



www.marc-radio.org

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SOUTHEASTERN, PA
19399-2154

REMARCS

September/October 2007

MARC Election Results!

As most of you may know, the annual MARC election has been concluded. Well over half of the membership voted and most sent in their ballots via the Post Office. Members also had a last chance to place their vote in person, at the September general membership meeting where the ballots were unsealed and counted. A strict process was followed when opening the envelopes containing the ballots to ensure privacy for the voters. Thanks to **Dennis KA3QOT**, **Yak N3MQM**, **Bob W3HOF** and **Stu W3SMC** for their assistance with this process. Special thanks go to **Ed KB3JGU** and his grandmother **Shuree Hildenbrand** for assembling the ballots and distributing them to the membership in a timely manner (see photo). Ed announced the election results live, via email. There was a tie between **Foster K3FXS** and **Ray KB3NFE** for the 2-year, Member-at-Large position. Foster stated his preference for the 1 year term and Ray graciously accepted the 2 year term (thank you gentlemen). **Phil KB3MAW** also ran for a Member-at-Large position and there was a write-in vote for **Dennis KA3QOT** for the Secretary's position.

The MARC Board members for 2007-2008 are:

President: Dieter Hauer K3DK

Public Relations: Lori Jones KB3PRF

Vice President: Ed Oswald KB3JGU

Public Service: Bob Palin N3JIZ

Secretary: Sam Mitchell WA3LGL

Technical Chairman: Dennis Silage K3DS

Treasurer: Lou Ruh WX3I

Program Chairman: Dennis Silage K3DS

Member-at-Large: Ray Jones KB3NFE (2 year term) **Membership Services: Jim Biddle W3DCL**

Member-at-Large: Foster Schucker K3FXS (1 year term)



Ed KB3JGU and grandmother Shuree sending out the MARC ballots - photos by Ed KB3JGU

VOX

MARC has more new members! Please provide a warm welcome to: **James Odom KB3PCY**, **Andrew Pavlin KA2DDO**, **Deborah Schein W3KID**, **Bill Henderson WM3L** and **Roy Holmes KA8BYU**. **Roy** and **Walter WA3PPW** won their MARC memberships at our hamfest earlier, in July.

Thanks to **Mike Pilotti KF3CD** and **ANRO Inc.** for generously printing our MARC hamfest flyers and for printing next year's hamfest tickets gratis. They have done a wonderful job in supporting the club and provided high quality material.

Phil KB3MAW is now Rooster #1220 and **Bob WR3K** is Rooster #1224! **Ray KB3NFE** recently became the Assistant County Coordinator for Delaware County Skywarn.

Allan (ex-WA4REM) is now **AB3FN**. **Tom KB3TQS** is heading up some of the MARC Chit-Chat Roundtables that occur on our linked 2 Meter repeaters every Thursday. **Russ W3GGY** and **Miguel KC2HMG** also run the Roundtable that was started by **Bob W3LIA**.

Thanks to the generous hamfest donors that contributed some of the proceeds from the sale of their equipment at the club table: **Mike KF3CD**, **Susan K3SUE** and **Lewis WA3SXV**. Lewis donated all of proceeds from the sale of his classic Swan transceiver.

Long time MARC member **Doug N3ENU** is currently working in Dubai (in Saudi Arabia) for a company that is involved with the multi-media aspect of the Dubai Mall Project. It is one of the largest construction projects on Earth! Doug did apply for a ham license in Dubai a while ago and is awaiting its arrival to obtain operating privileges. [See: www.thedubaimall.com]

Congratulations to **Steve WA2EAJ** on his recent engagement! Isn't love grand?

AMATEUR TEST SESSION

Bob Lees W3ZQN provided the following updates for the last amateur test session held in Bryn Mawr:

3 Technician, 1 General and 1 Extra class license were granted. A total of 5 candidates were served and 6 elements given. No MARC members took advantage of their free test session. One candidate passed all 3 theory examinations to become an "Instant Extra". The General class license was a paper upgrade.

The following VE's assisted with the session: **Bob W3ZQN**, **Dennis K3DS**, **Ron W3ZV** and **Gerry W3GER**.

