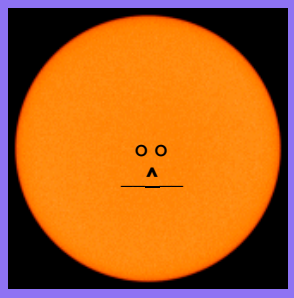
The North Florida DX Association

PileUp

The NFDXA Newsletter

Volume 1, Number 4 April 2009 http://nfdxa.com/



Sunspot Group Sighted
(April Fool)
☹

Inside this issue…

NFDXA April Meeting at Gainesville Hamfest

The April meeting of the North Florida DX Association will be 3 p.m. at Sonny's Bar-B-Q, 2700 North Waldo Road in Gainesville at 3 p.m., Saturday April 25.

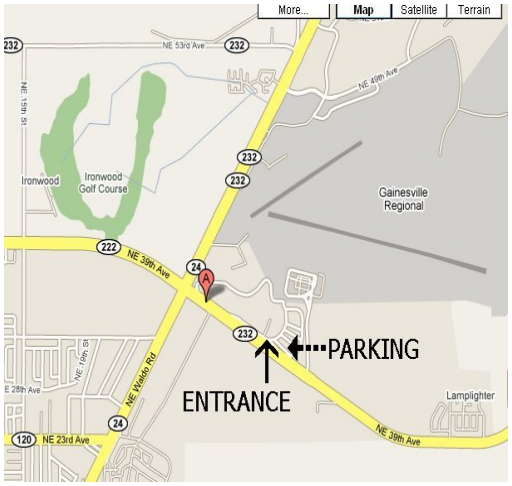
The meeting will be held in conjunction with the annual Gainesville Hamfest and Computer Show which is taking place for the 16th consecutive year at the Alachua County Fairgrounds, 2900 NE 39 Avenue next to the Gainesville Airport. (See map on the right).

During the Hamfest, NFDXA will have a table set up along the east wall of the main building for the principle purpose of DX Card Checking.

The table will also be available to NFDXA club members to exhibit items they might have for sale. However, owners of the for sale items will be expected to 'man the table' to answer questions from any prospective buyer.

The monthly club meeting, arranged by NFDXA Treasurer will be at Sonny's Bar-B-Que which is a short distance from the hamfest location. To reach Sonny's from the Alachua Fairgrounds, turn to the right (west) as you exit the fairgrounds on NE 39th Avenue and proceed to the traffic light at the intersection of NE Waldo Road (SR-24). Turn left (south) onto Waldo Road and proceed a short distance until you reach Sonny's which will be on your right on the west side of the road.

Come inside, Join the gang and be sure to bring your appetite.



Map showing location of Alachua County Fairgrounds just south of the Gainesville Airport. Arrows point to the NE 39th Avenue entrance to the Hamfest and the large free parking area. — *Google Maps*

BE IN THE "KNOW"

Check into the weekly NFDXA net
Wednesdays 0000z 3625 MHz

International Mail and the Upcoming Postage Increase

Are International Reply Coupons still available?

Yes and the selling price remains $2.10 each. International Reply Coupons are exchangeable in any other Universal Postal Union member country for stamps equal to the minimum postage for an air letter

Can I use the Forever Stamp for international mail?

Yes, but keep in mind that the postage value of the Forever Stamp is the domestic First-Class Mail 1-ounce letter price in effect on the day of use.

Until May 11 it is 42 cents, and beginning May 11 it is 44 cents.

Since international prices are higher than domestic prices, you will need additional postage.

Your call is important to us, just not as important as whatever else we are doing.

Reading The Mail

"It's for you."

Question Pool Size Won't Change: FCC

A North Carolina Amateur filed a petition last April requesting the Federal Communication Commission increase the number of questions each Ham Radio license question pool. Michael Mancuso, KI4NGN, asked that the pools be increased to ten times the current number of questions.

Mancuso's argument was that the current question pools were much too easy to memorize and that over the past 10 years or so there had been a significant increase in the number of Amateur Radio operators "who do not appear to possess the knowledge indicated by the class of license that they had received."

Most discussion about this topic, Mancuso averred, both over the air and on the Internet generally referred to these observations as the "dumbing down" of amateur radio. The current question pool is inadequate because online practice exams enabled the examinee to memorize the question pool without fully comprehending the subject matter being tested.

In sum, the Commission observed, Mancuso's position was to stop this dumbing down process by increasing the question pool size as an effort to hinder memorization.

The Commission countered Mancuso's argument by saying he had presented no data or facts to back up his contentions., and concluded that there was no evidence of an existing problem or a reason to make a rule change and denying his petition.

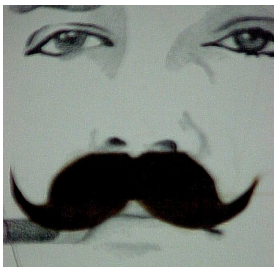
In conclusion the Commission pointed out its rules only dictate the *minimum* number of questions for each of the three Amateur Radio license class pools. The National Conference of Volunteer Examiners (NCVEC) can increase the number of pool questions should it decide that it is appropriate.

