

# Boxboro Special

## The Framingham Circuit

Newsletter of the Framingham Amateur Radio Association

September 2002, Vol. 69, No. 9

### President's Message

August has been a productive month for FARA!

Peter (KA1AXY) reports that the W1FY 147.15 repeater is on the new 7/8 inch transmission line and the new antenna. Thanks go out to Kurt (W1OBQ) for donating a very nice external dipole Sinclair antenna. Kurt is not a FARA member but he is a friend of the Club and has helped us out more than once. Thanks, also, to MEMA for donating the new line and to Peter and Tom Muise for doing the installation. Tom Kinahan (N1CPE) was also a big help in making the arrangements. The preliminary results are superb. There have been several comments stating that coverage has returned to what it used to be. Steve (AA1IZ) and Dick (W1HRV) typically drive well beyond the coverage area of this repeater. In the last couple of days, I have talked to both when they have been in areas that, in the past, have been outside of the coverage area. I hesitate to speak too soon, but it really looks like 147.15 coverage is back to what it was in the old days. Try it out yourself. You can typi-

cally find me monitoring in the morning between 7:30 and 8:30 AM.

Roger (WA1NVC) reports that the new FARA 448.025 repeater should be on the air very soon. Hopefully, you will have seen it at the FARA Boxboro booth.

Speaking of Boxboro, as I write this, the Boxboro convention is tomorrow. By the time you read this, Boxboro, 2002, will be history. Thanks to Richard (KB1BF, now AA1VI) for arranging for FARA's booth. Thanks also to Katy (N1JDD), Sharon (KC1YR), Steve (AA1IZ), Peter (KA1AXY), and Roger (WA1NVC) for setting up the booth. Also thanks to Dick (K1KTK), Marsha (K1NGI) and Ed (W1NXC) for doing booth duty.

Peter (KA1AXY) and Brian (N1JFO) did another job at Marvis' (W1LAV) place in Sudbury. Marvis is an 87 year old ham that needed some help with antennas and his new amplifier. Peter and Brian put an 80 meter dipole high up in the trees. According to Marvis, it plays well. Katy (N1JDD) now has a regular sked with Marvis on 80. If any-

one remembers Marvis from the old days, he would love to have a rag chew with you on 80. Peter, by the way, also got his TH-6 triband beam going again. We still need to find Marvis some 6146's to get his TS-430 up to full power and we need to fix the rotator so he can turn that beam. Right now, Peter left the beam pointed at Europe.

We have at least one new member this month. Welcome to DON (KB1GYL), of Framingham.

Check out page 13 of this month's Worldradio. You will find Katy's (N1JDD) excellent article there and it made the cover! Also, check out the August QST for an article by Sumner (W1VIV).

I am looking for meeting topics for the upcoming year. If you have a suggestion for a FARA meeting topic or presentation please contact me: W1RH@yahoo.com

We have another great Dxpedition video for this month's meeting. Hope to see many of you there.

*Bob, W1RH*

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### Thursday, Sep 5 This Month's Meeting

This month's meeting will feature the ZD7K/ZD8K video of St. Helena Island

## After Ten Years, I'm Finally On the Air!

Katy Sharko, N1JDD  
n1jdd@arrl.net

Being an active ham radio operator has been my dream of 10 years. Ten years ago, I took my tests and became an advanced class ham. I loved the idea of getting on the air and talking to different countries. But my attempts at the hobby failed. The equipment and technical aspects of the hobby were too daunting.

I met Bob Hess W1RH about a month ago through an online friend, Peter Wang KF5ND. A couple of weeks later Bob, Peter Simpson KA1AXY, and Martin Bayes AA1ON showed up at my doorstep with a G5RV donated by Marc, WA1R. They were there to set up the G5RV for me.



Bob (W1RH), Peter (KA1AXY) and Katy's husband John (KB1HVK) assembling the G5RV.

Peter rubbed his hands and grinned as they walked around the house, planning and measuring distances to determine what would be the best way to install the antenna. Then we toured the inside of the house and we talked about different options for where our ham shack should be located. Peter took a ruler and, going back and forth from the basement to the outside of the house, planned how to route the antenna feed line into and through the house to the ham shack.

At mid-day we drove to Radio Shack, and Martin and Peter talked about contesting, PSK31, and APRS. Over lunch Martin picked up my "ARRL's Wire Antenna Classics" and explained the architecture of the G5RV using the diagrams of the wave patterns. He was a wonderful teacher. Even though I felt guilty about taking up their Saturday, they truly

looked like they were having a good time.

