Mt. AIRY V.H.F. RADIO CLUB. INC.



W3CCX CLUB MEMORIAL CALL

ARRL Affiliated Club



Volume LXVIII March 2025 Number

The Prez Sez (March 2025)

PREZ

Despite the unpredictable and SF7 rapidly changing February weather, the Pack Rat general

club meeting achieved mixed success. A total of 27 members attended (near 50/50 mix of inperson and zoom) to hear Rick K1DS presentation on the highs, lows, and preparation needed to be a successful Rover in a VHF contest. They also listened to a dozen crying towel stories from the recent January contest. It was a tough decision based on the many sad and humorous accounts of that challenging weekend, but after considerable discussion the judges awarded the coveted Crying Towel to Scott AA2SD who promised to do his best to never win this award again! Congratulations Scott!!

The only down side of the February meeting was

that the disruptive weather caused many to stay home and resulted in the Mario raffle and planned live auction of estate items being postponed until March. The hearty in-person attendees consoled themselves with an extra donut and various hot and cold refreshments. In other activities this month the Pack Rats now have a full set of beacons on-the-air covering the bands from 144 MHz to 10 GHz. The 3400 beacon was repaired with a new amplifier and put into service a week ago by Gary WA2OMY. Gary and the other Beacon Committee team members - Len N3NGE, Warren WB2ONA, and Bruce WA3YUE, have worked tirelessly for the past year to build and deploy the microwave beacons. Please thank them the next time you see them for their service to the club.

Planning for the traditional ARRL Night is well

underway. We have made tremendous progress and will have a dais of national, division, and regional League representatives joining us in April. The ARRL Headquarters visitor will be David Minster NA2AA, Chief Executive Officer and league Secretary. More information will be sent out in a few weeks. Mark your calendar now for this very special Pack Rat membership meeting. Planning for the June VHF Contest has also started. While much of the detail is almost automatic after many years of effective contest organization, the most important part of the effort is identifying the people that will operate W3CCX and the people that will support and contribute to the setup / tear down on Friday and Monday. It's a big job and it requires the effort of many people to assure the success and safety of the operation. Please contribute as best you can - small or large. Let the team know you will help in any way you are able in order to make this the best June contest effort ever!

The upcoming March meeting will be our annual Home Brew night competition. Please bring in your latest mechanical or electronic related innovation, conversion, enhancement, or photos if the project scale is too large to move. The categories range from best design, best construction. most innovative, to most miserable failure. This meeting is always a showcase of the wide range of talents within the club. The meeting will also include a huge Mario Raffle and rescheduled live auction of highly desirable items from the KB1JEY estate. Don't miss out.

See you at the meeting on March 20th.

Phil WA3NUF

Cheese Bits March 2025 Packrats **CHEESE BITS** is a monthly publication of

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PACKRAT 222 MHz REPEATER - W3CCX/R

222.98/224.58 MHz (PL 136.5) Hilltown, PA

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PACK RAT COMMITTEES

January Contest
June Contest
Fall Sprints

N3RG, N2NC, W2SJ, AA2SD
N3YMS, WA3YUE, W2SJ
WA3NUF, W9KXI, WA3EHD,

WS3O

Pack Rat Awards WA3EHD, W2SJ

Quartermaster Vacant

Membership: Ray N3RG, W2SJ, WA3GFZ

PACKRAT BEACONS - W3CCX/B

144.300 (FN21be), 222.060 (FN20tk), 432.300 (FN20tk), 903.300 (FN21be), 1296.300 (FN20dh), 2304.300 (FN20tk), 3400.300 (FN20dh), 5760.300 (FN21be), 10,368.300 (FN20tk) See https://www.packratvhf.com/index.php/on-air for details

MONDAY / TUESDAY NIGHT NETS

VHF/UHF Monday:

TIME	FREQUENCY NET CONTROL
6:45PM	224.580 MHz KB3MTW Michelle Even,
	K3JJZ EI Odd Mondays
7:00 PM	Packrat Talk Group KA3WXV George
	See Packratvhf.com ON AIR for details
7:30 PM	50.150 MHz N3RG FM29ki Ray
8:00 PM	144.245 MHz W2KV FN20ok Dave
8:30 PM	222.125 MHzKC3BVL FM29jw Jim
9:00 PM	432.110 MHzWB2RVX FM29mt Mike
Visit the Mt Airy VHF Radio Club at:	
www.packratvhf.com or www.w3ccx.com	

PACKRAT E-MAIL REFLECTORS

The Pack Rats have an E-Mail reflector that is open to Pack Rats and friends of the Pack Rats. The intent of this E-mail reflector is to have a convenient means of reaching list members on subjects of general interest to the VHF/UHF and Microwave community.

