The Dystonaut

#1 - January/February 2011

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I purchased this old multiband portable, a 1970's vintage Lafayette Guardian 5000, at a hamfest. Old multiband portables like this are inexpensive and useful for things like quick emitter checks or casual listening. While working in the basement one evening, I turned it on and started tuning through the shortwave band. I came across Arnie Coro's show, DXers Unlimited, on Radio Havana where he was talking about getting on the air and building home-brew clones of a World War II radio called a Paraset. You never know what you might hear when you randomly spin the dial...

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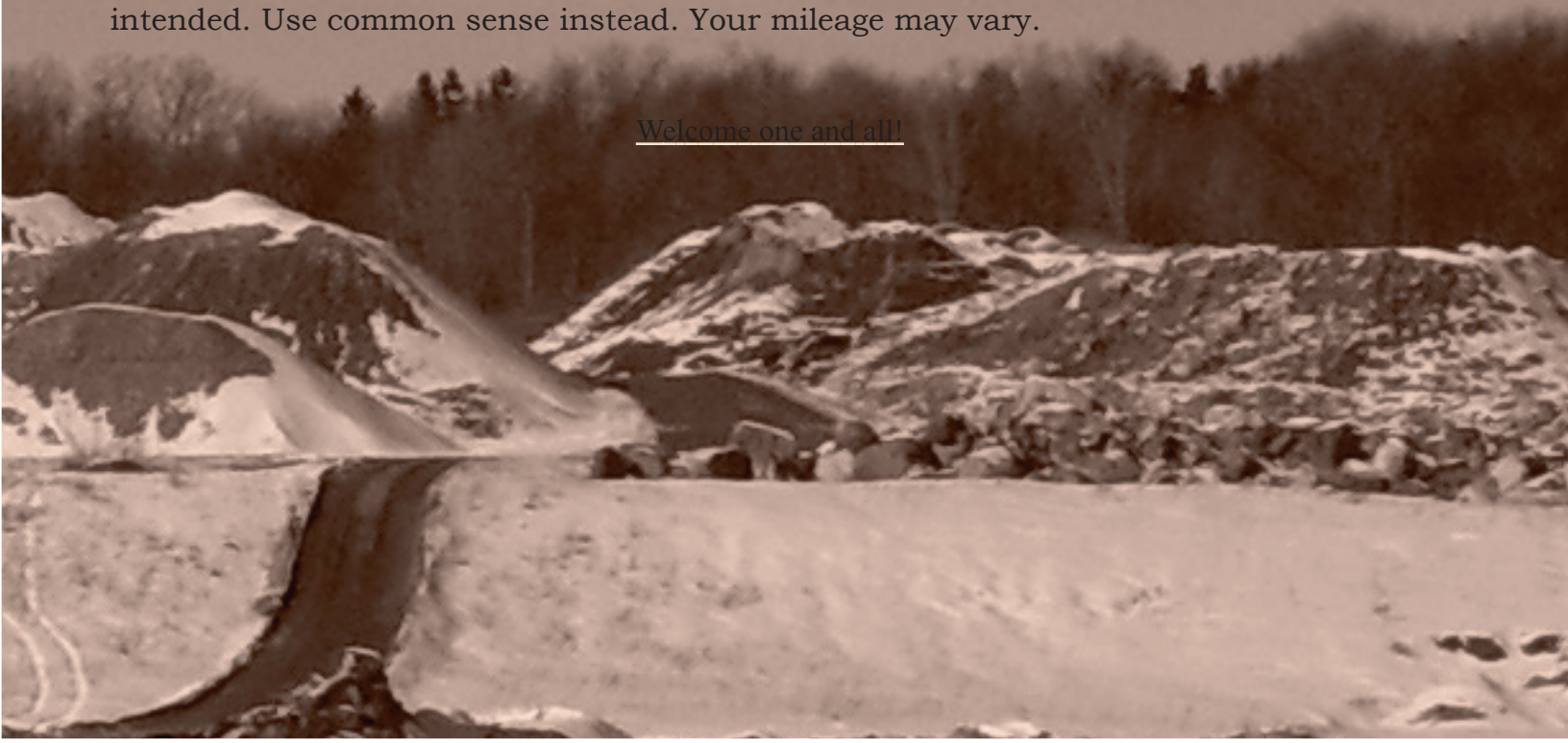
A “dystonaut” is an individual who is adept at navigating around a dystopian society. Many people consider present-day America to be a dystopia in some regards.

The Dystonaut is Ticom's magazine for modern survivalists, hackers, phreaks, cyberpunks, drop-outs, hippies, disaffected Americans (of all kinds), neo-pagans (and just plain pagans – born-again or otherwise), libertarians (with a small and big “L”), LMIs, fellow travelers, wanderers who are not lost, and everyone else who lives in the various assorted philosophical or physical regions known as the Fringes, Outskirts, Outback, Great Black, Interzone, or wherever. Contrary to what many may tell you, all rivers do flow into the same ocean.

In this magazine we talk about dystonaut culture and personal infrastructure systems that will be needed for the slow decline, reset, and American renaissance that will follow afterward.