The DX Calendar 4/17 to 5/16 — Richard, K4UTE

START	END	DXCC	CALL	QSL
4/17	4/20	Costa Rica	TI7	DK6AO
4/12	4/13	THAILAND	E21IZC/p	E21IZC
4/12	4/17	W.SAHARA	S04R	EA5RM
4/14	4/20	HONDURAS	HR2/WU1B	WU1B
4/19	4/25	Morocco	5C2A	IK7JWX
4/18	4/26	Svalbard	JW/F8DVD	F8DVD
4/20	5/3	Guyana	8R1AD	N7EAA
4/21	4/28	Mongolia	JT1AGO	JA7AGO
4/21	5/6	Cayman Is	ZF2ZB	K9WZB
4/22	4/22	Samoa	5W8A	YT1AD
4/22	4/24	Samoa	KH8/N9YU	YT1AD
4/24	5/4	Liechtenstein	HB0	DL2SBY
4/25	4/25	Fiji	3D2AD	YT1AD
4/27	4/29	West Kiribati	T30M	YT1AD
4/29	5/5	Maldives	8Q7SV	SV1JG
4/29	5/5	Ogasawara	JD1BLK	JM1LJS
4/29	5/5	Ogasawara	JD1BLY	JI5RPT
5/1	5/8	Fiji	3D2ZW/p	OK2ZAW
5/1	5/30	Nauru	C21TI	EA4ATI
5/2	5/4	Fiji	3D2ZW/p	OK2ZAW
5/2	5/5	Ogasawara	JD1BMT	JE4SMQ
5/2	5/12	Ogasawara	JD1BMH	JG7PSJ
5/4	5/4	Fiji	3D2AD	YT1AD
5/4	5/6	Fiji	3D2ZW	OK2ZAW
5/4	5/11	Ascension I	ZD8KR	G0UNU
5/6	5/8	Fiji	3D2ZW	OK2ZAW
5/9	5/10	China	B1Z	TBD
5/16	6/20	Niue	ZK2V	LotW

"DX IS! The Best of the West Coast DX Bulletin" is a compilation of stories written by WA6AUD, Hugh Cassidy, editor of the ***West Coast DX Bulletin*** and it was Edited and Published by W5DV, Charles T. Allen, and his brother W6OGC, James M. Allen. A small quantity is now available at the HRO in San Diego. Contact KM6K, Tom, for a copy.

(— Daily DX 09 Apr 09)



A New Approach to Antenna Wax by Shannon Boal, K4GLM

Often I learn more from accident than when I get the expected results. As you may know, I make my own mustache wax. It is cooked in a double boiler on the stove, slowly adding the ingredients and cooling; then testing and adding a bit more of what-ever is lacking. It was inevitable that I would try heating it in the microwave oven to cut down on the time consuming heating process. One of the ingredients has a surprising quality. Beeswax does not heat in a microwave! You can nuke the heck out of it and not melt it.

Other waxes found in mustache wax could be paraffin, carnauba wax and nano-wax. Nano-wax is used in the latest car waxes where it gives a long-lasting shine without hard rubbing. Nano-wax was produced from the new Nano-technology coming out of sub-atomic physics. At the University of Florida, physicists custom design atoms and molecules to produce physical properties that do not exist in nature. Guess what? Nano-wax can be highly reactive to RF! It has electrolytic properties the opposite of inert Beeswax. It can produce either inductive or capacitive reactance in a pure conductor when its sub-atomic particles are manipulated in the correct way.

Are you seeing the possibilities here? My next experiment was to coat my vertical antenna with beeswax. This aluminum pipe is three inches in diameter and eighty-four feet tall. It is used for low-band DX. Now the noise level on seventy five meters seems much lower with the beeswax coating. I can't do the proper "A and B" testing of course but the stations I worked say my audio is better than ever, what-ever that means.

Well, I have two other formulations to try, so I cleaned off the North-East side of the pipe and have re-coated it with the capacitive Nano-wax….and coated the South-West side with inductive Nano-wax. The results were successful beyond my wildest dreams! I have a signal beaming into Siberia with reports of S-9 plus from QRP power levels, and even lower receive noise than before.

I have a few problems of course. The bees love this stuff and are pests when climbing the aluminum pipe. (Coat this starting at the top and working down so you don't slip!) And the paper-work is just starting in the patent process but promises to be years of up-hill struggle. (They laughed at me in the patent office, can you believe it?) The patent officials insist that I tell them how to make the wax before they'll proceed. I am no fool, though. I told them "IT'S NANO YOUR BEESWAX

—Happy April 1st Y'all...73 Shannon, K4GLM

April Fool

GOTCHA !

Ha Ha Ha

go on see the funny side !

California April Fools Hoax Rattles Ham Radio's Cage

An April 1 story posted on an on a Google Groups Internet page stated the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors had passed an ordinance which banned Amateur Radio operators from operating their transmitters. The ban was to take effect immediately.

The story claimed the action was taken in response to university research which showed that exposure to transmitted radio waves caused damage to the brains of young people. Several comments from an alleged researcher were quoted. Additionally, the Board's action was reported in to be in response to complaints of interference to television and radio sets caused by ham transmitters.

The posted story was fairly long and detailed with numerous apparent quotes, and was well written in typical wire service newspaper style.

Although the San Luis Obispo County Board was quick to deny it had taken any such action, and that the story was a total fabrication, the Federal communications Commission had already received calls of concern from hams.

The county board then issued a release of its own that stated: "Not only is this online fabricated story not true, but SLO County government, incorporated cities within the county and other entities work hand-in-hand with Amateur Radio operators who provide alternate and back-up communications in case of unique emergencies or disasters." The release concluded that emergency assistance by Hams is "absolutely appreciated."