The next exam session is on November 3rd and you must contact **Bob W3ZQN** to schedule an exam. He may be reached at RJLees@aol.com or 610 265-6032.

GET CONNECTED!

Mike KF3CD points to the following website as useful for finding repeaters:

www.k5ehx.net/repeaters

PA QSO Party

The PA QSO Party is hosted by the Nittany ARC and is a great way to get experience in radio contesting. It truly is the "Friendly Contest". Last year, several MARC members participated in this annual contest. Below are their scores for the 2006 contest.

Charlie KB3CO	153,109
Dieter K3DK	59,032
Kay N3KN	44,894
Carter N3AO	4,086
Dennis K3DS	825
Steve WA2EAJ	324
Mid-Atlantic ARC [Club Score]	262,270

Charlie KB3CO and friend **Joe KQ3F** operated as a mobile station, activated 18 counties and scored a whopping 153,109 points! **Dieter K3DK** got top score for Montgomery County. **Kay N3KN** was in the top 20 in the High-Power division for Eastern PA. **MARC's** Club Score was the 11th highest out of the total of 47 competing clubs. Not bad, especially since conditions for the 2006 contest were poor and the ability work all 67 counties was tougher than usual (only 7 stations managed to work all 67 PA counties).

The upcoming 2007 PA QSO Party contest celebrates its 50th anniversary and will run from **October 13th-14th**. If you decide to participate in the contest, please be sure to enter "**Mid-Atlantic ARC**" as the club that you are affiliated with. This will help MARC's overall score in the club competition. For official information on the contest, please click on the following link: www.nittany-arc.net/paqso.html

PUBLIC SERVICE EVENTS

Bob Palin N3JIZ says that he still needs additional volunteers to assist with radio communications for the following public service events (below). These events don't take much of your time and the event organizers greatly appreciate the assistance received from MARC members.

Please contact Bob directly at 610 687-4587 if you can assist. Thank You.

- 1. Penn Wynne Library 5 K Run – Oct. 13, Saturday**
 - Volunteers Assemble at: 8:00 AM
 - Location: Penn Wynne Library, Wynnewood
- 2. Radnor Run, Amer. Lung Assoc. – Oct. 28, Sunday**
 - Volunteers Assemble at: 7:00 AM
 - Location: Willows Park, Wayne
- 3. Vietnam Veterans 5 K Run – Nov. 11, Sunday**
 - Volunteers Assemble at: 8:30 AM
 - Location: Norristown Farm Park, Norristown

UPCOMING CLUB MEETINGS

October 16th, Due to popular demand, **Lou Ruh WX3I** will continue a presentation (Part II) on Skywarn/weather.

November 20th, **Ron Kenwood W3ZV** will give a presentation on trunked public service radio systems.

MARC BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2007-2008

PRESIDENT

Dieter Hauer K3DK

dhauer@gis.net 610-489-1920

VICE PRESIDENT

Ed Oswald KB3JGU

kb3jgu@arrl.net 267-241-9067

SECRETARY

Sam Mitchell WA3LGL

wa3lgl@earthlink.net 215-591-0378

TREASURER

Lou Ruh WX3I

lou@wx3i.net 610-630-9146

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Lori Jones KB3PRF

wishnstar@comcast.net 610-322-8097

PUBLIC SERVICE

Bob Palin N3JIZ

610-687-4587

TECHNICAL SERVICE & PROGRAM CHAIRMAN

Dennis Silage K3DS

silage@temple.edu 610-353-4829

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES CHAIRMAN

Jim Biddle W3DCL

w3dcl@arrl.net 610 353-0880

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

To 9/30/2009 -

Ray Jones KB3NFE

kb3nfe@comcast.net 610-322-8097

To 9/30/2008 -

Foster Schucker K3FXS

k3fxs@arrl.net 302-363-7347

CALLSIGN TRUSTEES

- WB3JOE

Dennis Silage K3DS

silage@temple.edu 610-353-4829

- W3NWA

Dieter Hauer K3DK

dhauer@gis.net 610-489-1920

AI Ward, W5LUA, Makes 1296 MHz WAS #1

(Sep 8, 2007 – ARRL HQ) -- AI Ward, W5LUA, of Allen, Texas, is the first person ever to achieve the ARRL's Worked All States (WAS) on 1296 MHz, making him 1296 MHz WAS #1. Ward first started on his pursuit January 25, 1977, with his first 1296 MHz contact with Leroy May, W5HN (SK). His 30 year quest ended just this week, with confirmed contacts with Wyoming, Utah and Idaho, giving Ward his last three needed states, thanks to Paul Perryman's, WA5WCP, EME DXpedition. >>>