The Dystonaut is published for educational purposes only. No illegal use is implied or intended. Use common sense instead. Your mileage may vary.



Welcome one and all!

Analog II:
No Band Like Low Band

My dad was a volunteer firefighter back in the 1970s and 1980s. The fire department had a siren on its roof that went off every day at noon, and whenever there was a fire call. You couldn't hear it if you were more than a mile or two away from the station, and in that case you relied on the Plectron to tell you when there was a call. The Plectron was a radio receiver tuned to the department's radio frequency with a quartz crystal you plugged into the circuit board. When the particular paging tones were sent over the air for your department, the Plectron would go off with a noise that would wake the dead, or at least it woke me up every time. It was a fascinating device. I later learned that its frequency, 46.38 MHz., was used for dispatch by all the fire departments in the county. You could flip a switch and it would hear all the radio traffic on that frequency. You could hear the fire calls for neighboring departments, and their periodic radio checks. As I listed in to the various departments, I also discovered that the Plectron had a second frequency crystal plugged into it: 46.36 MHz. That frequency belonged to the county north of mine, and I was able to hear a few of the towns on the border. All of this with no more than about three feet of wire plugged into the back of the unit.

The Plectron was replaced in the 1980s with a Minitor, a pager that you could wear on your belt. The Minitor was convenient. You could carry it with you. Soon all the volunteer firefighters were sporting Minitors on their belts, all set to go off when their particular two-tone combination was received. I thought they didn't have the sensitivity of the Plectron, nor its buzzardly charm. The Plectron stayed on my dad's desk, right on top of the Radio Shack CB that mom used to talk with him during his evening commute home when the post-Convoy CB craze was in full swing. The CB was a great pre-cellular way to request that your spouse pick up a gallon of milk on the way home. For all I know the two radios are still there. There was also a requisite police scanner there, a four channel affair that also used those quartz crystals. The crystals were for the local police and sheriff's departments, although even back then the local PD would have the officer “landline” the department if they didn't want something sensitive going out over the air.

That scanner held little interest to me at the time. I was more interested in what else was out there. Programmable scanners existed back then, but they were prohibitively expensive. Sometime after the Plectron was retired in favor of the Minitor, I found an “Electra” multiband portable radio at a tag sale and paid the princely sum of $20 for it. Besides having AM, FM, Aircraft and shortwave band reception, it also had two “public safety” bands. One was VHF high-band, 145-174 MHz. The other was VHF low-band, 30-50 MHz. There wasn't much of interest on high-band at the time, but low-band had plenty of stuff to listen to. I found out that all the region's fire departments, mostly volunteer, were right around 46 MHz. Police and sheriff's departments were around 39 MHz, and the State Police were around 42 MHz. Tuning around I also found the local highway departments, my school district's bus frequency, and the local Taxi service. All on low-band. The slide-rule tuning was approximate, and when tuned to a particular frequency you'd also hear the users above and below it. This wasn't much of a disadvantage back then. Radio Shack sold this book called Police Call, and with a little judicious listening you could identify who you were tuned to even if you only had a general idea of the frequency. Eventually the increasing number of loggings and the number of interesting things to listen to necessitated the acquisition of a real programmable police scanner. After doing some research in the Radio Shack catalog, a holiday present request was made and I found a twenty channel(!) Radio Shack PRO-2020 under the tree.

Over thirty years later, my parents' fire department still dispatches out on 46.38 MHz. The county to the North has switched their operations to UHF, but still simulcasts on 46.36 MHz. I'm listening to both right now from about an hour's drive away, along with about a dozen other VHF low-band frequencies used for dispatch in the region. The 46.38 MHz. frequency is shared with a local city that also maintains a low-band simulcast of their fire operations frequency. The furthest dispatch frequency I listen to is about 70 miles away, but

it and I both have some elevation to help things out. When the skip conditions are right, I can hear low-band users in the Midwest and deep South. The key is having enough antenna, although when conditions are right you can do it with a telescoping whip on a portable.

The general saying among many in the Land Mobile Radio (LMR) industry is “Low band is no band.” Many industry giants are trying to get their customers off low-band and up in frequency. Yet, many users still hang on to and use their low-band frequencies. I have seen thirty-year old low-band radios still in service by public works departments, CERT teams, and volunteer fire departments. A lot of the stuff is cast-off from other agencies who've upgraded their systems and changed frequencies. They'll use it until it breaks for the last time, and parts become unavailable through any avenue. In rural, especially hilly, areas it works exceptionally well. Many businesses in rural areas use VHF low-band, especially in places where mobile phone service is spotty to non-existent. Yes Virginia, there are places, some even in the Northeast, where you cannot get mobile phone service. I expect many of these users to continue using low-band until they are forced off the frequency. In many rural areas of the country, even an old 1980s vintage 20 channel scanner hooked up to a good antenna and programmed with the right low-band frequencies will keep you informed of goings-on within a hundred miles of your location. Sometimes when I've got a particular frequency I want to keep an ear on, I go retro with a Lafayette HE-51, Lafayette Guardian 5000, or Watkins Johnson/CEI 977. A simple Sinclair passive multicoupler allows them all to share the same antenna. You could do the same with a TV antenna splitter and a couple of vintage police scanners or tunable public safety receivers that shouldn't cost you more than $20 apiece at a local hamfest. The key to successful low-band monitoring is the antenna. Most scanner antennas concentrate on VHF high-band through 800 MHz. That leaves a lot to be desired for low-band reception. A discone antenna, with the very important top whip element, will suffice if nothing else is available. Many low-band enthusiasts utilize CB, 10 meter, or 6 meter ham band antennas.

