Chapter 7

Multiband Antennas

For operation in a number of bands, such as those between 3.5 and 30 MHz, it would be impractical for most amateurs to put up a separate antenna for each band. But this is not necessary—a dipole, cut for the lowest frequency band to be used, can be operated readily on higher frequencies. To do so, one must be willing to accept the fact that such harmonic-type operation leads to a change in the directional pattern of the antenna, both in the azimuth and the elevation planes (see Chapter 2, Antenna Fundamentals, and Chapter 3, The Effects of Ground).

You can see from discussions in Chapter 6, Low-Frequency Antennas, that you should carefully plan the height at which you install a multiband horizontally polarized antenna. This is one aspect of multiband antennas. Another important thing to consider is that you should be willing to use so-called *tuned feeders*. A center-fed single-wire antenna can be made to accept power and radiate it with high efficiency on any frequency higher than its fundamental resonant frequency and, with a reduction in efficiency and bandwidth, on frequencies as low as one half the fundamental.

In fact, it is not necessary for an antenna to be a full half-wavelength long at the lowest frequency. An antenna can be considerably shorter than ½ λ, even as short as ¼ λ, and still be a very efficient radiator. The use of such short antennas results in stresses, however, on other parts of the system, for example the antenna tuner and the transmission line. This will be discussed in some detail in this chapter.

Methods have been devised for making a single antenna structure operate on a number of bands while still offering a good match to a transmission line, usually of the coaxial type. It should be understood, however, that a multiband antenna is not *necessarily* one that will match a given line on all bands on which you intend to use it. Even a relatively short whip type of antenna can be operated as a multiband antenna with suitable loading for each band. Such loading may be in the form of a coil at the base of the antenna on those frequencies where loading is needed, or it may be incorporated in the tuned feeders running from the transmitter to the base of the antenna.

This chapter describes a number of systems that can be used on two or more bands. Beam antennas, such as Yagis or quads, are treated separately in later chapters.

Simple Wire Antennas

The simplest multiband antenna is a random length of #12 or #14 wire. Power can be fed to the wire on practically any frequency using one or the other of the methods shown in **Fig 1**. If the wire is made either 67 or 135 feet long, it can also be fed through a tuned circuit, as in **Fig 2**. It is advantageous to use an SWR bridge or other indicator in the coax line at the point marked "X."

If you have installed a 28- or 50-MHz rotary beam, in many cases it may be possible to use the beam's feed line as an antenna on the lower frequencies. Connecting the two wires of the feeder together at the station end will give a random-length wire that can be conveniently coupled to the transmitter as in Fig 1. The rotary system at the far end will serve only to *end-load* the wire and will not have much other effect.

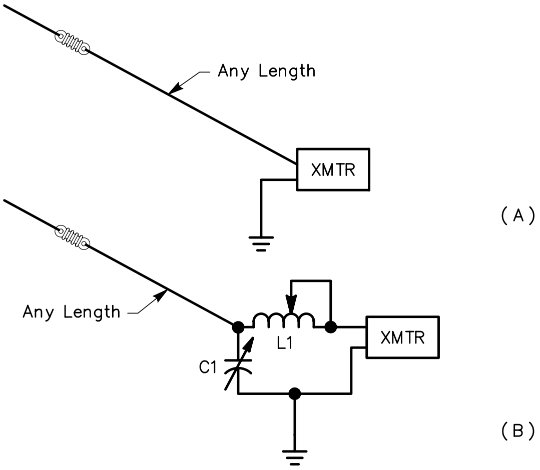

Fig 1—At A, a random-length wire driven directly from the pi-network output of a transmitter. At B, an L network for use in cases where sufficient loading cannot be obtained with the arrangement at A. C1 should have about the same plate spacing as the final tank capacitor in a vacuum-tube type of transmitter; a maximum capacitance of 100 pF is sufficient if L1 is 20 to 25 μH. A suitable coil would consist of 30 turns of #12 wire, 2½ inches diameter, 6 turns per inch. Bare wire should be used so the tap can be placed as required for loading the transmitter.

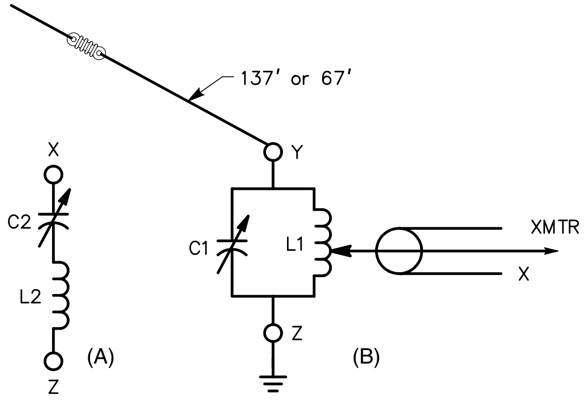

Fig 2—If the antenna length is 137 feet, a parallel-tuned coupling circuit can be used on each amateur band from 3.5 through 30 MHz, with the possible exception of the WARC 10-, 18- and 24-MHz bands. C1 should duplicate the final tank tuning capacitor and L1 should have the same dimensions as the final tank inductor on the band being used. If the wire is 67 feet long, series tuning can be used on 3.5 MHz as shown at the left; parallel tuning will be required on 7 MHz and higher frequency bands. C2 and L2 will in general duplicate the final tank tuning capacitor and inductor, the same as with parallel tuning. The L network shown in Fig 1B is also suitable for these antenna lengths.

One disadvantage of all such directly fed systems is that part of the antenna is practically within the station, and there is a good chance that you will have some trouble with RF feedback. RF within the station can often be minimized by choosing a length of wire so that the low feed-point impedance at a current loop occurs at or near the transmitter. This means using a wire length of λ/4 (65 feet at 3.6 MHz, 33 feet at 7.1 MHz), or an odd multiple of λ/4 (¾-λ is 195 feet at 3.6 MHz, 100 feet at 7.1 MHz). Obviously, this can be done for only one band in the case of even harmonically related bands, since the wire length that presents a current loop at the transmitter will present a voltage loop at two (or four) times that frequency.

When you operate with a random-length wire antenna, as in Figs 1 and 2, you should try different types of grounds on the various bands, to see what gives you the best results. In many cases it will be satisfactory to return to the transmitter chassis for the ground, or directly to a convenient metallic water pipe. If neither of these works well (or the metallic water pipe is not available), a length of #12 or #14 wire (approximately λ/4 long) can often be used to good advantage. Connect the wire at the point in the circuit that is shown grounded, and run it out and down the side of the house, or support it a few feet above the ground if the station is on the first floor or in the basement. It should not be connected to actual ground at any point.

END-FED ANTENNAS

When a straight-wire antenna is fed at one end with a two-wire transmission line, the length of the antenna portion becomes critical if radiation from the line is to be held to a minimum. Such an antenna system for multiband operation is the *end-fed Zepp* or *Zepp-fed* antenna shown in **Fig 3**. The antenna length is made λ/2 long at the lowest operating frequency. (This name came about because the first documented use of this sort of antennas was on the *Zeppelin* airships.) The feeder length can be anything that is convenient, but feeder lengths that are multiples of λ/4 generally give trouble with parallel currents and radiation from the feeder portion of the system. The feeder can be an open-wire line of #14 solid

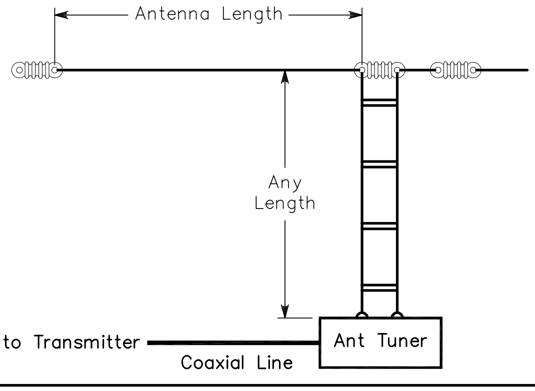

Fig 3—An end-fed Zepp antenna for multiband use.

copper wire spaced 4 or 6 inches with ceramic or plastic spacers. Open-wire TV line (not the type with a solid web of dielectric) is a convenient type to use. This type of line is available in approximately 300- and 450-Ω characteristic impedances.

If you have room for only a 67-foot flat top and yet want to operate in the 3.5-MHz band, the two feeder wires can be tied together at the transmitter end and the entire system treated as a random-length wire fed directly, as in Fig 1. The simplest precaution against parallel currents that could cause feed-line radiation is to use a feeder length that is not a multiple of λ/4. An antenna tuner can be used to provide multiband coverage with an end-fed antenna with any length of open-wire feed line, as shown in Fig 3.

CENTER-FED ANTENNAS

The simplest and most flexible (and also least expensive) all-band antennas are those using open-wire parallel-conductor feeders to the center of the antenna, as in **Fig 4**. Because each half of the flat top is the same length, the feeder currents will be balanced at all frequencies unless, of course, unbalance is introduced by one half of the antenna being closer to ground (or a grounded object) than the other. For best results and to maintain feed-current balance, the feeder should run away at right angles to the antenna, preferably for at least λ/4.

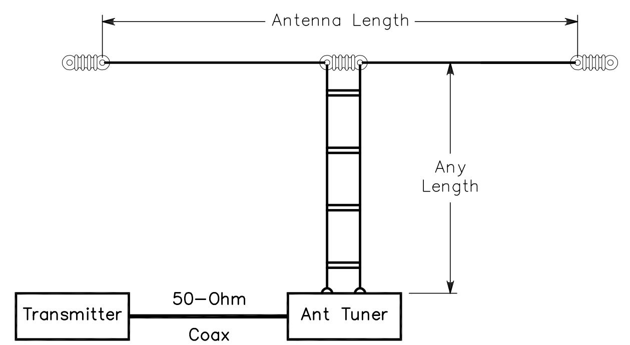

Fig 4—A center-fed antenna system for multiband use.

Center feed is not only more desirable than end feed because of inherently better balance, but generally also results in a lower standing wave ratio on the transmission line, provided a parallel-conductor line having a characteristic impedance of 450 to 600 Ω is used. TV-type open-wire line is satisfactory for all but possibly high power installations (over 500 W), where heavier wire and wider spacing is desirable to handle the larger currents and voltages.

The length of the antenna is not critical, nor is the length of the line. As mentioned earlier, the length of the antenna can be considerably less than λ/2 and still be very effective. If the overall length is at least λ/4 at the lowest frequency, a quite usable system will result. The only difficulty that may exist with this type of system is the matter of coupling the antenna-system load to the transmitter. Most modern transmitters are designed to work into a 50-Ω coaxial load. With this type of antenna system a coupling network (an antenna tuner) is required.

Feed-Line Radiation

The preceding sections have pointed out means of reducing or eliminating feed-line radiation. However, it should be emphasized that any radiation from a transmission line is not "lost" energy and is not necessarily harmful. Whether or not feed-line radiation is important depends entirely on the antenna system being used. For example, feed-line radiation is not desirable when a directive array is being used. Such feed-line radiation can distort the desired pattern of such an array, producing responses in unwanted directions. In other words, you want radiation only from the directive array, rather than from the directive array and the feed line. See Chapter 26, Coupling the Line to the Antenna, for a detailed discussion of this topic.

On the other hand, in the case of a multiband dipole where general coverage is desired, if the feed line happens to radiate, such energy could actually have a desirable effect. Antenna purists may dispute such a premise, but from a practical standpoint where you are not concerned with a directive pattern, much time and labor can be saved by ignoring possible transmission-line radiation.

THE 135-FOOT, 80 TO 10-METER DIPOLE

As mentioned previously, one of the most versatile antennas around is a simple dipole, center-fed with open-wire transmission line and used with an antenna tuner in the shack. A 135-foot long dipole hung horizontally between two trees or towers at a height of 50 feet or higher works very well on 80 through 10 meters. Such an antenna system has significant gain at the higher frequencies.

Flattop or Inverted-V Configuration?

There is no denying that the inverted-V mounting configuration (sometimes called a *drooping dipole*) is very convenient, since it requires only a single support. The flattop configuration, however, where the dipole is mounted horizontally, gives more gain at the higher frequencies. **Fig 5** shows the 80-meter azimuth and elevation patterns for two 135-foot long dipoles. The first is mounted as a flattop at a height of 50 feet over flat ground with a conductivity of 5 mS/m and a dielectric constant of 13, typical for average soil. The second dipole uses the same length of wire, with the center apex at 50 feet and the ends drooped down to be suspended 10 feet off the ground. This height is sufficient so that there is no danger to passersby from RF burns.

At 3.8 MHz, the flattop dipole about 4 dB more peak gain than its drooping cousin. On the other hand, the inverted-V configuration gives a pattern that is more omnidirectional than the flattop dipole, which has nulls off the ends of the wire. Omnidirectional coverage may be more important to net operators, for example, than maximum gain.

Fig 6 shows the azimuth and elevation patterns for the same two antenna configurations, but this time at 14.2 MHz. The flattop dipole has developed four distinct lobes at a 10° elevation angle, an angle typical for 20-meter skywave communication. The peak elevation angle gain of 9.4 dBi occurs at about 17° for a height of 50 feet above flat ground for the flattop dipole. The inverted-V configuration is again nominally more omnidirectional, but the peak gain is down some 6 dB from the flattop.

The situation gets even worse in terms of peak gain at 28.4 MHz for the inverted-V configuration. Here the peak gain is down about 8 dB from that produced by the flattop dipole, which exhibits eight lobes at this frequency with a maximum gain of 10.5 dBi at about 7° elevation. See the comparisons in **Fig 7**.

Whatever configuration you choose to mount the 135-foot dipole, you will want to feed it with some sort of low-loss open-wire transmission line. So-called *window* 450-Ω ladder line is popular for this application. Be sure to twist the line about three or four turns per foot to keep it from twisting excessively in the wind. Make sure also that you provide some mechanical support for the line at the junction with the dipole

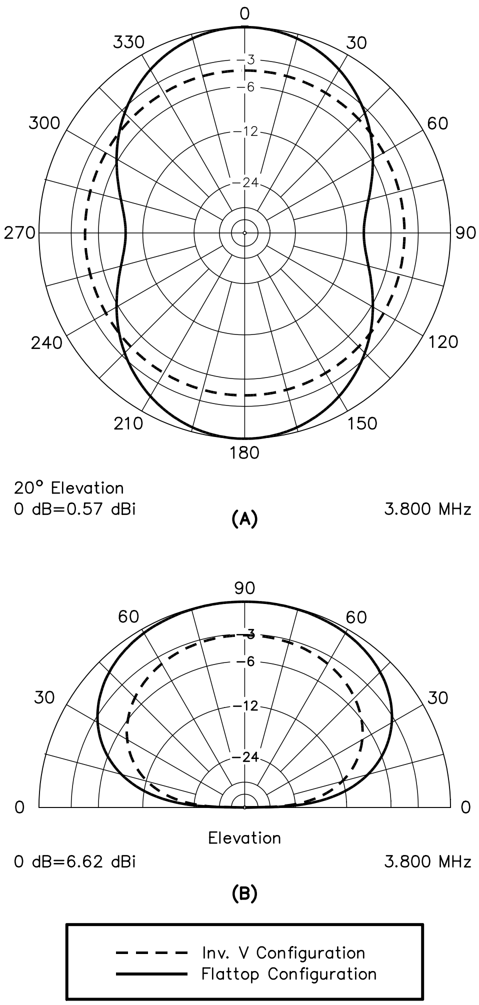

Fig 5—Patterns on 80 meters for 135-foot, center-fed dipole erected as a horizontal flattop dipole at 50 feet, compared with the same dipole installed as an inverted V with the apex at 50 feet and the ends at 10 feet. The azimuth pattern is shown at A, where the dipole wire lies in the 90° to 270° plane. At B, the elevation pattern, the dipole wire comes out of the paper at a right angle. On 80 meters, the patterns are not markedly different for either flattop or inverted-V configuration.

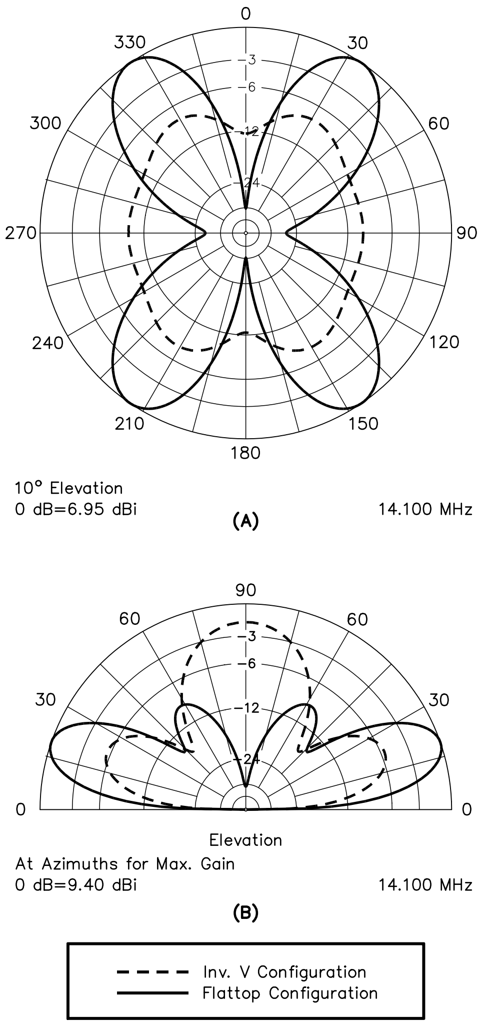

Fig 6—Patterns on 20 meters for two 135-foot dipoles. One is mounted horizontally as a flattop and the other as an inverted V with 120° included angle between the legs. The azimuth pattern is shown in A and the elevation pattern is shown in B. The inverted V has about 6 dB less gain at the peak azimuths, but has a more uniform, almost omnidirectional, azimuthal pattern. In the elevation plane, the inverted V has a fat lobe overhead, making it a somewhat better antenna for local communication, but not quite so good for DX contacts at low elevation angles.

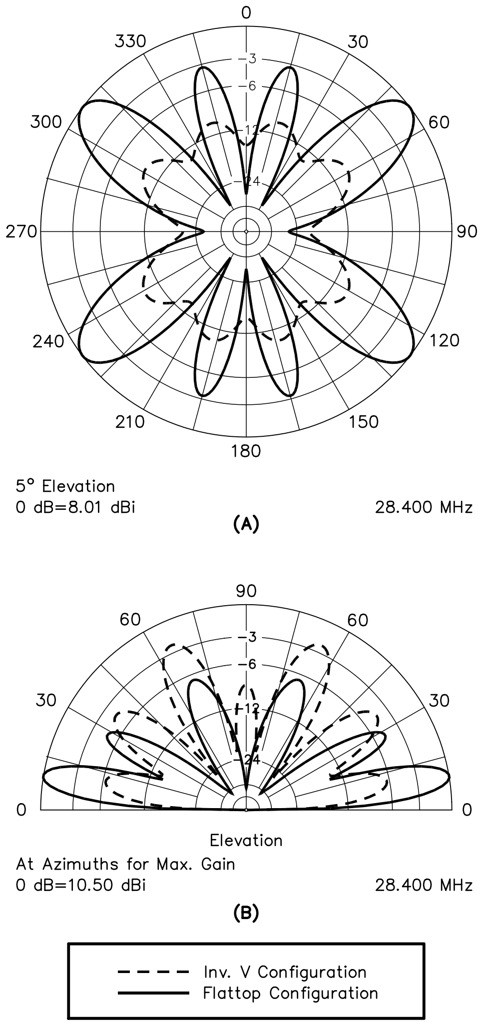

Fig 7—Patterns on 10 meters for same antenna configurations as in Figs 7 and 8. Once again, the inverted-V configuration yields a more omnidirectional pattern, but at the expense of almost 8 dB less gain than the flattop configuration at its strongest lobes.

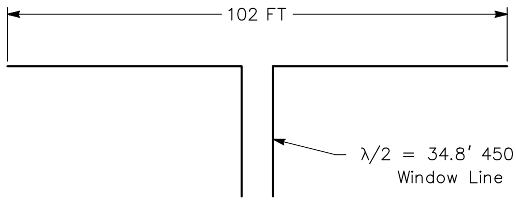

Fig 8—The G5RV multiband antenna covers 3.5 through 30 MHz. Although many amateurs claim it may be fed directly with 50-Ω coax on several amateur bands, Louis Varney, its originator, recommends the use of a matching network on bands other than 14 MHz.

