

The VHF Journal

Published by The Rochester VHF Group

June 2000

<http://vhfgroup.rochesterny.org>

Club Memorial Call: W2UTH

**VHF
ACADEMY
Rev's Up
for Fall**

**INTERNATIONAL 2M PSK31
ACTIVITY NIGHT DECLARED:
SUNDAYS 8PM ON 144.144.15**

ARE YOU READY FOR JUNE CONTEST?

RVHFG member N3EMF prepares for battle at K2TV1 FN21wh

N3EMF

*So, what's wrong with
the Rochester Hamfest?*

Summer WEB Issue Membership \$10US \$15 CDN annually

VHFBILL



The Rochester VHF Group

Club memorial call: W2UTH

Club website @ <http://vhfgroup.rochesterny.org>

Our "Who's Who":

Well, here we are- welcome to the first digital-only copy of the VHF Journal.

Reports at 1PM Saturday of the Rochester Hamfest indicated that MORE people were signing up for the WEB version of the JOURNAL than were signing up for the PRINT version- **hooray for all of you forward thinking folks out there.** It shouldn't surprise anyone... we have had 71 "hits" on the download section of the RVHFG members-only webpage for May alone! Simply amazing... We are tapping an important niche market here.

ARE YOU READING THIS WITH ACROBAT 4.0? You better! Experimentations with Acrobat 3.0 during the production of the April issue (*VHFBOY*) showed that **FINE LINE DRAWINGS or PEN-AND-INK ILLUSTRATIONS** were not as readable using the older version. Take the time and do it **NOW.** The links on the VHF group website will take you there.

DID YOU GET YOUR BEER STEIN? The RVHFG project fund floated a loan to have commemorative Beer Steins with the RVHFG logo on them made... They were sold for \$5 each at K2DH's Flea-market space at the Rochester Hamfest. Missed out? There's still a few left- (we already sold over 50!) but if there are still any left I am sure they'll be at the Picnic and if you really want one, send the RVHFG \$6.50 and maybe we'll have one shipped to you. The profit from this little venture (once the "loan" is repaid) goes into the RVHFG project fund. We should gain **about \$105** from this project- better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick, as they say.

HOW ABOUT THAT BIG AU on JUNE 8? lotsa stuff heard here in FN14- the indicators were VERY HIGH and the Europeans seemed to be having a great time too.

Many thanx, BTW, to Dianne and Dave Hallidy, who made it possible for the editor to attend the May meeting by providing a place to crash afterwards! Dave was particularly keen on showing off his 2304 EME stuff with live echoes using his 16 ft dish. Dianne showed off her stuff making blueberry muffins. Lucky I didn't have to choose between the two!

This is where I usually say "be sure to check it out on the web in FULL COLOR! but if you aren't on the internet, you aren't reading this, are you?"

73 es DX2U, EH ...*de VE3IEY*

PS: Find the  on the cover? ~~~~~>



To Subscribe: Send your address, call, and \$10 US funds (or \$15 CDN funds) to: The Rochester VHF Group, PO Box 92122, Rochester, NY, 14692

Commentary and articles: via e-mail to editor VE3IEY: tantonr@kingston.net. Use standard ASCII text, Corel's Word Perfect or send as a regular e-mail message.

Photos and drawings: via e-mail, and can be sent in any format that is available (JPG, GIF and TIFF are the most common).

Assistant Editor, printer, membership & data-magician: N2KXS

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Jeff, KB2VGH sez:

"There is only *one* mailing list [you'll ever need...]

Rvhfg@vhfgroup.rochesterny.org

It is setup to broadcast to all RVHFG members

Photo, artistic, text credits and apologies (where not otherwise noted):

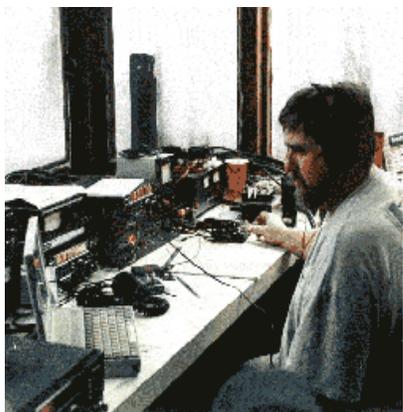
T. Richmond, Peter Aschwanden,
Dave and Dianne Hallidy, NEWS, Packrats Cheese Bits
Popular Communications, N2GKM, KB2ECH

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So how about PSK31 on VHF+ frequencies?

