

FROM THE EDITOR'S JUNK BOX



Do we ever actually listen to some of the things we say?

What is the first thing we ask someone who has just been cut, burned, bopped, bean-balled, dog-bit, knocked down, run over, thrown down a flight of stairs, squashed under a falling piano, or had the living spit scared out of him?

"Ooh, are you all right?"

Just peachy, thank you. Now will you call 911 before *I am completely dead?*

Spin the VFO . . . It's MARC hamfest time again. I go to a lot of hamfests. They range from small enough to hold inside a phone booth to big enough to need their own area code. I like hamfests, because in this unpredictable world they provide some things a person can depend on.



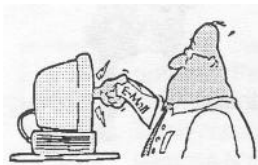
Like hamfest food. A few hamfests have excellent food. Yeah, *really!* Most hamfest snack bars, however, feature grease-dogs, beast-burgers, sausages of dubious ancestry, gummy french fries, watery sodas, and tongue-shriveling liquid purveyed as coffee that would **have** more credibility as flea dip. After nearly a decade working the hamfest circuit, I could digest a handful of machine screws washed down with kerosene.

And hamfest attire. Hams are born in a flannel shirt and baseball cap. Tee-shirts replace the flannel in hot weather, but the caps are permanent. *(We whose hair looks stupid in a baseball cap do not have it easy in ham radio.)*

And hamfest soreheads. It is a mathematical fact that the people who come up to a hamfest booth and argue until your driver's license expires are the same characters who have not owned a toothbrush since Nixon was president. This is why a slang term for long-windedness is "gassing."

So swallow a slug of Maalox, grab your baseball cap, floss those pretty teeth, and come say "hi" at the MARC hamfest! -73 de WT3P

E-MAIL DIRECTORY COMING



Many club members have e-mail addresses. We know who we are, but we may not know who the others are. So we're going to publish an e-mail directory in the next newsletter.

To have your e-mail address included, please send it now to Kay WT3P (wt3p@aol.com). If we already have your e-mail address, just send your permission to publish. We will NOT publish any member's e-mail address without permission!

Eventually, the e-mail directory will be integrated with the membership telephone list published several times a year.

DON'T BE A SCAM VICTIM!

The *INQUIRER* reports that a disabled car scam is operating in the upper Main Line area. Victims are approached by a man in his 20's, who claims to know a family member or to be a workman who has just done a job on a neighbor's property. The man says he needs \$15 to \$30 to have his broken-down car towed to the shop. He may even offer a credit card (possibly stolen) as security. If this happens to you, offer to call 911 for the man, but DO NOT give him any cash. After he leaves, call police.

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PUBLIC SERVICE EVENTS

MARC members who helped communicate for the Delaware County Special Olympics on May 20 were Janet KA3VTQ, Gene WB3FTJ, Sean N3EOG, Ned WQ3Z, Jerry KA3NKT, Floyd KA3OXA, and Beth KA3GKI.



Memorial Day weekend weather was soggy, but that didn't stop the parades or the hams who communicated for them. At the Radnor parade in Wayne, MARC's volunteers were Floyd KA3OXA, Jerry KA3NKT, Sean N3EOG, Ned WQ3Z, Carter

KD3AO, Bob W3ZQN, Phil N3RBX, Roger N3VBZ, Beth KA3GKI, Bob W3SA, Bill N3QOR, and Bob N3JIZ.

Across town, Bob WA3PZO and Mike WB3JHX were among the hams who helped at the Bustleton-Somerton parade in Philadelphia. 'PZO's face even appeared on the noon news!

Future public service events to put on your calendar are a benefit for Parkinson's Disease on September 9 at Rose Tree Park, and a Thorncroft Equestrian Center event on October 22. More about those in the next issue, but you can call Sean N3EOG (610-449-6447) now if you just can't wait that long. No previous experience is needed to volunteer for public service communications. It is not hard, just important!

VHF AND ABOVE

By Bruce Walker N3JOV

[This is another in our series about how to have fun on the bands above 30 MHz besides FM repeaters and packet. This time, we look at a band that provides exciting DX opportunities . . . 6 meters. Send your VHF news to N3JOV @ WB3JOE. Let's get some chatter going about who's doing what above 30 MHz!]

Six meters is hopping. Really it is. Sporadic E hopping that is. During this part of the sunspot cycle, sporadic E (also called E skip) is our most common method of propagation.



