

Washington Amateur  
Communications, Inc.  
c/o Ed Oelschlager N3ZNI  
60 Carl Avenue B-2  
Eighty Four, PA 15330-2829

# The WACOM

# HAM

JULY  
2005



WACOM had a *great* Field Day. While the weather was warm and humid, there was a good breeze most of the time at our location at the Washington Sportsmen's Club. A 20m beam and a 6m beam went up on the trailer tower, and a 10m-80m vertical was set up as well. Somewhere along the line a home-brew 80m dipole was "McGyvered" (by N3ZNI Ed, KB3JHO Kevin, and KB3JHP James) using wire, rope and lots of duct tape. In fact, this whole Field Day was in debt to the manufacturers of said duct tape, we couldn't have done without it!

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Joe, N3XE, built a 20m vertical antenna for his PSK31 station, and found that it tuned perfectly for him. Larry, KB3KXO, and Bill, KB3LIX, both brought their Yaesu 897 radios. Larry brought his key and made a number of CW contacts, while Bill operated SSB.

Ken, AA3GM, came with his self-contained "station in a truck" and operated on VHF, as well as CW on HF into the night. Jim, KC3HW, mentored some of our "newer" hams who participated in Field Day for the first time this year: James KB3JHP, Ben KB3MDO, and Linda Sue KB3KXN. Tom, KA3NIY, organized the food and was again our chef.

*(Field Day Continued on page 3)*

"Beams on the Trailer Tower"  
Photo courtesy of and Copyright ©2005 Jacqué Gosselin N3ZEL



## UPCOMING MEETINGS!



**Next WACOM Monthly Meeting:**  
Thursday, July 7, 2005, 7:30 PM  
→ Picnic Plans to be finalized at the meeting!

**Next WACOM Board of Directors Meeting:**  
Thursday, July 28, 7:30 PM

**Meeting Location:** Room 103, Washington County Building, Downtown Washington. *All Welcome!*

# The Strange Antenna Challenge for 2005

Dave Wagner K3LGM

Back in early May, while browsing the Special Events section of QST, I happened across a most interesting entry.

It seemed Erik Weaver, NØEW, was hosting a special event station, namely the Kurt N. Sterba Strange Antenna Challenge over the Memorial day weekend. If you happen to subscribe to

**World Radio**, you already know Krusty Kurt as the gentleman writing the Aerials column every month. Having experimented with the Buddipole, I thought this would be an interesting event as I have come up with some pretty strange configurations for that system.

Upon checking the web site for rules and other info, I learned that the restriction, and part of the challenge too, was to use

materials for an antenna that are normally NOT used for antennas. Well, that changed the circumstances a bit. As usual, I forgot about the event until the Saturday it was underway. I can't remember what jogged my memory, but suffice to say it was a scramble to come up with something. That Saturday was a wash as far as the weather was concerned. It was raining so hard, I didn't even want to go outside to try to find something I could throw together.

Sunday, I nosed around and found a lot of wire, fencing, steel and aluminum poles, but wasn't allowed to use any of that.

Found some sheet metal, but couldn't figure out how to make an antenna out of the pieces I found on that short notice. Keep looking. Found some of Jane's horse driving carts, but there was not enough metal on them to make a decent antenna. Then I looked under one of the many tarps we have covering both unknown treasures and more junk.

AHA! One of her carts (a practice one) was all metal. That was just the ticket. No way THAT could be mistaken

for an antenna! I used some of the metal sheeting I had found earlier for a ground plane, and was off and running.

Using an LDG balun, I hooked up two pieces of ordinary wire to the setup and ran coax back to the rig. Deciding to complicate things, I chose to experiment with two variables at once just to see if I could not figure out where potential problems may lie. I decided to use the Yaesu FT-897 along with the LDG 897 tuner for the first time instead of my standard base station.

