About this Article

This material was included with the downloadable supplemental content accompanying the *ARRL Antenna Book*.

You may print a copy of this material for personal use. Any other use of the information requires permission from the ARRL.

THE N6BV/1 ANTENNA SYSTEM — BRUTE FORCE FEEDING

The following material was extracted from earlier editions. Figure and Equation sequence references are those from the 21st edition of *The ARRL Antenna Book*

The N6BV/1 system in Windham, New Hampshire, was located on the crest of a small hill about 40 miles from Boston, and could be characterized as a good, but not dominant, contesting station. A number of top-10 contest results were achieved from that station in the 1990s before N6BV returned to California.

There was a single 120-foot high Rohn 45 tower, guyed at 30-foot intervals, with a 100-foot horizontal spread from tower base to each guy point so there was sufficient room for rotation of individual Yagis on the tower. Each set of guy wires employed heavy-duty insulators at 57-foot intervals, to avoid resonances in the 80 through 10-meter amateur bands. There were five Yagis on the tower. A heavy-duty 12-foot long steel mast with 0.25-inch walls was at the top of the tower, turned by an Orion 2800 rotator. Two thrust bearings were used above the rotator, one at the top plate of the tower itself, and the other about 2 feet down in the tower on a modified rotator shelf plate. The two thrust bearings allowed the rotator to be removed for service.

At the top of the mast, 130 feet high, was a 5-element, computer-optimized 10-meter Yagi, which was a modified Create design on a 24-foot boom. The element tuning was modified from the stock antenna in order to achieve higher gain and a better pattern over the band. At the top of the tower (120-foot level) was mounted a Create 714X-3 triband Yagi. This was a large tribander, with a 32-foot boom and five elements. Three elements were active on 40 meters, four were active on 20 meters and four were active on 15 meters. The 40-meter elements were loaded with coils, traps and

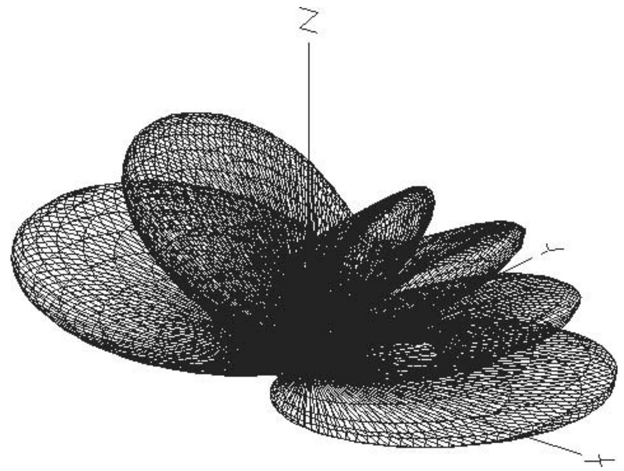

Fig 37—3D representation of the pattern for two 4-element 15-meter Yagis, with the top antenna at 95 and the bottom at 65 feet, but pointed in the opposite direction.

capacitance hats, and were approximately 46 feet long. A triband 20/15/10-meter Hy-Gain TH7DX tribander was fixed into Europe at the 90-foot level on the tower, just above the third set of guys.

At the 60-foot level on the tower, just above the second set of guys, there was a "swinging-gate" side-mount bracket, made by DX Engineering of Oregon. A Hy-Gain *Tailtwister* rotator turned a TH7DX on this side mount. (Note that both the side mount and the element spacings of the TH7DX itself prevented full rotation around the tower—about 280° of rotation was achieved with this system.) At the 30-foot level, just above the first set of guys, was located the third TH7DX, also fixed on Europe.

All five Yagis were fed with equal lengths of Belden 9913 low-loss coaxial cable, each measured with a noise bridge to ensure equal electrical characteristics. At each feed point a ferrite-bead choke balun (using seven large beads) was placed on the coax. All five coaxial cables went to a relay switch box mounted at the 85-foot level on the tower. **Fig 38** shows the schematic for the switch box, which was fed with 250 feet of 75-Ω, 0.75-inch OD Hardline coaxial cable.

