

WE'RE ON THE WEB!  
HTTP://WWW.MRRC.NET



## From the Big Fish

By Ken Meier, W8MJ    w8mj@sbcglobal.net



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## Upcoming Events

**2-4 December**  
ARRL 160M Contest

**10-11 December**  
ARRL 10M Contest

**17-18 December**  
RAC Winter Contest  
Stew Perry TopBand Challenge

**6-8 January**  
K8MR Christmas Party/  
MRRC Meeting  
K8AZ/NCC Party  
ARRL RTTY Roundup

**14-15 January**  
North American QSO Party - CW

**21-23 January**  
North American QSO Party - Phone  
ARRL VHF SS

**28-29 January**  
CQ 160M Contest - CW

Happy New Year to everyone, and I hope that you had a wonderful Christmas holiday with your family, and that you all got what you really wanted for Christmas; more radio equipment - Yeah!

With the start of the New Year, it not only brings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> half the radio contest season, but also our annual K8MR New Year's party this coming weekend January 7, 2006. Please make plans to join the Club gathering at Jim's place this coming Saturday. There will be a group traveling from Michigan that always makes a few stops of interest on the way to Jim's place, so if you need a ride, look elsewhere in this *FLASH* for the details.

We're now through the first half of the contest season, and I hope that everyone has been able to get their stations in the operating order that they hoped for, and been successful with your contest

endeavors to this point in time. With Sweepstakes now behind us we are starting to see some preliminary numbers showing that we did not fare as well as last year, although we gave it a gallant effort.

Our competition from the Minnesota Wireless Association has proven to be a very valiant competitor, and the results will show they did an extremely good job of getting many members on the air. I want to thank all of those members of MRRC who did get on for the club effort in Sweepstakes, and hope that you enjoyed it as much as I did. It certainly takes the numbers to make it all happen, and hopefully next year we can do a better job in trying to win the traveling trophy.

More club competition is on its way with NAQP for CW and SSB on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of this month. The final weekend of the month brings us the CQ 160 meter CW Contest. Following

those in February are the North American Sprints for CW and SSB along with the ARRL International DX CW Contest, and CQ 160 Meter SSB Contest on the last weekend of February. In March there are two contests that the club always looks for support on, and that is The ARRL International DX SSB Contest, and The CQ WW WPX SSB Contest. So there are plenty of opportunities to get on and support the club as the second half of the contest season gets under way.

I am looking forward to working many of you in the weeks to come. Get on the air make some Qs and have fun. That's what it is all about.