Now to see if it would load. I hooked up an MFJ antenna analyzer to the setup and was actually surprised when I got a real SWR. Only 6.8:1 on 20 meters. (The range of SWRs was 2.9:1 on 160 meters to 9.8:1 on 10 meters.) Well, the info for the LDG tuner said it would handle up to a 10:1 SWR, so I gave it a try. Using the internal battery packs and

putting out a whopping 20 watts, I hit the tune button, and was pleasantly surprised when it stopped its internal chattering and settled down to a 1.2:1 SWR and didn't let out any smoke during the process. I tuned around 20 meters and heard W9IMS from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway

booming in on 14.250. He was working other stations, but I gave him a shot. I called several times, but he never came back to me. Oh well, guess I'll just chalk this one up to experience. It was a nice try.

Later that day, I decided to try out the internal power supply for that radio. I took

out the batteries and plugged in the FP-30, which got me up to 100 watts. I hooked up the 'antenna' and began tuning around on 20 meters again. Lo and behold, W9IMS was still there! This time I tried and he came back to me on my second call with a 58 report! When I told him what I was using for an antenna, I think he almost dropped his mike. Shortly after this, the band went south, and nothing much else was heard the rest of the day. This just goes to show that almost anything, even when it's not supposed to be an antenna, can be used as one.

Check out Erik's web site for more info about the challenge, see what he was using as well as what other folks came up with. There is also info about the event from past years as well as a ton of other links including antenna information and theory about 1/3 down the page:

<http://www.n0ew.radiomonkey.org/index.php>

For now, 73 til the PAQSO Party

When does "Not An Antenna"  
become an antenna?  
— or —  
How Not to be Seen



WACOM is going to sponsor a YL Net on Wednesday nights at 7:00 p.m. We have yet to pick which repeater we'll be using, so will announce that and the starting date soon.

# BPL Coming to SW PA — Soon?

"Bits & Bytes" edited by Corilyn Shropshire, From the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, July 2, 2005, Page A-10

**BPL Global Limited.**, the Downtown-based start-up, has landed \$1 million from investors, including money from **PA Early Stage Partners** and \$300,000 from **Innovation Works**. The company, founded by University of Pittsburgh graduate, and Indian Wells, CA resident Keith Schaefer, currently employs 12 full-timers and plans to hire more. BPL partners with **Redleaf** portfolio company **Amperion**, based in Lowell MA, to provide broadband connections through power lines to utility companies and Internet service providers.

Schaefer, a start-up pioneer who has worked with companies such as Atari and Viacom, may live out west, but BPL's headquarters and staff are in Pittsburgh.



*(Field Day Continued from page 1)*

This year we even had a visit from Bill, N3BPB, as he made a swing through on his way to the North Hills Field Day.

In addition to those already mentioned, the following attended, operated, visited, set up and helped tear down this Field Day: Faye, KB3VOM and her husband Lowell; Dave, N3IDH; Bob, KB3IN; Jerry, KD3DK; Tom, K3PLM; Jack, K3DMY; Alan, KB3EUQ; Don, AA3UV; Kathy, KB3MDP; Chriss, KB3KXM; Sam, W3CYO; and Jacque, N3ZEL.

— 73, Jacque Gosselin N3ZEL

WACOM Field Day 2005 Antennas  
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Joe Caldwell N3XE



## Upcoming Events

- July 9 & 10 — IARU HF World Championships
- July 10 — North Hills ARC Hamfest
- July 16, 17 — Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix
- July 17 — Somerset Co ARC Hamfest
- July 17 — WPA Repeater Council Meeting
- July 30 — SWPA Packet Group Meeting
- August 6 — WACOM Picnic
- August 28 — Skyview RS Hamfest
- September 3 — Uniontown ARC W3PIE Gabfest
- September 11 — Butler Co ARA Hamfest
- September 24 & 25 — Mid-Atlantic VHF Conference & HAMARAMA, sponsored by the Mt. Airy VHF Society
- October 1 & 2 — California QSO Party
- October 8 & 9 — Pennsylvania QSO Party
- November 6 — WACOM Hamfest
- May 19, 20, & 21, 2006 — Dayton Hamvention

## FYI Networks

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MENTION THAT YOU ARE A WACOM MEMBER FOR A SPECIAL PRICE OF \$18 / MONTH.

