

The NEWSLETTER

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Mercury Amateur Radio Association - MARA
North America - North East

*It's coming,
whether we want it or not!
Before that happens,
enjoy what's left of the good
weather.*

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OTHER STUFF

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Best viewed in Microsoft Internet Explorer. Chrome may not display some items in the correct place.

E-mail your comments, ideas, or submissions to marane@mara.net or to ve1vq@eastlink.ca

Grandma Mara's RAMBLINGS...

Twice a year, in the spring and the fall, I think about taking one of Walter's QRP rigs and heading for the great outdoors. Spring because the leaves are emerging and the temperatures have warmed up, and fall because the last of the nice weather is soon to end, but the warmth still lingers. Whenever I see [pictures](#) someone posts of themselves operating from a rock next to some pond or river or on the top of a mountain, I get the urge to do the same. Walter laughs and points out that my ambition is much greater than my actions - meaning I

“Walter laughs and points out that my ambition is much greater than my actions...”

only make it as far as the picnic table on the back lawn. He has however, indulged me in my fantasies by taking me to several of the [NPOTA](#) sites as an activator, even putting up the vertical or the end-fed half wave for me.

No stump or log or rock for a seat. If the site is nearby to home, then the gear (along with a comfy folding camp chair and a small operating table) is loaded in the SUV and off we go. If the location is farther afield, requiring more travel and an overnight stay, then the RV is pressed into service as a mobile “shack” and “hotel”.

“While Grandma has not forgotten how to “operate” from the outdoors, I am no longer interested in sitting on a rock and balancing a key on one knee and the rig on another.”

While Grandma has not forgotten how to “operate” from the outdoors, I am no longer interested in sitting on a rock and balancing a key on one knee and the rig on another. That kind of thing seems harder and harder to get up on my feet again, as each day goes by.

Anyway, getting back to NPOTA - there have even

been occasions when I've been surprised to find another team or individual already on site, when we get there. Others, I'm sure, have been equally taken aback to discover Walter and I set up and in business. That's what we all get for not checking [the list on the ARRL website](#).

The easy sites have been pretty well visited, while some of the more remote ones (think the hinterlands of Alaska) probably won't ever get in anyone's log. I understand that even the White House has been activated. Now that would be something. Maybe get the President to say a few words in the mic! Of course, if you aren't of his political persuasion, that might not be such a big deal.

Anyway, I don't know what I'll do when the NPOTA finishes at the end of the year? Go back to operating from the picnic table, I guess. MARA

TECH AND OTHER STUFF

When I ran the frequency scan of the MFJ-840 to see what the impedance versus frequency as a dummy load looked like (for last month's column), I wasn't overly surprised by what the analyser showed. I had hoped by keeping the wire lead from the connector to the dummy load resistor and from there to the diode as short as possible, I could keep the SWR at the top of the two meter band under 1.2:1. However, as the current popular saying goes, “It is what it is”.

I rummaged around the layers of stuff on the bench and found the adjustable capacitor removed from the original circuit. Soldering it back in place and using an insulated tool to make the adjustment finally got me the SWR plot shown in Figure 3 on the next page.

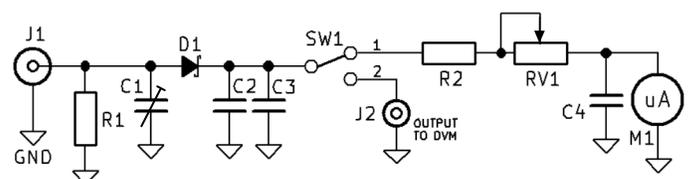


Figure 1 - New schematic showing the variable capacitor back in the circuit.

Parts list

- C1 - capacitor, adjustable, part from MFJ840
- C2 - capacitor, chip, 100v, 0.01uF
- C3 - capacitor, chip, 100v, 0.1uF
- C4 - capacitor, 0.01uF, part from MFJ840
- D1 - diode, Schottky, 1N5711
- J1 - connector, BNC, part from MFJ840
- J2 - connector, female, RCA
- M1 - meter, 100uA, part from MFJ840
- R1 - resistor, 50 ohms, 30 watt, Caddock,
- R2 - resistor, 10K, part from MFJ840
- RV1 - resistor, adjustable, 500K, part from MFJ840

If you don't happen to have a handy antenna analyser, or some other piece of test equipment to show you the results of adjusting the variable capacitor, leaving it out of the circuit still gives you a standing wave ratio of under 1.4 to 1 at 150 MHz.