When the antenna was positioned exactly as they wanted it and the cables routed into the house, Martin and Peter sat down and gave me a lesson on how to use the equipment.

A couple of weeks later I had my first HF QSO with a friend, Peter Wang



The new antenna ready to go.

KF5ND. During this QSO I met Vern Kaspar W9FAM, who, knowing that I was a new ham, sent out "CQ Europe"'s and introduced me to each of his contacts. That day I was able to talk with people from Spain, Newfoundland, Portugal, Denmark, England, and Northern Ireland!

There's beauty in living, and beauty in even the tiniest acts of kindness that people do for each other. You see, I was diagnosed with Stage III breast cancer last March. When I stepped out of my last radiation treatment on January 2nd 2002, I looked up at the sky and breathed the fresh air as though for the first time. It had been a long difficult year, but now it was over. Heroism is born from simple acts of kindness offered for no apparent reward to another human being. Today when I think about these amateur radio operators who helped me accomplish this ten-year dream, I see heroes. I'm very thankful to know these people and proud to be a part of the Framingham Amateur Radio Association.

*This article was originally printed in the March 2002 Circuit and has also been seen in the latest edition of Worldradio.*

## Circuit Information

### Membership Dues

Annual membership dues are as follows:  
(Make checks payable to FARA)

Regular FARA \$15

Student / Retired \$10

Repeater (voluntary) \$10

### READ THE CIRCUIT ONLINE... SAVES PAPER AND POSTAGE

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email [fara@fara.org](mailto:fara@fara.org) and we'll set you up!

### Change of Address

If you would like to change the address on your ~~Circuit~~ label, please email [fara@fara.org](mailto:fara@fara.org). Or, you can call the Club at 508-879-8097

### Submitting Material to the Circuit

Material may be submitted for publication by sending it directly to the editor. This can be done by phone, by US Mail, or via the Internet (preferred). The deadline for each issue is the **Wednesday**, one week before the monthly meeting.

#### by phone

Home:

(508) 435-2055 (before 9:00PM please!)

#### by mail

Robert Hess, N1UVA  
1 Cold Spring Brook Road  
Hopkinton, MA 01748

#### by internet

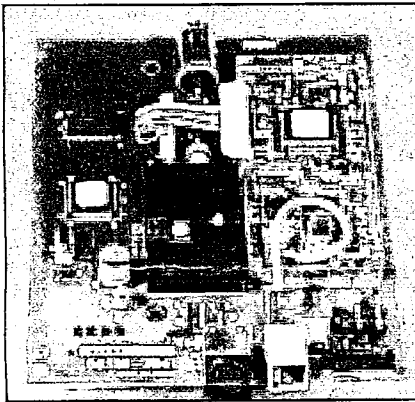
[circuit@fara.org](mailto:circuit@fara.org)

### APRS on the Cheap

By Peter, KA1AXY

A couple of years ago, I saw an offer of surplus GPS "engines" for \$20 each. These units were surplus from a discontinued Japanese vehicle navigation system. They consisted of a printed circuit board, a voltage regulator, a processor and the two key components, a tin box containing the GPS receiver and a GPS antenna on a long piece of coax.

Luckily, I bought three of them. There were apparently enough of these units so that many on the internet bought them. Shortly thereafter, a web page was started to act as a meeting place for those wishing to share information. Some of this information consisted of kits and pre-programmed PIC microcontrollers.



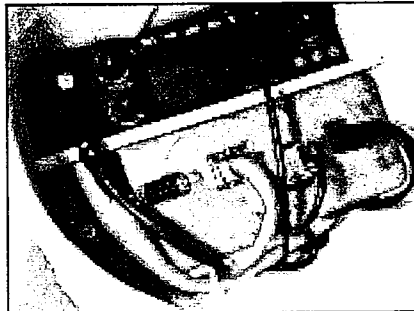
*The surplus GPS board*

I purchased a few of these microcontrollers. They are quite clever, and convert the proprietary output of the surplus GPS engine to the standard NMEA messages used by APRS, Street Atlas, and just about every other piece of software that takes a GPS input. The best thing about these microcontrollers, is that they are 8-pin DIP parts, and require NO additional components!

Now, along comes a gentleman by the name of Byon Garrabrant. Byon created a gadget called the Tiny Trak II, which is an encode-only APRS modem. You purchase a kit of parts for about \$35, and an hour or two later, you're sending APRS packets! Yup, another pre-programmed PIC.

