

# The Open Feed Line

A Publication of the Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance (MARA)

Volume 12, Issue 4 Friendship, Community service & Advancement of the Hobby

Oct--Dec, 2003

## New Year Hamfest

The Amateur Radio Group of Youth in Lowell (ARGYL) will be holding a swap on Saturday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004, at the Lowell High School. The swap will run from 9:00 AM until 1:00 PM. Admission is \$5.00, and benefits the youth group. Elementary, Middle School, and High School students are admitted free. All admission tickets will be sold at the door, no advance sales.

*Continued, page 3, column 1.*

## The 2004 West Michigan Ham of the Year Award

Nominations are being accepted for the 2004 West Michigan Ham-Of-The-Year award. (WMHOTY) This will mark the 5<sup>th</sup> year of our local HOTY. This award has been administered by MARA, and supported by GRARA and LARC, however, please do not think that this is a club event. Any ham may participate, or be nominated, regardless of club affiliation, or lack thereof.

This award is an effort to say "Thank-you" to some of those who have selflessly served the amateur radio community, and the community at large.

The award is to be presented at the Welcome New Hams Dinner, which will be held February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Please see the flyer for the Welcome New Hams Dinner, included in this issue.

So far, the operation and execution of this award has gone smoothly. However, there has been talk of making some changes. Perhaps these changes will come during 2004. For now, things remain the same.

*Continued, page 3, column 1.*

## A Letter from Dan N8NIJ

As I prepare to leave the board of MARA, I have many thoughts of accomplishments that have been made within our club. I have been actively involved in MARA since the early nineties and have seen many changes from the early years. I can remember when I first joined the club the members used to vote as to whether or not you were accepted into membership. Through the years there have been many changes and this was due to the interest and support of the membership. This club has survived through some pretty tough times, which is an indication that its members are strong and dedicated. I can assure that I have found the last couple of years to be very interesting to say the least. We were successful in establishing our coffee stop on the major holidays during the summer and have staffed this event with a majority of MARA members to this day. We have been successful in obtaining our very own repeater even though there were those who made an attempt to jeopardize our efforts. We were successful in the long term even though it was necessary to obtain a different frequency pair. Making decisions during these times was extremely difficult, however, with the support of our membership we were able to make these decisions based on what was good for the majority of our members. In closing I would like to thank you for having had the chance to serve the membership and I wish the new board the very best.

Dan Markowski  
President MARA

*(Editor's note; I served as Secretary for the last 4 years, and I wouldn't have wanted to be in Dan's shoes. I think Dan did a great job, and I respect him greatly.)*

## The Open Feed Line

### **Publisher**

Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance  
Post Office Box 670  
Comstock Park MI 49321-0670  
Visit our website- <http://www.w8usa.org>  
E-mail us at- [w8usa@arrl.net](mailto: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.

### **Editor**

James M Cordes KI8JD  
1235 Morgan NW  
Grand Rapids MI 49504  
616-459-1195 or 459-5415  
E-mail- [jcordes@iserv.net](mailto:jcordes@iserv.net)

### **Membership information**

The Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance, an American Radio Relay League affiliated club, was created to provide opportunities for friendship, community service, increasing technical knowledge and upgrading our skills in the hobby of amateur radio. Annual dues to MARA are \$20. Family memberships are an additional \$5. Persons aged 70 and over - \$5.00. Membership is free to students under 21. 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, 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 Larry Dells KC8KVR c/o MARA  
P.O.Box 670  
Comstock Park MI 49321-0670  
E-mail- [w8usa@arrl.net](mailto:w8usa@arrl.net)

## MARA club officers

### **President**

**Dan Markowski N8NIJ**  
343 Brandywyne NW  
Comstock Park MI 49321  
616-784-5973  
[n8nij@arrl.net](mailto:n8nij@arrl.net)

### **Vice President**

**Wayne Dowling KB8VOZ**  
2442 West Collier Ave.  
Kentwood MI 49546  
616-957-4641  
[wdowl26686@msn.com](mailto:wdowl26686@msn.com)

### **Secretary**

**James M Cordes KI8JD**  
1235 Morgan NW  
Grand Rapids MI 49504  
616-459-1195 or 459-5415  
[jcordes@iserv.net](mailto:jcordes@iserv.net)

### **Treasurer**

**Gale Scholten N8GS**  
8530 Peach Ridge NW  
Sparta MI 49345  
616-887-1820  
[n8gs@voyager.net](mailto:n8gs@voyager.net)

## Appointed

### **Awards Manager**

**Larry Dells KC8KVR**  
4317 Willow Dr. NE  
Grand Rapids MI 49525  
616-363-8235  
[Lldgrd@Netscape.net](mailto:Lldgrd@Netscape.net)

