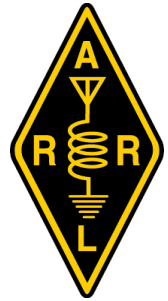




CHEESE BITS

W3CCX
CLUB MEMORIAL CALL

ARRL
Affiliated
Club



Volume LXIX

January 2026

Number 1

PREZ

The Prez Sez (January 2026)

SEZ: From all of the club officers and directors, we wish you a Happy and Healthy New Year!!

By all accounts, 2025 was a very good year for the Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club. The number of club members attending the meetings has increased each month, and the special event meetings like ARRL night, the Picnic, November NF testing, and the Holiday party have set recent records. The number of Pack Rats on 10 GHz continues to grow higher and, best of all, members are helping other members get on new bands. It looks like the 2026 January VHF Contest will be another high point for the club!

The Contest is only two weeks away. Are you ready? Don't wait till the 17th to find out for sure. Get on the nets, run tests with other club members, use the Tuesday 222 activity nights as a mini-contest and see what you can work while confirming that your station ergonomics are right for the real event.

There is still time left before the contest weekend. Help will always be available to those that ask for it. The members of this club have been unconsciously collecting radio items and parts for 40 years or more! What do you need to take your contest score to the next level?

The December Holiday Party had the highest turnout of any meeting this year, it was also a lot of fun! There was plenty to eat and drink, lots of good company to catch up with, and a full eve-

ning of auctions, raffles, and presentations. Thanks to Jeff K1TEO for sharing his insights about the evolution of VHF contesting and an actual snapshot of how his station has adapted to meet the current contest environment. Thanks also to the crew that made the meeting look so effortless, KA3WXV, WA2OMY, WA3YUE, K2EZ, AA2SD, KE5NJ, plus many more pitched in to keep everything moving like clockwork. Special thanks go to Tim Duffy K3LR the CEO of DX Engineering (DXE) who arranged the Grand Prize for the Pack Rat Holiday Party, a new ICOM IC-9700 tri-band transceiver. No doubt, this unexpected prize donation helped bring more members to the meeting last month. It also caused a majority of attendees to pay their dues early for this year – a win-win situation if ever there was!

The January general club meeting will be ZOOM only this month to allow everyone more time to work on their stations since the contest start will be only two days later. The featured speakers will include Dave K1RZ with a timely guideline talk about using the W3SZ/K1RZ map program during the contest and answering all of your questions. Next, yours truly will cover setting up WSJT for VHF contest operating and touch on other useful apps to help you work the contest more efficiently. Finally, Scott AA2SD will provide a timely update on the club rovers plans for the contest weekend. It will be an informative evening, I hope you will join in. 73 and Good Luck in the Contest!
Phil WA3NUF

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W2SJ Bob Fischer	1 Year Director
K1RZ David Petke	1 Year Director

PACK RAT COMMITTEES

January Contest	N3RG, N2NC, W2SJ, AA2SD
June Contest	N3YMS, WA3YUE, W2SJ
Fall Sprints	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 NIGHT NETS

VHF/UHF Monday:

<u>TIME</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>	<u>NET CONTROL</u>
6:45PM	224.580 MHz	KB3MTW Michelle
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 MHz	KC3BVL FM29jw Jim
9:00 PM	432.110 MHz	WB2RVX 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.qth.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".

December Meeting

The Pack Rats December meeting was quite an extravaganza featuring food, an auction, presentations, a Mario raffle, and a special prize drawing. Phil, WA3NUF, organized the meeting and several people helped make it happen. The food came from Giuseppe's Pizza with many members contributing dessert items. There was no excuse for leaving hungry. There was an auction of various ham related items such as a 222 transceiver, some attenuators, a set of Bencher paddles, and other things. As usual Elliot, K3JJZ, served as auctioneer and did a wonderful job. Bruce, WA3YUE, presented a software link he wrote to allow WSJT contacts to be automatically transferred into Dave's, W3KM, very popular VHF Log. Jeff, K1TEO, spoke about VHF contesting showing how it has evolved over the years and providing his ideas for how to succeed in today's contesting environment. The Mario table was packed with interesting things and everyone who bought a ticket got a chance to take something home. The special prize drawing was for a new in box Icom IC-9700 which was donated to the club by DX Engineering. Lenny, W2BVH, was the lucky winner.

The meeting was well attended and it looked like everyone had a good time.