Sporadic E is an ionized cloud located roughly 70 miles above the earth. Most are only a few hundred yards thick. However, they can be many miles wide. They are also very unstable. They rarely last for more than a day and sometimes last for as little as five minutes.

Sporadic E clouds can form anytime, but they are very seasonal with a mild peak in occurrence during the winter months of November through January, plus a major peak during the summer months of June, July, and August. During the peaks, multiple hops are possible, allowing band openings to the west coast, Europe and South America.

Sporadic E is most common during the day and shortly after sunset. Openings rarely happen after midnight. But don't leave if 6 fades out. The cloud may dissipate, and the band may close, but the cloud could also re-form later. So if 6 is open early in the day, don't forget to check it out later, too.

Six meters can be fun, and you don't need a super station to work DX. A modest station with ten watts and a small beam can work lots of DX. For multiple hops, a small amp (100 - 200 watts) will work wonders.



The best way to detect a 6 meter band opening is to monitor the 50.0-50.1 portion of the band for beacons. Many hams all over the world operate propagation beacons for just this reason. Also, when you have short skip on 10 or 15 meters, (200-300 miles) check out 6 meters as well.

During the month of June, I counted 27 days on which 6 was open for some part of the day. And on at least 10 days, it was open to Europe. Ron KE3NU also reported to me that he worked Europe and the Azores during June. Today, July 1, I worked 42 stations in 28 grids, including stations from TI (Costa Rica), KC4 (southern USA), FG (Guadeloupe), V44 (St. Kitts), VE4 (Manitoba, Canada), HI (Dominican Republic), XE (Mexico), YV (Venezuela), and W6 (California), all in one day. Today 6 was hopping . . . like mad.

So is 6 a band worth taking a second look at? Yes!! Yes!! See you on 6.

WHAT ARE PROPAGATION BEACONS?

They are automatically-controlled stations which transmit their callsigns in CW with the designator /B on a fixed frequency at a known power level, some of them 24 hours a day. By rotating your antenna as you tune through the beacon sub-band, and noting which beacons can be heard at your QTH, you can deduce whether the band is open at all, and if so, in which directions propagation seems to be the strongest. By using the beacons, you avoid wasting your time on a dead band and/or an unfavorable path. A list of propagation beacons on 6 meters (and other bands) is printed in the **ARRL OPERATING MANUAL**.

GOOD OPERATING ON 6 METERS

On 6 meters, the FCC's rules specify that only CW may be used from 50.0 to 50.1 MHz. Within that CW-only segment, the propagation beacon sub-band is 50.060 - 50.080 MHz. Operators should avoid transmitting in the beacon sub-band, to allow others to copy the beacons. The beacon sub-band is a matter of custom, not the FCC's rules.

Other 6 meter customs you should know about: The SSB calling frequency on 6 is 50.125 MHz. You make a contact on that frequency, then QSY. The frequencies 50.10 - 50.125 and 51.0 - 51.1 are DX windows. This means that USA and Canadian operators should not call CQ in those segments, but rather leave them free for DX stations to call CQ. Of course you can answer those CQ's . . . but when you finish your QSO with the DX, you QSY.

The whole 6 meter band plan (which is a matter of intense controversy once you get to the repeater segment), is published in the **ARRL REPEATER DIRECTORY**.

SPORADIC WHAT?

Read about E skip and other kinds of VHF propagation, such as tropospheric ducting and aurora, in chapter 12 of the **ARRL OPERATING MANUAL** (5th edition). Also explained are VHF operating customs on 6 and other bands.

VIRUS ALERT!

Check out your computer for these new & identified viruses!

☹ **Paul Revere Virus** - This revolutionary virus doesn't horse around. It warns you of impending attack, once if by LAN, twice if by C.

☹ **Congress Virus** - Computer locks up with screen split vertically. Message appears on each window blaming the other side for the problem.

☹ **AT&T Virus** - Every 3 minutes, it reminds you what great service you are getting.

☹ **MCI Virus** - Every 3 minutes, it reminds you that you're paying too much for the AT&T Virus.

☹ **Airline Virus** - You're in Philadelphia, but your data is in Singapore.

☹ **Government Bureaucrat Virus** - Nothing works, but all the diagnostic software says everything is fine.

[adapted from Ft. Venango Mike & Key Club newsletter, originally from KE6IZU packet bulletin.]