

The Open Feed Line

Volume 8, Issue 4

Friendship, Community service & Advancement of the Hobby

June July 2000

Revised Morse Testing Standards

(Reprinted from the ARRL: Letter vol. 19.No.29)

The National Conference of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators has voted to set up revised standards for the administration of Morse code examinations in the US. The move at the NCVEC's July 21, meeting in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, comes in the wake of the FCC's December 3, 1999 action to establish 5 WPM as the sole amateur Radio Morse code requirement.

Under the revised standards, examinees would have to show 25 character-count solid copy on their test sheets or successfully answer seven out of 10 questions of a fill-in-the-blank quiz on the sent text. The plan would bar the use of multiple choice tests for Morse code testing. Morse examinations would specify use of the Farnsworth method, where characters are sent faster than the overall speed and additional spaces added between characters, words and sentences.

Farnsworth "character speed" would be in the range of 13 to 15 WPM at an audio pitch of between 700 and 1000 Hz. *(Continued on page 3)*

Operation Care Coffee stop

By Rich Ranta K8JX

Once again, MARA is operating Operation Care Coffee stop. We provide hot coffee, orange drink and apples and cookies to weary motorists. Our operation period is the three holidays of summer: Memorial Day, the 4th of July and Labor Day. What started out as a means of generating money for our repeater has turned into one of the best experiences we hams have ever had. You can't imagine the expression of relief that is given the volunteer when a lone motorist stops in at any hour of the day and sees a warm friendly face. So many of our club members have no idea of just how special this event can be to all involved. If you have Internet access, go to the clubs web page and visit the public service page. You'll see photos of our members and other club members jointly working together to help make this a successful event.

So far this summer, we have gone through 700 Wendy Cookies, 4 bushels of apples, 1500 donuts, 5 gallons of orange drink and about 2 cases of coffee. We have also received \$1145.00 in donations. This is just for the Memorial Day weekend! We still have the Labor Day weekend ahead of us. If you'd like to have a great experience this summer, call Mark Scholten AB8MS. He'll let you know what time slots are available. If you have Internet access, go to the clubs web page and click on Events Calendar.

See you this summer!

Questionnaire

"We want to know what you think!" That's right. On the last page of this Newsletter, we've included an anonymous questionnaire to discover just what you think of your club.

UP COMING HAMFESTS

- 8/5/00 Delta County ARS WD8RTH
- 8/5/00 Iosco County AR KA8AIP
- 8/13/00 Cascades ARS KC8IJZ
- 8/27/00 Lapeer County ARA N8RVG

The Open Feed Line

Editor

Richie Ranta K8JX
812 Graceland NE
Grand Rapids MI 49505-4363
h&w 616-361-5975
Internet rranta@worldnet.att.net

Publisher

Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance
Post Office Box 670
Comstock Park MI 49321-0670
packet W8USA.#SWMI.MI.USA.NOAM
<http://www.waycom.com/mara>
W8USA@arrl.net

The Open Feed Line is published 4 times a year. It is the official journal of The Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance. You may freely reprint any material in the Open Feed Line, but please credit the Open Feed Line, the original author, and the original publication, if given.

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
P.O.Box 670
Comstock Park MI 49321-0670
packet KC8DOC@W8USA
internet KC8DOC@yahoo.com

MARA club officers

President

Mark Scholten AB8MS
8570 Peach Ridge NW
Sparta MI 49345
616-887-9750
ab8ms@arrl.net

Secretary

James M Cordes KI8JD
1235 Morgan
Grand Rapids MI 49504
616-459-1195
jcordes@iserv.net

Vice President

Eric Moore K8CCA
1417 Stark NW
Walker MI 49504
616-735-4555
k8cca@arrl.net

Treasurer

Dan Markowski N8NIJ
343 Brandywyne NW
Comstock Park MI 49321
616-784-5973
danmarco@pathwaynet.COM

Appointed

Awards Manager

Brian Scholten KC8DOC
8570 Peach Ridge NW
Sparta MI 49345
616-887-9750
KC8DOC@yahoo.com

Club Trusty

Bill Wisneski K8WM
1845 Herrick Ave NE
Grand Rapids MI 49505
616-361-6349
K8WM@arrl.net

Net &

Membership Director
Wayne Dowling KB8VOZ
2442 W Collier ave
Kentwood MI 49546
616-957-4641
wdowl26686@aol.com

Education

James Cordes KI8JD
1235 Morgan
Grand Rapids MI 49504
616-459-1195
jcordes@iserv.net

Bereavement

Jerry Wittkoski W8MSK
1025 Kendalwood St NE
Grand Rapids MI 49505
616-363-6146
jeromeW551@aol.com

Field Day

Gale Scholten N8GS
8530 Peach Ridge NW
Sparta MI 49345
616-887-1820
N8GS@ARRL.net

Super Swap

Operation Care Coffee Stop
Mark Scholten AB8MS
8570 Peach Ridge NW
Sparta MI 49345
616-887-9750
AB8MS@ARRL.NET

Chairman MARA
Lee Burgess W8ZP
46 Indiana SW
Grand Rapids MI 49504
616-458-9297
LBURGESS@PATHWAYNET.COM

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.

