

The Open Feed Line

Volume 8, Issue 3 Friendship, Community service & Advancement of the Hobby

March 2000

New Ham Dinner

By Rich Ranta K8JX

This past February 26th, GRARA, LARC and MARA, joined together at the CHARLEVOIX CLUB BANQUET CENTER to welcome new hams and their significant others to the western Michigan area. The event was the new hams dinner. Door prizes, as well as a grand prize of a Handie-Talkie, were purchased for this special evening. The Lowell ARC started this several years back and they have had only positive results. The evening was filled with some speeches and lots of time to get to know each other and share Amateur Radio experiences. At the end of the evening, many new friendships had been made. For those who didn't attend, we'll have to wait and meet these new hams on the air or at one of our club' meetings.

Ham of the Year

The event was also the occasion of the first presenting of the Ham of the Year award. The recipients, fittingly, are Carl Thompson WA8AAT and his wife Evelyn KB8ILI.

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UP COMING HAMFESTS

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 3/18/00 | Marshall MI Jim Holloway KG8GZ 616-963-6602 |
| 4/16/00 | Gross Point Jerry Rosner N8FGK |
| 5/6/00 | Cadillac MI Alton McConnell NU8L 231-862-3774 |
| 6/3/00 | Grand Rapids IRA Kathy Werkema KB8KZH |
| 6/18/00 | Monroe MI Fred VanDaele KA8EBI |

A Brave New World

Restructuring finally takes form

By Rich Ranta K8JX

On April 15,2000, the FCC's Amateur Radio service Rules and Regulations restructuring finally takes effect. Gone is the Novice and Advanced class licenses. Many Ham's will not miss the terrible Advanced class examination: it has stopped quite a few folks from upgrading. But the Novice is something else. Like the old sweater you loved to wear when it gets cold out. It has fond memories for all who studied and passed it.

Gone also is the wonderful 20 word per minute code test for the Amateur Extra class license. This in itself has caused many hams to question the wisdom of the FCC's action. When one invests oodles of time to learn and pass a test only to have it throw out cause it's deemed "non-essential for acquiring an Amateur Radio License", people start to question the motives behind the action. More on this later.

So What's it all mean to me?

On April 15,2000, there will exist only 3 classes of Ham radio licenses that you can apply for.

1. **Technician (no code required)**
2. **General (requires passing a 5 wpm code test)**
3. **Extra (requires 5 wpm code test)**

The main question everybody seems to want answered is this. Do I lose or gain anything?

"Nobody gains anything, and nobody loses anything".

If you hold either the Novice or Advanced class license before April 15,2000, you will have all the privileges you now have and can keep on renewing it indefinitely.

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Membership information

The Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance, an American Radio Relay League affiliated club, was created to provide opportunities for friendship, community service, increase technical knowledge and upgrading our skills in the hobby of amateur radio. Annual dues to MARA are \$20. Family memberships are also available. Persons aged 70 and over have the rate of \$5.00. Memberships expire on December 31 and club dues are due on January 1st. MARA membership is open to all interested persons.

Everybody is encouraged to submit original articles to the editor on disk, fax or by mail. The deadline for submission is the end of the 2nd week of February, May, August and November. Please send change of address information and membership applications to the club secretary.

Great Lakes Award

Send inquiries regarding the Great Lakes Award to the Awards Manager Brian Scholten KC8DOC c/o MARA
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Club activities

MARA holds their weekly 2 meter Net on the MARA W8USA repeater, 145.410 MHz -600Khz PL. 94.8., every Thursday, at 8 PM, except the 2nd Thursday of the month. MARA holds their monthly meetings on the 2nd Thursday of the month at Saint Adalberts Benevolent Society Aid Hall, located at 5th Street and Davis NW. We meet at 7:30PM upstairs. All are welcome.

Prez's 2 bits

By Gale Scholten N8GS

I have been asked to write an article describing what it was like to be president of MARA. Well.....it was an interesting year. It had its ups and downs but in spite of the work and abuse, it was a lot of fun. It was good to see meeting attendance go up. We are now averaging 15-20 people at most meetings and the discussions are getting livelier all the time, although Robert's Rules of Order have taken a severe beating, it is good to see the open exchange of ideas. The operation CARE coffee stops are running smoothly and providing the club with some much needed cash while doing a terrific job of serving the public on holiday weekends. MARA and GRARA have developed a working relationship that has benefited both clubs. The coffee stop trailer continues to be refined and this year an awing was added so that the crews can stay dry and out of the

sun. Our involvement in the GRARA swap has led to several constructive ideas for expanding and improving that event. At the beginning of the year I wanted to create a "Mission Statement" and most of the membership laughed at the idea. Well guess what, we created a new set of by-laws that redefine MARA and its goals. The mission was accomplished, it just had a different name attached to it. Several projects did not get done this year and I hope that they can be done in 2000. We need to work hard at expanding our membership base. A better system needs to be developed to keep track of membership status. What about those that want to pay for more than one year at a time? The Ham of the Year idea is gathering momentum. I hope it doesn't get left by the wayside. Field Day still needs some work but then it is supposed to be a learning event. It sounds like we may have some dedicated computers for next

year. Anyone want to adapt TR log to a network environment? Thank you for letting me be your president in 1999. Maybe I'll run for office again some day. (What a glutton for punishment!!) 1999 was a good year for MARA

