

The Open Feed Line

Volume 5 Issue 3

September 1996

THE MICHIGAN AMATEUR RADIO ALLIANCE

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Fun Raisers

by *Richie Ranta WB8HJX*

This past summer, our club members participated in operating a coffee stop on South bound highway 131, near mile marker 99. MARA was involved in Operation Care, a program that encourages groups and other qualifying clubs to provide refreshments to weary motorists during the summer's holiday weekends. On May 25th, 26th and 27th, nearly half of our club members took turns making coffee, bringing ice for the orange drink, refilling the apple bowl and snuggling up just to keep warm and dry. Memorial day weekend turned out to be wet, cold and windy. But the sight of a lone woman driver, who stopped by to say thank you for just being there, made it all worth while. One group of visitors consisted of a bus load of teenagers coming back from a nature adventure trip. The teens filed by, usually going for the fruit and orange drink, while their group leader, one tired, cold and hungry teacher, opted for the hot coffee and cookies. While he sipped the hot brew, he inquired what a MARA was all about.

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Field Day 1996

Field Day 96 was held at Belknapp park once again. This year we had beams on 20,15 and 10 meters as well as 6 and 2 meters. Dan Markowski N8NIJ and Bill Wisneski N8OAR were co-chairmen for the event, and it went without a hitch. Tim Kymes KC8BZE had his tent set up with a home made bracket mounted on his pick up truck where he had his 3 element HF beam mounted. Once again, the MARA trailer, courtesy of Harold Wisneski WD8EMD, was operated by both Bill N8OAR and Dan N8NIJ, who impressed many folks with his CW ability. Bill Zaidel N8VWI and Connie N8WKQ operated both all modes 6 meters and 2 meters, with beams on both bands. Bill had made a special trailer mount so he could mount his beams on his motor home.

Filed Day wouldn't be complete without the best part of it, the food. This year, Len Gongalski, N8NEK, made a kettle of home made chili. It was delicious!

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The New BBS

by *Richie Ranta WB8HJX*

On June 7th, while Bill N8OAR was performing routine weekly maintenance on the club's BBS, our motherboard, which had performed so flawlessly for the last 3 years, broke (actually, the system couldn't access and create page memory, which our system requires). During the following week, Bill had many calls with Richie WB8HJX, attempting to diagnose the trouble and cure. Bill brought the whole system over to Richie's where he discovered the trouble. The only trouble was, nobody makes 386SX motherboards any longer and we really do not have any real use for a 486DX motherboard, yet. So Richie made many calls, attempting to locate a used 386 motherboard. He discovered treasure on June 25th, when he happened to give one of our members a call and discovered a used, but highly reliable 386DX40 motherboard with 4 megs of ram already on board.

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(Fund Raisers continued from page 1)

He was very interested in hearing more about Amateur Radio, and he found one of our pamphlets on Amateur Radio in the rest area pavilion.

This was our club's first time out operating a fund raising event, and it certainly helped out our monetary problems. The greatest reward was in meeting all the interesting people that stopped and took the time to chat with us, and told us where they were headed: family get togethers, motorcycle groups, grand parents meeting their great grand children and many other personal interest stories that helped warm us through the cold weekend. One of the most satisfying achievements for our club, was the renewing of friendships among our own club members. Both over night shifts held philosophical sessions, discussing everything from Ham radio to Windows 95 to "Why is there air?". A most enjoyable time was had by all who participated during this first, of our two coffee stops. While the weather did not cooperate with us, careful planing by our first event chairperson, Bill Zaidel N8VWI and Connie N8WKM covered almost everything that we needed. A very big heartfelt thank you to both Bill and Connie, for their unselfish efforts, the use of their motor home and tireless energy in bringing this off.

(a complete listing of all participants and sponsors will be in the next issue)

The Prez's 2 bits

by Dan Markowski N8NIJ

The Labor Day holiday has come and gone and with that, summer is almost over. The Labor Day coffee stop was a complete success although for a while I had some doubts as to whether we were going to pull it off. I would like to take this time to express my thanks on behalf of the Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance to those who provided their time and efforts to this event. an event of this kind is a major undertaking, and I am extremely pleased that we were able to provide the service to the community. For those of you that were there, you saw first hand the appreciation expressed by the holiday travelers who took the time to stop for a cup of coffee, cookies or an apple. I would also like to express my appreciation to those companies who so generously donated to our event.

