



# DIGITAL DISPATCH

A publication of the  
West River Radio Club



October — 2008

Volume III—#10

## VITAL STATISTICS

The West River Radio Club, an ARRL Special Service Club, was founded in 2004 through the efforts of KA1ZQX, Tim Bell, and N1JSG, Richard Pierce.

Our 52 members pride themselves on belonging to an active and productive organization with involvement in many aspects of this great hobby: public service, special events, Field Day, repeaters, emergency communications, contesting and chasing DX.

### Current officers are:

N1TOX, John Borichevsky; President  
W1CWB, Chas Baker; VP  
KD6MPY, Sean Sanderson; ED/VE Liaison  
K1KU, Darrel Daley; Secretary/Treasurer

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### *How do we do it?*

**B**efore I move forward with my words to the club for October, I must first say I'm sorry for the tardiness of this issue of the Digital Dispatch. I have been busy with work and preparing for the 2008 RACES conference which was yesterday, Saturday October 4, 2008. Now I can relax and breathe! Ahhhhh.....

While our club is nearing yet another successful year, I was asked a question at the RACES conference. "How do we stay so energized, have people deploy and practice drills, and also have a group that works so well together?" I thought about how to answer that question and the reply just flowed. I said, "We are a group of folks who are interested in amateur radio, emergency communications, helping out our local communities, club members, and our neighbors. We are committed to practice 4 drills per year with the Entergy Vermont Yankee and the VEM-RACES program, scheduled ARES drills and nets, CERT deployments, and many special events we support."

Without the commitment of the members of the West River Radio Club, we could not be one of the

leaders in the state for communications. Looking at other clubs in the state, they also have dedicated folks who follow with the same philosophy. So we are on the right track. This is a commitment that we need to continue. Over the past 5 years, this team has jelled into a well working machine that can deploy at a moment's notice. We know our duties, we know where to go, we know what to setup, and we know who to communicate with. Thank you all for your dedication and devotion to the programs we support. As I look into the crystal ball toward our 6<sup>th</sup> year (2009), it's another action packed year of drills and bonding. We can do it and I'm sure we will!

Now for the some folks who went the "Extra Mile". Tim Bell – KA1ZQX and Mark Kracum – KB1HCG, along with many others, were very interested in looking under the hood of the FEMA - MERS (Mobile Emergency Response Support) vehicle. And to tell you the truth, who would not want to take a peek? I sure did! This is one expensive truck and a thing of beauty. When the hood was lifted, they both immediately found a problem and pointed it out to the driver and support team of the truck. They were very quickly able to find the problem, resolve it, and the truck could go on its way. I'm sure MERS will be in the garage Monday to correct the few things wrong with it! They both avoided a very expensive truck from being a weight on the side of the road. Thank you Tim and Mark for noticing and resolving this problem!



**KB1HCG, Mark ▲**

While I have not released this information yet, the MERS driver and support team wanted me to extend their deepest "Thanks" to you both for noticing the problem and correcting it with "Professionalism and Dedication". Here again, going the Extra Mile and putting on another hat to resolve a problem. This was a simple thing for them to do as they are both mechanics. They

might have saved the MERS mission as it could have been deployed while returning home and possibly would not make it because of the problems they observed. Good job to both of you!!

This, my fellow members, is how we do it! Stepping up to the plate to get the job done within our expertise. Good job to all!

The MERS team has asked to return to the conference next year. The members of FEMA that visited us all love Vermont, all of its beauty, and mostly our hospitality and support.

Until next month!

73

-----

de N1TOX

John Borichevsky – President WRRRC



## CONFERENCE #5

On October 4 ten adventurous WRRRC members wended their way north to Pittsford, VT to attend the 5<sup>th</sup> annual RACES Conference at the Vermont Police Academy.

Present were:

N1TOX, John	KA1CYZ, Jenifer
WK1L, Frank	KB1NWT, John
N1HOS, Jack	K1KU, Darrel
N1JSG, Richard	W2NH, Gordon
KA1ZQX, Tim	KB1HCG, Mark

It was a busy day of learning about many aspects of EmComm progress in Vermont and hob knobbing with fellow RACES members from around the state. Below is a sampling:

- o The new Disaster LAN web based reporting system developed by KB1LRR, Bob.
- o MARS operations in Region 1 and throughout the world - KC1BT, Ray
- o The *interface* between RACES and NWS Skywarn – KB1GYE, Greg
- o VY response status – Our own N1TOX, John
- FEMA Region #1 communications plan – N1RBN, Tim

The FEMA MERS (Mobile Emergency Radio System) was also there for all to oooohhhh and ahhhhh over. We may as well oooohhh and ahhhhh as its capabilities cost us taxpayers 5 million smackeroos and there are five of them. Oh well, it's only money.