### **Club Trustee**

**Richard Douglas KC8NKA**  
3903 Oriole Ave. SE  
Wyoming MI 49509  
616-531-6218  
[kc8nka@arrl.net](mailto:kc8nka@arrl.net)

### **Membership Director** **Wayne Dowling KB8VOZ**

2442 West Collier Ave.  
Kentwood MI 49546  
616-957-4641  
[Wdowl26686@msn.com](mailto:Wdowl26686@msn.com)

### **Education Director**

**James Cordes KI8JD**  
1235 Morgan NW  
Grand Rapids MI 49504  
616-459-1195 or 459-5415  
[jcordes@iserv.net](mailto:jcordes@iserv.net)

### **Bereavement Director** **Jerry Wittkoski W8MSK**

1025 Kendalwood St. NE  
Grand Rapids MI 49505  
616-363-6146  
[jeromeW551@aol.com](mailto:jeromeW551@aol.com)

### **Field Day** **Chairperson**

\*Open\*

### **Operation Care** **Chairperson**

\*Open\*

### **Super Swap** **Chairperson - MARA**

\*Open\*

## Club activities

MARA holds their weekly 2-meter Net, every Thursday, at 8 PM on the MARA W8USA repeater, 145.230 MHz -600Khz PL. 94.8. MARA holds their monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7:30PM, at the Steepletown Building, located on the SW corner of 5th street and Davis NW, in Grand Rapids. This site is handicap accessible, with additional parking on the West side of the building. All are welcome to attend our meetings.

\*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.

## New Year Hamfest

*Continued from page 1.*

Set-up is Friday 6 to 9 PM, and/or Saturday 6 to 9 AM. Round tables (5-ft) are \$5, and rectangular tables (8-ft) are \$8. For table reservations, call Al Eckman WW8WW at 616-897-7659, or e-mail at [aleckman@pathwaynet.com](mailto:aleckman@pathwaynet.com).

There will be VE exams at 10:00 AM, walk-ins are welcome. Bring your identification, paperwork, etc. I believe the exams are up to \$12.00 now, and they usually like you to bring check or exact change.

Refreshments include Starbuck's coffee, breakfast rolls, hotdogs, popcorn, candy, and soft drinks.

Talk-in is on 146.620 (minus offset), with a PL tone of 94.8. Since I was there last year, I may listen to 146.520 on my way there and back. Basically, you go out Fulton St. to Lowell, drive slow, and look for the sign with the arrow pointing towards the high school. If you are coming from Grand Rapids, you will make a left at the Ford dealer (Alden Nash Ave.), go north a mile or two, and make a left at the school. There is also an entrance off from Vergennes Rd. The school is west of Alden Nash, and south of Vergennes.

As I stated, I was there last year, and it was a pretty nice little swap. There were many nice-looking rigs for sale. I believe it is an ARRL approved swap. It warmed my heart to see so many amateurs supporting the youth group. 73 Jim ki8jd

## The 2004 West Michigan Ham of the Year Award

*Continued from page 1, column 1.*

Basically, this is how it goes. All of the hams in Kent County, and the surrounding counties, are invited to submit a written "nomination". The nominees should also be from this 8-county area. Each individual may only submit one nomination. This nomination also counts as a vote. MARA keeps a record of these nominations, and reviews them at the February MARA meeting. A simple count has revealed the wishes of the community. The outcome of this process is then approved by the MARA membership.

There are a few good things to say about the process. Firstly, any ham may participate, even if they do not belong to any club/group. Secondly, inter-club politics doesn't come into play. If

anything, these shared events help to unify the area clubs, which is a good thing, in my opinion. Thirdly, the process has been fair, and above reproach. Anyone who wishes to witness this process may attend the February MARA meeting, which will probably have to be held a week early, due to the fact that the dinner is earlier in the month this year.

If you would like to honor a worthy person for this award, you may do it in writing by e-mail, postal mail, or in person. Sorry, verbal nominations will not be accepted. Please include the name and call of your nominee, your name and call, and a brief explanation of why you think your nominee deserves this honor.

Nominations will be accepted throughout the month of January, and right up until the February MARA meeting, which may have to be held on the 4<sup>th</sup>, instead of the 11<sup>th</sup>, in order to facilitate this award.

Previous winners of this award are; Carl and Evelyn Thompson (WA8AAT & KB8ILI), Raymond Abraczinskas (Abe W8HVG), Jim Jaworowicz (AA8JR), and Jack Amelar (NY8D). These people are not eligible to receive the award twice.