*Gale N8GS
(This article was
postponed from last fall.)*

The New Prez's 2 bits

By Mark Scholten AB8MS

Hello everyone. It's cold out but the bands have been hot! My home away from home in Tekonsha MI is a Ham's delight. I can work all the DX I want until the latest of hours and no one to tell me to get off the "&\$^%\$#@# radio and come to bed. I worked Mongolia for the 3rd time and still haven't gotten a QSL card from there. I've also been working a lot of Germany on 75 meters late at night. 75 meters has been excellent. Most nights I can be found on 3.813-15 at 8:00PM.

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*(New Hams Dinner
Continued from page 1)*

Carl and Evelyn have been active in public service for at least a decade. ARES, Skywarn and Hoscom are a few of the areas they have been involved in. I first met Carl during a tornado watch. Congratulations Carl and Evelyn. You deserve it!

Jim's Corner

By James Cordes KI8JD

By now you probably know that I was elected your club secretary for the year 2000. I am honored, and will try to do a good job. I am sure your other officers feel the same way. Six people were nominated for the "Ham of the Year" award, actually seven. Four people nominated Carl and Evelyn Thompson WA8AAT and KB8ILI as a team. So we put it to a vote at the February meeting, and selected them as the winners of the first annual 'Ham of the Year' award. Carl and Evelyn had some very

good company. Also nominated for this prestigious award were Raymond Abraczinskas W8HVG, Tom Hansen N8DGD, Jay Mol N8ROM, Russ Povenz KC8LOI and Jim Spicer KB8OGT, in alphabetical order. The winners not only received some much-deserved recognition; they also got a nice certificate and a \$100.00 gift certificate. Of course, there are many hams in our area that deserve recognition and thanks, and hopefully we will get a chance to recognize most of them. The award was presented at the 'Welcome New Hams Dinner' on February 26. I don't know how many attended, but I would guess about 50. I stayed about 3 hours, and many were still there when I left. It was quite a bit of fun, with many door prizes, short speeches, good company, and so on. Abe won the big door prize. As you know, memberships expire December 31 with a grace period until

February 1. As of 3-3-00, we have a total of 40 members, including 3 lifetime memberships, and 5 family memberships. I used MS Works to create a new membership database. I received current membership information forms from most of the members, so I think the information is fairly accurate. I plan on maintaining and updating this database as the year goes by, adding or changing entrees as I get the information. If you would like a copy of the latest database, or any other information, feel free to get in touch with me. For a parting thought, I hope that this will be an excellent year for the club. Your new officers want you to get maximum enjoyment from your club, so come to the meetings if you can, and speak your mind. Don't forget, meeting time is now 7:30PM. If you cannot attend the meetings, there are many ways to contact your officers.

73 de Jim KI8JD

*(New Prez's 2 bits
continued from page 3)*

Gale, Ron, Jim, Jerry, Bill, Eric, Steve (I hope I didn't miss anyone) get on and rag chew for anywhere up to 1 ½ hours. We try to solve the problems of the world but failed when it came to the FCC Restructuring. Oh well, we'll talk to them when we get to Dayton.

Things on the club level are moving along well. The Super Swap is in the infant stage. Teams are being bought together to start on planning the swap. We still need 2 volunteers from MARA to head up our end. If you would like to be on this fall's hamfest committee, please email me at either markab8ms@aol.com or ab8msmark@aol.com. This 2nd address is at Tekonsha. I have been talking to fellow hams about a special event station. I thought I had one all set but there were some glitches. That is on hold until the middle of February. I may have to go in another direction. Anyone have any ideas of a special event station, let me know. Maybe we could set one up at the Klein Rodeo if they can find a spot to hold the rodeo. They sold the land and have a rodeo with no place to hold it. If you have a 60 acre back yard and don't mind a big party, let Klein's know and I'm sure you will never forget that weekend. forever!!!

The January meeting had a great turnout 23 people. The best attended meeting I have seen in the 4 years I have been a member.

Project Care is all set to go. The permit has been received and returned. Put Memorial Day weekend on your calendar of things to help on. We always need volunteers for this very worth while public service event. Work a 4 hour shift and you will feel good about helping the public motorist. It's a good time to work with other club members you may not know very well, and get to know them. The motoring public appreciates us and your families will too, when they arrive home safe. Please give us your help if you can. I think that's about it for now. Catch us on 3.813MHZ or around there some night and have a laugh.