Deep Solar Minimum *Dr. Tony Phillips - Science@NASA*

The sunspot cycle is behaving a little like the stock market. Just when you think it has hit bottom, it goes even lower. 2008 was a bear. There were no sunspots observed on 266 of the year's 366 days (73%). To find a year with more blank suns, you have to go all the way back to 1913, which had 311 spotless days: plot.

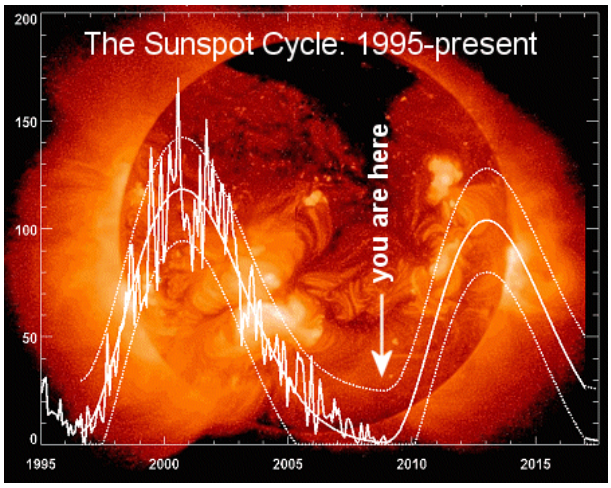
Prompted by these numbers, some observers suggested that the solar cycle had hit bottom in 2008

Maybe not. Sunspot counts for 2009 have dropped even lower. As of March 31st, there were no sunspots on 78 of the year's 90 days (87%). It adds up to one inescapable conclusion:

"We're experiencing a very deep solar minimum," says solar physicist Dean Pesnell of the Goddard Space Flight Center.

This is the quietest sun we've seen in almost a century," agrees sunspot expert David Hathaway of the Marshall Space Flight Center.

Quiet suns come along every 11 years or so. It's a natural part of the sunspot cycle, discovered by German astronomer Heinrich Schwabe in the mid-1800s.



The sunspot cycle from 1995 to the present. The jagged curve traces actual sunspot counts. Smooth curves are fits to the data and one forecaster's predictions of future activity. Credit: David Hathaway, NASA/MSFC.

Sun scientists agree current lack of sunspot activity is not that unusual

Sunspots are planet-sized islands of magnetism on the surface of the sun; they are sources of solar flares, coronal mass ejections and intense UV radiation.

Plotting sunspot counts, Schwabe saw that peaks of solar activity were always followed by valleys of relative calm—a clockwork pattern that has held true for more than 200 years.

The current solar minimum is part of that pattern. In fact, it's right on time. "We're due for a bit of quiet—and here it is," says Pesnell. But is it supposed to be *this* quiet? In 2008, the sun set the following records:

A 50-year low in solar wind pressure
A 12-year low in solar "irradiance"
A 55-year low in solar radio emissions

All these lows have sparked a debate about whether the ongoing minimum is "weird", "extreme" or just an overdue "market correction" following a string of unusually intense solar maxima.

"Since the Space Age began in the 1950s, solar activity has been generally high," notes Hathaway. "Five of the ten most intense solar cycles on record have occurred in the last 50 years. We're just not used to this kind of deep calm.

"Deep calm was fairly common a hundred years ago. The solar minima of 1901 and 1913, for instance, were even longer than the one we're experiencing now. To match those minima in terms of depth and longevity, the current minimum will have to last at least another year.

Modern technology cannot, however, predict what comes next. Competing models by dozens of top solar physicists disagree, sometimes sharply, on when this solar minimum will end and how big the next solar maximum will be.

Pesnell has surveyed the scientific literature and prepared a "piano plot" showing the range of predictions. The great uncertainty stems from one simple fact: No one fully understands the underlying physics of the sunspot cycle.

Pesnell believes sunspot counts will pick up again soon, "possibly by the end of the year," to be followed by a solar maximum of below-average intensity in 2012 or 2013.But like other forecasters, he knows he could be wrong. Bull or bear? Stay tuned for updates.

Hazer Construction Project—No April Fools by AJ4FX

(Editor's note: AJ4FX, Ken Robinson, retired from General Electric in 2006 after 20-years as an Electrical Engineer. He currently runs a Pro III barefoot, often operating his station remotely using ***Ham Radio Delux*.** The **AJ4FX** QTH, to quote **Ken, "**is a yard-full of antennas" with a Force 12 tri-bander on a 60-foot Rohn tower, an Easyway tilt-over/crank-up with a 3-element 12/17 yagi, a flat top for 10 through 75 meters and a 2 meter J-pole on a 40-foot TV tower. "I am deeply into antennas", says **Ken** who resides in Archer, Florida with Carolyn, his XYL of 41 years who is an orchid fancier**.)**

A Hazer is a device that allows one to raise and lower an antenna without having to climb a tower. Instead of mounting the antenna directly to the tower, it is attached to the side of the tower as part of the Hazer assembly, along with the rotator and bearing assembly.

I purchased an antenna system from a Ham in High Springs about a year ago. It consists of a 60 foot Rohn 25 tower, a Force 12 Tri-Band Yagi for 10, 15, and 20 meters, a 12 / 17 meter three element Yagi, Ham IV rotator, and all associated cabling and wiring.