Low-band also has some territory for those of you who want to transmit. For those avoiding the minor inconvenience of getting their ham ticket, there is the CB service at what many consider to be the bottom end of the low-band, right around 26-27 MHz. You're limited in power, have forty channels, and legally can't talk more than 150 miles or so. Yet, for the most part in the United States those 40 channels are mostly dead except for small local pockets of activity. Bootleg CBers, known as “freebanders”, operate using modified ham and CB gear above and below the standard CB channels. You can find them anywhere from 25-28 MHz. using AM, SSB, and even FM modes of transmission. The area around 49 MHz. is also another free-parking space on the RF Monopoly board. There you find old cordless phones, baby monitors, and very very low-power walkie-talkies that offer about a quarter to half mile range for the most part. Still, there are some experimenters who have made their home there. For those willing to get their ham ticket, there is the ten meter and six meter ham bands, each on opposite ends of the low-band spectrum. Both can get very interesting at times when the band conditions are right.

The best ranges to start monitoring are the frequency ranges of 33-34 and 46-47 MHz. Many fire departments, particularly volunteer ones in rural areas, are licensed in these frequency ranges. Even if the department has gone to another frequency for their operations, they often still dispatch or maintain a simulcast of dispatch on the low-band frequency. During the day you can do a search in the business radio service allocations of 30.5-32, 35-36, and 43-44.6 MHz. Utilitiy companies, especially in rural areas, remain one of the biggest low-band users. They can be found in the frequency ranges of 37.46-37.88 and 47.68-48.54 MHz. The FCC's General Menu Reports site will show you who is licensed on low-band in your region. You can also participate in the famous Ticom Analog Tradition. Use any old police scanner with a search function or VHF-low band tunable public safety band receiver. You get extra style points if you use something like a Lafayette HE-51 or old military surplus receiver. Start at one end of the band, tune your way through the entire band, and repeat. Note down each frequency and what you heard on the frequency. When you get tired, leave it on the last frequency you heard traffic on. Then take some DMAE, get some sleep, and call me in the morning. Don't be surprised if later you find yourself putting up a proper VHF low-band antenna, visiting Radio Shack for a TV antenna splitter, and searching flea markets, hamfests, and tag sales for old low-band receivers and police scanners. Just like AM broadcast band, there is a certain truth to VHF low-band.

WORKBENCHES & WORKSPACES: HOW SMALL CAN YOU GO?

If you do any type of technical or mechanical work, you need a workbench. Since I have established that the basis for modern survivalism is technological in nature, that means a workbench is a necessity for anyone who wants to prepare for the interesting times ahead. Working on the dining room table becomes problematic because come mealtime you have to pack up your work in progress and put it away somewhere. A workbench eliminates this inconvenience. A workbench also acts as a focal point where you can store all your tools and technical literature that you will undoubtedly acquire. Fortunately, they are very inexpensive, easy to make, and can be custom-built to fit anywhere.

My current primary workbench consists of a door placed upon two old radio repeater cabinets. The bench was free, as everything was salvaged out of a dumpster. It is solid, and easy to move since it is only three parts. It's also 6½ feet long and resides in the basement. Because of its sometimes inconvenient location, I decided to build another, smaller bench upstairs in the den that would be suitable for smaller projects. Due to the size of the den and the arrangement of the furniture in it, there was a corner spot of about 24”x40” available for a small workbench. While there are small portable workbenches available from places like Sears, Home Depot, and Lowes that would fit in a place that size, the project had a budget of zero and needed to be done with whatever material was already on hand.

If you own a place and do even some of the work on it yourself, you soon acquire various leftover pieces and parts from various projects, much like any other hobby. In this instance, I went through my scrap wood collection to see what was available. I found some

2x4s and a decent piece of ½" plywood. Looking further in the parts pile, I also found some plastic brackets that are designed to turn 2x4s into a shelf unit. They even came with a good-sized bag of wood screws. The 2x4s would serve as legs, and the bench top would be made from the ½" plywood. The brackets would serve to hold everything together. Going even further into the scrap wood pile, I found a homemade wooden shelf unit that was removed when we originally bought the place and remodeled one of the rooms. It was about four inches higher than the planned height of the bench, but that would be easily remedied by cutting a little off the bottom. That would become one of the workbench's legs. All that was required was to cut everything to the appropriate size with a jigsaw and screw it together. Total time of assembly was about 90 minutes.

