

# The Open Feed Line

A Publication of the Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance (MARA)

Volume 15, Issue 4 - Friendship, Community Service & Advancement of the Hobby - Oct.-Dec. 2006

## Why Can't Hams Talk?

A treatise of topics for further discussion.

By Ray Abraczinskas, W8HVG

Catchy title huh? Got your attention? I hope so, because maybe this article will cause you to think about the situations, and may even create some conversation on the ham bands. The main reason for this article is to think about what we say and do with our great Amateur Radio privilege.

First, we need to add some appropriately descriptive words to the title, like *nicely*, *politely*, *often*, *about interesting things*, *to other hams*, and *like they do in real life*. For example, why can't hams talk nicely? Why can't hams talk about interesting things? And why can't hams talk to other hams? Why can't they talk like they do in real life, person to person? Maybe you can add your own example scenarios! Of course hams do talk to other hams on the radio, by definition it's the hobby! And there are hams that do talk nicely, politely, and about interesting things, but there are those that often don't. One way to greatly improve ham radio is to do these simple things, that is, talk nicely, politely, about interesting things, and welcome all other hams. Talk like you would in person and try to meet all the hams that you can and help them to improve also. Think about it. Why can't hams talk?

There are hams that seem to talk a lot and never say anything, and there are hams that say the same thing over and over. There are hams that support clubs and organizations and there are hams that never contribute or do anything. There are hams that complain about everything and there are hams that openly offer to help.

*Continued on page 4*

## Big Changes For Amateur Radio

By Jim ki8jd

Since October, the FCC has released 2 "Report and Orders" which will have a huge impact on Amateur Radio.

As a result of these changes, all Technician-class licensees will have some privileges on HF, without any further testing. Even if a Tech does not know the code, they will still be able to use a computer to send and receive CW on 3.525 to 3.6, 7.025 to 7.125, and 21.025 to 21.2 MHz. In addition, they will get CW, RTTY, and data (including PSK 31, etc.) on 28.0 to 28.3 MHz., and CW / SSB on 28.3 to 28.5 MHz. Please note; they must stay below 200 watts on all of these bands.

But wait, there's more; there will no longer be any Morse code testing, so anyone can upgrade his or her license by only taking a written test. The General-class test is very easy, so most Technicians will be better off just upgrading, and getting full General-class privileges.

The above changes will go into effect around the middle of February, and the following changes took effect December 15.

There was an article in the last newsletter about some of this. The changes were many, and involved many aspects of Amateur Radio. The CW-only portions were reduced on 80 and 40 meters, and the voice portions were increased. The only losers were the Generals, who lost 100 KHz on the 75/80-meter band. If you are a General, make sure you don't run CW between 3.6 and 3.8 MHz, or between 7.125 and 7.175 MHz, because you will be outside of your privileges.

I can't wait for the new rulebook to come out, and I recommend that everyone try to familiarize yourselves with the new rules, lest you be in violation. 73

## **The Open Feed Line**

The Open Feed Line is published quarterly. It is the official journal of the Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance, or MARA for short.

MARA, 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.

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.

Everybody is encouraged to submit original articles on topics relevant to the hobby of Amateur Radio to the editor. The deadline for submission is the end of January, April, July, and October, and the newsletter will be published within the following month.

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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<sup>st</sup>, and club dues are due on January 1<sup>st</sup>. MARA membership is open to all interested persons.

Please send change of address information and membership applications to the club secretary.

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Send inquiries regarding the Great Lakes Award to the Awards Manager  
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\* Some of these positions become open occasionally. If you'd like to volunteer, contact one of the board members and let them know what your interested in. \*

## **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.

## Mara's Members Dinner!

*By Richie K8JX*

We decided it would be nice to celebrate our friendship by holding a winter dinner. Last year's event was the most well attended event Mara has had in distant memory. Here are the details; it will be at Brann's Restaurant, 28th near Cascade, February 10, 2007 at 5:00PM. Must RSVP Marian at her home phone before the event.

The banquet's suggested price is \$13.00 or \$9.00. Non-Mara members (those who weren't members during 2006) can come, but will be charged the full price.