I climbed the tower when I purchased it to remove the antennas, and cables. It didn't take long to figure out that I am not as young as I used to be and have no business climbing anything other than a short ladder.

After due consideration I decided to design and build a Hazer in my shop.

I laid out the design around 1 ½ inch galvanized angle iron. It took about 30 feet or so of the angle iron to put everything together. With the pulleys, cable, and miscellaneous parts, the total cost of my Hazer was about $200.

The picture on the right shows the Hazer partially completed mounted on a tower section in my shop. Also shown is the Ham IV rotator attached to a side mounting plate, a mast section, and near the top of the photo the thrust bearing attached to the top section of the Hazer. The Hazer is mounted on my 60 foot Rohn 25 tower.

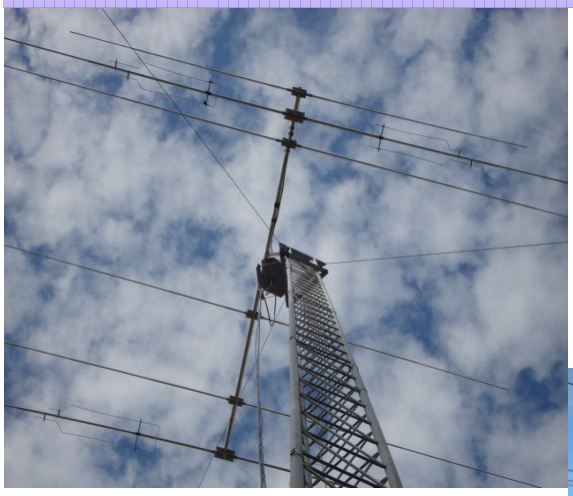
The tower has a tilt base that is secured to a one cubic yard concrete base with a full re-bar cage.

I have the Force 12 Tri-Bander Yagi antenna mounted on the Hazer with the Ham IV rotator. I assembled and raised the 60 foot tower by myself, but that's another story.

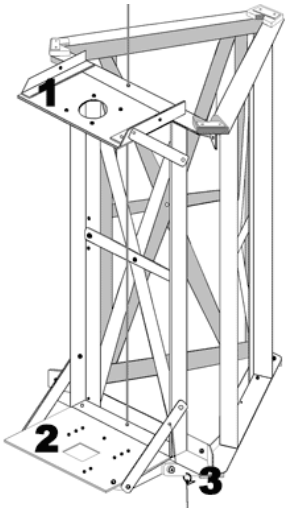
At the base of the tower is a small boat winch. The boat winch raises and lowers the Hazer using a stainless steel cable. At the top of the tower there is a pulley, the cable is run up the inside of the tower, over the pulley, and down the outside of the tower, attaching to the Hazer. The Hazer assembly slides on high density plastic rub blocks mounted at the Hazer corners.

(Concluded next page)

Home Brew Hazer…*conclusion*



The three guy wires attach to the top section of the tower, at the 60 foot level. Raising or lowering the antenna requires that two of the guys be detached and aligned with the tower to provide clearance for the Yagi as it moves up into position. For those paying attention, it is imperative that the antenna be oriented correctly when parked, in case the rotator gives trouble. If this is not done one might have to climb the tower and loosen and relocate the antenna if the rotator fails to turn.

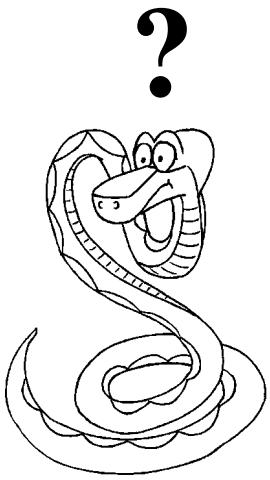


The rest of my station consists of an Icom 756 Pro3 transceiver, the normal 2 meter rig, and an Icom Wide band receiver. I operate my station using Ham Radio Deluxe which runs on a desktop server connected to my laptop. I operate mainly on 17 and 20 meters and some local 10 meters. Just recently started working on 60 part of the time. That's pretty much the story,

If anyone has questions I am usually at the meetings, or you can Email me at **AJ4FX@ARRL.NET**

— 73 Ken, AJ4FX

"Out of the corner of my eye I saw something move. I DID!! I DID!! So I captured him and put him outside to play. Gotta check for holes in the house…" **— W4FDA photo and caption**



How'd he get in?

PARASET - World War II Spy Transceiver AE4IC – Bob Kellogg

The Paraset was a three tube transceiver developed by the British during the early part of World War II. It was a "Spy Radio" used by the resistance forces on the mainland of Europe. Messages were sent on schedule from an array of powerful transmitters in Britain and the Parasets replied.

The complete transceiver, including a built-in key, was contained in a metal case about the size of a large Kleenex box. It was easy to store and hide and move quickly if necessary. Only a few feet of antenna wire was required. The Paraset operated from a separate six volt vibrator supply, so a car battery could power it. It used a 6L6 as a crystal controlled oscillator/transmitter with an output of 4 to 7 Watts. The regenerative receiver consisted of two 6SK7s. The receiver was very sensitive, but not very selective. A two-position range switch allowed continuous operation between 3.3 and 7.6 Megacycles.