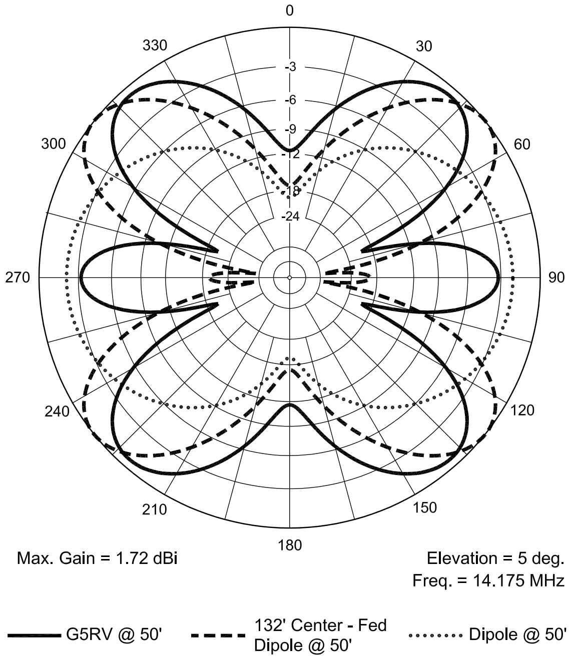

Fig 9—Azimuth pattern at a 5° takeoff angle for a 102-foot long, 50-foot high G5RV dipole (solid line). For comparison, the response for a 132-foot long, center-fed dipole at 50 feet height (dashed line) and a 33-foot long half wave 20-meter dipole at 50 feet (dotted line) are also shown. The longest antenna exhibits about 0.5 dB more gain than the G5RV, although the response is more omnidirectional for the G5RV—an advantage for a wire antenna that is not usually rotatable.

wires. This will prevent flexing of the transmission-line wire, since excessive flexing will result in breakage.

THE G5RV MULTIBAND ANTENNA

A multiband antenna that does not require a lot of space, is simple to construct, and is low in cost is the G5RV. Designed in England by Louis Varney (G5RV) some years ago, it has become quite popular in the US. The G5RV design is shown in **Fig 8**. The antenna may be used from 3.5 through 30 MHz. Although some amateurs claim it may be fed directly with 50-Ω coax on several amateur bands with a low SWR, Varney himself recommended the use of an antenna tuner on bands other than 14 MHz (see Bibliography). In fact, an analysis of the G5RV feed-point impedance shows there is *no* length of balanced line of *any* characteristic impedance that will transform the terminal impedance to the 50 to 75-Ω range on all bands. (Low SWR indication with coax feed and no matching network on bands other than 14 MHz may indicate excessive losses in the coaxial line.)

Fig 9 shows the 20-meter azimuthal pattern for a G5RV at a height of 50 feet over flat ground, at an elevation angle of 5° that is suitable for DX work. For comparison, the response for two other antennas is also shown in Fig 9—a standard half wave 20-meter dipole at 50 feet and a 132-foot long center-fed dipole at 50 feet. The G5RV on 20 meters is, of course, longer than a standard half wave dipole and it exhibits about 2 dB more gain compared to that dipole. With four lobes making it look rather like a four-leaf clover, the azimuth pattern is more omnidirectional than the two-lobed dipole. The 132-foot center-fed dipole is longer than the G5RV and it has about 0.5 dB more gain than the G5RV, also exhibiting four major lobes, along with two strong minor lobes in the plane of the wire. Overall, the azimuthal response for the G5RV is more omnidirectional than the comparison antennas.

The G5RV patterns for other frequencies are similar to those shown for the 135-foot dipole previously for other frequencies. Incidentally, you may be wondering why a 132-foot dipole is shown in Fig 9, rather than the 135-foot dipole described earlier. The 132-foot overall length describes another antenna that we'll discus in the next section on Windom antennas.

The portion of the G5RV antenna shown as horizontal in Fig 8 may also be installed in an inverted-V dipole arrangement, subject to the same loss of peak gain mentioned above for the 135-foot dipole. Or instead, up to ⅙ of the total length of the antenna at each end may be dropped vertically, semi-vertically, or bent at a convenient angle to the main axis of the antenna, to cut down on the requirements for real estate.

THE WINDOM ANTENNA

An antenna that enjoyed popularity in the 1930s and into the 1940s was what we now call the *Windom*. It was known at the time as a "single-feeder Hertz" antenna, after being described in Sep 1929 *QST* by Loren G. Windom, W8GZ (see Bibliography).

The Windom antenna, shown in **Fig 10**, is fed with a single wire, attached approximately 14% off center. In theory, this location provides a match for the single-wire transmission line, which is worked against an earth ground. Because the single-wire feed line is not inherently well balanced and because it is brought to the operating position, "RF in the shack" and a potential radiation hazard may be experienced with this antenna.

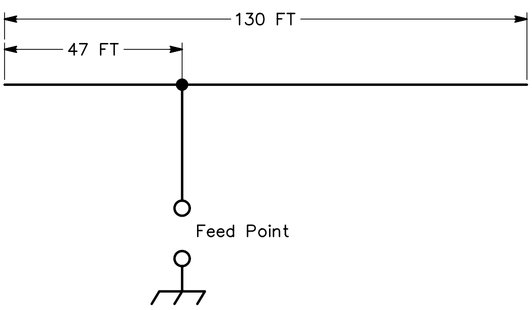

Fig 10—The Windom antenna, cut for a fundamental frequency of 3.75 MHz. The single-wire feeder, connected 14% off center, is brought into the station and the system is fed against ground. The antenna is also effective on its harmonics.

Later variations of the off-center fed Windom moved the attachment point slightly to accommodate balanced 300-Ω ribbon line. One relatively recent variation is called the "Carolina Windom," apparently because two of the designers, Edgar Lambert, WA4LVB, and Joe Wright, W4UEB, lived in coastal North Carolina (the third, Jim Wilkie, WY4R, lived

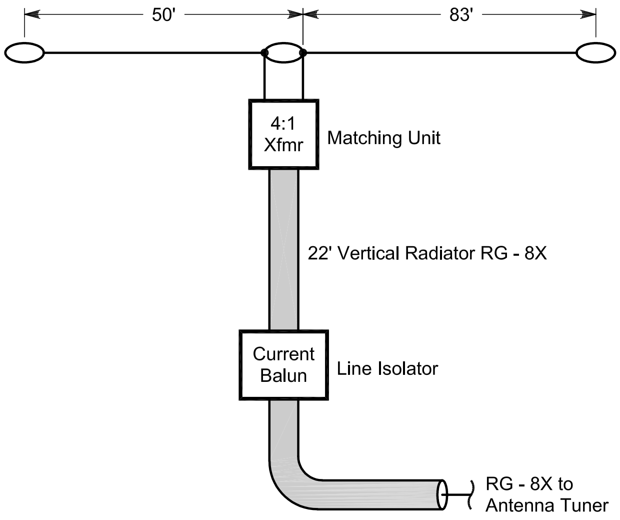

Fig 11—Layout for flattop "Carolina Windom" antenna.

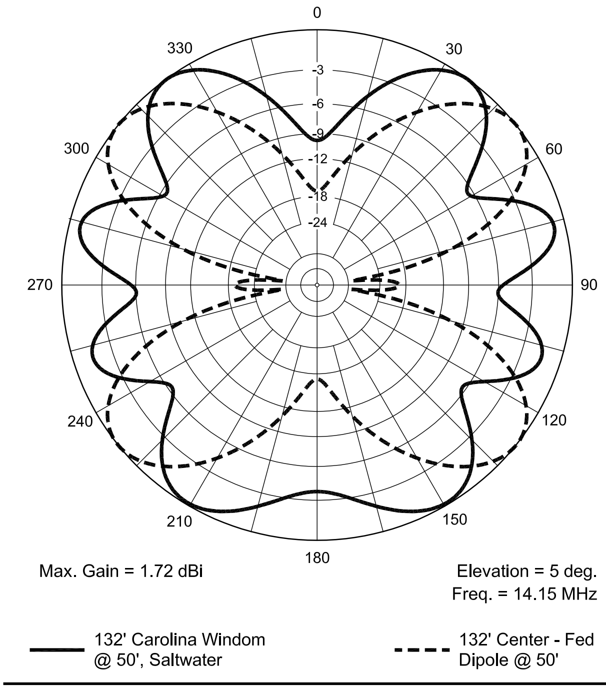

Fig 12—20-meter azimuth patterns for a 132-foot long off-center fed Carolina Windom and a 132-foot long center-fed flattop dipole on 20 meters, both at a height of 50 feet above saltwater. The response for the Carolina Windom is more omnidirectional because the vertically polarized radiation from the 22-foot long vertical RG-8X coax fills in the deep nulls.

in nearby Norfolk, Virginia). One of the interesting parts about the Carolina Windom is that it turns a potential disadvantage—feed line radiation—into a potential advantage.

Fig 11 is a diagram of a flattop Carolina Windom, which uses a 50-foot wire joined with an 83-foot wire at the feedpoint insulator. This resembles the layout shown in Fig 10 for the original W8GZ Windom. The "Vertical Radiator" for the Carolina Windom is a 22-foot piece of RG-8X coax, with a "Line Isolator" (current-type choke balun) at the bottom end and a 4:1 "Matching Unit" at the top. The system takes advantage of the asymmetry of the horizontal wires to induce current onto the braid of the vertical coax section. Note that the matching unit is a voltage-type balun transformer, which purposely does not act like a common-mode current choking balun. You must use an antenna tuner with this system to present a 1:1 SWR to the transmitter on the amateur bands from 80 through 10 meters.

The radiation resulting from current induced onto the 22-foot vertical coax section tends to fill in the deep nulls that would be present if the 132-feet of horizontal wire were symmetrically center fed. Over saltwater, the vertical radiator can give significant gain at the low elevation angles needed for DX work. Indeed, field reports for the Carolina Windom are most impressive for stations located near or on saltwater. Over average soil the advantage of the additional vertically polarized component is not quite so evident. **Fig 12** compares a 50-foot high Carolina Windom on 14 MHz over saltwater to a 50-foot high, 132-foot long, flattop center-fed dipole. The Carolina Windom has a more omnidirectional azimuthal pattern, a desirable characteristic in a 132-foot long wire antenna that is not normally rotated to favor different directions.

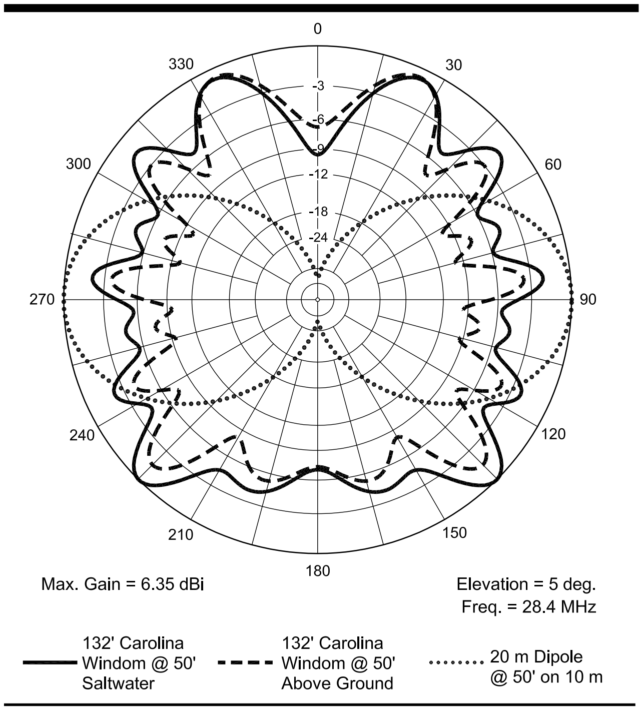

Fig 13—10-meter azimuthal responses for a 132-foot long, 50-foot high Carolina Windom over saltwater (solid line) and over average ground (dashed line), compared to that for a 20-meter half-wave dipole at 50 feet (dotted line).

Another advantage of the Carolina Windom over a traditional Windom is that the coax feed line hanging below the common-mode current choke does not radiate, meaning that there will be less "RF in the shack." Since the feed line is not always operating at a low SWR on various ham bands, use the minimum length of feed coax possible to hold down losses in the coax.

Fig 13 shows the azimuth responses for a 50-foot long flattop Carolina Windom on 28.4 MHz over saltwater and over average soil. The pattern for a 50-foot high, flattop 20-meter dipole operated on 28.4 MHz is also shown, since this 20-meter dipole can also be used as a multiband antenna, when fed with open-wire transmission line rather than with coax. Again, the Carolina Windom exhibits a more omnidirectional pattern, even if the pattern is somewhat lopsided at the bottom.

MULTIPLE-DIPOLE ANTENNAS

The antenna system shown in **Fig 14** consists of a group of center-fed dipoles, all connected in parallel at the point where the transmission line joins them. The dipole elements are *stagger-tuned.* That is, they are individually cut to be λ/2 at different frequencies. Chapter 9, Broadband Antenna Matching, discusses stagger tuning of dipole antennas to attain a low SWR across a broad range of frequencies. An extension of the stagger tuning idea is to construct multiwire dipoles cut for different bands.

In theory, the 4-wire antenna of Fig 14 can be used with a coaxial feeder on five bands. The four wires are prepared as parallel-fed dipoles for 3.5, 7, 14, and 28 MHz. The 7-MHz dipole can be operated on its 3rd harmonic for 21-MHz operation to cover a fifth band. However, in practice it has been found difficult to get a good match to coaxial line

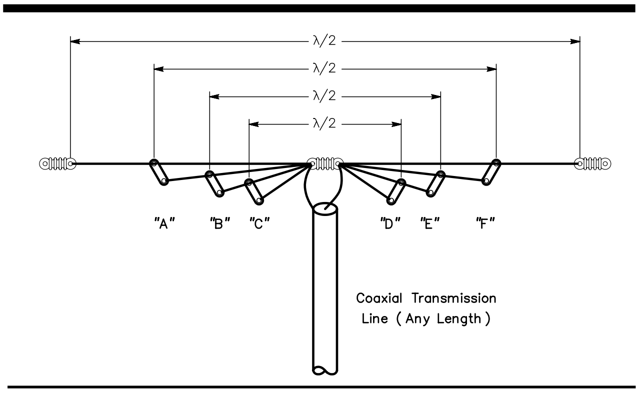

Fig 14—Multiband antenna using paralleled dipoles all connected to a common low-impedance transmission line. The half-wave dimensions may be either for the centers of the various bands or selected to fit favorite frequencies in each band. The length of a half wave in feet is 468/frequency in MHz, but because of interaction among the various elements, some pruning for resonance may be needed on each band.

on all bands. The $\lambda/2$ resonant length of any one dipole in the presence of the others is not the same as for a dipole by itself due to interaction, and attempts to optimize all four lengths can become a frustrating procedure. The problem is compounded because the optimum tuning changes in a different antenna environment, so what works for one amateur may not work for another. Even so, many amateurs with limited antenna space are willing to accept the mismatch on some bands just so they can operate on those frequencies using a single coax feed line.

Since this antenna system is balanced, it is desirable to use a balanced transmission line to feed it. The most desirable type of line is 75-Ω transmitting twin-lead. However, either 52-Ω or 75-Ω coaxial line can be used. Coax line introduces some unbalance, but this is tolerable on the lower frequencies. An alternative is to use a balun at the feed point, fed with coaxial cable.

The separation between the dipoles for the various frequencies does not seem to be especially critical. One set of wires can be suspended from the next larger set, using insulating spreaders (of the type used for feeder spreaders) to give a separation of a few inches. Users of this antenna often run some of the dipoles at right angles to each other to help reduce interaction. Some operators use inverted-V-mounted dipoles as guy wires for the mast that supports the antenna system.

An interesting method of construction used successfully by Louis Richard, ON4UF, is shown in **Fig 15**. The antenna has four dipoles (for 7, 14, 21 and 28 MHz) constructed from 300-Ω ribbon transmission line. A single length of ribbon makes two dipoles. Thus, two lengths, as shown in the sketch, serve to make dipoles for four bands. Ribbon with copper-clad steel conductors (Amphenol type 14-022) should be used because all of the weight, including that of the feed line, must be supported by the uppermost wire.

Two pieces of ribbon are first cut to a length suitable for the two halves of the longest dipole. Then one of the conductors in each piece is cut to proper length for the next band higher in frequency. The excess wire and insulation is stripped away. A second pair of lengths is prepared in the same manner, except that the lengths are appropriate for the next two higher frequency bands.

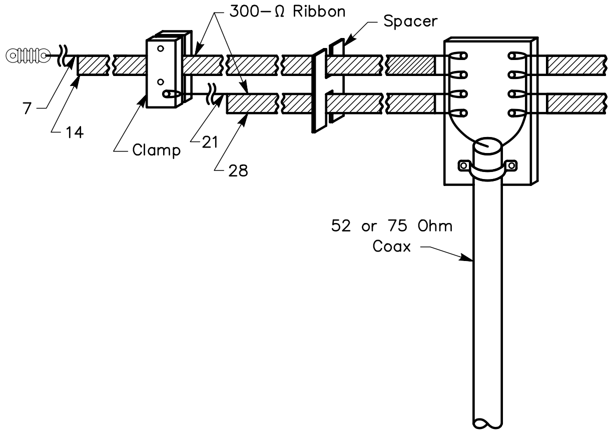

Fig 15—Sketch showing how the twin-lead multiple-dipole antenna system is assembled. The excess wire and insulation are stripped away.

A piece of thick polystyrene sheet drilled with holes for anchoring each wire serves as the central insulator. The shorter pair of dipoles is suspended the width of the ribbon below the longer pair by clamps also made of poly sheet. Intermediate spacers are made by sawing slots in pieces of poly sheet so they will fit the ribbon snugly.

The multiple-dipole principle can also be applied to vertical antennas. Parallel or fanned $\lambda/4$ elements of wire or tubing can be worked against ground or tuned radials from a common feed point.

OFF-CENTER-FED DIPOLES

Fig 16 shows an off-center-fed or *OCF* dipole. Because it is similar in appearance to the Windom of Fig 12, this antenna is often mistakenly called a "Windom," or sometimes a "coax-fed Windom." The two antennas are not the same, since the Windom is worked against its image in the ground, while one leg is worked against the other in the OCF dipole.

It is not necessary to feed a dipole antenna at its center, although doing so will allow it to be operated with a relatively low feed-point impedance on its fundamental and *odd* harmonics. (For example, a 7-MHz center-fed half-wave dipole can also be used for 21-MHz operation.) By contrast, the OCF dipole of Fig 16, fed ⅓ of its length from one end, may be used on its fundamental and *even* harmonics. Its free-space antenna-terminal impedance at 3.5, 7 and 14 MHz is on the order of 150 to 200 Ω. A 1:4 step-up transformer at the feed point should offer a reasonably good match to 50- or 75-Ω line, although some commercially made OCF dipoles use a 1:6 transformer.

At the 6th harmonic, 21 MHz, the antenna is three wavelengths long and fed at a voltage loop (maximum), instead of a current loop. The feed-point impedance at this frequency

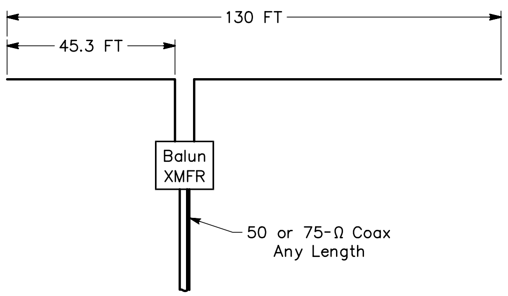

Fig 16—The off-center-fed (OCF) dipole for 3.5, 7 and 14 MHz. A 1:4 or 1:6 step-up current balun is used at the feed point.

is high, a few thousand ohms, so the antenna is unsuitable for use on this band.

Balun Requirements

Because the OCF dipole is not fed at the center of the radiator, the RF impedance paths of the two wires at the feed point are unequal. If the antenna is fed directly with coax (or a balanced line), or if a voltage step-up transformer is used, then voltages of equal magnitude (but opposite polarity) are applied to the wires at the feed point. Because of unequal impedances, the resulting antenna currents flowing in the two wires will not be equal. This also means that antenna current can flow on the feeder—on the *outside* of a coaxial line. (You may recall that this is how the Carolina Windom works, actually inducing current onto a carefully chosen length of coax, choked at its bottom end, so that it acts as a vertical radiator.)

How much current flows on the coax shield depends on the impedance of the RF current path down the outside of the feed line. In general, this is not a desirable situation. To prevent radiation, equal *currents* are required at the feed point, with the same current flowing in and out of the short leg as in and out of the long leg of the radiator. A *current* or *choke* type of balun provides just such operation. (Current baluns are discussed in detail in Chapter 26, Coupling the Line to the Antenna.)