The stock DX Engineering remote switch box was modified by adding relay K6, so that either the 130-foot or the 120-foot rotating antenna could be selected through a second length of 0.75-inch Hardline going to the shack. This created a *Multiplier* antenna, independent of the *Main* antennas. A second band could be monitored in this fashion while calling CQ using the main antennas on another band. Band-pass filters were required at the multiplier receiver to prevent overload from the main transmitter.

The 0.75-inch Hardline had very low losses, even when presented with a significant amount of SWR at the switch-box end. This was important, because unlike K1VR's system, no attempt was made at N6BV to maintain a constant SWR when relays K1 through K5 were switched in or out. This seemingly cavalier attitude came about because of several factors. First, there were many

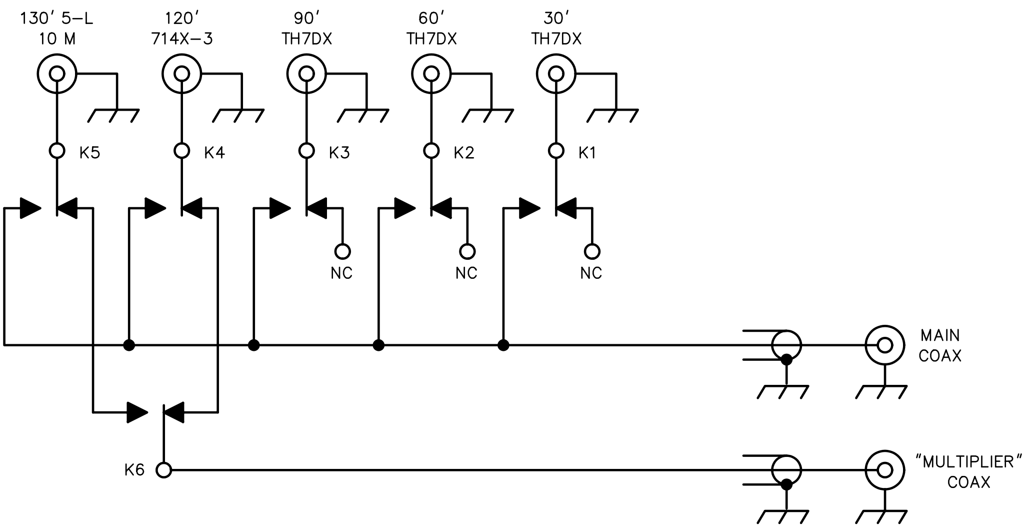

Fig 38—N6BV/1 switch box system. This uses a modified DX Engineering remote switch box, with relay K6 added to allow selection of either of the two top antennas (5-element 10-meter Yagi or 40/20/15-meter triband 714X-3) as a "multiplier" antenna. There is no special provision for SWR equalization when any or all of the Yagis are connected in parallel as a stack fed by the Main coaxial cable. Each of the five Yagis is fed with equal lengths of flexible Belden 9913 coax, so phasing can be maintained on any band. The Main and "Multiplier" coaxes going to the shack are 0.75" OD 75-Ω Hardline cables.

different combinations of antennas that could be used together in this system. Each relay coil was independently controlled by a toggle switch in the shack. N6BV was unable to devise a matching system that did not become incredibly complex because of the numerous impedance combinations used over all the five bands.

Second, the worst-case additional transmission line loss due to a 4:1 SWR mismatch when four antennas were connected in parallel on 10 meters was only 0.5 dB. It was true that the linear amplifier had to be retuned slightly when combinations of antennas were switched in and out, but this was a small penalty to pay for the reduced complexity of the switching and matching networks. The 90/60/30-foot stack into Europe was used for about 95% of the time during DX contests, so the small amount of amplifier retuning for other antenna combinations was considered only a minor irritation.