Packrats@mailman.gth.net

The Pack Rats also have a **Members Only** reflector. This list consists of, and is for the use of, **only Pack Rat club members**.

Packrats-members@mailman.qth.net

See the W3CCX Web page for specific information on joining.

Packrats on Facebook

Use the browser link "www.facebook.com/ PackRatVHF", or within Facebook search for the name "Mt Airy VHF Radio Club".

NanoVNA & TinySA Remote Control via Wifi Mike Seguin, N1JEZ

Have you ever wished you could run your NanoVNA, NanoVNA-H 4 or TinySA Ultra remotely so you didn't have to lug around a laptop hooked to either to control them? I realize that you can do everything from their touch screens, but I find the text to be really small for these tired old eyes. Then there is the issue of sunlight washing out the screen of the Nano/TinySA and Laptop if you are outside.

Well, there is a solution using an Android Cell Phone.

It's possible to use an OTG (on the go) cable to go between your Android Cell Phone and the Nano/TinySA. My OTG cable uses a USB C on both ends. To go one step further, you can use an old retired Cell Phone with no SIM card as long as it has Wi-Fi capability and is not too underpowered. I have used both with my current Samsung A-13 5G and an older/retired Samsung A-10e. The A-10e was under powered for use with the TinySA, but worked OK with my NanoVNA and NanoVNA-H 4. Try it and see.

So, let's get started. Besides having an OTG cable, there are two pieces of software needed. The first is NanoVNA-Appwhich is used on your PC. The current version is 1.1.218 available here:

https://github.com/DiSlord/NanoVNA-App/blob/main/Win32/Release/NanoVNA-App.exe

There is no installer for NanoVNA-App. Just create a folder on your C: drive. Copy the .exe file there. Don't put it in your Programs or Programs(x86) folders. NanoVNA-App will create folders and files as necessary. Next is TCPUART for your Cell Phone. It is available for free (Hams like free) at the Android Play Store.

Download and install.

Next, the Nano/TinySA 'Connection' setting should be set to USB in the upper right corner as is shown below. It is under 'config' in both the Nano and Tiny SA.



Let's start TCPUART. Here it is running on my Cell Phone.



Essentially, TCPUART connects to the Nano/Tiny SA via USB. It then magically encapsulates the data so it can be sent via TCP/IP out the Wi-Fi server in TCPUART.

In my case, the Wi-Fi connection that the Cell Phone makes is to my home network. It can be whatever you set up in your Cell Phone for Wi-Fi. TCPUART is given an IP address via DHCP from your network.

Next, connect the OTG cable between your phone and the Nano/Tiny SA.



To continue setting up TCPUART, make sure the baud rate is 115200 and press 'Connect'. The label will change to 'Disconnect' which actually means you are connected. Your Cell Phone will likely ask you if you want to give TCPUART the right to rummage around in your phone so it can find a device. Answer 'OK'.

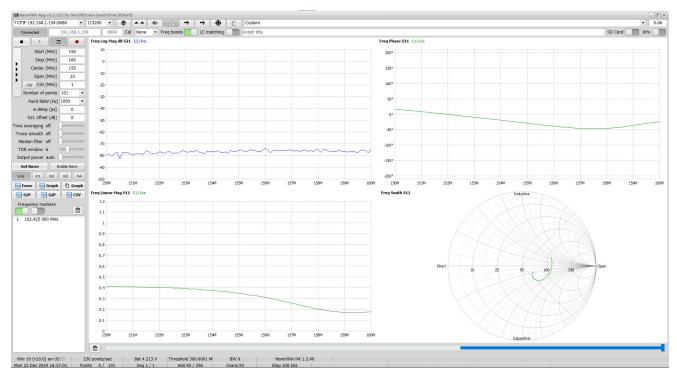


Next, for the TCP part, select 'Server' and check that the port is set to 8080 then press 'Start'. The label will change to 'Stop' which means you are connected.

