

The Link

February 2006



The Official Journal of the Buffalo Amateur Radio Repeater Association, Inc.

Annual BARRA Auction is This Month!



2005 BARRA Auction

The most popular event of BARRA's calendar is almost here -- the annual Auction! Monday, February 20th is the date and the doors will be open at 6:45 PM to admit sellers and buyers. The auction will begin promptly at 7:30 PM. Refreshments will be available for sale.

Anyone is welcome to buy or sell at the BARRA Auction. BARRA retains 10% of the selling price of each item as a fundraiser to help pay for its excellent meeting space at St. Bartholomew's church.

In addition to the auction and the refreshments there will be a door prize raffle drawing for a DVD player, courtesy of Crest AV Electronics.

As always, the Auction promises to be a don't miss event and we look forward to seeing you there!

Dues are due!

*Check your mailing label for your
renewal amount.*

*Members whose dues are unpaid at the end
of the month will be dropped from the
roster!*

The Plank Antenna

David S. Faul, VE3TIJ N2ZVK M1FBS
ve3tij@arrl.net

My new Yaesu Mark V warranted a better HF antenna set up than I had been using. The Mark V was my enticement to develop a real HF capability from my sixth floor apartment balcony. I have been a ham since 1991 with full spectrum privileges since 1996. I have a lot of fun and meet very interesting people on VHF and UHF. But there is still the lure of HF and distant contacts. The Mark V is also a prelude to my retirement in the next five years. I just entered my 30th year with my employer.



HF operation from an apartment is always a struggle: Poor grounding; close proximity to RF susceptible appliances; lack of space; reinforced concrete that readily absorbs RF from any antenna; incident wave take off angles that terminate into ceilings. Moreover, the antenna may not be visible from the ground or permanently hang over the balcony.

I created the plank antenna to allow the antenna temporary placement into free space. Visualize a MFJ 1611 limited space antenna in a plastic box fastened to the end of a 8-ft plank. The weatherproof box is held to the plank with self tapping wood screws and two bungee cords. A water tight garbage bag is placed around the plastic box to make the assembly waterproof. I placed the antenna end of the plank into free space thus straddling the concrete balcony wall. The balcony end of the plank is secured to a concrete block via nylon rope. The plank antenna was born. (Photos on page 4)

The MFJ 1611 is in a small, non-weather proof box that has several surface mounted controls and an adjustable whip antenna. The controls for inductance, capacitance and band selection are adjusted to a given HF band from 40 - 10 M. I adjusted the antenna to 40 m by manipulating the controls for maximum receive audio on a weak signal while I listened on the balcony. It is worthwhile to note that the whip is capable of rendering RF burns to human tissue if handled while under transmit. One would not want to operate this antenna on the ground or in easily accessible places without barrier safe guards. The assembly has to be taken apart to change the controls to another band.

The antenna works well on receive -- especially on 40M -- my chosen band. Incoming signals range from S5 to S9. However, the transmit has proven marginal. I suspect that the lack of ground radials inhibit the creation of a effective radiating RF pattern. I tried a MFJ -1644 artificial ground device. However, I found it difficult to operate. I was only successful in activating my near-by speaker

continued on page 4

Buffalo Amateur Radio Repeater Association, Inc.

Club Officers & Directors

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Voice Repeaters

WB2JQK	PL 107.2	29.68 -	Boston
K2ISO		145.17 -	Wethersfield
K2ILH	PL 107.2	146.73 -	Niagara Falls
W2EUP		146.91 -	Boston
N2YDM	PL 107.2	147.00 +	Kenmore
W2EUP		224.82 -	Boston
WR2AHL	PL 110.9	442.00 +	Wethersfield
WB2DSS	PL 151.4	443.925 +	Niagara Falls
WA2HKS		444.00 +	Buffalo
WB2DSS	PL 151.4	444.75 +	Kenmore

BARRA Tech Net

Join the BARRA Technical crew on the 146.91/444.00 system Wednesdays at 8 PM for answers to your technical questions.