RACES membership in Vermont is now ap-

proaching the 200 mark. If you're interested in helping to fulfill the *service* aspect of Part #97 get in touch with John, N1TOX ([n1tox@comcast.net](mailto:n1tox@comcast.net)) or Darrel, K1KU ([k1ku@arrl.net](mailto:k1ku@arrl.net)), and we'll get an application off to you in a hurry.



Pictures—Top to Bottom & Left to Right  
 WK1L, Brother Frank being tutored on the technology  
 KA1ZQX, Tim & W1WOL, Bill  
 Just part of the MERS' innards  
 MERS with the mast up  
 K1KU, Darrel & N1TOX, John  
 WK1L, Brother Frank

## RUNNIN' ON EMPTY

This is becoming a chore, but a pleasant one.....Thinking of things to write about each month, that is. And shame on those of you who are saying at this very moment, "Why bother? Somewhere I read that it's good for old folks to keep their minds active, so I'm doing my bit at following advice.



Another thing that old people do is reminisce. I wonder – if you don't reminisce will you stop growing older? I'll contemplate that thesis someday when I'm not thinking about what to write for the newsletter each month.

One reason that I reminisce is that for the past few years I've been scanning the gazillion slide and photos that we have around the house. When you're old enough and you see all those pictures from yesteryear the mind comes up with questions, like, "Who the heck is that?" When this question comes up and you're the one in the picture, well, that spells trouble.

I've put one of those pictures with this write up. The year was 1956 and the locale was the stage in the gym on Kodiak Island in Alaska where the Navy band rehearsed and gave concerts. It was a small band, but we did a lot of performing:

- For arriving dignitaries, such as Congressmen and high ranking officers. I'm still working on why they always visited at the same time that salmon season or brown bear season was open.
- The raising and lowering of the flag each day.
- Playing for the departure of the Coast Guard cutter on its twice monthly trip out on the Aleutian Chain of islands.
- Playing for dancing at the enlisted men's club, the chief's club and the officer's club.

Anyway, those were good years and I even earned the fantastic sum of \$150/day.....once a month.

The point of all this is to ask you to send along some old pictures you might have around the place. They have to be old enough so that you're not easily recognizable as you look to-

day...a baby picture. Skeptic that I am, I don't really expect any responses, but the optimist side of my nature says to keep on trying.



## UPCOMING EVENTS & LOOKING AHEAD

**October 10 – 11** – NEARFest at the Deerfield, NH fairgrounds. Go to <http://www.near-fest.com/> for further information

**October 14:** Regularly scheduled meeting of the WRRC in the EMT room of Grace Cottage Hospital. The meeting begins at 7 PM.

**October 15:** RACES reception centers drill

**October 25:** Regularly scheduled monthly luncheon meeting at the Pan Asian Restaurant in Brattleboro by Staples. The meeting starts at 11:30 AM

**October 29** – RACES reception centers drill

**November 11:** Regularly scheduled meeting of the WRRC in the EMT room of Grace Cottage Hospital. The meeting begins at 7 PM.

**November 20:** VE session if needed



## FINANCES

The data below is valid as of the publication of this issue of the Digital Dispatch

43 Full members—9 Associate members  
53.49% of the full members belong to the ARRL

Checking = \$1417.28  
Cash on hand = \$49.11

## In the beginning, the early days

(Ed: Here's another installment from Gordon, W2NH – more exciting tid bits about his experiences during the early days of radio.)

**N**ineteen Forty-three -A bit before your time for many of the club members. I was eleven and had been tinkering with all kinds of electrical things, much to the dismay of my parents. No, I was not trying to burn the brand new house to the foundation but necessity breeds invention. It started when I had a basic Lionel train set but my parents didn't have the money for things like automatic crossing gates so I built my own thingy – only it turned on a small toaster "as the train went rumbling through. That brought parent trouble as there were exposed 115 volts at the rails.