The Feast



The Main Course



Club members enjoying the Feast



Contributed Desserts



Don We Now Our Gay Apparel



December Meeting

The Auction



Our Auctioneer EI, K3JJZ



Items to be auctioned



Gary, WA2OMY, displaying some relays up for auction



Gary with a Bird Coaxial Resistor up for auction



Club members bidding

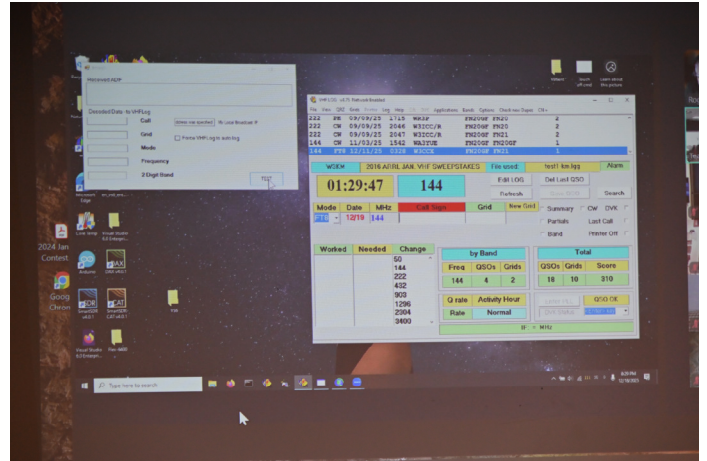


Nick, N3YMS, happy after winning the bid for an attenuator

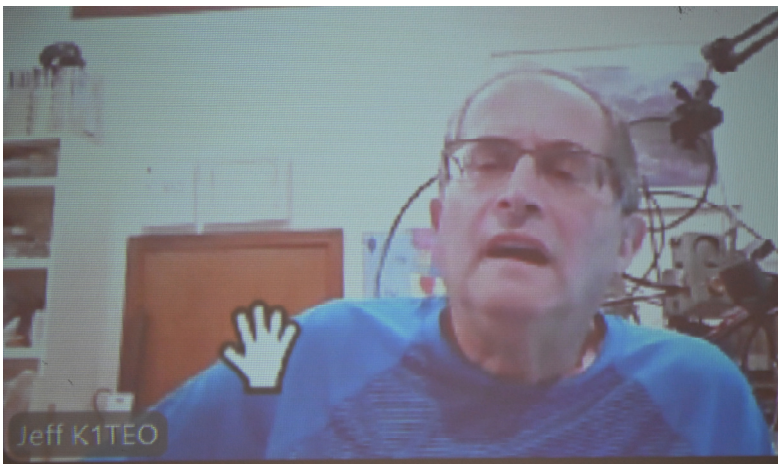
December Meeting



Some items for sale besides the auction



Bruce, WA3YUE, presenting his bridge program between WSJT and VHF LOG



Jeff, K1TEO, presenting the evolution of VHF contesting with ideas on how to succeed and his shack

December Meeting

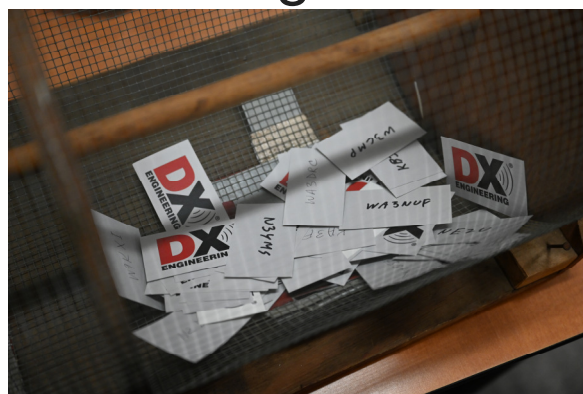


Andrea, K2EZ, the photographer

The Grand Prize Drawing



Preparing the tickets



Ready to roll



Phil, WA3NUF, announcing the winner



The winner, Lenny, W2BVH



Special Thanks to DX Engineering for supporting the Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club

Station Improvements

Lenny W2BVH

Here are a couple of pics of the IC-9700 that I won in the raffle at the December meeting. It's set up and running, though in a jury rigged sort of way. I've had some Q's on 1296 with it so far. I'm very much looking forward to using all the features it has especially the bandscope and the ability to do digital modes on 432 and 1296.