... de VE3IEY

I've been doing a little experimenting with this new mode you've had the chance to read about in QST, CQ, Pop-Com, etc for the past few months. Lots of folks are raving about it on the HF bands... but where's the activity on VHF using it? Trying PSK31 on 2m has been fun and the results so far are very promising. Stations in FN23, 31 and 20 have been worked from FN14 using a crooked 7 element beam and 50 watts.



What is PSK31? It's a little like RTTY with a little ARQ thrown in as an option, a pinch of an internet chat room, and the DSP processing power of your standard hamshack computer. **YOU DON'T NEED a MODEM or a TNC or a BLACK BOX- just A COMPUTER, the FREE program, and the radio. No extra stuff.** It also has the uncanny ability, due to that DSP processing, to **pull signals out and decode them when**

they are essentially inaudible (to these 41 year old ears, that is).

A properly tuned PSK31 station only has a bandwidth of 31 cycles. There are 3 modes: BPSK (standard) QPSK (error correcting) and FSK31 (experimental narrow freq shift FSK mode). It is so darn easy to set up it can be done in less than an hour with a few cables you definitely have kicking around the shack. The display on the most popular program, **DigiPan**, makes your computer screen into a 3kc (or 3kHz) monitoring window.

I am really looking forward to trying some MS skeds once I get the large beam back in the air, and also trying some tests to compare the various modes to CW and SSB.

I've **arbitrarily** declared an activity night on Sundays at 8pm with a calling frequency of **144.144.15MHz** (yes, that's 144144150 cycles- this follows a convention used on HF for psk31 to be on a 150cycle offset from ZERO freq.). This time/day/frequency was chosen to miss the majority of the EME activity, but also not detract from the Packrats net on Monday nights (normal 2m activity night). The easy-to-remember frequency should be a plus. This is being publicized on the various VHF reflectors at this time. (It's international because I'm in Canada and most of the rest of you aren't :^). This also provides a ready meeting place for UHF and up skeds on PSK31.

Want more info on PSK31? Use that computer and go to:

www.aintel.bi.chu.es/psk31.html

or

www.megalink.net/~n1rct/psk/pskin.html

Don't think it's worth the trouble? **Do you actually want to be stuck on SSB and CW for the rest of your life?**

Cu on the bands!

...de abciej

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

... de NS9E

The first item in this month's letter is a big THANK YOU to the membership of the Rochester VHF Group for choosing me to be your chairman for another year. I hope this year can be as good as the last year.

I do want to make one correction on an item I mentioned in last month's newsletter. There I stated that membership had dropped this year over last. Well, I am happy to report I was wrong! When we sat down at last month's board meeting and looked at the numbers, we have indeed turned our declining membership around. This is really good news for us, as no other local Amateur Radio Club (That I know of) has managed to do this. I hope this is just the beginning of a long series of year-over-year membership increases.



A general thanks also goes out to all of the re-elected board members. A special word of thanks is also due Frank Pollino, K2OS, who departs the RVHFG board. He was our secretary. I would also like to welcome Jim Howard, N2JMH on board as our new secretary.

I also want to specifically thank Tom Richmond, VE3IEY for his work on the newsletter (And Judy Stonehill, N2KXS, who prints and distributes it.) The number one item named by those asked why their interest in the RVHFG has increased is the newsletter. Thanks, Tom & Judy!

While on the subject of the newsletter, I want to announce a new thing we are going to try this year; electronic newsletter distribution. The information age has come along far enough that electronic distribution of the newsletter in its complete form is practical. The membership application form now has a place to check if you would like this option. (Of course, you can elect to continue to receive the newsletter by mail.) What's in it for you if you elect for electronic distribution? FULL COLOR for starters. You will also have higher picture quality than the print version. (You can always print out the newsletter on your own printer.) You can also receive it sooner than by mail. Since this is a large file (2 MB typically), a lower resolution version will

also be available. This will help those of you with slow dial-up connections. What's in it for us? We can put \$4.00 of your dues in the project funds, to help fund club activities. An example of such a project is the wildly successful 10 GHz transverter project.