I'd been looking for just the right project to build using tube technology. I was just a kid during WWII, and played "War" with the other kids on our block. Especially after seeing a movie showing secret agents operating behind the lines, we would all be secret agents for a week. The Paraset would have been our ideal radio. Since it's small, QRP power and size, and operates on two of the current ham bands, it seemed ideal for my glow bug project

The Paraset is described in some detail in a book, "Secret Warfare" adapted by David Kahn, who translated it from the original French book, written by Pierre Lorrain. This book, ISBN 0-85613-586-0, covers much of the equipment used in the clandestine warfare of WWII, including a section on the various secret code systems used

The Paraset Replicas originated with a Belgian ham, ON5LJ, who apparently found one in a museum and researched the circuit, made drawings, etc. His work was discovered by Mario, IK0MOZ, who, along with his friends, made several replicas from drawings furnished by Jo, ON9CFJ. Mario documented their work on his web site. He includes circuit diagrams. This information was all I needed to get started with my own Paraset replica

The URL is: htmhtmhttp://www.qsl.net/ik0moz/paraset_eng.htmhttp://www.qsl.net/ik0moz/paraset_eng.htm

The pictures below show the Paraset in various stages of construction. Several Knightlites have started construction of their own Parasets so before long we hope to have an all-Paraset roundtable QSO.

Paraset Construction hints:

I found most of the parts at Dayton last year. They are all available with some searching.

The Case:

Building the case is an interesting problem. It has to be fashioned pretty much by hand if you want to build a real replica. The originals were made of steel, and mine is made from the tops of a couple of old VCR cases. The top and bottom pieces were bent first, into a "U" shape. Then, the end pieces were bent with tabs fitting inside of the "U"s. I used an aluminum chassis which just fit inside the bottom.

This is the> case as it was constructed from sheet steel. Regular galvanized steel, about 20 gauge, was used for the end pieces and for the ½" strip around the top edge. This strip becomes the lip that overlaps the bottom of the case.

I cleaned (sanded) the joint between the ends and the top and used an old, heavy, 250 watt soldering iron to make the joints. Soldering is tedious, and should be done starting at the center of a seam, working toward the end or edge. If you start at one end and work toward the other, the two pieces of metal will expand at different rates, resulting in gaps or corners which don't seem to match. However it's done, this problem of differential expansion should be considered and made to work for you instead of against you.

After the top and bottom shells were complete, I cut a ½" strip of metal and soldered it around the open edge of the top, forming the lip which overlaps the bottom of the case.

Small gaps in the solder and other deficiencies can be repaired with automobile body putty before the final painting. Mine is painted with Krylon NO. 1606 Pewter Gray Gloss, which is very close to some of the original WWII colors.

Paraset…from page 8

This is the aluminum chassis, covered with masking tape and marked for the various holes. The tube sockets have been mounted.

Small Parts:

Most of the internal small parts can be obtained by robbing them from an old tube-type radio. I deviated from the "authentic" a little bit on the internals. I used some silver micas and other caps that were not vintage. The original used wafer tube sockets, but I used Bakelite sockets.

The hardest part to find is the 36 Henry choke. I'm told that anything above about 18 henrys will work. I used a large (too large) 30 Henry choke that was all I could find. Didn't have a good way to measure such a large inductance, but I think the primary of an old tube type output transformer would work, since the current drain is very low.

Other parts that were hard to figure out were:

1. The power plug. This turned out to be standard three pin Cinch-Jones connectors. (the original used a female plug on the chassis and a male plug on the cord. For safety reasons, most of the replicas reverse this. I didn't)
2. The crystal jack was 3/4" spacing for large pins. I found three jacks at Dayton, bought them all, along with some crystals, and when I got home, I discovered that two of the jacks were for slightly smaller pins than the vintage crystals.
3. Be aware that there are three 100 mmfd variables and one of them must have an insulated frame.
4. The aerial and earth jacks are simply banana jacks.

The underside of the chassis ready for wiring, with all of the hardware mounted. Note the choke which is twice the size of the original. The rotary wafer switch in the middle was later replaced by a smaller rotary DPDT.

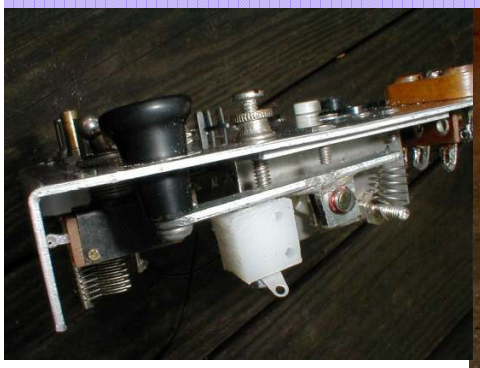
The unfinished case and chassis fitted together before wiring and painting.

Wiring completed. There are two or three layers of parts in some places. Note a mixture of vintage and modern capacitors and resistors were used in the interest of conserving space.

The wired chassis from another viewpoint. Note the yellow two turn coils at each end of the main coil. These are pick up loops for the tuning indicators. During final testing these loops were reduced to one turn each to keep from burning out the indicator bulbs.

