

THE BCARA BEACON

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SUN AND SUNSPOTS

Spring is now upon us and we've seen our first sixty-degree days. I heard it reported that we've had multiple sunspots peeking out to liven up the old ionosphere. The peak of sunspot activity is years away, but this is still good news for us hams. I can attest to decent 15m band openings out to California and down to Puerto Rico and the Grand Caymans in my log. With these more comfortable temps of late I get to thinking about antennas. They get used and abused all winter long. What better time to try out those new plans from the internet, or perform some necessary maintenance than before the mercury hits ninety?

On a more serious note, our humble little club finds itself in search of a direction. The leadership greatly needs ideas for what YOU want to do. What kind of activities would make YOU want to attend regularly? We don't exist solely as an EMCOMM club, for contesting, or strictly for scientific experimentation—rather we try to make a broad array of activities available to our members. In effect, we do all of these to some degree. We are fortunate to have a lot of very talented and knowledgeable members. If there's an idea or issue you'd like to experiment with or discuss we'd like to know. That could be the topic of the next meeting.

I'd also like to put in a plug for the BCARA Raffle. Cheryl Lipman's (KC9GHA) dad is constructing an ornate wall clock to donate to this effort. This is an idea to help fund our operating expenses. I know there's been some discussion regarding the price of dues. However, we do have bills that must be paid. The funds will have to come from somewhere—be it dues, donations, raffle, or some other form of fundraiser. So, I encourage everyone to enjoy the pictures posted on the webpage and support this project.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

March was a big month for the club with regard to PR. I understand that the Severe Weather Spotter Training was well attended and quite informative. Advertising it was something of a tag team effort making use of the Lebanon Community Channel, a *Lebanon Reporter* newspaper article, and postings on the local message boards. Hopefully we might even open some eyes to the benefits of ham radio in the community. Those antennas aren't just tall, ugly metal structures—they actually provide a service. I hear we may also have interested some people in becoming hams.

I've gotten some nice printed materials from the ARRL for the club. There are five different brochures covering some of the different aspects of ham radio and aimed at different audiences. They come in a nice display stands. Check them out at the next meeting and take a couple to your friends!

THE NAME GAME

For many hams their callsign is a sacred thing. It's spoken more often than our true name. Most of us try to subscribe to good operating practices so our "name" reflects favorably on other hams. I know some hams who still have their original FCC-issued sequential call. That's to be commended. Some of us end up with hideous calls. I certainly can't blame anyone for selecting a new one when that happens. Here recently we've had a couple local hams change callsigns. So in case you haven't made note of them I shall bring you up to date. Tabb Adams is now W9TTW. Dick Glidewell is now WW9WG. And I, Jeff (your humble journalist), am now AB9QJ.

MISC INTERESTS

How about some notes on antennas for this issue of the *Beacon*? The internet provides a wealth of resources for the antenna builder/experimenter. The website of L.B. Cebik (W4RNL) provides practical plans and technical explanations for antennas of all types, configurations, and issues related to antennas. His website is: www.cebik.com. Of interest to those of you who are Techs is a section down at the bottom of the antennas page called An-Ten-Ten-As. It outlines many 10m antennas from the *Ten-Ten News*.

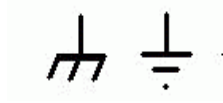
If short antennas aren't your thing, how about a 160m antenna? Don't have the space for a full 160m dipole you say? I have just the thing for you. Check here for a restricted space antenna that's only slightly longer than an 80m dipole: www.hamuniverse.com/cobraantenna.html. Fed with ladderline into an outboard tuner it should match just about every band.

In addition to my 80m doublet I've had pretty good luck with my 40m sloping dipole. The high end is about 40ft. in my pin oak and it slopes down to about 12ft. at the low end. It hovers above the roof of my house and works and tunes well on both 40m and 15m. In fact, it's the antenna I used to make the 15m QSOs mentioned above. At about 67ft. long it takes up very little space and is pretty low-profile. Due to restrictions limited by the size of my real estate it's worked out quite well for what started out as leftover materials from another project. I feed it with ladderline into a balanced antenna tuner (KW Matchbox) and it will tune up on 80m, 40m, 20m (a little higher SWR), 15m, and 10m (about like 20m).

Don't be afraid to try something new. Even a marginal antenna can work somewhere on the bands. Don't get hung up on perfection. Remember, even a resonant dipole is only resonant on the actual frequency it was cut for. Spin the dial in either direction and watch the SWR change! I'd also like to include a link to a program called HamCalc. It's used for antennas, tank circuits, baluns, etc. Jimmie (N9VXQ) has used it and found it to work on Windows OSs up through XP. Go here to download the free program and instructions: www.cq-amateur-radio.com/HamCalcem.html.

DO YOU KNOW...

I'm pleased to report that Mr. Tanner Thompson (KC9JOC) is the winner of the last trivia question. I did have several members send me their guesses but Tanner was the first to answer correctly. With the article I wrote on station grounding I thought it would be clever to show two symbols for grounds. The one on the left is a chassis ground like circuit board would connect to on a piece of electrical equipment. The one on the right is an earth ground like a ground rod at the electrical service entrance to your house or the base of a tower. Anyway, congratulations are in order for Tanner.



Happy hamming. Best regards until next time.
Jeff—AB9QJ (the ham formerly known as KC9ANB)