- McDonalds Rockford MI
- McDonalds Cedar Springs MI
- Bill Knapps of MI
- AAA of Michigan
- Greenridge Fruit

I hope we are able to continue these events next year. I would also like to give a special thanks to Kevin and Mary Nester, KC8CLA and Scott Rowe, WD8JMF for their efforts in making this coffee stop a reality.

Mary's Corner

by Mary Nestor KC8EGF

I completed my exam in June 1996 and realized that a radio might be kind of handy to have around, but now I know it is very handy. Since I started my job this fall, the radio has taken the place of a telephone. It is long distance from my job to home when I call my husband, Kevin KC8CLA. Now I just get on the radio. It's great and I'm very thankful for it now. It keeps us connected when we don't see one another for long periods of time. So I really want to encourage other women to study and get their licenses; you'll never know how handy one is until you can use one. When my husband took his test, he said I should study and take the test too.. I thought he was nuts, why would I want to talk on a radio. Now I see how helpful it really is.

73 Mary KC8EGF

XYL NET

Several of our XYL's have talked about forming a XYL net on the repeater. This would be a most welcomed addition to what is and is not heard on the repeater during the day. Let's encourage all the XYL's out there, to pick up the mike and lets start that net. We really do want to hear from you.

Terrible Terry's Corner

by Terry Francis WB8ZNO

I am now writing from our new home in the North country. We moved on the 23 of August, but it really seems like we've been moving for months with all the junk we had. I hope that I never have to do that again. Yes, some of my junk never made it up here. Two circular saws, one jig saw and one orbital sander was lifted off my truck, we think, while I was in a restaurant getting lunch. Low lifes like that are not a welcome type to have around.

This place called Farwell, reminds me a little of Northern exposure because of the smallness of it and the old look. The people are very friendly and seems like everyone speaks. The closest place is Clare and that is just about 6 miles away. We are located on West Washington road and we are at the end of a dead end road, the very end. From there on, there is a two track that leads back into state forest Au Sable state forest. You see, we are blocked in by state land on the West side and the South side. The place is at least covered by 5/8 of woods and goes back for 1/4 mile, so we don't have as much pasture as we would like, but we will get by for the time being. The county we live in is called Clare county, and we live in Surrey township.

We have to find someone to do some work around here, but it seems like everyone is really busy.

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(FieldDay 1996, continued from page 1)

Len Gongalski N8NEK, while still recovering from a stroke, made a kettle of spicy chili. Everybody said they were going to try it, only to find out it was gone before dinner time. Bill Zaidel N8VWI made a tasty pasta dish, which went quickly also. Seems like there is nothing like working in a contest to get ones appetite up.

There were several firsts during this Field Day outing. Susan Zaidel, Bill and Connie's teenage daughter, actually participated and before it was over, she was determined to get her license. Laurie, Scott Rowe, WD8JMF 's wife, was so interested with what went on, that she has now got her license too!

The final scores for our group will appear in the November issue of QST. Check out where we placed. Everybody who was there has already made plans for next summers Field Day 97. We all hope to see you there!

(The New BBS continued from page 1)

But we weren't finished. Richie WB8HJX also gave up his motherboard, a AMD 386DX/40 with 4 megs of ram for use as a standby, just in case the new board should ever go down.

The MARA BBS now has two AMD 386 DX/40 mother boards, one with 8 megs of ram, one with 4 megs of ram, one 2 speed CD drive, one new 3 1/2 floppy drive and a new I/O card. But, there was a lost involved also. All of the data on the hard drive was unstable, due to the problem on the old motherboard. So all of our zip files are gone, but Richie does have it backed up on tape.

A new addition is a Ham Callsign CD, which also has some DX calls on it. To access it, type in PC callsign.

MARA now has one of the fastest Ham BBS Packet systems in Western MI. Enjoy it, Use it. It's there for your use.

MARA BREAKFAST CLUB

by Richie Ranta WB8HJX

Starting this past September, MARA held an informal coffee-breakfast club at The Old Country Buffet restaurant, on 785 Center DR NW Walker MI. Scott Rowe WD8JMF turned wishful thinking into a reality. We meet on Saturday mornings, at 10:00 AM in the back room and you can just get coffee if that's all you want. But food isn't the only reason we meet. If you're interested in what other members are up to, what new gear they have, what new country they have worked and everything else a ham would talk about. We'll see you there.