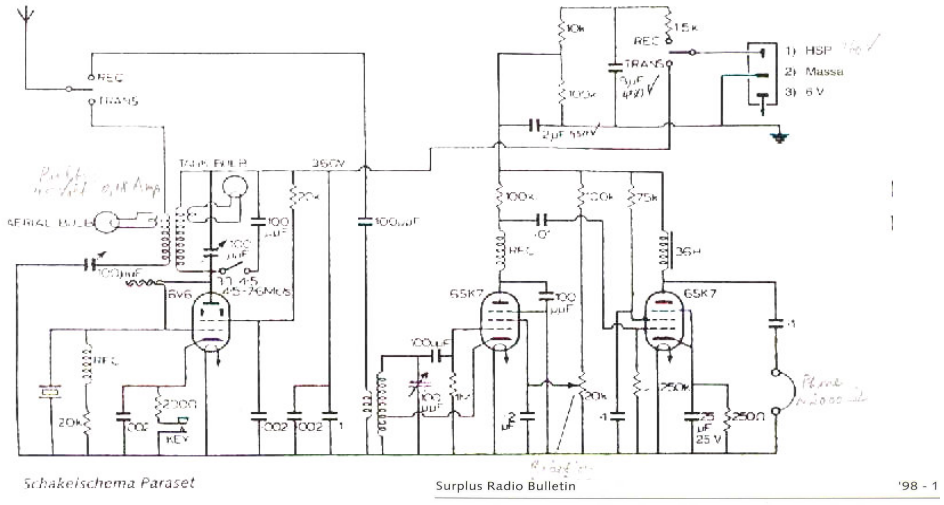
(Conclusion plus schematics on page 10)

Paraset conclusion plus schematics



This end view of the chassis shows the hand made key mechanism. It's a simple lever with spring tension at one end and a screw adjustment on top of the chassis. The contacts are between the plastic block and the lever. The knob protrudes from the lever through the top of the chassis. The smaller screw holds the key in place.

The completed Paraset as it appears when the case is opened. Note the tubes are stored in clips inside the lid. The chart converts the 0 to100 dial readings to megacycles.

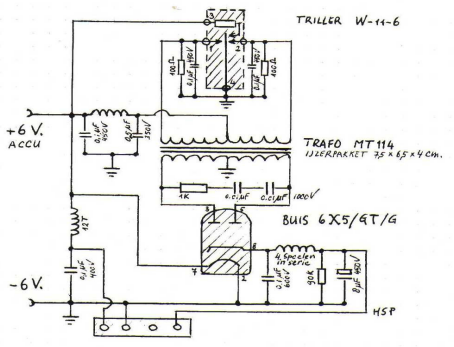


(Above)