RAWNY Net

Stop by Monday evenings at 7:00 pm and join the RAWNY club's net which meets on our 146.91 and 444.00 repeaters.

BARRA on the Internet

<http://barra.hamgate.net>

Club Calls

BARRA holds club calls W2EUP and K2ISO in honor and memory of two of its founders, Gil Boelke, W2EUP, and Hugh Wilson, K2ISO.

CBS-Scanners-Ham-Marine-Business Radios-Radar Detectors

HIRSCH'S

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These great looking, sturdy, quality ceramic mugs sport the BARRA buffalo logo, are dishwasher safe, and let you show your club colors in style!

Only \$5.00 Each!

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The BARRA E-Mail List Serve

To join, send an e-mail message to:

majordomo@hamgate.net

with the message subscribe barra in the main body of the note.

To send a message to the list subscribers, address your e-mail to:

barra@hamgate.net

The Link is published eight times a year by BARRA, the Buffalo Amateur Radio Repeater Association, Inc. The opinions expressed herein, however, are not necessarily those of the Board of Directors or membership of BARRA. Letters to the editor are solicited and must be signed. Names and addresses will be withheld if requested. Material for *The Link* should be sent to the Editor:

Buffalo Amateur Radio Repeater Ass'n
P.O. Box 507
N. Tonawanda, NY 14120-0507

or may be submitted electronically to the editor's e-mail address: ka2wft@arrl.net. The editor may be reached by telephone in the evenings at (716) 834-2664.

DISTRIBUTION

The Link is available in both print and electronic formats. If you wish to receive *The Link* in the Adobe cross-platform PDF format by e-mail instead of regular mail, please notify the editor at ka2wft@arrl.net.

ARTICLES

Articles for the *Link* on any subject, technical or general interest, are always welcome and encouraged. When submitting material to the *Link*, please type it or submit it electronically, if possible. Remember that the editor reserves the right to make necessary changes including reformatting and condensing for space and that Full Membership may be obtained by writing articles.

LINK DEADLINES

All material must be submitted to the Editor by the end of the month previous to the issue (e.g. December 31st for the January issue). Of course, if the material is received earlier than that date, you will have a better chance of getting your article in the next issue. All advertising is subject to the same deadline.

ADVERTISING

Want-Ads are free to BARRA members and are published in the next available issue. Ads from other hams are accepted free on a space-available basis. Ads appearing in other club newsletters with which BARRA has an exchange agreement are reprinted on a space-available basis.

Display advertising is available at the prevailing rates. Business card size is currently \$2.00/mo; full page is \$16.00/mo. Contact the editor for rates for other sizes.

DUES

Basic membership rate: \$20.00

Family member in the same household as first member: \$3.00

Discounts from basic rate

Senior Citizen (65+): -5.00

Disabled: -5.00

Voting member: -5.00

Full-time student with ID: -5.00

Each new member recommended: -1.00

Note: A voting member is a member who has performed a service for BARRA (e.g. helped out at an activity, written a *Link* article, etc.).

Hobby Highlights

Rich Sellers, KG2OR

I learned from ARNewsline that Tri State Amateur Radio Club of Cresco, Iowa has received a \$150,000 grant from Homeland Security.

They are going to buy new mobile communications equipment, and a big tower. Ernie Martin, WA0AUU said he really worked originally with FEMA, to obtain the grant.

I can correlate this club's efforts to any club. If the treasury is low on funds, or membership is dwindling, we must look to Tri State's example for one way to improve a club's situation. This club is going to become an important part in their community. Congratulations Tri State!

73 de KG2OR, Richard Sellers.