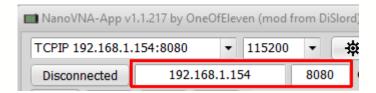


Look at the screen to get the IP address that your home network has assigned. You can see the server IP address is 192.168.1.154 and a port number of 8080. Remember these numbers as there will be a quiz later.

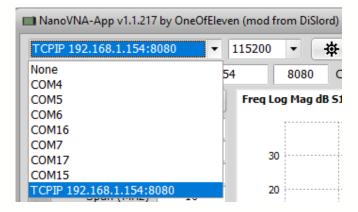
The next piece is the NanoVNA-App on your computer. As I said, there is no installer for the software, so you'll have to make your own shortcut to launch it if you want. The software looks like this for the VNA:



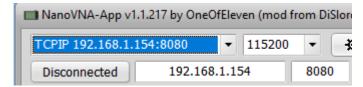
Now to make the final connection. Launch NanoVNA-App on your PC. This assumes your PC is connected to the same network as your Cell Phone. In the upper left is the place you enter the IP info so that you can connect to the Nano/Tiny SA.



The red outlined section is where you enter the IP address and port number in TCPUART. Pop Quiz! Did you remember the IP address from before? Now that you have entered that info, you click on the connection drop down and select that TCPIP address:port.



Finally, you press the 'Disconnected' button and you should be connected to your device. If you are, the button will change to 'Connected'. That's all there is to it.



Here are a couple of images. The first is my TinySA Ultra. The carrier is NOAA Weather Radio on 162.425 MHz on Burke Mountain which is LOS from my house.

HAMCATION 2025

Reflections on a Once Great Hamfest

No doubt that we have all been seeing the shrinkage of once-great hamfests. Sharing a comment with a buddy, we remarked that we were used to lines to get to the prize stub drum, lines for the bathroom facilities, lines for the lunch wagons and crowds in front of the commercial vendor exhibits. Not this year. You could walk right up to any vendor or display without peeking over someone's shoulder. Many of the commercial booths were meagerly staffed. The flea markets had some beautiful vintage radios, but they are museum pieces rather than items you would add to your station.

I drove the 2-hour and 35 minutes each way with N3JT and KS3K as my passengers, both are Boca Raton ARA members. Leaving at 6:15A, we arrived at 8:45AM, just a few minutes before the opening gate on Saturday. My shopping list included some multi-pin connectors, a 902MHz SSPA, BNC jumpers and anything else that could enhance the microwave gear that I brought down from Philly. I started the morning at the FLWSS meeting—that is the Florida Weak Signal Society that meets quarterly around the state at homes of various VHF & Up hams. Things are picking up slightly with more Monday night FT8 activity on 2m and working up the bands. There are additional members adding bands from 2G-10G, especially as the IC-705 and IC-905 are being used.

VHF "row" is close to the pavilion where there are 3 classrooms and an open theater area. It's the place to find all your VHF buddies and see Steve and Sandra from DEMI. They are about fully restored from the hurricane and back in business. BNC jumpers found their way into my bag and right next door, I found a 50W class C SSPA designed for cell service at 870MHz, and I hope that I can get it converted to use with my 10W driver, despite the fact that it is a 0dB input! I visited the AMSAT and ARISS booths, bought a logo T-shirt, and learned more about the SSTV pictures being sent through the ISS this month on 437.55MHz FM. I bought male and female multi-pin connectors of the microphone style to power up the 10GHz and 24GHz rigs and a set of 75A power poles to use with another 70A Astron PS that I purchased before it got to the Hamcation flea market.

Having spent a total of 6 hours there, we were all ready to hit the road by 3PM, but there were some lingering 73's to friends from abroad who were attending. All of us were home by 6:15P. I'm wondering if I'll be going again next year.

