

Volume XLVII

MARCH 2005

Number 03

<u>PrezSez</u>

I am always enlightened to hear other members' ordeals with Murphy during the Annual Cryin' Towel meeting. There were no real comedians this month, but some of the stories in and of themselves had their black and sadistic humor already incorporated, and brought chuckles from the audience, without the prompting of the presenter. Thanks to all who participated for a fascinating look into what else might go wrong in your shack next year during the contest, and thanks again to our judges panel, Drex, W3ICC, Bert, K3IUV, and guest Marc, N2UO. We did miss a yarn from Ernie, W3KKN, but he warned us that if he really got started, we'd really be crying our eyes out, drenching our shoes and socks, and getting sick with wet feet in this cold weather, so he spared us the grief!! We have a very ambitious schedule for the club this year. We have already kicked off our planning for the

June Contest, and several members are busy at work seeking a 432 band captain, more tower bases and possible trailers, and improvements are scheduled for several parts of the set-up. The rovers are starting to plan their routes, including Randy, NR6CA, who will again join us with a new and improved set-up, guaranteed to boost his East Coast roving score by several thousand percent.

Thanks to Marietta Taylor and Joe, K1JT, for hosting our Annual contest wrap-up and the June kickoff. The meal and hospitality were fantastic, and lots of the gang got to see how easy it was to work into Russia and Europe on 2m EME using JT65.

Please plan to join us to honor one of the longest standing members and most continuously active VHF hams in the club on Saturday, April 2nd at noon at Williamsons, when we will honor Ernie Kenas, W3KKN, with a luncheon. You will receive an invitation in the mail soon and you must RSVP if you plan to attend. Reminiscences will be the order of the day, and several members have indicated their willingness to deliver testimonials. Be prepared of course, for some feedback from our illustrious honoree.

Planning has commenced for the Mid-Atlantic States VHF Conference, to be held on Saturday, September 24, 2005 and for HAMARAMA, on Sunday, September 25th. We will need to have everyone available to help and attend to make these activities into a super weekend for the Packrats and for VHF-UHF-Microwavers throughout the region.



K1DS/R & N1XKT/R Ready to roll??

This month we had two new applicants who are very active on the high bands, and accomplished builders. We expect to be reading their applications again at the March BoD and then at the March meeting, when they are present again, so that we can take action on them. The ongoing increase in active membership is the lifeblood of the club, and we look forward to active participation from all of our new and existing members. You can help by getting involved in event planning and management, technical assistance, Elmering, developing a club construction project, writing an article for Cheesebits. Don't wait until someone asks, Just Do It!! That has been one of the unwritten "rules" followed by the Packrats over the years.

Now that I have my FT100D back from Yaesu Vertex, repaired and working, I'll be rewiring the rover for the sprints, MAD events, the SBMS Microwave contest, and all the summer events. Standby for a final decision on the program for March, as our VP is still working out the details. 73, Rick, K1DS

MARCH 2005

Pack Rats CHEESE BITS is a monthly publication of the Mt. AIRY VHF RADIO CLUB, INC. -Southampton, PA.

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8:00 PM	144.150	MHZ	N3H I	FN20KI		
8:30 PM	222.125	MHz	K3TUF	FN10we		
8:30 PM	224.58R	MHz	W3GXB	FN20jm		
9:00 PM	432.110	MHz	WA3GFZ	FN20kc		
9:30 PM	1296.100	MHz	WA3NUF	FN20le		
10:00 PM	903.125	MHz	AA3GN	FN20ig		
10:30 PM	2304.085	MHz	W3KJ	FN20hg		
& go to 3.4G & up after FN20hg						

Visit the Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club at: http://www.ij.net/packrats

Wow! That was some Contest. Unfortunately I was traveling back from Dallas and missed the CRYING TOWEL, but Rick has reported on the events with his usual golden pen and pictures. Thank you Rick for covering the evening.

Now that the crying towel is hung out to dry for another year, what are you doing to recover and improve your station? I have a list of "TO DO's" and I am sure, with a little thought we can all come up a thing or two that need special attention before the next operating event.

