).

Run Skimmer and set it up in 3-KHz radio mode. Fill in the operator tab. Tune your radio to an area of activity on any band, and you should see CW streams on the Skimmer waterfall. Start the aggregator, and your spots will go to the network - that's all there is to it.

One caution - Skimmer works best if you use its frequency controls to change your radio's frequency - you will have to set up Omni-Rig for your radio, on the CAT tab in Skimmer's settings, and set up for computer control of your radio if you don't already have one. My experiments suggest that if you tune your radio with that big knob in the middle you will have to stop and wait a bit before Skimmer gets sorted out and starts decoding properly again.

Be sure you enter a 6-character grid square in the location field of the Operator tab in Skimmer. We will fix this, but for the moment, if you do not have a full 6-character grid, your spots will not be displayed by the server. If you don't know the last 2 characters of your grid, just use XX.

See you on the reverse beacon network?

Reverse Beacon Network Going Graphical - May 1

Felipe, PY1NB has been busy this week. The main page of the CW Skimmer reverse beacon network server <http://skimmer.dxwatch.com/> now displays a world map on which all active "reverse beacons" are shown as green dots, DX spotted by the CW Skimmers is shown as orange dots, and the paths between the "spotter" and "spotted" are shown. You can mouse over either the DX or beacon dots to see what station it is, and the paths are color-coded by band. You can also set the spot lifetime anywhere from 15 seconds to 10 minutes - if a station is still being heard on the same frequency, Skimmer renews the spot every 10 minutes. Because the service is based on Google Maps, you can zoom in close. With a short spot lifetime and a busy band, the site almost provides an animation of the propagation.

There are still a few known issues on the page, reflecting its beta status. For example, although the "beacons" are accurately located, spots in any given country are still shown in an arbitrary location near the center of the country; Felipe is studying the feasibility of doing a QRZ lookup; and then locating them more precisely. The great circle paths are still a little lumpy, and the mouse-over function is a little twitchy. When you change the spot lifetime, the lifetime of all spots is reset to the new value, even if they were originally much older, so it takes a little while to settle out. Look for additional functionality in the next few weeks, and if you see Felipe in Dayton, say hi and tell him you appreciate all his work.

Meanwhile, the reverse beacon network still needs additional CW Skimmers operating on more bands and in more locations. For example, every morning I spot VK and ZL stations on 40M. I wonder what the VKs and ZLs are hearing, on that or any other band. Who'll be the first reverse beacon in JA, or BY, or HL?

A "Classic Contest"

from Frank W3LPL

[for all the talk about CW Skimmer and new technology,, W3LPL points out this contest, sponsored by the Straight Key Century Club, SKCC-W3DQJ]

Now, here's the contest that the technology averse among us have been dreaming of! No keyers and no computer keying; just straight keys, bugs or sideswipers! The rules are available on the SKCC website: <http://www.skccgroup.com/sprint/sprint-rules.htm>

Can't make it this month? No worries. Straight Key Sprints take place on the fourth Wednesday of every month from 0100z to 0300z!

VHF & Above News *from Jamie NS3T*

PVRC Excels In 2007 September VHF QSO Party

Led by the top overall score from the Grid Pirates at K8GP, PVRC won the Club Competition of the 2007 September ARRL VHF QSO Party.

K8GP led all scores with 1.37 million points, beating out Massachusetts multi-op power W2SZ. The other big chunk of club points came from David Petke K1RZ, who finished second in the Single Op High Power category behind winner K1TEO.

PVRC submitted 21 logs, exactly the same as the North East Weak Signal group - and we came out ahead by only 26,818 points. The club needed every possible point, so, congrats to everyone who submitted their log!

In 2007, PVRC won the club competition in two of the three ARRL VHF events (June and September) and finished third in the January VHF, in which K8GP did not compete.

The 2008 June ARRL VHF is one month away, which gives you some – but not much -- time to get your equipment in order.

For those looking for a bit of VHF/UHF contest action before the June ARRL test, the VHF/UHF Sprints are already upon us. The 2 meter, 222 MHz, 432 MHz and 902 MHz Sprints have already taken place.

The 50 MHz Sprint is up next, 2300z May 10 - 0300z May 11 (Saturday local.). For more information, go to <http://www.sysadnet.com/vhfsprinrules.htm>

Household Appliance Noise *from Ron W8RJL*

I recently solved an interesting noise problem (over the phone) for a ham friend. He had intermittent noise on 3799.5 KHz and other frequencies. The noise was very unusual sounding with a ramping up squiggle noise that would start and stop. It was driving him crazy. I had told him at the last club meeting to call me the next time it came on and I would see if I could hear it from my location which is about 3 miles from his QTH.