So, last month, I spent some money and bought one of these, and packaged one

of the surplus GPS engines, a converter PIC, and a Tiny Trak II into an old printer buffer case. The whole unit is about the size of a standard mobile rig. I could have made it a lot smaller, but I wanted to see it work. It works better than I ever expected. I added a DB-9 connector, so that I could access the NMEA messages to use with a laptop running Street Atlas. The audio from the Tiny Trak II goes into a Radio Shack HTX-212 2-meter mobile, which cost me about \$150. So, the whole tracker cost about \$250 (and I already had the 2-meter rig!).



*The tracker pack, showing the HTX212 and the packaged GPS/TinyTrak II*

It's been working for several weeks now, and you can see the results at <http://map.findu.com/n1vzw>.



*The GPS antenna*

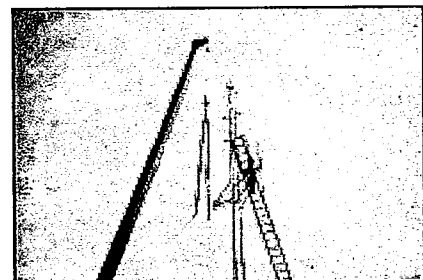
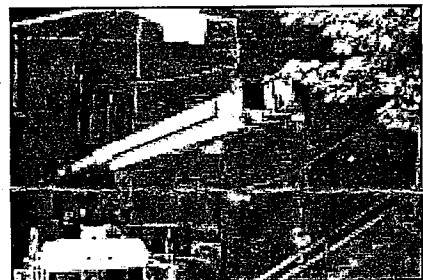
I have used it hooked into Street Atlas, and it works equally well. Mike will be driving out to school in Colorado in mid-August, and he'll be taking the tracker along.

*This article was originally printed in the August 2001 Circuit.*

### Marlboro Tower Takedown Pictures

Pictures by Katy, N1JDD

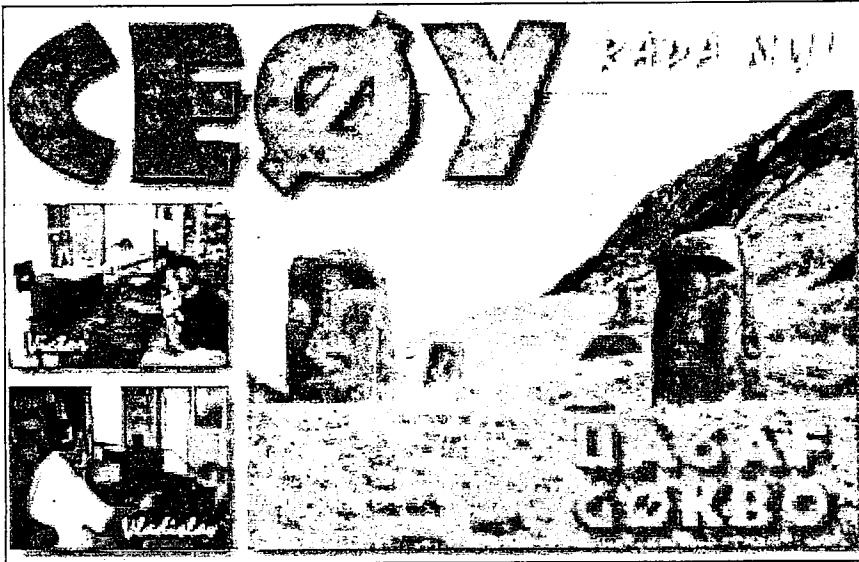
In June a joint operation between the Algonquin Amateur Radio Club and FARA assisted in the takedown of a tower at the Marlboro fire station. Katy, N1JDD was there and snapped many photos of the event, more of which are available on the FARA website, [www.fara.org](http://www.fara.org).



**QSL Card**

Card Submitted by Martin, AA1ON

Write-up by Bob, W1RH



This month's QSL comes to us from Martin, AA1ON. Martin loves his QSL's and this one was chosen for the newsletter because it shows the beauty of Rapa Nui, otherwise known as Easter Island. Martin worked this dxpedition in February, 2000 on 12 meters. Easter Island counts as a DXCC entity and is IOTA SA-001. The island is governed by Chile.

Easter Island is over 2,000 miles from the nearest population center, (Tahiti and Chile), making it one of the most isolated places on Earth. A triangle of volcanic rock in the South Pacific - it is best known for the giant stone monoliths, known as Moai, that dot the coastline. The early settlers called the island "Te Pito O Te Henua" (Navel of The World). Admiral Roggeveen, who came upon the island on Easter Day in 1722, named it Easter Island. Today, the land, people and language are all referred to locally as Rapa Nui.