Getting it integrated with my power amps, my other microwave transverters, the 10 MHz reference, the computer etc will be quite a job but I'm more than up to the task; just not for the January contest. It's just too much work and too many chances for mistakes. In this case, I'm following the W2SJ prime directive and will leave well enough alone until after the contest before I get going on integrating it in, but all should be in order with the new rig for the Spring Sprints and the June contest.

Hope you had a good Christmas and have a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

73,
--Lenny W2BVH



Michelle KB3MTW

After years of my shack breaking down, I was having issues with antennas, lengths of coax in excess of 75' going through walls also building interference messing the readings of a nano VNA, George, KA3WXV, suggested I move my shack closer to the antennas.

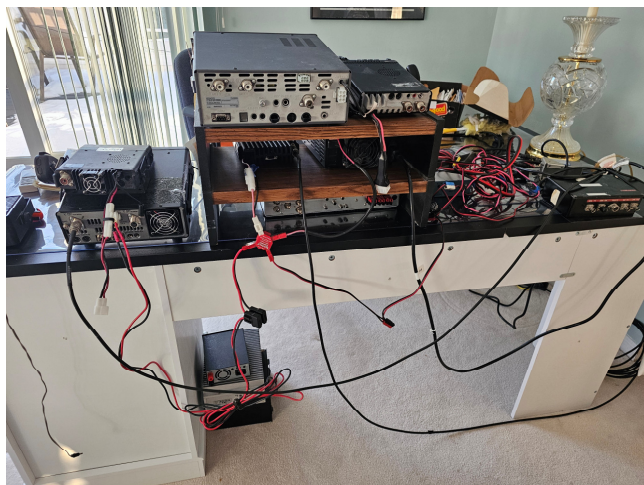
After some issues with Neil in rehab I made the decision to move Neil's sleep area from the den on the sofa (a move he made) to an actual bed in the 2nd bedroom which was turned into an office by the first owners of this property.

So for the past couple of weeks my shack has been moved onto a new L-shaped office desk from the office/2nd bedroom to the den. My work computer will be coming also. George has hooked up the 4 lower

bands with newer shorter length coax, making the back of my radios easily accessible. Eventually 6 meters, the 903 and 222 transverters will be connected and hopefully I should be back on the air for the January 2026 ARRL UHF contest with all 6 lower bands again. Any and every Pack Rat is welcome to come by and see the new shack as long as you are not severely allergic to cats. Just call.

73

Michelle London - KB3MTW



Tom KA3FQS

For a long time I have had an unopened Comet CX-333 tri-band vertical antenna stuck in the rafters of my shack. During that time I was using some homemade J-Poles and a Cheap Yagi for 144, 222, and 440 FM. On the first day of winter Warren, WA2OMA, and his crew came to my house and mounted the CX-333 on a sidearm on my tower. I now have a decent signal on FM. Maybe I can try the Winter Heat contest. Thanks to Warren, his son, and Sydney (who did all of the climbing).

73

Tom KA3FQS



Pack Rats KC3BVL, and AA2SD/R Make a Chip Shot Across the Delaware River with 5GHz and 10GHz.



Scott AA2SD/R, points across the river from the Southern NJ shore in New Jersey to KC3BVL located on the Philadelphia side During a 5GHz and 10GHz Horn Contact.

AA2SD/R Rover - November 29th 2026 Philadelphia- Saturday Morning I set up for an across the River shot to test my new 5GHz and 10GHz portable roving set up. Although the distance was short, this test helped to prove out my equipment and provide needed experience to me as a novice to the microwave bands. I deployed an ICOM 705 with a built-in battery as the IF Rig with DEMi Transverters. The 5 GHz set up included a 5 watt power amp, and the 10GHz set up outputs 1.8 watts, both with horn type antennas.

The Horn antenna configuration attaches to a simple mounting post on the roof rack of my Subaru Outback. Ray N3RG created the concept of building a shoe-shine box rover set up. My operating style is all mobile, and this configuration allows me to quickly set up the mobile station and use the top of my vehicle as a stabilization platform for aiming.



Ray N3RG created the shoe-shine box set up for both horns with quick deployment as a Rover



5.7 GHz Horn is mounted on a quick mount for pointing on the Subaru Outback, all components are mounted directly to the horn, including the transverter, power amp, pre-amp and switching relays and the Transmit / Receive Sequencer. The horn is removed during travel and mounted as I reach the over-look areas.

