

# The Open Feed Line

Volume 10, Issue 3 Friendship, Community service & Advancement of the Hobby

July-Aug 2001

## Our Constitution

The MICHIGAN Amateur Radio Alliance, MARA, was founded on August 31, 1991 by Chuck Lemarbre W8VOM, James ED Norton KA8SHZ, Serge Lisk N8NFZ, Andy Gusack W7PG, Gary Springfield KB8AKV, John Visser NF8P, Edmund Lomasiewicz W8NZW, Lyle Griffen KB8EHM, Larry Ambruz KB8MZR, Harold Allen KB8MNI and Peter Vanduivendyke KA8ZAZ. The intention of forming this club is to,

1. Foster goodwill among the community of Amateur Radio Operators.
2. Enjoy our friends in our special hobby of Amateur Radio.
3. Use our skills to help our own community in times of emergency.
4. Fulfill the Amateur's code both in our community and in our own membership.
5. To upgrade our skills, both technically and as operators.

This is the idea that the original members had, when they formed our club. Some of these hams you know from various club activities. Others have moved on to other interests. But they are not forgotten for the fine effort they invested in forming this, our club.

A big thank you to all who wanted something different.

"I wonder what the next 10 years will bring?"

## Labor day coffee stop

Over this coming weekend, we at MARA will be holding the final Operation Care Coffee stop, with GRARA. This is our club's main public service where we provide hot steaming coffee, cold orange drink, cookies and donuts to help keep the wary and often tired motorist alert and awake, while they travel across the state. The shifts are 4 hours long and there are still some open. What started out as way to get donations, has become a fun filled time where us hams chat with tired motorists and sometimes even demonstrate ham radio to them via the 2 meter radio. Over the years, the regulars have made friends with people who travel the same route each Labor Day weekend. There's the farmer, who grows apples north of Sparta. The truck driver hauling cherries out of state. But lets not forget the law enforcement individuals who stop by to chat as well as check up on our welfare. "How would you like to share in the fun?" Just check out the sign up sheet. If you have Internet access, go to either GRARA" site,

[HTTP://WWW.W8DC.ORG](http://www.w8dc.org)

Or MARA's site,

[HTTP://WWW.W8USA.ORG](http://www.w8usa.org)

. Don't have Internet access, give Dan N8NIJ a call at 784-5973

It is recommended that you bring some warm clothes with you. You never know what weather will develop in this state.

But the real warmth giver will be the friendly people your going to meet. This Labor Day, sign up and help keep Michigan Motorists safe.

See you There!

## Ham Swap-N-Shop

September 8 ARA of Hansen Hills Jon Schultz N8YSS Grayling MI 517-348-4966

September 15 GRARA—LARC—MARA Super Swap. Ed Novakowski N8UXN 616-458-9029

September 16 Adrian ARC Ted Rahwal K8AQM 517-263-0615

## The Open Feed Line

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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 1<sup>st</sup>. MARA membership is open to all interested persons.

Everybody is encouraged to submit original articles, on topics relevant to the hobby of Ham Radio, to the editor on disk, fax or by mail. The deadline for submission is the end of the 2nd week of February, April, June, August, October and December. 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  
Larry Dells KC8KVR c/o  
MARA  
P.O.Box 670  
Comstock Park MI 49321-0670  
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## MARA club officers

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### Operation Care Coffee Stop

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### Super Swap

#### Chairman 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.

\*Some of these offices are still open. If you'd like to volunteer, contact one of the board members and let them know what your interested in.

## The Prez's 2 bits

by Dan Markowski N8NIJ

Well summer is almost over, where did the time go. Many of us were able to work on ham related projects outside such as installing antennas and tower work etc. summer is also the time when much community related events are taking place. I hope you were able to devote some of your time to these events. For MARA the main focus is the coffee stops. As you all know we are engaged in providing the traveling public with coffee, orange drink, cookies, doughnuts and conversation during their stop at the rest area. Our goal is to promote safety during their holiday travels. Obviously this requires that club members from MARA and GRARA devote time to this project. I would like to express my thanks to those who spent time at the coffee stops providing this service to the public. Your efforts are greatly appreciated by all. The ending of summer does not mean that activities for the year are over. Our club will again be offering code classes. Thanks to the efforts of our educational director, Jim Cordes and our club trustee, Richie Ranta, anyone wishing to learn code will have the opportunity to tune in to the MARA repeater on the designated days and times to do so. It is my hope that we are able to provide you with enough information to

enable you to pass the five words per minute requirement for upgrading. I would also like to express my thanks to Richie Ranta for all the work he has done in keeping our repeater up and running. Due to the fact that we started with brand new equipment many hours have been devoted to bringing our system up to our expectations. There is still more work to be done. We are hoping to get the coverage problem resolved in the not too distant future. For the short time that this new equipment has been on the air Richie has spent many hours perfecting the system.