You can mail your nomination to; MARA, PO Box 670, Comstock Park, Mi. 49321-0670. You can e-mail to; [w8usa@arrl.net](mailto:w8usa@arrl.net), or you can hand-deliver it to a MARA meeting.

Thank-you and 73,  
Jim ki8jd

## K8 Operating Oddities K

*By Mike K8OOK*

Several years ago in a contest, I worked K0GAS, the very next call I worked was N6PU. Here are some oddities I worked in a recent 160 meter Contest. In succession, I worked K0LIR & K0IR, W2GDJ & W2GD, W0GG & N4GG. Also worked various other calls that made me think maybe I copied the call wrong the first, until I check their section or state. K3SV, K4SV, K7SV----W4MY, W4MYA----NO2R, KO2R----NY3A, NY4A----AB2DE. AB2E----K3WW, K4WW----K4EA, N8EA, K0EA.

Merry Christmas to ALL  
Mike K8OOK

## **Of Logos, Membership Cards, Planes, Trains, and Automobiles.....**

*By Jim ki8jd*

After a long drawn out process, the club finalized the designs for a new club logo, and a new membership card. The new logo is almost identical to the original logo from the early 1990's. The new membership card is of a bi-fold design, and will be given out to the 2004 MARA members.

It seems like all of the members present at the last several meetings participated in the designs. This is a mixed blessing. With all the different ideas and opinions, things got a bit complicated. However, it is good that everyone had a chance to input their ideas, and I think we have a result that we can be proud of.

I believe all the members will be pleased with their membership card, which will be suitable for carrying in your wallet, displaying on your shirt or blouse, or hanging from your neck on a string.

On to the next goal.....

## **Another Antenna Adventure**

*By Jim ki8jd*

It was getting dark Thanksgiving evening, when I saw the neighbor lady walking by. "Hello," I called out. She asked, "What are you doing at the top of that tree?" .....

It all started years ago. I always wanted a better antenna for 160 meters. My trusty random wire works fairly well, but other continents are out of the question. In fact, contacting all of the 48 contiguous states was a challenge I never met. I checked out the E-H Antenna, and gave some serious thought to trying to build one. Run an internet search on the E-H Antenna, it's very interesting. After a couple of years, they are still debating if it really works, or not.

Here's the problem; a half-wave dipole for 160 meters is 260 feet long, and I only have room for about 72 feet of wire (or so I thought). There are many solutions to this problem, and all of them involve a decrease in performance, some more than others.

While considering this problem, I learned that the center one-third of a half-wave dipole emits as much radiation as the outer two-thirds. This tells me (but I could be wrong) that if you use an 80 meter dipole on 160 meters, fed with ladder-line and a

tuner, you automatically lose about three-fourths of your performance, because the center one-half of your antenna is inside your tuner and feed-line. If you used coax, instead of ladder-line, on this same dipole, the loss becomes overwhelming, due to high SWR on the feed-line. You'd be lucky to radiate 10% of your power, but your coax would be nice and warm.

Earlier this year, I decided to build an antenna. I settled on a dipole, shortened with induction coils. These coils should help replace the wire that I don't have. I put the coils out towards the ends of the dipole, to minimize the amount of current in the coils. Remember that the center one-third radiates the most? This is because the current is highest at the center of a half-wave dipole, with the voltage highest towards the ends. The current causes the desired radiation, not the voltage.

By putting the coils out near the ends, as opposed to near the center, the performance goes up, but the coils need to be much larger. If the coils are at the very end of the antenna, the size becomes almost infinite, and you get other problems, such as corona discharge. I planned to use 3-foot wire "stingers" outside the coils to help alleviate these problems. Another problem that arises with the coils out towards the ends, is that the antenna becomes more narrow-banded. I planned to use ladder-line and a tuner, so I didn't think narrow bandwidth was an issue for me.

I've got a copy of a computer program written to calculate the size of the coils. Without making precise measurements, I guessed that I had about 75 feet of room between the maple tree and the black walnut tree. I knew that this was not a precise measurement, so I cut my wires long. After all, I wanted to use all the space that was available. Because it would be easier to remove turns than to add them, I put extra turns on the coil.

I built the coils on 4-inch PVC pipe, which is four and a half inches outside diameter. After much thought, I chose to use 107 turns of 18 gauge enameled wire, which gives you a coil length of 4 inches. Whether or not this was a good choice remains a mystery to me. Like so many things, the wire size is a trade-off. To help prevent the coil wire from breaking where it solders to the antenna wires, I ran the antenna wires through the PVC in a unique fashion. You may be able to see this in the following photo.