Jim KC3BVL and I enjoyed successful contacts on both 5GHz and 10GHz from this location. Jim was deploying a single dish with a dual feed for 5 and 10 GHz. I did experience a high noise level on 5 GHz from routers as I pointed the antennas towards the city.



<https://youtube.com/shorts/6NMZqudclqI?si=JpO0yq46rSqlQXXM>

Devices used for this test

ICOM 705

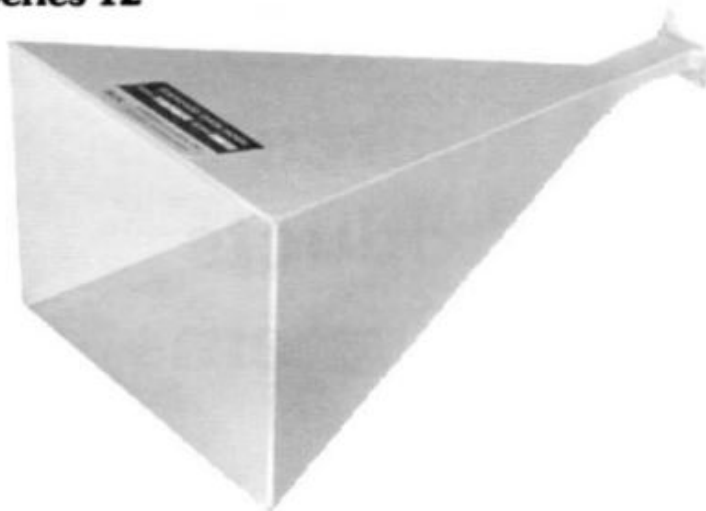
5 GHz DEMi Transverter with 5 watt Power Amp

5 GHz Standard Gain Horn Spec nominal gain 22 dbi

10 GHz DEMi Transverter with 1.8 Watts

10 GHz Horn

Standard Gain Horn Series 12



STANDARD GAIN HORNS

Model Number	Freq Range (GHz)	Nominal Gain (dB)	Nominal Beamwidth (°)		Weight lb (kg)		Model Number	Weight lb (kg)	
			E-plane	H-plane	net	shipping		net	shipping
12-0.4	0.35 to 0.53	15.5	30	27	300(136)	665(302)	12F-0.4	27(13)	60(27)
12-0.5	0.49 to 0.75	15.5	30	27	180(82)	403(183)	12F-0.5	18(8)	40(18)
12-0.75	0.75 to 1.12	15.5	30	27	67(30)	145(66)	12F-0.75	12(6)	27(13)
12-0.9	0.95 to 1.15	13.7	40	35	25(11)	50(23)	12F-0.9	8(4)	15(7)
12-1.1	1.12 to 1.70	15.5	30	27	15(7)	30(14)	12F-1.1	3(2)	6(3)
12-1.7	1.70 to 2.60	15.5	30	27	8(4)	15(7)	12F-1.7	3(2)	6(3)
12-2.6	2.60 to 3.95	18.0	23	22	7(3)	13(6)	12FS-2.6	2(1)	4(2)
12-3.9	3.95 to 5.85	18.0	23	22	7(3)	12(6)	12FS-3.9	2(1)	4(2)
12-5.8	5.85 to 8.20	22.1	12	13	5(2)	10(4)	12FS-5.8	2(1)	4(2)
12-8.2	8.20 to 12.4	22.1	12	13	4(2)	7(3)	12FS-8.2	2(1)	4(2)
12-12	12.4 to 18.0	24.7	9	10	3(1)	6(3)	12FS-12	1(0.5)	3(1.5)
12A-18	18.0 to 26.5	24.7	9	10	2(1)	5(2)	12FA-18	1/2(0.3)	3(1.5)
12A-26	26.5 to 40.0	24.7	9	10	2(1)	3(2)	12FA-26	1/2(0.3)	2(1)
12-33	33.0 to 50.0	24.7	9	10	1(0.5)	3(2)	12F-33	1/4(0.1)	2(1)
12-50	50.0 to 75.0	24.7	9	10	1/4(0.1)	2(1)	12F-50	1/4(0.1)	2(1)
12-60	60.0 to 90.0	24.7	9	10	1/4(0.1)	1(0.5)	12F-60	1/4(0.1)	2(1)



www.aa2sd.com

Special Links to Follow: for the Jan 2026 ARRL Contest

ARRL Contest explanation: <https://www.arrl.org/january-vhf#:~:text=Additional%20Information,to%20enter%20the%20new%20categories>.

