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RV Travelers News

Tuesdays 7PM PNW/Digital WA-2

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My first weather radio was the only radio we had on our first sailboat. It came with it and it didn't work. I took it home and disassembled it, resoldered a couple of wires and put it back together.

It was a Radio Shack Realistic Cube.



Two channels and one would always work. We sailed the Puget Sound, the San Juan Islands and into the Canadian Gulf Islands. Most of the time we could grab the weather info we needed.

We listened mostly to get a next day weather forecast in the evenings and then in the morning it if looked like last night's forecast was going to ring true. A marine forecast usually has lots of information you don't get on land. You will get info for weather out 50 miles from the shore, you get wind and wave height, and you get tidal info that may allow you decide if you will wake up with water still under you keel. It's a lot different from the standard weather you get inland.



That cube didn't have an alert system, if there was an alert and you were listening, you'd hear it. Otherwise it was the standard weather broadcast loop that replays/loops as soon as the forecast and the current observations were over. Today's modern marine radios have alerts and all sorts of improvements that allows you to make weather decisions as you journey.

RV's and travelers today have lots of options available to them to make weather decisions. You can tune your vehicle radio into a local station and listen to their weather person make their weather forecast. That works when you are stationary, however, when you're on the road things change and during tornado and hurricane season you might need the info to be a lot more localized for your current location and where you are headed.

Let's step back a few years and I'll share the RV journey we have been on and how it's evolved from then till now. I'm put a few caveats on it as things have changed somewhat from when we first became trailerites. When we started out, we still had a boat, and it was equipped with the latest and greatest of marine radio using the marine bands and NOAA weather radio. I did have in addition a couple of marine handheld radios that we used for cockpit communications whenever we would leave a mooring and needed to contact the harbormaster of our departure. It had all the NOAA weather channels and as the day progress, I'd tune up and listen to any new predictions and the current observations from local reporting stations. Fine business and always helpful to the sailor. But not what you need while you're rolling down the interstate or on a blue highway.

Today we lots of information available to us from multiple sources. We have smartphones with weather apps but they can only do so much. When you are traveling cellular coverage can be marginal to nothing and then back to exceptional all within a few miles. This makes depending on cellular coverage semi-unreliable if you need to be alerted to a weather hazard that may lay ahead. In 2014, I retired and we purchased a 20 ft travel trailer and headed out to explore America. I was not a ham at that time

and so I purchased a small Midland Weather radio that turned out to be a life saver a couple of times. I'd like to say run out and buy one, but this one has been discontinued and Midland has decided not to offer it's features are no longer offered by anyone. For the RVer/Traveler I think this radio is exceptional and does things that I deem pretty wonderful, but I'll just mention what it did and then let's decide what you can do to have an alert system that will keep watch for you.

I'll start with a quick antidote about an experience we had in North Carolina and look at options I have today. We were staying in our 20 ft trailer on the outskirts of Jacksonville, North Carolina. We were there for about 10 days visiting our daughter and her family. That evening as we headed back to our trailer, we observed a huge thunderstorm to the west of our location and since we had our "charged weather radio sitting in a cup holder beside us, we turned it on. (make note of the words in quotes, we will circle back to those) We listened to the forecast, and the observations and the fact our area was within a severe weather "watch". When we arrived back at the trailer we knew it was one of our evening tasks to drain our holding tank; so we entered the trailer and turned on the AC to

get it cooled down inside and proceeded with our task. The nice thing about that little weather radio was the fact it has a belt clip and it was on my side. After draining the tanks, we sat outside for a bit. We hadn't given much thought to the weather any more as the RV park was surrounded by trees and our sitting area put our backs to the approaching storm. We were beginning to hear a lot of thunder and it was growing in intensity and frequency. And suddenly my little radio that was clipped to my belt started to wail with a loud alert siren. And then the alert . . . there has been a tornado spotted on the ground near the northern end of Jones Sausage Road and was moving in a south-westerly path towards Haws Run. Okay, first where in the hell is Jones Sausage Road and where is Haws Run? We had no idea, but our local weather station was broadcasting an alert and it was time to act. We survived and use that story to help develop how you should be monitoring weather radio and how you should implement that into your travel plans.

