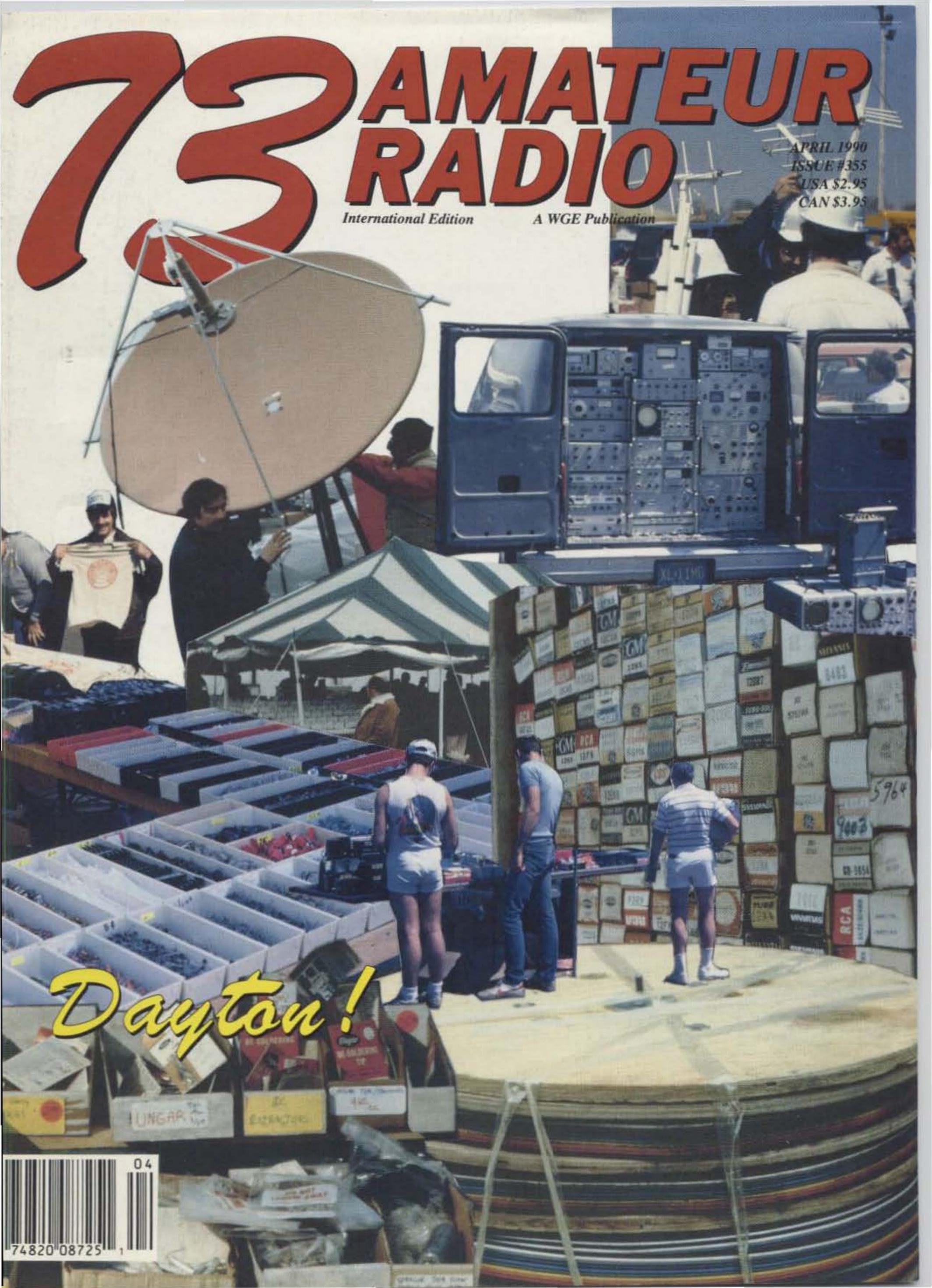


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*Dayton!*



# LETTERS

## From the Hamshack

### Electric Blanket Mod Supply

After reading your column about the 60 hertz radiation, I was concerned. I also enjoy sleeping under an electric blanket. I didn't unplug my blanket, though. Instead, I built a DC power supply to power it.