(Terrible Terry's Corner, continued from page 4)

We need fence put in, and we have decided to have it done by professional people, and now are waiting for them to get back to us with the amount. Since then we have found out that they will not be able to get to us till November, so I guess we will have to see what else we can do about it. Also, we need some stalls put in and there is just too much for me to do at this point in time. The big thing I want done is to put shop back into operation, that's my big thing. Ha. My wife says the horses come first, so there we go again. Yes dear....

We have covered the lean to with 16 X 32 sheet metal and have put in a sawdust bin for the horse bedding.

The local club has their net on Monday night and I joined in. They meet in Clare so I will have to see about going there for an eye ball. Their club is called "Mid Mich. Amateur Radio Club". I cannot get over how quiet it is up here. We do get some traffic, some of the 4 wheelers that are going back into the woods. The school bus uses our driveway to turn around in, so I understand the county snow plow cleans out the main part of our drive. Nice little extra.

We have met our part time neighbors that come up on the weekend. They have a beautiful log cabin back into the woods, about 1/4 mile back in the woods. The day after we moved in, they came

over and took us out to breakfast and then later we had to go to their place for some wine and a look see. We laughed so much that my jaw ached. Just super people. My dogs think they have died and gone to heaven with all the woods and strange smells. I can't get over how tired they are at the end of the day. Now our cats, that's another thing. They will not leave the house without us pushing them out. When we do that, they hardly get 5 feet from the main porch, or should I call it a deck. They are really insecure.

I tried two different radio shack Fax switches and to no ones surprise, they did not work, so have ordered another line in at the cost of \$137.95. Allendale charged us \$35.00 and we had the capacity of 6 lines. Oh well, we wanted to move up here, so I guess we'll take the bad with the good, and the good really over powers the bad. We have put our 2nd mobile home up for sale. It is a 14 X 60 and really hope it sells soon. It kind of blocks some of the woods, so really want it out. The other owners used it for rental, but we really don't want that at all.

We had 2 acres down in Ottawa CO. and now have 5, and we paid less for this place, plus the other mobile, and of course, the taxes are a lot less, it turned out. Now that is a really good deal for us, but we have spent more than the difference for things we wanted done around here.

One of these days I hope to have my antennas up and going, but it seems like so many other things have to be done before my shop or radio gets set up. Darn.

Well I guess I had better stop here and send this to Richie. He called and pushed me to hurry up and get it done. But it wasn't that bad to do, for I wanted all my friends in radio to know what's happening up here. I promised him I would keep you all up date on what is happening so he can put it in the newsletter. GOD BLESS YOU ALL, and thanks for the years we've had together. PS. If I hear any good jokes I will send them along, but maybe they will be old ones; it takes a while to get things up here. Ha.

(Terry can be reached on the 147.200 MHz and the 147.160MHz repeaters.)

The Top Band

by Mike Eilers K800K

The 160 meter band and it's close cousin, 75 meters, are other bands that can stretch the amazement of the common ham. How can a band just above the broadcast band bring any good especially for DX? It can be great DX band after summer time static fades out in the colder fall nights. Some big gun DX-er have well over 200 countries.

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MARA On the Web

by Chuck Lemarbre N8LDY

Early in September, Chuck N8LDY created the MARA World Wide Web page on his internet provider. If you surf the internet, stop by, http://www.geocities.com/cap_eceanaver1.3176

Please, only use small letters when addressing this page. So far, the page has changed several times as folks stop by and offer suggestions as to what they would like to see on it. The Great Lakes Award information is available as well as totals and club information. Why don't you stop by and see what you like and would like to see placed there. Be sure to drop Chuck N8LDY a note and tell him how you like it.

(The Top Band continued from page 5)

The antennae for this band are much larger than most city lots. A half wave dipole is about 256 feet long! The smaller compromising antennae work to a smaller degree. A big vertical with many ground radials are used for transmitting and horizontal wires for receiving.

I have heard of one station with a 7200 foot long receiving antenna, I believe that is 1 1/2 miles long! The gray line effect is used to work much DX on 160/75 meters. The sun coming up is one location and the sun going down at another location may give you as little as a 15-30 minute

window of opportunity to work a certain DX station. Where as 6 meter openings can be short, but very strong, openings on 160 are usually very weak and much patience is necessary. Thus QRM can be very nerve racking. There are quite a few stations using 160. During a big contest, signals are wall to wall. It is also a great rag chewing band; 75 meters is too crowded and most other HF bands close at night. If you have the real estate, try it. You will like it.

