
The Open Feed Line

Volume 7 Issue 1

March 1998

THE MICHIGAN AMATEUR RADIO ALLIANCE

Post office box 670 Comstock Park MICHIGAN 49321-0670

Up Grade fever!

It seems like everybody has the desire to change his or her license class. First, Eric Moore KC8CCA goes from Novice to General and is still studying, this time, for the extra. Mark Scholten KC8CUU goes from Novice to Extra, and not to be out done, his bro. Gale N8AVQ, also upgraded to extra the very next day! Bob Wild's wife passed her Technician class license and is now KC8JIN. "What's going on here?" Why that should be apparent even to non-hams: we're all on an upgrade kick.

While we're not sure when this all started, the desire has been here for quite some time. For our club, some folks inquired when we might hold a Novice-Tech class. Dan N8NIJ and Lee W8MLB volunteered to teach the class, with the addition of teaching the Morse code too! MARA hasn't offered both code and theory since the club first came into being way back in August 1991. But Dan knew teaching the code once a week wasn't going to do it. Tapes are very helpful, but you can learn what's on the tape. Then they're useless. Rich K8JX

spoke of putting the Morse code practice back on the repeater. Golly, did his phone ever ring over that suggestion! After finally getting all the technical stuff to work right, On March 11, 1998 at 8PM, the first code practice session came on the air. It's basically being done the same way that Dan is doing it in the class, with the exception that we're also offering both a 20-wpm and 13wpm qso practice. The first time this was sent no less than 12 people came on the air to say thanks!

So, if the upgrade bug hasn't bitten you yet, give a listen at either 8PM or 1AM Wed and Sat. for the code practice. Monday is 8:30PM and 1AM.

SAREX TO BE ON JOHN GLENN FLIGHT

*(reprinted from The ARRL Letter
Vol. 17, No. 9
February 27, 1998 with
permission)*

A ham radio package will be aboard the shuttle flight that carries US Senator and astronaut John Glenn into

space this fall. Word from NASA this week was that the Shuttle Amateur Radio Experiment or SAREX payload would be carried on STS-95 when it flies in October carrying the 77-year-old space pioneer into orbit for the first time since the early 1960s, when Glenn became the first US astronaut to orbit the Earth.

Two hams--US Astronaut Scott Parazynski, KC5RSY, and European Space Agency astronaut Pedro Duque, KC5RGG, of Spain--will be among an international crew aboard STS-95. The launch date for the only other SAREX mission scheduled for 1998--STS-93--has slipped from August to December. Glenn already has begun his astronaut training, but it's not yet known if he plans to get his ham ticket before his return to space.

W8AKI S.K.

The last week of February saw the passing of a local ham, known to many, as always offering to help guide motorists through the local area. Edward Wisniewski W8AKI is a silent key.

(continued on page 3)

VP Speaks

By *Connie Zaidel N8WKQ*

Hi everyone. I hope everyone enjoyed the wonderful weather we had in February. Fifty degrees was great, for winter antenna projects. Not like the freezing temperatures and big snowflakes we had when we put up our antennas. But without all the cold weather to kill all of those bad bugs, I have been suffering with the flu and sinus infections. Still nice to not have to shovel. Even two of our radios are sick, maybe dead. The Yaesu 2400 lost a power module and the 2400 in my car had the battery die; it doesn't keep the program. Bill keeps promising to put the bus radio in my car. It'll get there someday. And the 736R had an audio problem, but we got lucky, it was only the mike cord on the hand mike, the desk mike does work. We may be a little more radioactive now. We have the satellite radio on the desk now.

I would like to thank all the members who renewed their membership and welcome all of the new members, especially the ladies. I look forward to meeting all of you. Remember that this is YOUR club, and YOU are the club. So when there is a club function, please don't wait for an invitation. Volunteer. You will have fun. We have field day at the end of June and the coffee

stops on the three summer holiday weekends, and I heard some talk of a club picnic. With a few new ladies in the club, I have been thinking about restarting the Ladies Net, a little later in the spring. With only four or five of us, we kind of ran out of things to talk about. Plus everyone got busy. This time it would be nice if we could take turns at coming up with a topic to talk about. That does sound strange, ladies having trouble finding something to talk about!

This is about all I can think of for this time, but I feel as an officer I should have an article in the Open feedline. Rich does such a good job with the newsletter.

