



Sparks from the Spa



A PUBLICATION OF SARATOGA COUNTY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

General membership meeting—October 14, 2013

The meeting topic of the evening was solar power for the ham shack. In spite of the holiday, (or maybe because of it), the meeting was well attended. Tim, N2MBX and Peter, W2BEW were the presenters.

Tim started out with a block diagram of a typical ham radio solar installation. Solar cells, are connected through a charge controller which in turn feeds the load applied. The load being a set of deep cycle batteries, and the ham radio station. Tim displayed some of his equipment, including his unique design for mounting the cells to a wooded frame which can be made to adjust the angle of the cells to the sun, which is necessary to harvest the maximum amount of energy from the sun. He also demonstrated the operation of his charge controller, and also various sets of cables he created to allow the placement of the cells various distances from the controller. This is to allow a very flexible emergency setup in the field.

Peter also brought along parts of his setup for display, and you can see some attached photos of his setup at home. He also brought along his unique solar cell mounting hardware. At home Peter has his collector mounted more or less permanently on a fence in his backyard. His mount is also manually operated for azimuth and elevation. Both Tim and Peter indicated that the position of the cells are fairly flexible, meaning that you don't need to be constantly running out to adjust the angles just to follow the sun.

It was emphasized that the cost of an installation is constantly going down as the technology matures, and some real bargains can be found if you shop around. Peter's emphasis was on the home installation, whereas Tim was more interested in field operations, demonstrating that the ham spirit of experimentation is not dead in the Saratoga area.

The next general membership meeting will be held on Monday November 11, 2013. The primary topic of discussion is expected to be Remote operation of a ham station via the internet. Steve WA2TPP has been using this capability for several years, as he regularly makes trips out of state.



A front view of Peter's Solar Cell. Its loosely mounted to his fence at home.



A rear view of Peter's installation, showing its genius flexibility. Note that it is mounted in a fence post to allow a wide degree of azimuth adjustment. You can just see the set screw in the PVC sitting on top of the fence post, preventing the cell from falling inside the post. Also note the U bolts holding the frame of the cell to the horizontal PVC mounting. They are used to adjust the elevation. Peter says that he rarely makes any elevation adjustments, as the solar cell works well over a wide range of settings.



Peter's 8 amp charge controller. This magic box sits between the solar cell, and the load (battery and radio)

Headlines from the CQ newsroom

FCC Says No to Expanded 10-Meter Tech Privileges - Says Techs may already use VHF or UHF inputs that are linked to many 10-meter repeaters, and that upgrading to General is easy.

California Ham Honored as "Champion of Change" - Matt Brisbois, KI6RBS, of Newport Beach, recognized by White House
Ham Industry Changes - DaySaver merges with Elk Antennas; DX Engineering is sole distributor for Hi-Z Antennas; Small Wonder Labs shuts down.

AMSAT Celebrates 30 Years of Hams in Space - Owen Garriott, W5LFL, became the first person to operate a ham radio station from space in 1983

For details on these and other news stories, visit the

CQ Newsroom by going to the CQ magazine website at <www.cq-amateur-radio.com> and clicking on the "[CQ Newsroom](#)" button. Please read the full story

Contest Activities

ARRL November Sweepstakes
Nov 15, 2100Z to Nov 18, 0300Z
Homebrew and Oldtime Contest
Nov 17, 1300Z - Nov 17, 1700Z
Run For the Bacon
Nov 18, 0200Z - Nov 18, 0400Z
NAQCC Monthly QRP Sprint
Nov 21, 0130Z - Nov 21, 0330Z
CQ World Wide CW Contest
Nov 23, 0000Z - Nov 24, 2359Z
Top Band Sprint
Nov 28, 0000Z - Nov 28, 0600Z
ARRL 160-Meter Contest
Dec 6, 2200Z - Dec 8, 1600Z
TARA RTTY Melee
Dec 7, 0000Z-2400Z
Ten-Meter RTTY Contest
Dec 8, 0000Z-2400Z
ARRL 10-Meter Contest
Dec 14, 0000Z - Dec 15, 2400Z
ARRL Rookie Roundup, CW
Dec 22, 1800Z-2359Z

Minutes Of the Board of Directors Meeting - 10/14/13
Saratoga County Amateur Radio Association
As reported by W2BEW

- President Tim, N2MBX, reported that the Field Day pins are still safely at home on the counter - ready to bring to a future meeting
 - Minutes for 9/9 meeting OK as presented in newsletter
- Treasurer KG2H reported a Sept. ending balance of \$15,080.24 in the club acct.

OLD BUSINESS

- KG2H reported that the newsletter will remain in email format for now while he is in transition (moving)
 - N2MBX brought up the Rochester club newsletter and discussion followed about considerations for our own newsletter and membership.
 - What are the benefits of membership in our club?
- Should we consider wider distribution to solicit additional membership and hamfest attendance? (Rochester distribution list is 8,000)

NEW BUSINESS

- Need future programs for meetings
 - WA2TTP, Steve, on remote operation in November (now confirmed)
 - December - Holiday Gala
 - W2XM, Bob, Ham Radio Jap-ar-dee (?) - January
 - February - ?
 - March - Swap Meet
 - April, May, June - ?
- Topics to consider: APRS, K2DLL resources (use of club transceivers prior to FD), NBEMS, Mesh Networks, tablet computers in ham radio, ARRL speaker, others??
- Peter, W2BEW, agreed to call Jim, K2LM, to ascertain the status of the repeater move at Providence and availability of a shelter/structure
- Fred, W2EMS, urged members to register for ARES membership online at K2DLL.org
- Board voted to reimburse Fred \$40 for refreshments at recent ENY ARES meeting hosted by SCARA
- Board voted to reimburse Tim \$105 for attendance for 3 at upcoming Hudson Division awards dinner Nov 2 in Newburgh, NY (Sid, K2LJH will be presented with Grand Old Ham award for 2012)
- Fred reported that the SET exercise on 10/5 was a success. Our ARES participation garnered 597 points from many participants. Could add formal traffic handling next year. Hal, AK2E inquired about establishing an online club reflector through Yahoo.com (eg NEARH@yahoo.com). To be explored.

Adjourned at 7:30 pm

Upcoming program note

In December, we will have our usual Holiday meeting. That means we will not have a guest speaker. Instead, we would like you to come and just kibitz. If you would like to bring a food item to share with the group that would be great. At this meeting we encourage you bring along a new unwrapped toy for a child. All the toys will be donated to a charity to be distributed to needy children. We have been very successful in the past, and would like to share to good feeling of helping out another.

In January, Bob Rafael, W2XM is scheduled to present his updated Jeopardy game. Come along in see what you know in the world of Ham Radio.

February is open, but let us know what you would like to hear.

March is the Swapfest on Saturday March 15, instead of our usual Monday evening session.

Some ideas floated for Feb, April and May include antennas, NBEMS (narrow band emergency messaging system), tablet computers and ham radio.

If you have knowledge in these areas (or know someone who does) and would like to share them with the group, please let me or any of the board members know. Likewise, if you know of any other topic you would like to share (not necessarily Ham Radio related) let us know. Thanks.



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Got News or information you would like to get published? How about your own projects or other things you think would be of interest to Club Members? How about (GASP), a letter to the editor? Contact us at our email address :

SparksFromTheSpa@gmail.com

UPCOMING PUBLIC SERVICE

Winter is usually slow, so needless to say, we have nothing scheduled at this time. Hopefully in the next edition, ARRL will have published Field Day results which we will let you know how K2DLL fared.