



The W. A. COM Ham

Volume 1 Issue 2 MARCH 2008

From “Bud” Plants, N3TIR, President....

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I would first like to thank you for allowing me to serve as your President. I can promise you all a year of interesting meetings, a year of change, and a year of growth.

An executive meeting has already taken place and we have a lot on the agenda for this year and I am sure that you will experience all that I have just mentioned.

If you haven't been a club meeting lately, come on down and join us. You will find a friendly and interesting atmosphere and always with Amateur Radio as the main topic, which I am sure you will enjoy.

Spring is very near and we have to make plans for field day 2008, and if anyone needs help with station setup and those winter damages to our antennas.

73's

Bud Plants, N3TIR

**DUES ARE DUE!
PLEASE SEND IN
YOUR 2008
DUES— OR
BETTER YET,
BRING THEM TO
THE MARCH
MEETING ON
THURSDAY,
MARCH 6TH AT
7:30 P.M. AT THE
WASHINGTON
COUNTY
BUILDING.**

WASHfest 2008

WASHfest is the first hamfest of the year in this area, kicking off the season. Despite the questionable weather we were lucky that that day was nice (relatively, for winter) and the roads were clear and dry. As always there was a fine attendance, Hams just had to get out and visit and shop and compare notes with each other after being shut inside this winter. WACOM had two tables there this year—Dave DeMotte, N3IDH, manned one table with items donated by Tom Fox's estate for sale to benefit the club. The items did generate a lot of interest, especially among those with interest in older radios. At the other table we

continued to sell the candy bars and promoted our upcoming Technician Licensing class. Hats off to Jim Bertoft, KC3HW, who spent a good bit of the day manning the table.

The WASHfest was attended by a number of our members, and we have photos of some of them. Those we spoke to all seemed to enjoy themselves and found something of interest to take home.

There is a list of upcoming hamfests in this area on the last page of this newsletter. If there are any we need to add, please email to let me know.



You Know You're a Ham if :

- you buy electrical black tape in ten packs.
- you've stripped wire with your teeth.
- you've told your son that, "One day, all this will be yours", and he doesn't respond.
- you'd rather help a buddy put up a new tower than mow the lawn.
- you've grabbed the wrong end of a soldering iron.
- you start giving out RST reports when you are on the telephone.
- the propagation forecast means far more to you than the local weather forecast.
- the microphone or visual aids at a meeting don't work and you rush up to the front to fix it.
- you tell the XYL, when she notices a new rig in the shack, why that has been there for years.
- your watch is set only to UTC.
- at night, when you pray, it starts off something like: CQ CQ CQ GOD DE (your callsign).
- you ever had to patch your roof after an antenna project.
- Ham radio magazines comprise more than 50% of your bathroom library.
- you ever put a GPS tracker in the XYL's car, just so you could watch her on APRS.
- you and the XYL took a cruise so you could visit the radio room.
- you ever tapped out HI in Morse on your car horn to another ham.
- you ever had an antenna fall down.
- your teenager refuses to ride in your car because it looks like a porcupine.
- you know the Latitude and Longitude of your home QTH.
- you go into the local Radio Shack store and the clerk asks you where something is.
- you go necking with your girl/boy friend at secluded tower sites.
- you answer the phone "QRZed?"
- you notice antennas on top of buildings before you notice traffic lights.
- you tell the girl/guy at the Wendy's drive-through window "73" before you pull away.

Thanks to KB3HPC & WC3O and the SKYVIEW Newsletter

Bill's Contest Corner

Two certificates showed up the other day, both from CQ magazine. One for First Place, Rookie class, low power, in the CQ WW WPX SSB Contest for the third call district, and a second one that I almost missed, for third place overall, low power in the Third Call District.

My DXCC pin showed up last week too. I may have told you that. First round application with 135 confirmations, and I already have another 10-12 here that have shown up since the hamfest in November.