AA2SD/R Rover Plans <https://www.aa2sd.com/arrl-january-vhf-contest-2026>

W3SZ Pack Rat Database Map <https://w3sz.com/map.php>

The ON4KST amateur radio chat <https://www.on4kst.org/chat/login.php?band=8>

Pack Rats VHF Site <https://www.packratvhf.com/index.php>

10G Added to Driveway Rover

Pete K0BAK

A couple years ago, Gary WA2OMY built a 5-band QRP microwave transverter to replace the club's venerable 6-band transverter with more reliable compact technology. I've used that box to help the club's score by driving to Packrat's homes to make short-distance contacts. Earlier this year, I bought a 10G transverter to add another band to my driveway rover for 10 bands total including low bands. As usual with my ham projects, it's easier to buy stuff than to build and implement, and it was too easy to defer till now.

Because I wanted a transverter that was flexible, I decided to buy the latest Khune model "MKU 10 G5". The feature I liked most was being able to field-configure IF to 28, 144, or 432MHz. Gary's box uses 432 IF so that's how the Khune was configured too, but it's nice having a choice in case I use the 10G in another role like a portable dish station for 10G contests.

Both Gary and Ray N3RG generously offered to help me. Ray "won" due to having 10G on-air already, although Gary is working on that. I drove to Ray's on Dec 13, bringing the new transverter, the 5-band box, and my IC-705 IF rig. My driveway rover station is totally manual, using a 6-position BNC rotary switch to select the radio's destination device and an RCA switch for PTT. There was one unused position left on the BNC switch to be used for the new 10G, and I would replace my current 4-position RCA switch with a larger one.

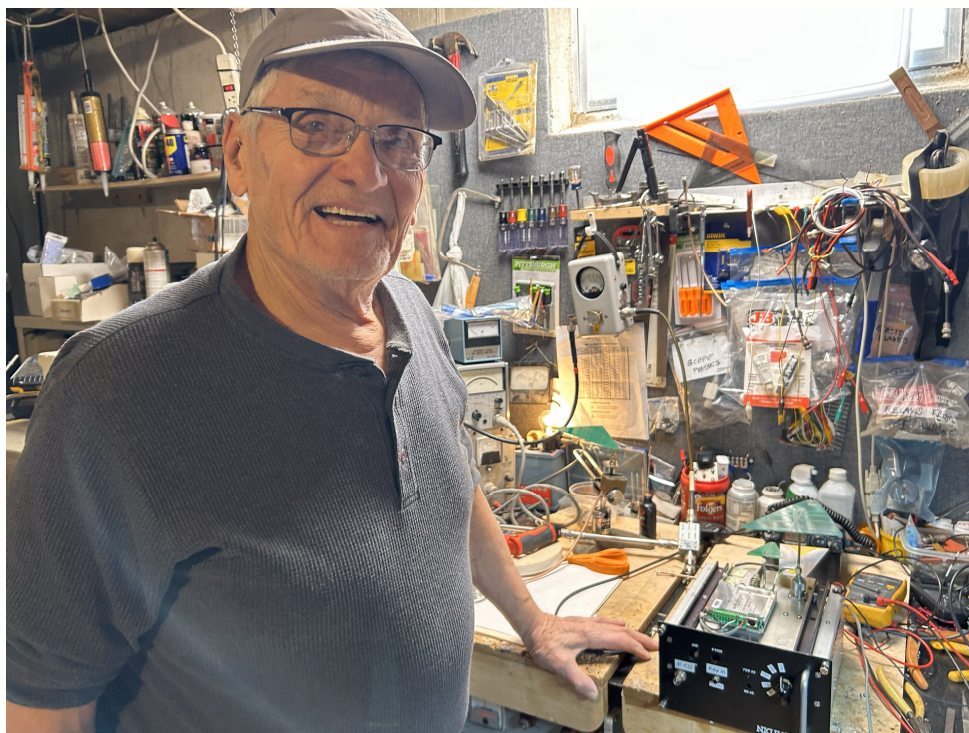
When we originally discussed the project, we had assumed an SMA relay would be needed to switch the RX and TX ports on the transverter to the little printed circuit Vivaldi antenna I bought. Ray had a great last-minute suggestion that would simplify the project: he would let me borrow a second printed circuit board antenna so we'd use an antenna on each of the two transverter ports. No relay required, no worries about switch timing, no need to find an SMA relay good at 10G.

