

<h1>CCARC News</h1>
<h2>Capital City Amateur Radio Club</h2>
<h3>March 2026</h3>

**BAND HOPPER RESURRECTION**  
By Dennis Grisamore KK7YFZ

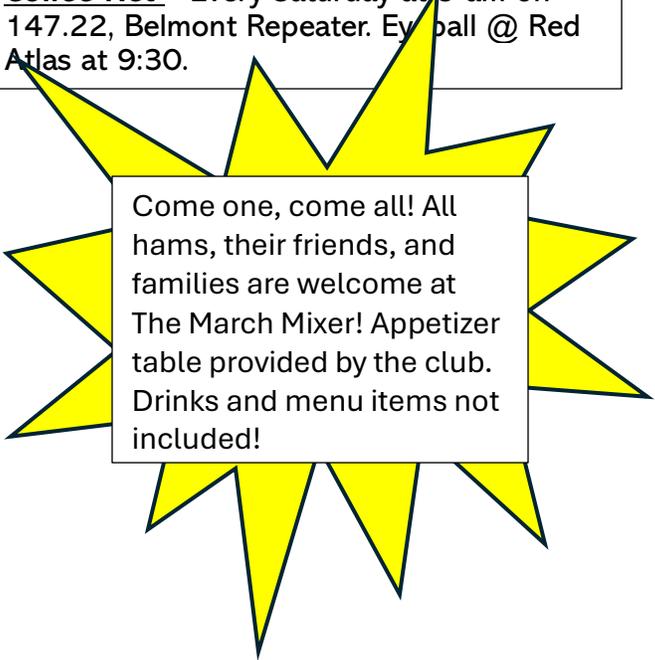
I recently acquired this new-to-me screwdriver style mobile antenna. It has a very interesting history to it, involving our very own Bob Morris N7AGP. Bob was instrumental in the research and development of the band hopper, and it was even manufactured in nearby town of Clancy.



There's more to the story than this, but we'll need to corner Bob for "The rest of the story!"

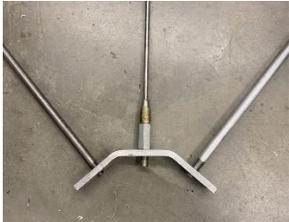
I've been busier than a two-headed woodpecker. It came to me from Arizona, where it baked in the sun for a good while. The exposure made it necessary to replace some rotten wiring and generally clean up the rest.

**Coming Events 2026**  
**CCARC monthly meeting** – March 2, 7pm at the Salvation Army, 1330 Hudson St. or on Google Meet, <https://meet.google.com/zfs-ctwp-bax>  
**March Mixer** – March 21, 3 pm -7 pm, Brewhouse Downstairs.  
**Coffee Net** – Every Saturday at 9 am on 147.22, Belmont Repeater. Eyeball @ Red Atlas at 9:30.



Come one, come all! All hams, their friends, and families are welcome at The March Mixer! Appetizer table provided by the club. Drinks and menu items not included!

With the wires out of the way, it was time to figure out the whips on this 80-10-meter antenna. I pulled on my beard plenty, because I have no hair, but good ol' Bob kept me pointed in the right direction.



It's operational, thanks totally to Bob. Success through patience!

Best wishes all! ~Dennis KK7YFZ

WE ARE GROWING!

NEW MEMBER – welcome!

**Seth Eikomstead** N7SWG says he is getting back into the hobby and is interested in SOTA, POTA and EMCOMM.

UPGRADES – congratulations!

**Devin Felix** to Extra with new call sign AJ7JO.

**Matthew Jacques** KM7DTU to General.

**Gage Sappington** KM77DTB to General.

These new tickets resulted from the Volunteer Examiner (VE) exams on February 25.

Thank you to the VEs assisting with the exams: Allen KH7AL and Brett N7SKI. The next VE exam sessions are scheduled for April 1 and May 14. If you're interested in taking an exam please register on hamstudy.org at least one week prior the exam. If you have any questions, please contact John KS7R.

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#### FIRST HOME BREW ANTENNA By Matthew Jacques KM7DTA

Here is a photo of my first directional antenna, a UHF Yagi 7-element tape-measure PVC antenna. This antenna is for receiving.

I want to contact the ISS when it passes, and I'm working on a new design for transmitting. Although I'm still super new to amateur radio, I thought I'd share this with you. I hope you find it useful. ~Matt KM7DTA



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#### BACKYARD BOREALIS By Dave White WA7YFF

Back in November of last year, you may remember that the northern lights were spectacular. My wife Lisa and I went out on our back deck and gazed skyward in the late evening brisk winter air.

We were surrounded by the aurora! This photo is looking south at the northern lights. I took this photo with my Samsung S22+ Ultra cell phone. 1/5000 second, f/1.8, ISO 2000.