I was chasing VP6DX on Ducie Island. I got them on 12, 15, 17, 20, 40 & 80 phone, plus 17, 20 & 30 RTTY. And by the way, take a look at the March 2008 issue of QST: The article is the one with the results of



the IARU HF World Championships. (Starts on page 81). On Page 82: Bottom, under W/VE winners, Northeast Region. (far left column) see a familiar callsign about 1/2 way down the column? Score 83,616 On Page 84 Very bottom of the page, middle column, bottom group under the heading of W/VE Top Ten, under Single Operator.....Phone Second from the bottom—Look familiar?

**I made QST.....TWICE !!!!!!!
WOW!**

I LOVE HAM RADIO CONTESTING!

Until next time, 73 de Bill, KB3LIX

THE DAYTON HAMVENTION EXPERIENCE

When ham radio operators talk of making the trip to Dayton, many non-hams respond with "Why?" or "What's in Dayton?" Well, we know it's the home of the largest ham radio gathering in the world. Last year, over 30,000 people attended the Dayton Hamvention. .

Every ham needs to go to the Dayton Hamvention at least once in their ham radio career. Everything to do with ham radio is there. It's the hamfest where manufacturers show off their latest equipment. The flea market extends for acres. There are forums on every aspect of ham radio. There is the official banquet, and the many unofficial gatherings by just about every amateur radio group there is. But, let's not forget the most important part of the Hamvention, the people you see. They come from all over the world to be there.

Before we get too far with this, there is one very important thing you need to know. Book your hotel room early. Many rooms are booked for next year as people are leaving this year. That's the best way to be sure you're not staying in Columbus or Cincinnati or further away. The Internet makes booking hotels so easy, and you can find where your hotel is located compared to the Hara Arena (the actual location of the Hamvention). As you can imagine, the hotels close to the arena fill up early.

Getting to the Hamvention can be an experience. You see cars, trucks, vans and SUVs with call letter plates and extra antennas all headed to the same place. Never before have you seen that many hams headed to the same place. Put your 2 meter rig on 146.52 as you get closer to Dayton. It will get busy. Like any other hamfest, there is a talk-in frequency. At times, it can sound like the approach control at a busy airport. If you need directions, or have a quick question, the talk-in people are very accommodating. If it's an involved question, they will send you over to one of the other repeaters. After all, they are trying to take care of as many people as they can.

OK, you've found your way to Dayton, and to the hotel. Friday morning rolls around, and it's off to the hamfest. In years past, you drove to the Hara Arena, and spent time looking for a parking place in a field as close as you could find, but wasn't axle deep in mud, or didn't cost an arm and a leg. Alas, the Dayton Hamvention people have borrowed an idea from the folks who put on the Oshkosh Fly-in. They have busses that run from a shopping center and deliver you to the front door.

Ham radio manufacturers unveil their newest equipment at the Hamvention. Why not, where else can you find 30,000 plus people in one location who are interested in buying radios? You see them advertised in the magazines, you check out the prices on the Internet, but you wait until Dayton to actually buy one. You can talk to the manufacturer's representatives about it. Best of all, you can put your hands on it before it appears in stores. This is the ultimate candy store. Needless to say, a lot of equipment is sold the first day as people check out the latest offerings. Then they spend Friday evening learning how to use it.

Off the arena is even more exhibit space. It's in this area you'll find logging software, connectors, tubes, towers, batteries, basically everything A to Z. ARRL always sets up a huge display back there. You can finally put a face to the name you read in QST every month. You can talk to someone about repeater controllers. You can talk about the differences between different types of tubes in your amplifier. There are places to buy the makings for most any type of antenna you want. You say you need batteries for your handheld? There will be several places to buy them. Looking for a program to interface your computer and that new radio you just bought? You could buy the one from the manufacturer, or you could buy one from one of the vendors who improved the software. Need QSL cards? Check out people who print QSL cards. Interested in microwave communications? There are people who will get you started in style. This is just the beginning.