Greater Buffalo Winter Hamfest Sunday - March 5, 2006

Hamfest web site: <http://gbhamfest.hamgate.net/>

Table Reservations:

Reserve by email kc2blh@aol.com

Reserve tables online:

http://gbhamfest.hamgate.net/gbwhf_table_info.htm

Location:

Main Transit Fireman's Grounds

6777 Main St., Williamsville, NY

Only 1 mile from NY State Thruway I 90 exit 49

Sponsored by:

The Lancaster Amateur Radio Club

PROS Radio Club Hamfest Saturday, April 22, 2006

8:00AM until?

Sardinia Historical Society

12070 Savage Road

Sardinia, NY

Contacts:

Roy Schwedt, KC2LEE

Cindy Schwedt, KC2MQU

716-676-3903

rschwedt@netscape.com



Plank Antenna *continued from page 1**All photos in this article were taken by Paul G. Crowley*

telephone that initiated random dialing. Not good. But this is the life of the apartment dweller. I also replaced the thin 50 ft cable -- RG 58- - that came with the 1611 with LMR 400 to about 1 ft from the antenna box itself. The LMR 400 at 20 feet would offer better braid shielding and less signal loss. In an apartment with a marginal antenna set-up one maximizes system gain whenever possible and tries to negate signal leakage. But even the LMR 400 did not help the telephone problem. The plank antenna will not tune up on transmit with the internal Mark V tuner. I had to program the internal tuner out and substitute an external MFJ auto tuner, the 991. The external tuner SWR runs from 1.5:1 to 1.7:1 and higher on 40M.

I have had several marginal QSOs on 40M. But the band has to be very quiet. Signal reports peg me just above the noise level -- generally S3-S5. I sometimes need relay assistance to check into a regional net. But the Mark V with the matching SP-8 speaker is just too good to be relegated to the status of a general coverage receiver. It is also



desirable to use the internal tuner as the Mark V RF power adjustment is not a smooth, linear operation with my external tuner. The Mark V operates at a maximum of 200 watts PEP SSB. The add on tuner limit is 150 watts PEP SSB. It is difficult to set a safe RF output with the Mark V RF output control. The RF control is also not ergonomically well placed for ease of operation. What to do next ?

An almost forgotten part of ham radio is the role of experimentation. My next goal will be to create an artificial ground on the balcony. The 1611 is fine just for receive. The balcony configuration makes the transmit process very difficult. What about another antenna type? I have had some limited success

with two ham sticks mounted in a bracket to effect a centre fed dipole. The bracket mounts on a mast tripod assembly. One ham stick is mounted directly into the bracket; the other ham stick is mounted into a 3/8 inch retaining stud with the centre insulated from the bracket by a plastic insert for the feedline. In this configuration, the ham sticks normally mount in a commercially made bracket. But the bracket is made in such a way that the ham sticks are oriented parallel with the balcony edge and inside the balcony. I need a mounting bracket that would allow the ham sticks to project into free space. A fellow ham, with machine shop access, has offered to build a "W"-shaped bracket for the ham sticks. A "W" pattern bracket, mounted with the "W" peaks facing out would allow the ham sticks to project into free space in a "V" configuration -over the edge of the balcony. I will place the mast and tripod for the bracket flush with the balcony wall. I will conduct experiments with this configuration and a ground radial system to develop an antenna that should have a better radiating pattern in free space. The aim will be to check into regional nets without the need of a relay, have a transmit signal that rises above the noise floor and use the internal tuner.

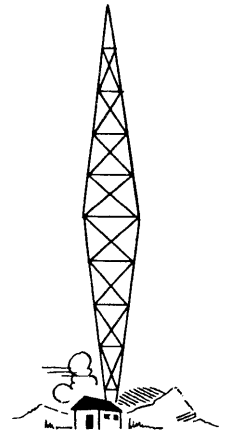
This set up is far from perfect, but it is a challenge to successfully operate HF from an apartment balcony. Ultimately, a successful QSO without a relay assist and with the use of the internal tuner will be very rewarding.