73, Rick K1DS

HAMCATION 2025

Rats in Attendance













HAMCATION 2025 In Pictures













Cheese Bits March 2025

HAMCATION 2025 In Pictures













When you know your antenna is big enough!

The old saying - "If it didn't fall down last winter, it wasn't big enough!" has been around for as long as I can remember. Well, it appears that Dave Buckwalter K3SK, in Farmville, VA has tested that theory to its inevitable conclusion.

Dave is an avid EME and VHF enthusiast who is a regular participant on the 222 Tuesday activity nights. He has been absent for the past few weeks during which we have experienced frigid temperatures, high winds, and periodic snowfall events. We now know why.



Dave reported that the mast on his 144 / 222/ 432 EME array bent during the strong winds that blasted the NE through Mid-Atlantic states during February.

Dave is upbeat that the bent mast can be replaced in the next few weeks. I hope he is right, but it sure looks like a daunting project to me!

Even bent over though, it is still an impressive antenna array.

Submitted by Andrea W2EZ

Editor Emeritus Notes

Lenny W2BVH

New MMICS

Mini-Circuits has recently come out with a couple of interesting MMIC gain blocks that are worth looking at. The PMA1-14LN+ part amplifies signals between 50MHz and 10 GHz with a pretty flat gain (22dB) across that frequency range. Noise figure is 1.1dB and its output power at 1dB compression is 19.5-22.5 dBm depending on frequency. So it looks like it would serve well as both a LNA and an IPA on the transmit side of a rig. In fact its output of 19.5 dBm (around 100 mW) could be considered usable power in a 10 GHz rig. It's a 6 pin component and is (remarkably) housed in a 1.5mm square package (smaller than a grain of rice). Needless to say this is not a part you can solder in by hand at home. Mini-circuits provides a suggested circuit for it to be used in and a suggested 3 layer PCB layout. It uses Rogers 4350 pcb material which is expensive but not outrageously so.

The second part in this category is the Mini-circuits PMA3-14LN+. It has similar gain but somewhat less impressive noise figure and 1dB compression specs. It comes in a much bigger package (3mm square -- still TINY). Mini-Circuits has a suggested schematic and layout for this part too. JCLPCB, a pcb fabrication house out of China lists this part as available. So presumably they'll etch a board and populate it with the necessary components for you. They have a good reputation for both quality and price. I'd guess that some of the other China based pcb makers would compete well with JCLPCB if you want to have these made. Will the higher spec part appear as available for fabrication by these guys? I'd be surprised if it doesn't at some point.

What's all of this Pease Stuff

Bob Pease was a design and applications engineer for decades at National Semiconductor up to the time it was bought by Texas Instruments. Bob wrote a monthly column "Pease Porridge" from 1990 to 2011 in the well known and popular electronics trade magazine "Electronic Design". His column was extremely popular among hardware techies. It was the first thing I turned to when my copy of Electronic Design arrived each month. If you're interested in taking a look at what Bob wrote, the columns plus additional articles he authored (along with a nice bio) can be found at https://www.qsl.net/n9zia/pease/index.html. The articles as you might imagine are quite technical, but written in an informal style -- not at all like journal articles). Bob tragically died in a car accident in 2011.

History of Heathkit

Here's a url to the first of a 6 part article on the history of Heathkit. It's mostly an interview with Chas Gilmore, VP of Engineering at Heath for quite a few years. The remaining 5 episodes are linked at the end of the article. Interesting reading for those of us who built Heathkits. https://www.eejournal.com/article/the-rise-and-fall-of-heathkit-part-1-early-days/

Cheap Connectors are not cheap

Jeff wrote this up 25 years ago and it's still on the internet for us to learn from (minus the link to the last photo in the writeup -- nothing lasts forever!). There's a reason the no-name adapters are so cheap. Read and heed and avoid aggravation.

https://wa8dbw.ifip.com/adapterWN3A.html

Thank you Lenny for contributing these pieces. Now we need to find write ups on Bob Widler and Jim Williams. Ed.



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Sussex Amateur Radio Association - APRIL 26, 2025 -



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The RF Connection

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Events & Attractions

ARRL State Convention

Tail Gating

Great Food

Blood Pressure Testing

Chinese Auction

Raffle...Big Prizes!