There has been much controversy and confusion concerning the origins of the Easter Islanders. Thor Heyerdahl proposed that the people who built the statues were of Peruvian descent, due to a similarity between Rapa Nui and Incan stonework. Some have suggested that Easter Island is the remnant of a

lost continent, or the result of an extra-terrestrial influence. Archaeological evidence, however, indicates discovery of the island by Polynesians at about 400 AD - led, according to legend, by Hotu Matua. Upon their arrival, an impressive and enigmatic culture began to develop. In addition to the statues, the islanders possessed the Rongorongo script; the only written language in Oceania. The island is also home to many petroglyphs (rock carvings), as well as traditional wood carvings, tapa (barkcloth) crafts, tattooing, string figures, dance and music. FARA member, Joe Rich (then N1OCS, now W1EK) operated on Easter Island with the XROY team in 1995 and did a great talk for FARA about his adventure on the island.

Here is what the card says on the back:

To the races that once flourished on Rapa Nui we have dedicated this journey and operation. This is what the Stanzas of Dzyan reveal about the sunken continent of which Easter Island is but the mountain top:

Stanzas X-XII. The first, on every zone, was moon coloured; the second yellow like gold; the third red; the fourth brown, which became black with sin. The next seven began mixing. Then the third and fourth became tall

with pride. "We are the kings; we are the gods." They build temples for the human body, cut their own images nine yards high, in the size and likeness of their bodies, and worship them. The third eye acted no longer. Inner fires had destroyed the land of their fathers. The waters threatened the fourth. The first great waters came. They swallowed the seven great islands. All holy saved, the unholy destroyed. Few remained. The moon-coloured were gone for ever.

*The Circuit is in need of QSL cards!!! If you would like to share your favorite QSL card, which could be your own, with the club, please send it my way!*

*A caption or story would be appreciated also.*

*Don't let not having a scanner keep you from sending in your favorite card. Many FARA Members have access to scanners, including Bob, W1RH.*

**Magazines Wanted**

By Dave, K1HT

Are there any FARA members who don't keep their radio/electronics magazines and would be willing to give me a bunch of "old" ones (maybe not too old)? I had an exchange of e-mail recently with VU2MTT, and Mur would like to receive such magazines. I gather that they're not readily available in India. I'd like to consider sending him a package (depending on how steep the postage gets).

**Contest Corner**

January 2002 ARRL VHF Sweepstakes:

K1UR -- Second place, Eastern Mass., 50 MHz

December 2001 ARRL 160 Meter CW Contest:

W1VIV -- Second place, Eastern Mass., Low power

**FARA - The Early Years**

Transcribed by Karen Hess

*The Framingham Amateur Radio Association, formerly called the Community Radio Association, is fortunate to have the notes dating back to the Club's first meeting. Karen Hess, W1RHF's XYL, has transcribed the hand written notes, verbatim, and they will appear in this and future issues of the Circuit. They make for fascinating reading!*

November 23, 1934

The 33<sup>rd</sup> regular meeting of the Framingham Radio Club was called to order at 8:30 p.m. by Pres. McLean. The secretary's report was read and accepted.

A letter from the General Radio Co. was read expressing regrets that Dr. Pickard would be unable to be with us.

A letter from the communications manager of the A.R.R.L. was read concerning a new charter for the club.

The program for the supper meeting to be held Thursday, Dec. Fifteenth was announced. Mr. George Bailey and Mr. Cooper of the Telephone Co. to be the guest speakers.

Motion by Dr. Crosby that secretary write letters to The Boston Worcester and New York Street Railway and The Middlesex and Boston Street Railway suggesting that they put suppressors on their busses. Copies of the same letters to be sent to the Framingham News and the A.R.R.L.

There being no further business before the meeting, it was adjourned by unanimous vote.

After the business meeting several reels of motion pictures were enjoyed.

Respectfully submitted,

Alfred L. Schaltenbrand, Sec.

**Become a Member**

**Framingham Amateur Radio Association**  
POB 3005 Framingham, MA 01705-3005

Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Call: \_\_\_\_\_

ARRL member?                      Y / N                      New / Renew

Family members at same address wishing to join FARA:

Can we Publish?

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Web or printed newsletter ?                      Web / Print

Regular membership (Jan - Dec)    \$15                      \_\_\_\_\_

Student/Senior                                      \$10                      \_\_\_\_\_

Repeater Membership                            \$10                      \_\_\_\_\_

Total Dues Payable                                      \_\_\_\_\_


Received \_\_\_\_\_ Entered \_\_\_\_\_

**FARA Horizons**

- Sep 5:                      Club Meeting
- Sep 23:                      Board Meeting
- Oct 3:                      Club Meeting

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