I run the AC line through the existing thermostat, then through 17 ohms of 50 watt power resistors, then to a 600 PIV, 4 amp rectifier. The output of the rectifier is connected to a 200 volt, 7500 microfarad electrolytic capacitor and also to the blanket. The blanket now sees 115 volts of DC (at 135 watts) with 0.7 volts of ripple. I had to slightly modify the existing thermostat (shorten its heating wire) so it would behave exactly as before. This is due to the "wasted" power dissipated by the current/voltage limiting 17 ohm resistor.

It works flawlessly and I now sleep in "polarized" comfort! I am figurin' that this may even cause some of my dislocated brain cells to straighten out. A friend of mine suggested that perhaps if I were to "float" on a lake, I might even point north.

All joking aside... I did indeed build, and am using, the forementioned DC power supply for my electric blanket and at a cost of less than \$15, using all new parts. I got the rectifier for a buck and a half and the 75 microfarad cap for \$4.50.

I sure do hope you aren't gonna print anything negative about DC electromagnetic fields (I see a pun)! I also want to say that your editorials are at least half the reason I subscribe to 73 Magazine. I enjoy them.

Gregory R. McIntire KE0UV  
Belle Fourche S. Dakota

Gregory... Hey, you came up with a simple fix for your blanket. Great idea. I was wondering how the thermostats would adapt to DC operation.

I haven't seen much yet on the effects of DC fields on cell growth and communications... except one study which showed a remarkable cell effect when the cells were moved just a few degrees off the earth's magnetic field.

Just in case, I'm making do with blankets and a nice comforter... Wayne.

### New Direction for Scouts

Regarding your comments [Mr. Green's] to the "Something for Beginners" letter in the Feb. '90 issue, page 56, I heard something on TV that might be worth checking into.

A national Boy Scout leader said the Scouts were changing policy with regard to their direction. It was becoming more socially oriented to help correct problems like functional illiteracy, the drug abuse situation, etc. I don't know if the Scouts would be receptive to including some ham radio indoctrination within their organization, but it seems possible. Likely there have been cooperative efforts between Scouts and hams before during emergency conditions.

This group has a national leadership that can implement programs nationwide. They may like to include some of the benefits of amateur radio within their new outlook even if they haven't done so before. And this might help compensate for the loss of ham support through school systems (which are not guided at a national level, but are guided regionally). The aim, of course, is to encourage the growth of the hobby by gaining younger blood.

Roy Ekberg W0LIQ  
Brownsville TX

### Newcomer to Amateur Radio

As a newcomer to amateur radio I find 73 very much suited to my interests and reading style. I am especially pleased with Wayne's monthly comments (tirades?). I got into ham radio this summer after returning from a three-year Peace Corps stint in Botswana. A long-term friend (N4PIV) prodded me into it. I was into 11m during the 70s but could never seem to learn the code. So this summer I cracked the whip and worked from Novice to Extra Class in just 2½ months. By the way, I am 26 years-old, just completing a Masters degree in plastics Engineering at U. Lowell, Massachusetts.

I was dismayed with what I heard on the HF bands. I'd had far more fun and meaningful

communications on 11 meters. Another friend, N1GYH, worked with me to get his Tech Class. When he listened to HF one night, with a gleam in his eyes that he was finally on amateur radio, his face nearly cracked as he heard the nonsense contacts on 20m.

I want to comment on Wayne's editorial in the Jan. '90 issue, specifically with regards to Africa being hopeless. To imply that there are no countries in Africa that have decent education is a lark. It may not be as readily available as education here, but then have you checked Boston's SAT scores lately?

I taught junior/high school for three years at a school named Shashe. We had the best teachers from around the world there. When I compare the education I got with the education I was giving, there is no comparison. The European teachers were far more qualified.

A group of 11/12 grade students begged me to start a computer club for them. I got the funds to buy a computer, which usually drew 20+ children a day. These kids had the technical knowledge to handle communications. A few comprehended the physics of electronics better than I did. The headmaster made money available to buy an amateur radio to start a club. I'm kicking myself now for not making time to get another AA2 station on the air. I didn't know any better.

My comment is: When somebody goes on a DXpedition to one of these countries, seek out the high schools. There are Europeans and North Americans with technical backgrounds (Peace Corps volunteers, WVRST volunteers, etc.) at these high schools. Identify a person who can introduce amateur communications to the teachers, then go home and have the club donate some old equipment (or new) to get the school's club on the air. That way, at least with children on the air, the conversations will be far less boring and meaningless. At the most maybe a future presidency will be encouraged to continue his/her education in electronics and do something to encourage development and prosperity in the RICHEST continent. Wayne, keep kicking, you've got a good forum.