Your Fish - W8MJ

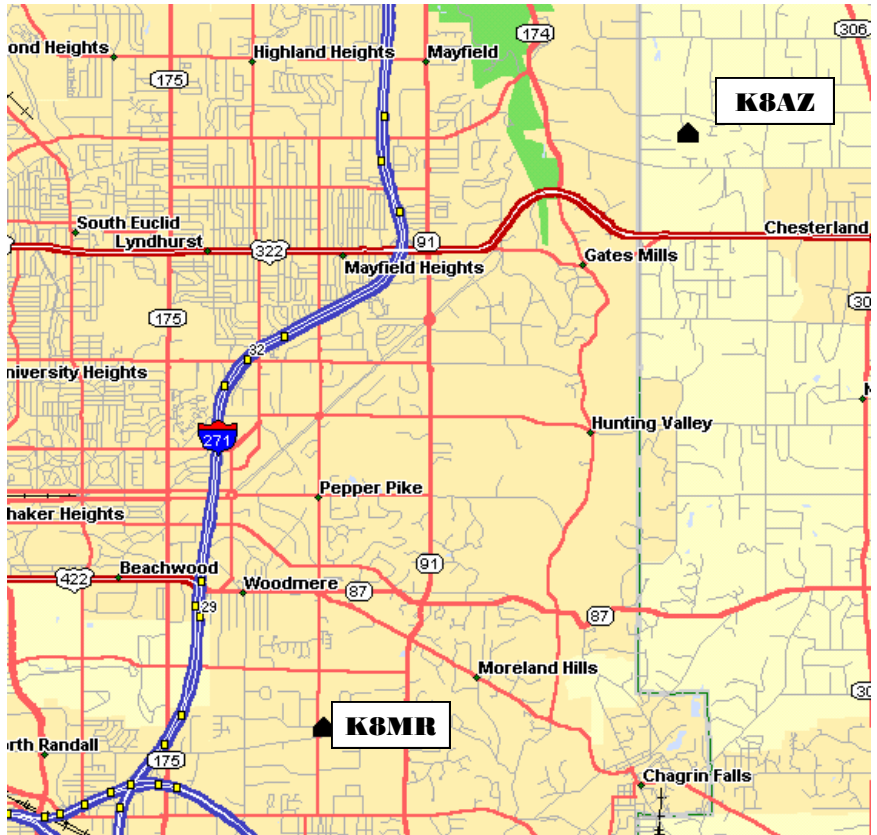
  
**January 7, 2006**  
**K8MR & K8AZ Christmas Parties**  
**Details Inside!**  


**K8MR Christmas Party/  
MRRC Meeting**  
**K8AZ Open House/  
NCC Christmas Party**

Continuing an MRRC holiday tradition, the 30th annual K8MR Christmas Party and MRRC meeting will be held on January 7, 2005 in the eastern suburbs of Cleveland, OH. That same weekend, MRRCers are invited to the K8AZ Open House/NCC Christmas Party.

The K8AZ Open House begins around 3:00 PM with refreshments, snacks and pizza. Around 7:00 PM, the migration begins for the twenty minute drive to K8MR. The festivities at Jim's culminates in a MRRC meeting around 10:00 PM.

Printed below is a map showing both the K8MR and K8AZ QTH's, coming from I-271 which runs north-south along the eastern edge of the suburban Cleveland. Here are the specific addresses and info:



**Jim Stahl, K8MR**  
**30499 Jackson Rd**  
**Chagrin Falls, OH 44022**  
**216-831-6954**

**Tom Lee, K8AZ**  
**7275 Surrey Lane**  
**Chesterland OH 44026**  
**440-729-8104**

There are other "unofficial" activities that are planned for that same day. Some MRRCers intend to make the rounds of Samsel Marine Hardware in downtown Cleveland around 10:00 AM, then on to Electronics Surplus, with lunch at the Hooters in Mentor, OH. Finally, if schedule allows a visit to Amateur Electronic Supply in Wickcliffe wrapping up by 3:00 PM. Details and times are still being worked out, but if interested, contact K8CC at k8cc@comcast.net or K8MR at JimK8MR@aol.com to coordinate.

Mad River Radio Club Treasurers Report  
January 2, 2006

Balance Forward	\$1629.96
Dues collected this period	\$243.00
OQP Donation Received	\$5.00
MiQP Plaques - Holding	\$320.00
ARRL SS Plaques	(\$268.00)
Franklin Printing - 2005 MiQP Plaques	(\$616.75)
MiQP Committee	( \$28.25)
Frankling Printing - 2004 OQP Plaques	(\$616.28)
Balance	\$668.68

Monies collected for MiQP and OQP are held as sponsors send in checks to the respective contest committee. MRRC's only expenses for MiQP and OQP plaques are the individual plaques that we sponsor.

MiQP - The \$28.25 expense was excess money collected, and returned to the committee for use at their discretion

OQP - The OQP committee owes MRRC \$11.28

Respectfully Submitted

Dennis KT8X

## Installing PL-259s The Right Way

By Dave Pruett, K8CC, k8cc@comcast.net

I've been a ham for almost 37 years, and for all that time I've hated installing PL-259s on coax cable. Robust connector installation is crucial to building a reliable station, and as I've gotten older, I've come to realize that the key is doing it the RIGHT way. Like most hams, I've seen the diagrams and read the descriptions in the ARRL Handbook, but up until now never took the time to follow the advice.

I have since come to understand that there are five keys to reliable installation of PL-259s:

1. Use Good Connectors - With silver plated PL-259s available for \$1 apiece at Nema or at most hamfests, putting cheap or used connectors on a permanent cable for your station is false economy. I never buy regular plated connectors anymore, because it is much harder to get the plating to take solder. I have filed off the plating near the braid holes to expose bare brass beneath and found it to take solder well. Radio Shack PL-259s are useless in this regard, being made of steel which won't take solder if exposed.

2. Use Good Coax - In this context, "good" coax is defined as having a tightly woven braid with good coverage (i.e. very little of the center dielectric is visible). This is particularly important when attempting to tin the braid (see step #3 below). A tight braid traps the dielectric inside so that it doesn't seep through during tinning. Polyethylene dielectric is much better than foam in resisting heat and melting

3. Tin The Coax Shield - Tin the braid, just like they show in the Handbook, which offers two advantages: first, it prepares the braid to make connection to the connector shell, and second, it simplifies the task of trimming the braid and center dielectric

4. Use The Correct Tools To Make Cuts - A plumber's tubing cutter

will make cuts that are consistent and square to the center axis of the coax. Use the cutter to make initial "grooves" in the outer jacket and tinned braid, then finish the cut with a sharp razor knife. "Sharp" is the key here; the blade should be almost new.