On to summer activities. Although there is no organized June club contest effort, everyone is encouraged to get on and operate. I will be with the N2HLT team from a hilltop near Bath. The N2PA team will probably be on as well. June is a fun time to operate, as six meters can go wide open with little warning. Sometimes, six gets so wide open that the upper bands are ignored!

The RVHFG summer picnic will be on Saturday, July 22 at the QTH of Mark, K2AXX. Scott, AA2WV is organizing this. Expect more details to follow.

In August, there are two significant events. The first is the August UHF contest. There is some preliminary talk about a big operation from Dave, K2DH. Watch for more information to follow on this really fun contest.

However, the most serious talk is about a big effort for the 10 GHz cumulative contest. With all the new 10 GHz rigs out there, we have a chance to put Western New York on the 10 GHz map! I purchased the necessary switching relays at Dayton to give me 20 watts and a hot receiver for this effort. The portable dish already has a buttonhook feed; all that's needed now is integration! In any case, watch for important news on this exciting event.

Looking further ahead to the fall, Ev, W2EV has agreed to organize a new session of the very successful VHF academy. Look for another article in this newsletter describing how you may be involved!

The RVHFG All-band Sprint will run again on Thursday evening, November 9th. This is the first announcement of the date. Rules, etc. will follow soon (No changes anticipated from last year!)

Now, a few words about Dayton 2000! I was privileged this year to be able to make the big Hamvention, and I had a really good VHF time! I traveled with Rick, KB2DMK, Leon, N2HLT, and Wayne, KA2GBU. I picked up a dish and feed for 5 and 10 GHz (For the home station), a Down East Microwave 2 meter transverter kit, a weatherized 5 GHz preamp kit, and a TS820 as a second IF rig. Just before the hamfest, I managed to snag a piece of WE90 with connectors. I now have all the pieces (Except the quadpod!) to finish my microwave station!

Unfortunately, I missed the VHF forums. Although I looked for them, I could not find them. The speakers were the usual list of suspects, including Tom, WA8WZG. However, I did make the VHF banquet this year. This is one of the best activities at Dayton, and one where the tickets sell out well in advance. This is a chance to make (and renew) VHF acquaintances from all over the country! The keynote speaker was Doug Smith, of the ARRL. He is the editor of QEX magazine. He is soliciting the VHF community for technical articles. Subjects most wanted include advanced DSP systems, and demodulation theory (Did I really receive the signal??) Of course, one of the things the banquet is also noted for is the door prizes. Many hundreds of dollars of door prizes were given away, and there were very few people who walked out empty handed. (I won a DEM local oscillator kit, which I actually needed!)

I had a chance to talk to some members of the W2SZ team. They lamented over the fact that we won't be on in a big way in June. Even though we are their 'mortal enemies' (And them ours!), they very much want the large-scale competition in each and every contest. Although it's a bit late to plan something for this June, we ought to start thinking ahead!

Last, but not least, I had a fairly lengthy chat with Dan Henderson, N1ND. He is the director of the ARRL contest branch. He shared some positive things with me that should make upcoming contest operations more enjoyable. (they also call for some new discipline on our part, but positive discipline.) Stay tuned for more to follow in this area!

+++++

CSVHFS States Above 50 Mhz Contest

Bruce Richardson W9FZ

The Central States VHF Society sponsors an annual contest called the "States Above 50 Mhz Award". This contest, in it's fourth year, allows an operator to find new challenges each year. The point, just like the old days before grids, is to contact as many states as possible on each of the VHF/UHF/SHF bands 50 Mhz and up. Please enter and see how you do! It's an interesting way to track your station from year to year.

The Award is presented to any op submitting paperwork documenting contact with 30 states or more during the year that runs 0001 UTC, 1 July 1999 to 2359 UTC 30 June 2000. The contest part is competing with other ops to have the most band-states worked total. If the entrant is a CSVHFS member, the entrant is eligible for a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place plaque.

The full information is available at: www.csvhfs.org or more specifically to the very page at: <http://www.csvhfs.org/CSTEST0.HTML>

For instance, during last year's contest, W7XU worked an astounding 49 states on 6m alone as part of his total of 113 States worked. And last years winner, WW2R worked a total of 117 states by making contacts on bands up to 47 GHz.