For a better view of this photograph, please follow this link:

<https://iconsofnature.art/featured/backyard-borealis-lewis-and-clark-county-mt-david-white.html>

~Dave White WA7YFF

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SOTA ACTIVATION  
February 2026  
By Bill McGuire N7MSI

Lots of news, tech advice and plans are made at the Red Atlas Saturday ham radio coffee meeting in Helena. I mentioned to Brett N7SKI that I needed 7 SOTA (Summits on the Air) activator points to reach 100 points. If I do a 4-point summit with the 3-point winter bonus points I'd meet that goal of 100 points.

Within minutes we had a plan to activate W7M/HB-117 on Sunday 8 February 2026, a summit just past Unionville south of Helena. I had activated that summit before in 2017. Brett and I met at the old Federal Building on Last Chance Gulch and within minutes we were hiking up the hill.

It's not the hardest hike nor the longest, so it was a quick 45-minute climb. We saw lots of elk sign all over that hill.

Brett set up an end-fed antenna connected to his Yaesu FT-891, and I put up a 2-meter J-pole with my 20-foot telescoping pole connected to my Yaesu FT-1 HT. Weather was moving in, and it had started sprinkling a bit, so we worked fast.

We got our usual very supportive locals on 2 meters and then moved to 40 meters SSB. We made contact with several stations in Montana, Washington, and Alberta, plus a summit-to-summit with KX0R in Colorado.

Brett made his first CW contact from a summit, I achieved my 100 points goal, and we made new friends.

It just doesn't get any better than that.

~73 Bill N7MSI



Bill N7MSI



Brett N7SKI

## POTA ON THE ROAD!

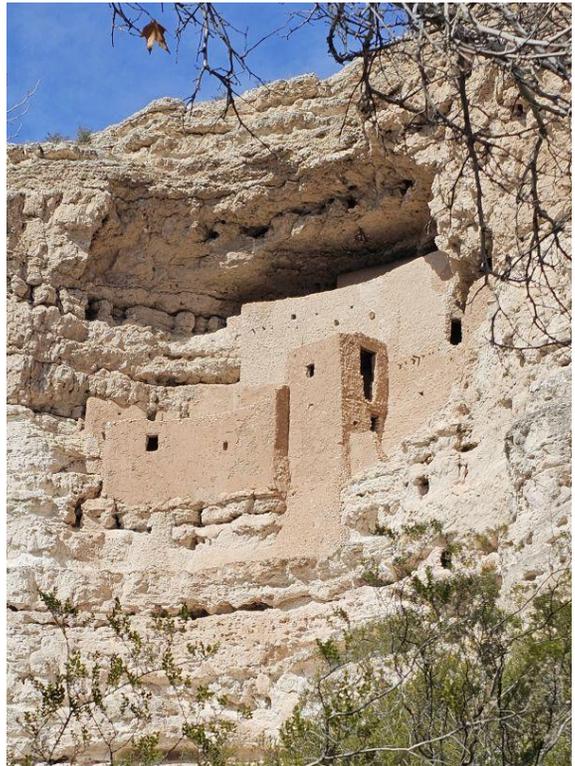
By Kathe N1NYT

Al and I recently took a two-week road trip to Arizona. Truth be told, the weather in Arizona wasn't all THAT much warmer than here but having sunshine reliably every day was sensational. Our itinerary took us through Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and Arizona.

Al was totally game to make the focus of the trip POTA activations. I got to work right away on the POTA site, finding several parks (accessible by car) we could hit each day of our travel. We spent five days in Sedona and four days in Tucson so we knew we could get quite a few in those areas. There are many ways to do POTA activations. You can hike into a wilderness area, or go to a park and set up on a picnic table, etc. We choose to operate from our car using a mag-mount "ham stick" antenna on the roof, a Yaesu FT-891, and a 20Ah battery. Even with such a simple setup, we worked Japan, Alaska, Indonesia, and Spain. Oh. Yes. And Montana!

I also printed out about 25 log sheets. Yes, I still log with paper and pencil and enter into my ACL log and upload to POTA the same day. Then we had to stop at a Staples store to copy a bunch more. Al operated FT-8 from each site too. FT8 has a fixed time of one minute per contact if everything goes perfectly; a good SSB operator can make several contacts in that same minute.

We visited some pretty amazing places including Montezuma Castle National Monument, Lake Mead National Rec Area, Casa Grande Ruins NM, among many others. We contacted three CCARC club members – Stacy KK7CJV and Eric KE7NLU Webb as well as Devin Felix KM7AXU (now AJ7JO) with a P2P from Spring Meadow Lake. We completed 38 activations in 12 days making over 500 QSOs each.



Montezuma Castle National Monument

We're already perusing some POTA maps for other states we'd like to explore. What a terrific way to see the country!

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## BACK ON TRACK

By Zhaun Paddock AI7BM

It's been a bit since I contributed much to the newsletter, and I have missed being on the radio. But now I have some free time thanks to



surgery on my thumb. (it's healing well and should be good as new in a few months).

My computer in my shack had a glitch about a year after I installed Windows 10 on it. All of a sudden it wouldn't boot up. If I did a factory reset and re-installed Windows 10, it would run until the next restart and then would not boot again! I gave up and have not been in the shack as a result.