(Mike K800K is a avid county hunter and loves the lower HF bands. He will be back with more DX tips)

Net Schedule

by Bob Wild N8JXB

I have had several Hams inquire about being net control, if you would like to take a net, give me a call at 616-363-9631. I will be glad to send you a Net opener/closer. Give me a call.

DATE	NAME	CALL
10/3/96	Louie	N8ZVB
10/10/96	clb mt.	
10/17/96	Wayne	KB8VOZ
10/24/96	Andy	N8HUB
10/31/96	Louie	N8ZVB
11/7/96	Mike	KG8QQ
11/14/96	clb mt	
11/21/96	Wayne	KB8VOZ
11/28/96	Thanksgiving, no net	
12/5/96	Richie	WB8HJX
12/12/96	Clb mt	
12/19/96	Mike	KG8QQ
12/26/96	Wayne	KB8VOZ

Once again, thanks to all of the people who have made operating this net possible.

73 Bob Wild N8JXB

Club News

Wayne Dowling KB8VOZ, is now a ARRL Technical Assistant. He will be trying to resolve complaints on TVI and other problems that crop up between hams and their neighbors. Good luck Wayne.

Louie White N8ZVB placed in the summer ARRL VHF-UHF contest. Louie is spending a lot of time on 2 meters SSB. Give a listen for him.

Tim Kymes KC8BZE has taken Terry Francis WB8ZNO's idea, and moved up north. While we hope they are settled and happy in their new qth's, we will miss seeing them at the club meetings.

Bill Dell's KG8PI back may have finally healed enough so he can return to work. Ah, says his wife, Sue Dells' KB8WJW.

Bob Good KC8DHK is now enjoying his retirement by filling most of his free time with visiting his great grand kids and also ham radio. Ralph Ortwig N8PWR is likewise, enjoying his retirement by paddling up a creek? Well, that's what Bob KC8DHK said.

Our club trusty, Bill Wisneski, N8OAR, is riding the rails these days. Bill has fulfilled every boys dream: he's working on the Rail Road.

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(Club News continued from page 6)

He is currently learning the spikes, as they call it, and soon should be in a regular shift. So the next time you are stopped at a RR crossing gate, look into the lead engines cab, it just might be Bill.

During the Labor Day coffee stop, TV8 stopped by to see how our Operation Care was going. It ended up with our president Dan N8NIJ, being interviewed for the evening newscast.

Do any of you members remember when Dan N8NIJ, said one of our goals for the 95-96 season, should be to get 50 members into the club? Well as of October 5, 1996, we have made it. I didn't have the time to wait to include the new members call into this issue. But on behalf of all of us at MARA, we welcome you, and, Dan KC8DHV, John N8IDX, Bob KC8DHK, Pat KB8PGD, Eric KC8CCA, Matt KC8BMI, Chris KC8CIL and Larry N8AFC to MARA. We hope you enjoy your involvement and feel free to give any of our members a call. Welcome aboard. If you have any information about club members you'd like to see here, send it to our editor.

A New Look

This issue of the Open-Feed-Line has a new look to it. When we first started printing this rag, way back in September 1991, we used a

copier machine, and relied on the trusty old typewriter to make copy. This issue was composed on a brand new computer, running Windows 95, Word 6 and the most important part, a Hewlett Packard Laserjet printer. Everything is new, except for the printer. The difference in the printing is striking. I can now print the entire newsletter in one night, and without all the clacking noise. You will notice a line running through the left side of this page, the fusion roller has a cut on it, and they don't give those away for free. But remember, I got this printer for free, to print out these newsletters, so enjoy it and I'll work on getting the roller replaced.