# JOIN WACOM ON THE AIR

2 meter net: Every Tuesday at 8:30 PM on the W3CYO repeaters 145.49 and 443.3 MHz

10 meter net: Every Tuesday at 9:00 PM on 28.340 MHz

## Field Day, QRP Style

Bill Hill W3WH/QRP

I've had a casual interest in QRP for some time now. Unlike most QRPers I'm not a builder but like to operate and I've owned several qrp rigs like the Heath HW-8 , Index Labs, and currently the Ten Tec Argonaut V. In the last couple of years I've had success in the ARRL Sweepstakes placing 1<sup>st</sup> in the WPA Section QRP Category.

For several years I've wanted to try Field Day using 5 watts to see how this power level would fare against mostly 100 watt big brothers. Well this year I got the chance to find out. Carol and Richie, KB3GMN and N3SBF invited Bob, W3RJM and I to spend FD weekend at their camp outside of Vowinkel Pa. Home of the famous Vowinkel Hotel. Vowinkel is about 2 ½ hours northeast of Pittsburgh a few miles from Clarion.

With the sunspot cycle well on it's way to the solar minimum for this time around I wondered if this was the right time to try qrp. So to demonstrate my confidence in



5 watts, I also brought along my Icom 706 as a backup 100 watt rig in case I couldn't work anyone in the contest(I know it's not a contest but it's a contest).I'm happy to say that the 706 never came out of the case all weekend.

We arrived at our weekend QTH on Friday and quickly got started setting things up. We ended up with a vertical loop for W3RJM's PSK operation, a horizontal loop for the qrp and a 50-60 ft. high G5RV for Richie and Carol's SSB entry. The vertical loop was a disappointment but the other two antennas worked well.

I found that most of the time I had to wait in line to work stations if others were calling but certainly not every time. QRM also caused stations to ask me for fills of my class and section frequently but as I recall that also happens when you run QRO (100 watts). On Sunday morning on 80 meters I was able to hold a frequency and ran quite a few stations in a row.I got my rate up to about 45/hr. for a short time.

I guess all the fresh air and sun took it's toll( it certainly wasn't age) because no one stayed up past midnight on Saturday. I'm confident that if I had been able to approach 500 Q's. Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining. To work 300 stations running only 5 watts was a gas and I won't forget it any time soon and



I've sure given myself a worthy goal to shoot at next time.

I'm sold on QRP. It amazes to realize how little energy it take to talk for long distances. It's tempting to sell all the 100 watt gear and really commit to qrp but as I frequently say I might be dumb but not stupid.. I doubt I would crack many DX pileups easily with just 5 watts but I can assure that whenever possible I'll use 5 watts. Come on down and join me.

Life's too short to waste it operating QRO!

## A Field Day Tale

Glen KE7FD

The beady eyes of the creature stared out from its lair at its next meal. From this vantage point it was just a matter of timing and opportunity. Its kind seldom killed its prey, but were known to terminate life if hunger drove it to this occasional, but ultimate, conclusion. Using its excellent sense of smell and keen eyesight, a plan is devised and put into action.

Slowly, at first, so as not to draw attention, the creature emerges from its hiding place under the cover of darkness. Stop, look, listen. All safe. Move ahead. More quickly now, hunger pangs intensifying as a potential meal is spotted, laying still, it's back turned, unsuspecting.

Just then at the moment before the pounce, something is coming. A sound. A flash. Something sails across its back just brushing its fur. What.. No- Retreat! Bolting around and thrusting its powerful legs onto the hard soil, it propels itself back into the brush. Safe? Maybe not! Deeper, deeper it goes into the forest. Stopping. Listening. Waiting.

Moments go by, courage rising. Again the creature finds itself gazing from its vantage point at the same scene, now quiet, undisurbed. This time, nothing will stay its power from felling its pray. Crazy with hunger, it is now driven to reckless abandon. Madness takes over as it boldly breaks cover, and striding sideways the creature displays its dominance over all it surveys. The creature marches forward belching a guttural

howl , its prey frozen where it lay unable to move, the end is near. Its claws reaching out to claim its prey, a prize worth salivating over, one worth risking so much for. What's that? Whrrrrr... SMACK! No more, no more! The creature vanishes into the forest and the darkness, never to return.

In the distance strange sounds are heard, sounds it cannot understand, but will never forget:

"Todd, did I hit it?"