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## West Michigan Ham of the Year

*By Richie k8jx*

It's that time of year; when we ask the western Michigan Ham community to submit nominations for the "West Michigan Ham of the Year Award". If you know of an individual who has contributed to the Ham Radio community, either by performing an outstanding deed or by a life time of achievements, please write up a short note and submit it to either Jim KI8JD or Rich K8JX at their home address or the club's address, P.O. Box 670 Comstock Park MI 49321-0670.

This year, we've decided to retain "ALL" of the nominations we've received since we started HOTY back in 1999. This way, once nominated, the person's submission will be kept and gone over each year. This is our way of trying to be fair to all of the great Hams we have in the Western Michigan area. And we sure are blessed! So whom do you want to nominate?

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## GRARA News

The Grand Rapids Amateur Radio Association decided to allow the members of other local clubs (MARA, LARC, etc.) to join GRARA for only \$10 per year. You must show proof that you have paid your dues.

## How I got into Ham Radio

*By Mike K800K*

Stories of how we got interested in ham radio are very numerous. Here is mine.

When I was young teen, my parents left for a night of dinner and dancing. I was left in charge as the babysitter. In those days, the most TV stations left the air at midnight. So I turned on the AM radio and listened around. Without an outside antenna, I heard a station in Oklahoma City. I thought I was hot stuff and continued to DX on the AM band for quite some time. Then someone told me about short wave. It may have been a friend's father. His father assembled a Knight Kit Ocean Hopper and connected it to their massive speaker system. The first station we heard was the British Broadcasting Corporation from London just thundering in over the speakers. That really hooked me.

I saved my money from my paper route and bought a short wave receiver and listened to mainly short wave broadcast stations at first. Then I discovered the ham bands and spent most of my time listening to the hams talk back and forth. Upon further investigation, I found out about the ARRL and their study material. I self-taught myself the code and theory to pass my Novice test. A year later, I had to study for my General because the Novice license was only good for one year and not renewable. That is my story, how about others sharing their story?

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## MARA News

*By Jim ki8jd*

At the October meeting, the MARA membership voted to grant free memberships to newly licensed hams, good until the end of the calendar year. As it is now New Year's Eve, and you won't receive this until the new year, it is perfect timing to get yourself or someone else a free one-year membership.

## Why Can't Hams Talk?

*Continued from page 1*

There are hams that explore cultures on the air and there are hams that just exchange signal reports and sign clear. There are hams that help other hams and there are hams that intentionally interfere with other hams' conversations. There are hams that actually say they don't like "no coders" and there are hams that will leave the conversation if another ham joins in. What's happening in our world of wonderful privilege? Why can't hams talk?

I've been an active ham for over 50 years now. You can look up my call on QRZ and read my story. "Active" is a quantitative word and I can truly say that I have operated on one of the bands from 160m to 70cm often during those 50 years and worked on many different kinds of equipment and many types of antennas. For the last three-decades, I've been the Trustee of a wide-area linked 2m repeater system ([www.w8hvg.org](http://www.w8hvg.org)) which involves working with several clubs and organizations throughout Michigan. Not that all that makes me an expert on these matters but I do have a lot of observations for my comments. Someone once said on the ham bands that an opinion is not necessarily based on factual data so these comments are beyond opinions.

One thing that continues to be good is that our ham radio capabilities continue to change. We have more frequencies and modes to operate than ever but how many hams take advantage of them? The equipment available to us is mind-boggling but there are still things that can be built. The license restructuring and VE program has been very good. It allows more people easy access to the hobby but how many clubs are taking advantage of growing their numbers with classes and license exams? If we all would bring one new ham into the hobby a year, our ranks would double! And who trains all the new hams? In the last decade, it seems there has been more

"splinter-growth" of ham clubs. There is an increased number of clubs occurring. But somehow in the last five years, the total number of hams in the U.S. has gone down just under 28,000. Attendance at hamfests seems to be decreasing probably due to the Internet. Many repeaters seem to be getting quieter than ever. Changes are occurring. Hams need to talk.

Emergency communications backup is one of the primary reasons for ham radio's existence so why do certain hams pooh-poo the training that occurs on the link repeater system during the West-Michigan Traffic Nets? I believe that more people listen than actually check into the net, which means that they still get some familiarity anyway (one always learns by listening). Listening is a skill that needs to be developed. It's sometimes more important than talking. There was this ham on one of the repeaters that would always break into an on-going informative discussion, just to say, I don't know who all is in here yet and what the conversation is about, but put me in the roundtable. And then he doesn't turn it over to someone. Duh!