THE K1VR ARRAY: A MORE ELEGANT APPROACH TO MATCHING

The following material was extracted from earlier editions. Figure and Equation sequence references are those from the 21st edition of *The ARRL Antenna Book*

The K1VR stacked array is on a 100-foot high Rohn 25 tower, with sets of guy wires at 30, 60 and 90 feet, made of nonconducting Phillystran. Phillystran is a nonmetallic Kevlar rope covered by black polyethylene to protect against the harmful effects of the sun's ultraviolet rays. A caution about Phillystran: Don't allow tree branches to rub against it. It is designed to work in tension, but unlike steel guy wire, it does not tolerate abrasion well.

Both antennas are Hy-Gain TH6DXX tribanders, with the top one at 97 feet and the bottom one at 61 feet. The lower antenna is rotated by a Telex Ham-M rotator on a homemade swinging-gate side mount, which allows it to be rotated 300° around the tower without hitting any guy wires or having an element swing into the tower. At the 90-foot point on the tower, a 2-element 40-meter Cushcraft Yagi has been mounted on a RingRotor so it can be rotated 360° around the tower.

After several fruitless attempts trying to match the TH6DXX antennas so that either could be used by itself or together in a stack, K1VR settled on using a relay-selected broadband toroidal matching transformer. When both triband antennas are fed together in parallel as a stack, it transforms the resulting 25-Ω impedance to 50 Ω. The transformer is wound on a T-200A powdered-

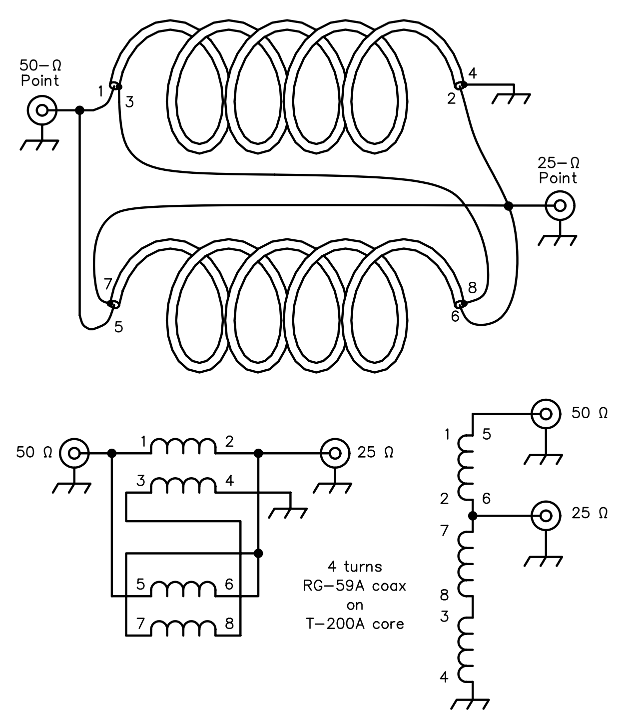

Fig 39—Diagram for matching transformer for K1VR stacked tribander system. The core is powdered iron-core T-200A, with four turns of two RG-59A or "Siamese" coax cables. Center conductors are connected in parallel and shields are connected in series to yield 0.667:1 turns ratio, close to desired 25-Ω to 50-Ω transformation.

iron core, available from Amidon, Palomar Engineering or Ocean State Electronics. Two lengths of twin RG-59 coax (sometimes called Siamese or WangNet), four turns each, are wound on the core. Two separate RG-59 cables could be used, but the Siamese-twin cable makes the assembly look much more tidy. The shields of the RG-59 cables are connected in series, and the center conductors are connected in parallel. See **Fig 39** for details.