License Testing

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Guests Pay \$8 To Enter! (Under 18 FREE!)

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Gates open at 6:00 A.M. Expo begins at 8:00 A.M.

Schedule

6:00 AM Gates Open 7:30 AM Tailgating

8:00 AM Indoor expo venue opens

Restaurant available

12:00 PM FCC testing -No test fee, pre-registration

Last test seating at 12:30 PM

Speakers Forums

ARRL Update Others

TALK-IN: SARA Repeater

147.090 mHz PL 156.7

Schedule subject to change

For Information Contact Jamie, W3UC

(410) 202-7690

hamfestdelaware@gmail.com

HAMFEST LOCATION:



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Registration is now open 48th EASTERN VHF/UHF/MICROWAVE CONFERENCE: May 9-11, 2025

Hilton Garden Inn (860)-688-6400 555 Corporate Drive, Windsor, CT 06095 (I91 exit 38 to Day Hill Rd.

https://www.newsvhf.com/conference/

The 47th Eastern VHF/UHF/Microwave Conference will be held on May 8-11, 2025, in West Windsor, CT

Papers and presentations on all VHF, UHF, and Microwave topics are solicited and welcome.

Please take this opportunity to share your latest projects with your fellow operators and experimenters. The conference is four months away, so you have time to write it up, or even to start a new project.

If you have an idea or topic, please send to w1ghz@arrl.net

73 Paul, W1GHZ, and Mark, K1MAP, co-chairs

Southeastern VHF Society 2025 Annual Conference.

- Call for Papers and Presentations extended to March 17th
- New link to Hotel Reservations at Quality Inn (Exit 4)
 Southeastern VHF Society

The Southeastern VHF Society will hold its 2025 Annual Conference on Friday April 4th through Saturday April 5th at the Quality Inn (Exit 4) in Clarksville Tennessee. Clarksville is located about 45 miles north of Nashville TN which is the hub for Country Music and Entertainment.

- Registration will begin Thursday afternoon.
- Use the following link to reserve a room at the Quality Inn (Exit4) to get the special Conference rate.

https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/LY04F8

Hotel Address: 3095 Wilma Rudolph Blvd, Clarksville, TN, 37040, US

Hotel Phone: (931) 648-4848

We will have an Antenna Range for 10GHz only.

More details to follow soon at Southeastern VHF Society website svhfs.org

Call For Papers and Presentations

Papers and presentations are solicited on both the technical and operational aspects of VHF, UHF and Microwave weak signal amateur radio. The deadline for the submission of papers and presentations for this year's conference is March 17, 2025. Some suggested areas of interest are:

- Transmitters
- Receivers
- Transverters
- RF Power Amplifiers
- RF Low Noise Pre-Amplifiers
- Antennas
- Construction Projects
- Test Equipment and Station Accessories
- Station Design and Construction
- Contesting
- Roving
- DX-peditions
- EME

- Propagation (Sporadic E, Meteor Scatter, Troposphere Ducting, etc.)
- Digital Modes (WSJT, etc.)
- Digital Signal Processing (DSP)
- Software Defined Radio (SDR)
- Amateur Satellites

Amateur Television

In general papers and presentations on non-weak signal related topics such as FM repeaters and packet will not be accepted but exceptions may be made if the topic is related to weak signal. For example, a paper or presentation on the use of FM simplex in contests or on the use of APRS to track rovers during contests would be considered.

All submissions for publication in the proceedings should be emailed to kc4ri@att.net in Microsoft Word (.doc) or Microsoft PowerPoint (.ppt) formats. Submissions for presentation at the conference should be in Microsoft PowerPoint (.ppt) format and can be delivered at the conference on a USB memory stick.

Paper: Size should be 8½ 11-inches.

Margins: Top and sides should be 0.75 inches; bottom must be 1 inch.

Font: You may use any font you'd like. The font should be clean and easy to read (12 pt Arial is a good choice).

Layout: Either a one or two-column format is fine.

Page numbers: It's not necessary to include page numbers.

Headers/Footers: You don't need to add any. If you do include them, it's likely they'll be removed.