73 Connie N8WKQ
MARA Vice President

Field-Day 98 Novice-Techplus station

By *Jim Cordes KC8FGQ*

Filed Day is a great event and provides a number of benefits. Amateur radio exists, in part to provide emergency communications. Field Day helps us to be prepared for emergencies. The public can stop by and become acquainted with amateur radio. Field Day is a great motivation to upgrade, at least it was for me. It gave me my first taste of the HF bands.

But I must admit that my #1 hope is that everyone has a good time, enjoying the camaraderie, the radio, the outdoors, the fresh air, the awesome view, the food, etc. We had beautiful weather last

year. I also hope that MARA achieves a high score. Gale N8AVQ and Eric KC8CCA are in charge of MARA's Field Day this year. Brian KC8FUW and myself were interested in setting up and running the Novice-Techplus station, so we volunteered and were appointed to the job. Thank you for the confidence and we will try to do a good job. Anyone can help operate the Novice-Techplus station. So come on up, sit a spell, make a few contacts or whatever. All contacts made by the Novice-Techplus station must be under one, and only one, callsign. Brian and myself decided to use my call, KC8FGQ. Any comments suggestions or questions? If so, please contact Either Brain (784-8348) or myself (459-1195) or (459-5415). It is early yet, and we are still trying to soak in all the information that we can. See ya at Field Day for some good clean fun. Respectfully yours James M Cordes KC8FGQ

W8AKI S.K.

(Continued from page 1)
Ed, who held the advanced class license, could be found chatting away on the 'old polish net', 145.760 with many of his friends. But, unless you knew the polish language, you might not be able to tell what they were saying. Ed always tried to make every Ham Swap in Western Michigan. He'll always be remembered as the gent chatting away with a friend, while wearing his favorite bib overalls. We'll miss you Ed W8AKI.

Club News

By Rich Ranta K8JX

Our club meetings are about to get a boost. Eric Moore KC8CCA, has been very busy lining up guest speakers for our meetings. April's club meeting will have a speaker discussing Michigan Lighting Protection. What with all the storms we get in any season, this surely will be a great topic for our members. Be sure to attend and bring your friends.

Eric is also co-chairing Field-Day98 this year, with Mark Scholten KC8CUU. That's only three months away, but now is the time to look through your box of goodies, and see if you have something we could put to good use at the event. Call either Mark or Eric and ask what they need to pull this off. It takes a lot of work, but it is worth it.

MARA's web page needs your help. Richie is about to change the face of our web page and is waiting to hear your ideas about what we should look like to the rest of the world. Feel free to call him and share your ideas. He also would love to include many more local clubs URL's. When you're surfing the web, check out any other local club you can, and let Richie know their URL. Thanks.

The repeater has the hic cups, or so it seems. There is a beep that keeps going off at all the wrong times (those times when

we're listening for it!). The range of the repeater also seems to be down from what it was. But this might just be the shifting band condition that is reflecting the lousy weather we've been having. Dr. Bill N8OAR is going to re-check the machine and see if he can spot the culprit.

Connie N8WKQ still needs to know what property the club owns. It's more important now, since our liability insurance is about due. We need to know just exactly what we have and an idea of what it's worth. So please, make the time to jot down any club property you have, with a good description of it and any identifying numbers, or names.

Connie has also been working on what to include in our membership kits. These would be sent to new members. Ideally, it would contain your membership card, a copy of our latest newsletter. Perhaps even a copy of our club's constitution and by-laws. If you have any suggestions, please let her know.

Is there a club station in our future? Many years ago, one of the pet projects of our then president, Rich K8JX, was to establish a club station. Several of our members simply do not have the option of putting up any kind of wire antenna. A club station could provide an opportunity for those members to get on the air. What will it take to get this done? There is one local

club that owns it's own building and property. Is there something we can do that isn't so expensive, yet fulfills our need? Pull your thinking caps on, and see what we can come up with at our next several club meetings.

The local simplex frequencies are sparely being used. What about 440 MHz? Over 50% of our members have dual band vhf-uhf radios. Is there a simplex frequency you folks use on 440? I haven't heard anybody mention any good simplex frequencies.

Be sure to remember Labor Day weekend, the 4th of July and Memorial Day weekend. That's when we are having our operation Care Coffee Stops. Now is the time to plan ahead, and volunteer for our major public service operation of the year. It is great fun meeting so many interesting folks. You'll be glad you did, while providing a needed public service.