I would also like to express my thanks to the members of MARA who have provided me with the support necessary to get us through some very trying times. My term as the president of MARA has been interesting to say the very least. Your efforts and your loyalty to this club have not gone unnoticed.

## The First Ten Years A Story of MARA'S Success By Charles A. LeMarbre W8VOM

When looking for a local club to join, many of us seek the same qualities. We seek Fellowship, Information and above all Fun! In 1991 a small group

of men decided to sample what existing area clubs had to offer. There already were at least two fine clubs in the greater Grand Rapids area. They did offer Fellowship and Information but not a lot of Fun! Some of us thought that a few of these clubs were far to business orientated. They had a lot going for themselves but something was missing, it just did not feel right. One of the original MARA founders suggested that we form our own club and center it on enjoying the many things Amateur Radio had to offer but in a more open and friendly atmosphere!

These 9 men created the Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance!

The early years were not easy, we needed a Constitution and by-law's not to mention a place to meet. There were also a few bumps in the road but we were new at this and we had a learning curve. The creation of MARA was a collaboration of love for the people and the hobby as well as a love for the service that many of us enjoy using as well as providing. CW classes, Theory classes, Project Care coffee stops and Field Day. Growth at first was slow, we had to get the word out but MARA was an HF Club in the early years and we had no Repeater or funds to purchase one. In time some of these founders and friends decided to put up the funds to purchase a repeater for the club and the rest is history.

*(Continued on page 4)*

Each founder and member had something to offer, some were great CW operators while others had a knack for Theory. Some of the founders were dreamers but you need them as well! Other members were great at organizing events or awards. Each founder and member had something to offer and we decided we were going to make this club work not just for our benefit but for the benefit of the entire community and we began to grow! Success is not based on any one individual, it is based on cooperation and respect.

People said that MARA meetings were more Fun and they liked the Open atmosphere. One could say that the Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance put the Fun back into local Amateur Radio activities. Members were always treated with respect no matter what class ticket they held. Some of us found that lacking in other clubs.

The Spirit of Amateur Radio was strong within the MARA membership; we had great times in the early years and even greater times today thanks to all of your support! You the member brought the dreams of our founders to life. We were on the right track and you noticed our efforts and appreciated them. As a founder I have noticed tremendous progress! We are no longer just an HF club, we are a Full Service organization with many talented members. The founder's goals were also

to include sharing this vast and wonderful hobby and to help others to experience the many facets it has to offer.

Today we have our own Repeater, a great Web Site with lots of information. We also have Officers who tirelessly strive to serve all of your needs. They are there when you need them and I know this is true because I have placed phone calls to them at 2:00 AM in the morning and they did not hang up! Try that with another club, these people are dedicated and love the hobby with all their hearts. As a founder I am amazed at how far MARA has come! This club is truly one of the best clubs in the state and I am proud to have been a small part of that success. What will the future bring? Our founders had the ability to dream dreams and with your help these dreams came true.

We want to hear about your dreams and ideas! The future belongs not only to the dreamers but also to the members who have the courage to make these dreams become a reality and to make Amateur Radio even better then it was a decade ago. Share your knowledge with each other, be open to new ideas and modes of operation while still remembering the past and recognizing the efforts that have made MARA the full service club that it is today! I wish to thank MARA for putting the Fun back into a great hobby. Ever wonder why we choose Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance? We also

wanted to see clubs help each other! It is so great to see our area clubs work together in an alliance on the SuperSwap and Project Care. I know this friendship between the clubs is just what the founders wanted. I thank each and every member for supporting MARA through the years and I look forward to seeing this Open and Fun atmosphere continuing for the benefit of all who enjoy this hobby. I wish MARA a very happy 10th anniversary and many more to come.