"I couldn't have done this without Paul," Ward said. "Also, thanks to Ron Roche, K0ALL, and Barry Malowanchuk, VE4MA, in North Dakota for number 47 in August. Without them, it just wouldn't have been possible." After collecting his 50th QSL card, Ward drove from his home in Texas to Little Rock, Arkansas so ARRL President Joel Harrison, W5ZN, could verify his cards and complete his WAS paperwork. "Verifying QSL cards from 30 years of activity brought back a lot of memories of several stations active on 1296, many who are Silent Keys now," Harrison said.

FROM THE EDITOR'S SHACK

By Dieter Hauer K3DK

Well, summer has come to a close... or, has it? This past Monday, the thermometer hit 89 degrees F in Philadelphia! That broke a 120 year-old record which stood at 85 degrees. Yet, where are those sunspots that all of us HF operators crave and need? You'd think that with the lack of solar flares, we might have slightly cooler weather. Okay, that's just my theory.

MARC has been a busy club this year with Field Day, Public Service events, meetings, etc. and, our hamfest was a great success. None of this could have happened without the help of volunteers that rolled up their sleeves and helped out in one way or another. There also seems to be additional activity on the repeaters and we now have a new 220 MHz net thanks to **Sam WA3LGL**. It's pretty lonely up there, but it seems that gradually, those that have 220 capability are starting to check-in. Remember the term "use it or lose it"? Well, we've already lost the first 2 MHz of that band, hopefully, we can keep the remainder.

On another note, I am very pleased to see that a nice bunch of new members that have joined the club and elated to have more folks on the MARC Board. This should make for a fun and interesting year.



Carter N3AO leading the Rooster crow-in at the 2007 MARC Hamfest - Photo by Mike KF3CD

Also, congratulations to those that have assisted with the Lance Armstrong - Livestrong event a few months ago and the Multiple Sclerosis 150 City-to-Shore. A great job was done by all.

- 73 Dieter K3DK

MARC INFO

wb3joe@marc-radio.org
<http://www.marc-radio.org>

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS -

3rd Tuesdays, 7:30 PM
Tredyffrin Twp. Bldg.
Berwyn, PA – Guests Welcome
Smoke Free, Handicapped-accessible.

BOARD MEETINGS -

2nd Tuesdays of even months, 7:30 PM
Paoli Hospital, Willistown Meeting Room
Members may attend as observers.

WB3JOE REPEATERS (CTCSS or PL = 131.8 hz) -
145.130 - / 147.060 + / 224.420 - / 445.675 -
The 2 meter repeaters are linked.

WEBMASTER -

Foster Schucker K3FXS
k3fxs@arrl.net 302-363-7347

2 METER NETS -

Club Net, Sunday, 8:30 PM
Traffic Net, M/W/F, 8:30 PM
Roundtable, Thursdays, 8:30 PM

These nets occur on linked 145.13 - R / 147.06 + R

1.25 METER (220 MHz) NET –

Club Net, Sunday, 7:30 PM

This net occurs on 224.420 - R

NET MANAGER –

Lou Ruh WX3I
lou@wx3i.net 610-630-9146

DUES -

\$15 Full (licensed Amateurs)
\$5 Associate (unlicensed persons)
Family rate \$5/ham - after first member
pays full dues

NEWSLETTER -

The REMARCS editor is Dieter K3DK
610-489-1920 dhauer@gis.net
Do you have anything for REMARCS?
Please let me know.