Trap Antennas

By using tuned circuits of appropriate design strategically placed in a dipole, the antenna can be made to show what is essentially fundamental resonance at a number of different frequencies. The general principle is illustrated by **Fig 17**.

Even though a trap-antenna arrangement is a simple one, an explanation of how a trap antenna works can be elusive. For some designs, traps are resonated in our amateur bands, and for others (especially commercially made antennas) the traps are resonant far outside any amateur band.

A trap in an antenna system can perform either of two functions, depending on whether or not it is resonant at the operating frequency. A familiar case is where the trap is parallel-resonant in an amateur band. For the moment, let us assume that dimension A in Fig 17 is 32 feet and that each L/C combination is resonant in the 7-MHz band. Because of its parallel resonance, the trap presents a high impedance at that point in the antenna system. The electrical effect at 7 MHz is that the trap behaves as an insulator. It serves to divorce the outside ends, the B sections, from the antenna. The result is easy to visualize—we have an antenna system that is resonant in the 7-MHz band. Each 33-foot section (labeled A in the drawing) represents λ/4, and the trap behaves as an insulator. We therefore have a full-size 7-MHz antenna.

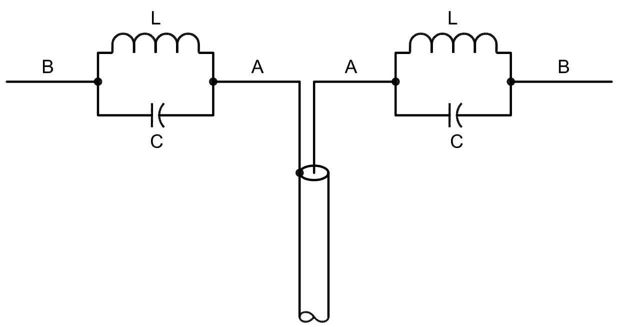

Fig 17—A trap dipole antenna. This antenna may be fed with 50-Ω coaxial line. Depending on the L/C ratio of the trap elements and the lengths chosen for dimensions A and B, the traps may be resonant either in an amateur band or at a frequency far removed from an amateur band for proper two-band antenna operation.

The second function of a trap, obtained when the frequency of operation is *not* the resonant frequency of the trap, is one of electrical loading. If the operating frequency is below that of trap resonance, the trap behaves as an inductor; if above, as a capacitor. Inductive loading will electrically lengthen the antenna, and capacitive loading will electrically shorten the antenna.

Let's carry our assumption a bit further and try using the antenna we just considered at 3.5 MHz. With the traps resonant in the 7-MHz band, they will behave as inductors when operation takes place at 3.5 MHz, electrically lengthening the antenna. This means that the total length of sections A and B (plus the length of the inductor) may be something less than a physical λ/4 for resonance at 3.5 MHz. Thus, we have a two-band antenna that is shorter than full size on the lower frequency band. But with the electrical loading provided by the traps, the overall electrical length is λ/2. The total antenna length needed for resonance in the 3.5-MHz band will depend on the L/C ratio of the trap elements.

The key to trap operation off resonance is its L/C ratio, the ratio of the value of L to the value of C. At resonance, however, within practical limitations the L/C ratio is immaterial as far as electrical operation goes. For example, in the antenna we've been discussing, it would make no difference for 7-MHz operation whether the inductor were 1 μH and the capacitor were 500 pF (the reactances would be just below 45 Ω at 7.1 MHz), or whether the inductor were 5 μH and the capacitor 100 pF (reactances of approximately 224 Ω at 7.1 MHz). But the choice of these values will make a significant difference in the antenna size for resonance at 3.5 MHz. In the first case, where the L/C ratio is 2000, the necessary length of section B of the antenna for resonance at 3.75 MHz would be approximately 28.25 feet. In the second case, where the L/C ratio is 50,000, this length need be only 24.0 feet, a difference of more than 15%.

The above example concerns a two-band antenna with trap resonance at one of the two frequencies of operation. On each of the two bands, each half of the dipole operates as an electrical λ/4. However, the same band coverage can be obtained with a trap resonant at, say, 5 MHz, a frequency quite removed from either amateur band. With proper selection of the L/C ratio and the dimensions for A and B, the trap will act to shorten the antenna electrically at 7 MHz and lengthen it electrically at 3.5 MHz. Thus, an antenna that is intermediate in physical length between being full size on 3.5 MHz and full size on 7 MHz can cover both bands, even though the trap is not resonant at either frequency. Again, the antenna operates with electrical λ/4 sections. Note that such non-resonant traps have less RF current flowing in the trap components, and hence trap losses are less than for resonant traps.

Additional traps may be added in an antenna section to cover three or more bands. Or a judicious choice of dimensions and the L/C ratio may permit operation on three or more bands with just a pair of identical traps in the dipole.

An important point to remember about traps is this. If the operating frequency is below that of trap resonance, the trap behaves as an inductor; if above, as a capacitor. The above discussion is based on dipoles that operate electrically as λ/2 antennas. This is not a requirement, however. Elements may be operated as electrical 3/2 λ, or even 5/2 λ, and still present a reasonable impedance to a coaxial feeder. In trap antennas covering several HF bands, using electrical lengths that are odd multiples of λ/2 is often done at the higher frequencies.

To further aid in understanding trap operation, let's now choose trap L and C components that each have a reactance of 20 Ω at 7 MHz. Inductive reactance is directly proportional to frequency, and capacitive reactance is inversely proportional. When we shift operation to the 3.5-MHz band, the inductive reactance becomes 10 Ω, and the capacitive reactance becomes 40 Ω. At first thought, it may seem that the trap would become capacitive at 3.5 MHz with a higher capacitive reactance, and that the extra capacitive reactance would make the antenna electrically shorter yet. Fortunately, this is not the case. The inductor and the capacitor are connected in parallel with each other.

$$Z = \frac{-jX_L X_C}{X_L + X_C} \qquad \text{(Eq 1)}$$

where *j* indicates a reactive impedance component, rather than resistive. A positive result indicates inductive reactance, and a negative result indicates capacitive. In this 3.5-MHz case, with 40 Ω of capacitive reactance and 10 Ω of inductive, the equivalent series reactance is 13.3 Ω inductive. This inductive loading lengthens the antenna to an electrical λ/2 overall at 3.5 MHz, assuming the B end sections in Fig 17 are of the proper length.

With the above reactance values providing resonance at 7-MHz, X_L equals X_C, and the theoretical series equivalent is infinity. This provides the insulator effect, divorcing the ends.

At 14 MHz, where $X_L = 40\ \Omega$ and $X_C = 10\ \Omega$, the resultant series equivalent trap reactance is 13.3 Ω capacitive. If the total physical antenna length is slightly longer than 3/2 λ at 14 MHz, this trap reactance at 14 MHz can be used to shorten the antenna to an electrical 3/2 λ. In this way, 3-band operation is obtained for 3.5, 7 and 14 MHz with just one pair of identical traps. The design of such a system is not straightforward, however, for any chosen L/C ratio for a given total length affects the resonant frequency of the antenna on both the 3.5 and 14-MHz bands.

Trap Losses

Since the tuned circuits have some inherent losses, the efficiency of a trap system depends on the unloaded Q values of the tuned circuits. Low-loss (high-Q) coils should be used, and the capacitor losses likewise should be kept as low as possible. With tuned circuits that are good in this respect—comparable with the low-loss components used in transmitter tank circuits, for example—the reduction in efficiency compared with the efficiency of a simple dipole is small, but tuned circuits of low unloaded Q can lose an appreciable portion of the power supplied to the antenna.

The commentary above applies to traps assembled from conventional components. The important function of a trap that is resonant in an amateur band is to provide a high isolating impedance, and this impedance is directly proportional to Q. Unfortunately, high Q restricts the antenna bandwidth, because the traps provide maximum isolation only at trap resonance.

FIVE-BAND W3DZZ TRAP ANTENNA

C. L. Buchanan, W3DZZ, created one of the first trap antennas for the five pre-1979 WARC amateur bands from 3.5 to 30 MHz. Dimensions are given in **Fig 18**. Only one set of traps is used, resonant at 7 MHz to isolate the inner (7-MHz) dipole from the outer sections. This causes the overall system to be resonant in the 3.5-MHz band. On 14, 21 and 28 MHz the antenna works on the capacitive-reactance principle just outlined. With a 75-Ω twin-lead feeder, the SWR with this antenna is under 2:1 throughout the three highest frequency

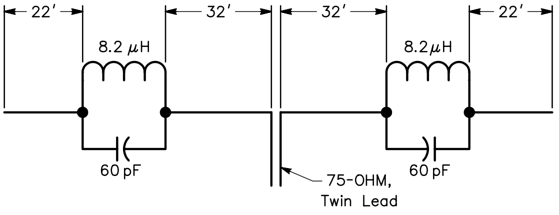

Fig 18—Five-band (3.5, 7, 14, 21 and 28 MHz) trap dipole for operation with 75-Ω feeder at low SWR (C. L. Buchanan, W3DZZ). The balanced (parallel-conductor) line indicated is desirable, but 75-Ω coax can be substituted with some sacrifice of symmetry in the system. Dimensions given are for resonance (lowest SWR) at 3.75, 7.2, 14.15 and 29.5 MHz. Resonance is very broad on the 21-MHz band, with SWR less than 2:1 throughout the band.

bands, and the SWR is comparable with that obtained with similarly fed simple dipoles on 3.5 and 7 MHz.

Trap Construction

Traps frequently are built with coaxial aluminum tubes (usually with polystyrene tubing in-between them for insulation) for the capacitor, with the coil either self-supporting or wound on a form of larger diameter than the tubular capacitor. The coil is then mounted coaxially with the capacitor to form a unit assembly that can be supported at each end by the antenna wires. In another type of trap devised by William J. Lattin, W4JRW (see Bibliography at the end of this chapter), the coil is supported inside an aluminum tube and the trap capacitor is obtained in the form of capacitance between the coil and the outer tube. This type of trap is inherently weatherproof.

A simpler type of trap, easily assembled from readily available components, is shown in **Fig 19**. A small transmitting-type ceramic "doorknob" capacitor is used, together with a length of commercially available coil material, these being supported by an ordinary antenna strain insulator. The circuit constants and antenna dimensions differ slightly from those of Fig 18, in order to bring the antenna resonance points closer to the centers of the various phone bands. Construction data are given in **Fig 20**. If a 10-turn length of inductor is used, a half turn from each end may be used to slip through the anchor holes in the insulator to act as leads.

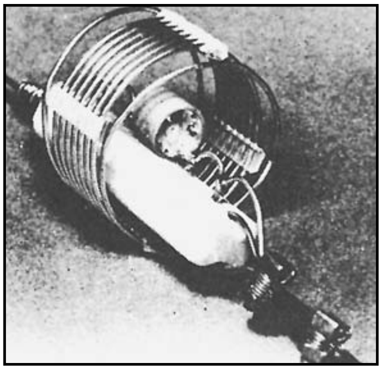

Fig 19—Easily constructed trap for wire antennas (A. Greenburg, W2LH). The ceramic insulator is 4¼ inches long (Birnback 688). The clamps are small service connectors available from electrical supply and hardware stores (Burndy KS90 servits).

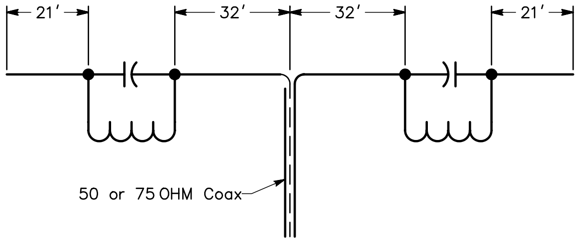

Fig 20—Layout of multiband antenna using traps constructed as shown in Fig 21. The capacitors are 100 pF each, transmitting type, 5000-volt dc rating (Centralab 850SL-100N). Coils are 9 turns of #12 wire, 2½ inches diameter, 6 turns per inch (B&W 3029) with end turns spread as necessary to resonate the traps to 7.2 MHz. These traps, with the wire dimensions shown, resonate the antenna at approximately the following frequencies on each band: 3.9, 7.25, 14.1, 21.5 and 29.9 MHz (based on measurements by W9YJH).

The components used in these traps are sufficiently weatherproof in themselves so that no additional weatherproofing has been found necessary. However, if it is desired to protect them from the accumulation of snow or ice, a plastic cover can be made by cutting two discs of polystyrene slightly larger in diameter than the coil, drilling at the center to pass the antenna wires, and cementing a plastic cylinder on the edges of the discs. The cylinder can be made by wrapping two turns or so of 0.02-inch poly or Lucite sheet around the discs, if no suitable ready-made tubing is available. Plastic drinking glasses and 2-liter soft-drink plastic bottles are easily adaptable for use as impromptu trap covers.

TWO W8NX MULTIBAND, COAX-TRAP DIPOLES

Over the last 60 or 70 years, amateurs have used many kinds of multiband antennas to cover the traditional HF bands. The availability of the 30, 17 and 12-meter bands has expanded our need for multiband antenna coverage.

Two different antennas are described here. The first covers the traditional 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10-meter bands, and the second covers 80, 40, 17 and 12 meters. Each uses the same type of W8NX trap—connected for different modes of operation—and a pair of short capacitive stubs to enhance coverage. The W8NX coaxial-cable traps have two different modes: a high- and a low-impedance mode. The inner-conductor windings and shield windings of the traps are connected in series for both modes. However, either the low- or high-impedance point can be used as the trap's output terminal. For low-impedance trap operation, only the center conductor turns of the trap windings are used. For high-impedance operation, all turns are used, in the conventional manner for a trap. The short stubs on each antenna are strategically sized and located to permit more flexibility in adjusting thc resonant frequencies of the antenna.

80, 40, 20, 15 and 10-Meter Dipole

Fig 21 shows the configuration of the 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10-meter antenna. The radiating elements are made of #14

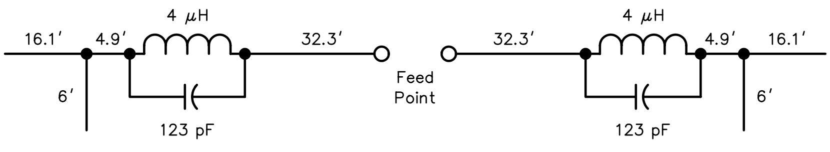

Fig 21—A W8NX multiband dipole for 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10 meters. The values shown (123 pF and 4 µH) for the coaxial-cable traps are for parallel resonance at 7.15 MHz. The low-impedance output of each trap is used for this antenna.

stranded copper wire. The element lengths are the wire span lengths in feet. These lengths do not include the lengths of the pigtails at the balun, traps and insulators. The 32.3-foot-long inner 40-meter segments are measured from the eyelet of the input balun to the tension-relief hole in the trap coil form. The 4.9-foot segment length is measured from the tension-relief hole in the trap to the 6-foot stub. The 16.l-foot outer-segment span is measured from the stub to the eyelet of the end insulator.

The coaxial-cable traps are wound on PVC pipe coil forms and use the low-impedance output connection. The stubs are 6-foot lengths of ⅛-inch stiffened aluminum or copper rod hanging perpendicular to the radiating elements. The first inch of their length is bent 90° to permit attachment to the radiating elements by large-diameter copper crimp connectors. Ordinary #14 wire may be used for the stubs, but it has a tendency to curl up and may tangle unless weighed down at the end. You should feed the antenna with 75-Ω coax cable using a good 1:1 balun.

This antenna may be thought of as a modified W3DZZ antenna due to the addition of the capacitive stubs. The length and location of the stub give the antenna designer two extra degrees of freedom to place the resonant frequencies within the amateur bands. This additional flexibility is particularly helpful to bring the 15 and 10-meter resonant frequencies to more desirable locations in these bands. The actual 10-meter resonant frequency of the original W3DZZ antenna is somewhat above 30 MHz, pretty remote from the more desirable low frequency end of 10 meters.

80, 40, 17 and 12-Meter Dipole

Fig 22 shows the configuration of the 80, 40, 17 and 12-meter antenna. Notice that the capacitive stubs are attached immediately outboard after the traps and are 6.5 feet long, ½ foot longer than those used in the other antenna. The traps are the same as those of the other antenna, but are connected for the high-impedance parallel-resonant output mode. Since only four bands are covered by this antenna, it is easier to fine tune it to precisely the desired frequency on all bands. The 12.4-foot tips can he pruned to a particular 17-meter frequency with little effect on the 12-meter frequency. The stub lengths can be pruned to a particular 12-meter frequency with little effect on the 17-meter frequency. Both such pruning adjustments slightly alter the 80-meter resonant frequency. However, the bandwidths of the antennas are so broad on 17 and 12 meters that little need for such pruning exists. The 40-meter frequency is nearly independent of adjustments to the capacitive stubs and outer radiating tip elements. Like the first antennas, this dipole is fed with a 75-Ω balun and feed line.

Fig 23 shows the schematic diagram of the traps. It explains the difference between the low and high-impedance modes of the traps. Notice that the high-impedance terminal is the output configuration used in most conventional trap applications. The low-impedance connection is made across only the inner conductor turns, corresponding to one-half of the total turns of the trap. This mode steps the trap's impedance down to approximately one-fourth of that of the high-impedance level. This is what allows a single trap design to be used for two different multiband antennas.

Fig 24 is a drawing of a cross-section of the coax trap shown through the long axis of the trap. Notice that the traps are conventional coaxial-cable traps, except for the added low-impedance output terminal. The traps are 8¾ close-spaced turns of RG-59 (Belden 8241) on a 2⅜-inch-OD PVC pipe (schedule 40 pipe with a 2-inch ID) coil form. The forms are 4⅛ inches long. Trap resonant frequency is very sensitive to the outer diameter of the coil form, so check it carefully. Unfortunately, not all PVC pipe is made with the same wall thickness. The trap frequencies should be checked with a dip meter and general-coverage receiver and adjusted to within 50 kHz of the 7150 kHz resonant frequency before installation. One inch is left over at each end of the coil forms to allow for the coax feed-through holes and holes for tension-relief attachment of the antenna radiating elements to the traps. Be sure to seal the ends of the trap coax cable with RTV sealant to prevent moisture from entering the coaxial cable.

Also, be sure that you connect the 32.3-foot wire element at the start of the inner conductor winding of the trap. This avoids detuning the antenna by the stray capacitance of the coaxial-cable shield. The trap output terminal (which has the shield stray capacitance) should be at the outboard side of

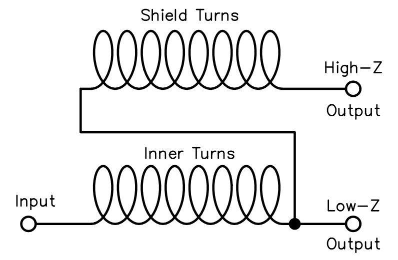

Fig 23—Schematic for the W8NX coaxial-cable trap. RG-59 is wound on a 2⅜-inch OD PVC pipe.

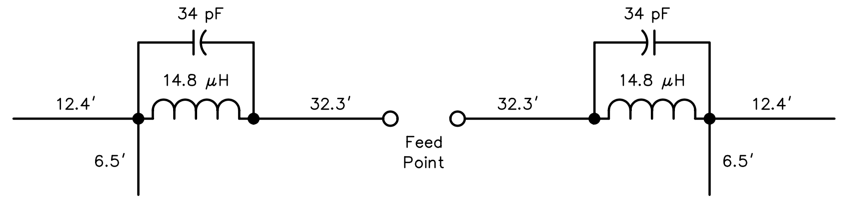

Fig 22—A W8NX multiband dipole for 80, 40, 17 and 12 meters. For this antenna, the high-impedance output is used on each trap. The resonant frequency of the traps is 7.15 MHz.

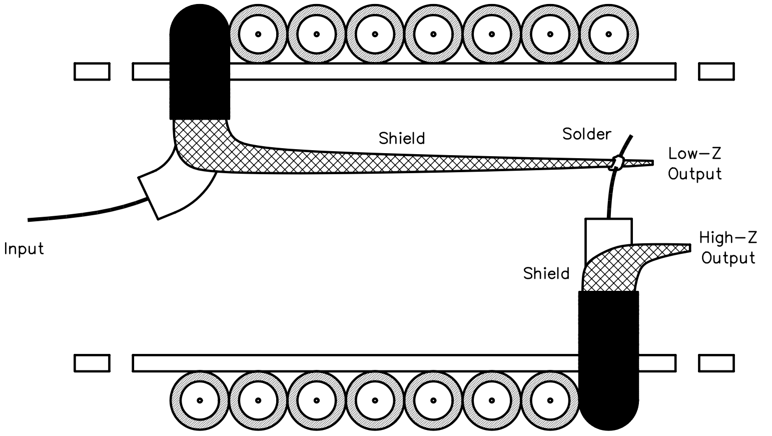

Fig 24—Construction details of the W8NX coaxial-cable trap.

the trap. Reversing the input and output terminals of the trap will lower the 40-meter frequency by approximately 50 kHz, but there will be negligible effect on the other bands.