Last weekend he called and said “the noise is there”. I listened but heard nothing while it was S7 at his QTH. We then listened at the frequency divided by two and the frequency multiplied by two as well as other frequencies. He could hear it other places but could not locate anything louder. I then made the statement that it was most likely in his neighborhood and he should first eliminate his house. I asked if he owned a portable shortwave radio so he got one out of a drawer and put it on 3799.5 AM and started walking around the house.

Low and behold, the noise peaked at the clothes washing machine. The machine is a front load machine and with a front load machine the drum rotates one way for a while then stops and goes the other way. Each time it started in the other direction the ramping frequency squiggle noise would be heard.

I made several suggestions for a possible fix in addition to contacting the manufacturer. One was to try grounding the washer chassis to his copper cold water pipe. Another was to install a brute force filter in the AC line. If that does not work it might require some ferrite near the motor leads or motor controller leads.

The machine is a Sears Kenmore, Model 417 40052990, with a "UL Listed 138H 03/00" tag, and it was purchased around March 2000. On the front of the machine it reads, "Heavy Duty-2-Way Tumble Action". At my QTH I have a GE front load washer and I have never experienced that type noise so it appears to be make/model unique. The purpose of this posting is to remind everyone that in this time of more and more complex electronics in our homes the noise source can be anything that plugs into the wall and the first place to look is in your own home.

If you want to hear noise audio files and look at wave forms of various noise sources try the link below. My friend is sending his noise file to ARRL and hopefully they will add it to their noise data base:

<http://www.arrrl.org/tis/info/HTML/rfi-noise/appliances.html>

Remember that when chasing noise, just turning off the main breaker in a home power panel will not turn off an Uninterruptible Power Supply. You must actually push the off button on the UPS. I found one UPS unit that generated severe RFI all across the 80 meter band at a hams own home and he was convinced it was a power company problem which they were not solving. Always eliminate your own home first.

73 and Happy Hunting!

Australian Broadcasting Corp. Documentary Program

Many of you have mentioned that you enjoy the historical items we've included in past PVRC Newsletters. Here's another item worth pursuing. Radio National, part of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, produces a series, "Hindsight". The documentary referred to below is about Florence Violet McKenzie, Australia's first female electrical engineer and an amateur radio operator. The show aired earlier this year and is available on-line at: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/hindsight/stories/2008/2189785.htm>

It's a great story, well researched and presented. You'll enjoy it!

Resources and Other Interesting Sites Worth Noting... *from the PVRC Membership*

Just in case you thought CW was an obsolete skill, check out this website: <http://obsoleteskills.wikispot.org/Skills>

Multiple DX Clusters: HB9BZA's 'RXCLUS', a free download from: <http://www.hb9bza.net>

Local Radio Repair Shop Re-Opens

John Miller Communications is again "open for business": Amateur Radio repair, Antique/Vintage radio repair (no restorations), and commercial two-way base, mobile and repeater systems.

Rates are minimum "turn-around". This means there is a set-fee for the job, e.g.- HF amateur solid state transceiver \$165.00 plus parts, shipping, and hourly bench fee of \$68.50 if I need to spend more than 2 hours on the radio. Other rates available upon request. Appreciate it if you would pass this info

John Miller Communications
Liverpool, PA
717-877-3267

Jerry Scarano, ex-W3MVB, now W1ZM *from Jack W3TMZ*

This is PVRC member Jerry Scarano, formerly W3MVB, now W1ZM. I went to visit with him at his QTH in New Port Richey, FL. He is still active on HF. For a man who is 93, he is in terrific health. We shook hands several times and I was the weaker.

I'm sure there are a few older members who will remember Jerry.



Resources And Other Interesting Sites Worth Noting... *from the PVRC Membership*

If you work with wire and/or wire cables this is a nice calculator:

<http://circuitcalculator.com/wordpress/2007/09/20/wire-parameter-calculator>

A good source of copper wire and lots of other related products, including copper strips and bar,

<http://www.parawire.com/magnetwirestore.shtml>

<http://www.parawire.com/copper.html>

Online CQ Magazine Archive Complete; Issues From 1945-2006 Posted On Hamcall.Net

(Hicksville, NY / Mineral, VA) - CQ Communications, Inc. of Hicksville, New York, publisher of *CQ Amateur Radio* magazine, and Buckmaster Publishing of Mineral, Virginia, jointly announce that Buckmaster's searchable online archive of *CQ* magazine back issues, dating back to the magazine's first issue in January 1945, is now complete. The searchable archive may be accessed via the internet at <http://hamcall.net/cq> or via a one-click link from the CQ website at <http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com>.