MARC Board Meeting Minutes

From: August 14 - By Ed Oswald KB3JGU

In attendance: Dieter K3DK, Ed KB3JGU, Dennis K3DS, Foster K3FXS, Lou WX3I, Bob N3JIZ, and Jim W3DCL. No regular club members in attendance this month.

>>>

Regular Business

Hamfest

- Grand Door Prize Winner (FT-60R HT) was Phil Ostrander of Ambler (no call sign).
- Free MARC memberships won by WA3PPW Walter Sharrar (used for renewal) and Roy Holmes - KA8BYU of Lester, Pa (new).
- Expenses = \$392.90, Profit = \$3261.10
- Tickets for 2008 have already been printed by Mike KF3CD and ANRO.
- Dieter K3DK advised that PA system install may be much more next year (currently \$90), maybe around \$250?
- Should the Hamfest be earlier in the season?

New Members

- 5 new members: Roy Holmes KA8BYU, Andrew Pavlin KA2DDO, Jim Martin KB3PCY and Bill Henderson WM3L and Deborah Schein KA3SFJ.

Kimberton Fair

- Fair was a success and fire company was happy with the assistance.
- Mike KF3CD asked to not do schedule next year, board agrees to let him focus on Hamfest

Field Day

- All necessary FD data is with ARRL.
- Dieter K3DK suggested a "duty list" for 2008 event.
- Jim W3DCL suggested the club look into a "supergroup" FD where the event is an amalgamation of several clubs working together.

Programs

- August program would be DXpedition video from Peter I
- September would be a Skywarn presentation.
- Dennis K3DS has stepped forward to assume the Program position if no one else volunteers.

Elections

- Foster K3FXS suggests that the board be more specific on what the positions do.
- Nominations taken, we now have nominees for every position officially except for PR and Secretary (see attached Nominations list).
- Discussions about future online voting (Ed KB3JGU is looking into this for next year).
- Setting of dates (proposed dates follow the minutes)

Board Member Reports

Dieter K3DK – Treasurer

- ResNet held their Resource Net on our linked-repeaters and it appeared to work out well.
- Sam WA3LGL informed me earlier that he is interested in hosting a net on our 220 MHz repeater.

Dennis K3DS - Technical

- We need to do outreach to get more people involved.
- Looking into ARRL insurance for the equipment.

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MARC Board Meeting Minutes - ct'd

Ed KB3JGU - Secretary

- Nominations are going well
- HF Net has been held off until further notice. Need an amplifier and just don't have the money to spend right now
- Will be taking position of acting secretary with the Dauberville DX Association post elections.

Bob N3JIZ - Public Service Events

- Penn Wynne Run October 13 at 8 am.
- Radnor Run, October 28 at 7am.
- Vietnam Vets Run, November 11 at 8:30 am.

Foster K3FXS - Member-at-Large

- Suggest that the board be more specific on what the positions do.

Lou WX3I - Member-at-Large, Net Manager

- No Report

Jim W3DCL - Membership Services Chairman

- Put together a "welcome" package for new members.

MARC Elections 2007 Important Dates

Nominations Close: August 25, 2007 11:59pm

Ballots Mailed: August 27, 2007

Ballots Due via Mail: September 15, 2007

Ballots Due in Person: September 18, 2007, before meeting is called to order

****WRITE-IN CANDIDATES WILL BE PERMITTED****

****RESULTS ANNOUNCED DURING SEPTEMBER MEETING****

MARC Elections 2007 Nominees as of August 14, 2007

President

Dieter Hauer K3DK

Vice President

Ed Oswald KB3JGU

Secretary

****NO NOMINEES****

Treasurer

Lou Ruh WX3I

Public Service

Bob Palin N3JIZ

Technical

Dennis Silage K3DS

Membership Services

Jim Biddle W3DCL

Member-At-Large

Foster Schucker K3FXS

Programs

Dennis Silage K3DS

Public Relations

****NO NOMINEES****

MY FIRST HF QSO

By Terry Schieler WØFM

My first QSO was in the summer of 1962. My Novice license had just arrived in the mail and I settled down in front of the Knight Kit R-100 receiver that I had built a year earlier and the Heathkit DX-60 transmitter that I had just completed while waiting for my license to arrive (it took months for a license to arrive from the FCC back then.) I loaded the DX-60 into my 40M dipole strung between two peach trees in the back yard.