A workbench lends itself well to permanent tool placement. Here are two very useful workbench items available from one of my favorite companies, Dremel. The first picture is a Dremel Work Station (The tool wasn't installed yet.) that turns a Dremel Tool in a small

This tool chest is a wooden Lowes "Classic" model that I picked up on clearance. You should also keep your eyes open for serviceable tool chests at tag sales and flea markets. You can never have too many toolboxes or tool chests. They always get filled with tools. For workshop use, I found drawer-type tool chests superior to portable tool boxes or tool bags.

So now you've got a small workbench installed in a convenient, out of the way corner, and are wondering just what would you be able to work on with a small workbench of this size? You could do some gunsmithing on it. As you can see in this picture, a gun vise fits nicely on the bench. You could also easily do small electronic work on it.

drill-press. You can also rotate the tool holder 90 degrees for sanding, polishing, or wire wheel work. The second picture is a small Dremel vise with slotted plastic jaws that are perfect for holding electronic circuit boards. It's small enough to stay out of the way if you're not using it, and the jaws can be removed to be used as a stand-alone bar clamp. A Dremel Tool can also be secured to the base for sanding, polishing, grinding, and brushing.

Now that you have a workbench set-up, you will be acquiring more tools and test equipment, especially if you are working with electronics. Those of us on a budget, usually find older gear at various hamfests. For those of you in New England, I definitely recommend visiting NEAR-Fest in Deerfield, NH that occurs twice a year (October and May), and the Boxboro ARRL Convention Hamfest that occurs every even year in August. There is also the MIT Flea. It is held on the third Sunday of the month from April to October. This flea has slowly been turning from a hamfest into a computer show, and has been very hit or miss as of late. However Boston-area technological hobbyists I've talked to have said they've gotten lucky with equipment acquisitions often enough to keep attending the flea. For those of you who live in New England, a full list of all that region's hamfests is available online at the following web address:
http://web.mit.edu/w1gsl/Public/ne-fleas

As I mentioned earlier, older, but still very functional, test equipment can be had at reasonable prices at these hamfests. The catch is that it is often big and bulky. You might notice, however, that it is 19 inches wide and has mounting ears on the sides. That is so it can be installed in a rack-mount. Rack-mount cabinets give you vertical storage capacity, which means more room in a workshop where floor space is at a premium. Here is a “test receiver rack” currently in the process of being put together in a surplus 44” cabinet that previously held a radio repeater system. These cabinets are often thrown out, often with the original equipment still in them. If you can't dumpster dive one, or otherwise find one for free, ask a fellow techie to give you a heads-up when his/her company is throwing some out.

THE FALLACY OF "BUGGING OUT"

If I had a nickel for every time over the past twenty years that I heard a "survivalist" say *"If the shit ever hits the fan, I'll head for the hills"*, I would be retired, living at that nice converted missile silo in the Adirondacks, and enjoying my multiple hobbies in a well-equipped Quonset hut at the end of the property's airstrip. Survivalists plan on bugging out because they expect that their current residence would be uninhabitable after some form of disaster or societal collapse. This plan is wrong for many reasons, and survivalists who espouse it are simply parroting advice they've read somewhere, having not given the issue the full consideration it deserves, and in some instances are simply living out a fantasy.

My wife is quite fond of saying, *"You bloom where you're planted."* Having once seriously considered a bugging-out strategy, and doing some serious planning towards it, I have come to agree with that saying over the years. You need to live in a sustainable location, and put together a long-term preparedness plan. To begin, going off and living in the wilderness like a mountain man is not going to benefit you in the long term, unless you are one of the rare few who are able to make their living as a professional woods-runner. If you are, then you sure don't want amateurs running around shitting where you eat, and you know that you will still need the occasional support of people living in civilization for long-term success. For the rest of you, assuming you survive, living like Wild Bill Mooreland will be of no help to the reconstruction effort. Don't expect your fellow survivors to be friendly towards you when you saunter in from the woods after they've given their all to help put things back together.

If you maintain a sustainable and self-reliant lifestyle, you come to realize that your property and tools, along with your common sense and education, are your livelihood. You would do well not to abandon them. Any homeowner worth his or her salt should be familiar with basic home repairs and have the necessary tools to keep their place habitable at a basic level. This can be as simple a making sure you have a generator and working sump-pump if the basement floods, being able to secure a tarp over a leaky roof or use Visqueen plastic sheeting or a piece of plywood to temporarily cover over a broken window. You might have to improvise temporary living quarters in an outbuilding or live in a refurbished RV if for whatever reason(s) your residence becomes uninhabitable. At the very least, you are still on your property and can soon begin to effect repairs so as to get back into your house. All of these mundane skills are the essence of self-reliance and preparedness. You cannot do any if this if you bug-out into the woods and live like a refugee.

Part of that long-term self-reliance and preparedness plan involves a useful trade that will remain viable after the reset, or at least a hobby that can eventually develop into a trade. How do you expect to conduct business, or even use your skill-set to rebuild after the reset, when you've bugged out? How do you expect to maintain a viable, preparedness-suitable trade when living in a small apartment in a big city? The solution is to live in a sustainable location. If you aren't there right now, then you need to make that one of your first priorities. If you feel that you will have to bug out from your current location when TSHTF, then do it now. It is better do it ten years too early then ten minutes too late. If you think rush hour is bad during normal times, or even when there is an accident on the highway, wait until things are really messed-up. My book, ***Musings Of a Man In Black: Prometheus***, goes into extensive detail on survival planning. I recommend it for those interested in further study. It is available directly from Homestead Design Works at our Lulu store site: http://www.lulu.com/hdworks/.