Fig 25 shows a coaxial-cable trap. Further details of the trap installation are shown in **Fig 26**. This drawing applies specifically to the 80, 40, 20, 15 and l0-meter antenna, which uses the low-impedance trap connections. Notice the lengths of the trap pigtails: 3 to 4 inches at each terminal of the trap. If you use a different arrangement, you must modify the span lengths accordingly. All connections can be made using crimp connectors rather than by soldering. Access to the trap's interior is attained more easily with a crimping tool than with a soldering iron.

Performance

The performance of both antennas has been very satisfactory. W8NX uses the 80, 40, 17 and 12-meter version because it covers 17 and 12 meters. (He has a tribander for 20, 15 and 10 meters.) The radiation pattern on 17 meters is that of a $\frac{3}{2}$-wave dipole. On 12 meters, the pattern is that of a $\frac{5}{2}$-wave dipole. At his location in Akron, Ohio, the antenna runs essentially east and west. It is installed as an inverted V, 40 feet high at the center, with a 120° included angle between the legs. Since the stubs are very short, they radiate little power and make only minor contributions to the radiation patterns. In theory, the pattern has four major lobes on 17 meters, with maxima to the northeast, southeast, southwest and northwest. These provide low-angle radiation into Europe, Africa, South Pacific, Japan and Alaska. A narrow pair of minor broadside lobes provides north and south coverage into Central America, South America and the polar regions.

There are four major lobes on 12 meters, giving nearly end-fire radiation and good low-angle east and west coverage. There are also three pairs of very narrow, nearly broadside, minor lobes on 12 meters, down about 6 dB from the major end-fire lobes. On 80 and 40 meters, the antenna has the usual figure-8 patterns of a half-wave-length dipole.

Both antennas function as electrical half-wave dipoles on 80 and 40 meters with a low SWR. They both function as odd-harmonic current-fed dipoles on their other operating frequencies, with higher, but still acceptable, SWR. The presence of the stubs can either raise or lower the input impedance of the antenna from those of the usual third and fifth harmonic dipoles. Again W8NX recommends that 75-Ω,

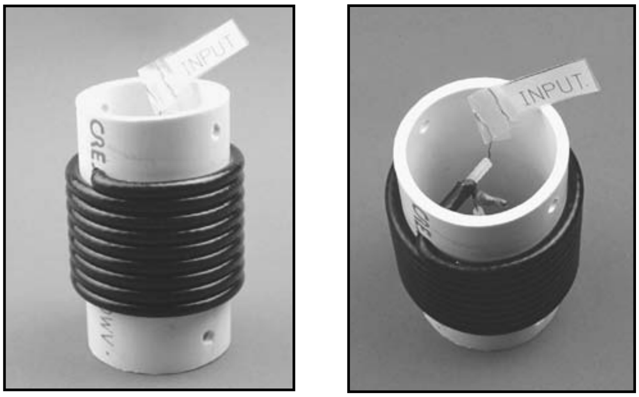

Fig 25—Other views of a W8NX coax-cable trap.

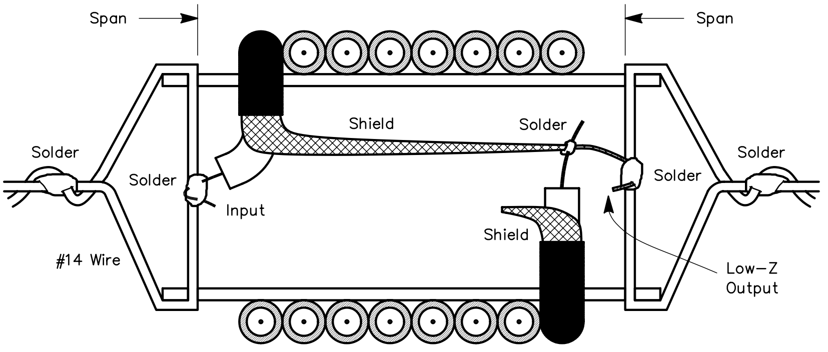

Fig 26—Additional construction details for the W8NX coaxial-cable trap.

rather than 50-Ω, feed line be used because of the generally higher input impedances at the harmonic operating frequencies of the antennas.

The SWR curves of both antennas were carefully measured using a 75 to 50-Ω transformer from Palomar Engineers inserted at the junction of the 75-Ω coax feed line and a 50-Ω SWR bridge. The transformer is required for accurate SWR measurement if a 50-Ω SWR bridge is used with a 75-Ω line. Most 50-Ω rigs operate satisfactorily with a 75-Ω line, although this requires different tuning and load settings in the final output stage of the rig or antenna tuner. The author uses the 75 to 50-Ω transformer only when making SWR measurements and at low power levels. The transformer is rated for 100 W, and when he runs his 1-kW PEP linear amplifier the transformer is taken out of the line.

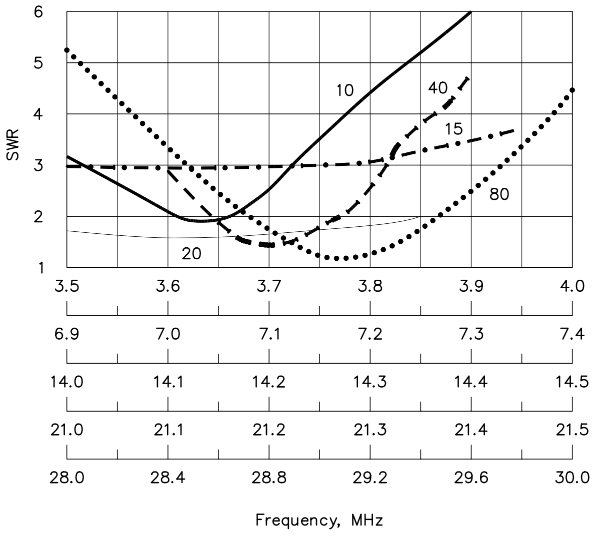

Fig 27—Measured SWR curves for an 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10-meter antenna, installed as an inverted-V with 40-ft apex and 120° included angle between legs.

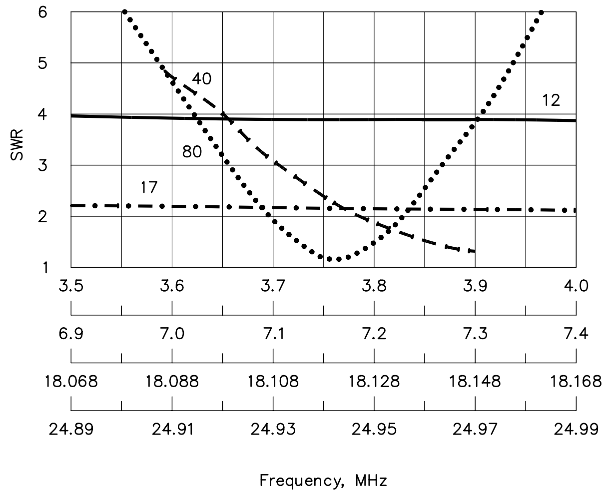

Fig 28—Measured SWR curves for an 80, 40, 17 and 12-meter antenna, installed as an inverted-V with 40-ft apex and 120° included angle between legs.

Fig 27 gives the SWR curves of the 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10-meter antenna. Minimum SWR is nearly 1:1 on 80 meters, 1.5:1 on 40 meters, 1.6:1 on 20 meters, and 1.5:1 on 10 meters. The minimum SWR is slightly below 3:1 on 15 meters. On 15 meters, the stub capacitive reactance combines with the inductive reactance of the outer segment of the antenna to produce a resonant rise that raises the antenna input resistance to about 220 Ω, higher than that of the usual 3/2-wavelength dipole. An antenna tuner may be required on this band to keep a solid-state final output stage happy under these load conditions.

Fig 28 shows the SWR curves of the 80, 40, 17 and 12-meter antenna. Notice the excellent 80-meter performance with a nearly unity minimum SWR in the middle of the band. The performance approaches that of a full-size 80-meter wire dipole. The short stubs and the low-inductance traps shorten the antenna somewhat on 80 meters. Also observe the good 17-meter performance, with the SWR being only a little above 2:1 across the band.

But notice the 12-meter SWR curve of this antenna, which shows 4:1 SWR across the band. The antenna input resistance approaches 300 Ω on this band because the capacitive reactance of the stubs combines with the inductive reactance of the outer antenna segments to give resonant rises in impedance. These are reflected back to the input terminals. These stub-induced resonant impedance rises are similar to those on the other antenna on 15 meters, but are even more pronounced.

Too much concern must not be given to SWR on the feed line. Even if the SWR is as high as 9:1 *no destructively high voltages will exist on the transmission line.* Recall that transmission-line voltages increase as the square root of the SWR in the line. Thus, 1 kW of RF power in 75-Ω line corresponds to 274 V line voltage for a 1:1 SWR. Raising the SWR to 9:1 merely triples the maximum voltage that the line must withstand to 822 V. This voltage is well below the 3700-V rating of RG-11, or the 1700-V rating of RG-59, the two most popular 75-Ω coax lines. Voltage breakdown in the traps is also very unlikely. As will be pointed out later, the operating power levels of these antennas are limited by RF power dissipation in the traps, not trap voltage breakdown or feed-line SWR.

Trap Losses and Power Rating

Table 1 presents the results of trap Q measurements and extrapolation by a two-frequency method to higher frequencies above resonance. W8NX employed an old, but recently calibrated, Boonton Q meter for the measurements. Extrapolation to higher-frequency bands assumes that trap resistance losses rise with skin effect according to the square root of frequency, and that trap dielectric loses rise directly with frequency. Systematic measurement errors are not increased by frequency extrapolation. However, random measurement

Table 1

Trap Q

Frequency (MHz)	*3.8*	*7.15*	*14.18*	*18.1*	*21.3*	*24.9*	*28.6*
High Z out (Ω)	101	124	139	165	73	179	186
Low Z out (Ω)	83	103	125	137	44	149	155

Table 2

Trap Loss Analysis: 80, 40, 20, 15, 10-Meter Antenna

Frequency (MHz)	*3.8*	*7.15*	*14.18*	*21.3*	*28.6*
Radiation Efficiency (%)	96.4	70.8	99.4	99.9	100.0
Trap Losses (dB)	0.16	1.5	0.02	0.01	0.003

Table 3

Trap Loss Analysis: 80, 40, 17, 12-Meter Antenna

Frequency (MHz)	*3.8*	*7.15*	*18.1*	*24.9*
Radiation Efficiency (%)	89.5	90.5	99.3	99.8
Trap Losses (dB)	0.5	0.4	0.03	0.006

errors increase in magnitude with upward frequency extrapolation. Results are believed to be accurate within 4% on 80 and 40 meters, but only within l0 to 15% at 10 meters. Trap Q is shown at both the high- and low-impedance trap terminals. The Q at the low-impedance output terminals is 15 to 20% lower than the Q at the high-impedance output terminals.

W8NX computer-analyzed trap losses for both antennas in free space. Antenna-input resistances at resonance were first calculated, assuming lossless, infinite-Q traps. They were again calculated using the Q values in Table 1. The radiation efficiencies were also converted into equivalent trap losses in decibels. **Table 2** summarizes the trap-loss analysis for the 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10-meter antenna and **Table 3** for the 80, 40,17 and 12-meter antenna.

The loss analysis shows radiation efficiencies of 90% or more for both antennas on all bands except for the 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10-meter antenna when used on 40 meters. Here, the radiation efficiency falls to 70.8%. A 1-kW power level at 90% radiation efficiency corresponds to 50-W dissipation per trap. In W8NX's experience, this is the trap's survival limit for extended key-down operation. SSB power levels of 1 kW PEP would dissipate 25 W or less in each trap. This is well within the dissipation capability of the traps.

When the 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10-meter antenna is operated on 40 meters, the radiation efficiency of 70.8% corresponds to a dissipation of 146 W in each trap when 1 kW is delivered to the antenna. This is sure to burn out the traps—even if sustained for only a short time. Thus, the power should be limited to leas than 300 W when this antenna is operated on 40 meters under prolonged key-down conditions. A 50% CW duty cycle would correspond to a 600-W power limit for normal 40-meter CW operation. Likewise, a 50% duty cycle for 40-meter SSB corresponds to a 600-W PEP power limit for the antenna.

The author knows of no analysis where the burnout wattage rating of traps has been rigorously determined. Operating experience seems to be the best way to determine trap burnout ratings. In his own experience with these antennas, he's had no traps burn out, even though he operated the 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10-meter antenna on the critical 40-meter band using his AL-80A linear amplifier at the 600-W PEP output level. He did not make a continuous, key-down, CW operating test at full power purposely trying to destroy the traps!

Some hams may suggest using a different type of coaxial cable for the traps. The dc resistance of 40.7 Ω per 1000 feet of RG-59 coax seems rather high. However, W8NX has found no coax other than RG-59 that has the necessary inductance-to-capacitance ratio to create the trap characteristic reactance required for the 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10-meter antenna. Conventional traps with wide-spaced, open-air inductors and appropriate fixed-value capacitors could be substituted for the coax traps, but the convenience, weatherproof configuration and ease of fabrication of coaxial-cable traps is hard to beat.

Multiband Vertical Antennas

There are two basic types of vertical antennas; either type can be used in multiband configurations. The first is the ground-mounted vertical and the second, the ground plane. These antennas are described in detail in Chapter 6, Low-Frequency Antennas.

The efficiency of any ground-mounted vertical depends a great deal on near-field earth losses. As pointed out in Chapter 3, The Effects of Ground, these near-field losses can be reduced or eliminated with an adequate radial system. Considerable experimentation has been conducted on this subject by Jerry Sevick, W2FMI, and several important results were obtained. It was determined that a radial system consisting of 40 to 50 radials, 0.2 λ long, would reduce the earth losses to about 2 Ω when a λ/4 radiator was being used. These radials should be on the earth's surface, or if buried, placed not more than an inch or so below ground. Otherwise, the RF current would have to travel through the lossy earth before reaching the radials. In a multiband vertical system, the radials should be 0.2 λ long for the lowest band, that is, 55 feet long for 3.5-MHz operation. Any wire size may be used for the radials. The radials should fan out in a circle, radiating from the base of the antenna. A metal plate, such as a piece of sheet copper, can be used at the center connection.

The other common type of vertical is the ground-plane antenna. Normally, this antenna is mounted above ground with the radials fanning out from the base of the antenna. The vertical portion of the antenna is usually an electrical λ/4, as is each of the radials. In this type of antenna, the system of radials acts somewhat like an RF choke, to prevent RF currents from flowing in the supporting structure, so the number of radials is not as important a factor as it is with a ground- mounted vertical system. From a practical standpoint, the customary number of radials is four or five. In a multiband configuration, λ/4 radials are required for each band of operation with the ground-plane antenna.

This is not so with the ground-mounted vertical antenna, where the ground plane is relied upon to provide an image of the radiating section. Note that even quarter-wave-long radials are greatly detuned by their proximity to ground—radial resonance is not necessary or even possible. In the ground-mounted case, so long as the ground-screen radials are approximately 0.2 λ long at the lowest frequency, the length will be more than adequate for the higher frequency bands.

Short Vertical Antennas

A short vertical antenna can be operated on several bands by loading it at the base, the general arrangement being similar to Figs 1 and 2. That is, for multiband work the vertical can be handled by the same methods that are used for random-length wires.

A vertical antenna should not be longer than about ¾ λ at the highest frequency to be used, however, if low-angle radiation is wanted. If the antenna is to be used on 28 MHz and lower frequencies, therefore, it should not be more than approximately 25 feet high, and the shortest possible ground lead should be used.

Another method of feeding is shown in **Fig 29**. L1 is a loading coil, tapped to resonate the antenna on the desired band. A second tap permits using the coil as a transformer for matching a coax line to the transmitter. C1 is not strictly necessary, but may be helpful on the lower frequencies, 3.5 and 7 MHz, if the antenna is quite short. In that case C1 makes it possible to tune the system to resonance with a coil of reasonable dimensions at L1. C1 may also be useful on other bands as well, if the system cannot be matched to the feed line with a coil alone.

The coil and capacitor should preferably be installed at the base of the antenna, but if this cannot be done a wire can be run from the antenna base to the nearest convenient location for mounting L1 and C1. The extra wire will of course be a part of the antenna, and since it may have to run through unfavorable surroundings it is best to avoid using it if at all possible.

This system is best adjusted with the help of an SWR indicator. Connect the coax line across a few turns of L1 and take trial positions of the shorting tap until the SWR reaches its lowest value. Then vary the line tap similarly; this should bring the SWR down to a low value. Small adjustments of both taps then should reduce the SWR to close to 1:1. If not, try adding C1 and go through the same procedure, varying C1 each time a tap position is changed.

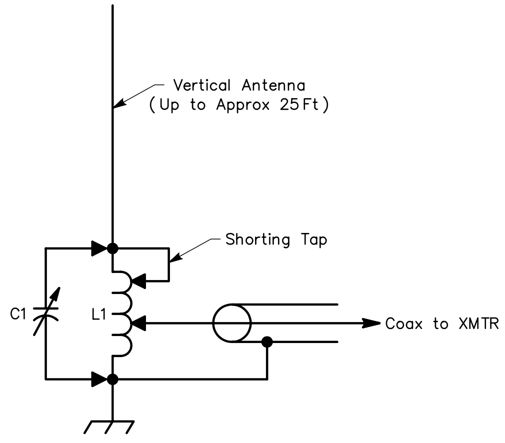

Fig 29—Multiband vertical antenna system using base loading for resonating on 3.5 to 28 MHz. L1 should be wound with bare wire so it can be tapped at every turn, using #12 wire. A convenient size is 2½ inches diameter, 6 turns per inch (such as B&W 3029). Number of turns required depends on antenna and ground lead length, more turns being required as the antenna and ground lead are made shorter. For a 25-foot antenna and a ground lead of the order of 5 feet, L1 should have about 30 turns. The use of C1 is explained in the text. The smallest capacitance that will permit matching the coax cable should be used; a maximum capacitance of 100 to 150 pF will be sufficient in any case.

Trap Verticals

The trap principle described in Fig 17 for center-fed dipoles also can be used for vertical antennas. There are two principal differences. Only one half of the dipole is used, the ground connection taking the place of the missing half, and the feed-point impedance is one half the feed-point impedance of a dipole. Thus it is in the vicinity of 30 Ω (plus the ground-connection resistance), so 52-Ω cable should be used since it is the commonly available type that comes closest to matching.

A TRAP VERTICAL FOR 21 AND 28 MHZ

Simple antennas covering the upper HF bands can be quite compact and inexpensive. The two-band vertical ground plane described here is highly effective for long-distance communication when installed in the clear.