Listening on 20m you can sometimes hear a ham in western Canada continually chastising a ham in Kalamazoo along with calling Riley Hollingsworth names. He goes on for hours in a tirade claiming he was on the frequency first. If it weren't for Mr. Hollingsworth's great efforts, ham radio would be a big mess today. Hams need to talk nicely.

Ham radio is more than the ego trip of having the strongest signal on the band, the biggest station, winning contests, working the most contacts in all the countries, states, counties and 10-10 members. In doing all that, hams usually aren't talking; they're just exchanging reports for a QSL card or certificate. Talking means sharing, helping, exploring, learning, teaching, and expanding our ranks.

*Continued on page 5*

## Why Can't Hams Talk?

*Continued from page 4*

On most all the bands (when they are open and active) you can find nets and roundtables galore. Some nets have catchy titles and have existed (met religiously) for years. Some nets provide a real service; some seem to just provide a home for hams that can't talk. Roundtables are great, if you are welcome and accepted when checking in, bad if you're not. In many of the nets and roundtables, hams seem to be communicating but are they really talking? Are they exchanging meaningful information or are they saying the same kind of stuff they said yesterday, last night, and last week? Like, the weather is ..., the rig here is ..., your signal is ..., my SWR is ..., I should work on my ..., the band conditions are ..., etc. Think about ALL the talent and expertise involved in all the ham radio operators. What an education we all would receive if hams could really talk!

Repeaters are wonderful assets as they provide an extension to a ham's capability and a valuable service in dire need. I think that quiet repeaters are useless, a waste of an asset. But then the same person(s) talking most of the day, everyday, saying the same things over and over, will eventually contribute to the repeater becoming quiet. All hams (in the repeater coverage area) need to talk. There has to be a sensible balance, especially on a wide-area repeater system.

Some really dumb things heard on repeaters lately include the hams that switched repeaters because they could not stand listening (and talking) to the blind lady that got her license recently. There is the 'ham nut' that sometimes mocks the ham that talks with a raspy voice because he has one vocal chord. The 'ham nut' also occasionally mocks the mentally challenged ham that is in a care facility, which by the way can talk about more subject matter than most hams. Those hams all worked very hard to get their license and then they

experience that kind of behavior. Maybe it's an indication of the world problem. Those hams that antagonize can't talk but they must satisfy their ego somehow! They have never really learned how to use their ON / OFF switch.

There are hams that demonstrate their technical ability by just kerchunking and kerchunking the repeater. Apparently they like to hear the courtesy tone, it must give them a feeling of power. And there are hams that set their radio and/or microphone on the car seat or in the ashtray while not using an inexpensive mic hangup clip. Yes, you guessed it! Everyone on the repeater has to listen as they drive around with a stuck mic, and during that situation, hams can't talk.

Enough of these examples; they could go on and on. What's the bottom line? What's the solution? Well, the answer lies in people. People can and must make the difference and things will always improve. The ARRL has continually strived to improve ham radio with recommendations, information and programs such as the recent "Hello" campaign celebrating 100 years of radio. Ham radio is a privilege and an asset to our lives. It involves talking (listening too). Did you ever think about the fact that ham radio could NOT exist without talking? So let's all try to talk *nicely, politely, often, about interesting things, to other hams and, like we do in real life.* Let's try to improve!

A simple algorithm I've found and used throughout my life is using the 'six-questions of life' approach to any situation you face. Ask Who, What, When, Where, How, and Why, while simply adding what specifics you want to know and then do it again and again. It'll make a more interesting conversation and you'll talk more.

Comments and suggestions about this treatise can be sent to the author at [w8hvg@w8hvg.org](mailto:w8hvg@w8hvg.org) and/or you can talk to me on the link repeater system.