Remember that the Link is available as an emailed full color PDF document attachment by email. The club saves postage costs -- something especially important now with the recent postage increase -- and you receive a sharp-looking unmanagled copy of the newsletter. To get your next Link by email, contact the editor at ka2wft@arrl.net



It's time for the
Annual
BARRA
Ham Radio & Electronics
AUCTION



And Everyone's Invited to Buy or Sell!

Ham Radio Gear . Scanners . Computer Equipment . Parts
Books . CBs . Test Equipment . More!

Monday, February 20, 2006
St. Bartholomews Episcopal Church
Brighton & Fries Roads
Tonawanda, NY

(Across from Kenmore East HS)

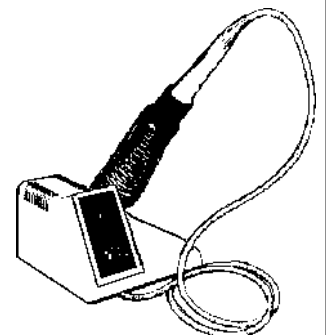
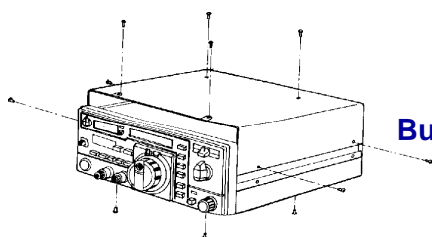
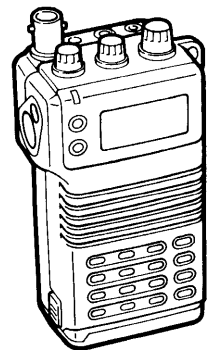
Doors open at 6:45 pm
Auction begins at 7:30 pm

BARRA Retains 10% of each item's selling price.

\$1.00 per person donation
Refreshments Available

DOOR PRIZE RAFFLE!

For more information contact:
Buffalo Amateur Radio Repeater Association
PO Box 507
N. Tonawanda, NY 14120
<http://barra.hamgate.net>



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Post Office Box 507

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

Calendar of Events

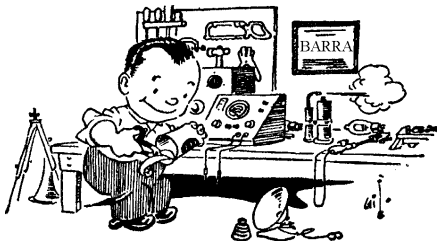
GENERAL MEETINGS

General meetings are held at St. Bartholomews Episcopal Church, Brighton and Fries Roads, Tonawanda, across from Kenmore East HS. Doors open at 7:00 pm for rag chew, business meeting at 7:30, with program following.

Monday, February 20, 2006 -- Annual BARRA Auction! Turn your electronic trash into cash!

Monday, April 17, 2006 -- Meeting program TBA. Vote on proposed dues increase.

Monday, June 19, 2006 -- Field Trip! Tour of WKBW-TV transmitter facility in Colden, NY.



**NO GENERAL MEETINGS IN MARCH,
MAY, AUGUST OR NOVEMBER**
The *Link* is not published in those months.

BOARD MEETINGS

Board Meetings are held the second Monday of every month at the **Athens Family Restaurant**, 2801 Harlem Rd, Cheektowaga, between Genesee Street and George Urban Blvd. The meetings begin at 7:30 PM and **members are always welcome** to sit in on a meeting or bring concerns to the board.

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

The Technical Committee has formal meetings the first Friday of every month at 7:00 PM in Room 117 of the BOCES Potter Road Career and Technical Center, 705 Potter Road, West Seneca (Corner of Slade, Potter and Orchard Park Rds). Come on out to BARRA's own CCITT (Coffee & Crumpets Interrupted by Technical Talk), where progress of current projects is evaluated and new projects are planned. The meetings usually conclude with munchies at a nearby restaurant.

See You at the Annual
BARRA Auction
This Month
Monday, February 20, 2006!