Terrible Terry's Corner

By Terry Francis WB8ZNO

I must first mention my friend Ed Wisniewski, W8AKI. We're not close friends, but he made you feel like you were. Never once in all the years I knew him, were there any bad things coming from him about anyone person.
(Continued on page 5)

*(Terrible Terry, continued
from page 4)*

He loved to challenge you in a subtle way, and really enjoyed our reactions. I must say I will miss him greatly, because when there was no one else to answer you when you called, he was always there. How could you feel lonesome when driving on the road all by yourself when Ed was there? Especially I will miss him. Wouldn't that be nice if that could be said about all of us?

I have not joined any group up here. I don't think that the MARA club could be replaced by any, in any way. I greatly miss all the bushwal that went on, on the 145.410MHz repeater. I talked to Len the other day and he seemed to have had a great time down in Florida. I'm not the jealous type but I do get very close to it. Ha! This winter has not been the best for us up here. I will not go into detail but we lost two of our very good friends. One of them was my horse and the other one was our 18-year-old cat. Then on top of that pat's horse then went into mourning and stood over her grave for two days and we had to have the vet out to help him get him through it all. That really worked the devil out of us. On top of that this old man is reminded that he is getting old. Lots of medical problems, like my sister said "The golden years, bushwal!" I ended up with 3 trips to the hospital to help alleviate the pain. Spent two weeks in bed,

too many back troubles, not fun. Then again this last week because of spitting up blood. I guess it all got to me and tore things up inside. They were afraid of TB but have since determined that it is called gerd, lots of pepcid and antacid. Sorry about all this. I'll try and find some jokes to send along. HA!

Talk about animals, today we had near 100 turkeys show up at our feeder. The wildlife is such a great joy to watch. The bucks that come here are still carrying their racks and we found out from a deer expert that the reason they are is because of the good food that they get. They will keep them longer if fed well. Well according to our checkbook, they sure are fed well! But we love it all, the birds and squirrels. That shows up here. Living at the edge of the state forest is a plus for us. I will admit something though. In some ways I am a city person also along with being a woodsy. I miss the big city a great deal for some of the things that go on there. This big berg of Farwell- the only thing that is going on is the coffee break, and all the local gossip. Some of it is like the Peyton Place: it can really be down right dirty. Oh well there is not much of anything else to do than gossip. We dug out a 5-gallon water container for our friends that live back in the outback. They do not have electricity, water. So we thought they could use it so they would not have to come to town so often.

They do have a wood burner thought and really are nice people. He makes his living by cutting firewood.

Oh yes, Pat reminded me that we have a woodchuck living in our barn and Pat puts out corn and dry bread for it everyday. Oh yes, we have tons of field mice, and they made a nest in one of my pants drawers. Some times they will just sit there and watch us. They are not even scared of us. They must know what suckers we are for animals. As long as they don't do any damage, we don't bother them. Now if they get in the house that's a different story. But we have not had that trouble with two cats that live with us.

You have heard this story before, but it is still going on. We have rescued several people that have gotten either stuck or broke down out back. The old 4-wheel beater sure does come in handy. I towed one clear into town last week. One of the 4 boys did not even have a jacket on and I told him that was A.D.S. deal! (You will have to figure out what D.S. means) It was really cold that day. My apache friend took some hair from my horse and made us a really neat reminder out of it. Our place has a lot of Indian stuff in it. His wife made us a dream catcher out of deer ribs and decorated it very nicely. Pat, KA8ROS, is still working some long hours.

(Continued on page 6)

Continued on page 5)

I worry about her, but she is a tough old bird. When they are short at the unit she will go in to help with the patients. She is really dedicated. She is getting plenty of practice so she can take care of me. HA! The old beater was in the garage again this time for new brakes. It now has a new oil pump and brakes. Really enjoy driving it though. It is sorely needed to keep people out of trouble on state land. I'll probably be taking my wife to work all this week because she and the employees are trying to get the united steel worker's union in. between low pay and poor working conditions, the employees have run out of patience with the corporation who bought the place 18 months ago. None of the promises made have been kept. But it is getting down and dirty now as the vote is March 6th. A couple of the vehicles have been keyed and she is worried that one of our trucks might catch it. So she wants me to drive her in each day. This coming week should be interesting. Whether the union is a good idea or not remains to be seen. If it doesn't make it in, at least the home management has had the pants scared off of them. Maybe things will improve with or without a union. We'll see. Here I go again complaining. Well, we have the worst service from this area. This winter after a really big storm, it took them 7 days to get to us. I plowed the 1.1 miles