So make your list and write something up too. This a member supported publication and we can all benefit from each others ideas and experience. I can work with any written computer format but MS Word and Word Perfect are preferred. I can handle photos and drawings too. Either send them to me as hard copy or e-mail them as attachments.

I see that we have 2 more candidates for membership. That is good news, the PACKRATS have always been a group that welcomes new membership. The exchange of ideas and skill can only help the club continue to grow.

Bob N4HY has been busy lining up speakers and events for the Spring and Summer meetings. Many of these are traditional activities but leave it to Bob to add a little spice somewhere to keep it all interesting. For March, of course, dust off those of projects and get them working. Show off you latest wiz bang or gizzie. To big to bring in? Well submit photos and giving a graphic presentation qualifies and the rest of the club would appreciate what ever it is that you have accomplished. I have taken a firm hold on the Doc Cutler Award having been bless with that dubious distinction twice, but, who knows, maybe this year I can improve my status a bit. That will not happen unless I bring a project for show and tell time.

The contest wrap up meeting at K1JT was very interesting with lots of good food thanks to Margaretta's skills in the kitchen. There was also a great follow up meeting on the June Contest under the leadership of KF6AJ. And, I got a one on one introduction to WSJT Meteor Scatter with Joe K1JTat the helm.

Here is my station for the January Sweepstakes.



W3GAD FN20mg –1.8 Through 2304 MHz Listen for the WEAK ONES

73

W3GAD Doc



CheeseBits

The Cryin' Towel 2005

By Rick Rosen K1DS

These tales are often best told in first person, but it's hard to capture the angst shared by the unfortunate member who experienced the moment, without having been at the actual event (as in the K3EGE misfortune) or at the telling (such as in the droll delivery of N3ITT).

W3SZ submitted a ditty on his experience with a shared feedline for three bands that he switches electronically up on the tower. Suffice it to say that the operating characteristics of these relays favor good weather, dry conditions and mid-May temperatures. Even if it was working the night before, and the morning of, when the real contest started, it got damper and colder, and BAM-you gotta work 'em off the coax alone without the advantage of the antenna gain. And how do those finals like that SWR??



K1DS next told us about "everything working" on the test weekend 2 weeks before the contest, even a 10" SSB QSO with W3SZ on 24GHz over a 60 Km terrain path, only to be bamboozled by the Murph on the Monday night following, when checking into the nets and finding out that the microwave IF rig has started honking again with the wide-hiss signal both in xmt and rcv, and nothing could be done to fix it, except shipping back to Yaesu for a complete replacement of all the parts in the VCO. Luckily, he keeps a spare IC-202, enough to continue to make whatever OSOs were available under the blizzard conditions.

N0YMV relayed his experiences with being handed the "key to the shack" at K1JT's to get going on some MS QSOs, just in time to see the VSWR jump up under the snow conditions, causing him to miss his first sched! Luckily temps changed, the snow fell off the elements, and he got his first taste of MS fun!!

He had 2 IF rigs, a fool-proof IF switching scheme, extra of everything, including time, all warmed up and ready to go, but wait, what is this, the IF dies just as the contest starts? Unable to reconstruct the whole station on-the-fly, Jim gave his best effort a band at a time, until things just didn't work any more. But he's al-

N3ITT (our second place Cryin' Towel winner) explained how he uses his 903 feedline to fill wine bottles in the cellar. I had visions of a still, with all of

W3ICC, K3IUV and K2UO sit in judgment

KB3BBR and WA3RLT gave us their renditions of the family station, and how they spent time in the middle of the night getting their extra laser rig and 2304 rig into good enough working order to complete some QSOs. One can just imagine how this father-daughter team gets along at 2AM during the contest! WA3EHD was a Murphy victim also, as he had planned a bit too much!!

ready getting it fixed for next year.