After sending CQ a couple of times, a station in Ohio actually answered me. I flipped the function switch to transmit and got a grip on my old J-38 key. As I began to send my first CW transmission, my hand was shaking very badly on the key. At that point my mom walked into my bedroom and saw me shaking almost violently. She immediately knocked the J-38 key out from under my hand and across the room with the broom she was carrying.

My mom said she was convinced I was being electrocuted by that "silly electrical thing" and that she had just saved my life. I managed to recover in time to complete the short QSO with the guy in Ohio and got his QSL card a week later.

73,

Terry, WØFM

[Article reprinted with author's permission – Thanks Terry!]

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Getting Started in QRP and Other HF Tidbits, Part III



By Bob Woish, WR3K

What a great couple of months it's been since the last ReMARCS! Even though propagation has been somewhat down due to the recent bottoming out of the sunspot cycle, band openings have been there if you look for them. HF activity has been surprisingly good at times.

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MARC VOLUNTEERS

MARC isn't just an amateur radio club, it's also a volunteer organization and as such, it's important that we recognize those that have been active and volunteered their time and efforts on behalf of the club. Your assistance is greatly appreciated and helps to keep MARC a strong club that can provide programs, a holiday party, Field Day activities and repeater systems that offer decent coverage. Thanks to all of the volunteers for your time and effort!

MARC 2007 HAMFEST

Alex – KA2VLP
Bill – KN3EUF
Bob – W3ZQN
Bob – N3JIZ
Dan – K3OU
Dennis K3DS
Dennis – KA3QOT
Dieter K3DK
Ed – KB3JGU
Foster – K3FXS
Jim – W3DCL
Josy – WQ3E
Lou – WX3I
Mike – KB3PDR
Mike – KF3CD
Mitch – W2MBH
Ned WQ3Z
Phil – KB3MAW
Sam – WA3LGL
Steve N1HDP
Steve W3AHL
Steve KD3WK
Steve – N3LJZ
Sue – K3SUE
Tom – KB3TQS
Will – K3WIL

KIMBERTON FAIR

Bob – N3JIZ
Bob – W3LIA
Bob – W3ZQN
Bill – N3NUL
Dave – WB3JOY
Dieter – K3DK
Dominic Pilotti
Ed – KB3JGU
Floyd – KA3OXA
Foster – K3FXS
Jeff – WA3RIZ
John – KB3LPE
Jon – N3VZG
Lou – WX3I
Maria Blatman
Miguel – KC2HMG
Mike – KF3CD
Mitch – W2MBH
Ned – WQ3Z
Ray – KB3NFE
Ray – K3RIZ
Ron – W3ZV
Sam – WA3LGL
Steve – KD3WK
Steve – N3LJZ
Steve W3AHL
Tom – KB3TQS

I've put up a new invisible multi-band vertical for 75, 40, and 30 meters, and my first phone contacts on 75 with the new baby were Worcestershire, England and Amsterdam, Holland.

Let's start this time with a look at the mailbag: Some club members are racking up new countries on a regular basis. Sue, K3SUE is one country away from Honor Roll (328 countries confirmed is the requirement). Yak N3MQM has now worked 52 countries since April including his latest, Asiatic Russia. Nice catch! Yak uses 100 Watts with a G5RV at 20 feet. I've put up a new invisible multi-band DX vertical for 75, 40, and 30 meters, and my first phone contacts on 75 with the new baby were Worcestershire, England and Amsterdam, Holland. I also earned the honor of becoming an official "Rooster" by checking into the Rooster Net (3.990 MHz; 6 – 7 AM daily) 20 times within 90 days and Dieter, K3DK your ReMARCS editor, is right on my tail feathers with 17 as of this writing. Bob, W2AYA, is setting up his 75 meter station and plans on rising with the barnyard birds as well. Phil, KB3MAW is another new Rooster and veteran Roosters K3ROC, K3SUE, and K3UYK have all been on the net. Same for N3AO (Carter was a healthy +15 this morning), who I also have contacted twice recently on the 40m CW band during his QRP backpack outings. It's great to be able to stay in touch with him regularly since the Craigie's move to VA.