with my tractor. It took 4 trips to get it done. When they did get here, they plowed for the following 3 days! They had to bring in a front plow to push back what snow I couldn't do. My tractor only has a 7-foot plow and when it's on an angle, it doesn't do a wide path. One neat thing is that darn old tractor started every time with out hesitating. I also plowed out several other places also so they could get out and to work. I told the county that there is an old man that lives at the end of the road and if there were ever a need for an ambulance or fire truck, it would have a bad time of it. The old man I was talking about is I of course. HA! Last year I put chains on and really did not need them and this year I opted not to and really wished I had them a few times. I wear Trifocals and have a 20-20 vision in the rear. Sorry, but it was too late. The heater we put into the shop has done such a great job that we leave it on low just about all the time. Only a couple times when I was working out there I had to turn it up. I did not work out there as much as I wanted but at least with the heat on, the tools did not rust. The 23rd of this month my wife and I celebrated our 41 years together. We went to the same place we did on our honeymoon and got the same room. Same restaurant and the only difference this time was I went into the bathroom and cried. Joke of course! I am one of those lucky people that got a great gal.

She has to be to put up with me all these years. I'm done for this time. Let's hope spring is here early.

*Terry Francis WB8ZNO
(Terry, who retired 2 years ago,
writes often about the Golden
Years. Write him, he misses us
all.)*

Learning CW*

Learning the Morse code is easy. It's just being able to copy it that creates all the trouble! The Hams who have gone from zero words per minute to 20 WPM within three months, can usually be counted on one hand (this author hasn't met one yet in over 21 years!). Unlike most myths you may have heard about in Amateur Radio, there does exist a secret to over coming the learning of the Morse Code: There exists a Plateau between what is referred to as slow code, (from 5 WPM to 8 WPM) to Fast Code (18 WPM to 35 WPM and beyond!). This area can be felt when no matter how many hours you practice, you don't seem to increase your copying speed. The secret is to vary your practice times. Practice Monday at your normal time and at your normal Code Speed, but on Tuesday, increase your copying speed beyond what you normally would do (Example: you are going for 13WPM and you are practicing at 12WPM. On Tuesday, practice at 18 WPM.). And on Wednesday, " Don't DO ANYTHING!" rest, think of anything else except Ham radio.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Then when Thursday comes along, practice with the 18-WPM code. Then start the whole process over again. But, whatever you do, do not copy at any speed where you can copy solid. That's the last thing you want. Right now, you are in no mans land: your ability to copy code faster is increasing while your confidence is being measured by your 100% solid copying rate.

Nonsense! Ask some of our Fast-Code Hams we have in the club, like ED W8NZW: the only sure way to learn High-Speed code is to use it: Force yourself to copy whatever is being sent, and whatever you do DONT STOP TO CORRECT! Try this method out. It has proved to be very helpful to many, many Hams

HEAD-COPY

This deals with the ability to hold in ones memory the message you just heard. At first, this might sound ridiculous: who in their right mind would want to concentrate on turning dots and dits into one long sentence. That's simple, what if you run out of paper, or merely want to listen to what is going on without committing the message down on paper? This is also difficult to accomplish, since about the only way one builds this skill, is to listen to the code and try to follow what is being sent. The difficulty: If you miss one word, or think of something else, you lose

it! We know of one Ham who as he was driving to work, would listen to a cassette tape of the Morse code. The result, he still couldn't write it down any faster, but he had developed a skill of holding in his head the gist of the conversation. To start practicing this, simply listen to a QSO in code and you will find that many parts of the conversation is very familiar to you and you really do not need to write down everything that is being sent. Just try to copy in your head what the message is. This is not anticipation: you are not anticipating what is being sent, but developing your capacity to memorize what is being sent.

Once again, this is not for anyone who is just starting to learn the code, but rather for those who simply cant write the entire message down as it is sent.

