

The Open Feed Line

Volume 10, Issue 4 Friendship, Community service & Advancement of the Hobby

Nov-Dec 2001

Club Elections

It's that time of year once again, when we, the MARA membership, nominate and elect new officers to the board. This year we're continuing what we started two years ago: including in this issue of the Newsletter, you'll find a combination nominating and voting ballot. Starting at this past November's meeting, we opened up the nominating procedure and accepted nominations. You can nominate any member you wish and likewise, you can vote for anybody you like. Your vote counts here. The only rule is that you have to have your dues paid in order to vote. But instead of just nominating, why don't you seriously think about serving on the board. It's not an insurmountable task, you really don't have to be a rocket scientist or a politician. Just a keen interest in helping your club through changes and reaching goals is all that is required. You'll have help if you want it, so you won't have to learn all the ropes by yourself. But the important thing is to want to help your fellow members out. Give it a thought and we'll wait to hear from you. After this November's meeting, the club secretary will have a list of folks already nominated at that meeting for you to choose from.

. (A current list of nominated members is on the last page)

HAM FESTS

12/2/2001 L'anse Creuse ARC Gregg Crump KC8PXJ
810-463-0729

1/19/2002 Amateur Radio & Youth Club Flushing MI

Clay Hewitt KF8UI 810-233-7889

1/20/2002 Hazel park ARC Jeff Albrecht N8WR

248-642-3608

CW

Class is in Session!

You read right. Starting this past October, Jim Cordes K18JD and Richie Ranta K8JX, are once again bringing Morse Code practice to the Western Michigan area. This is a first time for both the "Brass Bums" to work together. Jim will be introducing the Morse Code characters on Sunday night, at 8:00PM. Richie will be following up with further practice and only practice on Wednesday night, at 8:30PM. "Why all this bother, when the latest word is that Morse code will probably be dropped as an requirement within 5years?" Because we just like CW. It's a simple mode to use, it takes less bandwidth, less power too. But mainly, it's just plain fun using CW. Sure, it takes dedication, practice and time to learn. But once you've learned it, you'll never forget it. There also seems to be a lot of interest in passing the CW test while it is still being offered.

If you're interested, tune in to the W8USA Repeater, 145.410MHz on Sunday night at 8PM and Wednesday night at 8:30PM. See you there.

Hard & Fun work ahead

This past spring, MARA purchased a trailer. We thought it was about time to get our very own for operating the Coffee Stop, Field Day and other events we may have. We have to clean it up and paint it and modify it for our own use. There has already been talk about installing VHF and HF Radios in it. What we need now are folks who are willing to commit some time, perhaps each weekend, just to clean it up and start fixing it up. If you have some free time, give Larry Dells KC8KVR a call. Thanks Larry for taking the time to find this treasure.

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 1st. 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
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internet W8USA@ARRL.NET

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Operation Care Coffee Stop

*

Super Swap

Chairman MARA

*

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.

Jim Talks to Spacemen?

By Jim ki8jd

I've been asked, "Jim, how do you get involved in all this stuff?" In fact, I've asked myself the same question. Just "being in the right place at the right time" doesn't seem to be the proper answer. I think a person needs to have a sense of adventure, a willingness to say "yes" when opportunity knocks.

When Mr. Kilroy first approached me last winter about the SAREX program, I felt that I was not qualified. After all, I've only been a ham for 5 years, and have had absolutely no experience with satellite communications. I also wondered if I could afford the time. But I did not want to turn him down, either. The first thing I did was to try to pass it off on someone with more knowledge, experience, and time. Out of the few people I contacted, I didn't find anyone.

They wanted to connect Holy Spirit Elementary School with the astronauts on the International Space Station, via Amateur Radio. I realized that this would be a rewarding experience, and an honor. What I didn't realize, was how much fun it would be. Well, anyway, I told him that I would do everything I could to help them.

I had to fill out a form; it took a few hours to gather that information. Afterwards, I realized that I didn't do it perfectly. But no one ever mentioned my small error. I was under the impression that I would need to construct a 2-meter satellite station. So, back to the books again. I built a turnstile-reflector

antenna from plans I found in The ARRL Antenna Book. After countless hours of cutting coax stubs, and testing, I ended up with an antenna that was "good enough", and many too-short pieces of coax. I downloaded a satellite-tracking program, and learned to use it. I started listening to the packet racket, as the ISS flew over. I did a bit of research on satellite communications.

Summer came, and I knew that I had until fall to get ready. On September 24th, I got a call from Tim Bosma W6ISS, and he said that they had some open time slots during the following week, the first week of October. He also said that the contact would be done by 'Tele-bridge', i.e. a phone line to an Amateur Station somewhere else on the globe. So I wouldn't need my antenna after all.