5. Use The Right Soldering Iron - For many years, I relied on the typical 100/140W Weller soldering gun to install PL-259s. While this worked well for tinning the braid, and for soldering the center conductor, soldering the shield (even when properly tinned) through the access holes seldom resulted in a totally trustworthy connection.

A big improvement in my PL-259 installations came when I acquired a 250W "Black Beauty" soldering iron (see photo below). This bruiser weighs several pounds, is over 14" long with a tip that's 5/8" in diameter. With that much mass heated with 250 watts, soldering the braid through the PL-259's access holes is no problem. In fact, I've heard of people heat-

ing the iron in their workshop, unplugging it and carrying it outside and still able to make the connection!

Soldering irons this massive are not something you'll typically find at your local hardware store or Radio Shack. Fortunately, MRRC's own **Pete Michaelis, N8TR** buys them quite often at garage sales or fleamarkets, cleans them up and re-sells them. Pete was the source for the iron I have, and if I recall the price was in the \$25-35 range. Check with Pete to see what he has "in stock".

With the right tools, your coax connections will be more reliable, which prevents failures at inconvenient moments. In recent years I'd taken to the "K9TM cable postulate"; that is, "Life is too short to make your own cables". The consequence was that I'd taken to buying pre-made cables from companies like Cable XPerTs. But now that I have the right tools and the right procedure, installing PL-259s on coax cables is no longer dreaded, but is almost fun. And it's a highly useful skill when you need to make specialized cables for your next big array □



**Black Beauty Soldering Iron  
(with a PL-259 to show scale)**

## Mad River Radio Club

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Ypsilanti, MI 48198



### Where's the *FLASH*?

By Dave Pruett, K8CC

Back in the 80s, the Wendy's hamburger chain ran a commercial where a little old lady shouted out "Where's the beef?", bemoaning the small size of the competitor's burgers. For most of 2005, MRRC members could have been shouting "Where's the *FLASH*?" as our official club newsletter has not been seen since before Dayton.

The reason for this absence is not due to laziness on the part of the editor, but the tale is a cautionary one about the risks involved with upgrading a modern Windows computer. It started back in the first quarter of 2005,

when my main computer became infected with a nasty virus. Many of the available virus and malware removal programs were tried, but the Windows operating system itself was infected and even re-installing Windows did not fix the problem. So the decision was made to wipe the hard drive clean, and start over while upgrading to Windows XP.

Upgrading to Windows also meant upgrading from Office 97 to Office 2003, including the Publisher program used to produce the *FLASH*. After the upgrade, all of newsletter graphics were rendered invisible for unknown reasons, including the club logo, front page banner, etc. Producing a *FLASH* in

this state was simply unacceptable.

Over the past year I've taken several steps to try and fix the problem, including searching the Microsoft on-line Knowledge Base, but to no avail. On the other hand, the same version of Office/Publisher would render the *FLASH* fine on my brother's computer under WinXP, so I knew that *somehow* it could be done.

Just this week I tried removing my accelerated video card and going back to the ten year old video card from the pre-WinXP days and voila! It now works!

My apologies to the club for all the missing *FLASH*s, and now that it's back I hope people will send me stuff to print :- ) □

## Club Resources

The Mad River Radio Club is an ARRL affiliated club of amateur radio contesting enthusiasts. The club is centered near Findlay, OH and serves Ohio and the surrounding States. Membership is open to anyone.

The *Flash* is the official newsletter of MRRC and is published six times per year. Submission of material for publication is welcome. It may be sent to the editor at the postal or e-mail address shown at right. The *Flash* may be reprinted in whole or in part provided proper credit is given.

Club dues are \$12 per year, payable after the 1st of May each year with a grace period thru 31st of July each year. Members of the same family living at the same address may elect to receive a single Flash for one set of dues. Fulltime students are eligible for dues at half price. Dues are to be paid to the treasurer at the address shown above. Please make checks payable to *Mad River Radio Club*.

The club roster appears annually in the October/November issue of the *Flash*.

The Mad River Net is held on Monday nights at 8:30 PM Eastern time on 3825 KHz.

The MRRC web site is <http://www.mrrc.net>.

Keep up with MRRC happenings by subscribing to the MRRC Internet Reflector. To join send an email to [mrrc-re-quest@contesting.com](mailto:mrrc-re-quest@contesting.com). The body of the message should include the word "subscribe".

**K8MAD** is the club callsign of the Mad River Radio Club.

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