Dennis, KA3QOT, is working on his HF antenna farm and Bill, KN3EUF is nearing completion of his HF shack. I also heard from Mike, KF3CD, who sent me a neat photo of his pedestrian portable HF setup. He looks like something out of a Buck Rogers comic strip with the rig strapped to his side, mic in hand, and Hamstick mobile antenna protruding from his backpack Mike says his neighbors call him "Rocketman". So as you can see, HF activity is alive and well, and promises only to improve as the sunspot count increases over the next few years, so let's be ready for all the action!

Some of you may have tried the QRP basics outlined in the last column – I have been using my QRP transceivers and my TS-440S running 4 Watts. I also assembled my first bicycle portable setup. All of the gear fits in the trunk of the bike. I can accommodate two bands hauling less than 10 pounds of gear. I have not yet worked out a scheme for operating in motion, but I can bike to my destination, sling my antenna into the nearest tree, and go. My first test run was during The Adventure Radio Society's *Flight of the Bumblebees* contest in July, challenging hams to operate QRP from remote locations. Let's just say it was a learning experience!

Wow, that was quite a bit of club member news on HF operating, and I'm sure there are more interesting projects going on than I've listed. Let me know and I'll include your efforts next time, with extra kudos for QRP operating.

This issue, let's look at some QRP gear. There are two basic categories of quality equipment – commercially made or already built second-hand kit gear, and homebrew. In the April issue I mentioned my "new old" Heathkit HW-8 and the successes I've had with it. I've enjoyed lots of DX contacts as well as stateside ragchews using it. But I have also recently completed a new Small Wonder Labs *SW Plus* for 30 meters. My logbook shows contacts all over Eastern Europe including Ukraine, Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovakia, Estonia, and Italy for good measure using the SW Plus, and many states have also been worked. This is a nice, compact, easy to build single band CW QRP unit that features 3 Watts of output (variable down to tiny power levels for the QRPp, or milliwatting enthusiast), a superheterodyne receiver with crystal filter, a stable VFO, QSK, sine wave sidetone, and an audio filter. At \$55 postpaid for the board kit, this purchase was an easy decision. I used my own controls, connectors, and housing and it looks great. SWL (Small Wonder Labs) also offers a nice case kit that includes everything to complete the project for \$40 additional. For under \$100 you have a palm-sized portable, rugged, full-function transceiver you can build yourself in a few evenings. A complete testing, alignment, and troubleshooting guide comes with the kit.

SWL also offers the legendary Rockmite. I have one that I built a few years ago for 40m and converted over to 30m earlier this year. The Rockmite has a huge following, and a ton of modification plans are available online. This is a crystal controlled, direct conversion (more on DC receivers later), miniature transceiver with around a half Watt output. I do have a large bag full of upgrade power transistors, and mine runs 3 Watts. I've done a couple of other upgrades as well and consider mine a "Super Rockmite." It's easy and fun to build and I've logged a large number of domestic QSOs on 40m, and plenty of DX on 30m. For \$29 shipped and another \$14.50 for the controls kit, it's easy to see why the Rockmite is so popular. I like 30m better than 40m for the RM, due to congested band conditions on 40 and the dreaded BCI (broadcast interference) the international short wave broadcasters inflict

around sundown on the 41 meter international short wave band. The direct conversion receiver in the Rockmite is an easy target for 40 and 41 meter QRM. 30 meters is a nice, quiet QRP band much better suited for a direct conversion receiver.

Another entry-level QRP rig with a great reputation for performance is the Ten Tec 1300 series. At \$99 plus shipping, it's a great radio with a lot of eye appeal, but with one significant issue – delivery. I ordered one in February with the promise that it would arrive in March, but I cancelled in May when I got the same news – shipping will be “next month.” After three months, my patience ran out. The 1300 series features a full battery of nice features, and includes a metal housing. For an all-inclusive kit with a large online following, the 1300s are the ticket, if you can wait. The 1300 is available for 20, 30, 40, and 80 meters. It's a superhet with VFO control and many mods available for the adventurous kit builder.