(Chuck is responsible for creating the Great Lakes Award and many other endorsements. While Chuck is still involved with MARA, he is focused more on the MDXA, The Michigan DX Association. To see his creative talent, visit <http://www.MDXA1.com> A very heart felt thank you for all you've contributed)

## **Adventure on the High Seas**

*By Jim Cordes KI8JD*

The 7 members of the Michigan DX Association island crew left Grand Rapids on Monday July 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00AM. The purpose of our trip was to activate a few of the 50 islands surrounding Drummond Island, most of which have never been on the air. We made it to the cottage on Drummond Island, which we reserved many months ago, around 1:00PM.

*(Continued on page 5)*

The owner of the cottage was staying there, and did not plan on leaving. We drove to the real estate broker's house, and he found us another place to stay. He had problems getting the keys, so we never got into the "cabin" until almost 6:00 PM. Due to the mix-up, he gave us the new place for the same price. It was brand-new, and we may have been the first ones to stay there. It had the appearance of a log cabin, with its log siding. However, this place was more like a mansion than a cabin. It had 3 large bedrooms, plus a loft that served as a 4<sup>th</sup> bedroom. It had 2 full bathrooms, and the big one had a Jacuzzi. There was a screened-in porch and a large deck with a built-in gas grill overlooking Lake Huron, and many small islands. It had a fireplace, a large screen television, a satellite dish with all the channels, washer and dryer, automatic dishwasher, stereo system, microwave, trash compactor, pots, pans, dishes, silverware, towels, and just about everything you could want. I think it even had central air, although we ended up needing heat, not cooling, as you will soon find out. It was secluded in a cedar forest, about 100 feet from the lake. When the lake levels come back up, it will truly be on the water. Anyway, the place was absolutely beautiful, inside and out. When we finally got the keys, we knew that we were staying there. The other guys laid claim to their beds, and I got stuck with my own bedroom with a queen-sized bed. Poor me! (Hi-hi)

Because of the location of the cabin and the trees, it seemed that a coax-fed dipole would be the best thing to have. I immediately began working on my home-built, coax fed, coaxial-matched, broad-banded 80-meter dipole, for Monday night

operation at the cabin. I had considerable trouble getting ropes through the brushy cedar trees. After raising and lowering it several times, it stubbornly continued to have a perfect match at the upper end of 75 meters and at 3.3 MHz. For whatever reason, it is too broad-banded. With sunset approaching, I decided that a tuner would make it work. And work it did! I traded 20 over 9 signal reports with Jerry W8MSK on 3.537.5 MHz, in spite of the high SWR. We then QSY'ed to single-sideband for a nice long chat. The crew was tired, so we didn't do very much operating Monday night. Besides, Drummond was not the focus of our trip.

It was hot on Monday, and again on Tuesday morning. We had clear skies, not much wind, and the lake was calm. I got up early on Tuesday morning, and re-started the search for a boat to rent, so that we could activate a few of the many small islands in the area. We had checked for boats on Monday while we were waiting for the keys to the cabin. The Cisco's (a type of whitefish) were running, and there was a shortage of boats. Finally, I found a pontoon boat at a reasonable price. We rented the boat for Tuesday afternoon, and for all day Wednesday. Hindsight is 20/20, but I probably should have studied the weather channel a little harder.

At this point, let's define the extremes. At one end of the spectrum, you have the paranoid people who don't dare leave the safety of their homes. At the other end, you have the adventurous, although foolhardy, people who end up killing themselves. Most of us lie somewhere in-between. Four of the more adventurous crewmembers pulled out of the bay where the marina was located about noon Tuesday, and headed into the

open water for the islands that we had chosen to activate. We still had hot sunny skies and calm seas. As we passed through the straits that separate Drummond from the mainland, we noticed a single, large, black thundercloud. Hoping that it would miss us, and determined to activate our islands, we pressed on. Soon, it passed right over us, complete with tons of lightning and torrential rain. (Later, we found out that this storm was moving at 60 MPH.) Fearing the almost continuous lightning, we beached the pontoon, and took shelter (or so we thought) in the cedars. I was the first one ashore, and as I entered the dense cedar forest at the water's edge, the other guys saw a bolt strike almost right over my head. Lightning was everywhere, and choosing the lesser of two evils, they decided to follow me into the cedars. However, the cedars offered almost no shelter from the wind and the horizontal rain. It took maybe 20 minutes for the cloud to pass over us, but by that time, we were shivering from the cold. It was hot before the cloud came, and I had only shorts and a tee shirt. (I am sure that you who know me are laughing by now.) After the thunderstorm had passed, we were still determined to accomplish our goal, so we got back into the boat and continued our journey. The wind was increasing, and the temperature was dropping, but the seas were still fairly calm. Between the sun and the wind, we began to dry somewhat.