The school planned a 'Space Week' for the first week of October. I gave a presentation in the gym to the 450 students on Tuesday morning, first to kindergarten through 3rd grade, then to 4th through 6th. I opened the second presentation with a contact from my handheld through the Holland repeater, to Brian KB9ZPK, who was using a handheld from Kenosha, Wisconsin. The school is in a low spot, and I couldn't get into any of the local repeaters. The repeater contact was sheer luck. I followed the contact with a demonstration of cycles-per-second, using a rope and a swinging weight. We discussed direct current, alternating current, and of course RF current. The kids were free to raise their hand at any time, and I answered

many good questions. I also gave a demonstration of CW, and the kids were fascinated by the sound of the code. You could have heard a pin drop as I went through the first half of the alphabet. I also gave a dissertation on the history of communication, including the telegraph and the history of radio. The presentation went extremely well, and was enjoyed by all present, including the teachers and myself. The kids were a joy, and I had them 'eating out of my hand'.

By that time, we knew that our contact would be through Tony VK5ZAI's station in Australia, at 4:50 PM on Thursday. By 4:30, we were ready, including several TV camera crews, and The Grand Rapids Press. At 4:51, Tony started calling Frank on the International Space Station. There was no answer. He kept calling, but no answer. The time just dragged by. After 5 minutes, I was getting a very bad feeling. Tony valiantly kept calling, even after it seemed hopeless. Finally, after 11 minutes, and almost 30 calls, he gave up. Tim promised to re-schedule the contact as soon as possible.

Tom N8DGD was there, and we went across the street to Mr. Burger to get something to eat. By the time I got home, at almost 7:00, "Tim from NASA" had already called. I called him back, and we decided to try it again at 8:40 the following morning. It was a mad scramble for me to try to get in touch with the school people at that time of the evening.

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Tom and myself showed up at the school at 8:00 AM Friday. The TV crews were not able to make it on such short notice, but the Press reporter was there. This time we used Gerald ZS6BTD's station in Johannesburg, South Africa. Gerald called NA1ISS, and Frank came back on the first call. I did not personally get to talk with Frank, but the students got to ask 18 of the 19 questions that they had prepared before the ISS dropped over the horizon. We had perfect audio throughout almost the entire 10-minute contact. The school had two video cameras set up, one recording, and one sending video to all the classroom televisions.

I recorded both attempts on audiocassette, and made two extra copies, so if anyone would like to listen to the contact, let me know. Richie and/or myself will also try to upload the audio to the Internet. I also have photographs, although there is not much to see. There may also be something on the ARRL's website by the time you read this.

In closing, it was a pleasure and an honor to have been involved in this. This was certainly the first school contact in this area, and possibly the first in Michigan, I don't know for sure. I learned a bunch; so did the students and the teachers. If we don't get some new hams out of this deal, I'll eat my hat, literally. I also got a loose promise for a direct contact sometime in the

future. All in all, there just wasn't a downside. It was so much fun; we are already planning the next one.

Opportunities come along often. The Boy Scout Jamboree on the Air is another example of an opportunity to become involved in some fun, and educational activities. It will be at the Rivertown Crossings Mall on October 20. I am sure that it will be even more fun than last year. I hope to see you there.

Call me on the repeater
sometime,
73 Jim ki8jd
(Jim is MARA's Education
director)

IARU Administrative Council Calls for End to Morse Requirement

Saying that it was "setting aside any previous relevant decisions," the International Amateur Radio Union Administrative Council this week resolved that IARU policy supports "the removal of Morse code testing as an ITU requirement for an amateur license to operate on frequencies below 30 MHz." The Council further resolved to urge member societies--as an interim measure--to seek Morse code testing speeds "not exceeding five words per minute."

The resolution was adopted during the IARU Administrative Council meeting October 6-8 in Guatemala City, Guatemala, which followed the 14th General

Assembly of IARU Region 2. The Council's Morse resolution took into consideration the approval--without opposition--of ITU-R Recommendation M.1544. That document sets out the minimum qualifications of radio amateurs. The Council also said it recognizes that Morse code "continues to be an effective and efficient mode of communication used by many thousands of radio amateurs" but that Morse code proficiency as requirement for an HF amateur license "is no longer relevant to the healthy future of Amateur Radio."

(The above is taken from ARRL Bulletin 44 ARLB044, dated October 12, 2001. Printed with permission)

How to use the ULS

By Jim ki8jd

You have probably heard that the FCC has instituted the Universal Licensing System, or ULS. When you want to renew your license or notify them of an address change, you will have to use this system, as far as I know. You access this system through the Internet.

In addition to my duties with MARA, I am also Trustee for the Michigan DX Association (MDXA). The MDXA decided to apply for a vanity call, so I started to check out the ULS. It seemed mysterious.