All issues through early 2006 are now online, according to Buckmaster President Jack Speer, N1BIC. By agreement with CQ, issues are not posted until two years after their publication dates, as paper copies are still available from the CQ bookstore. Newer issues will be posted as the two-year "window" expires.

Buckmaster, which produces the "HamCall" CD and website, and has for decades filmed back issues of CQ onto microfiche for use by researchers and hobbyists alike, has applied its advanced scanning and searching technology for online posting of documents to back issues of CQ. It has taken nearly four years to get all back issues scanned and posted. Pages are available to users as either low-resolution or high-resolution JPEG image files, or as PDF files, which are more "printer-friendly" than the JPEGs.

"One of the great benefits to this approach is Buckmaster's very powerful search engine," which indexes every word on every page, notes CQ Publisher Dick Ross, K2MGA. "It is far better than anything we could put onto a CD." Ross also noted that most readers looking for back issues are seeking a specific article and don't necessarily want to spend the money for a set of CDs, "an amount which can really add up if you want access to nearly 65 years worth of magazines."

On the HamCall archive site, pricing is based on the length of time for which the user wants access. Searches are free, as is access to the first ten pages of each issue, assuring that the table of contents page will always be accessible. Archive subscription pricing is as follows:

- * Searching and access to the first ten pages of each issue: Free
- * 1-day "test drive": \$5 (same as the cost for ordering a reprint of a single article from CQ)
- * 3 months: \$20
- * 6 months: \$30
- * 12 months: \$50

Views are limited to 300 pages per day to conserve bandwidth on the busy "HamCall" server.

How to Work Yourself for Award Credit

from Brian WV4V

Some interesting aspects of the DXCC Awards program came to light from recent DXpeditions. Whether a loophole or not, it appears that you can participate in a DXpedition, work your home station and you may receive DXCC credit for the contact. Although under Rule 1 the DXCC award is said to be available to amateur radio operators, it appears that in reality, the award is granted to the *station licensee*, not the operator. Section 1, Rule 1 states: "**The DX Century Club Award** is available to Amateur Radio operators throughout the world."

However, the operable rule for this discussion is Rule 10: "**10. All contacts must be made** using callsigns issued to the same station licensee. Contacts made by an operator other than the licensee must be made from a station owned and usually operated by the licensee and must be made in accordance with the regulations governing the license grant." The second sentence of Rule 10 is key here in that the operator licensee of a station need not be present at all for award credit. His station could be operated by other operators holding valid licenses at an appropriate level (problem solved when an Extra class guest operator transmits from the callsign and licensed station of another Extra class operator.) "Usually operated by the licensee" is not defined but presumably the operator licensee must have made a few contacts from his home station. Of course club stations are not eligible for DXCC awards.

Developments in Online Logsearch software utilized by some recent DXpeditions permit the software user, in this case the general public, to identify the DXpedition operator who was at the controls during a contact. On the TX5C website it states: "To see who was the operator you worked, just place your mouse button over the band/mode square above." In most cases on the TX5C website a photo and callsign of the operator is displayed although some errors have been reported due to errors logging in. In order to conduct research for this article, I looked up the callsigns of all the TX5C operators and came up with the following results. Four US and three French operators personally had numerous QSO's with their own home stations. Four of these operators' home stations also worked TX5C when other operators were at the mike or manning the RTTY station. In addition, three US and two French operators' home stations had CW and Phone contacts with TX5C when operators other than themselves were present at the key or mike.

Call	Worked Self Band/Mode	Other Op Band/Mode
N6HC	12 CW, 30 CW	40 RTTY
K6SGH	17 Ph	None
N2WB	17 Ph	None
K3VN	40 Ph	None

Call	Worked Self	Other Op

	Band/Mode	Band/Mode
F2JD	40 CW, 20 RTTY, 40 RTTY	30 RTTY
F5AHO	17 Ph, 40 Ph, 80 Ph	40 RTTY
F5PAC	15 Ph, 20 Ph, 40 Ph	17 Ph 40 RTTY
N7CQQ	None	20 CW, 10 Ph 12 Ph, 17 Ph 15 Ph, 80 Ph
K4ZLE	None	40 Ph
FM5CD	None	40 CW 80 CW 160 CW
K8LEE	None	40 CW
F6BFH	None	20 Ph

