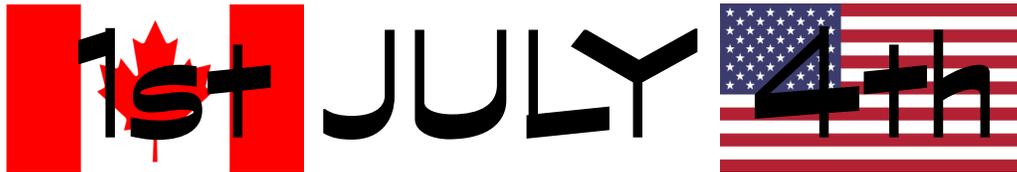


The NEWSLETTER

JULY 2016 VOLUME 16, No. 7

Mercury Amateur Radio Association - MARA
North America - North East



LET'S MAKE IT A FOUR DAY LONG WEEKEND

CONTENTS

2

GRANDMA MARA'S RAMBLINGS

• RAMBLINGS OF AN OLDER PERSON - IS THERE LIFE AFTER FIELD DAY?

2

TECH and other STUFF

• A NEW TOY! THE SIGLENT SDS1102CML OSCILLOSCOPE
• QRP TRANSCEIVER - 1-WATTER - PART 5
• FIELD DAY - 2016 - FOILED AGAIN!

5

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

• FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

5

DI-DA-DI-DA-DIT

• DOES TIME SPEED UP AS YOU AGE?



OTHER STUFF

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Grandma Mara's RAMBLINGS...

As far as I know, everyone had a good time. At least no one complained. Always a good sign. 

TECH AND OTHER STUFF

Strangely, Murphy didn't put in an appearance at our Field Day activities. Anybody with any time in as a radio amateur just normally expects him to come around and spoil things. Whether it was due to Walter's careful planning, or just plain old fashioned luck, things went well. None of the senior folks tripped over anything (or any of us "younger" folks either). No antennas fell down. No tents collapsed. No radios failed. No storms struck, and although there were some dark weather moments, nothing came from them. No bug attacks, no cases of sunburn. No RF burns. No food poisoning. Zip. Zilch. Nothing.

Whether it was due to Walter's careful planning, or just plain old fashioned luck, things went well.

I know I'm getting older, and that my Field Day memories have been tempered by time. I think most of us develop this kind of selective remembrance where we tend to think of only the good things that happened; unless it was something really horrendous that sticks in our brain! Like the time in my teens where I was tilting my chair backwards while operating SSB during Field Day. I leaned back too far, going past the point of no recovery, hitting my head on the ground, even blacking out for a moment. That's what I mean by the bad things sticking in my brain!

In what might be considered a small act of bribery by some...

In what might be considered a small act of bribery by some, we invited the park staff to stop by for our Saturday evening meal, and to see what ham radio was all about. Several of the younger ones were amazed at what you could do; that you could actually talk to people on the other side of the world without using a computer or cell phone. Some of the staff had a friend, a relative, or a neighbor, who was a ham and knew something of what it was about.

It was time for a new one! My trusty Hitachi oscilloscope had served me long and well but was suffering from several front panel switch failures. At one point, I'd opened up the case to see what could be done, but the repairs appeared to be more than I wanted to handle.

I had looked on-line at scopes in the 100MHz range - specifically the Rigol DS1102E and the Siglent SDS1102CML. Both had similar features but, in the end, the Siglent model won out because of the larger screen and the built-in frequency counter. Amazon had the best price and had them in stock. I signed up for "Prime" to get me faster shipping. It showed up at my local post office a few days later.