I will answer email questions or send forms if for some reason you can't access the web-pages. Full rules and downloadable tracking and entry sheets are available on the web-page.

We need entrants! Please visit the site and download the forms. Entries eligible for plaques must be to me by July 20, 2000 but entries are allowed in up to August 31, 2000.

Stand-by for announcement on Reverse-VUCC award for Rovers. I will repeat this posting in mid-June.

VHF ACADEMY

... de W2EV

The VHF Academy is being contemplated for early November, 2000. The purpose is to draw new blood into the club. It is geared to the VHF narrowband and/or weak signal wannabe.

The last time we ran The VHF Academy, we had instructors on five separate topics of interest to newly associated hams. This year, we will need five instructors to cover freshman-level information on topics of interest to newbies. To date, Frank Pollino (K2OS) has stepped forward to volunteer for a 45-minute slot. We are looking for four more presenters.

Of particular need is someone who can send attendees away with something of use, physically. Last year, they came away with a copy of Jeff Ach's VHFTEST software and some came away with a fully functional LASER transceiver (those that brought parts with them...the parts list was published prior to the event).

If this is going to fly, we will need all five slots filled by August 1st. I will write an announcement for the September RaRa Rag (it is sent to every licensed ham in our area). If you are available for 1-hour on a Saturday (45-minute presentation and 15-minute Q&A), drop me an eMail. Tell me what you'd be interested in presenting. If it lines up with the intent of The VHF Academy, we'll get you on the program!

Quit whining about declining interest in the hobby. Here's something you can do about it personally. The next generation of VHF SSB operator is counting on you.

Ev Tupis, W2EV
mailto:evman@ix.netcom.com



On The Net

... de N2JMH

You know the bands are quiet or spring boredom has set in when you see a string of postings go through the W6YX vhf reflector so mean and nasty that someone as grumpy as I, am actually getting sick of it.

The past week has brought an endless string of flames and intelligent postings on spectrum use, calling frequency use and slams on the age of other operators. All this before a contest is probably just a primer for what is going to happen in a couple weeks. I bring this up because I wanted to bring attention to what I thought was one of the most strategic moves I have seen come through the pile of garbage in a while. Included is a brief excerpt from the string and W2EV's reply to them.

Ham guy wrote: Well, I guess we had better do a better job of "Elmering" without slamming. Unfortunately, it seems that (perhaps) those who have been offering classes as well as the published manuals don't put enough emphasis on protocol for the ham bands.

Interestingly, The Rochester VHF Group is attempting to assemble another round of VHF Academy in early November 2000. We are looking for instructors for the all-day event. To date, we have three lined up and could use another three.

In past years, we have sent narrowband and weak signal (not necessarily interchangeable, btw) wannabe's away with not only knowledge and camaraderie that this type of event engenders, but also some sort of completed project. Last time it was run, we posted a parts list prior to the event and many folks walked away with a fully functional Level-1 LASER transceiver (they purchased and brought the parts to class).

We are still looking for a simple project to include and an instructor to instruct on its construction. Maybe an "ethics of operating" class is in order? The only thing that I can guarantee is that these events are *well* attended. If you live in the Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Rochester, Syracuse, Ithaca or Jamestown NY area and are interested in helping others into our part of the hobby, drop me a line with a course idea (that *you* are willing to teach). We will review it (to assure it is a good fit) and get you on-board.

Particulars:

VHF Academy will take place on a single Saturday (all day). Each class throughout the day is approximately 45 minutes long with 15 minute Q&A. A light lunch will be provided to students free of charge. Instructors do not have to stick around for the whole day (come for your part and leave... a whole hour of your time to help the next generation along...pretty easy to muster, no?).

That's it for now...as nothing is official until we have a full docket of instructors. Here is your chance to make a difference.

Ev Tupis, W2EV

VHF Academy Headmaster <grin>

Sponsored by The Rochester VHF Group

THE VHF JOURNAL ADVISOR

It's another advice column, based upon conversations had at the Rochester Hamfest just last weekend.

Seems like the Rochester Hamfest has lost it's "zing" . RF- Victor, NY

Yup. You're absolutely right. I asked around of the attenders and this was the response:

#1 most mentioned reason: The ongoing controversy over the Rochester Hamfest finances.

To a man everyone who this question was posed mentioned this first. Members were asking questions about this 20 years ago and now it's finally boiled over.