Continued on Page 6



Technician Licensing Class will be held on April 19, 20, and 26th, EOC Center Classroom from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day.

Sunday, April 27th we will have the exam session at 1 p.m. Sign up sheet and info is also on the web site.



Ask the Technician

This month's question comes from a newly upgraded General Class licensee who is interested in working CW.

Dear Joe:

What is the difference between a 'bug' type key and a keyer? I'd like to start working cw, and as I build my speed, I may want to upgrade to one of these devices.

This is a common question for new cw operators. A bug, or semi automatic key, generates dots by using a mechanical arm in conjunction with a weight. When the paddle is moved by the thumb to the right, the arm begins a mechanical vibration, the rate of which is controlled by the position of the weight. The arm is mechanically damped, so when the pressure on the paddle is released, the oscillation ceases.

The dashes are manually (hence the name semi-automatic key) controlled by pressing the paddle to the left and held for the duration of the dash, and repeated as necessary. An operator using a bug develops his/her own style or 'fist.'

An electronic keyer is a device that uses a paddle that is in reality two normally open, momentary contact switches. When that paddle is pressed to the right, a timing circuit produces a steady stream of dots as long as the paddle is pressed. When moved to the left, a second timing circuit produces a stream of dashes (3X the duration of the dots) as long as the paddle is held. The speed is adjusted by a pot on the front of the keyer.

Either device is a great operating aid for a cw operator, and which one to use is personal preference. My choice is the bug (my XYL bought me a 100th Anniversary Vibroplex for Christmas), but then again, I'm an old school nostalgic.

73 til next month,

Joe WA3WMB

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Don't forget, if you have a question you'd like to have the Tech answer, just email Joe, WA3WMB, at [Joseph.A.Furjanic@dom.com](mailto:Joseph.A.Furjanic@dom.com)

## Minutes of the General Membership Meeting February 7, 2008

Meeting called to order by **Kevin Beatty**

**Minutes from January meeting distributed**

Motion to accept KC3HW Sec: WA3WMB

**Repeater:** OK

**Treasurers Report: Read into the record.**

Motion to accept: WA3WMB Sec: KB3OMH

**AREA/RACES:** Kathleen Pyca resigned

**By-Laws:** By-Laws read aloud. Motion to accept: KB3EUQ Sec: N3IDH Passed

**1 Position on Board of Directors to fill due to vacancy**

Nominated: Bob KB3IN, Joe WA3WMB

Ballots distributed and voted: KB3IN 9 WA3WMB 7

KB3IN elected

**Candy:** Sold some at Sportsmen's Show, and some available tonight if anyone wants any.

**Sportsmen's Show:** Went fine. Trailer had some damage, cables snapped, and must be replaced.

**Education Committee:** Technician Class scheduled for April. Joe Furjanic working on General Class presentation.

WASHFest February 24, 2008

Monesson Hamfest March 30, 2008

**Old Business**

Question: Hamfest, what went well, what needs improvement?

**New Business:** Discussion about HamFest prizes

**Motion to adjourn:** Joe WA3WMB Sec: W3CYO

Attendance: KB3LIX, N3ZEL, AA3JK, KB3AAG, KB3OMH, KC3HW, KB3EUQ, WA3WMB, W3CYO, N3XE, N3IDH, N3WMV, N3AXR

(13)

B. Sheehan

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### The Dayton HAMVENTION Experience Continued from Page 3

In addition to a great indoor exhibit area with some of the latest high tech ham gear, Dayton has to have the ultimate collection of previously owned equipment anywhere. It's better than E-Bay because you can put your hands on it before you buy it. There are literally acres and acres of stuff. Stuff you will not find anywhere else but Dayton. If you have a project you're working on, and can't find the parts locally, take your parts list. Chances are, somebody has it. Before you go, take a lesson from N3TIR about buying things at the flea market. No need to pay more than you have to. Let's not forget the unusual. I once saw a surplus 1 kW Army Signal Corps transmitter in somebody's flea market spot with a for sale sign on it. You needed a U-Haul trailer to take it home. Later that day I walked past that same spot, and it was gone. I asked about it, and yep, it was sold.