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Trustee's Corner

By Richie Ranta K8JX

This is my first report as your Trustee. It's been almost a whole year since I was appointed to this position and I can state that it certainly has been a learning process. Golly, this is almost like studying for the Extra class license! I had to learn controller principals, go back to the basics with the care and feeding of a repeater (the first repeater I ever saw had pencil thin tubes in it, and it ran a whopping 10 watts.). But I've always said the only real way to test ones knowledge is to put it in the real world. It has also been a painful experience when you find out that there exists a problem, and it can't be corrected by oneself, the manufacturer had to do it. Luckily, there has only been one of those.

The easy part has been the programming of the controller. The controller follows basic computer programming and I haven't had to call for support for that end of it. Now, as to the current status of the system, I am still testing and breaking in the system in preparing it for the move to our final repeater site. Next up is configuring the UHF receiver we got 2 years ago. After that, we'll be about ready for the move.

These things take time, please be patient. My goal is to be able to install the system without relying on human intervention every time the power hic cups or a storm takes the power away. To do this, and

follow the FCC's part 97 rules, we have to install safe guards. When it is done, we'll have one of the best and reliable systems in the area.

As I type this, I am working on programming the DTMF key play back, so you can hear if your tones are getting through and also a voice replay so you can hear how you sound. Well, I guess that's about it. If you have questions you want answered, give me a call, late at night is best.

I also really want to thank all of you folks for putting so much trust in my ability to be your trustee. I can't thank Dan Markowski N8NIJ and Gale Scholten N8GS enough, for spending a bitterly cold day last January to install the repeater and for all you have done since. "Thank you".

(Continued from page 4 How to use the ULS)

According to what I read on the MARA website, and on the ARRL website, you need to use the Netscape browser to access the ULS. So I downloaded the Netscape browser, and that did not go smoothly.

Club licenses fall under a different set of rules than an individual Amateur call sign. In addition, a club does not have a Social Security number, otherwise known as a Taxpayer Identification Number, or TIN. So I called the FCC, and was issued a number to be used in place of the standard TIN.

At that point, I thought that I had all my ducks in a

row, and was ready to go. I fired up my new browser, went to the ULS site, and started filling out the form. When I got to my phone number, an error window popped up saying that my phone number was invalid. Now, I know that is not true, because it rings all the time. So I tried my other phone number, my work number, leaving it blank, etc, etc. No matter what phone number I put in there, they claimed it was invalid. I was beginning to get annoyed.

To add insult to injury, I had to click an "OK" button to get the error window to go away. There was nothing OK about it. I think they should furnish us with a "Not OK" button.

Finally, after trying everything I could think of, I tried using good old Internet Explorer 5.5. It worked like a charm.

I guess the moral of the story is that you can't believe everything you read.

73, and good luck,
Jim

SK W8DMW

It is with great sadness, that we report the sudden passing of Donna Wild, beloved wife of Bob Wild WC8O, in September. Donna was always a cheerful person to chat with and get to know. She was the first woman to study the Morse code on our repeater, every single time it was on. It was a joy to hear her report her progress, and yes, she finally passed to her great joy. We'll miss you Donna.

Kent County Repeater Listing

The following list of frequency coordinated repeaters comes from the Michigan Area Repeater Councils' database, which is managed by Dave Johnson WD8DJB, printed by permission. This list was last updated on September 9,2000. There are many repeaters that can be accessed from within the Grand Rapids area that are not listed here. This reflects what you should be able to reach with a handie-talkie. All of these repeaters are open repeaters.

FREQ.OUTPUT	CALL-SIGN	P.L.	SPONSOR
52.600 Mhz	K8KWD	114.8	K8KWD
52.720 Mhz	NW8J	136.5	NW8J
52.760 Mhz	W8DC		GRARA
145.110Mhz	K8SG		Kent Races
145.270Mhz	W8LRC	94.8	LARC
145.410Mhz	W8USA	94.8	MARA
145.490Mhz	W8CSO	94.8	NORC
146.760Mhz	W8DC		GRARA
146.880Mhz	NW8J	141.3	NW8J
147.060Mhz	K8DAA	94.8	HARC
147.160Mhz	W8HVG		IRA
147.260Mhz	W8DC	94.8	GRARA
234.140Mhz	NW8J	167.9	NW8J
224.440Mhz	WB8VOJ		IRA
224.640Mhz	W8DC		GRARA
224.760Mhz	WD8KXA		WD8KXA
224.880Mhz	K8SG		K8SG
421.250Mhz	K8DMR		K8DMR
442.000Mhz	K8EFK	141.3	K8EFK
442.075Mhz	K8KWD	114.8	K8KWD
443.075Mhz	NW8J	94.8	NW8J
443.775Mhz	W8GVK	94.8	W8GVK
443.800Mhz	KA8YSM		IRA
443.825Mhz	K8DAA	94.8	HARC
444.100Mhz	N8NET		N8NET
444.400Mhz	K8EX		GRARA
444.625Mhz	KD8CP	94.8	KD8CP
444.775Mhz	AB8MS	94.8	AB8MS
444.900Mhz	K8IHV	94.8	K8IHV