The gist of it is this: An accounting of the Rochester Hamfest books was reportedly asked for by the RARA President and refused. As RARA is the sponsoring entity, and the members of RARA volunteer for the good of the club to make the Hamfest operate, this all seems pretty strange. So, we have to ask, are people staying away because they *have lost faith in the transparency of the Hamfest operation?*

#2 reason: All hamfest attendances are down.

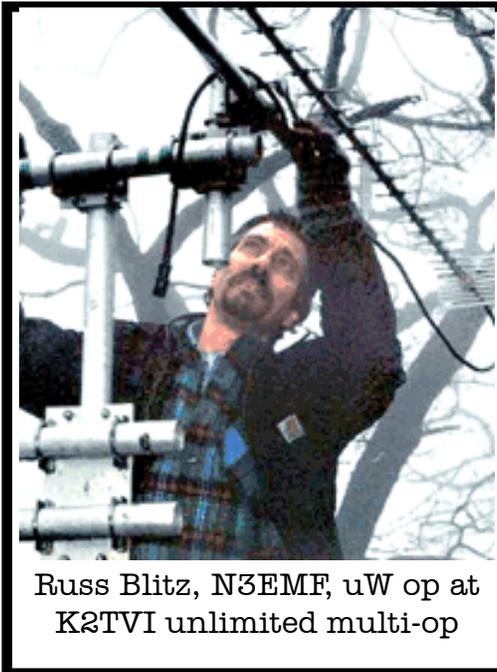
Yup- that's true. After years of denying it, even the Dayton Hamfest had to admit that they were dropping off. I heard this about 5 years ago.

#3 reason: memberships are down in all local Rochester ham clubs.

This is true of all local clubs *except* the RVHFG. There was a time when Rochester boasted the highest number of hams per-capita of anyplace in the world. This may still be the case, but it tells me that, as a microcosm of the ham community, our whole hobby is in serious trouble.

#4 reason: the draw of the Internet.

Another indisputable truth. I wonder what young folks would ever see today in radio below 50MHz, frankly... ask KB2VGH why the heck he's wasting his time on VHF and uW? I think not. Look at the attendance at the "ever popular" and "highly acclaimed" VHF mini-forum at the hamfest. Nuff said.



Russ Blitz, N3EMF, uW op at K2TVI unlimited multi-op

5 reason: Morse Code is killing us.

In Canada the RAC is petitioning the government to drop ALL Morse code requirements. No doubt this controversial motion will eventually be approved, as international requirements and uses of Morse Code are falling left and right.

I *love* the code, don't get me wrong. I enjoy pounding brass over using a microphone. But I love lot's of things... and I don't force other to participate in them either.

Has code outlived its usefulness as a critical mode of communications and now just is serving as **filter** whose mesh is too fine for the use were putting it to? Sure, it's the only way to make a contact

in a lot of VHF + situations... but is that because we're still afraid to try something else? (you already got my PSK31 rant on page 3- I won't go into that again).

OF ALL THE TECHNOLOGY available to Marconi 100 years ago when he crossed the Atlantic on Shortwave, Morse code is the sole one we still use. Why shouldn't we use the most advanced techniques? **Why should we prevent people from using those techniques because they don't know one used 100 years ago that today is literally in its death throes?**

THE TIME TO DUMP THE CODE AS A REQUIREMENT IS NOW. The future is digital- deal with it! Look at what was for sale at the hamfest- how much was radio stuff? How much was computer stuff? As I said earlier in this issue, are you going to operate CW and SSB for the rest of your life? If so, why did you get off HF, then? Where's your sense of adventure?

So how does this come back to the Rochester Hamfest?

There are a lot of things about the Rochester Hamfest that are *old and in the way* just like there are in Ham radio. Maybe it's time to clean house, take the stuff we don't want to the dumpster, and get rid of it.

Got a question?

We have an answer... even if we have to make it up ourselves!