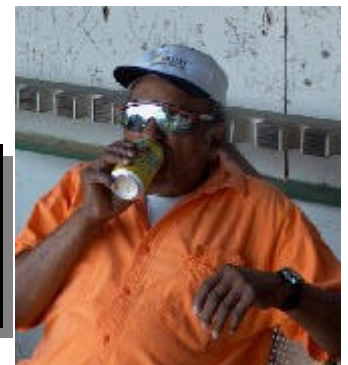
"Yeah. I think you caught that raccoon upside the head!"

"I guess we should be more careful to pick up the potato chips when we spill them."

"Who's wrist rocket is this anyway?"

Our Chef, Tom KA3NIY

Photo courtesy of and  
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Gosselin N3ZEL



# North Hills ARC Hamfest

Sunday, July 10<sup>th</sup> 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Northland Public Library, Cumberland Road, Wexford

Between McKnight Road & Perry Highway (Route 19)

Talk-in on 147.090 MHz

For more information, go to <http://www.nharc.pgh.pa.us>

## More WACOM Field Day Photos!

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James KB3JHP & Joe N3XE



(Above) Kevin  
KB3JHO &  
Ken AA3GM  
(Below)



The Gang Gathering Around the Grill



(Above) Larry  
KB3KXO, Bill  
N3BPB, Dave  
N3IDH  
  
(Left) N3ZNI wiring  
the rotor



Note: More Field Day photos will be worked into future newsletters as space permits, so if you still have some, email them to WN3VAW!

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60 Carl Avenue B-2  
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*We're On the Web!*  
[www.wacomarc.org](http://www.wacomarc.org)

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The editor welcomes articles and timely information of interest to members and the general amateur community.

## The WACOM HAM

Editor: Ron Notarius WN3VAW  
412-572-6723 [wn3vaw@njdx.com](mailto:wn3vaw@njdx.com)

### WACOM Officers

President: Jacqu  Gosselin N3ZEL  
724-746-9235 [n3zel@fyi.net](mailto:n3zel@fyi.net)

Vice President: Joe Caldwell N3XE  
724-663-5708 [joecaldwell.jc@gmail.com](mailto:joecaldwell.jc@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Ed Oeschlager N3ZNI  
724-746-9235 [n3zni@arrl.net](mailto:n3zni@arrl.net)

Secretary: Susan Robishaw KB3JHQ  
[sracer318@netscape.net](mailto:sracer318@netscape.net)

### Board of Directors

Elmer "Bud" Plants N3TIR  
[bnelectronics@starband.net](mailto:bnelectronics@starband.net)

John Moninger, WA3VKC  
724-228-5787 [jam@pulsenet.com](mailto:jam@pulsenet.com)

Damian Zanolli KB3JHM  
[damian\\_zanolli@hotmail.com](mailto:damian_zanolli@hotmail.com)

### Repeater

Sam Mayberry, W3CYO  
724-222-0367 [zammy@pghmail.com](mailto:zammy@pghmail.com)

## PLEASE SEND YOUR 2005 DUES AND APPLICATION INFORMATION

Annual WACOM membership dues are only \$15 .  
A couple pays only \$22.50.  
Send your check payable to WACOM to:

Ed Oeschlager, N3ZNI,  
Washington Amateur  
Communications Inc.  
60 Carl Avenue B-2  
Eighty Four, PA 15330-2829



## WACOM e-Mail Reflector

An e-mail reflector has been set up for WACOM members.

What's a reflector? It's a mailing list which lets you send one e-mail message to the list address — [wa3com@yahoo.com](mailto:wa3com@yahoo.com) — and have it "reflect" to all members of the list. Unlike a personal mailing list, you don't need to know all of the e-mail addresses for every single member of the list. Only group members can send e-mail to other members of the reflector — no spam allowed!

E-mail reflectors are being used by many area Amateur Radio clubs as a means to facilitate news and information at a moments notice. Yahoo! Groups (formerly eGroups) provides this service for free to anyone who wants to avail themselves of their list server. Yahoo! also provides calendar, file storage, & additional services.

To join the WACOM reflector, simply send a blank e-mail to:

[wa3com-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:wa3com-subscribe@yahoo.com)