Club News

Our summer season is off to a great start. Our Field Day Chairman, Gale N8GS, decided to hold the event on Peach Ridge, just behind Mark AB8MS and his house. All who attended said it was a great location. Even the weather was a little nicer to us this time. This year we worked as 3A with one station being operated on cw most of the time. Throughout the day and night, sounds of cw and ssb could be heard as we worked as many stations as we could. We got to use some of the highest tech gear made and it was a real pleasure to see and hear DSP work for once. Some of our old friends who have left the club showed up to help out. I don't have the exact count on how we turned out yet, but if you would like to see what our Field Day looked like, go over to our web page. Thanks to several thoughtful individuals, who remembered to bring cameras with them, we have photos to document our adventure.

We are already preparing for next years Field Day. Let's get you involved and share all the fun we've been having.

Starting with the next issue, we'll be bringing back the members' biography session. In it, we'll share some of the information and background of our members with you. This is one way you can become acquainted with your fellow ham. We'll start with our club, and then, if there is enough interest, we'll include other hams from the West Mi. area. If you have an idea on what info you'd like to see included, please let me know. See you then.

MARA on the Internet

Finally, after almost a whole year of poking around and learning new software, I got the new and

vastly improved MARA's Web page up and running. I spent most of that time looking over other clubs' web sites, seeing what they had and noting what worked, and more importantly, what didn't. I haven't found another ham radio club web page in the whole state of MI that offers what MARA offers its' members:

- ULS link to register with the FCC.
- Grand Rapids new antenna ordinance (thank you N4SC)
- The revised FCC Part 97.
- State of MI automobile Special license plates application.
- Grid square map.
- Frequency Band chart.
- The new license class study pool questions.
- PBR-1
- Club History Graph.
- All of our current Newsletters.
- Ham of the Year awards page.
- A copy of MI's Scanner Law
- Vanity callsign link
- Daily FCC action
- Operating permits Link, if you're going to another country.
- Club By Laws & Constitution.
- A Swap Page
- A Callsign lookup link.
-

I also linked our site with the Great Lakes Web Ring. After visiting GRARA's site I thought we at MARA should support the other clubs and individuals who are on the Internet.

Putting all of this on the Internet basically answered 3 questions I came up with in designing our new page:

1. What information do I as a MARA member need?
2. What info do I as a ham need?
3. And 3. If I wanted to look up a ham resource, where can I find it?

Now I need you good folks to go

examine the site and let me know, "What works" and " What doesn't!" Hopefully, working together, we can build a web presence that really shows the rest of the world what Ham radio is and how they can get involved.

A New Frequency?

WA2XSY has been granted an experimental Radio Service license for investigations on 5 MHz. The FCC and ARRL have long wanted an "in-between" frequency for use when emergencies require something other than the usual 80 or 40 meters. 5MHz is being tested right now to see if it is suitable for that use. Whether it would be available for non-emergency use is not known at this time.

(Reprinted from the ARRL Web Extra 1/29/00 with permission)

Test your Receiver

"Want to really see what your antenna and receiver are capable of doing?" Tune to 137.710 kHz between November 10 through the 27th and give a listen for VA3LK's transatlantic II attempt on LF from Newfoundland. He has been sending test transmissions with CW at 0.4 WPM. For more information contact va3lk@arrl.net

(Reprinted from the ARRL Letter vol.19.no.26 with permission)

(Revised Morse testing, continued from page 1)

Standard 5 WPM tests with 5 WPM character speed could be administered only as a special accommodation. The new Morse testing standards are to be in effect by next July 1, but VECs may implement them sooner.

(Reprinted from the ARRL Letter Vol. 19 no 29.7/28/00)

10 minute propagation report lesson

(When you use QRZ to look up a callsign, they also provide a solar report. The following article describes how to use this information)

Let's take a quick peek at the nice, concise report at the top of qrz.com. Right now it says:

Solar Rpt: WWV SFI=171, A=21, K= 3, MOD/HIGH; UNSET/ACTIVE

That's pretty much all the important stuff.

Let's focus in on the first bit, SFI=171. That's the Solar Flux Index. Up until a couple of years ago, it pretty much stayed below 100. Now if it's under 200 it's too low! Higher numbers make the MUF go up. A number like 171 means that 20 will stay open well past sunset, but 10 will be open only for a short time, if at all. When it gets around 200, 10 will be open all day and into the evening. Under 100 and 20 will only be good in the middle of the day.