One question to ponder is how the QSL Manager, N7CQQ, will be able to issue a valid TX5C QSL card to his home station, which had six contacts, without creating a conflict of interest? My first reaction when learning about the possibility of a DXpeditioner working his home station was conflict of interest. However, after reviewing the rules and regulations of DXCC and the FCC, I believe it is permissible. How does this work under FCC rules? Although I have no knowledge of French regulations, US FCC regulations require a control operator for each amateur station. Part 97.103(b) permits a station licensee to designate an alternate control operator. Parts 97.3(a)(1) & 97.5(b)(1) define the separate concepts of operator license and station license. The control operator may be the station licensee or may be another amateur radio operator with the required class of license and designated by the station licensee. Further, if the duty control operator was other than the station licensee, under 97.103(b) it should be noted in the station records along with the name and callsign of the designated operator. In this case both operators have responsibility for the operation of the station.

Eight of the above callsigns have received DXCC awards and have confirmed contacts with DXCC entities in the mid-300's range. While there is no evidence that any of the TX5C participants have or will receive DXCC award credit for the contacts with their home stations, and such information is generally not published, it is interesting enough to know it is theoretically possible, and rumor has it that some DXpeditioners have received award credit for such contacts in the past.

So grab your passport, contact your travel agent, apply for a foreign license permitting you to operate from an exotic location, then invite W3DQ, NN3W, or WV4V to drop by your home as guest operator so you can work yourself on all bands and modes!



Mystery Metal Ball An Outback Space Oddity

By Sean Plambeck

March 28, 2008

Article from:  **news.com.au**

An outback farmer is on a mission to identify a strange ball of twisted metal - purported to be fallen space junk - which mysteriously turned up on his remote property.

James Stirton of Cheepie, 130 km from Charleville in southwestern Queensland, was heading out to feed cattle on his 40,500-hectare property when he came upon the bizarre-looking blackened ball.

"It was just off the road and I had been going up there every couple of days to feed cattle so I would be surprised if it had been there more than a week," Mr Stirton said.

"We got a shock when we first saw it. I had no idea what it was."

Suspecting it was a piece of space junk, Mr Stirton contacted the Aerospace Corporation - a research arm of the US Government - to get some sort of confirmation. "I know about sheep and cattle but I don't know much about satellites," he said.

While a spokesman for Aerospace Corp. told *NEWS.com.au* it was still working to identify the object, aerospace industry sources who contacted Mr Stirton believe it to be part of a rocket launched at Cape Canaveral, Florida, in 1998.

Investigation

Although he made the discovery in November last year, Mr Stirton waited until Easter to launch his own proper investigation into the object's origin.

"I talked to some people in Charleville and got on the internet and kind of figured it out for myself," Mr Stirton said.

He now believes the object is a helium tank wrapped in carbon fibre from a booster rocket used to launch communications satellites.

Mr Stirton said the ball appears to have landed partially on a tree stump, making a crater a few centimeters deep before rolling about 5m to its resting spot.

If it hit you, you wouldn't have gotten up," he said.

"We don't get many visitors here but anyone who has seen it has either wanted to touch it or has stood back afraid that someone was going to jump out of it.

"Everybody keeps telling me that it's probably worth a lot of money but no one's offered me anything for it yet."

About 200 pieces of space junk - parts of satellites and jettisoned rockets - re-enter the atmosphere each year.

Most of it disintegrates but some pieces survive the enormous heat generated on re-entry and make it to the ground.

One In A Trillion

The chances of being struck by space junk are one in a trillion and the only person ever reportedly struck described it as feeling like a gentle tap on her shoulder.

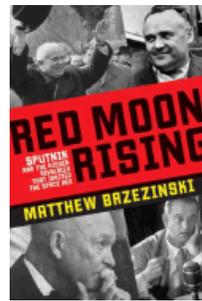
Yet space technology curator at Sydney's Powerhouse Museum Kerrie Dougherty said the objects could slam into the earth at hundreds of kilometres an hour.

"It's not that uncommon to find something like this, particularly in that part of southwest Queensland because there is a very large area of ground for these objects to fall on," she said.

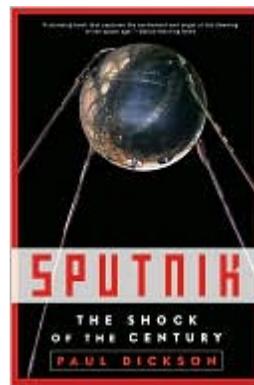
"They're not falling out there every day but there a few reports of people finding stuff each year."