Figs 30, **31** and **32** show the important assembly details. The vertical section of the antenna is mounted on a ¾-inch thick piece of plywood board that measures 7 × 10 inches. Several coats of exterior varnish or similar material will help protect the wood from inclement weather. Both the mast and the radiator are mounted on the piece of wood by means of TV U-bolt hardware. The vertical is electrically isolated from the wood with a piece of 1-inch diameter PVC tubing. A piece approximately 8 inches long is required, and it is of the schedule-80 variety. To prepare the tubing, you must slit it along the entire length on one side. A hacksaw will work quite well. The PVC fits rather snugly on the aluminum tubing and

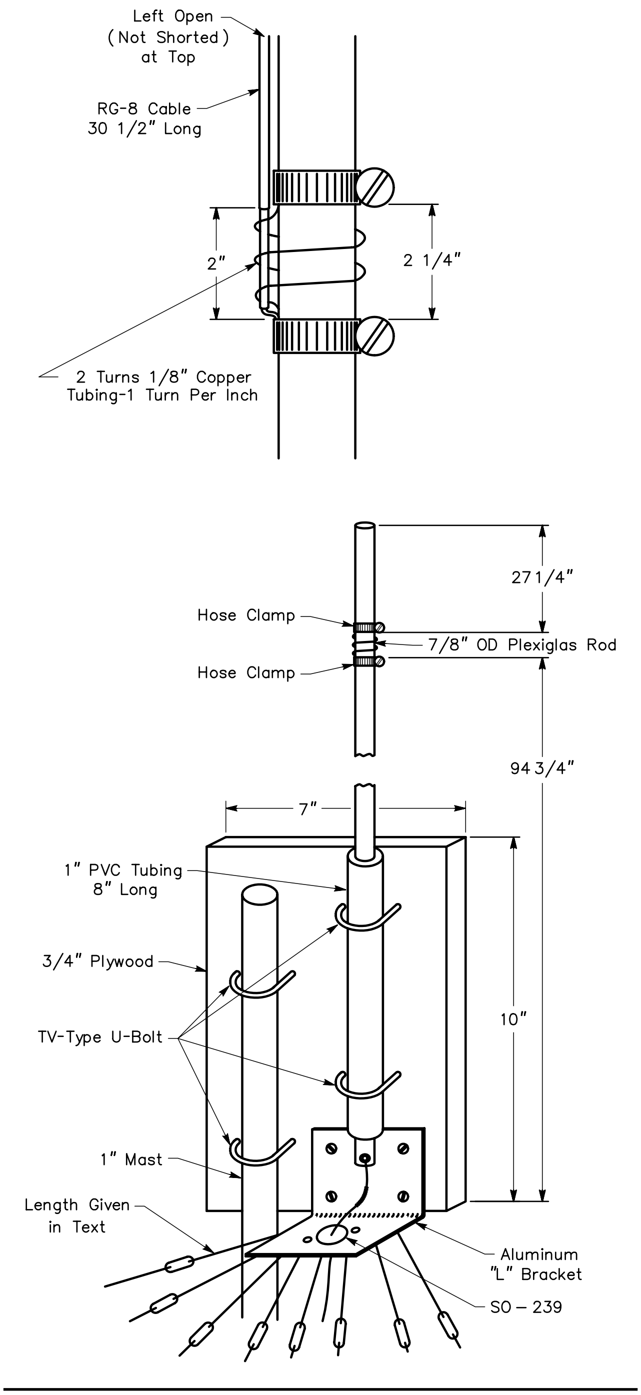

Fig 30—Constructional details of the 21- and 28-MHz dual-band antenna system.

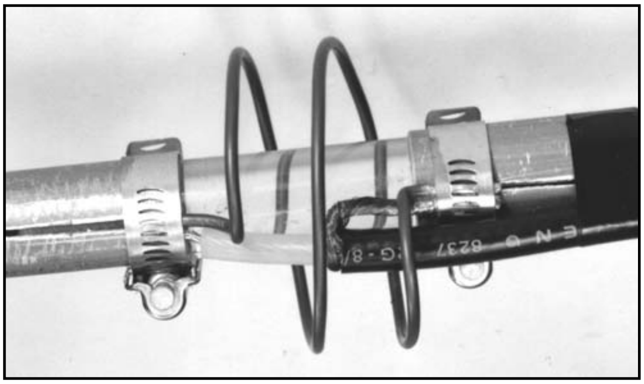

Fig 31—A close-up view of a trap. The coil is 3 inches in diameter. The leads from the coaxial-cable capacitor should be soldered directly to the pigtails of the coil. These connections should be coated with varnish after they have been secured under the hose clamps.

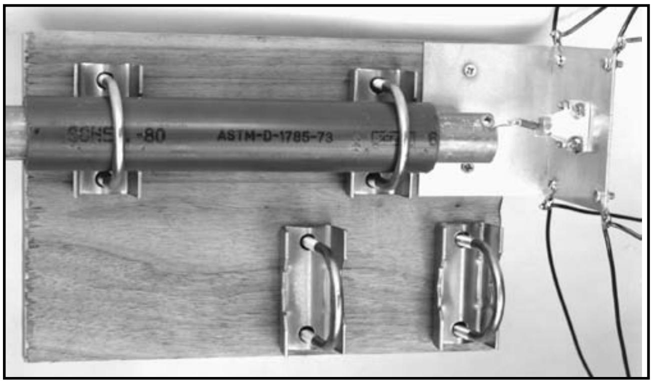

Fig 32—The base assembly of the 21- and 28-MHz vertical. The SO-239 coaxial connector and hood can be seen in the center of the aluminum L bracket. The U bolts are TV-type antenna hardware. The plywood should be coated with varnish or similar material.

will have to be "persuaded" with the aid of a hammer. Mount the mast directly on the wood with no insulation.

Use an SO-239 coaxial connector and four solder lugs on an L-shaped bracket made from a piece of aluminum sheet. Solder a short length of test probe wire, or inner conductor of RG-58 cable, to the inner terminal of the connector. A UG-106 connector hood is then slid over the wire and onto the coaxial connector. Then bolt the hood and connector to the aluminum bracket. Two wood screws are used to secure the aluminum bracket to the plywood, as shown in the drawing and photograph. Solder the free end of the wire coming from the connector to a lug mounted on the bottom of the vertical radiator. Fill any space between the wire and where it passes through the hood with GE silicone sealant or similar material to keep moisture out. The eight radials, four for each band, are soldered to the four lugs on the aluminum bracket. Separate the two sections of the vertical member with a piece of clear acrylic rod. Approximately 8 inches of ⅞-inch OD material is required. You must slit the aluminum tubing lengthwise for several inches so the acrylic rod may be inserted. The two pieces of aluminum tubing are separated by 2¼ inches.

The trap capacitor is made from RG-8 coaxial cable and is 30.5 inches long. RG-8 cable has 29.5 pF of capacitance per foot and RG-58 has 28.5 pF per foot. RG-8 cable is recommended over RG-58 because of its higher breakdown-voltage capability. The braid should be pulled back 2 inches on one end of the cable, and the center conductor soldered to one end of the coil. Solder the braid to the other end of the coil. Compression type hose clamps are placed over the capacitor/coil leads and put in position at the edges of the aluminum tubing. When tightened securely, the clamps serve a two-fold purpose—they keep the trap in contact with the vertical members and prevent the aluminum tubing from slipping off the acrylic rod. The coaxial-cable capacitor runs upward along the top section of the antenna. This is the side of the antenna to which the braid of the capacitor is connected. Place a cork or plastic cap in the very top of the antenna to keep moisture out.

Installation and Operation

The antenna may be mounted in position using a TV-type tripod, chimney, wall or vent mount. Alternatively, a telescoping mast or ordinary steel TV mast may be used, in which case the radials may be used as guys for the structure. The 28-MHz radials are 8 feet 5 inches long, and the 21-MHz radials are 11 feet 7 inches.

Any length of 50-Ω cable may be used to feed the antenna. The SWR at resonance should be on the order of 1.2:1 to 1.5:1 on both bands. The reason the SWR is not 1:1 is that the feed-point resistance is something other than 50 Ω —closer to 35 or 40 Ω.

The Open-Sleeve Antenna

Although only recently adapted for the HF and VHF amateur bands, the open-sleeve antenna has been around since 1946. The antenna was invented by Dr J. T. Bolljahn, of Stanford Research Institute. This section on sleeve antennas was written by Roger A. Cox, WB0DGF.

The basic form of the open-sleeve monopole is shown in **Fig 33**. The open-sleeve monopole consists of a base-fed central monopole with two parallel closely spaced parasitics, one on each side of the central element, and grounded at each base. The lengths of the parasitics are roughly one half that of the central monopole.

Impedance

The operation of the open sleeve can be divided into two modes, an antenna-mode and a transmission-line mode. This is shown in **Fig 34**.

The antenna-mode impedance, Z_A, is determined by the length and diameter of the central monopole. For sleeve lengths less than that of the monopole, this impedance is essentially independent of the sleeve dimensions.

The transmission-line mode impedance, Z_T, is determined by the characteristic impedance, end impedance, and length of the 3- wire transmission line formed by the central monopole and the two sleeve elements. The characteristic impedance, Z_c, can be determined by the element diameters and spacing if all element diameters are equal, and is found from

$$Z_c = 207 \log 1.59 (D/d) \qquad \text{(Eq 2)}$$

where

D = spacing between the center of each sleeve element and the center of the driven element

d = diameter of each element

This is shown graphically in **Fig 35**. However, since the end impedance is usually unknown, there is little need to know the characteristic impedance. The transmission-line mode impedance, Z_T, is usually determined by an educated guess and experimentation.

As an example, let us consider the case where the central monopole is λ/4 at 14 MHz. It would have an antenna mode impedance, Z_A, of approximately 52 Ω, depending upon the ground conductivity and number of radials. If two sleeve elements were added on either side of the central monopole, with each approximately half the height of the monopole and at a distance equal to their height, there would be very little

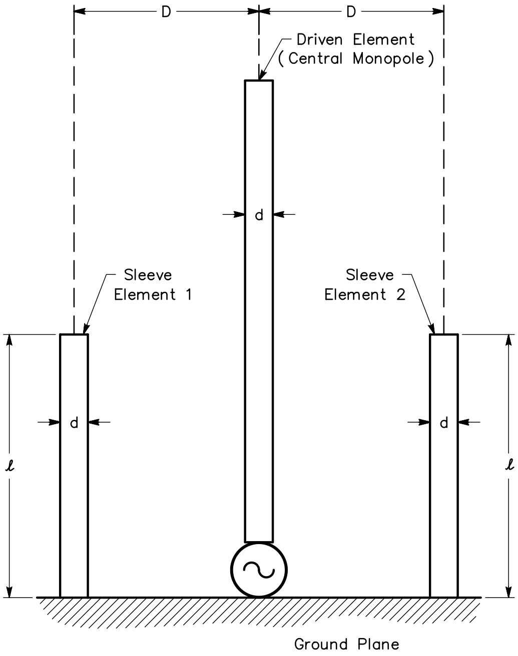

Fig 33—Diagram of an open-sleeve monopole.

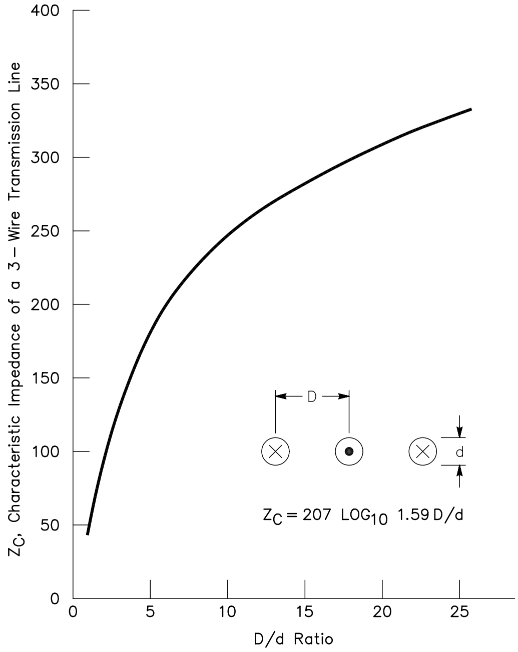

Fig 35—Characteristic impedance of transmission-line mode in an open-sleeve antenna.

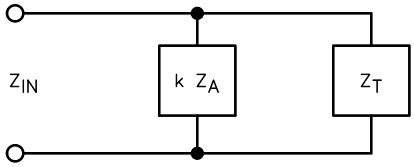

Fig 34—Equivalent circuit of an open-sleeve antenna.

effect on the antenna mode impedance, Z_A, at 14 MHz.

Also, Z_T at 14 MHz would be the end impedance transformed through a λ/8 section of a very high characteristic impedance transmission line. Therefore, Z_T would be on the order of 500-2000 Ω resistive plus a large capacitive reactance component. This high impedance in parallel with 52 Ω would still give a resultant impedance close to 52 Ω.

At a frequency of 28 MHz, however, Z_A is that of an end-fed half-wave antenna, and is on the order of 1000-5000 Ω resistive. Also, Z_T at 28 MHz would be on the order of 1000 to 5000 Ω resistive, since it is the end impedance of the sleeve elements transformed through a quarter-wave section of a very high characteristic impedance 3-wire transmission line. Therefore, the parallel combination of Z_A and Z_T would still be on the order of 500 to 2500 Ω resistive.

If the sleeve elements were brought closer to the central monopole such that the ratio of the spacing to element diameter was less than 10:1, then the characteristic impedance of the 3-wire transmission line would drop to less than 250 Ω. At 28 MHz, Z_A remains essentially unchanged, while Z_T begins to edge closer to 52 Ω as the spacing is reduced. At some particular spacing the characteristic impedance, as determined by the D/d ratio, is just right to transform the end impedance to exactly 52 Ω at some frequency. Also, as the spacing is decreased, the frequency where the impedance is purely resistive gradually increases.

The actual impedance plots of a 14/28-MHz open-sleeve monopole appear in **Figs 36** and **37**. The length of the central monopole is 195.5 inches, and of the sleeve elements 89.5 inches. The element diameters range from 1.25 inches at the bases to 0.875 inch at each tip. The measured impedance of the 14-MHz monopole alone, curve A of Fig 36, is quite high. This is probably because of a very poor ground plane under the antenna. The addition of the sleeve elements raises this impedance slightly, curves B, C and D.

As curves A and B in Fig 37 show, an 8-inch sleeve spacing gives a resonance near 27.8 MHz at 70 Ω, while a 6-inch spacing gives a resonance near 28.5 MHz at 42 Ω. Closer spacings give lower impedances and higher resonances. The optimum spacing for this particular antenna would be somewhere between 6 and 8 inches. Once the spacing is found, the lengths of the sleeve elements can be tweaked slightly for a choice of resonant frequency.

In other frequency combinations such as 10/21, 10/24, 14/21 and 14/24-MHz, spacings in the 6 to 10-inch range work very well with element diameters in the 0.5 to 1.25-inch range.

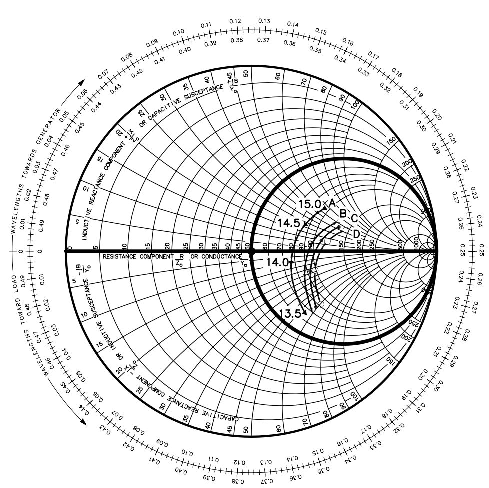

Fig 36—Impedance of an open-sleeve monopole for the frequency range 13.5-15 MHz. Curve A is for a 14 MHz monopole alone. For curves B, C and D, the respective spacings from the central monopole to the sleeve elements are 8, 6 and 4 inches. See text for other dimensions.

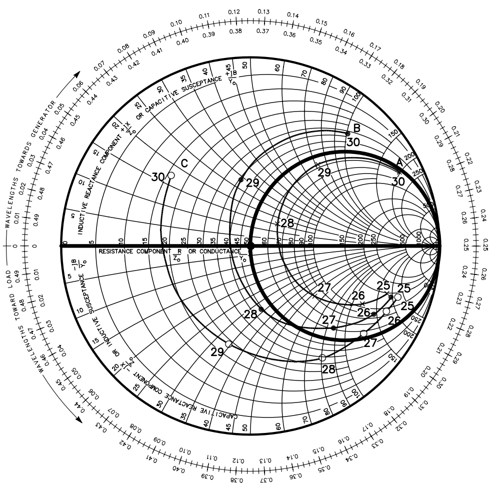

Fig 37—Impedance of the open-sleeve monopole for the range 25-30 MHz. For curves A, B and C the spacings from the central monopole to the sleeve elements are 8, 6 and 4 inches, respectively.

Bandwidth

The open-sleeve antenna, when used as a multiband antenna, does not exhibit broad SWR bandwidths unless, of course, the two bands are very close together. For example, **Fig 38** shows the return loss and SWR of a single 10-MHz vertical antenna. Its 2:1 SWR bandwidth is 1.5 MHz, from 9.8 to 11.3 MHz. Return loss and SWR are related as given by the following equation.

$$\mathrm{SWR} = \frac{1+k}{1-k} \qquad \text{(Eq 3)}$$

where

$$k = 10^{\frac{R_L}{20}}$$

RL = return loss, dB

When sleeve elements are added for a resonance near 22 MHz, the 2:1 SWR bandwidth at 10 MHz is still nearly 1.5 MHz, as shown in **Fig 39**. The total amount of spectrum under 2:1 SWR increases, of course, because of the additional band, but the individual bandwidths of each resonance are virtually unaffected.

The open-sleeve antenna, however, can be used as a broadband structure, if the resonances are close enough to overlap. With the proper choices of resonant frequencies, sleeve and driven element diameters and sleeve spacing, the SWR "hump" between resonances can be reduced to a value less than 3:1. This is shown in **Fig 40**.

Current Distribution

According to H. B. Barkley (see Bibliography at the end of this chapter), the total current flowing into the base of the open-sleeve antenna may be broken down into two components, that contributed by the antenna mode, I_A, and that contributed by the transmission-line mode, I_T. Assuming that the sleeves are approximately half the height of the central monopole, the impedance of the antenna mode, Z_A, is very low at the resonant frequency of the central monopole, and

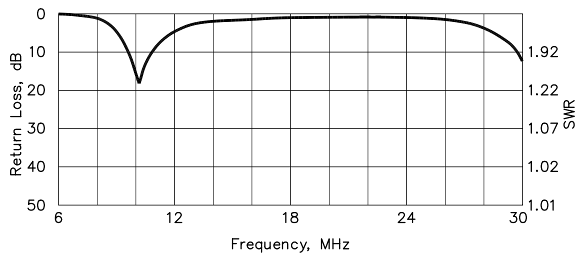

Fig 38—Return loss and SWR of a 10 MHz vertical antenna. A return loss of 0 dB represents an SWR of infinity. The text contains an equation for converting return loss to an SWR value.

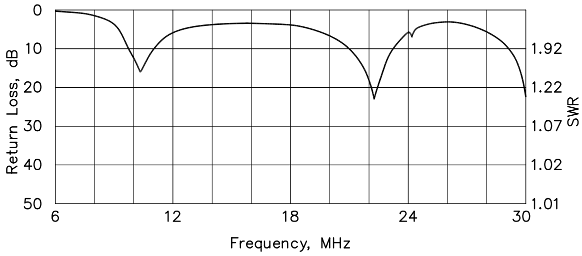

Fig 39—Return loss and SWR of a 10/22 MHz open-sleeve vertical antenna.

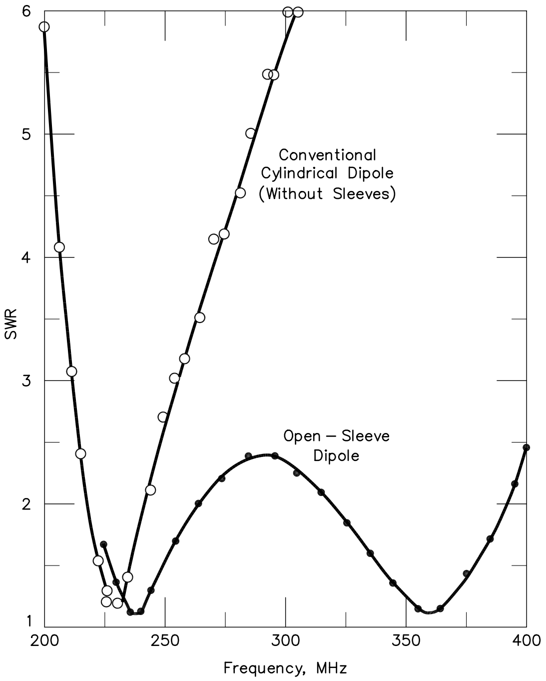

Fig 40—SWR response of an open-sleeve dipole and a conventional dipole.

the impedance of the transmission-line mode, Z_T, is very high. This allows almost all of the current to flow in the antenna mode, and I_A is very much greater than I_T. Therefore, the current on the central $\lambda/4$ monopole assumes the standard sinusoidal variation, and the radiation and gain characteristics are much like those of a normal $\lambda/4$ vertical antenna.

However, at the resonant frequency of the sleeves, the impedance of the central monopole is that of an end fed half-wave monopole and is very high. Therefore I_A is small. If proper element diameters and spacings have been used to match the transmission line mode impedance, Z_T, to 52 Ω, then I_T, the transmission line mode current, is high compared to I_A.

This means that very little current flows in the central monopole above the tops of the sleeve elements, and the radiation is mostly from the transmission-line mode current, I_T, in all three elements below the tops of the sleeve elements. The resulting current distribution is shown in **Figs 41** and **42** for this case.