That radio which is no longer available had a nice feature. When it was in the monitoring mode, it would listen to the station and if it lost reception as you drove down the other road. It would scan and find the next station and it would do this in the background again and again and again. It would keep you always in the presence of hearable NOAA weather signal. But let's move forward with ideas how to use the amateur equipment you have with you.

Most modern handhelds and mobile units have a weather alert feature. So, it's time to

look at your radio and figure out how that feature works. It's also important to adopt some strategies to prevent tragedies. My first word in quotes was – CHARGED. Hopefully, you can monitor during the day and charge at night. Or at least have a backup battery that you can charge at night and swap out for daytime monitoring. Obviously, this is for an handheld, if you have a mobile, you should be able to utilize it during the daytime and use the handheld for around the campfire or while you are in your RV. One side note, I have spoken to people that tell me they have a unit in their trailer that is a desktop model. This works great for when you are in the trailer/RV, but not so much if you're sitting around the campfire. I would have totally missed the tornado warning that we had to evacuate for if it had been inside and I had not heard it. My point – a handheld with you is important.

Since we're hams we can program out radios to include the weather channels and monitor them. You can have a set channel within your radio that you can turn to when you want to check. you can set your local channel as a priority channel and when it has an announcement or alert, you will be moved to that priority channel for the alert. Different radio's have different options, so get to know your radio and how to make it work for you.

your "local" station is, when there is an alert of you find a new broadcast, it will land there.

One thing we do is try to know what potential weather lays ahead for us that day, and one more thing, keep a watchful eye on the

But what if you're traveling and don't know when you move from one weather channel's range into another? I have a scan group setup for travel that has all the NOAA channels in the group. I can scan that group and no matter where you are, no matter what Or you can set your local channel as a priority channel an when it has an announcement or alert, you will be moved to that priority channel for the alert. Different radio's have different options, so get to know your radio and how to make it work for you.

One thing we do is try to know what potential weather lays ahead for us that day, and one more thing, keep a watchful eye on the sky. If the weather starts to look concerning – Check your radio to see what's changed.

Summing it up: Be sure you have access to a weather channel. Know your radio and where to access your weather channels. Know how to scan a weather channel bank. Watch your weather. And carry that radio when the weather looks threatening. Be prepared for what is coming your way.



- MHz 162.400**
- MHz 162.425**
- MHz 162.450**
- MHz 162.475**
- MHz 162.500**
- MHz 162.525**
- MHz 162.550**



***On The Road?
Stay Connected with the RV
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SUNRAY
CLASSIC 109

Loads of Fun in a Small Package

John Myers, KD7AAT



If I didn't know better I would think I had been born in a tent instead of a hospital and cut my teeth on tent stakes. Camping was a big part of life with my mom, dad and us three boys. We would travel all over the country setting up camp and yes with tents. For years our main one was an old canvas olive drab that weighed a ton with wooden poles to hold it up. And of course the Coleman white gas stove. That was camping. We finally got a tear drop trailer with a kitchen in the back. Mom and dad used that while us kids still slept in the tents but by now they were more modern nylon with aluminum poles.

Many years later I continued tent camp either when we took my boat to the lake or when I traveled with my motor cycle and a small cargo trailer behind. It finally came to the point that I was tired of driving tent stakes and sleeping on the ground (or even on an air mattress).

In 2018 I sold my Yamaha Royal Star Venture and bought a Can Am Spyder. I had no desire to put a hitch on the spyder so I sold the cargo trailer and decided it was

time to put the tent away and get a "real" trailer. The next year I started looking around, talked to a lot of people including Jeff KG7HZT who had recently purchased a Sherpa. It sounded great but from Nipomo, Ca. to Montana is a long way to buy one besides I was looking for something that had a kitchen of sorts. The large RV center up the hill from me had the Geo and a couple others but they weren't what I was looking for. I came across Sunset Trailers out of Indiana owned by the Amish. For the price they are pretty well rated and the closest dealer was 100 miles



from me. I drove down there and looked at the 109 Classic. Brand new 2019 SOLD!!! We did some paper work, I gave them a deposit and made plans to come back down a week later to pick it up.