While making non-SMA cables and physical mounting were tasks my low skills would be able to handle, Ray's experience and well-appointed workbench made the work at least 10 times faster than I could have done. The transverter has many-pin connectors for all non-RF connections and configuration jumpers, but I also bought a daughter board from Khune with screw-down connections for power and PTT, and DIP switches for configuration. This made the job a bit quicker. Ray verified the DIP switch positions I thought were correct for IF and output frequencies.

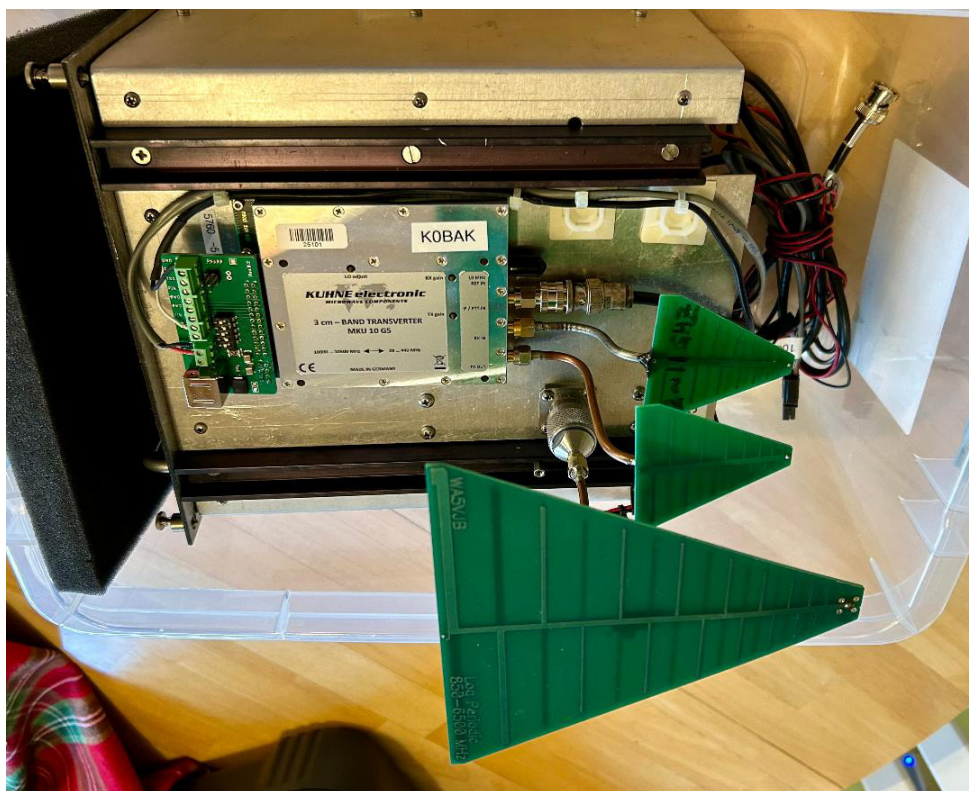
No smoke escaped when applying power. Ray's experience let us bring up the transverter step by step, including checking the power output from my radio. I was excited and happy that we were able to make a 10G SSB contact on the first try from Ray's tower antenna to the transverter in the basement. The signals on both ends were dead-on frequency without adjustment. The smoothness and lack of drama in the project is a testament to Ray's experience and attention to detail.

If I visit your station in January, I'll bring a full 10 bands on SSB with me, thanks to Ray and Gary.

Pictures of the updated Driveway Rover with 10 GHz



Ray, N3RG, at his workbench with the Driveway Rover transverter



The Driveway Rover transverter showing the separate PCB LPDA's for TX and RX

A Couple of Quick Lessons learned about building a 10 GHz station

I recently got on 10 GHz for the first time and I'm still figuring things out. Had 5 successful Q's this September but missed quite a few too. 10 GHz is different than the lower microwave bands...