Radiation Pattern and Gain

The current distribution of the open-sleeve antenna where all three elements are nearly equal in length is nearly that of a single monopole antenna. If, at a particular frequency, the elements are approximately $\lambda/4$ long, the current distribution is sinusoidal.

If, for this and other length ratios, the chosen diameters and spacings are such that the two sleeve elements approach an interelement spacing of $\lambda/8$, the azimuthal pattern will show directivity typical of two in-phase vertical radiators, approximately $\lambda/8$ apart. If a bi-directional pattern is needed, then this is one way to achieve it.

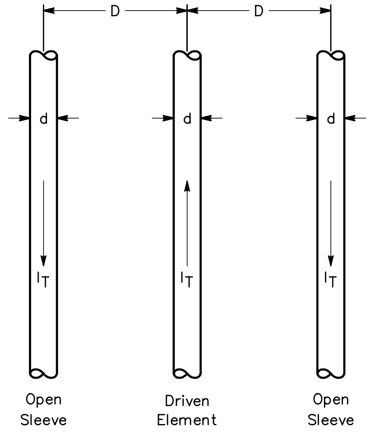

Fig 41—Current distribution in the transmission-line mode. The amplitude of the current induced in each sleeve element equals that of the current in the central element but the phases are opposite, as shown.

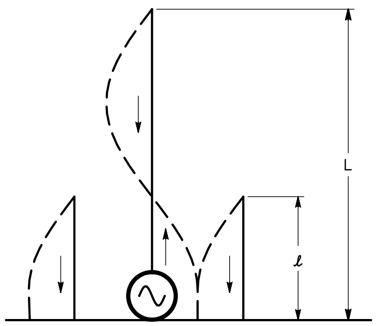

Fig 42—Total current distribution with λ= L/2.

Spacings closer than this will produce nearly circular azimuthal radiation patterns. Practical designs in the 10 to 30 MHz range using 0.5 to 1.5-inch diameter elements will produce azimuthal patterns that vary less than ±1 dB.

If the ratio of the length of the central monopole to the length of the sleeves approaches 2:1, then the elevation pattern of the open-sleeve vertical antenna at the resonant frequency of the sleeves becomes slightly compressed. This is because of the in-phase contribution of radiation from the $\lambda/2$ central monopole.

As shown in **Fig 43**, the 10/21-Mhz open-sleeve vertical antenna produces a lower angle of radiation at 21.2 MHz with a corresponding increase in gain of 0.66 dB over that of the 10-MHz vertical alone. At length ratios approaching 3:1, the

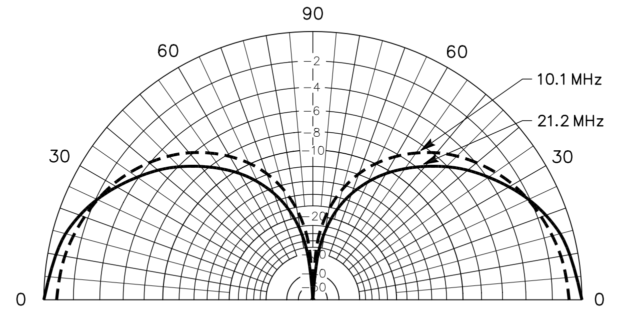

Fig 43—Vertical-plane radiation patterns of a 10/21-MHz open-sleeve vertical antenna on a perfect ground plane. At 10.1 MHz the maximum gain is 5.09 dBi, and 5.75 dBi at 21.2 MHz.

antenna mode and transmission-line mode impedance become nearly equal again, and the central monopole again carries a significant portion of the antenna current. The radiation from the top λ/2 combines constructively with the radiation from the λ/4 sleeve elements to produce gains of up to 3 dB more than just a quarter-wave vertical element alone.

Length ratios in excess of 3.2:1 produce higher level sidelobes and less gain on the horizon, except for narrow spots near the even ratios of 4:1, 6:1, 8:1, etc. These are where the central monopole is an even multiple of a half-wave, and the antenna-mode impedance is too high to allow much antenna-mode current.

Up to this point, it has been assumed that only λ/4 resonance could be used on the sleeve elements. The third, fifth, and seventh-order resonances of the sleeve elements and the central monopole element can be used, but their radiation patterns normally consist of high-elevation lobes, and the gain on the horizon is less than that of a λ/4 vertical.

Practical Construction and Evaluation

The open-sleeve antenna lends itself very easily to home construction. For the open-sleeve vertical antenna, only a feed-point insulator and a good supply of aluminum tubing are needed. No special traps or matching networks are required. The open-sleeve vertical can produce up to 3 dB more gain than a conventional λ/4 vertical. Further, there is no reduction in bandwidth, because there are no loading coils.

The open-sleeve design can also be adapted to horizontal dipole and beam antennas for HF, VHF and UHF. A good example of this is Telex/Hy-Gain's Explorer 14 triband beam which utilizes an open sleeve for the 10/15-meter driven element. The open-sleeve antenna is also very easy to model in computer programs such as *NEC* and *MININEC*, because of the open tubular construction and lack of traps or other intricate structures.

In conclusion, the open-sleeve antenna is an antenna experimenters delight. It is not difficult to match or construct, and it makes an ideal broadband or multiband antenna.

The Coupled-Resonator Dipole

A variation of the open-sleeve system above is the coupled-resonator system described by Gary Breed, K9AY, in an article in *The ARRL Antenna Compendium, Vol 5*, entitled “The Coupled-Resonator Principle: A Flexible Method for Multiband Antennas.” The following is condensed from that article.

In 1995, *QST* published two antenna designs that use an interesting technique to get multiband coverage in one antenna. Rudy Severns, N6LF, described a wideband 80 and 75-meter dipole using this technique, and Robert Wilson, AL7KK, showed us how to make a three-band vertical. Both of these antennas achieve multi-frequency operation by placing resonant conductors very close to a driven dipole or vertical—with no physical connection.

The Coupled-Resonator Principle

As we all know, nearby conductors can interact with an antenna. Our dipoles, verticals and beams can be affected by nearby power lines, rain gutters, guy wires and other metallic materials. The antennas designed by Severns and Wilson use this interaction intentionally, to combine the resonances of several conductors at a single feed point. While other names have been used, I call the behavior that makes these antennas work the *coupled-resonator* (C-R) principle.

Take a look at **Fig 44**, which illustrates the general idea. Each figure shows the SWR at the feed point of a dipole, over a range of frequencies. When this dipole is all alone, it will have a very low SWR at its half-wave resonant frequency (Fig 44A). Next, if we take another wire or tubing conductor and start bringing it close to the dipole, we will see a “bump” in the dipole’s SWR at the resonant frequency of this new wire. See Fig 44B. We are beginning to the see the effects of interaction between the two conductors. As we bring this new conductor closer, we reach a point where the SWR “bump” has grown to a very deep dip—a low SWR. We now have a good match at both the original dipole’s resonant frequency and the frequency of the new conductor, as illustrated in Fig 44C.

We can repeat this process for several more conductors at other frequencies to get a dipole with three, four, five, six, or more resonant frequencies. The principle also applies to verticals, so any reference to a dipole can be considered to be valid for a vertical, as well.

We can write a definition of the C-R principle this

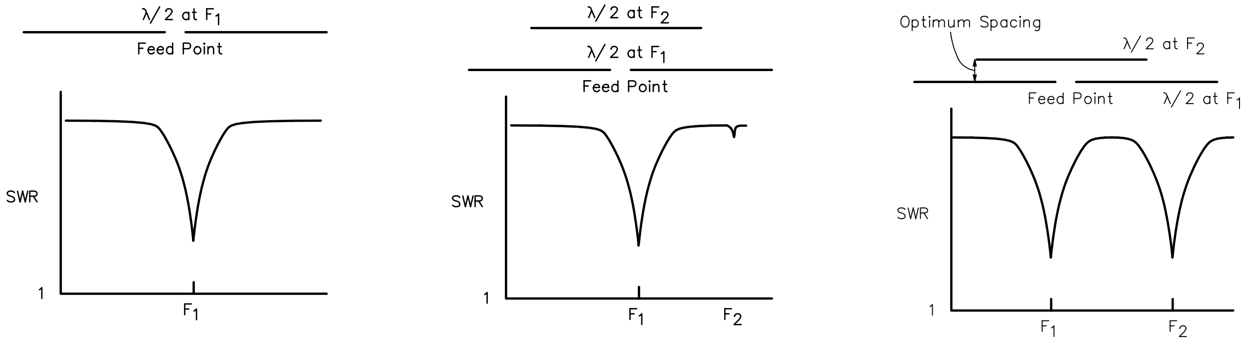

Fig 44—At A, the SWR of a dipole over a wide frequency range. At B, a nearby conductor is just close enough to interact with the dipole. At C, when the second conductor is at the optimum spacing, the combination is matched at both frequencies.

way: *Given a dipole (or vertical) at one frequency and an additional conductor resonant at another frequency, there is an optimum distance between them that results in the resonance of the additional conductor being imposed upon the original dipole, resulting in a low SWR at both resonant frequencies.*

Some History

In the late 1940s, the *coaxial sleeve* antenna was developed (**Fig 45A**), covering two frequencies by surrounding a dipole or monopole with a cylindrical tube resonant at the higher of the desired frequencies. In the 1950s, Gonset briefly marketed a two-band antenna based on this design. Other experimenters soon determined that two conductors at the second frequency, placed on either side of the main dipole or monopole, would make a skeleton representation of a cylinder (Fig 45B). This is called the *open-sleeve* antenna. The Hy-Gain Explorer tribander uses this method in its driven element to obtain resonance in the 10-meter band. Later on, a few antenna developers finally figured out that these extra conductors did not need to be added in pairs, and that a single conductor at each frequency could add the extra resonances (Fig 45C). This is the method used by Force 12 in some of their multiband antennas.

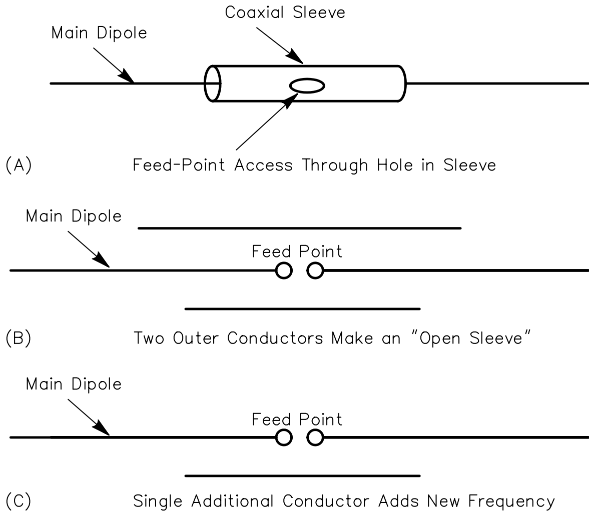

Fig 45—Evolution of coupled-resonator antennas: At A, the *coaxial-sleeve* dipole; at B, the *open-sleeve* dipole; and at C, a *coupled-resonator* dipole, the most universal configuration.

This is a perfect example of how science works. A specific idea is discovered, with later developments leading to an underlying general principle. The original coaxial-sleeve configuration is the most specific, being limited to two frequencies and requiring a particular construction method. The open-sleeve antenna is an intermediate step, showing that the sleeve idea is not limited to one configuration.

Finally, we have the coupled-resonator concept, which is the general principle, applicable in many different antenna configurations, for many different frequency combinations. Severns' antenna uses it with a folded dipole, and Wilson uses it with a main vertical that is off-center fed. The author K9AY used it with conventional dipoles and quarter-wave verticals. Other designers have used the principle more subtly, like putting the first director in a Yagi very close to the driven element, broadening the SWR bandwidth the same way Severns' design does with a dipole.

In the past, most antennas built with this single-conductor technique have also been called *open-sleeve* (or *multiple-open-sleeve*) antennas, a term taken from the history of their development. However, the term *sleeve* implies that one conductor must surround another. This is not really a physical or electrical description of the antenna's operation, therefore, K9AY suggests using the term *coupled-resonator,* which is the most accurate description of the general principle.

A Little Math

The interaction that makes the C-R principle work is not random. It behaves in a predictable, regular manner. K9AY derived an equation that shows the relationship between the driven element and the additional resonators for ordinary dipoles and verticals:

$$\frac{\log_{10} d}{\log_{10}(D/4)} = 0.54 \qquad \text{(Eq 4)}$$

where

d = distance between conductors, measured in wavelengths at the frequency of the chosen additional resonator

D = the diameter of the conductors, also in wavelengths at the frequency of the additional resonator.

Eq 4 assumes they are both the same diameter and that the feed point impedance at both frequencies is the same as a dipole in free space (72 Ω) or a quarter-wave monopole over perfect ground (36 Ω).

The equation only describes the impedance due to the additional resonator. The main dipole element is always part of the antenna, and it may have a fairly low impedance at the additional frequency. This is the case when the frequencies are close together, or when the main element is operating at its third harmonic. At these frequencies, the spacing distance must be adjusted so that the parallel combination of dipole and resonator results in the desired feed-point impedance.

K9AY worked out two correction factors, one to cover a range of impedances and another for frequencies close together. These can be included in the basic equation, which is rearranged below to solve for the distance between the conductors:

$$d = 10^{0.54\log_{10}(D/4)} \times \frac{Z_0 + 35.5}{109} \times [1 + e^{-[((F_2/F_1)-1.1)\times 11.3)+0.1)]}] \qquad \text{(Eq 5)}$$

where

d and D are the same as above.

Z_0 = the desired feed point impedance at the frequency of the additional resonator (between 20 and 120 Ω). For a vertical, multiply the desired impedance by two to get Z_0. If you want a 50-Ω feed, use 100 Ω for Z_0.

F_1 = the resonant frequency of the main dipole or vertical.

F_2 = the resonant frequency of the additional conductor. The ratio F_2/F_1 is more than 1.1.

e = 2.7183, the base of natural logarithms.

Eq 5 does not directly allow for conductors of unequal diameters, but it can be used as a starting point if you use the diameter of the driven dipole or vertical element for D in the equation.

Characteristics of C-R Antennas

Here's the important stuff—what's different about C-R antennas, what are they good for and what are their drawbacks? The key points are:

- Multiband operation without traps, stubs or tuners

K9AY's Eq 5 above does indeed yield a good "first-cut" value for the spacing between coupled-resonator elements. **Fig A** shows the spacing, in inches, plotted against the ratio of frequencies, for two coupled resonator elements with different diameters, again expressed in inches. This is for an upper frequency of 28.4 MHz. Beyond a frequency ratio of about 1.5:1 (28.4:18.1 MHz), the spacing flattens out to a fixed distance between elements for each element diameter. For example, if $^1/_2$-inch elements are used at 28.4 and 18.1 MHz, the spacing between the elements is about 3.75 inches.

EZNEC verifies Eq 5's computations. Note that a large number of segments are necessary for each element when they are closely spaced from each other, and the segments on the elements must be closely aligned with each other. Be sure to run the Average Gain test, as well as Segmentation tests. The modeler should also be aware that if mutually coupled resonators are placed along a horizontal boom (as they would be on multiband Yagis using coupled resonators), the higher-frequency elements will act like retrograde directors, producing some gain (or lack of gain, depending on the azimuth being investigated).

For example, in the *EZNEC* file **K9AY C-R 28-21-14 MHz 1 In.EZ**, using 1-inch diameter elements spaced 6 inches apart, if the 28-MHz element is placed 6 inches behind the 14-MHz driven element (with the 21-MHz element placed 6 inches ahead), on 28 MHz the system will have a F/B of 2.6 dB, favoring the rearward direction. On 21 MHz, the system will exhibit a F/B of 1.6 dB, favoring the forward direction. Of course, there are systems where gain and F/B due to the C-R configuration may be put to good use, such as the multiband Yagis mentioned above. However, if the elements are spaced above/below the 14-MHz driven element there is no distortion of the dipole patterns.

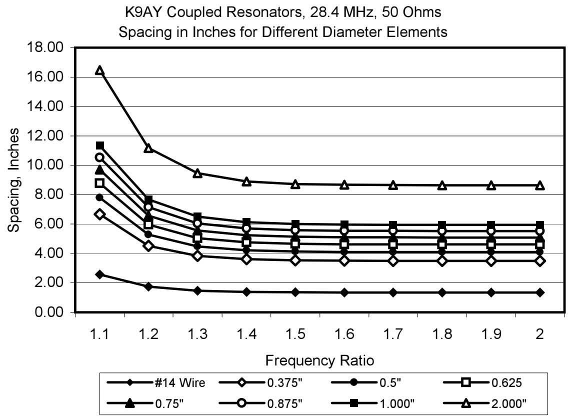

Fig A—Graph of the spacing versus frequency ratio for two Coupled-Resonator elements at 28.4 MHz, for 50-Ω feed-point impedance.

- Flexible impedance matching at each frequency
- Independent fine-tuning at each frequency (little interaction)
- Easily modeled using *MININEC* or *NEC*-based programs
- Pruning process same as a simple dipole
- Can accommodate many frequencies (seven or more)
- Virtually lossless coupling (high efficiency)
- Requires a separate wire or tubing conductor at each frequency
- Mechanical assembly requires a number of insulated supports
- Narrower bandwidth than equivalent dipole
- Capacitance requires slight lengthening of conductors

To begin with, the most obvious characteristic is that this principle can be used to add multiple resonant frequencies to an ordinary dipole or vertical, using additional conductors that are not physically connected. This gives us three variable factors: (1) the diameter of the conductor, (2) its length, and (3) its position relative to the main element.

Having the freedom to control these factors gives us the advantage of *flexibility*; we have a wide range of control over the impedance at each added frequency. Another advantage is that the behavior at each frequency is quite *independent*, once the basic design is in place. In other words, making fine-tuning adjustments at one frequency doesn't change the resonance or impedance at the other frequencies. A final advantage is *efficiency.* With conductors close together, and with a resonant target conductor, coupling is very efficient. Traps, stubs, and compensating networks found on other multiband antennas all introduce lossy reactive components.

There are two main disadvantages of C-R antennas. The first is the relative *complexity* of construction. Several conductors are needed, installed with some type of insulating spacers. Other multiband antennas have their complexities as well (such as traps that need to be mounted and tuned), but C-R antennas will usually be bulkier. The larger size generally means greater windload, which is a disadvantage to some hams.

The other significant disadvantage is *narrower bandwidth*, particularly at the highest of the operating frequencies. We can partially overcome this problem with large conductors that are naturally broad in bandwidth, and in some cases we might even use an extra conductor to put two resonances in one band. It is interesting to note that the pattern is opposite that of trapped antennas. The C-R antenna gets narrower at the highest frequencies of operation, while trap antennas generally have narrowest bandwidth at their lowest frequencies.

There are two special situations that should be noted. First, when the antenna has a resonance near the frequency where the driven dipole is 3/2 λ long (3/4 λ for a vertical), the dipole has a fairly low impedance. The spacing of the C-R element needs to be increased to raise its impedance so that the parallel combination of the main element and C-R element equals the desired impedance (usually 50 Ω). There is also significant antenna current in the part of the main dipole extending beyond the C-R section, contributing to the total radiation pattern. As a result, this particular arrangement radiates as three λ/2 sections in phase, and has about 3 dB gain and a narrower directional pattern compared to a dipole (**Fig 46**). This might be an advantage for antennas covering bands with a frequency ratio of about three, such as 3.5 and 10.1 MHz, 7 and 21 MHz, or 144 and 430 MHz.

The other special situation is when we want to add a new frequency very close to the resonant frequency of the main dipole. An antenna for 80 and 75 meters would be an example of this. Again, the driven dipole has a fairly low impedance at the new frequency. Add the fact that coupling is very strong between these similar conductors and we find that a wide spacing is required to make the antenna work. A dipole resonant at 3.5 MHz and another wire resonant at 3.8 MHz will need to be 3 or 4 feet apart, while a 3.5 MHz and 7 MHz combination might only need to be spaced 4 or 5 inches.

Another useful characteristic of C-R antennas is that they are easily and accurately modeled by computer programs based on either *MININEC* or *NEC*, as long as you stay within each program's limitations. For example, Severns points out that *MININEC* does not handle folded dipoles very well, and *NEC* modeling is required. With ease of computer modeling, a precise answer isn't needed for the design equation given above. An approximate solution will provide a starting point that can quickly be adjusted for optimum dimensions.