Ms Dougherty said most rockets were launched over desolate areas or oceans to avoid parts falling on people and modern satellites were equipped with the ability to manoeuvre and fall back to earth over unpopulated areas.

Book Reviews by Paul Gibson, WG4M



Red Moon Rising: Sputnik and the Hidden Rivalries that Ignited the Space Age, Matthew Brzezinski



Sputnik: the Shock of the Century, Paul Dickson

I was not yet born when Sputnik was launched on October 4, 1957, so I followed with interest the many reminiscences last year on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the event. Clearly, the ability to tune into the orbiting satellite and hear signals from space was a singular experience

for hams at the dawn of the new era.

The books by Brzezinski and Dickson, published in anticipation of the anniversary, tell the story of Sputnik, albeit from different perspectives. Both recount the rivalry of the United States and the Soviet Union in their efforts to place a satellite into orbit. They cover key events from rival efforts to secure Germany's V-2 spoils of war to the launch of Sputnik and the American response.

Both authors also remind us of the domestic climate prevailing in each country at the time of Sputnik's launch.

(Continued on the next page)

Book Reviews (continued)

For the Soviet Union, Sputnik was launched in the wake of Khrushchev's secret speech denouncing Stalin as he tried to consolidate power. For the United States, it was a time when President Eisenhower dispatched federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas the wake of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision.

But there the similarities in the books end. Brzezinski tells the story as a stark rivalry between the Soviets and Americans to get into space. *Red Moon Rising* recounts the competition in the context of the cold war. Throughout the book, he weaves parallel narratives, about the personalities in both rocket development programs, about the resistance they faced, whether bureaucratic or technical, and about their ultimate successes. Brzezinski describes the personalities, actions, and motivations of key players in each country's space program. The book reads alternately like a spy novel, a cold war rivalry, and a historical narrative.

Dickson, by contrast, places Sputnik in a much larger context, one that he starts with the Chinese invention of crude gunpowder rockets in the 1200s and ends with the Space Shuttle Era. He adds a remarkably thorough recounting of the legacy of the space program, some parts well-known, some parts obscure, not just in terms of technology, but across society at large.

Hams played a major role in hearing the beeps of the Sputnik as it passed overhead, thereby confirming the presence of the new era. Both accounts point to Soviet tactics that made this role for ham radio possible. Well in advance of the launch, the Soviet Union published the frequencies in the Moscow journal *Radio* that would be used for their satellite. Conveniently enough, the Russian's chose two frequencies near the ham bands, "just below 20 kc. and 40 kc.," as Dickson notes, thereby ensuring that a large audience of capable operators would be able to find the signals with relative ease.

As we are well aware in hindsight, however, the space rivalry was punctuated by launch failures, false starts, as well as successes. The initial orbital success, of course, went to the Soviets. The ensuing shock, virtual hysteria in some circles, is recounted by both, along with the failures and ultimate successes of the United States in following the Soviets into space. In the United States, various figures of the time, such as Senators Stuart Symington, LBJ, and Vice President Nixon are depicted, whether maneuvering behind the scenes, grandstanding, or acting out somewhere in between.

An example of the near hysteria in the wake of the Sputnik launch came from none other than White House Press Secretary Jim Hagerty. Shortly after Sputnik went up, Hagerty prematurely publicized an upcoming launch date for what was intended to be a test of a Vanguard rocket. The event, naturally enough, was seized upon by the media as a U.S. reaction to the Sputnik, thereby

ensuring saturation media coverage of the event. The designers knew full well that the odds of success were long, and the event ended in spectacular failure. The failure was quickly dubbed as America's "worst humiliation since Custer's last stand."

Both books, Brzezinski in particular, draw portraits of the key personalities on both sides of the rivalry. Perhaps the most complex personality in the U.S. program was that of Wernher Von Braun. Von Braun is remembered as a scientist, visionary, and charismatic spokesman for space exploration. He is also, it is noted, is a man who once made and screened a film for Adolf Hitler to sell the Fuhrer on expanding the V-2 rocket program late in World War II. Yet in the following decade, while in the employ of the U.S. Army, he came to host a regular segment on Walt Disney's television show to boost popular enthusiasm for space exploration and travel. The journey of a man from Hitler's SS to the U.S. Army is perhaps in itself a microcosm of the perceived political imperatives of the cold war era. The complexities of that journey, however, would re-emerge later in his life: although he served as one of NASA's founding scientists, Brzezinski notes that former V-2 slave laborers later identified Von Braun as responsible for war crimes.