So I had the wires cut, the coils built, and the wires permanently attached to the coils. I left the connections at the center insulator and the end insulators unsoldered, so that I could trim my wire length without having to do it at the coils.

So this brings us back to Thanksgiving evening, when I finally got the contraption into the air. I checked it for the half-wave resonance that I hoped would be near 1.8 MHz. The MFJ 259B analyzer only goes down to 1.72 MHz, and I was reading an SWR of over 25:1 anywhere near the 160 band. I wasn't too worried, because I "knew" that the antenna was too long electrically. I looked for the 1 1/2 wave resonance point, and found a perfect match at 5.265 MHz.

I went to work Friday, and didn't get back to the antenna until Saturday afternoon. The antenna was longer than the distance between the trees, so the center insulator was hanging down about 7 feet from the ground. I trimmed and checked, and

trimmed and checked some more. After the antenna was short enough to be pulled up tight, I started removing turns from the coil. I noticed that removing turns from the coil, or shortening the "stingers", had only a small effect on the "1 1/2 wave" resonance point. I concluded that what I was seeing was not a "1 1/2 wave" resonance point at all, but was caused by the length of the wire between the coils. I believe that not much of the 5 MHz signal was passing through the coils. I had suspected that this might happen, and was excited to see that my guess appeared to be correct.

Now if I could only get a perfect match on 1.8 MHz, I could build a coax-fed 160/60 meter dipole. A dual-band dipole such as this might be a first. I had visions of a QST article in my head.

They say that "pride comes before the fall." Well, I cut and checked, and cut and checked, but resonance on 160 was not to be found.

A few weeks go by....

Well, I tried it in the ARRL 160 meter contest, and it received very well. Unfortunately, it was a peanut-whistle on transmit. At the printing of this issue, I still haven't had time to try it on 80 meters, but I am hoping it will do well there, at least.

At this point, I'm not too sure of anything, but I believe that the coils are too small, probably due to too much stray capacitance canceling out my hard-earned inductance. If I wasn't working on this newsletter, I'd be out in the garage winding new coils, about 4 times longer and about half the diameter.

I don't give up easily, and I am learning quite a bit, so I think I'll keep working on it.

At this point, I would like to state that I am far from being an antenna expert. I would also like to thank those who have helped me rise to the level of understanding that I now enjoy. You know who you are.

Also, I would like to state that 42.7% of all statistics are made up on the spot. This article is no exception to that rule, however, my intentions were noble.

More later,  
Jim ki8jd

## **MARA Election**

MARA has a new set of officers for the year 2004. Nominations were taken at the November and December meeting, but when it was all said and done, the only office with more than one nominee was the office of Treasurer. Pam KC8VUB and Jerry W8MSK were the candidates. We held an election, but the outcome was 8 to 8, a tie. We held a re-vote, 2 voters abstained, and we had another tie, 7 to 7. So finally, it was agreed to flip a coin. Jerry won the coin toss.

Dan went around and asked each person present if they approved of the way the election was conducted, and each member present approved.

So next year's officers are as follows; President-Wayne Dowling KB8VOZ, Vice-president-Larry Dells KC8KVR, Treasurer-Jerry Wittkoski W8MSK, and Secretary-Rich Douglas KC8NKA. Rich also holds the office of Trustee, which is an appointed position.

## **Morse Code Class**

By Rich Ranta K8JX

The On-The-Air Morse Code Classes are over for this year. We started this way back during the last week of August and just ended it on December 8<sup>th</sup>. We ran it on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, at 8PM and repeated at 11PM. Our goal was to provide an On-The-Air Code Class, for folks who were having a hard time locating a class that just taught Morse Code. MARA has done this before, way back in 1994. We didn't have our own repeater then, so used GRARA's 146.760MHz repeater. It was well attended and we had several listeners who actually passed their 5 WPM test. This time, we ran two, 8 week sessions, with the hopes that by providing many opportunities, we would help folks upgrade their license class. I actually had to purchase the Nu Morse Professional Morse Code program just so I could generate the code. These new computers are simply too efficient for the older code programs to work accurately. It was fun and while I'm not on HF myself right now, dishing out the practice every other night has helped get my own speed back up. I want to thank several folks who contributed to the success of this year's session.

Jim Cordes, KI8JD, MARA's Education Director, who helped plan the character set we would use. For John Pinkerton, KC8EKJ for the donation of the VHF radio. Hey, I didn't burn this one up this time! Now that's an improvement. (I did burn up one power supply, though). Larry Dells, KC8KVR and Richard Douglas KC8NKA, Russ KC8LOI and Steve K8VOL for their on the spot suggestions and also just letting me know somebody was there. Also, during the week of Thanksgiving, my old code instructor, Alan Scott, W8KIZ checked in. Al was my code Elmer "Way" back in March 1970, when we both got together to learn the code. Me, the first time, Al, so he could get his old call sign. It is a small world.