The added resonators have an effect on the lengths of all conductors, due to the capacitance between the conductors. Capacitance causes antennas to look electrically shorter, so

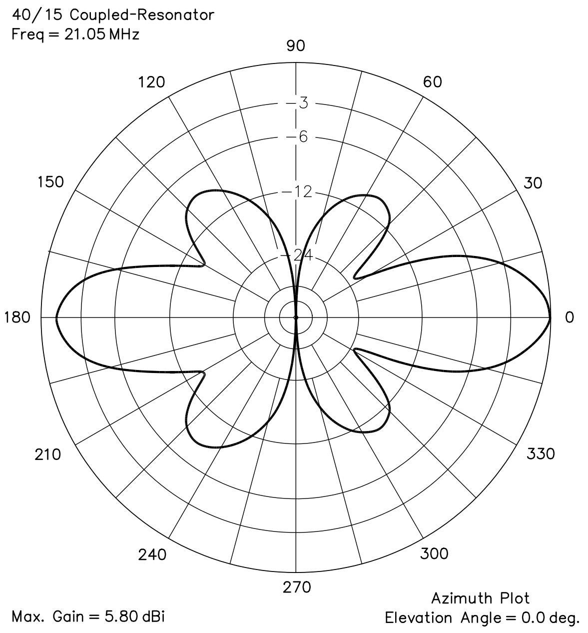

Fig 46—Radiation pattern for the special case of a C-R antenna with the additional frequency at the third harmonic of the main dipole resonant frequency.

each element needs to be about 1% or 2% longer than a simple dipole at the same frequency. As a rule of thumb, use 477/f (in feet) instead of the usual 468/f when calculating dipole length, and 239/f instead of 234/f for a $\lambda/4$ vertical.

A 30/17/12-Meter Dipole

To show how a C-R antenna is designed, let's build a dipole to cover all three WARC bands. We'll use #12 wire, which has a diameter of 0.08 inches, and the main dipole will be cut for the 10.1 MHz band. From the equation above, the spacing between the main dipole and the 18-MHz resonator should be 2.4 inches for 72 Ω, or 1.875 inches for 50 Ω. At 24.9 MHz, the spacing to the resonator for that band should be 2.0 inches for 72 Ω, or 1.62 inches for 50 Ω. Of course, this antenna will be installed over real ground, not in free space, so these spacing distances may not be exact. Plugging these numbers into your favorite antenna-modeling program will let you optimize the dimensions for installation at the height you choose.

For those of you who like to work with real antennas, not computer-generated ones, the predicted spacing is accurate enough to build an antenna with minimum trial-and-error. You should use a nice round number just larger than the calculated spacing for 50 Ω. For this antenna, K9AY decided that the right spacing for the desired height would be 2 inches for the 18 MHz resonator and 1.8 inches for the 24.9 MHz resonator. For simplicity of construction, he just used 2 inches for both, figuring that the worst he would get is a 1.2:1 SWR if the numbers were a little bit off. Like all dipoles, the impedance varies with height above ground, but the 2-inch spacing results in an excellent match on the two additional bands, at heights of more than 25 feet.

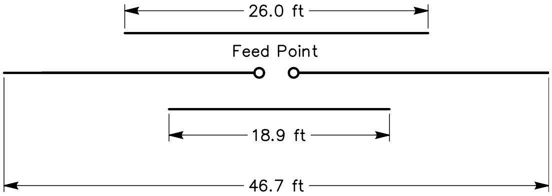

Fig 47—Dimensions of a C-R dipole for the 30, 17 and 12-meter bands.

The final dimensions of the dipole for 10.1, 18.068 and 24.89 MHz are shown in **Fig 47**. These are the final pruned lengths for a straight dipole installed at a height of about 40 feet. If you put up the antenna as an inverted V, you will need each wire to be a bit longer. Pruning this type of antenna is just like a dipole—if it's resonant too low in frequency, it's too long and the appropriate wire needs to be shortened. So, you can cut the wires just a little long to start with and easily prune them to resonance.

A final note: if you want to duplicate this antenna design, remember that the 2-inch spacing is just for #12 wire! The required spacing for a C-R antenna is related to the conductor diameter. This same antenna built with #14 wire needs under 1½-inch spacing, while a 1-inch aluminum-tubing version requires about 7-inch spacing.

Summary

The coupled-resonator principle is one more weapon in the antenna designer's arsenal. It's not the perfect method for all multiband antennas, but what the C-R principle offers is an alternative to traps and tuners, in exchange for using more wire or aluminum. Although a C-R antenna requires more complicated construction, its main attraction is in making a multiband antenna that can be built with no compromise in matching or efficiency.

HF Discone Antennas

The material in this section is adapted from an article by Daniel A. Krupp, W8NWF, in *The ARRL Antenna Compendium, Vol 5*. The name *discone* is a contraction of the words disc and cone. Although people often describe a discone by its design-center frequency (for example, a "20-meter discone"), it works very well over a wide frequency range, as much as several octaves. **Fig 48** shows a typical discone, constructed of sheet metal for UHF use. On lower frequencies, the sheet metal may be replaced with closely spaced wires and/or aluminum tubing.

The dimensions of a discone are determined by the lowest frequency of use. The antenna produces a vertically polarized signal at a low-elevation angle and it presents a good match for 50-Ω coax over its operating range. One advantage of the discone is that its maximum current area is near the top of the antenna, where it can radiate away from ground clutter. The cone-like skirt of the discone radiates the signal—radiation from the disc on top is minimal. This is because the currents flowing in the skirt wires essentially all go in the same direction, while the currents in the disc elements oppose each other and cancel out. The discone's omnidirectional characteristics make it ideal for roundtable QSOs or for a Net Control station.

Electrical operation of this antenna is very stable, with no changes due to rain or accumulated ice. It is a self-contained antenna—unlike a traditional ground-mounted vertical radiator, the discone does not rely on a ground-radial system for efficient operation. However, just like any other vertical

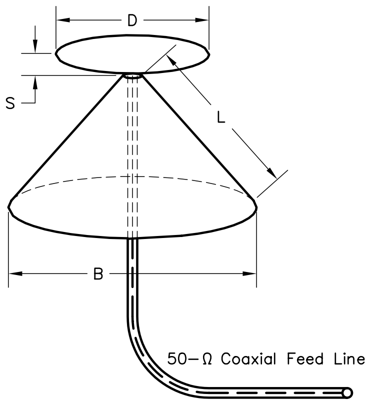

Fig 48—Diagram of VHF/UHF discone, using a sheet-metal disc and cone. It is fed directly with 50-Ω coax line. The dimensions L and D, together with the spacing S between the disc and cone, determine the frequency characteristics of the antenna. L = 246 / f_{MHz} for the lowest frequency to be used. Diameter D should be from 0.67 to 0.70 of dimension L. The diameter at the bottom of the cone B is equal to L. The space S between disc and cone can be 2 to 12 inches, with the wider spacing appropriate for larger antennas.

antenna, the quality of the ground in the Fresnel area will affect the discone's far-field pattern.

Both the disc and cone are inherently balanced for wind loading, so torque caused by the wind is minimal. The entire cone and metal mast or tower can be connected directly to ground for lightning protection.

Unlike a trap vertical or a triband beam, discone antennas are not adjusted to resonate at a particular frequency in a ham band or a group of ham bands. Instead, a discone functions as a sort of high-pass filter, efficiently radiating RF all the way from the low-frequency design cutoff to the high-frequency limits imposed by the physical design.

While VHF discones have been available out-of-the-box for many years, HF discones are rare indeed. Some articles have dealt with HF discones, where the number of disc elements and cone wires was minimized to cut costs or to simplify construction. While the minimalist approach is fine if the sought-after results really are obtained, W8NWF believes in building his discones without compromise.

History of the Discone

The July 1949 and July 1950 issues of *CQ* magazine both contained excellent articles on discones. The first article, by Joseph M. Boyer, W6UYH, said that the discone was developed and used by the military during World War II. (See Bibliography.) The exact configuration of the top disc and cone was the brainchild of Armig G. Kandonian. Boyer described three VHF models, plus information on how to build them, radiation patterns, and most importantly, a detailed description of how they work. He referred to the discone as a type of "coaxial taper transformer."

The July 1950 article was by Mack Seybold, W2RYI. He described an 11-MHz version he built on his garage roof. The mast actually fit through the roof to allow lowering the antenna for service. Seybold stated that his 11-MHz discone would load up on 2 meters but that performance was down 10 dB compared to his 100-MHz Birdcage discone. He commented that this was caused by the relatively large spacing between the disc and cone. Actually, the performance degradation he found was caused by the wave angle lifting upward at high frequencies. The cone wires were electrically long, causing them to act like long wire antennas. See **Fig 49**.

W8NWF's First Discone: the A-Frame Discone

The first discone was one designed to cover 20 through 10 meters without requiring an antenna tuner. The cone assembly uses 18-foot long wires, with a 60° included apex angle and a 12-foot diameter disc assembly. See **Fig 50** and **Fig 51**. The whole thing was assembled on the ground, with the feed coax and all guys attached. Then with the aid of some friends, it was pulled up into position.

The author used a 40-foot tall wooden "A-frame" mast, made of three 22-foot-long 2 × 4s. He primed the mast with sealer and then gave it two coats of red barn paint to make it look nice and last a long time. The disc hub was a 12-inch length of 3-inch schedule-40 PVC plumbing pipe. The PVC is very tough, slightly ductile, and easy to drill and cut. PVC is well suited for RF power at the feed point of the antenna.

Three 12-foot by 0.375-inch OD pieces of 6061 aluminum, with 0.058-inch wall thickness, were used for the 12-foot diameter top disc. These were cut in half to make the center portions of the six telescoping spreaders. Four twelve foot by 0.250-inch OD (0.035-inch wall thickness) tubes were cut into 12 pieces, each 40 inches long. This gave extension tips for each end of the six spreaders.

See **Fig 52** for details on the disc hub assembly. W8NWF started by drilling six holes straight through the PVC for the six spreaders, accurately and squarely, starting

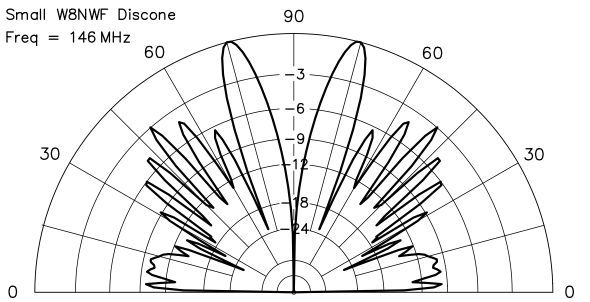

Fig49—Computed elevation plot over average ground for W8NWF's small discone at 146 MHz, ten times its design frequency range. The cone wires are acting as long-wire antennas, distorting severely the low-elevation angle response, even though the feed-point impedance is close to 50 Ω.

Fig 50—Photo of W8NWF's original A-frame mounted HF discone.

about two inches down from the top and spaced radially every 30°. Each hole is 0.375 inches below the plane of the previous one. Take great care in drilling—a poor job now will look bad from the ground up for a long time! It's a good idea to make up a paper template beforehand. Tape this to the PVC hub and then drill the holes, which should make for a close fit with the elements. If you goof, start over with a new piece of PVC—it's cheap.

Each six-foot spreader tube was secured exactly in the center to clear a 6-32 threaded brass rod that secured the elements mechanically and electrically. A two-foot long by ¼-inch OD wooden dowel was inserted into the middle of each six-foot length of tubing. The dowel added strength and also prevented crushing the element when the nuts on the threaded rod were tightened.

Insert the 40-inch long extensions four inches into each end of the six-foot spreaders. Mark and drill holes to pin the telescoping tips, plus holes big enough to clear #18 soft-drawn copper wire. This was for the inner circumferential wire for the disc. Drill a single hole for #18 wire about ¼ inch from each extension element tip, through which passes the outer circumferential wire. Finally, insert all 6-foot elements into the PVC hub and line up the holes in the center so the brass rod could be inserted through the middle to secure the elements.

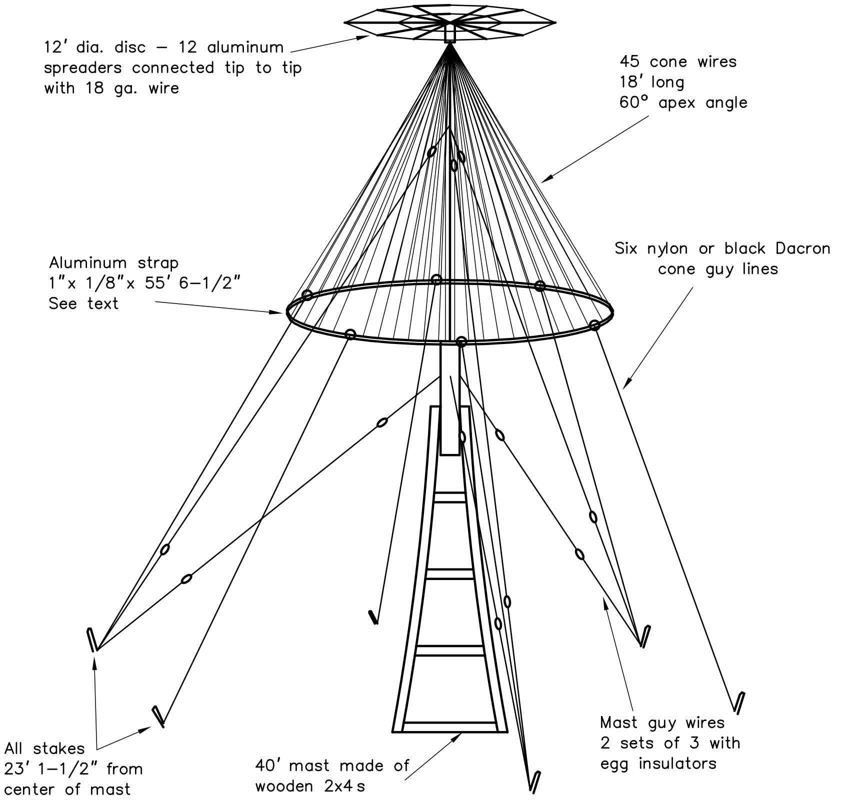

Fig 51—Detailed drawing of the A-frame discone for 14 to 30 MHz. The disc assembly at the top of the A-frame is 12 feet in diameter. There are 45 cone wires, each 18 feet long, making a 60° included angle of the cone. This antenna works very well over the design frequency range.

The next step is to "chisel to fit" the top of my wooden mast to allow the PVC to slide down on it about six or seven inches. For convenience, place the whole mast assembly in a horizontal position on top of two clothesline poles and one stepladder.

Place the disc head assembly over the top of the mast, but don't secure it yet. This allows for rotation while adding the disc spreader extensions. A tip for safety: tie white pieces of cloth to the ends of elements near eye level. Just remember to remove them before raising the antenna.

For a long-lasting installation, use an anti-corrosion compound, such as Penetrox, when assembling the aluminum antenna elements. As the extensions are added, secure them in the innermost of the two holes with a short piece of #18 wire. Then run a wire through the remaining holes looping each element as you go. This gives added support laterally to the elements. Next add a #18 wire to the tips of the extensions in the same fashion. This provides even more

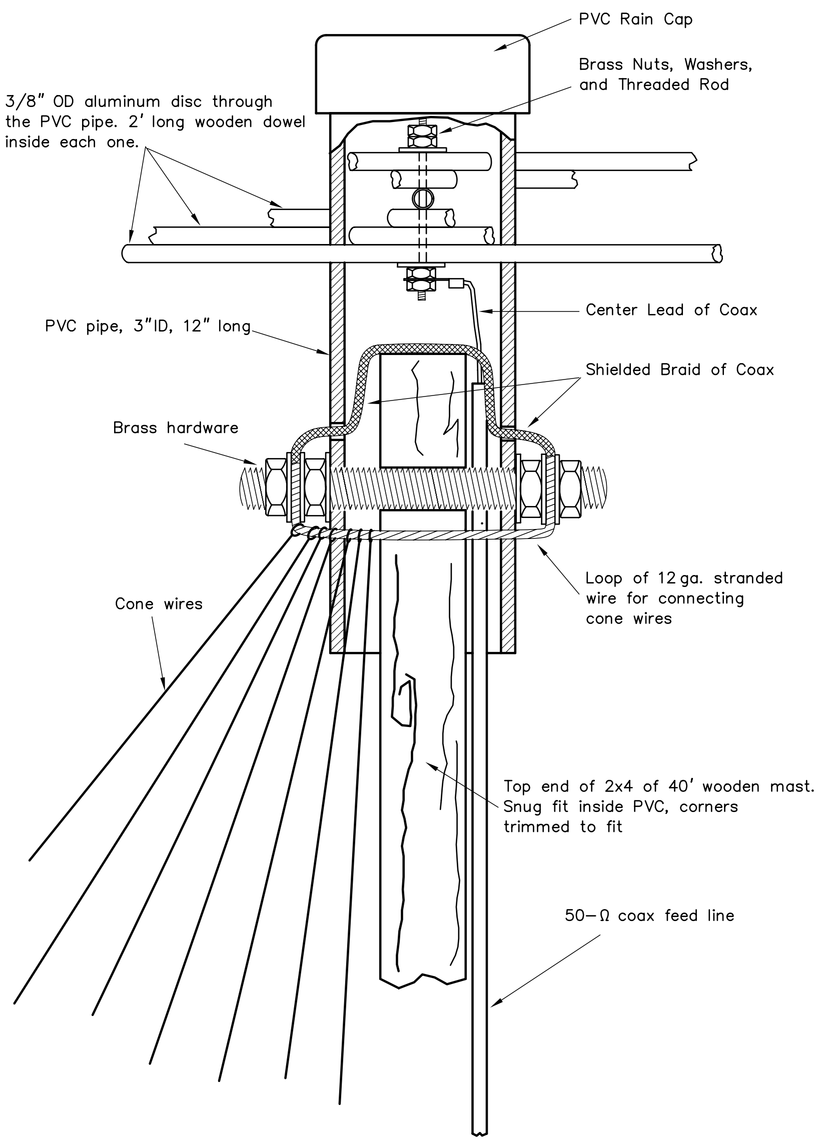

Fig 52—Details of the top hub for the A-frame discone. The three-inch PVC pipe was drilled to hold the six spreaders making up the top disc. Connections for the shield of the feed coax were made to the disc. The coax center conductor was connected to the cone-wire assembly by means of a loop of #12 stranded wire encircling the outside of the PVC hub.

physical stability as well as making electrical connections.

Next, pin the PVC disk hub to the wooden mast with a ⅜-inch threaded rod. This is also the point where the cone wires are attached, using a loop of #12 stranded copper wire around the PVC. Solder each cone wire to this loop, together with the coax shield braid. Make sure the loop of #12 wire is large enough to make soldering possible without burning the PVC with the soldering iron.

Connect the coax center conductor to the disc assembly by securing it with the same 6-32 threaded rod that ties all the disc elements together. Make sure to use coax-seal compound to keep moisture out of the coax. The coax is then fed down the mast and secured in a few places to provide strain relief and to keep it out of the way of the cone wires.

Use two sets of three guy wires. Break these up with egg insulators, just to be sure there won't be any interaction with the antenna. Use 45 wires of #18 soft-drawn copper wire for the cone, 18 feet long each. Cut them a little long so they can be soldered to the connecting loop.

A difficult task is now at hand—keeping all the cone wires from getting tangled! Solder each of the 45 cone wires to the loop of #12 wire, spacing each wire about ¼ inch from the last one for an even distribution all the way around.

The cone base is 18 feet in diameter to provide a 60° included angle. At the base of the cone, use five 12-foot long aluminum straps, 1 inche wide by ⅛ inch thick, overlapping 8¼ inches and fastened together with aluminum rivets. Drill holes along the strap every 15 inches to secure the cone wires.

Make sure to handle the aluminum strap carefully while fastening the cone wire ends; too sharp of a bend could possibly break it. Fasten six small-diameter nylon lines to the cone-base aluminum strap to stabilize the cone. These cone-guys share the same guy stakes as the mast guy lines.

After cutting the nylon lines, heat the frayed ends of each with a small flame to prevent unraveling. Apply several coats of clear protective spray to the disk head assembly, after checking that all hardware is tight. A rain cap at the top of the PVC disc hub completes construction.

Putting It All Up

You are going to need a lot of help now to raise this antenna. Have the whole process fully thought out before trying to raise it. You should have the spot selected for the base of the mast and some pipes driven into the ground to prevent the mast from slipping sideways as it is being pulled up. The three guy stakes should be in place, 23 feet, 1½ inches from mast center. Of course, the guys should have been cut to the correct length, with some extra. Be sure the coax transmission line will come off the mast where it should. A long length of rope to an upper and lower guy line is used to pull up the whole works.