Likewise, in Chief Designer Sergei Korolev, the Soviets had a competitive man seemingly as determined as Von Braun to reach space. A man who spent several years in a Soviet labor camp, he personally pitched the idea to Khrushchev of putting a satellite into orbit. Few of the details of his life and views are well-known, owing perhaps as much to Soviet secrecy – Sputnik was heralded as an accomplishment of the Soviet state and not specific individuals – as to his death less than a decade after Sputnik. Nevertheless, Brzezinski develops a portrait of an individual with a single-minded determination to find a way for his country to succeed in space.

While the accounts provide an in-depth telling of the main events surrounding the Sputnik launch and the U.S. response, the reader is left with little insight into the engineering challenges the teams faced and how they overcame them. Brzezinski summed up the frustrations that the Vanguard team faced by observing that "just about everything that could have cracked, leaked, broken, delaminated, depressurized, detached, smoked, sparked, or shorted out had done so." Those interested in more details about these obstacles, however, will need to look elsewhere.

Thanks to recently available documents from the Soviet era, the authors benefited from insights that were not known in the 1950s. In addition, Brzezinski in particular draws on recollections by Khrushchev's son Sergei (now at Brown University), although the reliance seems heavy at times.

(Continued on the next page)

Book Reviews (continued)

Another key figure at the time was President Eisenhower. The two authors differ on whether Ike was engaged, distracted, or calculating in his public response to Sputnik, which was widely criticized as insufficient. Was he a man out of touch with the times? Was he distracted by domestic events and his health issues? Or was he shrewdly calculating to let the Russians launch first and establish a precedent of overflight from space, something that would benefit the United States greatly in the wake of the vulnerability of U-2 spy planes to Soviet defenses.

Both books give the reader the opportunity to reflect on an event that helped define our country for more than a generation. Whether through Brzezinski's lens of the geopolitical rivalry or Dickson's broad scientific and social perspective, the authors offer engaging accounts of a key moment in history, one in which hams had a front row seat.

More Resources and Other Interesting Sites Worth Noting... *from the PVRC Membership*

While it's tempting to "do it all" by one's self, your Editor is reminded of K1TTT's recent comment on the TowerTalk email reflector:

Step 1: Hire a professional

Step 2: Pay the professional

Step 3: Live to enjoy what you paid for

To that end, two tree climbers have been recommended by PVRC members:

Great American Tree Service, recommended by Gene, AD3F.

"For those of you in MontCo, MD, I can recommend Great American Tree service for major and minor tree trimming chores as well as for stringing of antennas. They did a superb job and cleaned up after themselves daily. Their climber also said he has done some antenna stringing work for other Hams. Contact me if you want more info."

Paul Butler (tel 540-825-0406), recommended by Eric, W3DQ.

"Paul Butler and his assistant Chris Sutphin (a retired Coast Guard Radioman), put up multiple ropes and halyards along with trimming a tree that was blocking my roof-mounted tribander. They understood what I want to do and were quick to get it done. Not inexpensive, so negotiate ahead of time!"

Can you recommend companies or individuals who've provided services for you? Tower work; electricians; machine shops; equipment repair; components; legal services, just to name a few categories.

Your Fellow PVRC Members Will Appreciate Your Recommendations!

Product Review: KD9SV Front End Saver *from Glenn, K3SWZ*

In the Fall of 2007, as the thoughts of wonderful 160 Meter conditions danced in my feeble brain, I got to thinking about several mentions I had seen various times of possible damage to ones transceiver, if they were using alternate receive antennas while transmitting high power on the primary antenna. Since I have been using a variety of different receive antennas for number of seasons, I guess I have been lucky as I never had any problems with the FT-1000MP, even though the receive antennas were fairly close physically to the transmit antenna, due to the size of my property.

Toward the end of last season, I purchased a Broadcast Band Reject Filter built by KD9SV from Radioware. That was worth every penny of the \$30 that it cost. My receive pre-amp is broadband (1-30 MHz) and untuned, therefore BCB interference was a problem that needed to be eliminated. That filter did the job.

I recalled seeing another KD9SV product called the *Front End Saver* on the Radioware web site. I looked over the information and learned that it grounded the secondary receive antenna input during transmit. The cost was only \$80, so I ordered one.