Drawings: Drawings should be embedded in the files. Place them where you'd like them to appear.

Photos: Color or black-and-white digital images embedded in text. Place them where you'd like them to appear.

We do not copy edit (but will correct something if we notice it – or if you notice it and let us know). We do try to make all papers somewhat uniform, but we do not redo each article.

The deadline for the submission of papers and presentations is March 17, 2025. Please indicate when you submit your paper or presentation if you plan to attend the conference and present your paper in person or if you are submitting solely for publication. Papers and presentations are being handled by Mike Stipick, KC4RI, and should be sent to: kc4ri@att.net. Mike can be contacted at the same email address if you have any questions.

Registration

For registration and payment information, click on the link below:

https://svhfs.org/2025-SVHFS-Registration.pdf

Regularly Scheduled On The Air Events

VHF/UHF Monday - Every Monday except holidays and contest nights the following nets are held, 224.58 MHz FM Repeater at 6:45, Packrat Talk Group DMR net at 7:00 PM, 50.150 MHz USB NCS N3RG FM29ki at 7:30 PM, 144.245 MHz USB NCS W2KV FN20os at 8:00 PM, 222.125 MHz USB NCS KC3BVL FM29jw at 8:30 PM, 432.110 USB NCS WB2RVX FM29mt at 9:00 PM.

1296 MHz Activity Night—There's an informal 1296 activity night in the NY/NJ/PA/CT region (and beyond) every Monday night starting around 9:30 pm (or so) on 1296.110. No coordination, just jump in and say hello.

222 MHz Activity Night—There's been an informal 222 activity night in the Northeast (and beyond) every Tuesday night starting around 7 pm (or so) Eastern Time. ON4KST is being used by some to coordinate Q's when direct CQ's are weak.

KC3BVL UHF+ Wednesday Net—Packrat, Jim KC3BVL conducts a Wednesday night net with schedule as follows: 7:30PM—903.100, 8:00PM—1296.100, 8:30PM—2304.100.

KC3BVL VHF Friday Net—Packrat, Jim KC3BVL conducts a Friday night net with schedule as follows: 7:30PM-144.160, 8:00PM-50.160, 8:30PM- 222.150, 9:00PM-432.160

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Editor's Notes



The Crew (George, KA3WXV, Tom, KA3FQS) getting Jim, KC3BVL, ready for Homebrew night. Picture courtesy of Wayne, KB3YJV

Thank you to all of those who contributed to this months Cheese Bits. There were many great pictures but unfortunately not as much text telling the club what you are doing. Please consider writing up an article for next month's Cheese Bits.

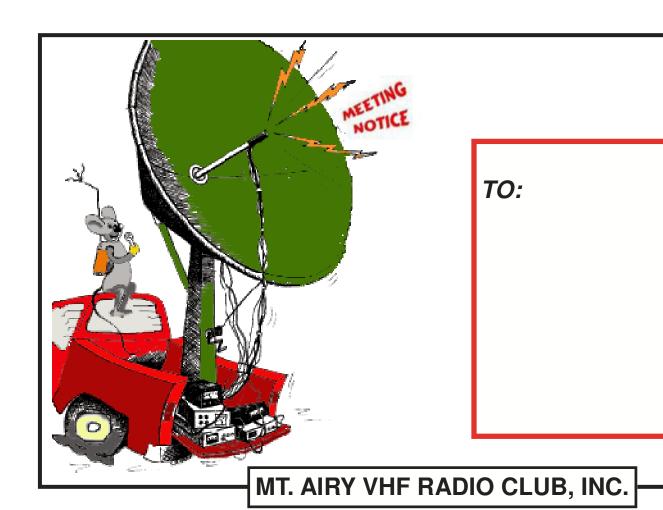
Send your input to cheesebits@packratvhf.com not to my personal gmail address as those submissions stand a good chance of being lost. If at all possible do not send pdf's of more than one page as I can't edit or reformat them.

No one has come forward to write the Way Back column so this is the first issue with no page for that feature.

As usual I want to thank my wife Melanie for proofreading and correcting this issue.

Tom KA3FQS

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Say you saw it in Cheese Bits

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