The author used an old trick of standing an extension ladder vertically near the antenna base with the pull lines looped over the top rung to get a good lift angle. The weight added to the mast from the antenna disc assembly and cone wires is about 26 pounds, most of it from the cone assembly. Use two strong people to pull up the antenna slowly so that the other helpers on the guy wires and cone guy lines have time to move about as required. As the antenna rises to the vertical position, if there are no snafus, the guy lines can be secured. Then tie the six cone lines to stakes.

A Really Big Discone

When an opportunity arose to buy a 64-foot self-supporting TV tower, the author jumped at the chance to implement a full 7 to 30-MHz discone. His new tower had eight sections, each eight feet long. Counting the overlap between sections, the cone wires would come off the tower at about the 61.5-foot mark.

W8NWF took some liberties with the design of this larger discone compared to the first one, which he had done strictly "by the book." The first change was to make the cone wires 70 feet long, even though the formula said they should be 38 feet long. Further, the cone wires would not be connected together at the bottom. With the longer cone wires, he felt that 75 and 80-meter operation might be a possibility.

The second major change was to widen the apex angle out from 60° to about 78°. Modeling said this should produce a flatter SWR over the frequency spectrum and would also give a better guy system for the tower.

The topside disc assembly would be 27 feet in diameter and have 16 radial spreaders, using telescoping aluminum tubing tapering from ⅝ to ½ to ⅜ inches OD. All spreaders were made from 0.058-inch wall thickness 6063-T832 aluminum tubing, available from Texas Towers. A section of 10-inch PVC plumbing pipe would be used as the hub for construction of the disc assembly.

Construction Details for the Large Discone.

While installing the tower, the author had left the top section on the ground. This allowed him to fit the disc head assembly precisely to it. **Fig 53** shows the overall plan for the large discone. The 10-inch diameter PVC hub was designed to slip over the tower top section, but was a little too large. So a set of shims was installed on the three legs at the top of the tower for a just-right fit. Drilling the PVC pipe for the eight ⅝-inch OD elements was started about an inch down from the top. W8NWF purposely staggered the drilled holes in the same fashion as the hub for the smaller antenna. See **Fig 54**.

Again, three-foot sections of ½-inch wooden dowel were used to strengthen the ⅝-inch center portion of each spreader. Instead of using a loop of #12 wire for connecting the cone wires, as had been done on the smaller discone, he drilled 36 holes in the PVC hub. These holes are small enough so

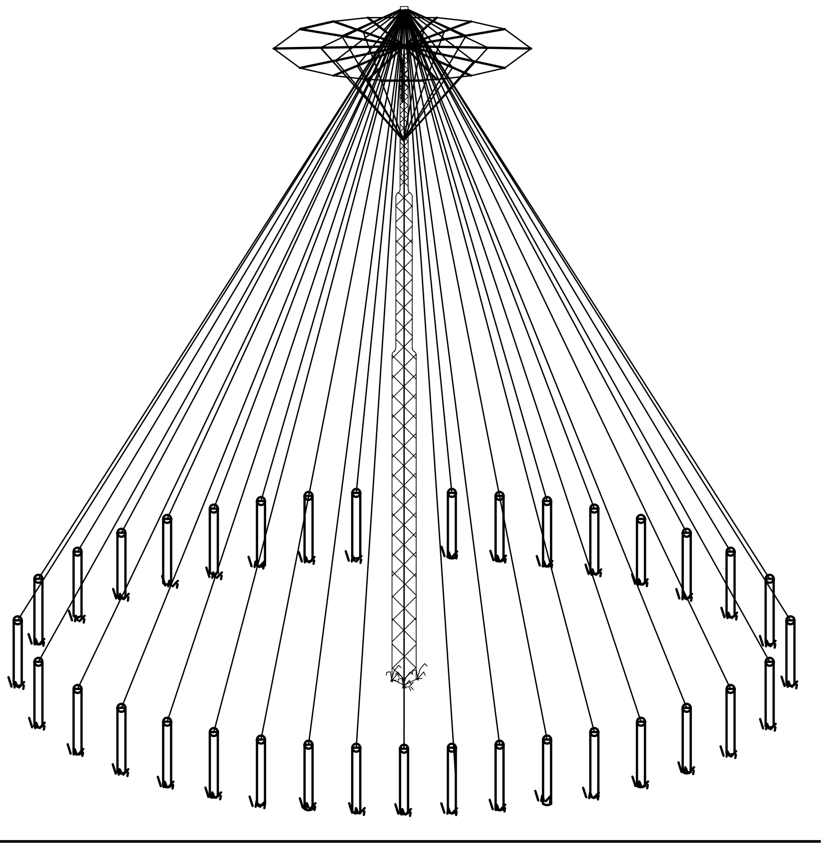

Fig 53—The large W8NWF discone, designed for operation from 7 to 14 MHz, but useable with a tuning network in the shack for 3.8 MHz.

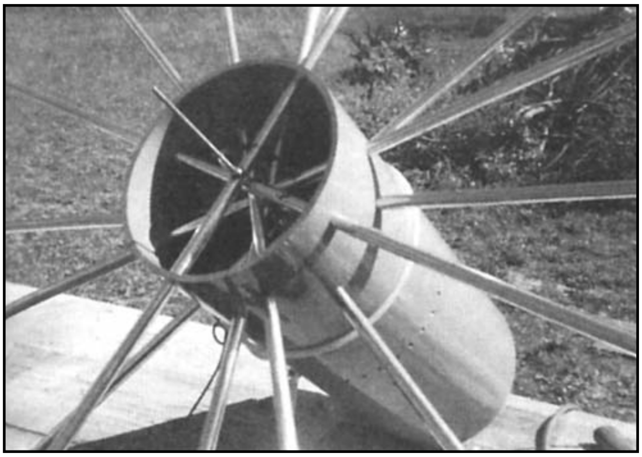

Fig 54—Photo showing details of the hub assembly for the large discone, including the threaded brass rod that connects the radial spreaders together. The 10-inch PVC pipe is drilled to accommodate the radial spreaders. Each spreader is reinforced with a three-foot long wooden dowel inside for crush resistance. Note the row of holes drilled below the lowest spreader. Each of the 36 cone wire passes through one of these holes.

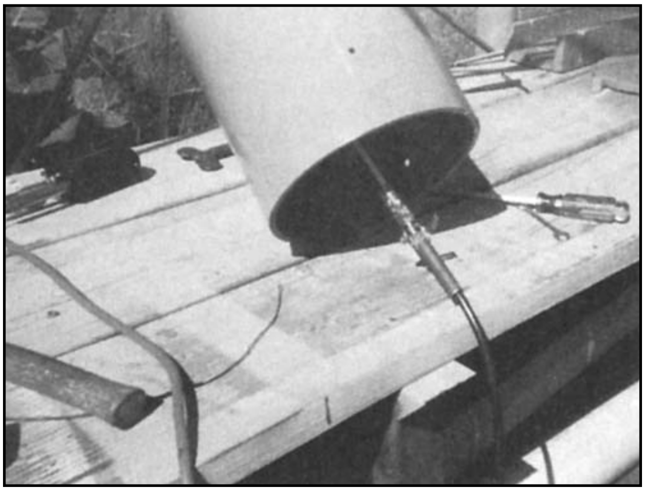

Fig 55—Details of the copper pipe slipped over the feed coax. The coax shield has been folded back over the copper pipe and secured with two stainless-steel hose clamps. The cone wires are also laid against the copper pipe and secured with additional hose clamps.

that the PVC hub would not be weakened appreciably. He drilled the circles of holes for the cone wires about 6 inches below the disc spreaders.

He prepared a three-foot long piece of RG-213 coax, permanently fastened on one end to the antenna, with a female type-N connector at the other end. Type-N fittings were used because of their superior waterproofing abilities. The coax center lead was connected with a terminal lug under a nut on the brass threaded rod securing the disc spreaders. The coax shield braid was folded back over a six-inch long copper pipe and clamped to it with a stainless-steel hose clamp. See **Fig 55** for details.

The plan was that after the top disc assembly had been hoisted up and attached at the top of the tower, individual cone wires would be fed, one at a time, through the small holes drilled in the PVC. They were to be laid against the copper pipe and secured with stainless-steel hose clamps.

The ½ and ⅜-inch OD spreader extension tips were secured in place with two aluminum pop-rivets at each joint. Again, the author used anti-oxidant compound on all spreader junctions. He drilled a hole horizontally near the tip of each ⅜-inch tip all around the perimeter to allow a #8 aluminum wire to circle the entire disc. A small stainless-steel sheet-metal screw was threaded into the end of each element to secure the wire.

In parallel with the aluminum wire, a length of small-diameter black Dacron line was run, securing it in a couple of places between each set of spreaders with UV-resistant plastic tie-wraps. The reason for doing this was to hold the aluminum wire in position and to prevent it from dangling, in case it should break some years in the future. Two coats of clear protective spray were applied for protection.

A truss system helps prevent the disc from sagging due to its own weight. See **Fig 56** for details. This shows the completed disk assembly mounted on the

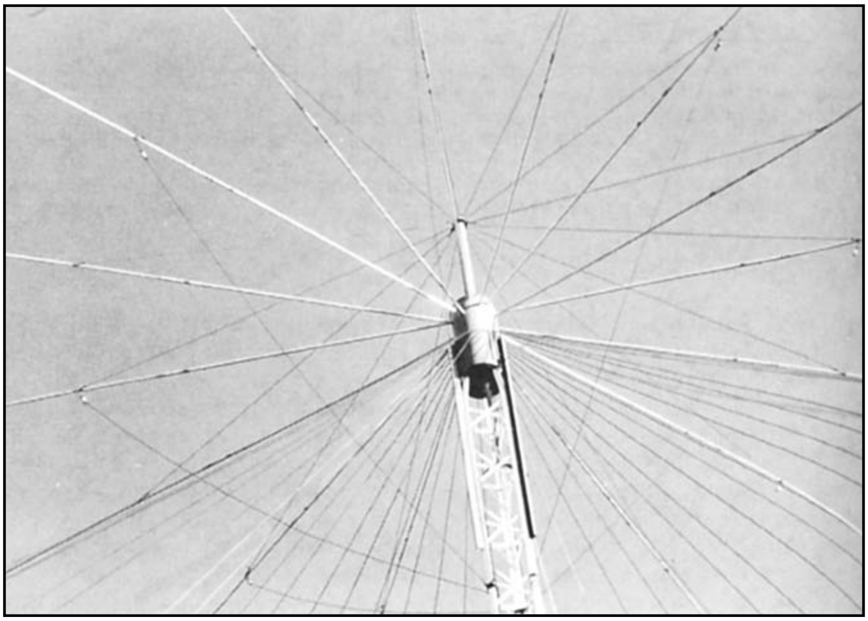

Fig 56—Photo of the spreader hub assembly, showing the truss ropes above and below the radial spreaders. This is a very rugged assembly!

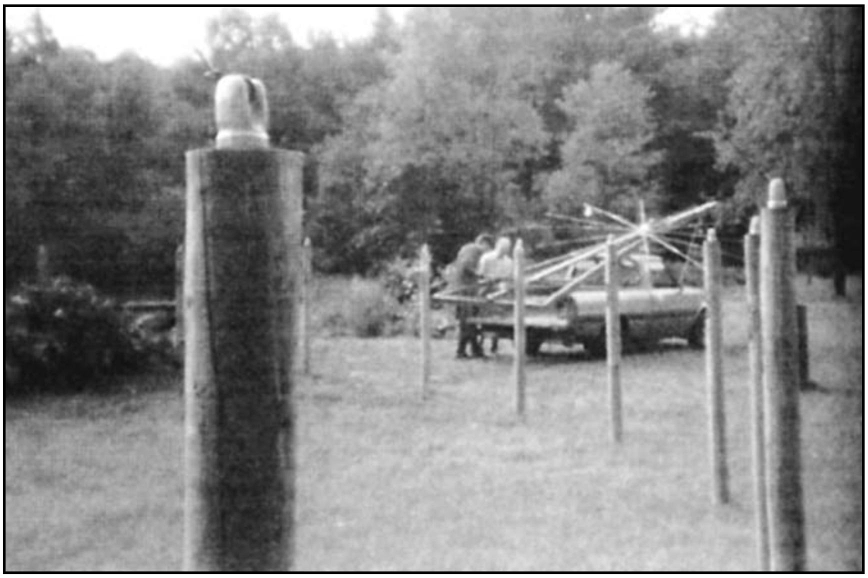

Fig 57—Photo showing some of the fence posts used to hold individual cone wires to keep them off the ground and out of harm's way. The truck in the background is carting away the A-frame discone for installation at KA8UNO's QTH.

top of the tower. A 3-foot length of 2-inch PVC pipe was used for a truss mast above the disc assembly, notching the bottom of the pipe so that it would form a saddle over the top couple of spreaders. This gave a good foothold. He cut a circle of thin sheet aluminum to fit over the 10-inch PVC to serve as a rain cap. The cap has a hole in the center for the two-inch PVC truss mast to pass through, thereby holding it down tight. The author sprayed a few light coats of paint over the PVC for protection from ultraviolet radiation from the sun.

Sixteen small-diameter black Dacron ropes were connected at the top of the truss support mast, with the other ends fastened to the disc spreaders, halfway out. Another rain cap was added to the top of the two-inch PVC truss mast. Eight lengths of the same small diameter Dacron rope were added halfway out the length of every other spreader. These ropes are meant to be tied back to the tower, to prevent updrafts from blowing the disc assembly upwards. Small egg insulators were used near the spot where the eight bottom trusses were tied to the disc spreaders, just to be sure there would be no RF leakage in rainy weather.

Hoisting the completed disc assembly to the top of the tower can be done easily, with the assistance of at least two others. The trickiest part is to get the disc assembly from its position sitting flat on the ground to the vertical position needed for hoisting it up the tower without damaging it. The disc assembly weighs about 35 pounds. Someone at the top of the tower will receive the disc as it is hoisted up by gin pole, and can mount it on the tower top.

You should prepare three 6-foot long metal braces going over the outside of the PVC to fasten to the tower legs. They really beef things up.

In plastic irrigation pipe buried between the house and tower base, the author ran 100 feet of 9086 low-loss coax to the shack. For cone wires, he was able to obtain some #18 copperclad steel wire, with heavy black insulation that looked a lot like neoprene. The cone system takes a lot of wire: 36 × 70 feet = 2520 feet, plus some extra at each end for termination. You'd be well advised to look around at hamfests to save money.

As each cone wire was connected at the top of the tower, a helper should place the other end at its proper spot below. The lower end of each cone wire is secured to an insulator screwed into a fencepost. See **Fig 57**. There are 36 treated-pine fenceposts, each standing about 5½ feet tall, 45 feet from the tower base to hold the lower end of the cone wires. This makes mowing the grass easier and the cone wires are less likely to be tripped over too.

On the final trip down the tower, the eight Dacron downward-truss lines were tied back to the tower about 6 feet below the disc assembly. The author's tower has three ground rods driven near the base, connected with heavy copper wire to the three tower legs.

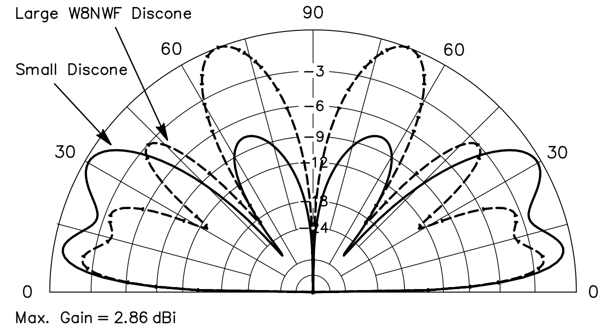

Fig 58—Computed patterns showing elevation response of small discone at 28.5 MHz compared to that of the larger discone at 28.5 MHz. The cone wires are clearly too long for efficient operation on 10 meters, producing unwanted high-angle lobes that rob power from the desirable low-elevation angles.

Performance Tests

On the air tests proved to be very satisfying. Loading up on 40 meters was easy—the SWR was 1:1 across the entire band. W8NWF can work all directions very well and receives excellent signal reports from DX stations. When he switches to his long (333 foot) center-fed dipole for comparison, he finds the dipole is much noisier and that received signals are weaker. During the daytime, nearby stations (less than about 300 to 500 miles) can be louder with the dipole, but the discone can work them just fine also.

The author happily reports that this antenna even works well on 75 meters. As you might expect, it doesn't present a 1:1 match. However, the SWR is between 3.5:1 and 5.5:1 across the band. W8NWF uses an antenna tuner to operate the discone on 75. It seems to get out as well on 75 as it does on 40 meters.

The SWR on 30 meters is about 1.1:1. On 20 meters the SWR runs from 1.05:1 at 14.0 MHz to 1.4:1 at 14.3 MHz. The SWR on the 17, 15, 12 and 10-meter bands varies, going up to a high of 3.5:1 on 12 meters.

Radiation Patterns for the Discones

From modeling using *NEC/Wires* by K6STI, W8NWF verified that the low-angle performance for the bigger antenna is worse than that for the smaller discone on the upper frequencies. See **Fig 58** for an elevation-pattern comparison on 10 meters for both antennas, with average ground constants. The azimuth patterns are simply circles. Radiation patterns produced by antenna modeling programs are very helpful to determine what to expect from an antenna.

The smaller discone, which was built by the book, displays good, low-angle lobes on 20 through 10 meters. The frequency range of 14 through 28 MHz is an octave's worth of coverage. It met his expectations in every way by covering this frequency span with low SWR and a low angle of radiation.

The bigger discone, with a modified cone suitable for use on 75 meters, presents a little different story. The low-angle lobe on 40 meters works well, and 75-meter performance also is good, although an antenna tuner is necessary on this band. The 30-meter band has a good low-angle lobe but secondary high-angle lobes are starting to hurt performance. Note that 30 meters is roughly three times the design frequency of the cone. On 20 and 17 meters there still are good low-angle lobes but more and more power is wasted in high-angle lobes.

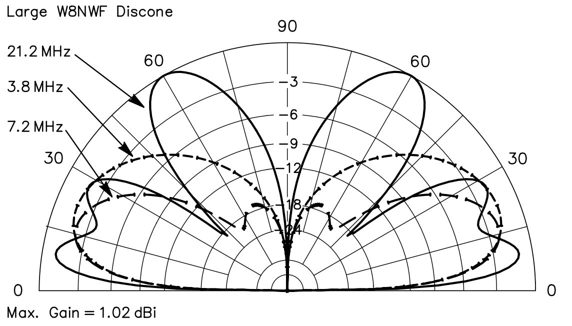

Fig 59—Computed elevation-response patterns for the larger W8NWF discone for 3.8, 7.2 and 21.2 MHz operation. Again, as in Fig 58, the pattern degrades at 21.2 MHz, although it is still reasonably efficient, if not optimal.

The operation on 15, 12, and 10 meters continues to worsen for the larger discone. The message here is that although a discone may have a decent SWR as high as 10 times the design frequency, its radiation pattern is not necessarily good for low-angle communications. See **Fig 59** for a comparison of elevation patterns for 3.8, 7.2 and 21.2 MHz on the larger discone.

A discone antenna built according to formula will work predictably and without any adjustments. One can modify the antenna's cone length and apex angle without fear of rendering it useless. The broadband feature of the discone makes it attractive to use on the HF bands. The low angle of radiation makes DX a real possibility, and the discone is also much less noisy on receive than a dipole.

Probably the biggest drawback to an HF discone is its bulky size. There is no disguising this antenna! However, if you live in the countryside you should be able to put up a nice one.

Harmonic Radiation from Multiband Antennas

Since a multiband antenna is intentionally designed for operation on a number of different frequencies, any harmonics or spurious frequencies that happen to coincide with one of the antenna resonant frequencies will be radiated with very little, if any, attenuation. Particular care should be exercised, therefore, to prevent such harmonics from reaching the antenna.

Multiband antennas using tuned feeders have a certain inherent amount of built-in protection against such radiation, since it is nearly always necessary to use a tuned coupling circuit (antenna tuner) between the transmitter and the feeder. This adds considerable selectivity to the system and helps to discriminate against frequencies other than the desired one.

Multiple dipoles and trap antennas do not have this feature, since the objective in design is to make the antenna show as nearly as possible the same resistive impedance in all the amateur bands the antenna is intended to cover. It is advisable to conduct tests with other amateur stations to determine whether harmonics of the transmitting frequency can be heard at a distance of, say, a mile or so. If they can, more selectivity should be added to the system since a harmonic that is heard locally, even if weak, may be quite strong at a distance because of propagation conditions.

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