When it came, of course I had to open the case, like any self-respecting ham would do. It is a neat little box and built very nicely. After looking at the schematic, my first thought was, I could have built one of these. Yea right, pencil whip out design, gather up the parts and fool around, drilling holes, etc. No way!! I am getting too old for that, hi!! It is connected to the rig with five (5) RCA cables. The +12 VDC required to operate it was obtained from the FT-1000MP, as it has a jack that provides +12VDC.

The biggest problem I had in hooking it up was locating five RCA – RCA cables in my rat's nest of spare cables that were not 3 or 4 feet long!! I did locate 4 nice ones about 18" long and a fifth for the antenna line that happened to be an actual piece of high quality coax with RCA connectors on both ends,. It was a remote VFO line leftover from the several Drake 4 lines that I owned over the years.

I got it all hooked up in about 10 minutes. The relay is so quiet that I had to put my hand on it when I keyed the rig to see if it was working. It is set-up for QSK, but since I don't use QSK, I cannot comment on that feature. For \$80, it sure is cheap insurance I would strongly suggest this box, if you are using alternate receive antennas and are not protecting your rig in some manner.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND PVRC MEMBERS?

- **The PVRC NW Region: [Bud W3LL](#)**

Meetings are 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.

- **The Annapolis Crew : [Bob W9GE](#)**

Meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month at West End Grill in Annapolis. We gather at about 5:30 PM and order dinner about 6. We break up usually before 8 PM. E-Mail [W9GE](#) to be put on the e-mail reminder list.

- **PVRCNC-East : [Will, Will, AA4NC](#).**

Meets on the first Thursday of each month. Details are always available on the web site: <http://www.pvrcnc.org>

- **PVRC-NC/West: [Tom N4IOZ](#)**

"The Winston-Salem Courteous Operators Club" (W4WS) meets on the fourth Monday of each month at 7:00 PM in the "Pure Chrome" establishment, 505 Deacon Blvd. Winston-Salem, NC 27105. It's now a biker bar (we came with the building), so feel free to roar in on your Harley. Info at <http://www.w4ws.org>

- **Gaithersburg Area: [Jeff K3OQ](#)**

Several of us get together, much like the downtown lunch group, about every 4 to 6 weeks and visit various restaurants in the Gaithersburg area.

- **Central Virginia Contest Club: [Ed NW4V](#)
(updated 5/2008)**

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 [Bill W3AZ](#)**

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](#), rogerergo(at)netzero.net 703-658-3991 for Virginia meetings; or [Bill Leavitt, W3AZ](#) (w3az at starpower.net) 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](#) (w3dq at arrl.net) or [Brian WV4V](#) (wv4v at arrl.net) for details and directions.

If you have a group that meets regularly or occasionally, please send details and contact information to [W3DQ](#) for inclusion in the Newsletter!

PVRC Spotting Network

WR3L: telnet://dxc.wr3l.net
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NE3H: telnet://dxc.ne3h.net
N3ME: telnet://dxc.n3me.net
WC3J: telnet://dxc.wc4j.net
N2QT telnet://n2qt.no-ip.com

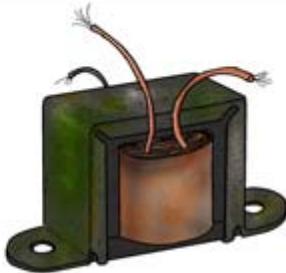
W3LPL Glenwood MD	145.590	441.250
WR3L Baltimore MD	145.610	440.950
N3RR Rockville MD	145.510	441.325
W3TOM Accokeek MD	145.770	
N4OHE Mt. Weather VA	145.710	446.025
NE3H Harrisburg PA	145.630	
N4SR Woodbridge VA	145.630	
N2QT Lynchburg, VA	144.97,	446.075

Information regarding the PVRC reflector can be found at <http://pvrc.org/pvrcfaq.htm> Note that this is simply the REFLECTOR FAQ pull down under main-page REFERENCE).

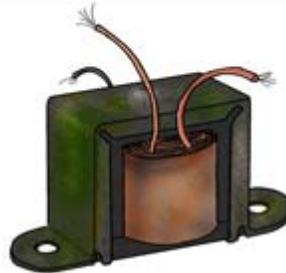


DASH! THE DOG-FACED HAM'S JUNKBOX

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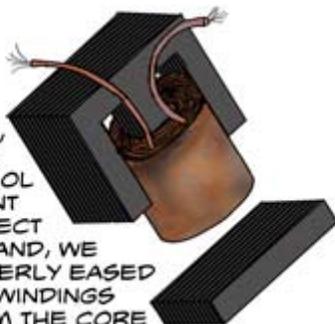
BACK IN THE OLD DAYS THIS WAS NOT A FILTHY TRANSFORMER DUG FROM A SUPERFUND SITE IN-THE-MAKING.