Before I finish up, I need to point out that there has recently been an alternative school of thought among some dystonauts regarding location. While it is not my personal choice, it still has merit. What is it? Find out in a future issue...

Spook Territory

Greetings fellow travelers, and welcome to another installment of Spook Territory. This time I shall be talking about locks and other impediments to access. This was once a very popular subject among old-school hackers and survivalists. It doesn't seem as widespread among hobbyist-types these days, although many hacker conventions do feature a talk about lock hacking. When my friends and I started getting into locks, we used a series of books by an author with the interesting pseudonym of “Eddie the Wire”. I also had the opportunity to learn a bit from a survivalist-friend who was a locksmith, and later on I did a little car repo work. If you want a real-world education on locks and the bypassing of same, find a mentor who either deals extensively with lock-out jobs, or automotive repossessions. The later is more interesting, and will also teach you some other useful skills that will come in handy for possible future endeavors.

For all its glamor, lock-picking is usually done by the pros as a last resort. Repo guys get a key code from the note holder, and have a key cut. Often there is already a key accompanying the repossession order. During lock-out jobs, any one of a number of techniques will get you past the lock quicker than breaking out the pick set. A large pair of bolt cutters will get through just about any padlock, chain, or hasp you may encounter; with the exception of the large "ghetto-sized” padlocks used to secure store gates in inner city areas. The last time someone forgot to add a customer lock to a gate's daisy-chain at a remote site, I used a Dremel Tool cutting wheel to gain access. In these instances, always cut the chain the locks are attached to, and not one of the locks. Cutting someone's lock off a daisy-chain is rude and a serious breach of shared-site etiquette. Many doors can be jimmied open with a crowbar, “wonder bar”, linoleum knife, or screwdriver blade from a multi-tool. I have seen doors with top-of-the-line locksets installed into them, but with susceptible latches, bolts, and strikers. You will find that a linoleum knife and a little six-inch prybar will often come in handy. Many items are secured with nothing more than "tamper-proof" hardware. The requisite bits will deal with these. One of the first things you should purchase for your kit is a multi-bit screwdriver and the biggest set of tamper-proof bits you can find.

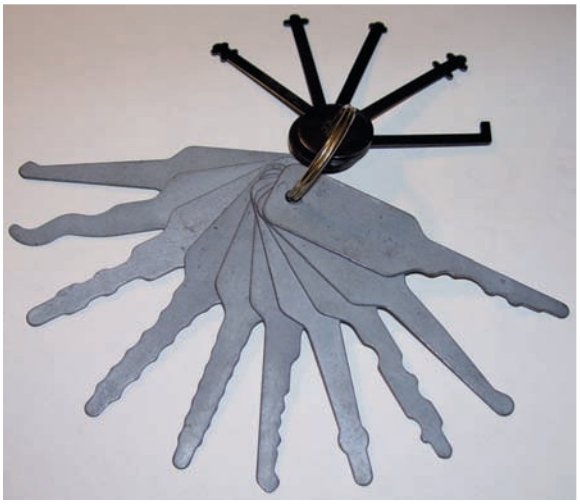
Now there are a lot of locks that are really no big deal to get past. Warded padlocks are one of the biggest examples. Those are the padlocks with the rectangular-shaped keys. An adequate set of warded padlock picks can be made by taking various warded padlock keys and grinding off all but the last one or two pieces on the end of the key so that the key looks like a cross. Most operatives buy a couple of the more popular Master warded padlock models, a few of the cheaper brands, and grind their own set from the keys. Disk tumbler locks, used on a lot of cabinets and enclosures, are another type that provides only an illusion of security. The tolerances on those are so loose that a similar key can be used as a “jiggler” pick to open the lock. Many of these locks also use common key cuts. Two examples are the “2135” double-sided disk-tumbler key that's used on 90% of all Motorola radios, and the “CH751” key that's used in everything from alarm systems, to industrial controller cabinets, to gas pumps. Make it a point to collect as many of these keys as possible, as they will come in handy.

Earlier in this article, I mentioned a writer with the pseudonym of “Eddie the Wire”. In the 1980s he wrote a series of books titled How to Make Your Own Profesional Lock Tools. He released four volumes through Loompanics, and they were the guide for rolling your own tools. Loompanics is out of business, and none of the other survivalist

publishers took over this series. They are occasionally found on Amazon, and those of you willing to locate a set will find it well worth the effort. Making your own lock tools is the way to go. A good pick set from a locksmith supplier will set you back around $100, and the cheaper $40 sets you find at gun shows are junk. You can get a bench grinder, some hand tools (which you should already have), and raw materials for much less. With a little practice you can roll your own tools that are just as good as the expensive sets. The big purchase is a bench grinder, but that's a one-time expense and you can use it for other stuff. Other definite advantages to rolling your own are that you can custom make a tool for a specific situation if you have to, that it's really inexpensive to do so, and that you don't have to feel bad if you lose or have to ditch them because they didn't cost much and you can make more. If you get really good at rolling your own, you can also make a few bucks selling tools to cool and trustworthy LMI friends.