that CATV coaxial cable that he was using, and the distillate feeding right down into a case of booze bottles, as he joked about the flow. Aided by N3EXA, he found out that the

top, where the rotor loop, as one continuous piece down the

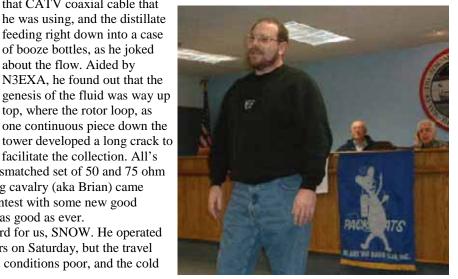
facilitate the collection. All's



WA3EHD Spins his yarn

well that ends well, despite a mismatched set of 50 and 75 ohm cable and connectors, the visiting cavalry (aka Brian) came through just hours before the contest with some new good "stuff" and Al was back on 903 as good as ever.

N3FTI just had one word for us, SNOW. He operated in his rover trailer for a few hours on Saturday, but the travel conditions were miserable, band conditions poor, and the cold brutal.



'sno snow job from N3FTI

CRYING TOWEL Continued from page three K3EGE, our Cryin' Towel



K3EGE has proof of his score

ranged the entire station by pulling on those coaxial cables, and causing the FT-736 to gouge the plaster wall. Luckily, most of the antennas landed softly in the snow and shrubs, and were easily restored, after the contest of course. The rigs were unharmed, and it was only Bill's ego, dreaming of breaking 50K this year, that was bruised.

1st Place winner, told the

gust that took his antennas down on Sunday, as the bell housing mounted on a mast sheared off the rotor,

ers and yagis, and with their direct connection to

the rigs on his bench, rear-



N3ITT uses sign language to tell his tale Lastly, KA3WXV reminded us that used rotors, purchased at swapfests need a complete overhaul and new low-temp lubrication in order to be useful in the January activity

BITS of CHEESE

Here's where you can download a copy of the ICOM Grid map for the US.

http://www.icomamerica.com/downloads/usgridsg.pdf 73, Harry, W3IIT EL09QE

NEW BEACONS to add to your list

Two new beacons recently installed in FM28ei (Ocean City, Maryland three miles from the ocean)

50.072 10 watts to a vertical array at 275

432.320 10 watts to a vertical array at 200'

Beacon transmits every 30 seconds with a 30 second pause using the call W3DOG

Please e-mail me a report if you hear them. I am looking for a 10M, 2M and a 222 beacon for this site if you can help please let me know.

Please visit the International 6 meter beacon project page at http://www.6mbeacon.net

73, AI K3TKJ



FIRST PLACE 2005

Steve, N3FTI presents the coveted first place CRYING TOWEL to Bill K3EGE For his tale of the fixed station suddenly going mobile as his antennas dropped from the tower.



RUNNER UP For 2005

And our other Winner is Al N3ITT for his tale of feedlines that worked more like the condenser line on a moonshiner's still.

MARCH 2005

Another Wacky Winter Rove VHF SS 2005

Yes, the League was in the most sadistic mood when it decided to have the VHF SS in January. With so many of the nation's VHF operators in the snow belt regions, there are extraordinary preparations and operating safety needs in this season. Hey, but who's complaining just because a northeastern 20" snowstorm started at the same time that the contest began? We should be used to this, right, with year after year of snow-storms, ice storms, deep freeze and windy conditions that test the stoutest antennas, towers and guys. A few hearty rovesconsider the challenge, and although there are real tales of disaster on the road, a contingent still goes out to excite the airwaves with some extra QSOs and some rarer grid multipliers.



Let competition begin-despite the snow

Despite posting a "good weather" and "bad weather" route on the reflectors prior to the contest, everything was subject to change depending on conditions. For those of us who experienced the 24 hours of rather steady snow at about an inch an hour, there was virtually no traffic movement past the first few hours of the contest. When the flakes had dissipated, and the plows were out, sometime after noon on Sunday we were able to get our rover van out of the driveway and up to some better points of propagation. I had already thrown the towel in on the 2304 transverter, and opted to focus on the use of the other 11 bands that were operational. Last minute replacement of the 903 coax cable had an improved ear on the beacon, and seemed to enable better communications on that band. The rover van was parked facing the metal garage door, and the house façade generally blocks much propagation in that direction anyway, so we tried to keep the antennas pointed away from our house, but I live in a cul-de-sac, so there were houses at virtually every degree of azimuth.