I took notice of one of the young ladies in our class at school and eventually met her father. They were also members of our church. I visited his Ham Shack, now silenced by WW 2 presidential edict. There I found huge coils and 813 tubes and monster transformers, all in open racks. He was Class A and that gave him phone privileges on all the bands before the war Class B was limited to phone only on ten meters as I recall. A service had been established for very local communications back then called "WERS," War Emergency Radio Service. Basically unlicensed carrier current below the broadcast band and I decided to build a transmitter. It used 802 tubes for everything, VFO, too. Well, there were no other stations within the range that would carry the signal over the power lines. But it was the flame that started it all

Then came the end of the war and the pre war authorizations were reopened but the bands were adjusted for some frequency changes made by the military, including, thanks to a surplus military tank radio called a Yaktota. All the screening on the face was bilingual – English and Russian. We evidently made them for Russkies and our tanks. 2 - 8 MHz (sorry, MC/S) VFO, AND a 220 - 225 MHz rush box, a super regenerative receiver/transmitter. These radios came military surplus from Macys in NYC in a dozen boxes that were made to be floated in to shore from a landing craft. They weighed some 300 pounds total, crated. All kinds of goodies once you got the Cosmolene off the packages and some parts. The cost? \$20 for it all.

One Sunday morning I got an invitation to visit W2PA, his call long before there were 1x3's. He was talking to a relative in Sweden on ten meters.

The modulation transformer talked. Next there was a contact with a mobile in Texas running six watts. The transmitter was all home brew. Antenna was a beam on a mil surplus hand remote cranked rotator on about 25 feet of mast. The time had come.

He was also a VP of Sylvania Electric and had a whole bench full of goodies for building things on frequencies in the new two meter band. Yes, the band was new. We formerly had frequencies about 110 MHz but the aircraft got that because it was worthless for anything else. Two meters was given to the hams for the same reason. (HA!)

Another kid in High School and I got together with my SX-43, BFO turned on and tuned to a local broadcast station for an oscillator, two keys and two headphones all in series and taught ourselves the code. Then one hot summer day we went to the ancient government building at 641 Washington Street in NYC and took the test. We both flunked. The examiner, about 80 years old, with a homemade TV set and one inch CRT in his desk watched ball games while the test was in progress. He sent us out for a snack and a second try. It didn't work either. The next try in September was a success, at least for me, as my buddy did not come. I did the commercial phone too and by chance two questions answered each other on element 3, the only ones I would have missed. So this ancient examiner said to take element 4 for first class and it will not change the results for the second class. So the Ham and Commercial came about at the same time. My first CW contact was a YL in Massachusetts. The rest is history for another installment some time.

Gordon, W2GHR/W1JTB/ now W2NH

There is so much good in the worst of us,  
And so much bad in the best of us,  
That it hardly behooves any of us  
To talk about the rest of us.  
- Edward Wallis Hoch



## WHO WAS TOM?

Let's see, there was the Tom of Tom and Jerry fame, but probably only a few of us old coots who, like me, religiously went to the Saturday matinee remember those cartoons. If you do remember, did you also have to pedal your *one speed* bike to get there? It was a four mile round trip pedal for me and uphill both ways. The theater also charged a whopping 12 cents to get in. I can't remember how much the popcorn cost, but there was a hot dog stand across from the theater where you could get a *chili dog* replete with chili and diced onions for the exorbitant sum of 35 cents.

So much for nostalgia. The TOM I'm referring to was none other than Hiram Percy Maxim. Yes, that was his nickname – "The Old Man". You need not confess, but some of you reading this may even be asking, "Who in the blazes was Hiram Percy Maxim?" Even though I didn't become a Ham until I was 42 years old, I believe that keeping the traditions of our great hobby alive is important. And so on with a little history. If you're interested in learning about our beginnings in more detail check out *200 Meters and Down* by Clinton DeSoto at <http://www.arrrl.org/catalog/?item=0011>

The Maxims were French Huguenots that had come to this country in the middle 17<sup>th</sup> century to escape religious persecution. Hiram Percy was born in Brooklyn on September 2, 1869. His father was the late Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim, inventor of the Maxim machine gun and his uncle, the late Hudson Maxim, invented high explosives. He attended Brooklyn schools and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating from the School of Mechanical Arts there in 1886, the youngest member of his class. He was a practicing engineer at the age of seventeen!

Aside from his accomplishments in the radio field here is a list of other matters he got involved with:

- 59 patents issued in his name
- Inventor of the Maxim Silencer
  - The application of this in industry included exhaust systems and compressor intakes
- An authority on acoustics
- A window silencer that permitted ventilation while silencing street noise
- An amateur motion picture enthusiast
  - As with radio he formed an organization in this area, the Amateur Cinema League
- Interested in aviation and helped form the

Aero Club of Hartford. He first envisioned Hartford's municipal airport, Brainard Field

As to The Old Man's involvement with Ham Radio.....Back in the 1910s Maxim, 1WH, a 44 year old engineer, was looking for one of those new Audion tubes for his 1 KW station. (Hams back then took whatever call sign suited their fancy.)