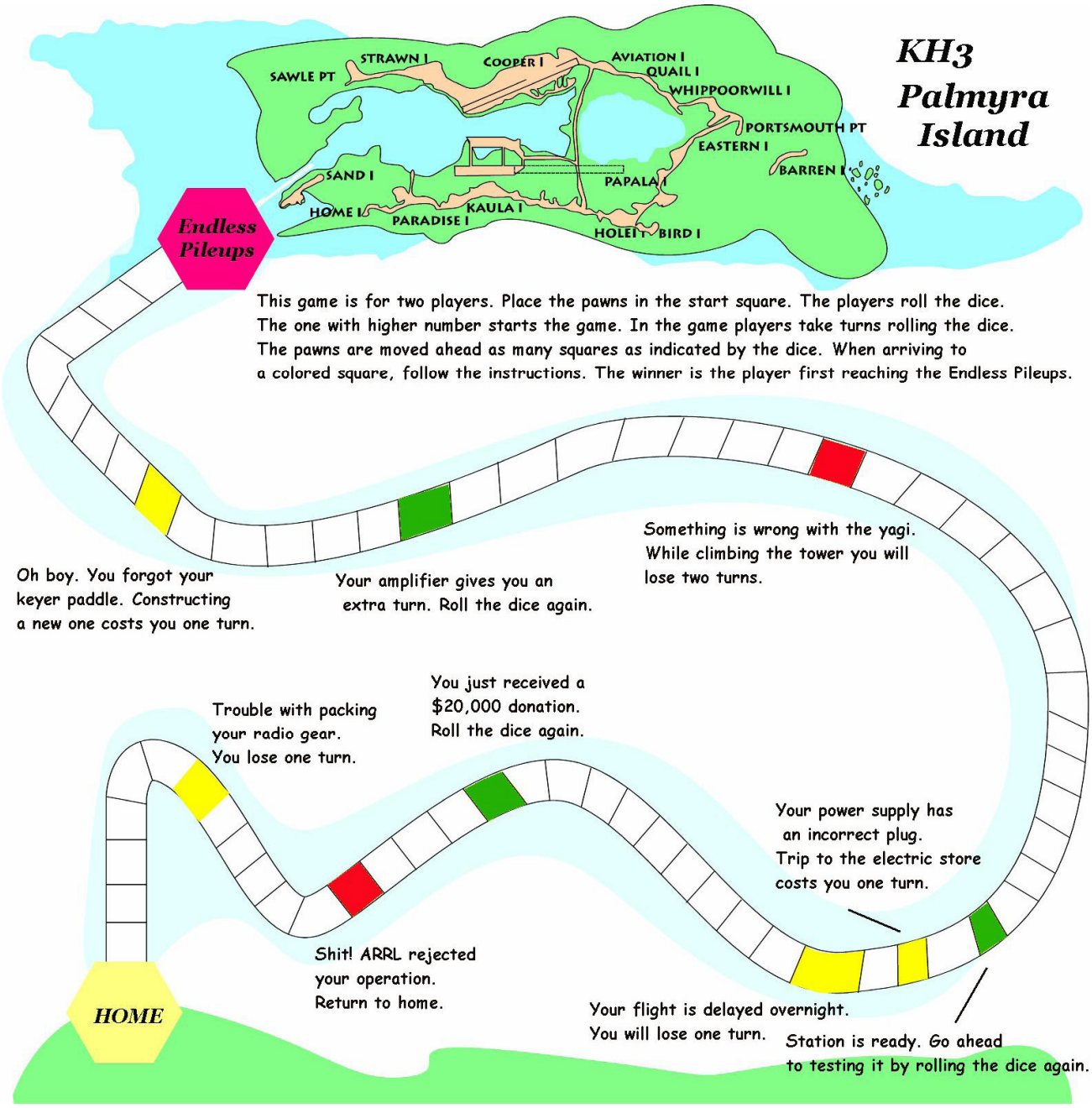
Paraset schematic

(Right)

6 volt vibrator power supply for Paraset



PileUp!, the Board Game



First, there's the original *PileUp!*, the quarterly Web journal of the Contest Club of Finland. Then there's the NFDXA *PileUp*, the monthly newsletter of the North Florida DX Association. Now there's *PileUp!, the Board Game* designed by *HamStyle* and published as a bonus in this month's edition of the Finnish PileUp! Considering the (lack of) sunspot activity of late the board game will probably get lots of use . . . Roll the dice, OM.

Whatever Happened to Heathkit?

Louis Frenzel (Editor's Notebook, *Electronic Design* 18 Feb 09)

(Part 2 The Beginning of the End)

The success of the computer line attracted the attention of Zenith Corp., which went on to buy Heathkit in 1979 from the owner Schlumberger, an oil field service company that also owned Fairchild Semiconductor at the time. Zenith carved out the computer product line and started Zenith Data Systems (ZDS), and that company went on to build a several billion dollar business making Zenith computers and PC compatibles. Groupe Bull of France eventually bought that business, and ultimately it succumbed to the market forces driving the PC-compatible business with all its shakeouts, ups, and downs during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In the meantime, the kit business suffered. Zenith didn't really want that business, but it came with the deal. It was neglected as ZDS grew, and so began its slow decline into oblivion. But a great deal of that decline had little to do with Zenith. It was also the time of great progress in semiconductor manufacturing. More and more equipment was being made of more and smaller ICs and surface-mount components, both of which were always a challenge for kit builders. It became harder to make a kit people could build at home with basic hand tools.

At the same time, wired products became cheaper thanks to Asian engineering and manufacturing. You could buy a great stereo or color TV set for less than what a kit cost, and you didn't have to spend three weekends building it. Everyone was into instant gratification in the 1980s, so nobody wanted to spend time building kits.

Heathkit discovered it could no longer compete in many markets like ham radio, audio, TV, and test equipment as it took as much time and money to create the manual as it did the product. With double the development costs and the technology making assembly more difficult, Heathkit eventually concluded it could not compete. This perfect storm of conditions led to the formal phasing out of the kit business in 1991 and 1992. There was lots of editorial coverage about that being the end of an era.

But Wait—Heathkit Really Didn't Go Away

Everyone thought that Heathkit was no more. Wrong! The education and publishing business now called Heathkit Educational Systems (HES) was still doing well. While the courses, materials, and trainers were sold to individuals, HES also developed a huge college and university business. HES was soon sold to a private buyer and continued as a successful operation. It still is today.

While its primary customers are educational institutions, you can still buy individual learning programs and even the trainer kits. HES also retained the rights to all those amazing kit manuals. The company still has many in stock. If you're looking for the documentation on an older Heathkit transceiver, scope, or whatever, you can get a copy of the manual. It's a nice little side business.

And despite the surface-mount components, ever smaller ICs, and challenging construction, you can still buy a kit today. Most of these kits are smaller products, but a few larger ones require some skill to build. An example of some of the smaller kits can be found at Ramsey Electronics (www.ramseykits.com), which offers a wide range of kits like power supplies and amplifiers that hobbyists love. Ramsey also has many ham radio kits and some commercial radio kits.

Jameco (www.jameco.com), which you might recognize as a mail order parts house, also has a line of small kits for hobbyists and educational institutions. Some of the ham radio companies offer kits as well, like Elecraft (www.elecraft.com) and TenTec (www.tentec.com). Other sources include Elenco Electronics (www.elenco.com) and Kelvin Electronics (www.kelviin.com).

Most kits go light on the newer parts and stay with older but still good ICs with the larger through-hole packages. When newer ICs are used, they're often pre-mounted on a PCB or the assembly using them will be pre-wired to prevent damage from poor construction.

It is still fun and satisfying to build a kit—at least to some people. And if you have the patience, you will actually experience that "Eureka" feeling one gets from building a particularly large and difficult kit. It works! It is a rare, satisfying experience that few enjoy any more. Next time you want to encourage one of your kids or relatives to enter the electronics field, give them a kit.

So despite the fact that almost everyone thought Heathkit died, it still exists and is still doing well. Check out its Web site at www.heathkit.com. The company's new address is 2024 Hawthorne Avenue, St. Joseph, Mich. 49085. Call 269-925-6000 or 800-253-0570. Many of the original Heathkit employees are still with the company, and that "we won't let you fail" attitude still prevails.