Why we're late

by Richie Ranta WB8HJX

A careful reader will notice that not all the dates on the articles seem to be current. There's a good reason for that. Have any of you ever had a day, when no matter what you did, it turned out wrong? Well, my whole summer was like that. I have successfully gained quite a education on how to totally burn out a computer, ruin a washing machine, smoke a microwave oven, break a toilet seal, pull bolts out of the floor on the toilet, so when you sit on it, it can tip over (this really happened) and other little things that

would drive a lesser man to drink. I myself, was driven to buying oodles of bags of M & M's and worrying about cavities later. On June 28, 1996, my beautiful computer went over to our BBS and was replaced with a high powered 486 DX/4 120 MHz model. Wow. It never got to run right! I bought a new floppy drive, and it had a hidden short between the 12 volt power line and the data cable: within 3 short seconds, \$1495.95 worth of computer was transformed into a boat anchor. But faithful reader, never worry, there's plenty of time to put another one together, right? I am a firm believer in American produced goods, so I quickly sent in the burned board for a replacement. That was on July 12, 1996. Just as quickly, they sent me a replacement on September 13, 1996. Now I'm ready to smoke, right? Wrong. Some clown over in California installed a 486 DX/4 120 MHz CPU on a motherboard that is rated between 25 to 100 MHz. I can't access the floppies, the machine periodically turns itself off and my tape backup is confused. I finally got the newsletter out, gained 5 pounds from all the candy, but by golly, the toilet is firmly bolted to the floor. At least one thing around here works!

CW Practice

When the new officers met in January 1996, Dan N8NIJ said he thought it would be a good idea to offer Morse Code Practice once again. Our practice person, Richie WB8HJX needs to know when you folks would like to have this event scheduled. When we ran it the last two times, we held in on Wednesday and Saturday night, at 8PM. We're going to do this, to provide you folks with the opportunity to upgrade or learn the code. It's been our experience, that if you provide a practice, folks will use it. So please, look at your schedule and see what time is right for you to sit down for 45 minutes and study the code with us. Either give Richie a call at 616-361-5975 or make known your ideas during our next club meeting or net. We will be sending 5, 13 and if there is enough interest, 20 WPM. Sharpen your pencils, fall is truly here.

Vanity calls

On September 23, 1996, the FCC opened up gate 2 of the vanity call sign system. Immediately, our club trusty checked out our form 610-v for completeness, and waited to mail it in. What is it about a sane person, that would get them to pour over call books or inquire into CD's, to check on whether a call sign has been assigned or not? For the newly licensed ham, this must seem like udder madness. It's not! A

Amateur Radio Call sign is one of the most personal pieces of identification a ham can have. It's how folks know you from other hams, but more important, it's only issued to YOU!

Locally, there's a bushel of folks who have quietly applied for a change of call sign and I'm sure it is going to following as each gate opens up. It's one of the special aspects of ham radio, to choose your own call sign. So within the next 2 weeks, give a listen on the repeaters, and hear all of the new call signs that pop up. Next month, it may be you, who will be saying your new call sign.

(richie WB8HJX, Lee WC8O, Bill W. N8OAR, John Wittman WK8X, Sam Nabkey WJ8T, MARA KB8YTM and a mess of other folks locally, are changing their calls)

Club Trusty

by Bill Wisneski N8OAR as reported by Richie WB8HJX

The repeater and BBS are operating fine. I want to change the temperature probe so it doesn't say it's 32' when its really 72'. We also need to replace the coax on the BBS. We have been having a good showing on the repeater, what with all the afternoon traffic that has used it. Good. Use it folks, it there to be used.

I have had many folks ask me about the emergency auto dial slots, so here it is. We at MARA are keeping with the general practice of keeping slot assignments as you will find them throughout Michigan.

To use these auto dials, please give your call sign BEFORE and AFTER you

have accessed the patch. Thank you.

***0 Ottawa County Sheriff
***1 Kent county sheriff
***2 State police-Rockford
***3 Area fire Dept.
***4 Kentwood PD
***5 Wyoming PD
***6 East GR PD
***7 Poison Control
***8 Grand Rapids PD
***9 911 Grand Rapids

So there you have it. Richie has promised he would make up a small card with this stuff on it.

Following is the Wish list for our systems.

- 1.a new repeater controller.
- 2.replace the existing repeater antenna
- 3.install a UHF or VHF link for BBS forwarding
- 4.coax for the vhf BBS
- 5.different antennas for Field Day; really, only need the wire.

That's it. See you next issue.

Finally

Our members have once again started talking about having a Christmas dinner. We held one 2 years ago, and it was fun for all. "What do you think?" Let us know on the net. Speak up either at the next meeting or on the net.

Remember, November is the month when we nominate folks for the coming year. "Who would you like to see on the board?" Put your thinking hats on.

73 The Open Feed Line Staff