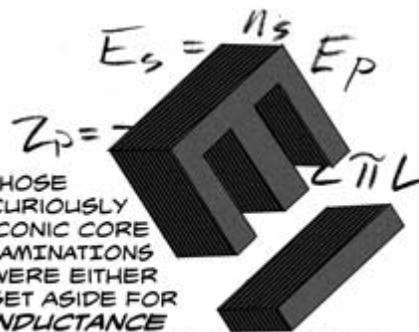
OH NO. WAY BACK THEN, THIS WAS A FILTHY ROLL OF ANTENNA WIRE IN TAMPER-RESISTANT PACKAGING.



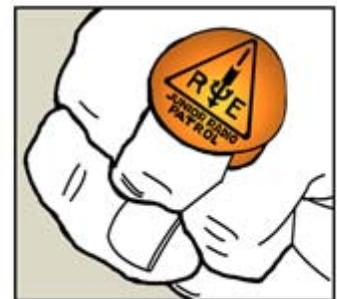
FIRST WITH THE **PRYING.** OUR PULSE QUICKENED AS WE PEELED OFF THE MOUNTING BRACKET.



NEXT, WITH ANY 'OL BLUNT OBJECT AT HAND, WE GINGERLY EASED THE WINDINGS FROM THE CORE WITH **LIGHT BUFFETING.**



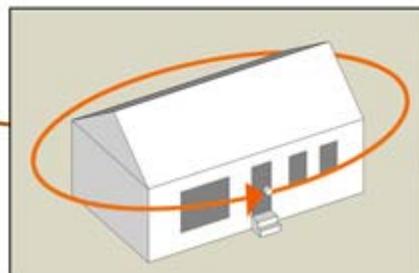
THOSE CURIOUSLY ICONIC CORE LAMINATIONS WERE EITHER SET ASIDE FOR **INDUCTANCE STUDIES** OR WE IMMEDIATELY PICKED THEM APART LIKE BIG SCABS...



WITHIN A **RIGOROUS** CONTEXT OF ACCEPTED STANDARDS & PRACTICE.



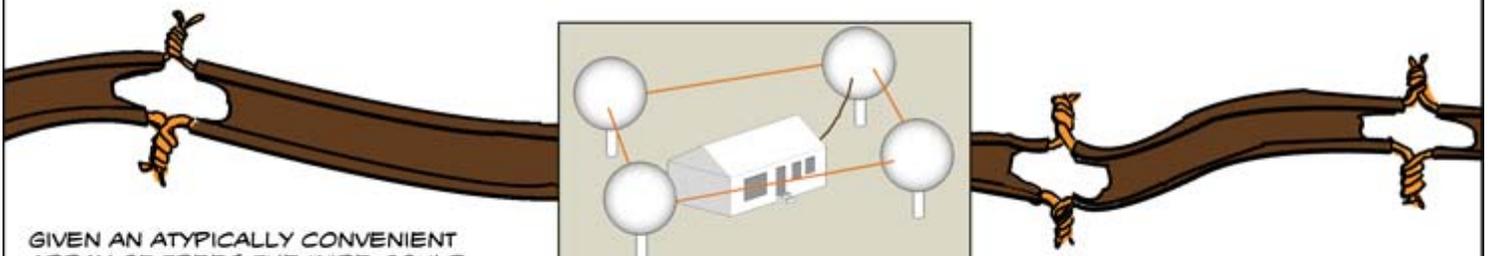
TIME TO TAKE IT **AL FRESCO.** WE YANKED OUT ONE END OF A WINDING AND TIED IT TO A STURDY EXTERIOR DOORKNOB.



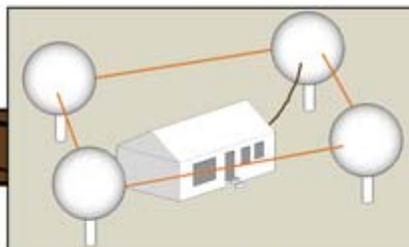
THE REST WAS CUPPED IN GLOVED HANDS AND WALKED BACKWARDS AROUND THE HOUSE, UNSPOOLING WITH **EASE** OR SOMETIMES NOT.



THIS RUBBED OFF RANDOM SHARDS OF SHELLAC AND THE OCCASIONAL ODD DRIPS OF **GOLDEN AGE MYSTERY GOO.**



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