He was living in Hartford, CT, and heard that one was available in Springfield, MA, about 25 miles away. His current station was unable to "make the trip" to Springfield so he hit upon the idea of finding an intermediate station to relay his offer to the Ham in Springfield.

One idea led to another and he was soon envisioning a national organization to standardize and coordinate relay procedures. With the backing of the Radio Club of Hartford and volunteers therein \$50 was appropriated to form The American Radio Relay League.

Maxim developed an application for membership that explained the purpose of the group and urged every known station in the country to join the League.

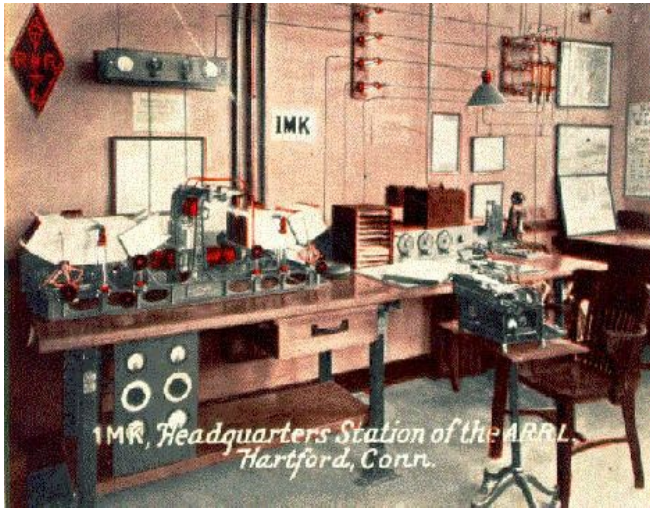
As a gifted speaker and *persuader* he convinced the national magazine Popular Mechanics to write favorable reports about the new organization. He also traveled to Washington, DC to explain ARRL's objectives to the Department of Commerce and the Commissioner of Navigation.

His PR skills paid off and by September of 1914 237 relay stations had been appointed and traffic routes established from Maine to Minneapolis and Seattle to Idaho. At Maxim's request the Department of Commerce granted special privileges on 425 meters (706 KHz) for stations in remote areas.

The newly formed ARRL emphasized the word RELAY In 1916 a test message was sent to the Governor of each state and President Woodrow Wilson. The message was delivered to 34 states and the President within 60 minutes. Refinement allowed a message in 1917 to go from New York to California in 45 minutes.

Because of the growth in the number of relay stations the ARRL started a small magazine which they called QST, *Calling All Amateurs*.





ARRL HQ station in 1925



Hiram Percy Maxim

---

## HOW'S YOUR ACRONYM IQ? Not to mention abbreviations

**M**y American Heritage dictionary on a CD tells me that an acronym is a word formed from initial letters of a name OR by combining initial letters or parts of a series of words.

My plan is (if I remember) to toss in a small handful of acronyms and/or abbreviations each month to test your savvy in this area. This is a self test and there's nothing to turn. If you get stuck you might want to Google *QST abbreviation list*. It's a nine page PDF file and might

even prove to be a good study guide as you move up the license ladder.

For starters let's go with:

1. CTCSS
2. DTMF
3. AGC
4. SET
5. LOTW

---

## IN CLOSING

**I**t's time to wrap up another issue of the Digital Dispatch. I find it hard to believe that I've been cranking out this rag since January of 2006. Time does really fly when you're having fun.

In my long tenure with assorted Ham clubs I've read more than once that a club newsletter is almost essential to the success of any organization. It bonds the membership by getting out information on club activities and allows us all to learn something about the group's members. Your contributions for publication are always welcome.

One disadvantage of a digital edition is that it is probably less likely to be read than if arriving via snail mail. Unfortunately, our financial situation doesn't allow for postal delivery to all 52 members.

We are blessed in that we belong to a vibrant and exciting group. Whatever your contribution, we're thankful for what you're doing to make it so. Keep up the good work.

Your Board of Directors never grows tired of seeking your positive input and contribution of time and effort in helping us to grow and prosper as we continue to promote the many benefits that Amateur Radio offers to individuals and the community.

We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting or event.

CUL es 73 de K1KU SK

