

THE HISTORY OF WR3AAA

Since 1972, when WR3AAA went on the air, many members have been added to the BVAFMA. The purpose of this article is to familiarize some of our newer members with the history and development of our repeater.

Two-meter FM really had its beginning during Hurricane Agnes in the Beaver Valley. There was no repeater in our vicinity and only a few FM rigs at that time. Most of you probably don't remember when 146.94 was the ONLY frequency in use! But several rigs were put to very good use, and several individuals began to see the advantages of a repeater.

Repeaters did start to pop up in the area. There was a 34-94 repeater put on in Pittsburgh (WA3BNO) and W8I00 had a repeater on WKBN's radio tower in Youngstown. It occupied 16-76 and had fantastic coverage. 28-88 appeared in Pittsburgh and pretty soon everyone was talking repeaters.

In the Fall of 1972, three individuals brought the subject before the Beaver Valley Amateur Radio Ass'n. They were Ken Riggle, W3FCQ, Jerry Williamson, WA3SXQ, and Dick Hanna, K3VYY. After much discussion and no action the subject was tabled.

It was then decided to get all interested persons together and form a new group for the purpose of building and running a repeater. In late 1972 several individuals met at the home of Bob McClain, W3VRZ, to lay the groundwork for what was to become WR3AAA.

Several basic criteria were set forth for construction of the repeater. They were: (1) good coverage of Beaver County; (2) repeater should have an emergency power source; (3) become operational as soon as possible -- keep it basic. Several sites were considered, and the Freedom Valvoline tower on Mengel Heights was the final choice. Antennas were put on the tower in January with about a 40 mph wind blowing, and the repeater first went into operation in about mid-February. There was no duplexer (two separate antennas were used) and audio was sampled from the speaker and fed to the mic input of the transmitter. It was a pretty well hay-wired mess, but it worked after a fashion. We had no license but there weren't really any rules governing repeaters anyway. So there it was -- our own repeater.

It wasn't long before the FCC solved the rules problem -- they released their now famous "Repeater Docket." At first look, it was about as complicated as a commercial license. K3VYY undertook the project of licensing the repeater. One form 610-B, two form 610's, about ten sheets of typewritten paper and a half-dozen quadrangle maps later, the whole mess was sent in a big envelop to the FCC to see if we could get a license.

The "long wait" began. Meanwhile the repeater was on only for "experimental purposes." That was a nice way of saying we were bootlegging. The waiting was becoming unbearable. QST reported that most applications were being sent back because of errors and still we heard nothing. Was no news good news? In early March the frustration was too much and K3VYY called then-Congressman Frank Clark for help and help we got! In late March WR3AAA was licensed. It was the first repeater in the third call area and the third license issued in the country.

Now that we had the license, we had to ID the darn thing. That was solved with a \$15.00 cassette player and a \$6.00 continuous loop cassette tape. It was actually funny to hear the tape start

in the middle of an ID. Well, you can't win them all.

We were still holding sporadic meetings at the home of W3VRZ, but now we were known as the "Beaver Machine" (we probably started the whole "handle" mess on CB). It was really nice to be referred to as "Triple A". We were a proud bunch. We went from conception to inception in about six months. A lot of hard work and planning paid off.

More members joined the organization, regular meetings were held and as money came in improvements were made. We never had much money hanging around in the treasury and we even got away with spending money we didn't have a couple of times.

We have come to expect the repeater to be there when we want to use it. It has become a valuable asset to us hams. The next time you use it remember that a lot of dreams, a lot of hours, and a lot of money made "Triple A" possible. Please support your repeater. It takes money and time to keep it operating. It just didn't happen to be there and if each of us doesn't do his or her share it could disappear tomorrow.

By Dick (K3VYY)

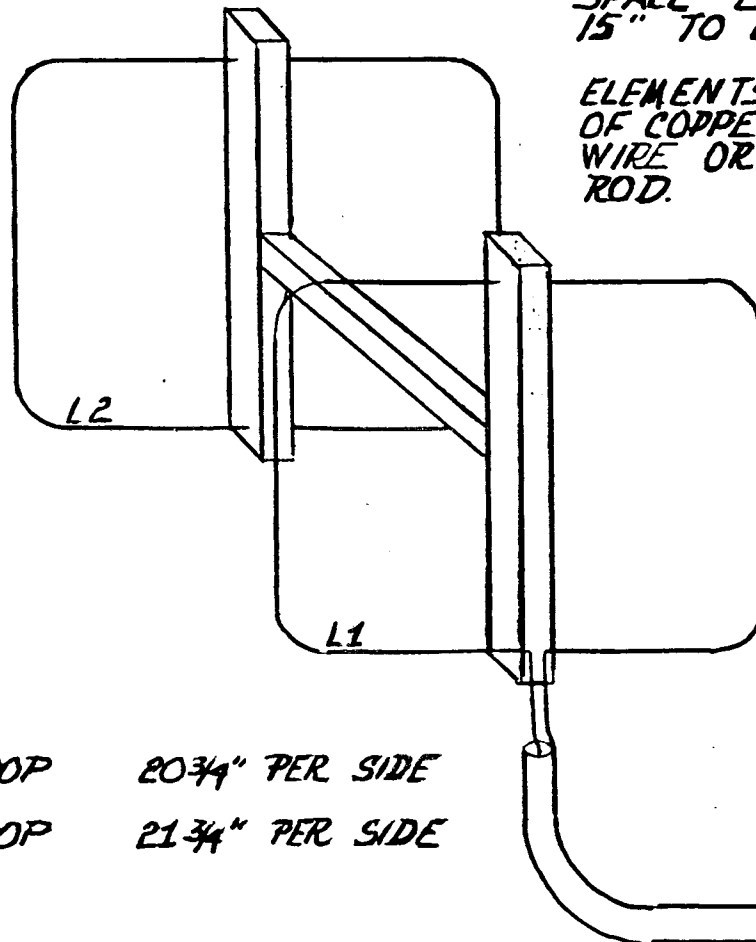
2 METER QUAD FOR DIRECTION FINDING AND PORTABLE OPERATION

L1 DRIVEN ELEMENT
L2 REFLECTOR

MAKE FRAME OF WOOD
1" x 1" STOCK

SPACE ELEMENTS
15" TO 20" APART

ELEMENTS MAY BE MADE
OF COPPER OR ALUMINUM
WIRE OR 1/8" ALUMINUM
ROD.



L1 83" LOOP 20 3/4" PER SIDE

L2 87" LOOP 21 3/4" PER SIDE

THIS BEAM IS RELATIVELY BROAD IN BANDWIDTH
AND IS GOOD FOR TRANSMITTING AND RECEIVING.