Most of the locals pile on 6 & 2 to get started, so there was plenty of action as I handled the FT736 for 2m and Leon manned the FT100D for 6m. The problem was that I was making all the QSOs, and he was hearing everyone and calling them, but they weren't responding. What could be the problem? A quick peak at the faceplate of the FT100D showed that it was not happy at all with the SWR of the 3element beam with its snow-cover. A few rattles of the mast and a slight tweak of the gamma-match fixed that and we were back on making Q's. In the meantime we dissembled the 5/10G dish, as the snow was building up on that, and considering the proximity of the other houses, and the 20° slant of the driveway, those bands would be the least productive, at this time. The going was good despite the conditions, cold and limited mobility. We took a short break for dinner, and things seemed to slow down further, so I continued to operate alone for the activity hours on Saturday. I was frustrated that I was having trouble with QSOs on 3456. It didn't dawn on me until after we were able to move out on Sunday, that I had always oriented the rotors and the van to park facing south, and while I was on the driveway with the nose of the van pointing to the garage, it was due north! Minor pilot error. At least I was able to make up some of those contacts the next day, but I'm sure that WA3NUF was frustrated every time I said, "I'm sending dashes" and he said, "Don't hear ya!"

It took about 2 hours to clear the driveway and be able to move the van as the streets were being plowed on Sunday. Cautiously we moved out after noon, with a large organ-pipe looking mess of icicles on the rear windows and doors, barely able to get them open to get to the 5/10G dish. The front-loader was clearing the parking lot up at Highpoint FN20jg, so we parked on a little pull-off on the main road up there, which was lightly traveled anyway in these conditions. Since the van again could not be oriented to the south, we had a corrective 90° measure thrown into every rotor turn. As I tried peaking the dish on some of the stronger microwave stations, it appeared that everyone was best heard with the dish pointed at the large water tower up there, using it as a great passive reflector.



"Large pipe-organ looking mess of ice on the windows" of the K1DS/N1XKT Rover

After working out most everyone that we could, and with sunlight on the wane, we headed slowly to FM29hx to try and get some additional contacts and run up the evening score. Of course, the NFL championship was on, so many of the stations were quiet for that stretch of time, but we managed to add several more UHF and microwave QSOs in the 2 short hours that we spent there.

Back to FN20 to work on getting home in timely fashion, running into K3DMA/R who packed a few rigs in his vehicle and roved two grids also! Caught a few last microwave Q's with AA3GN and W2SJ before closing time, and arrived home with a lot less score than planned, but never-the-less made the best of this winter blast. My favorite adage: NO ERRORS!! Safety is the main key, especially under such adverse conditions. And let's petition to have the VHF SS in a better season.

73, K1DS/R & N1XKT/R

"As long as you think the problem is out there, that very thought is the problem." Stephen Covey

WHERE DID ALL THOSE SIGNALS GO? Weather History for 22-23 January 2005





N3NGE MULTI-OP STATION: a photo essay Upper left: N3NGE and K3TUF Check out gear before the contest. Lower left: 50/144 MHz positions Lowere right: 222 and 432 hot seat and Upper right is the Micro-waveracks









W3CCX BEACON FREQUENCIES

by W3SZ Roger Rehr

Hello, All,

I was asked to measure the frequencies of the W3CCX beacons, realizing that they do move around a bit. For example, today the 3456 MHZ beacon moved +1.147 KHz over a period of 90 minutes as the temperature changed by +2 degrees F at my location [from 34 to 36 degrees]. I do not have a way of measuring the temperature changes at the beacon site, but I am in FN20ag and so I am only 46 miles from the beacon site.

I am GPS locked from 2304 MHz to 24 GHz. The setup is that I have GPS-locked the LO's for transverters for these bands, which feed a similarly GPS-locked 144 MHz to 28 MHz transverter. All of this is at the top of the tower. The 28 MHz IF signal is then amplified and split so half of it goes to the FT1000MP and half of it goes to a converter [which is GPS-locked] and then to the Antennspecialisten boxes that drive Linrad.