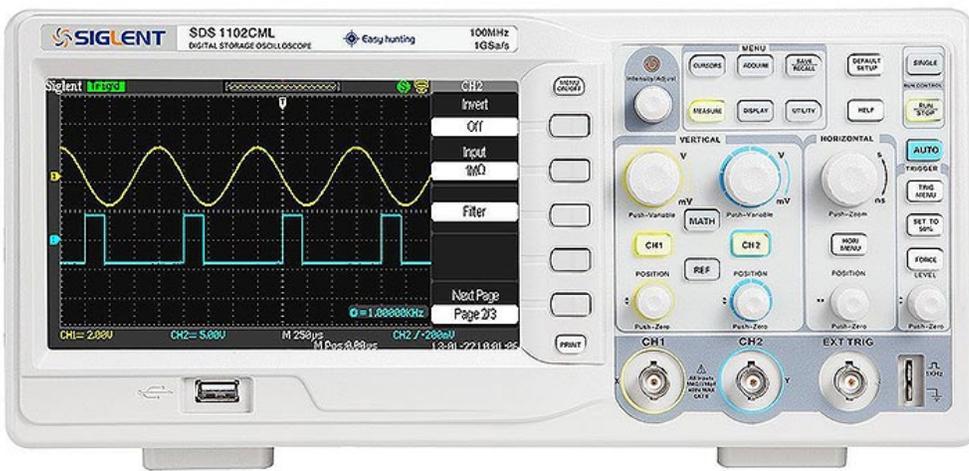
As soon as I presented the card from my lobby mail box, the lady behind the counter asked me if this was the one I had been waiting for (see Part 5 - QRP 1-WATTER TRANSCEIVERS below).

This scope is not as simple as the Hitachi. While it has fewer knobs to twiddle, it has menu settings to choose, for lots of features instead. If you get yourself lost, there is an a magic Auto button. Push that, and the scope does its best to display the input signal correctly. Most times it works. When it doesn't, you have to fall back on knob twiddling.

And, if you are totally lost and nothing works any more, there is another magic button called Default Setup. Pushing that one forces the scope to revert to the factory default settings.

As I write this, I've just had it a few days and have only been able to try it out for a couple of hours...

As I write this, I've just had it a few days and have only been able to try it out for a couple of hours (on the 1-watter transceiver). Being digital rather than analog, the traces sometime display artifacts



already installed in the scope to be the same.

There is also a printer port on the rear of the cabinet in case I want to save a viewed signal on paper.

The days of using the Hitachi as a door stop are numbered. It will soon take a ride to the local recycling facility, joining all of the cast-off computers, old VCR's, and big screen rear projection, and gigantic plasma TV's.

when quickly adjusting the vertical position setting. I have also noticed some very small discrete steps on some sine wave signals. The latter may be from the relatively low screen resolution (480 x 234 pixels) TFT-LCD screen. More likely it is a fact of life with the A to D conversion.

The price was right at \$479.00 Canadian. My suspicions that it was soon to be out of production were confirmed when a week after it came, Siglent's North American web site listed it as discontinued. I find this happens whenever a piece of electronics has been around for a few years; technology advancements provide for a better product (or less expensive production expenses) and when a new model is introduced, the old one is discounted to clear inventory. That was ok with me as it does much more than my old scope ever did.

Like the built-in frequency counter which reads seven digits on the 40 meter transmit signal from the 1-watter. That's 7.123456 MHz which is certainly good 'nuff for what I need to measure.

It comes with two X1/X10 probes, a USB cable, a printed Quick Start manual, and software and a manual on a CD.

The storage feature lets me save a signal trace to a flash drive for future reference. The same USB socket allows me to upgrade the scope's firmware to add new features or to make improvements to the scope, if the manufacturer comes out with an update. I checked the web site and found the latest version there and the one

The days of using the Hitachi as a door stop are numbered.

QRP 1-WATTER TRANSCIEVERS - PART 5

As part of this project, I ordered some display/frequency counter kits from QRPGUYS.COM back in mid April. They were shipped within a couple of days. The original on-line tracking screen showed it in Montreal a few days after that. And that's when it got interesting. The package was shown leaving the Montreal (Dorval) airport, but no destination was stated. A month later, the tracking page had deleted the reference about leaving the airport.

