

Special Guest Editorial:**THOSE "NOTORIOUS" OUT-OF-BAND CB'ERS...A Brief History**

by Bill Cheek, editor
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For years, SWL's and hams alike have encountered CB operations on unauthorized frequencies between 26 and 28 MHz. Is there a general band plan agreed upon among the unlawful operators? Bill Cheek provides an eloquent insight... and some fascinating history.

Freeband is that band of frequencies between 26 and 28 MHz, not counting the Citizen's Band. FB does include the "RC" channels that are located between certain channels in the CB.

FB all got started back in, maybe as early as 1959...certainly not later than 1961, when the more industrious CB'ers learned that the transmit and receive crystals could be reversed, thus operating 455 kHz below the CB channel for which they reversed the crystals. This still works in walkie-talkies and other transceivers that require one crystal per channel for Tx and for Rx.

Well...455 kHz was quite a bit "out of band" and not all radios worked very well, but most worked to an extent provided that only the upper CB channel crystals were reversed. Thus, the most popular low-band frequency was 26.800 MHz...which was available for switching around the ch-23 crystals: 27.255 MHz-26.800 L.O = 455 kHz IF...see??? Image freq's abounded in the old radios anyway, so most radios could at least receive...if not Tx...but any tech could slightly realign the Tx for better performance. Thus 26.800 was one of the first and most popular out-band channels.

Ch-22 crystals, when reversed yielded 26.770; ch-21=26.760...etc. 26.760 was about as low as most radios would go without realignment, but even a few would drop into the 26.600's. Thus 26.620, the CAP freq, became very popular for monitoring, though more than a few CB'ers got on it just to hassle the musters and role-calls. Until 1965, the two most popular frequencies were 26.800 and 26.760, and quite a net grew into being!

Circa 1963-1967, when SSB was introduced and accepted by CB'ers, it was kind of worked out that low frequencies would be for AM operation and channels above ch-23 would be for SSB. However, with the advent of

the 23-ch synthesized radios, it was very easy to make any radio function below or above band...So in the same time frame, AM'ers kind of took over what is now ch-26 to 30, with 27.305 being the call-channel and available to the "Big Straps."

By 1970, the situation was basically etched in stone...Channel 16, and the RC below it, 27.145 MHz were used by SSB'ers, and all freq's above 27.315 were for SSB...few violations, too! Other RC channels and all freq's below ch-1 were for AM'ers.

Even in 1970, AM'ers seldom ventured below 26.760 except to monitor CAP...but then there was plenty of room between .760 and 26.965, and major settlements occurred on 26.760, 26.800, 26.845, 26.875, 26.915 and 26.945 MHz. By settlements, I mean either an organized group or Club had made that frequency their "home channel."

In this same time frame, 27.325 became a national calling channel for SSB...QSO's weren't allowed, but an operator could go there and get his party and QSY off to another frequency. Plenty of "Channel Bosses" monitored 27.325 for violators and wandering AM'ers...none of whom were welcome very long!

For some reason, SSB radios after 1972 were quite wide-banded in terms of performance without realignment! This encouraged SSB'ers to either load up a box of crystals or get a VFO...and thus the spectrum up to 27.995 MHz became available.

PAL and SILTRONIX cornered the market on VFOs, and these were easily modified to reach the 27.995 border!

Circa 1970, "HF International" was born. This was an outlaw club that promoted operation above ch-23, specifically 27.315 and up to 27.500 maximum. In later years, HF International grew to unbelievable size with 50,000+ members. HF called for some order out of the chaos; thus 27.325 became a calling channel, 27.480 and 27.505 were used for Morse Code practice and technical discussions. 27.505 seemed about the limit that HF encouraged, however.

Another organization sprang up and called itself, "VHF International" and took over cognizance of 27.515 MHz to 27.715 MHz...similar sort of a deal as HF. And

then another organization called "UHF International" popped in with its operations from 27.715 MHz to 27.995 MHz! Neither of the latter two were as strong or as powerful as HF, but they did their thing.

By the middle 70's, there were several other groups operating across the "high frequency" band...the "APRIL" group, "The Whiskey" group, and the "Mike" group. Later... "Old Codgers."

As SSB was developing, growing and refining itself, the AM'ers on the low bands below ch-1 remained pretty much unorganized, officially. Each frequency, in 10-kHz increments, had a small, cliquish "family"-type group scattered over the country, the sizes of which rarely exceeded 20-50 members.

By the late 70's, the small, homespun group had to organize or face extinction by other power groups, so the family atmosphere stuck, and the groups became organized under names such as "Tucker," "Walker," "Hatfield," "McCoy," "Finger," and there were some oddballs called "Gay Caballeros," "Texas Niggershooters," "Earpluggers," "Wickerbill International" and others.

There was one club that started up on 26.915 MHz in the mid-60's that has lasted to the present through varying periods of inactivity, called "HIGHWAY 7." This was a large, pleasant group... Still is, though not very active anymore.

Newly organized, there is a neat group starting up called "The Loyal Order of Falcons"...home-based on ch-39LSB...composed of more serious and dedicated operators who have had enough of the rules, power, and self-gratification so evident with the leadership of most other prevailing clubs.

CLUBS

Late 60's and early 70's saw two major ones rise: "The Appliance Operators" and "United Bullshippers," both monitoring ch-5 and using 26.995 as overflow channel. Later, the "Armadillos" out of Texas joined these two groups.

The mid to late 70's saw a rise in technology, both in the hardware of newly manufactured radios and in the skill levels of the CB store technician. This resulted in radios modified with the capability of 25.800 to 28.200...with decent performance across this entire band.

Since late 60's, 26.915

GROVE TO SPEAK IN DAYTON

Bob Grove, editor of Monitoring Times and president of Grove Enterprises, will be a featured forum speaker at this year's amateur radio "hamfest" in Dayton, Ohio.

The Dayton Hamvention has become the largest hamfest in the western hemisphere, covering several floors of equipment display space indoors at the Hara Arena, and covering several acres of outside flea market as well.

This year's Hamvention will be held from Friday through Sunday, April 27 (noon) through April 29. For additional information write to the Dayton Hamvention at P.O. Box 1288, Dayton, OH 45402 or call 513-433-7720.

Grove's topics will include hot frequencies for monitoring, new equipment and accessories, trends in technology and answers to the most common questions about listening throughout the spectrum.

The listening forum will begin Sunday, April 29th at 10 AM.

SHORTWAVE LISTENING AT ALLTIME HIGH

Published studies indicate that there are some 500 million shortwave receivers in use worldwide! Time magazine recently reported that 18 million shortwave receivers had been sold over the past ten years in the United States alone.

With prices and sizes coming down, and quality of performance going up, the shortwave bug has bitten a good many listeners!

MHz has been an "independent" operators' channel where many of the better stations in the country meet to lock horns and test their "strength." Today, it has a congenial group standing by on it, but it is still the frequency where the "Big Straps" go to test their mettle...

26.875 is homesteaded by the "Gay Caballeros."

26.660, 26.680, 26.760, 26.800, 26.875, 26.895, 26.905, 26.915 MHz are heavily occupied when DX is in.

Operations can be regularly monitored to 26.500 and worldwide DX frequently clutters up the 26.000-26.500 band.

*Free sample of EMTJ available by writing P.O. Box 10723, Edgemont Station, Golden, CO 80401.