MORE THAN "THE DOCTOR IS IN"

After the September Newsletter was posted to the website a few days after Labor Day, I had an e-mail from Michael, KB3WKV telling me about a couple of additional on-line amateur radio

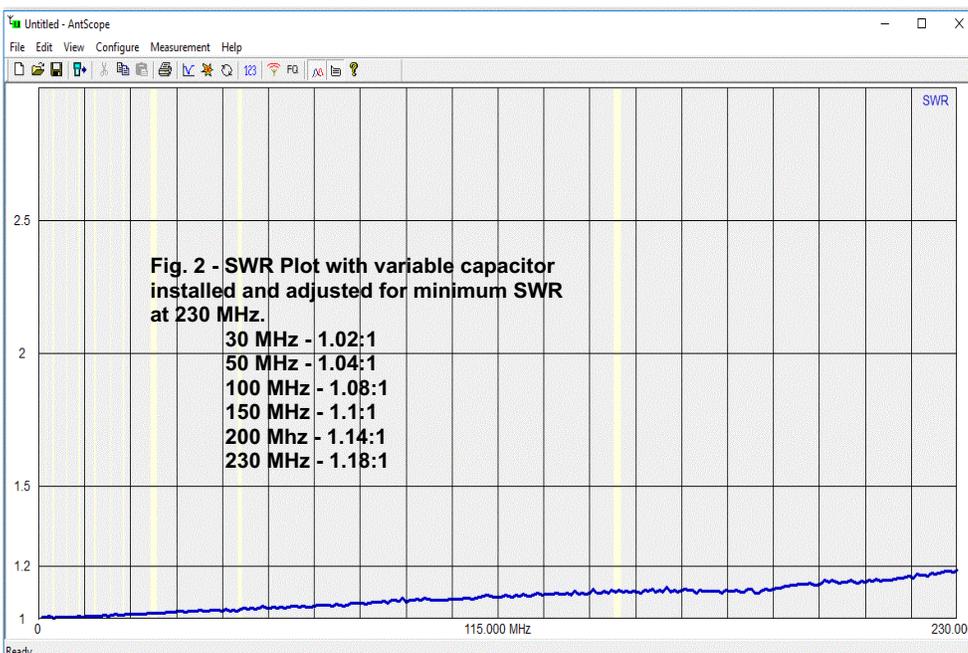
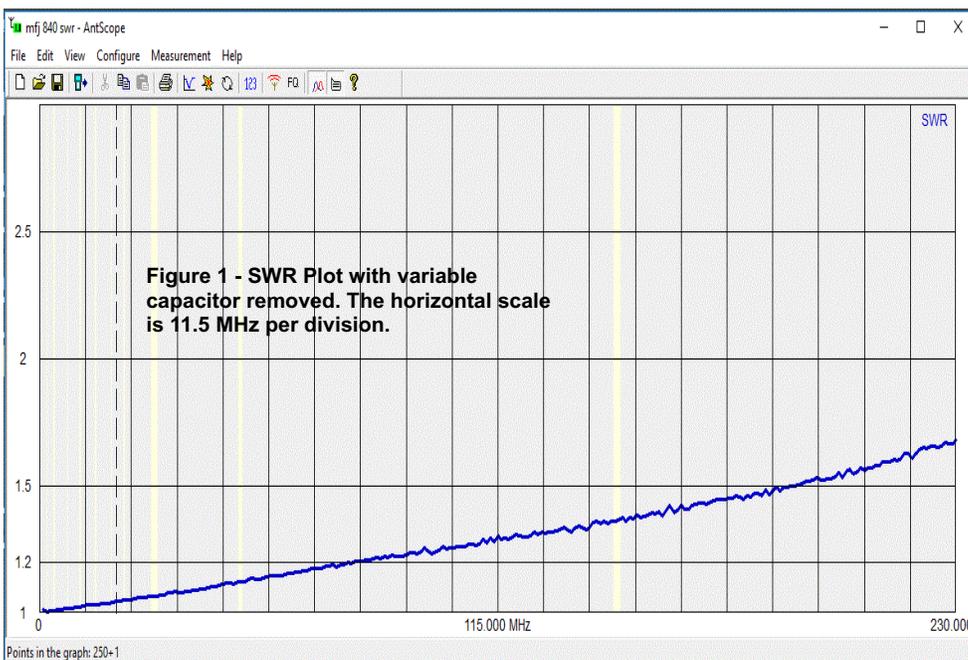
informational video sites.