The 109 is 12' from rear flat back hatch to hitch, 7' wide and weighs 1280 lbs. Small and light weight. The inside couch/bed area is 74" x 60" with a ceiling height of 4'6". The couch part wasn't what I needed

22" between the bed and the door. Plenty of room to get in and out, get on the bed like a regular one (it's not on the floor) and if need be I can sit on the bed with a TV tray to eat when the weather is bad. A small table in the corner to hold my CPAP and stuff underneath, a shelf and some clothes hangers on the wall and it's all good. It also has an AC unit in the wall and propane fired furnace. The only thing missing is the toilet but that was easily solved with a five gallon bucket and the toilet lid that fits on top. It sits in the corner totally out of the way. I put it outside in the portable Wolfwise potty/shower room when space permits.

But that's only the "bedroom" part. In the back is the kitchen. A sink with hot and cold water, two burner stove, micro wave and a nice size 3 way refrigerator/freezer (propane, 110 or 12v). A fair amount of cupboard space and it's great. A few add ons and it's a very workable kitchen. There is a 14 gallon fresh water tank (no grey water tank it goes in a bucket outside), propane fired 3 gallon water heater and it's all ready to go either on shore power, shore water, generator or the two deep cycle batteries up front that I keep charged with 100 watts of solar panels plus the 20 lb propane tank.



That's most of the details so click or cut/paste the link below for the video I made while camping at Lake Cachuma in July.

<http://kd7aat.net/trailer/109.mp4>

John Myers KD7AAT



HERE an Antenna



There an Antenna:

JIM WA7VFQ

Antennas, we all got'em, we all need'em, we're all looking to the perfect one. That said, having a solid portable system that you can toss up and use in a short period of time while you are RVing is a thing of beauty. Let consider options and ways we can RV and have a decent antenna system.

I have an G5RV Jr that I can string up between trees and an EFHW (end fed half wave) for 20 meters that I can raise up on a high branch. But there's always a but, the last great campsite I was at had no trees, so both of those were out. Besides, I hate the process of hanging a wire. That campsite meant put up vertical antenna and so I did. I have a SuperAntenna that tunes like a dream, but into a very narrow range. If I want to jump around SSB I will be checking and retuning occasionally. If you're hanging on a CW frequency or nailed down on FT8, all is well. It's limited to different bands depending on the configuration and can go to 60 and 80 if you change that configuration. It takes time going back and forth and that's okay.

This past year I came across a Chameleon MPAS 2.0 for a price that was too good to overlook, and I had some money in my HAM fund, so I picked it up. MPAS stands for Modular Portable Antenna System, and it will configure in multiple setups that include wire formats and vertical formats. The Swiss Army knife approach for sure. Here are its available configurations: Vertical, Horizontal, Sloper, inverted "V", Inverted "L", NVIS, Balcony, Vehicle (Stationary), and finally a Man-Pack config. Yes, some of them require trees or a pole, but the vertical is a quick up and running configuration and that was what had my interest.



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Now, I did say I liked the quick, but didn't mention the range of bands in that simple vertical configuration. It's good frequency wise from 6m to 160m, with 100W SSB and 50W CW or FT8 capabilities. It's SWR when tested was under 3 for all the range, which allows me to use my Icom IC-7300's internal tuner. When using my Icom IC-705, I have a Mat 705 Plus that will tune it with out missing a beat. The height is variable depending on how you configure it.

When both pole extensions together, it's 18 feet 2 inches and that covers the full band range 6m to 160m. The vertical configuration uses a ground spike and a single radial laid out upon the ground. I have experimented with using a camera tripod with a tripod plate mounted to the tripod and the antenna attached to the that tripod plate. You can see from the tripod picture that the legs are spread out to a wide base to counteract against tipping from the 18-foot antenna waving above it.