Next are the A and K indices, which pretty much say the same thing. These represent the absorption. A K index of 3 is pretty darned high. Not unusable for QRP but darn near. You would like the K index to be around 1 and the A index under 5 or so.

The final part that's interesting is the last bit - UNSET/ACTIVE. This is the geomagnetic field, which equates to noise. Unsettled is getting annoying, active is pretty bad. If it gets to be "Storm", might as well shut the radio off. You would like "Quiet" there!

Now the QRZ report doesn't tell you the MUF which is an

awfully interesting piece of data. But the MUF map at <http://www.spacew.com/www/realtime.html>

is just the ticket.

Looking at this map, you are interested in places 1500km from your QTH. The lines on the map are the MUF contours (in MHz). MUF is a little weird.

Let's say that you are interested in making contacts to the east, and 1500km east is a 15MHz line. What that means is that you SHOULD be able to make a 3000km contact in that direction at 15MHz. However, you will not be able to make a SHORTER contact at 15MHz. At above 15MHz, you will only be able to make line of sight contacts - essentially, everything above the MUF is VHF for propagation purposes. At successively lower frequencies, you will be able to make shorter contacts. Experience will tell you just how much shorter. But there's a dark side. At lower frequencies, the noise increases. That "unsettled" bit is more and more significant as you get further below the MUF. In addition, you can "see" more area. Let's say that with that 15MHz MUF you can hear stations as close as 1500km on 40. That means that you will hear QRM, electrical noise, thunderstorms, etc. from 1500 to 3000 km from your QTH. By the time you get down to 80 meters where you can probably see straight up, everything within 3000 km of your station is interfering with that one you want to hear. To add insult to injury, that absorption is also more effective as you go down in frequency, so you

need more power to make the same trip.

This is why the DX is so good on 10 meters when the band is open. The MUF is rarely much above 30 MHz, so the absorption and noise are low, and the skip is so long all you hear are the DX stations.

These numbers go in a couple of cycles. We are all aware of the 11 year cycle - we're at the good part of that now. There is also a solar rotation.

Every 26 days or so (maybe it's less - I'm not so sure on that) the sun rotates, and with it the solar flux (good) and the sunspots (bad). The sunspots are only "good" in that they are a harbinger of a high flux. They spit out all sorts of junk, and when that junk hits the earth, that geomagnetic field gets bad and the A index goes up. Fortunately, it's only every so often that one ends up aimed at the earth. When we get a really good wallop, HF blacks out and we in the north get nice auroras. Time to turn on the amp and work 6 meters!

Obviously, this is all greatly simplified, and it helps to be tempered with a good dose of experience, but I hope this will help some folks with the propagation numbers.

73 de WB8RCR
John J. McDonough"
<wb8rcr@arrl.net>

(Printed by permission of John McDonough. John only asks that you stop by his web page. Tell him thanks)

<http://members.home.com/wb8rcr/index.htm>

Questionnaire

The following is intended to give those folks, whether they are past members, present members or just interested folks a place where they can say what they think about our club. We're interested in what you think, feel, not who you are. Which is why we've chosen this anonymous format. We want to know how we're doing as a club, a board and if we're doing everything you expect a club to provide its members. There is a space provided on the backside of this page where you can write out anything you wish. If you need more space use another sheet of paper. If you'd like someone to get in contact with you over some issue you have, please leave your phone number and someone from the board will get back to you. Take your time and then mail this whole page to

MARA
P O BOX 670
COMSTOCK PARK MI 49321-0670

NOTE: some of these questions use a scale for you to rate your opinion. The scale here used goes from 1,2,3,4 to 5. (HARC means Holland ARC.)

1.Are you a licensed Ham? YES ___ NO___ 2. If you answered yes, what class do you hold _____

3.Do you belong to any local ham clubs? Circle which ones. GRARA LARC MARA NOARC HARC MDXA

4.On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor to 5 being great, how would you rate these clubs
GRARA ___ LARC___ MARA___ NOARC___ HARC___ MDXA___

5.Are you a current member of MARA? YES ___ NO___

6. If you are a current member, why did you join? _____

6A. Are you planing on renewing? Why or Why not? _____

7.If you are a past member of MARA, why didn't you renew? _____

8.On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT to 5 VERY IMPORTANT, how would you rate these Ham events Club Meetings ___ Field Day ___ Classes ___ Repeaters ___ Public Service___ CW classes ___ Swaps ___ Friendship ___ Meeting other Hams ___ Going to Breakfast ___ Serving on a Clubs Board ___ Club Newsletter ___ DX events ___ Packet System ___ Learning Theory ___ Building equipment ___

9. What would you like to see offered _____

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is great, How do you feel MARA is operating? _____

11. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is great, How do you feel MARA is at resolving problems that come up?

12.In your opinion, how could MARA better deal with problems ? _____

13. Do you know of any problems that exist in the club that haven't been addressed? _____

14.How would you improve MARA? (use the backside)