My IF rigs (FT1000 and Linrad with Antennspecialsten boxes) are not themselves GPS locked, but I checked the calibration on both of them using aGPS-locked 28 MHz source before and after the beacon frequency measurements were made. The FT1000 was on frequency within the limits of its calibration [10 Hz] and Linrad was high by 0.358 KHz at both time points. So for measurements from 2304 MHz thru 24 GHz I subtract 0.358 KHz from the Linrad measurements and 0.00 from the FT1000 Measurements to obtain the true W3CCX beacon frequency.

Measurements of all bands except 5760 were made today, 2/20/05 between 1300 and 1430 EST. I could not hear the 5760 beacon today, and so I include the last measurement I made on that band, from 1/23/05. The temperature was 34 degrees at the start of the measurement period today, and 36 degrees at the end of the period. First I measured the bands 2304 MHz and above, and then the lower bands.

All FT1000MP measurements and calibrations were made with the FT1000MP in the CW position with the narrowest filter and the 60 Hz DSP filter engaged, to reduce frequency ambiguity.

Band	Listed Frequency	Linrad Frequency	FT1000MP Frequency	-
50	50.080	50.080.001	50.079.90	
144	144.284	144.283.627	144.283.60	x 7
222	222.065	222.064.410	222.064.39	1.9
432	432.295	432.293.399	432.293.31	The last
903	903.071	903.072.382	903.072.38	KAR -
1296	1296.251	1296.246.045	1296.246.04	175 B
2304	2304.037	2304.041.306	not heard	
3456	3456.220	3456.209.683	3456.209.69	Har
5760	5760.190	5760.183.802	not heard	A Car
10G	10368.140	10368.137.059	10368.137.16	and the

I am not GPS-locked below 2304 MHz, and so I used the following procedure for those bands. For each band, I measured the beacon frequency with both Linrad and the FT1000MP. Then I immediately put a GPS-Locked 'calibration signal' on that band, within a few kHz of the beacon frequency, and used that GPS-Locked signal to measure the frequency error of each receiver on that band. The error was subtracted from the raw beacon frequency measurement and the corrected beacon frequency measurement was recorded in the chart above. As my GPS-Locked sources only cover up to 500 MHz, For 903 MHz I had to use the second harmonic of 451.535 MHz, and for 1296 I had to use the third harmonic of 432.0833333. The FT1000MP and Linrad measurements were consistently within 0.1 KHz of each other, and usually significantly closer than that.

Please note that, over time, I have noted variations of at least 3 kHz on 2304 MHz and above, and so the frequencies you measure may be slightly different than those above. I suspect a large component of the beacon frequency variation is temperature dependent, but I have not attempted to correlate temperature and the beacon frequencies.

NOTE: Illustration shamelessly lifted from W3CCX/B Web Page editor

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WHATS HAPPENING

A LISTING OF INTERESTING EVENTS

5 MARCH, 2 APRIL, 7 MAY - MICROWAVE ACTIVITIES DAY 0800—1300 Local

10 MARCH 2005–PACKRATS BOARD of DIRECTORS Meeting at the QTH of K1DS

17 MARCH 2005—Regular meeting of the Mount Airy VHF Radio Club (PACKRATS) at the Southampton Public Library at 8 PM. HOME BREW "Show n Tell"

2 APRIL 2005–LUNCHEON ROAST OF W3KKN.–Williamson Restaurant, Horsham, PA 12 noon

2 APRIL 2005–144 MHz Sprint 1900 to 2300 local time

12 APRIL 2005–222 MHz Sprint 1900 to 2300 local time

14 APRIL 2005–PACKRATS BOARD of DIRECTORS Meeting

20 APRIL 2005–432 Sprint 1900 to 2300 local time

21 APRIL 2005—Regular meeting of the Mount Airy VHF Radio Club (PACKRATS) at the Southampton Public Library at 8 PM. AWARDS NIGHT??