The antenna could also be mounted to a mag mount on a vehicle or onto a hitch mount. The base of the antenna uses a 3/8-24 thread so it can be used with a variety of mobile mounts. The system is NOT meant to be used while driving, only approved for stationary use on a vehicle. I have not tried it yet; however, I have used a mobile mount for my SuperAntenna and found the vehicle body to be ideal to use as a ground plane with no radials/counterpoise needing to be added. I plan on testing this out with my MPAS 2.0 later this summer. I have at least one site that I plan to do a POTA activation using the MPAS where using the ground spike would be impossible, that's why I worked on a tripod system. It would require setting it up in a parking lot, so the idea of using the mobile mount and using the vehicle for a ground plane, without radials/counterpoise is very appealing.



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The MPAS 2.0 includes the following: CHA HYBRID-MICRO, 73' Wire, 25' Wire, CHA MIL 2.0 (113" Long), CHA MIL EXT 2.0 (105.5" Long), SPIKE, 50' Coax with RFI Choke, and the backpack. The Hybrid Micro is the base of the system where the coax attaches. It can be raised into a tree for the wire configurations or be the base in a vertical. The 73' wire is for the wire configurations. The 25' wire is used as a ground radial/counterpoise for the vertical configuration, it is used in the wire configurations. The 113" pole is the larger diameter pole seen in the picture above and is the bottom pole that connects to the Hybrid Micro. The 105.5" pole attaches to the previous pole. Both poles are anodized aluminum and are shock corded together for ease of setup and takedown. All metal parts that are not aluminum are stainless steel. The backpack fits the larger diameter poles if placed in at an angle in the large back side pocket. The remainder of the bag has all the space you need to carry other items. It's well made and has lots of storage space. Overall, the build quality is excellent and impressive. I like the fact they have a built-in choke on the coax cable, nothing to add to the cable as it's built in.

My impressions after using it a few times are quite positive. I'm thinking when I travel using my travel trailer and have the space, I will use this antenna system. If I'm traveling to Japan, my SuperAntenna has a small suitcase footprint and will fit into my backpack I have setup for this purpose. However when I'm traveling the countryside with my own vehicle I'm planning on utilizing the MPAS 2.0.

Back to my impressions and thoughts on the MPAS 2.0. So far, I have only utilized the vertical configuration. It went up quickly, stayed up and was easy to tune. I used it with FT8 and made a few SSB contacts using my Icom IC-705 and my Mat 705 Plus tuner. I made several US contacts along with a few in Japan. Band conditions were excellent with 20 meters booming most of that afternoon. I also made 80 and 160 meter contacts using it. I had great signal reports but that was due to band conditions. I did find that my yard during this drought was a bit hard and I needed to use a vinyl headed hammer to encourage it into the ground. The spike is designed to allow that to happen, I would not use a metal headed hammer as it could damage the spike head where the Hybrid Micro attaches. I also tried the tripod configuration, and it will do in a pinch when "dirt" is not available.

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I would highly recommend you take a long look at Chameleon products. They make quality, well thought out products that are made to last. One thing that points to this well thought out thing – the vertical configuration can be put up as a permanent antenna. To facilitate that, the poles come with shrink tubing already on the top section joints that you can “shrink” as you need. That’s forward thinking, very nicely implemented.

Enough talking! I need to go camping or at least on a POTA activation to test this out away from home. More later. . . 73!





Road Warriors!



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CHECK YOUR HITCH!!



Camping one night in Billings, MT on our way to West Glacier, MT. Spending the weekend exploring Glacier National Park. It's so beautiful!

I wanted to share with the group something that you need to keep an eye on when on the road in Montana or that fact anywhere.

Camper next to us had all of their gear in a Uhaul and come to find out...their story was scary and interesting. While driving to West Glacier, MT, they lost their trailer while on the road. Somehow the trailer came off the hitch ball, almost took them out when it fish tailed and then went off the road. Their trailer is totaled... They couldn't figure out how this happened. The police told them about something that's been happening lately in MT. Some people who hate tourists will take the pin off the hitch while the unsuspecting tourists are away from their rig at a gas station or restaurant.