To give you an idea of how cheap it is to make your own. Eddie the wire recommends the use of hacksaw blades, feeler gauge stock, and music wire as raw materials for making tools. I was unable to immediately locate feeler gauge stock locally, but hacksaw blades were available everywhere and average $3 for a package of two. The music wire was available at a local hobby shop, and 9 feet of both recommended diameters was under $5. So for under $20 you'll have plenty of material to work with. There are also other good books out there for those of you with this certain slant. One of my favorite “classics” is The Big Brother Game, by Scott French. Despite its age (1975), it still contains a lot of good info. For this particular exercise I would pay attention to page 115.

There is a definite warning I have to impart to those of you who decide to get into amateur locksmithing or lock hacking. In many places possession of lock picking equipment is a definite no-no unless you are a locksmith, a student learning the trade, or are engaged in locksmithing as part of your job. In many cases, the circumstances of where and how you are caught with "burglar tools", and the attitude of local law enforcement, depends on whether or not you are prosecuted. For those who want to go a step further and get into something that could turn into a profitable sideline or even career, there is an excellent and reasonably priced locksmith correspondence course offered by Foley Belsaw. Upon completion of their course, you become a certified and bonded locksmith. Depending on where you live that may enough for you to hang out your shingle and solicit business. Even handling only a few lockout calls or re-keying jobs a week would bring in some spare cash to help take care of hobby expenses, and having an established business helps take the edge off the possibility of getting laid-off from your day job.



L: Warded padlock & "jiggler" picks
R: Assrted disk tumbler lock keys.

PRECIOUS METALS AS CURRENCY

In the premiere issue of what was to become this magazine, I talked about the potential uses of various precious metals in a preparedness context and how the best course of action would be to put aside those that you would need in the pursuit of your particular trade, or at the very least, your hobby (or hobbies) that could become a trade after the reset. Even if you are twenty-something, living with your parents, and work the counter of a fast-food restaurant, you can still have (and should have) a hobby that will eventually result in a good post-reset trade. If anything, you are likely in a better position than some of us who are older when it comes to discretionary funds to purchase tools, supplies, and formal education. You might even be able to visit the local coin shop a little more often to buy some pre-1964 junk silver coins.

You will need a calculator and some basic math skills that you should have acquired by the eighth grade, even if you went to public school. I recommend going to one of the ubiquitous retail Acme Mega-Marts, buying a couple of solar-powered scientific calculators, and adding them to your tool kit. They only cost a few bucks, last practically forever, and will prove their worth many times over. Starting with the basics, let's say that Silver is $20 a troy ounce. That's its approximate value these days. With silver at $20 a troy ounce, that one ounce .999 silver Walking Liberty “Dollar” is worth twenty bucks worth of Federal Reserve Notes, or even equivalent merchandise. Not that a dealer will give you twenty bucks for it, or that you'll pay twenty bucks for one at that spot price. AOCS one-ounce silver rounds were about $30 each the last time I checked, and had a “face value” of “50”. Walking Liberty one-ounce rounds were a little less than that, but still more than $20. Lets say however that the ninety-nine red balloons go up tomorrow, and you need to buy some produce from the local farm-stand. Assuming he decides to take your silver coin, it would be reasonable, assuming everything else remains equal, to expect that your one-ounce silver round should enable you to purchase twenty dollars worth of stuff. Of course he might decide to raise the price for his products up a bit, or not even take your silver coinage, but like I said previously: “assuming everything else remains equal”.

The process gets a little more complicated. Let's say you need a smaller amount than $20. You may need to make change, or only have a handful of Mercury dimes. You need to know the silver content of the coin and its weight in addition to the price of silver. Here is where the calculator comes in handy. I like Mercury dimes. They are cool looking, inexpensive to purchase in quantity as junk-silver, and potentially more useful than larger denominations. A Mercury dime, or any other pre-1964 silver dime for that matter, is 90% silver and weighs 2.5 grams or .08 troy ounces. At 90% silver content, a dime contains .072 troy ounces of silver. At $20 a troy ounce, your Mercury Dime is worth $1.44, not including the additional copper content. When I recently checked the local Acme Mega-Mart, that was almost the price of a box of .22 LR rounds. At $1.50 a box, I guess you could use .22 LR rounds as penny equivalents at 3 cents each. Some of us will even accept pre-1982 pennies, as they are almost pure copper and worth about twice their face value depending on the price of copper. Later dates are zinc.