LAG-COPY

This brings us to our final consideration: What happens when your writing isn't fast enough for the code being sent? You then can develop the skill of LAG-COPY. As the name suggests, you write BEHIND what you're hearing. Example: W8NZW sends the word BINGO, but by the time you have written down the B, he has already sent the I and is almost ready to send the N. You simply write behind what is being sent. When you first do this, it is truly an Erie experience: Your mind is responding to the sounds it hears, while your hand

writes down what is already sent. To learn this, simply requires one to
1. NEVER, EVER STOP TO LOOK AT WHAT YOU'RE WRITING DOWN! If you do, you have messed up good (you not only lost the letter that was sent, but the one that is being sent!).

2. slowly start forcing yourself to slow down what your hearing (practice this at a speed you are efficient at) and write behind what is being sent.
3. Increase your speed till you reach the point where you can see with your mind what is being sent, but know your hand is writing behind this.

This must all sound strange to anyone who has never come across it before, but all of these techniques work. They can help you to master the code.

(The preceding article was published in the Open Feed Line in May 1994)

Our Ham Shack

By Richie Ranta K8JX

One of the most useful pieces of equipment any ham shack can have, is the Antenna tuner. But there seems to be a misconception about what a tuner will do, and will not do. It can correct any mismatch between the transceiver and antenna. But it will not change the radiated pattern that radiates off the antenna. If you have a lousy match, your radiation pattern will probably be lousy also.

(Continued on page 8)

Continued from page 7)

So how can we insure our pattern is the best we can get it? Check out the following, and see if your antenna checks out.

1. The lowest frequency of operation should be no less than $\frac{1}{2}$ wave length in length. (The antenna's length)
2. Try to raise it at least $\frac{1}{4}$ wavelength off the ground (i.e. a 40 meter dipole should be at least 33 feet off the ground.).
3. Use the tuner to fine tune across the band and for higher frequency use.
4. Use Ladder line if possible, with an antenna tuner: they're made for each other.
5. Always use a good quality Low Pass filter between the transceiver and tuner. This will help prevent TVI.
6. Keep the antenna and ladder line away from all metal surfaces.
7. Make sure all your wire connections are clean and rust free.

If you do all of this, how can you tell if it's working? Try listening to WWV at 5, 10 and 15 MHz. This is a good way to tell when propagation is open and also if your antenna system is working. Of course, nothing beats a

solid contact. Maybe a short chat with somebody on Pago Pago? It's possible.

If you haven't constructed your antenna yet, the following formula will guide you.

Formula for calculating the length of a $\frac{1}{2}$ wave dipole.

Length=(468/Frequency in MHz)

Example: (468/7.110)=65.8 feet.

We chose 7.110Mhz as our center frequency. Now simply divide this figure by 2 to get the length of each side of the dipole. This comes out to 32.9 feet.

Try to cut your antenna very carefully. The length of each leg has to be as exact as possible, otherwise the impedance won't be 73 ohms.

If you can't use ladder line, go with a good quality coax and use a balun between the coax and dipole. Now you're set for working HF, either multiple, or single band operation.

Experiment if you can. Instead of having your dipole stretched north and south, try west and east. Then try this configuration as an inverted vee. This is the quickest way to get on the HF bands without erecting a tower. Now, when we connect our tuner, we know we're not just going to be heating the atmosphere over the antenna, our signal will be going out to

where we want it, to get that elusive DX.

Wait just one minute. You say you've got one of those new rigs with a build in tuner and it will only take coax.

These new build in tuners are wonderful. Some have memories and some are so fast, you won't believe a tuner is actually being used. But, how do you feed ladder line to a build in tuner. You must remember, when you use ladder line, it can radiate power. The last thing you want is to have RF floating around your shack, not to mention your radio. To remedy this problem, you'll need a 4:1 Current balun (W2DU, etc) with a range from 1 to 30 MHz. Now you make up a short section of coax, no longer than 8 feet long, and put PL-259 connectors on each end. Plug one onto the radio and the other onto the 4:1 Current balun. The ladder line connects to the other side of the balun. Presto, no RF inside the shack! There, now you're ready to work the bands in style. Go for it.

We strongly suggest that you explore your hobby by reading up on all the topics Ham radio has to offer. All of the books that the American Radio Relay League offers, special books, such as Electronic Communications by Robert Sharader, any edition, are some of the reading material that will help you grasp the truly amazing world that makes up Ham Radio.