Send yours to the VHF JOURNAL ADVISOR at:
tantonr@kingston.net

(At the very least our response will be colorful, eh! :^)

From the Treasurer:

By Paul N2OPW May 24, 2000

CHECKING ACCOUNT

Previous Balance.....	\$318.16
Income:	
Dues collected.....	10.00
50/50 profits.....	16.00
Awards collected.....	00.00

Expenses:

Newsletter Supplies.....	-39.09
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Current Balance..... \$305.07

SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Previous Balance.....	\$1258.07
Income:	
Interest:..	0.00
Expenses:.....	0.00

Current Balance.....\$1258.07

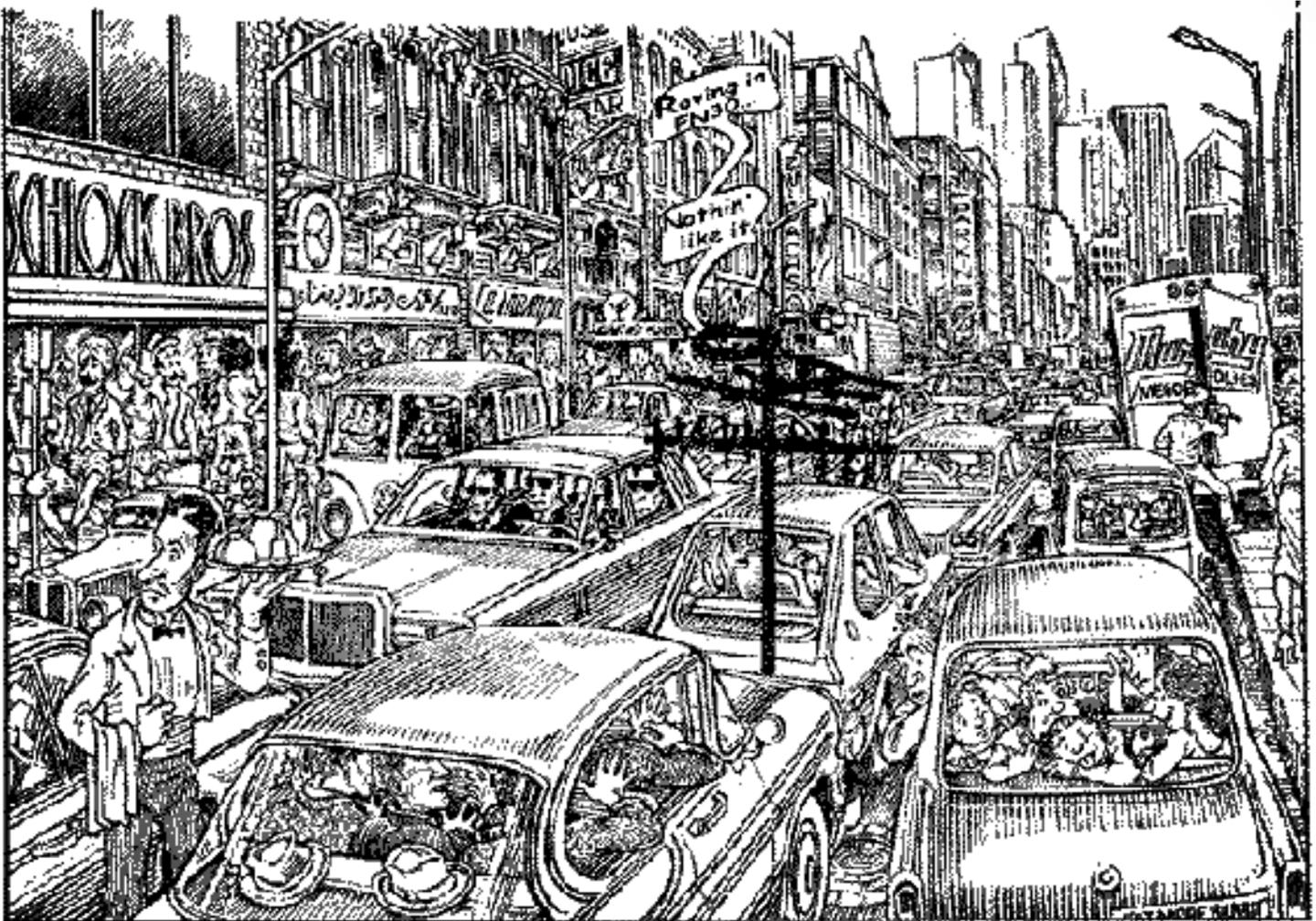
Balance on Hand:

Checking.....	305.07
Savings.....	1,258.07

Total..... \$ 1,563.14

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