Mark AB8MS

*(A Brave New World
Continued from page 1)*

No one gains any frequency. However, if a Technician class person should pass the 5-WPM test after April 15, they will be allowed to use the Novice's HF privileges. At least for one year, which is how long a C.S.C.E. is valid for. The Question pools will also reflect a change: the advanced and extra will merge some what. The good old AC theory hasn't gone anywhere, they're just calling it something

else, the new extra class written examination. The next few months should be very interesting for all of us hams. Who knows, maybe, just maybe, they'll change them again?

Old Kent River Bank Run

May 13,2000 is the date for the Old Kent River Bank Run. Christine Nabkey needs YOU to help out. She needs several people to provide communications during the Race. You should have 2 meter handi-talkies, with extra battery packs, if possible. This year, what with the S-Curve being closed, the race course has changed. If you want to help out with this worldwide event, give Christine Nabkey a call at 616-676-2310. They will be using the GRARA 147.260MHZ repeater.

SKY WARN TRAINING

There will be a SKY WARN training offered on March 23,2000. It will be at the Grand Valley State University campus, in 102 Henry Hall. Please use parking lot F. For more information on this, give Ed N8UXN a call. The training will last from 7PM to 10:30PM. This is a worth while skill to obtain. Sign up today.

Digital Corner

By Eric Moore K8CCA

RTTY or Radio Teletype, is a well proven and fun mode of digital operation. On an SSB receiver it sounds like a steady 'diddle' where a tone rapidly toggles between two similar frequencies, this is called FSK or Frequency Shift Keying. A RTTY transmission sends a character as a stream of bits. A high bit is represented by a MARK tone and a low bit is represented by a SPACE tone. Each bit is a fixed length. These tones are different frequencies, a high radio frequency for a MARK and a low radio frequency for a SPACE. Each BAUDOT character is made up of 7.5 bits. This is made up of 1 start bit (SPACE), 5 data bits (LB first), and at least 1.5 stop bits (MARK). Since BAUDOT is asynchronous the stop bit may be any length >1.5 bits. A new character must have a MARK before it so the start bit can be detected. The 5 data bits decode to one of two separate 'alphabets', one for letters and one for numbers and punctuation. Special code words are used to select the alphabet, these are called Letters and Figures shifts. There is also idle (blank), space, carriage return and line feed characters. The mode has become much more popular in recent years with the proliferation of the personal computer and low cost TNC's. There is

even a software package that allows the operator to use a PC sound card, with the addition of a few discrete components, to send and receive RTTY. This will result in even more activity on the bands. The lowest cost way to start out on RTTY is to download the software, TrueTTY, written by Sergei Podstrigailo, UA9OSV, located at <http://www.qsl.net/wm2u/truetty.html> .

This software also supports the latest Digital Mode, PSK31. TrueTTY uses your 'Sound Blaster 16' PC soundcard to decode RTTY. Once you install the software, just follow the connection instructions to connect to your HF rig, the soundcard, and you are off to the wonderful world of HF digital communications.

Upon completion of the installation, tune around 14.080MHZ, with your HF rig set to LSB, and watch the tuning indicator on your computer screen. With a little practice you will be able to recognize the rhythmic call of CQ at 45 baud RTTY, zero right in on the distant station and make a contact. The true fun of RTTY is the fact that there are hardly any quick, "RST and Next please" type QSO's. Most of the non-contest contacts I have made, are typically 30 minute rag chew sessions or loner. I have even had the excitement of "printing" many rare, at least as far as DX chasers are concerned, stations, jumping in, and working

them. RTTY is a very robust and exciting mode, even in light of the fact it has been around since December 3, 1918! Howard Krum is the man who got the first patent for the start-stop method of synchronization that allows RTTY, as we know it today to work. In the 1930's AT & T Western Electric Company and the Teletype Corporation pooled efforts to market this reliable form of communication to the business world. Today Facsimile machines have replaced the old teleprinters, but RTTY lives on in the Amateur Radio world. If you are looking for a new challenge, jump into the Digital world, and give RTTY a try. It is fun and rewarding. Next time we will dive into PSK31

73 Eric K8CCA

Why we're late...

Let's see if I can count the ways...

1. Our Club's elections.
2. FCC's Restructuring.
3. Developing a new membership list.

Developing a new reliable membership list has taken Jim K18JD, Dan N8NIJ and some help from me, Rich K8JX, over 3 ½ weeks! But I think it has paid off. The membership list you find on the rear cover is the most accurate one we've ever had. Thanks go to Jim K18JD for building the new database. The only correction: Lee's W8MLB and Dan N8NIJ's e-mail address is Pathwaynet.com not net.