Pre-1965 US coins above the 5-cent denomination are all 90% silver. That includes dimes, quarters, half-dollars, and dollar coins. Dimes weigh 2.5g, Quarters 6.25g, Half-Dollars 12.5g, and Dollars 26.73g. To convert grams to troy ounces, multiply by .03215. That piece of information combined with knowledge of what the coins weigh and current silver prices, enables you to conduct business and ensure a fair trade between both parties. If you do this now, even just among your preparedness-oriented customers, you'll quickly get a feel for how it works and be current on precious metal prices for when the reset occurs. After the reset, your knowledge and skills will help keep things moving and

make the rebuilding process go smoother. In 1965, the predominant metal became copper. Half-Dollar coins from 1965-1970 are 40% silver. While they are considered less desirable than 90% silver coins, you will come across them in batches of loose change. They too should be put aside and saved. Pennies were 95% copper until 1982, when the composition became 97% zinc. You will find both copper and zinc pennies in the 1982 date. You can tell the difference by weighing them. The copper pennies weigh 3.11 grams. The zinc ones weigh 2.5 grams. Depending on copper prices, the copper pennies have a metal worth of around twice their face value. In 1943, pennies were made out of steel, and have a nominal collector value.

In Canada, coins larger than a nickel in denomination were 80% silver until 1967. They then went to 50% silver composition until 1968. I mention this because Canadian coinage is commonly found among the border, and shows up in pocket change. Many of us upon discovering Canadian coinage simply put it in a container where it accumulates over the years. If you have an accumulation of Canadian coinage, you might want to go through it and check dates. You might have some silver coinage if the change is old enough.

Much of the information for this article was researched from http://www.coinflation.com/. This site is very useful for determining the current silver value for old coins, and contains a lot of good information. It would be worth your while to invest in a small digital scale like those used by ammunition reloaders for measuring powder amounts and bullet weights. While coin weights may be common knowledge for those who have previously accessed the information over the Internet, after the reset you will be dealing with individuals who are not as far along on the learning curve as you. This technique can also be used for other metals, such as Copper, Aluminum, and Lead. You just need to know the metal values, and have a means of weighing it.

There will still be parties who will prefer bartering “real goods” instead of using silver coinage. Others will attempt to charge 21st century prices while accepting silver coins at their face value, or inflate prices if something becomes rare and desirable. I remember when surplus SKS rifles were originally $100 each. When I last walked into a gun store about a month ago, the dealer was asking $450 for an SKS. Copper recently went up in price to where people were stealing plumbing out of abandoned houses, pieces of HVAC systems, and cabling from antenna towers. Now the price for copper has gone down a bit.

Warning: Don't expect that a having a large quantity of precious metals coinage will let you buy your way to survival after the reset. Individuals will simply not be selling that type of stuff until they get their small-scale manufacturing operations going and then it will probably be priced accordingly high. What it will probably enable you to buy are things like a few eggs from the local chicken farmer (Local eggs around here are $2.50-$3.50 a dozen. That probably equals a couple silver dimes at current prices), some home-spun clothing that the local seamstress makes, or maybe some small livestock. You really need to get your kit and other essentials together before the shit hits the fan. After that, if you want to put aside a little silver coinage, then go ahead and do it.

As you may have noticed, I did not talk about gold coins. Gold at the time of this writing is around $1300 an ounce. Ask yourself, how much will $1300 buy? At current prices, gold is too unwieldy for day-to-day transactions. Silver was the common man's metal back in the old days, and as current silver prices show, is much more convenient for the common types of everyday purchases. This article is intended to provide a basic guideline for those who wish to use precious metals in barter transactions, and to show a possible way how it might be done. If you have any further ideas to expand on this, or perhaps an alternative method that you can articulately expound upon, I'd like to hear about it. I can be reached via email at ticom.new.england@gmail.com.