Bill Discipio N1GWR/AE  
Hampstead NH 03841

I read with interest your comments concerning YLs in ham radio and the electronics field. I assure you that you are correct in your opinion of the treatment of females and minorities in the field of electronics.

I have been licensed since 1970 and hold an Advanced Class license. In addition I hold an FCC General Class Radiotelephone (former first class) license and am National Business and Educational Radio (NABER) certified. I have been employed in electronics for over 25 years and enjoyed every moment of it. I presently work for the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) as a Radio Telecommunications Specialist, and own my own company (Colorado Electronics Services). How am I treated? Like a know-nothing woman. My only satisfaction is in knowing that I am usually the one sent to do the job because I know my stuff.

Going back several months to your article on EMP, all I can say is good luck. I have been preaching the same thing for years and am tired of talking to stone walls. Even the Emergency Management people—at least here in Pennsylvania—have a deaf ear concerning high speed digital communications, not to mention EMP protection. It seems that in a time of emergency the politicians would rather talk to each other than pass important traffic; therefore, there is a great emphasis on voice circuits with telephone being the most wanted. Try as you might you can't get it through their heads that the phones are the first to go in an emergency. The thoughts of others in-the-know, concerning the possibility of EMP caused by terrorist activities, are met with a head-in-the-sand position. The consensus is that if the politicians don't think of it themselves, the idea is not worth pursuing.

Your comments in the January 1990 issue about the educational system are right on the target. You have started me thinking about getting into the video teaching aspect of education. I taught electronics in a vo-tech school until the lack of enrollments caused a layoff.

You mentioned the experiments by Estep in contacting the spirit world on VHF. I remember reading about and trying similar experiments years ago. I got some funny results but never followed through. Perhaps there is more there; maybe I will retry the experiments with more modern technology.

While on the subject of communications with other worlds, I will inform you that I am the Net Manager for the MUFON (Mutual UFO Network) amateur radio nets. We have several nets on the different amateur bands. Time and frequencies are: Saturday 8 AM Eastern 7237 kHz, Saturday 9 PM Eastern 3960 kHz, Sunday 3 PM Eastern 28470 kHz, and Thursday 8 PM Eastern 28460 kHz. All of these nets have a lot of check-in stations as well as SWLs. They are open nets and anyone is welcome to join in the conversations.

Keep on preaching the gospel, knowing that a few kindred souls—even females—are attuned to what you are saying.

Leslie Varnicle WA3QLW  
Camp Hill PA

Thanks for your letter... and bravo on your MUFON work. Of course I've a theory... wrote it up several years ago in an editorial that UFOs may be more involved with time travel than just aliens... and that as such they can't permit too close contact without screwing up the future. They do seem to clean up after themselves very well.

Having read most of the books on the subject for some 40 years... and been a member of most UFO groups at one time or another... the data I've gathered seems consistent with time travel. That's one of the few consistencies.

I had a nice letter and a tape from Sarah Estep. Now I've got to make some time to see what I can do with a DAT recorder. That should increase the sensitivity enormously.

Right now I have to get outta here... off to Poland and Czechoslovakia today for ten days. I'll be talking with the ham groups there... and seeing what I can find in music to import and beef up their hard currency revenues... Wayne

### Amateur Radio's Image

I just read a recent article of yours in the December issue of 73. I have had the desire to get my amateur ticket for years and haven't been able to conquer Morse code. I think a no-code ticket would be great. I know many others who have the same problem and have shied away from getting their ticket due to code. I was shocked to see only 100 Canadians took advantage of the great opportunity the no-code ticket would offer. I would be the first in line.

I also think it is hard for an experienced ham to understand what someone on the outside thinks of amateur radio. It is not appealing to hear constant radio reports (like "I run a Kenwood and a dipole," etc.). That is the major reason many young people think ham radio is boring. I think your idea of making contacts more interesting is perfect. Your idea of nets for UFOs, etc., is great. The airwaves need to be interesting to attract younger people. Amateur radio is competing with more things now than ever before. Like the home computer and modems.

Amateur radio is also suffering from an image problem. Most outsiders seem to think you need to be a college professor to be involved in it. They could be educated by public service ads, or some high profile hams could mention it on national TV shows.