Many people make time to attend some of the forums while they are there. The subjects are as varied as ham radio itself. There are forums on collecting radios such as Collins and Drake. There are forums on kit building, amateur television, transmitter hunting, satellites, and contesting, to name a few. This is in addition to the usual forums on ARRL, ARES, and Skywarn, the usual fare at hamfests. They range from basic overviews to very technical. Most are very informative because the people giving the presentations are THE experts in their field. You are bound to learn something.

On Friday and Saturday night at the Hamvention, there are any number of banquets and get-togethers. Friday is the night most of the interest groups have their banquets or open hospitality suites in local hotels. Nearly every hotel with meeting facilities in the immediate Dayton area has something going on. DX groups, county hunters, technical associations, you name it, there are plenty to choose from. Most groups have been advertising their get-together for months. Some are sold out as fast as they are advertised. There is one group that advertises their get-together by hiring a plane towing a banner. The banner tells you who it is, and what repeater to get the information on. Saturday night is the official Hamvention banquet. There are guest entertainers, some of whom are hams themselves. There are several hundred people who gather at a civic center to eat, be entertained, and talk ham radio.

You never know who will be staying in the same hotel. You could find yourself at breakfast next to a group from the United Kingdom, or find out the hams down the hall are from Japan. The group across the hall could be from Germany. You may find yourself in a forum sitting next to a ham from Russia. For the past few years, there has been a large contingent from Mainland China. Not to mention the many US and Canadian hams who make the trip every year. It's not unusual to tune around on the radio and hear several different languages. No matter what the language, everybody is there because of a common interest in ham radio. That's what makes the Dayton Hamvention special. It's worth the trip.

BUD PLANTS N3TIR (some information obtained at the Dayton HAMVENTION web site)

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**A request for photos of your station, no matter how large or small, has come from Bob, KB3IN. He'd like to have photos to show our prospective licensees during the Technician classes, just to let them see what different ham stations look like.**

**Photos can be emailed to me at [n3zel@fyi.net](mailto:n3zel@fyi.net) and I'll assemble them on a disk for Bob to show during the class. Thank you.**

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**Items donated to the WACOM club from the estate of Tom Fox, W3BGY, will be brought to the March meeting. These items are available for purchase by WACOM members, with the proceeds to be donated to the club. Please be sure to come and check out the merchandise. There are a lot of interesting things there, and Dave, N3IDH, will also bring some of Tom's logbooks to show how active he was.**



## Build Something! IT'S FUN TO BE A HAM

A couple of years ago, a group of us were talking on the club repeater, and the talk got around to building stuff. One of the guys said, "You can't really build anything anymore." I almost fell out of my chair. That's simply not true. Heathkit may be just a fond memory, but there are still many companies out there selling kits that are not only fun to build, but are useful additions to the ham shack.

Here are a couple of sources:

\* Elecraft ([www.elecraft.com](http://www.elecraft.com)). In my mind, Elecraft has become the premiere ham radio kit company, if not the premiere ham radio company, period. The new K3, for example, outperforms just about anything on the market by many accounts. Personally, I have built the KX-1, which is a real blast to operate from a park bench or to take on vacation. I also have and use the W1 wattmeter.

\* TenTec ([radio.tentec.com/kits](http://radio.tentec.com/kits)). While perhaps known more for their ready-made rigs, they also sell a line of single-band transceivers and receiver kits.

\* QRP Kits ([www.qrpkits.com](http://www.qrpkits.com)). QRPKits.Com sells kits that were originally projects of the Northern California QRP Club. My current General Class students are going to build the DC40A kit (\$40) as an exercise in building and as a way to learn about how radios work.