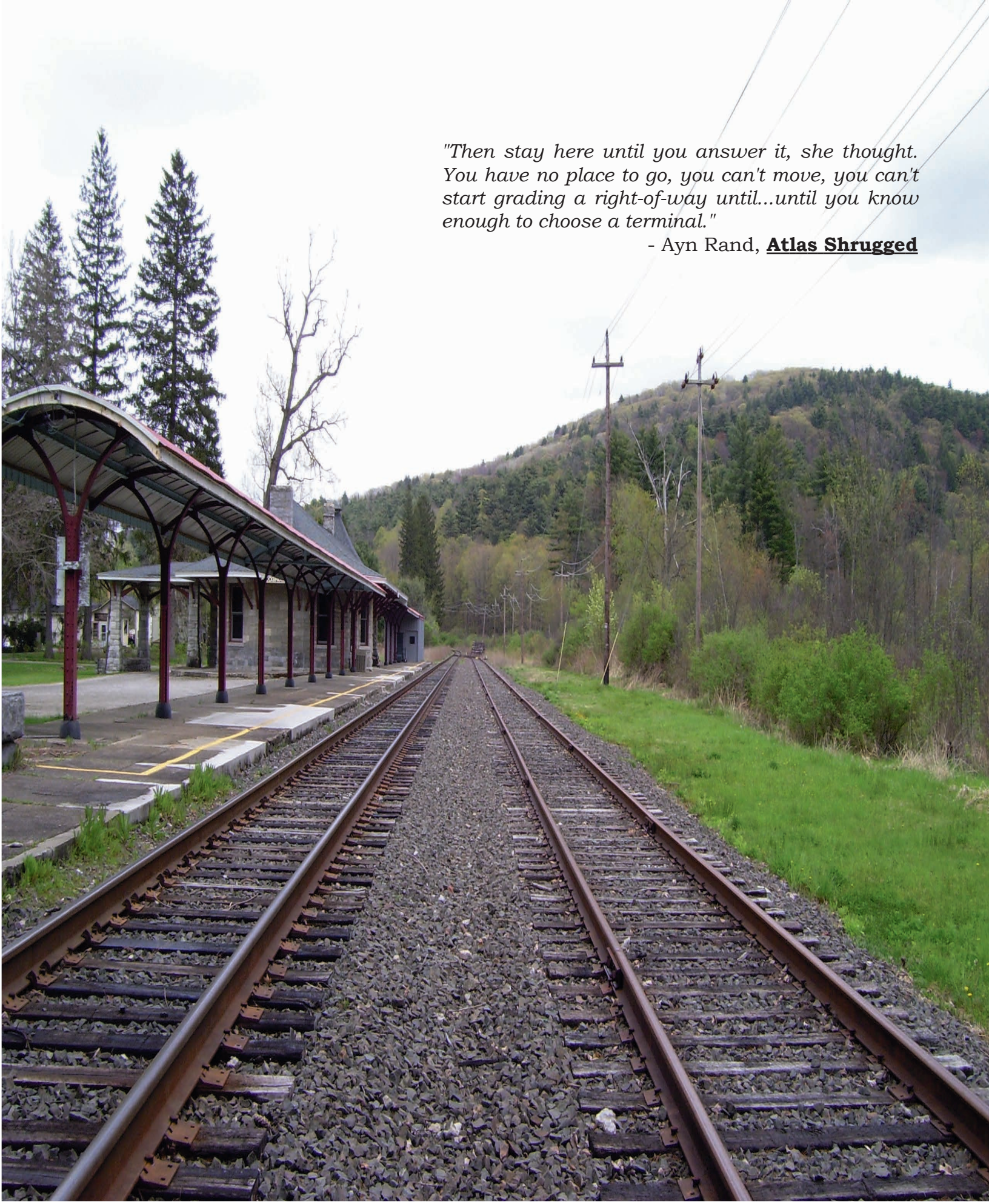
Before this issue comes to an end, I want to talk a little about personal infrastructure. This is all the stuff you put together, equipment and otherwise, that enables you to function regardless of present or future circumstances. Personal infrastructure in the context of a dystopian society is a major focus of this newsletter because too many survivalist rags would rather talk about TEOTWAWKI or the proverbial Zombie Apocalypse than the reality that society is just slowly collapsing and that the world might end in a whimper long after we pass onto the next great adventure. The longer I observe the survivalist scene, the more I become convinced of two things: The first is that most people who call themselves "survivalists" are actually engaging in fantasy play. The second is that the best tools a serious modern survivalist (dystonaut) can have are a good scientific/technical education and a well-equipped lab/workshop. I see survivalist fantasy-types as no worse than steampunk cosplayers, but if that's your thing you can do much better than being a gun fag. Look at some of the stuff authored/edited by Kurt Saxon. Often described as "a psychotic let loose in a junk shop", back in the day Kurt did an awesome books on the subject of improvised weaponry called The Poor Man's James Bond. He also published a series called The Survivor that was more preparedness and self-reliance oriented. He is considered the father of the survivalist movement, and always stressed skills, knowledge, and tools as the ultimate weapons for survivalists.

Being able to make, grow, and modify (or kit-bash) your own stuff is one of the greatest survivalist skills you can possess. One of the greatest survivalist abilities (and thrills of being a survivalist) is being able to beat the monkeys when they throw obstacles in your path that make preparedness, self-reliance, and self-determination more difficult. The path for this form of modern survivalism is a lot different than what you may have read and seen elsewhere. Instead of collecting firearms and stockpiling food, you keep a couple reliable working guns, learn different ways to produce your own food, and collect tools and knowledge that you can use to enhance your lifestyle. You pick a useful trade (or three) that not only brings in a decent income now, but can be used to do the same if the collapse and reset does occur in your lifetime.

Finally, instead of hanging on to the every word of those entertainers masquerading as right-wing pundits and getting scared every time they open their mouths about the latest plans of the collectivists or the "New World Order", you instead use various means to collect and analyze your own intelligence information. You then laugh when you realize that all it takes is a little imagination, some tools, the right knowledge, and a little attitude to get inside the bad guys' OODA loop and use effective countermeasures.

The best part about all this is that you can do it almost anywhere. There might be some places that are better than others, but you still have a lot of good choices available to you. You're not sitting around hoping that the great collapse happens and getting disheartened when it doesn't occur within the time frame that you set in the back of your mind. Your efforts show almost immediate results as your workings improve your current overall situation. In the end, you stop worrying about "what if" because you realize that the world as you knew it has already ended and that you feel fine.

Coming soon in a future issue of
The Dystonaut...



"Then stay here until you answer it, she thought. You have no place to go, you can't move, you can't start grading a right-of-way until...until you know enough to choose a terminal."

- Ayn Rand, **Atlas Shrugged**