Deith Belongia  
Racine WI 53504

### 14 MHz Controversy

Your November "Never Say Die" asked for comments regarding the 14.275/14.313 controversy. This is my comment.

All human conflicts have two sides. I know nothing of how this mess got started. I only know that it is now a disgrace. I have heard immaturity on both sides, idiots and KV4FZ. He obviously has a problem. I feel bad that so many otherwise intelligent hams allow themselves to lose their tempers and therefore their reason. The immature ones delight in causing people to lose their temper. If we could only learn that weirdos must have an "ear." If the good guys would ignore them, they would at least tire out. Every time they get an acknowledgment, they gain strength.

As I see it, we have three separate problems which are interrelated: intentional jammers, objections to nets "owning" frequencies, and third-party traffic other than health and welfare or emergency.

I believe an attempt should be made by the amateur community to stop the present trouble. Perhaps you, the ARRL, or maybe the FCC could take a poll of the amateur community and find out how the majority feel. Then the FCC or Congress could be pressured to enforce the wishes of the majority.

I am in favor of assigning a specific frequency to a net with definite hours. This would give a net authority to use a frequency. The publishing of this information would reduce most of the unintentional QRM.

I am also in favor of allowing third party traffic, and see nothing wrong with the operation on 14.300 as it is practiced at this time. Few amateurs would purchase equipment and learn to use it if it could be used only rarely.

I am not yet a subscriber to 73. I have only recently noticed your publication, and purchased Nov. and Dec. off the newsstand. It looks good so far, congratulations. I think I could learn to like you.

W.S. Latham AB4PG  
DeLand FL

### "Safe" Communication?

I enjoyed the challenges (definitely plural!) of reading your January column, but I wonder whether you haven't missed a possible reason for the general level of apathy in the ham ranks. It seems to me that many hams may be drawn to the hobby because, paradoxically, they are not good communicators. Rather, they may be drawn by the patina of the "semi-technical" skills and procedures which allow them to pretend to communicate. Witness contesting! Witness packet bulletin boards! Witness CW!

A similar phenomenon seems to be a normal phase of American adolescent development, only the patina of choice is the telephone. Many teenagers seem to use the telephone as a learning tool on which they can practice their communications skills without the dangers of face-to-face communications. After they master the basic skills and jargon, they can move on to develop more intimate personal relationships face-to-face.

I wonder whether many hams might actually be afraid (too strong a word?—maybe just uncomfortable) of close personal contacts, so they pretend. Ham radio offers a multitude of substitutes for real personal communications, and it offers an almost perfect stage. These substitutes can be challenging and even lots of fun, but when the medium substitutes for the content, there is no communication!

It's no wonder that ham club meetings are, for the most part, uninspiring. What else could you reasonably expect from an arbitrary collection of mostly white men, most of whom are not really comfortable with personal contacts, who have adopted Roberts' Rules (another stifling way to pretend) to govern themselves? There also seems to me a sacred dictum (ARRL, *ex cathedra*?) that only certain topics are safe for ham club meetings.

Most of the hams I meet, on-the-air or face-to-face, sound like they could be interesting people underneath their ham-veneers, but I am frequently rebuffed when I try to move a QSO into something which might be interesting (but which might draw them into expressing a personal opinion)—"Well, I'm destined [sic—yecch!]. I'll say 73s now and wait for your final." I don't know why I bother trying sometimes. I certainly have alternate uses for the modest time and money I spend on ham radio—like the local bookstore. I, like you, am an avid reader.

I wonder why you keep trying—I don't think it's for the money. You seem to enjoy the status of "prophet" (rabble-rouser), and you seem to have a genuine concern for the rest of us hams. I usually enjoy reading your columns and exploring my own reactions (both positive and negative). Most importantly, I learn something every time—I could have gone my whole TV-less life without ever hearing about the Lambada.

I am still thinking about your "expose" of the American public education system. I am a product of it in the '60s when we were trying to save the world from communism through advanced math, etc. Since our own kids have grown and gone, I've been out of touch with the schools. I have been vaguely aware that something's wrong, but I don't know enough about what's happening (not happening?). I also don't have a clear picture of what I expect, or what we need, so it will take me a while to chart out how to get there, and more importantly, how I might help. Thank you for challenging me to start.

Tom Russel NT4H  
Portsmouth VA