Acknowledgements

My special thanks to Chas Gilmore (W8IAI) of PPM Inc. as well as Doug Bonham and Randy Kaeding (K8TMK), both of Heathkit, for clarifying some of this information.

Minutes of 3/21/2009 Meeting at N4KE's estate

Name	Call	# Attending
Steve Brown	AB4UF	0
John Hale	AC4ET	0
Larry Junstrom	K4EB	0
Dick Hicks	K4UTE	0
Jim Hughes	KC4FWS	1
Bill Walker	KX4WW	0
Cory McDonald	N1WON	1
Mike Parnin	N4EPD	1
Ron Tivey	N4GFO	?
Joe Barnes	N4JBK	1
Ron Blake	N4KE	1
Dale Conner	N4NN	1
Billy Williams	N4UF	0
Mike Reublin	NF4L	1
Dave Mains	NO4J	0
Jim Iori	NU4Y	0
Warren Croke	NW4C	1
Pres Graham	W4FDA	1
John Moore	W5HUQ	0
Steve Barber	WA4B	0
David Price	WA4ET	1
Dick Knox	WR4K	0
Total Attending		**10**

The meeting was called to order by Jim, KC4FWS at 6:30 at N4KE's QTH.

Treasurer Jim KC4FWS, announced a balance of $796.68

Old business - None.

New business - David, WA4ET announced that the new shirts would cost about $25.00

The next meeting planner is: Jim, KC4FWS, The meeting will be April 25 at the Gainesville hamfest.

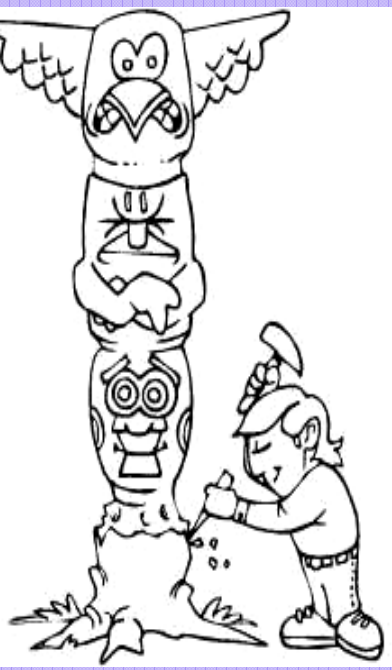
he meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Mike NF4L, Secretary

NFDXA CQ Marathon Totem Pole Top 10

Top 10 as of 16 Apr 09

1.	**N4NN**	**237**	**40**	**277**
2.	**K4UTE**	**236**	**40**	**276**
3.	**N4KE**	**207**	**40**	**247**
4.	**K4EB**	**206**	**40**	**247**
5.	**NF4L**	**145**	**35**	**180**
6.	**N1WON**	**120**	**32**	**152**
7.	**NW4C**	**72**	**25**	**97**
8.	**NU4Y**	**71**	**19**	**90**
9.	**WR4K**	**66**	**22**	**88**
10.	**KC4FWS**	**1**	**1**	**2**
	AB4UF	**1**	**1**	**2**
	W4FDA	**1**	**1**	**2**



Non Sequitur

On the DX Operating Guidelines, some have asked what is `Russian Roulette'? From John Kanode, N4MM, who did the work on the guidelines, we got the straight report. It is when a DX station blocks out a portion of the band, saying he will be listening over twenty or thirty kHz and then answers stations by calling on their frequencies. All this to help understand things. ***(WA6AUD-WestCoastDXBulletin 18Jul79)***

April NFDXA Meeting 3pm Apr 25 Sonny's BBQ-2700 Waldo Rd Gainesville

PileUp

The Monthly Newsletter of The North Florida DX Association

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— Ham-Mag No.4 Apr 2009

For What It's Worth

One thing that some Hams seem to have raised to an art form is whining, especially about the continuing lack of sunspots. Yes-sir, they say, conditions were better back in (insert year of choice here). Yep. Perhaps conditions *were* better.

But how does one explain those amongst us who actually are doing quite well with DX country totals and contest results *in spite* of the sun's clear complexion!

For some examples we in **NFDXA** have to look no further than our club's Marathon DX summary totals.

Four members, **N4NN, K4UTE, N4KE** and **K4EB** have worked *over* 200 countries — **N4NN** heads the group with 244. The same top four have worked all 40 zones.

And all this has been done ***since January 1***, a period now being recognized as one of the least active sunspot periods since records have been kept!

What's going on?

Is it high power? In some instances QRO has been a factor. But then how does one explain **N4KE's** total of 207 countries in the same time period ***using only 10 watts!***

Or, for that matter, **K4EB's** 206 total, some of which were worked portable while he was on tour with ***38 Special*** operating from sometimes strange locations using less than optimum antennas.

The other side of this coin are recent DXpeditions like **KP5** making over 100K Qs. Even the recent minimalist two-operator **VK9GMW** effort amassed over 20-thousand contacts!

I assume they had the same lack of sunspots the rest of us were lamenting.

That leaves the 'whiners' facing facts that maybe they didn't want to.

Namely, superior listening and operating skills coupled with good antennas and attention to detail will take one a long way in this period of poor propagation. Certainly a whole lot farther than a multi-dB whine.

— NW4C

NORTH FLORIDA DX ASSOCIATION

W4ZR