Then we bought a new computer for the household, and I took the old one to my shack. I set out to rework my shack. As I did, I gave the old computer one last try, and now it is working fine with Windows 10! So just like that I went from no computer to two.

A few years ago, I picked up a 20m QCX-mini 5w transceiver and a 50w power amplifier to go with it from QRP Labs. After assembly the radio was fine until I tried to use it in the field and the display was blank. It would work fine out of its case but fail once reassembled. I became frustrated and parked it on the bench to think about its behavior. Finally, I tried again rewetting all the solder joints feeding the display and voila! it's working. That success enabled me to assemble the amp.

On a different note, Al KH7AL has been helping a couple of new CW operators get on the air. His net on 40m went well, and he challenged them to get at least one contact in the log before the next net. Seeing an opportunity to help, I offered to do a CW activation of Spring Meadow Lake State Park. Devin KM7AXU took me up on that offer, and he was able to make nine CW contacts, hopefully the first of many to come.

Then the following week, Devin and I met again for another CW activation. This time after hunting a few, I spotted and bottled the pileup. With 15 total contacts in the log, I asked Devin if he was up to the challenge. He accepted, I yielded the frequency to him and spotted him. Like a good Elmer I ignored the pileup letting Devin do the copying. Only occasionally would I help. It was a success! After a bit the band went silent, and we both had enough in the log for an activation.

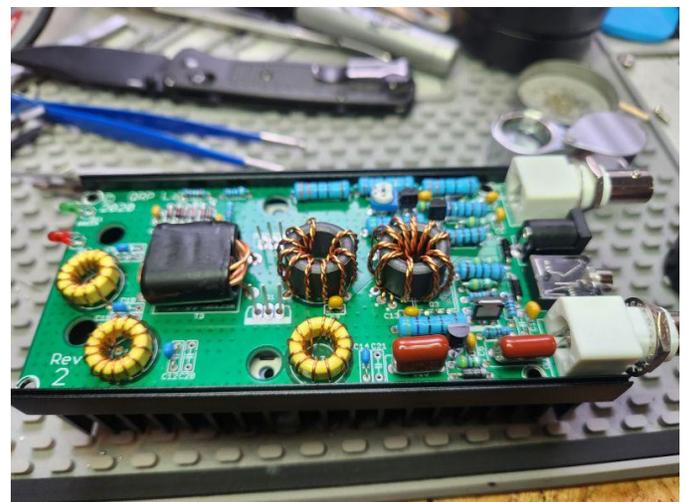
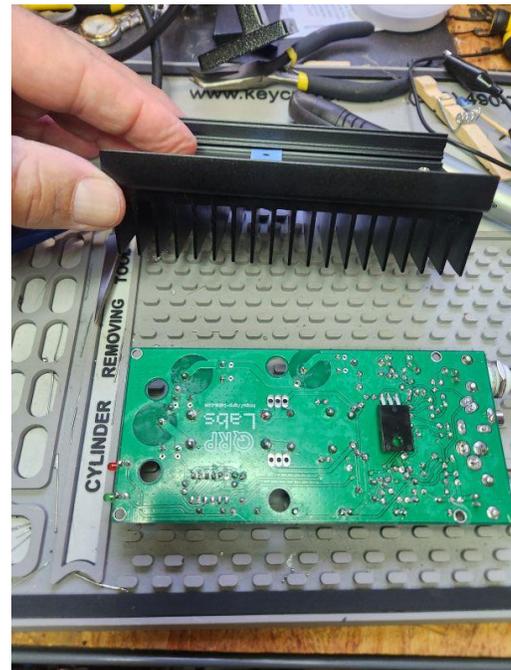
On an unrelated note, my Yaesu 857D had a common failure known as signal crash caused by failure of three 455khz filters on the IF stage. Crystals accumulate on them from contamination in the manufacturing process. This affects only certain serial numbers in the Yaesu 857D radios. The repair is easy and inexpensive. The replacement parts cost me \$13. The hard part is removal of the old ones. Each filter has 5 through hole pins with little or no lead solder. It takes more heat than normal to melt it. I

picked up a desoldering iron for \$36 on eBay. It is a solder sucker attached to a solder iron of sorts. This made short work of the repair.

The symptoms of this problem are a weak receive signal and static crashes. Testing after repair I was able to copy Eric KE7NLU on 2m simplex from Belgrade. Then I worked Al KH7AL on 40m CW. It's good to have this radio back! I have it mounted inside a Commander box – a complete shack-in-a-box for DC to daylight portable operations.

Having fun with ham radio again!

73, de AI7BM Zhaun





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HARCMT

Next meeting March 16, 7 pm.

Join via Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83208268599?pwd=2UrZLBn53E7Gd0sXG6ObWIRdq5lubl.1>

Meeting ID: 832 0826 8599

Passcode: 115546

## Capital City Amateur Radio Club Helena, Montana



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Club website: [n7rb.org](http://n7rb.org)  
[CCARC Shack Tour](#) – website  
with member profiles

**JOIN US!**

Membership \$25 per year. Contact Al  
Simons for application info.

[al@simonshome.org](mailto:al@simonshome.org)