Fig 40 shows the schematic of the K1VR switch box, which is located in the shack. Equal electrical lengths of 50-Ω Hardline are brought from the antennas into the shack and then to the switch box. Inside the box, the relay contacts were soldered directly to the SO-239 chassis connectors to keep the wire lengths down to the absolute minimum. K1VR used a metal box that was larger than

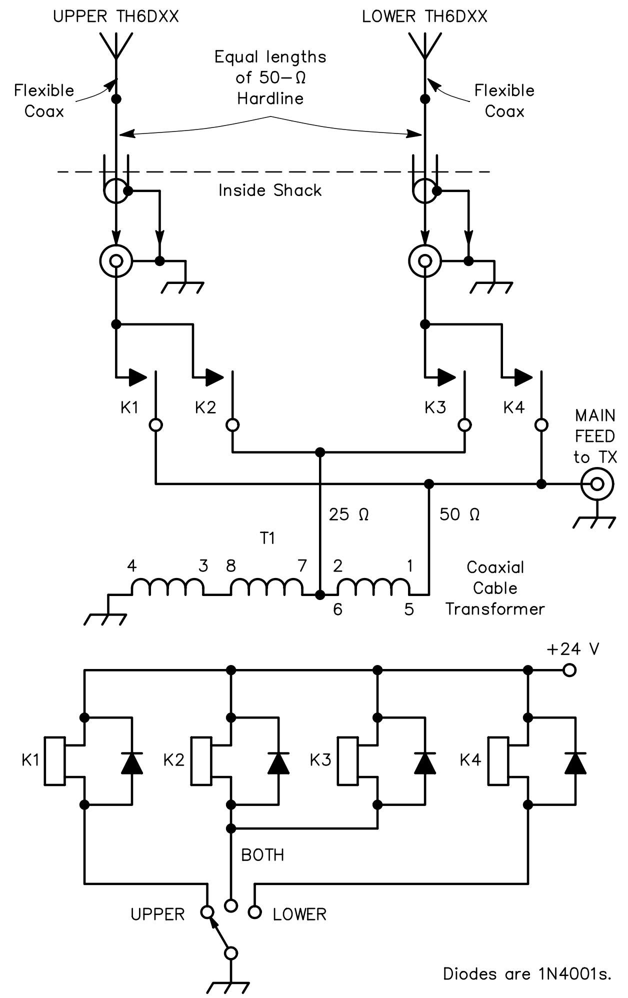

Fig 40—Relay switch box for K1VR stacked tribander system. Equal lengths of 50-Ω Hardline (with equal lengths of flexible 50-Ω cable at each antenna to allow rotation) go to the switch box in the shack. The SWR on all three bands for Upper, Lower or Both switch positions is very close to constant.

might appear necessary because he wanted to mount the toroidal transformer with plenty of clearance between it and the box walls. The toroid is held in place with a piece of insulation foam board. Before placing the switch box in service, the system was tested using two 50-Ω dummy loads, with equal lengths of cable connected in parallel to yield 25 Ω. The maximum SWR measured was 1.25:1 at 14 MHz, 1.3:1 at 21 MHz and 1.15:1 at 28 MHz, and the core remained cold with 80 W of continuous output power.

One key to the system performance is that K1VR made the electrical lengths of the two hardlines the same (within 1 inch) by using a borrowed TDR (time domain reflectometer). Almost as good as Hardline, K1VR points out, would be to cut exactly the same length of cable from the same 500-foot roll of RG-213. This eliminates manufacturing tolerances between different rolls of cable.

K1VR's experience over the last 10 years has been that at the beginning of the 10 or 15-meter morning opening to Europe the upper antenna is better. Once the band is wide open, both antennas are fed in phase to cast a bigger shadow, or footprint, on Europe. By mid-morning, the lower antenna is better for most Europeans, although he continues to use the stack in case someone is hearing him over a really long distance path throughout Europe. He reports that it is always very pleasant to be called by a 4S7 or HSØ or VU2 when he is working Europeans at a fast clip!