A special thank you to all the members of the MARA club, for being so enthusiastic about putting this session on. "Thank you". I hope to hear all of you on HF or VHF, the CW section of course.

## **Web Site Update**

By Rich Ranta K8JX

Its that time again. When we update the clubs web site. This time, I am hoping to actually finish it before we update it 2 years from now. I've listened to your suggestions, and I am going to include all of them in the new site. The pages you use the most will stay and be updated as needed. If any of you find any broken links or dead links, please let me know. It is sad though, to see several of our long time manufactures go out of business. Once again, I am aiming to keep the site clean, no pop-ups or large animations to keep you waiting for the page to load. If you think of anything while at the site please let me know. I'm here to please.

## **Finally..2004**

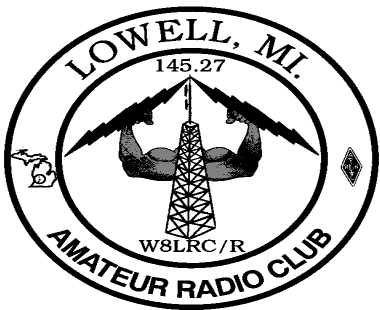
As our new board members take their offices, lets help them out by volunteering our time in fulfilling one of the many chair positions available. This club has been providing Field Day, Operation Care Coffee Stop, our 2 Meter Net and other opportunities to the West Michigan Ham community, and lets keep it going. Become active in YOUR club.

# GRAND RAPIDS AREA AMATEUR RADIO BANQUET



Announcing the NINETH ANNUAL  
**WELCOME NEW HAMS,**  
NEW TO THE AREA HAMS, AND THE REST OF US,  
GET OUTTA THE CABIN DINNER  
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2004, 6PM

JOINTLY SPONSORED BY:



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## At OLD COUNTRY BUFFET,

785 Center Dr NW, Grand Rapids-Walker / Alpine Twp.

From the I-96 expressway, exit Alpine Ave Hwy M-37 north (exit 30). Go first traffic light (Center Dr), turn right / east. When arriving, go through the normal line, **then go directly to the L shape area in the back unless** you are a new ham or new area move-in ham since last year's dinner. If you are new, meet with club representative at the entrance, sponsoring organizations want this to be our treat!

BRING YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER, FRIENDS, and the KIDS can come too! Dress casual.

LET THE NEW ONES KNOW WE WELCOME THEM, and enjoy each other's company without the need to split so not to miss that hamfest deal! And you don't want to miss out on the door prizes, nothing spectacular like a new rig, but a prize is a prize.

We'll have a good time!

Buffet style. Cost is about \$10. No reservations, just show up.

Questions, contact Doug KC8EGM [kc8egm@juno.com](mailto:kc8egm@juno.com) (616)363-4692

The annual WEST MICHIGAN HAM OF THE YEAR AWARD, recognizing someone in the area for exceptional service to the ham community and public service, is presented at this dinner. For more information and/or to make a nomination, visit <http://www.w8usa.org/HOYINTRO.htm>

Don't be snooty, show up! ☺

# NEW YEAR HAMFEST



Talk-in  
146.620 (-) K8LHS  
PL - 94.8

Saturday – January 3, 2004  
9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

No Advance Ticket Sales  
Admission At The Door Only:  
Adults - \$5.00  
Elementary, Middle School  
& High School - Free

Free Parking

Round 5' Tables - \$5.00  
Rectangular 8' Tables - \$8.00

For info or tables contact Al  
Eckman – WW8WW – at 1-616-897-4125  
or 1-616-897-7659, or e-mail  
[AEckman@lowell.k12.mi.us](mailto:AEckman@lowell.k12.mi.us)  
or [aleckman@pathwaynet.com](mailto:aleckman@pathwaynet.com)

V.E. exams at 10:00 a.m.  
Reservations not necessary,  
walk-ins welcome.

## Refreshments Sold On Site

Starbucks Coffee	Candy
Hotdogs	Breakfast Rolls
Popcorn	Soft Drinks

Set-up: Fri, Jan 2<sup>nd</sup> – 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.  
and/or: Sat, Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6 a.m. to 9 a.m.

## “WHERE”

Lowell High School – 11700 Vergennes – Lowell, MI.  
(See Map On Back)

Sponsored by the Amateur Radio Group of Youth in Lowell (A.R.G.Y.L.)