30 APRIL 2005–SBMS 2 GHz and up WW Club Competition 0600 30 April - 2000 1 May local time

1 MAY 2005 – Warminster Amateur Radio Club Annual HAMFEST—Middletown Grange Fair Grounds

12 MAY 2005–PACKRATS BOARD of DIRECTORS Meeting

14 TO 15 MAY 2005–50MHz Sprint 2300z 14 May to 0300z on 15 May

14 TO 15 MAY 2005 - Mid-Atlantic QSO Party

19 MAY 2005—Regular meeting of the Mount Airy VHF Radio Club (PACKRATS) at the Southampton Public Library at 8 PM.

20 TO 22 MAY 2005–DAYTON HAMFEST and ARRL CONVENTION—Dayton, Ohio

11 TO 13 JUNE 2005–ARRL June VHF QSO Party and PACKRATS BOD Meeting on the mountain.

16 JUNE 2005—Regular meeting of the Mount Airy VHF Radio Club (PACKRATS) at the Southampton Public Library at 8 PM.

25 TO 26 JUNE 2005—ARRL Field Day

5 SEPTEMBER 2005–Final call for papers for MICROWAVE UPDATE 2005

24 SEPTEMBER 2005—MID ATLANTIC MICROWAVE CONFERENCE Sponsored by the Mount Airy VHF Radio Club (The PACKRATS)

25 SEPTEMBER 2005—PACKRATS HAMFEST—Middletown Grange Fair Grounds

27 TO 30 OCTOBER 2005—MICROWAVE UP DATE 2005 sponsored by San Bernardino Microwave Society and Western States Weak Signal Society—Cerritos California (Near Los Angeles)

HEY! is W3GXB going commercial?

No!—W3IIT was wandering somewhere in Florida and spotted another Pack Rat's abode



902.1 v 903.1

I am opposed to a change for the East Coast calling frequency at 903.1 regardless of when implemented. This band is not 2M and does not require such a sophisticated level of band planning as is being proposed. My 900 MHz repeater sat unused except be me and one other for 4 years. The idea that now is the time to begin a migration to expanded repeater spectrum is ludicrous in my view. The number of amateur radio 900 MHz repeaters / users of same does not and will not warrant such band planning now or in 2010. By 2010 the use of 900 MHz Part 15 devices as we know them today will be history as 2.4 and 5G and even higher frequency equipment supplants those present devices. This is a bad and needless idea. We should focus our attention and efforts on preserving what we can have access to at 23 cm and up there is where the real threats lie. 73. Owen Wormser, K3CB / FM18lx

Hi Guys, I strongly suggest you speak with Kent (WA5VJB) about this issue. I recall him relating the same experience at one of the MUD conferences a few years ago...saying that the broadband digital noise was much worse at 902.1 compared to 903.1. I think this is a major issue.

From my experience, many of us need large hi-Q bandpass filters to use the band in urban areas already ... and operating at 902.1 would require a few more poles in an already difficult filter problem. I'm already using a 24 x 4 x 2in interdigital bandpass in the rover, and even it is not enough to reject the garbage.

Just my 2cents. 73. Bill W3IY

MORE on the 902.1 v 903.1 issue

On your usage list, the Southern California ATV repeaters on 33cm were not listed. I can see from our Open Repeater page on the SCRRBA web site, that this could be missed since the mode type on the list is not spelled out - it is FM voice repeaters only. The ATV repeaters are on a separate download pdf file on that same Open Repeater web page.