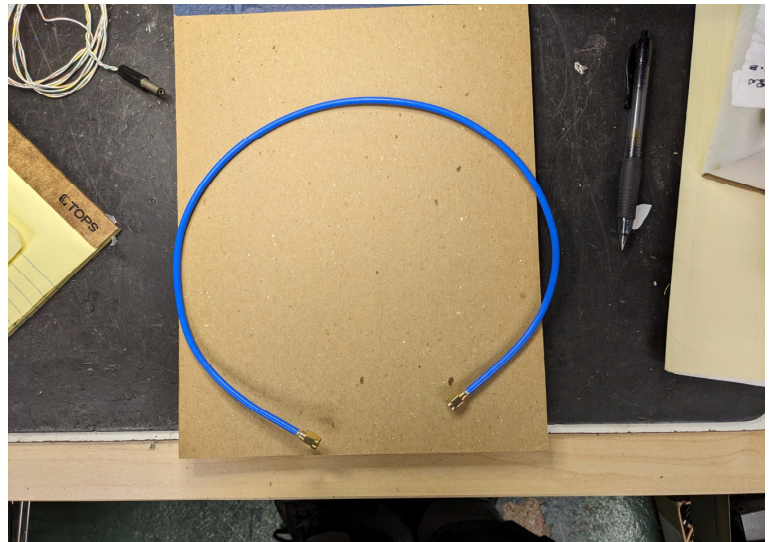
Here are a couple of things I found out about 10 GHz.

1. Here is a right angle sma connector I was using on my antenna relay (see picture). I tested it and if you put in 0 dBm you get out -4 dBm e.g. 4 dB loss over 3/4". Conclusion: on 10 GHz don't use \$5 adapters from China. I found similar adapters with good specs from places like Pasternack, Fairview etc. but they go for \$50 - \$330 each. Its best to find a way of not using them at all.

2. Here is 22 inches of a home made RG-402 jumper used to connect the antenna feed to the antenna relay (see picture). I tested it and it has 2 dB loss. Specs on the cable are .45 db per foot at 10 GHz, so including the hand soldered connector loss it's possibly in spec. But 2 dB loss in 2 feet? Not something I'm used to. If you know of something better, let me know.

I'm sure there's lots more to learn but what I learned so far is that at 10 GHz EVERYTHING matters. You can't just connect things with whatever is laying around and expect success. Don't treat 10 GHz like the "DC bands" (902, 1.2G etc).

73,
Lenny W2BVH



January

2026

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
			1 New Years Day	2 KC3BVL Lower Four Nets	3/4
5 Pack Rat Nets	6 222 Activity Night	7 KC3BVL 1296 Net	8 BOD Meeting	9 KC3BVL Lower Four Nets	10/11
12 Pack Rat Nets	13 222 Activity Night	14 KC3BVL 1296 Net	15 Pack Rats General Club Meeting Zoom Only	16 KC3BVL Lower Four Nets	17/18 ARRL January VHF Contest
19 Pack Rat Nets MLK Day	20 222 Activity Night	21 KC3BVL 1296 Net	22	23 KC3BVL Lower Four Nets	24/25
26 Pack Rat Nets	27 222 Activity Night	28 KC3BVL 1296 Net	29	30 KC3BVL Lower Four Nets	30/Feb 1 EME Conditions Moderate / Excellent
Feb 2 Pack Rat Nets	Feb 3 222 Activity Night	Feb 4 KC3BVL 1296 Net	Feb 5	Feb 6 KC3BVL Lower Four Nets	Feb 7/8 Jan Contest Wrap Up Session at W2SJ QTH

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

Upcoming Events

Eastern VHF/UHF/Microwave

Conference date

April 24-26, 2026

Hilton Garden Inn

555 Corporate Drive

Windsor, CT 06095

<https://www.newsvhf.com/>

CALL FOR PAPERS and Presenters

HamCation 2026

Central Florida Fairgrounds and
Expo Park

February 13th - 15th, 2026

<https://www.hamcation.com/>

Announcing the 2026 Annual Southeastern VHF Society Conference & Call for Papers

The 2026 SVHFS conference will be held on April 16th -19th in Macon, Georgia. All interested in VHF and above amateur operation are invited to attend.

The conference will begin with our Thursday night social at a local establishment. The technical conference begins Friday morning and will include a luncheon with a guest speaker and continue technical presentations in the afternoon. The conference events will continue with an evening flea market and hospitality suite. Saturday morning the technical presentations continue and conclude early afternoon when the antenna range and rover display opens. Our conference ends with an in-house banquet including a guest speaker, our awards, and door prize give away.

Please see our website [www.svhfs.org] for further details, which will include hotel and conference registration details.

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 2, 2026. Goto: <https://svhfs.org/wp/conference/call-for-papers/> for complete details.