The first is by *Dave Casler*, KE0OC. His series, "ASK DAVE", is aimed at beginners, but would be interesting and entertaining to most every ham looking for a refresher on basic topics. Episode 1 talks about using an antenna analyzer, and shows how to adjust the length of the antenna and mentions how height above ground can change the resonant frequency.

The second is *TX FACTOR*, "a series of high definition TV shows covering all aspects of the hobby of amateur radio - a professionally produced programme, now into its third year." Not your typical YouTube production done on a older version smart phone. The episodes I watched were very entertaining, with a definite British twist, and their particular sense of humour (Brit spelling for humor!).

QRPP MAGAZINE

For those of you interested in QRP, or homebrewing small projects, or both, check out the new on-line format of QRPP - Journal of the NORCAL



QRP Club. Edited by Doug Hendricks, KI6DS, it has changed from the printed page to freely available PDF format.

Go to [YAHOO Groups](#) and search for “qrp-tech”. Submit a request to join the group. Once you receive confirmation that you have been accepted, click on “files”, then click on “KI6DS”, and look for (at the time this is written) the August and September issues each in two parts.

Earlier issues running from 1993 to 2003 can be found at <http://www.ncqrp.org/>

You will need a PDF reader to view it. If you don't have one, download Adobe's [PDF Reader](#).

EQUIPMENT CASE

Wherever I go, I'm always on the lookout for stuff I can use for my work or my hobbies. Whether it's Costco or Walmart, Harbor Freight or Princess Auto, Michael's or the local hardware store, it pays to be ever vigilant. This time it was [Sam's Club](#) in Great Falls, MT.

The carrying case was something I have been on the lookout for. If you have priced Pelican equipment cases lately, you will certainly understand the meaning of “sticker shock”.

It goes under the Sam's Club Member Mark brand and is item number [483489](#). Measuring 16" x 13" x 6.87", it's just right for small test equipment, QRP or camera gear, or your Glock. The foam inserts may be customized to fit what ever you want to carry. It has stainless steel hinges and is shock-proof, water-proof, and dust-proof. Equipped with an O-ring seal and a pressure equalization valve, it may be the answer to your needs. It's not a Pelican but it sure is a whole lot less expensive at \$19.98 .



SKYPE and the Nearly Missing Audio

In last month's NEWSLETTER, I mentioned my frustration with SKYPE's update lowering my

laptop's built-in microphone level to the point where I had to use my USB headset mic to get a high enough level to be heard.

I'm happy to report that recently my on-board mic started working again in SKYPE. Was it a Windows 10 or a SKYPE update, both of which recently happened? Who knows! I'm just happy it works again. 

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Political correctness is tyranny with manners."

Charlton Heston

DI-DAH-DI-DAH ?

My ninety-five year old father died back in early June, and my step-mother moved into a seniors' nursing home at the same time. The xyl and I have been busy cleaning out the house in preparation for sale. He was a very organized man, saving every receipt, every tax bill, every invoice, all organized in envelopes. He wasn't one to stash cash in odd places, preferring instead to keep his money in the bank. While my step-mother didn't squirrel away money, she did tend to keep every bit of paper that came into the house. Between the two of them, there as a lot of paper to go through.

It seems she was on almost every charity's mailing list, so there were a lot of little knick-knacky things, personalized envelope return mail labels,

and begging letters. A lot of her keepsakes were stuffed randomly in every cupboard and drawer. It took us a couple of months, many trips to the Salvation Army thrift store and the local dump, to mostly clear it all out.

One thing it pointed out clearly to me was the need to personally de-clutter my “stuff”. I need to keep the obviously important things, but I do not need to keep items that I haven’t used, or perhaps not even seen, in years. While my children have said, when I die, they will simply toss it all in the dumpster, I shouldn’t make them have to go through the same thing I did.

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So, I’ve started. Even though when I pick something up and debate tossing or keeping, thinking that some poor ham, in the jungles or mountains of some far off country, is probably trying desperately to locate just this same part, I have to be firm with myself, and toss. Sorry, far-off ham!

My kids will thank me. And, I might be able to find things I haven’t seen for years and have been desperate to find (like the shack floor!).

Until next month,
VEIVQ