We had to pass the cabin to get to the advertised islands, so we stopped for food and more clothes.

*(Continued on page 6)*

One of the four shipmates decided to stay in the comfort and safety of the cabin. Three of us got back onto the boat to head to Harbor Island, which was easily within sight. The further we got from shore, the rougher the water got. I saw the look of fear on the other guy's faces. Unfortunately, I was piloting the boat. (Hi-hi) They pleaded with me to turn around, but I still wanted to go to the outer islands. I turned the boat so that the waves did not come directly over the front of the boat. Suddenly, I saw three 8-foot rollers coming right at our side. I was afraid that they would flip the boat, so I turned the boat into them, and had just enough time to take them head-on. Yes, we got drenched. At that point, I started to think logically. I know myself fairly well, and I know that I don't have much common sense or fear. So I decided that I should conform to the other's wishes, and turn back. As soon as we had turned around, more big rollers started hitting us from the rear, and we kind of surfed on them. It was pretty cool! It was kind of like the waves that you see the Hawaiians surfing on. We made it back to Drummond in no time, surfing all the way. We didn't even need the engine! That was the end of our boating. According to all predictions, there was no way that we would make it to any of the outer islands for days or even weeks. As a result, we were stuck on Drummond. There are several hams living on Drummond, so it is a common contact.

It kept getting windier and colder as the hours went by. The waves didn't get any smaller, either. I was waiting for snow. The furnace ran throughout Tuesday night. We had our stations set up on the porch, and couldn't stand the cold wind out there for very long. Most of the crew

decided to leave on Wednesday morning, and I wanted to get the heck out of there also. Besides, I had work to do around home before my vacation ended. So we got back into good old G.R. Wednesday night. It's good to be home.

The trip was not a complete success, but it wasn't a complete failure either. We did succeed to make some contacts from Drummond; we had a lot of fun, and gained some valuable experience. There were many other notable occurrences, but I am not going to put them into print. Hi-hi. It certainly was an adventure.

A few hundred years ago, there was a famous French explorer who wrote about the Great Lakes. He said that he had traveled all of the world's oceans, but nowhere had he seen fury comparable to these great inland seas. And I believe him.

It is no wonder that many of those islands have never been on the air, maybe some day.

73, and have fun,  
Jim ki8jd

P.S. Since I wrote this, a second crew, headed by Tim KC8BZE, was successful in activating Fire and Harbor Islands, for the first time ever. These guys live in the area, and waited for a nice weekend. I was lucky enough to contact them on one of these first-time islands.

The lesson that I learned was that you cannot plan a trip to a small island months ahead of time unless you have a very large boat. These small islands do not have docks, so you will need another, smaller, boat to get to shore. Weather becomes very important on open water, and when it gets rough, it might stay rough for a long time.

## **Short-Wave Permit: Not Needed**

*By Richie Ranta K8JX*

In our last issue of this newsletter, we provided a copy of the application to obtain a Short-Wave permit from the State of Michigan. Most people didn't know if they needed to obtain one or not. I come from the old school where it is better to fail safe than sorry. But the question remained, "Are we hams exempt or not?" I checked with the communications division of the State Police, to see if the application they provided me accurately reflected the law. The person I talked with stated "Ham's do not need to obtain a permit". The information asked for on the application was for "other" applicants. So for the time being, we're ok to install our rigs in our vehicles. I hope the first article didn't cause any unnecessary pain. I was merely responding to the form as it was sent to me.

## **W8USA.ORG**

To help start celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> year in existence, our club, with the very kind support and help from Waycom Communications, has obtained a domain name. That means, from now on, if you want to access MARA's web page, all you need do is type [WWW.W8USA.ORG](http://WWW.W8USA.ORG) it's that simple. Thank you Dan Thompson. N8WKM

## **Corrections:**

Our Awards manager's e-mail address is now.

LldgrD@netscape.net