Below are some other companies whose kits have good reputations, but with which I have no personal experience:

\* Small Wonder Labs ([www.smallwonderlabs.com](http://www.smallwonderlabs.com))

\* Wilderness Radio ([www.fix.net/~jparker/wild.html](http://www.fix.net/~jparker/wild.html))

\* Milestone Technologies ([www.mtechnologies.com](http://www.mtechnologies.com))

\* Almost All Digital Electronics ([www.aade.com/index.html](http://www.aade.com/index.html))

\* FAR Circuits ([www.farcircuits.net](http://www.farcircuits.net))

\* Jackson Harbor ([home.att.net/~jacksonharbor/ham.htm](http://home.att.net/~jacksonharbor/ham.htm))

\* QRPme ([www.qrpme.com/](http://www.qrpme.com/))

\* Linear Amp UK ([www.linamp.co.uk](http://www.linamp.co.uk))

QRP clubs are also a good source of cool kits. The problem with QRP clubs is that they order parts only for a very short run of kits. Once they sell out, the kits are no longer available. Even so, here are some clubs that are worth checking out:

\* American QRP Club ([www.amqrp.org](http://www.amqrp.org))

\* Four State QRP Club ([4sqrp.com/kits/kits.htm](http://4sqrp.com/kits/kits.htm))

\* NORTEX ([www.kk5na.com/nortex.htm](http://www.kk5na.com/nortex.htm))

Ready to rock and roll? Here are a couple websites that you might want to check out before you dive in:

\* Electronic Construction from A to Z

([www.mtechnologies.com/building/atoz.htm](http://www.mtechnologies.com/building/atoz.htm)). This site includes a page that lists all the tools you'll need to become a successful kit builder.

\* Crystal Sets to Sideband: A Guide to Building an Amateur Radio Station ([www.gsl.net/k3pd/book.html](http://www.gsl.net/k3pd/book.html)). This site not only discusses kit building, but also radio theory.

\* The Art of Kit Building ([ww2.netnitco.net/users/wt9w/kit%20building.html](http://ww2.netnitco.net/users/wt9w/kit%20building.html))

I hope that I've whetted your appetite for building a kit or two. They're a lot of fun to build, and you really do get a rush from operating a radio or using a piece of test equipment that you built yourself.

BUD 73'S N3TIR

(with information from the Dayton HAMVENTION website)

Washington Amateur Communications

WASHfest 2008 — Photo below courtesy of and © to Bob, AB3ED

Club Officers

President: Bud Plants, N3TIR; [bud@bnelectronics.com](mailto:bud@bnelectronics.com)  
Vice President: Kevin Beatty, KB3JHO; [KB3JHO@arrl.net](mailto:KB3JHO@arrl.net)  
Secretary: Bill Sheehan, KB3LIX; [sheehanbill@hotmail.com](mailto:sheehanbill@hotmail.com)  
Treasurer: Ed Oelschlager, N3ZNI; [n3zni@arrl.net](mailto:n3zni@arrl.net)

Board of Directors

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Director: Jim Burtoft, KC3HW; [jburtuft@verizon.net](mailto:jburtuft@verizon.net)  
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Above right, Hank, KB3FNM,  
Above, Dave, N3IDH and below  
Ed, N3ZNI. Photos by and © to  
Bob, AB3ED.