Another supplier of QRP projects is Ramsey Electronics. They make the easiest-to-build kits out there, and that comes from someone who's built over 100 kits since 1963. You can easily construct a receiver, transmitter, or keyer in an evening. Ramsey's kits run in the \$50 plus shipping range and include a plastic case and knob set. Sound too good to be true? It's not – just remember, you get what you pay for. These are separate TX and RX kits, not transceivers, and the receivers are analog-tuned direct conversion. What that means in use is your station will produce a beat note on both sides of the carrier, doubling your QRM. Think of it this way – you hear your desired station's CW note lowering as you approach his/her frequency, then you hear only thumping at zero-beat. As you continue to tune in the same direction, the note begins to rise again. So you can hear both the upper and lower beat note. In a superhet, as opposed to direct conversion, the signal can be heard on only one side of the carrier. The IF filtering kills the other sideband. That makes for an easier tune, and also eliminates the problem that if you begin to transmit, you might be on the wrong side of zero beat and your other station's filtering eliminates you altogether. DC (direct conversion) receivers are economical, easy to build, and have pleasant tone, but in practice can often be difficult to use. To boot, Ramsey's DC receivers drift, even when turned off. The cores of the tuning coils have an overdose of mechanical drift. In addition, there is no temperature compensation as with the other units above, making a large amount of drift a certainty. The plastic cases and lack of shielding invite “proximity effect” from fingers approaching the unit – another cause of immediate drift, making tuning difficult.

Ramsey's transmitters also have their issues. They eat a lot of battery power for only a little RF output (very inefficient). They chirp, and there is no sidetone. If you go this way, you'll need a transmitter, receiver, some way to switch the antenna between the two, and sidetone generator. An outboard audio filter or internal audio filtering modification is a virtual must. Additionally, the transmitter will overload the receiver due to lack of a muting circuit, and you will likely blast your eardrums into next week if you forget to remove the headphones when you start transmitting. So would I recommend Ramsey's kits? Sure, if you really want an easy build and are willing to deal with the drawbacks; or if you're an incurable hacker. Ramsey's PC boards are nicely laid out and provide plenty of real estate for adding mods and improvements. I confess I have built many Ramsey kits, and have a closet full of them (17 to be exact), but that's generally where the HF kits remain. Ramsey makes other kits that are far better. Their keyer kits and FM broadcast transmitters are quite good. Their QRP kits are not their best offerings. I've also built two Ramsey “Q-Amps,” for those times you want extra punch to overcome poor propagation conditions or QRM/QRN. They are advertised as 20 Watt output amps, but 12-14 Watts is the max you can get, depending on how well you wind your transformers. Ramsey has confessed to shipping out kits with the wrong output devices, which will blow easily due to thermal runaway, moderate SWR, or drive slightly above spec.

Lastly, the King Daddies of them all – the Elecraft K1, K2, and KX1 line of fine, upscale, multiband, superhet, dual-VFO, fully synthesized QRP transceiver kits. (There is also a K3, but it is not a QRP radio.) The functionality and sheer elegance of the feature-rich Elecraft kits command mention here – although for our purposes they are not a likely consideration. My intention is to highlight some of the entry-level kits that are currently available so I will make only brief mention of these Rolls Royces of the QRP kit realm. If you are an experienced builder or QRPer, you are already aware of Elecraft and you know where to find them. The KX1 will run you \$299, The K1 \$329, and the K2 starts at \$629. Not since the factory-assembled Ten Tec Argonaut line has such a wonderful QRP rig hit the market, and these offer the additional gratification and reparability of a kit radio.

There you have it – last issue, a jump start into QRP action, and now a rundown on some of the more popular kits. Anybody up for a club project? Anybody up for a kit builder's net? Email and let me know, and mention if one of the above projects is of particular interest to you. Meanwhile, maybe I'll run into you on the Rooster Net or other HF activity. Until then, here's wishing you many sunspots!

72, Bob, WR3K wr3k@aol.com

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Southeastern, PA 19399-2154

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