I had a hard time believing it....

Next day we drove around the park on our way to a trail, stopped at a gas station and noticed a guy and his son looking at their rig. I went to see what was happening, the hitch pin was gone and he noticed that the hitch wasn't sitting properly on the ball.

Two having the same thing happening in two days makes me think there is something going on.

Submitted by John KD7AAT
From The Trailer Forum



Questions, comments or ideas for the net or newsletter, drop em off to: Duff
WA7BFN@msn.com

A Portable Solar Solution Roger, KJ7V

I have a 38 foot fifth wheel that I pull with an F350 diesel pickup. When I camp I am plugged into shore power almost all of the time. Recently I went boondocking with a couple of fellow hams for about five days. Having never boondocked much, I found it kind of fun and I look forward to going with them again. Battery power seemed sufficient for what I needed. I have a 2300 watt "suitcase" generator that I used during the day to charge my batteries, but if I want to do more extended stays (I want to go to Quartzfest) I want to have a quieter, more convenient way to charge my batteries.



Enter solar power. My "fiver" does not have solar installed and I have never considered it because I am normally plugged into shore power. I wanted something that would be non-permanent for a couple of reasons. I am considering trading my unit for a smaller one. I also wanted the solar setup to be portable for events like ARRL Field Day. I purchased a single 200 watt solar panel and controller from eBay. It arrived as expected and I set it up in the yard. I then connected a spare battery just to make sure everything worked. After initial set up, the panel and controller were producing power

Next came the RV. Since I wanted a non-permanent RV installation and somewhat portable Field Day setup, I decided to ground mount the solar panel on a wood frame that could tilt at a 45 degree angle. I mounted the controller to a block and keep it under the front of the trailer near the fifth wheel hitch. Easy enough. My dilemma was getting the power to the batteries inside the compartment of the RV. Drilling and running wire through the trailer was not an option because of the temporary nature of the installation. While I was looking at the RV pondering how to run wire and power my batteries, I noticed the pigtail that runs to the pickup when I am towing. The pigtail runs to the RV to run the lights, brakes, and charges the batteries while towing. I purchased a 7 way receptacle and cable from Amazon and wired it to the controller. I plugged the controller into the 7 way plug on the trailer and connected the solar panel. The solar panel was producing power right away AND charging my batteries on board my fifth wheel.



Now I have a solar installation that I can put in the basement of my fifth wheel when I go boondocking. It can be setup in a matter of minutes. It is portable enough to use for other things like ARRL Field Day in a tent. I also have an RV that I can sell or trade-in with no holes from a solar installation. Overall it was an easy solution. Give it a try if you are looking for a similar solution.

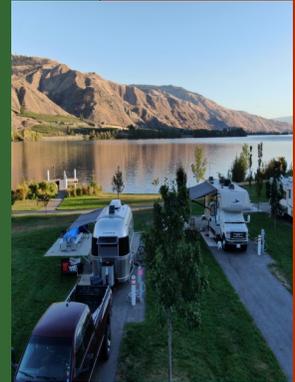
Roger, KJ7V

ED Notes

Well it's been a long VERY HOT summer. That along with Covid has put the breaks on a lot of our plans. BUT the "net goes on"! A lot of great comments and conversation. And personal thanks to Craig W7CDP and Jeff KG7HZT for NCS Duties!

The Travelers News is a bit late this time, due to lack of content. My thanks to those who answered the call with some great stuff. I look forward to MORE of the same.

Hitting the road this week to Entiat, WA. Hope to catch a few of you on the air in our brief travels. DMR and Coffee will originate from there Monday. 73 Duff



W4LKS Randy has come up with a nifty desk stand for the ANYTONE 878/868. For those of you with a 3D printer, a few hours print will give you a nice addition to the shack. Full Files can be found on Thingiverse; <https://www.thingiverse.com/thing:4336705>

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