After a couple of weeks and it not appearing in my mailbox, I called Canada Post. The nice lady told me it had been sent to Canada Customs in Vancouver as part of the normal inspection of incoming goods procedure. After another couple of weeks waiting, I called the Canada Post tracking number again. This time the gentleman who took my call told me he wasn't sure where it was. He said if it was in Vancouver it could take up to sixty days to clear Customs. He said if it had gone to the Toronto center, the delay was four days and if to Montreal it would be six days. He also said since it was now in the hands of Customs I should be talking to them, that it was no longer the post office's responsibility.

At this point, I went on line to find a phone number for Canada Customs mail inspection. My search found - nothing! I have to think that was deliberate, that they don't want to be bothered talking to the normal public. After cogitating for several more days, I paid a visit to my local Customs

Date	Time	Location	Description	Retail Location	Signatory Name
2016/06/03	06:56	HALIFAX, NS	Item processed		
2016/06/01	13:54	MONTREAL, QC	Item processed		
2016/04/15	04:13	USLAXA,USA	International item has left originating country and is en route to Canada		
	02:58	95124,USA	International item mailed in originating country		

office. The nice young lady gave me a phone number from her internal directory. A phone call to this number got me a gentleman who told me that Customs worked out of the Canada Post offices (in Vancouver, or Toronto or Montreal) but that it was the post office's job to keep track of mail and that I needed to call them.

Back to Canada Post. Another nice lady listened to my story and promptly opened a file. Told me that if the package had not been located in five business days that the case would be escalated. Now, I thought, we might be getting somewhere!

A little over five business days later I received an e-mail stating that it couldn't be found and that I would have to contact the sender (in the USA) and have them start a trace.

I called the phone number on the e-mail and got a guy who repeated what I could already read. When I told him the previous lady I had spoken with had said that if my shipment could not be found (at the end of five business days) my case would be escalated, he put me on hold. After several minutes of listening to the same repeating music, a supervisor came on the line and listened to my plight once again. She did some tapping on her keyboard and cheerfully announced that my package was currently in transit from Montreal to Halifax and that I should receive it shortly.

The shipping label was stamped "MISSENT TO MALAYSIA".

True to her word, my package (unopened for any inspection) showed up in my mailbox a few days later on the 7th of June. My guess is that they view contents with a scanning device, and only open the

suspicious ones.

The shipping label was stamped "MISSENT TO MALAYSIA". I'm thinking, if they have a rubber stamp for this, it can't be a rare thing for it to happen. Or when a package gets found after going astray, they use this stamp no matter where it's



gone.

I realize the post office handles millions of pieces of mail each day, and that every now and then one is bound to get lost. I also know that they have spent (and continue to spend) millions of dollars of Canadian taxpayers' money on systems to track this stuff.

A computer "bit" must have hiccuped when it came to my package routing - the "bit" that stands for Malaysia. Sure is handy to be able to blame it on a computer!

FIELD DAY - 2016

Every year, it seems like things conspire to keep me from operating even some of field day. Every year, I think this will be the one where I make it on the air, even if only for a short time, to provide someone else with a contact.

This year was no different.

How about you? Did you get to operate, either by yourself or in a group? Did you make any memorable contacts?



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"In the truest sense, freedom cannot be bestowed; it must be achieved."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

DI-DAH-DI-DAH^D_T

Seems to me, I was just shovelling snow and wishing for warmer weather. Feels like a blink of an eye and here it is the first of July. If I was a pessimist, I'd be moaning that winter and snow will soon be here again.

I wonder if Mr. Einstein ever had something profound to say about the time going faster as we got older. Sure seems to me that my days and nights are passing by in a blur.

No wonder I can't seem to finish the tasks I have to do each day. If the current rate of increase keeps up I'll just get farther behind on anything I start.

It's a scary thought if time goes any faster than it does now. I'll have to find an older person to ask this question. I'm not sure I want to know the answer.

See you in September,
VEINQ