All submissions for publication in the proceedings should be emailed to SVHFS@downeastmicrowave.com in Microsoft Word (.doc) format. No Power Point presentations will be accepted for use in the Proceedings.

JOIN US AT THE PACK RAT BOWL SUNDAY JANUARY 18TH 19:00 TO 22:00 UTC

Jan 2026 ARRL VHF Contest Pack Rat Bowl

Sunday Jan 18th 19:00 UTC to 22:00 UTC

Sponsored by the Mt. Airy VHF Club

**GET IN THE GAME
MAKE SOME NOISE
WORK THE BANDs**

2 MTRS CALL CQ USB 144.180 - 144.220

Use the database <https://w3sz.com/map.php>
January 17-19, 2026 Contest Period: Begins 1900 UTC Saturday, ends 0359 UTC Monday



PACK RATS

www.packratvhf.com



Take advantage of the Sunday afternoon contest doldrums, join the Pack Rats on 2M SSB and move stations up the bands. Increase your higher band Q's and grid totals. More efficient than sending endless unanswered CQ's on FT8. Tell everyone you know – the place to be on Sunday afternoon from 2 PM to 5 PM EST is 2M SSB/CW and QSY up.

FCC Amendments to Part 2 and Part 97 of the Commission's Rules

Following the WRC-15 recommendations, the FCC has allocated 5351.5 - 5366.6 kHz segment for amateur use.

They also retained the 4 discrete channels outside of that segment. Power has been dropped from 100W ERP to 15W EIRP/9.15W ERP. The maximum bandwidth permitted is 2.8 kHz.

<https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-25-60A1.pdf>

Amendment of the Commission's Rules Regarding Implementation of the Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference (Geneva, 2015) (WRC-15), Other Allocation Issues, and Related Rule Updates

Amendment of Parts 2 and 97 of the Commission's Rules Regarding Implementation of the Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference (Geneva, 2015) To Allocate the Band 5351.5-5366.5 kHz to the Amateur Radio Service

Heading	Paragraph #
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Editor's Notes

Tom KA3FQS

Happy New Year to everyone. I hope that your holiday season was a happy one.

Thanks to everyone who submitted material for this edition of Cheese Bits. I enjoyed reading the articles as did Melanie while proof reading and correcting this month's Cheese Bits.

Please continue to write up your adventures or things that you learned and submit them to cheese-bits@packratvhf.com.

Finally, good luck in the contest, I hope to work all of you.

Notice

Dues are due for 2026 club membership.

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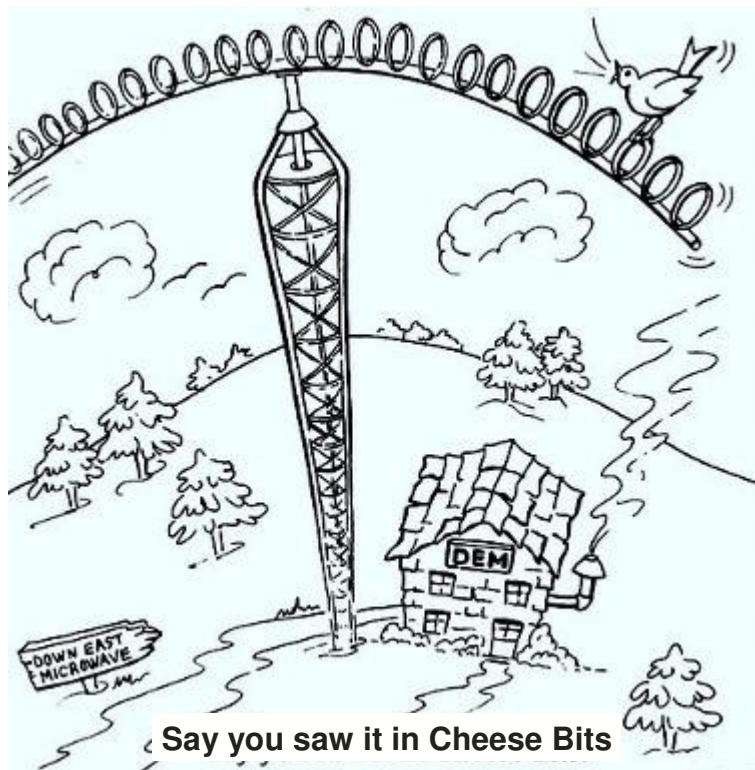
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