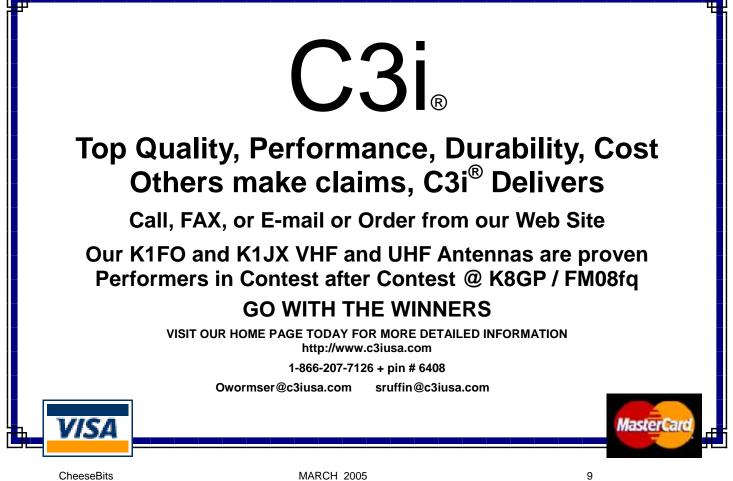
There are 2 ATV repeater outputs in So. Calif. on 919.25 MHz - Oat Mtn and Blue Ridge. We had to use 919.25 to avoid interfering with AVM here. Also, and for the same reason, 913.25 is used for ATV ground based simplex only.

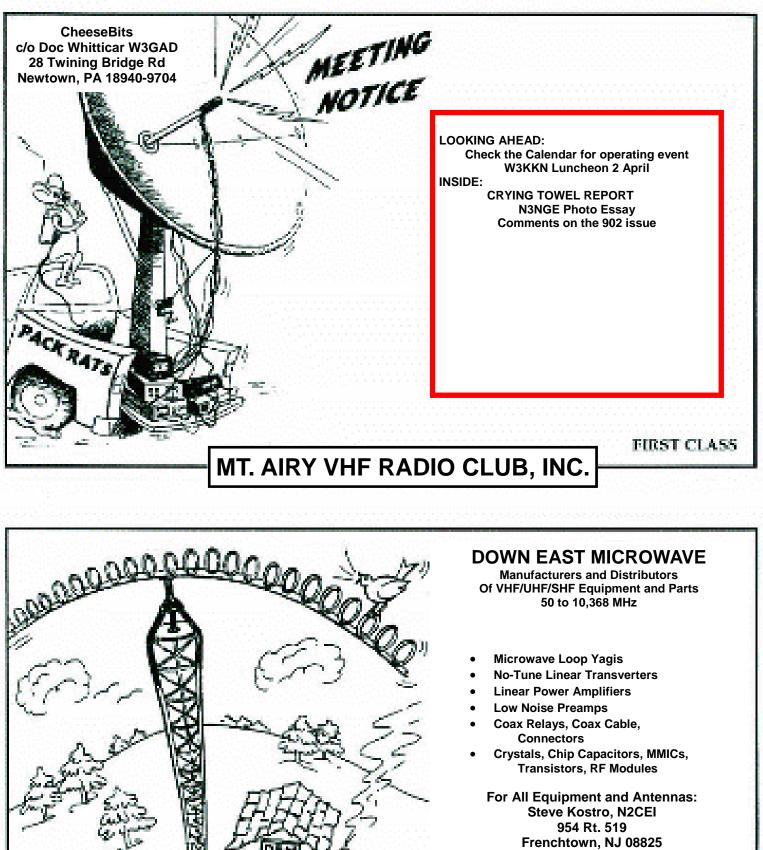
I can see that better definition of the bottom 2 MHz as part of the ARRL recommended band plan would be useful and apply to most areas, but depending on AVM usage in any given area, hill top by hill top, the actual amateur frequency usage will have to worked around. Tom O'Hara, W6ORG SCRRBA 23cm and ATV bands mgr 1200@scrrba.org atv@scrrba.org

Why do the repeaters need a 25 MHz split? Especially since the repeaters on 2 meters use only 600 KHz. It is a lot easier to build good filters at the higher frequency. With 25 MHz they probably don't need any filtering at all! But if they only reduced the split to 10 MHz, there would be plenty of room for all to coexist.

Weak signal work should NOT be crowded so much by wideband signals. If any of you have the experience of living within a mile or so of a 145 MHz output repeater (like I do), you will know that it is not always a comfortable coexistence. I think, at the very minimum, 902 to 904 should be reserved for weak signal operations. After all, there is 26 MHz of spectrum in the band - I don't think wideband modes need almost all of it!

73, Russ K2TXB





Say you saw it in CheeseBits

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http://www.downeastmicrowave.com