Sam, WA3DIP,  
right. Below:  
Joe,  
WA3WMB,  
Randy, N3ZK  
and his daughter  
and ham-in-  
training  
Caitlin. Photos  
by N3ZEL

**We're RadioActive!!!**

We're on the Web  
[www.wacomarc.org](http://www.wacomarc.org)



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HAMFESTS

March 9th 2008

Foothills ARC hamfest. Location: Greensburg VFD #1, 12 McLaughlin Road. . Talk-in 147.180 131.8pl. Contact: Frank J. Rossi, Jr., N3FLR 707 9th Street Irwin, PA 15642 Phone: 724-989-0462 Email: N3FLR@arrl.net Breakfast and lunch served

March 29th & 30th 2008

Greater Baltimore Hamboree and Computerfest. "Timonium hamfest". Talk-in 146.670- Contact: Info2008@gbhc.org <http://www.gbhc.org/>

March 30th 2008

Second annual Monessen ARC hamfest. New, bigger location! 8:00am to 1:00pm. Blaine Hill VFD, 409 Oxford Ave. Elizabeth, PA 15037. Talk-in: 147.225. Contact: John Graham, N3OVO at n3ovol@gmail.com Breakfast and lunch served

April 20th 2008

54nd Annual Hamfest/Electronics & Computer Show. Location: Emidio & Sons Party Center, 48 East Bath Road. Cuyahoga Falls, OH. Talk-in: 147.270+. Contact: Ted Sarah, W8TTS w8tts@w8tts.com <http://www.cfarc.org/hamfest2006.htm>

April 27th 2008

Two Rivers Amateur Radio Club. Location: at The Spectrum-6001 Smithfield Street Boston, PA. Talk-in 146.730. Contact: William Hetrick, N3LQC n3lqc@comcast.net <http://www.qsl.net/w3oc> VE testing. Breakfast and lunch served

May 16th – 18th 2008

Dayton Hamvention! **The big daddy!** Location: Hara Arena, 1001 Shiloh Springs Road. <http://www.hamvention.org/>

May 30th to 31st 2008

Rochester Hamfest. Location: Monroe County Fairgrounds Rt. 15A Rochester NY. Talk-in: ? Contact: info@rochesterhamfest.org ARRL Atlantic Division Convention! <http://www.rochesterhamfest.org/>

June 1st 2008

52nd Annual Breeze Shooters Hamfest & Computer Show **This is the biggest area hamfest!** Location: Butler Farm Show Grounds. Route 68 East of Butler. Talk-in 147.300+, Contact: Robert W. Benna, N3LWP hamfest at n3lwp@verizon.net <http://www.breezeshooters.net> Breakfast and lunch served VE testing.

July 13th 2008

North Hills ARC hamfest. Northland Public Library, 300 Cumberland Road. McCandless Township 15237. Talk-in 147.090+. Contact: Gorman, N3RQD n3rqd@earthlink.net <http://www.nharc.org> Breakfast and lunch served

July 20th 2008

Somerset County Amateur Radio Club. Location: Somerset County Vo-Tech School Talk-in: 147.195 123.0pl. Contact: Stewart Saylor, AK3J ak3j@arrl.net <http://www.k3smt.org/>

August 24th 2008 ARRL Section Convention!

Skyview Radio Society 48th annual Swap N Shop! Location: Skyview Radio Society clubhouse grounds. 2335 Turkey Ridge Road. New Kensington, PA 15068. Talk-in: 146.640- 131.8pl. Contact: Robert Boehmer, KG3F at SkyviewHamfest2008@verizon.net Map and directions at www.skyviewradio.net Breakfast and lunch served

August 30th 2008

Uniontown ARC Gabfest. Location: Uniontown ARC club grounds, on Old Pittsburgh Road just off of Rt. 51 and Rt. 119. Talk-in 147.045+ 131.8pl. Contact: Tony Alviar, KA3VOR (724) 430-1277 (M-F 8-4); newsletter@w3pie.org www.w3pie.org Breakfast and lunch served, free admission

November 2nd 2008

WACOM ARC Hamfest. Location: Washington County Fairgrounds on Main Street Extension. Talk-in 145.490- 131.8pl. Contact Ed Oelschlager, N3ZNI (724) 986-9371 or n3zni@arrl.net Free coffee all day, breakfast and lunch available. Map and directions at www.wacomarc.org