*(Editor's note; Thank-you very much, Abe, for the fine article. Maybe you'll inspire others to share their thoughts; either on the air, or in print!)*

## 2006 Another Great Year

*By Richie K8JX*

Our year started out with chairing our new club officers. We then selected our "West Michigan Ham of the Year" award winner and presented it at the New Ham's Dinner. If you haven't been to one of these get-togethers, you owe it to yourself to do so. This is an exciting opportunity to meet new hams on the block as well as meet old friends. Joe Bell WD8USA was this year's recipient of the HOTY. The very next weekend, we held our first Mara Members dinner. It was the largest attended Mara event we've ever had! We had a wonderful meal and then got time to chat and just have a nice informal evening with our friends.

We almost missed holding our First Operation Care Coffee Stop of the season when the construction that was going on site wasn't finished. But we received the go-ahead one week before the Memorial Day weekend. It was a rush effort, but we got the event covered! We then held Field Day 2006 and though the turnout wasn't as big as our chairman wanted, Mike K8OOK was glad we held it as all who attended had a great time. They always do.

We then held our last two Operation Cares and then ended our busy time with the annual Mara end of summer picnic. Once again, Larry and Peg treated us to a wonderful evening; which ended with a fireworks display. We also brought back the ever-popular Fox Hunt. This season's winners were the Dream Team, Wayne KB8VOZ and Larry KC8KVR, and Tom N8DGD and Jack AB8ND.

2006 is about in the record books and it was a good time to be a Ham Radio Operator.

From all of us at the Open-Feed-Line, we wish you and your family a Very Happy New Year.

## Filling Empty Space

*By Jim ki8jd*

The ARGYL swap has come and gone, but with work and all of life's other madness, I didn't get this newsletter out quick enough to include their flyer. It's an excellent swap, and if you've never been there, you should try it. Its been held in December for the past few years. It seems different from the other swaps, and, in my opinion, offers some real deals (and/or steals).

I asked Jim Weaver, our Great Lakes ARRL Director (who, by nature of the job, sets on the ARRL Board of Directors), for permission to reprint his "Weaver's Words" in our newsletter. He wrote a piece about treating each other with respect, regardless of our code or no-code status. I thought it was pretty good, but haven't heard back from him yet.

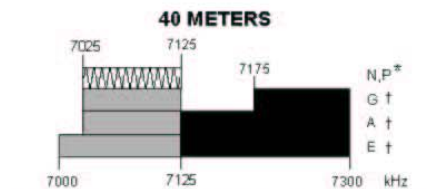
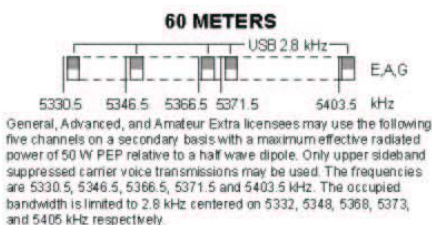
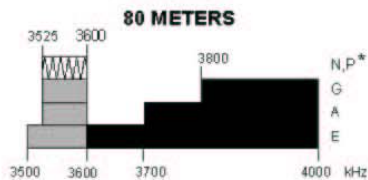
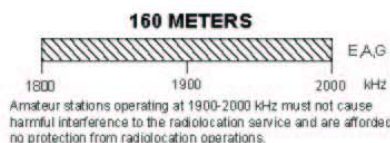
I am somewhat saddened by the total loss of the Morse Code requirement, but I am convincing myself that it will be for the best in the long run.

As long as I am typing to fill space, I am going to mention a long-standing question of mine. Why is it that some hams do not follow FCC regulations when participating in a net? Here is what they do; they give their call when checking in, but not when checking out. It's just one of those things I've always wondered about. If someone knows why they do this, please let me know.

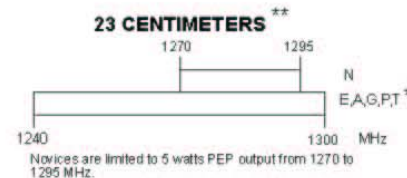
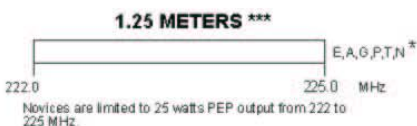
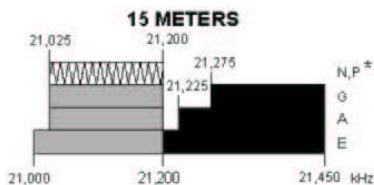
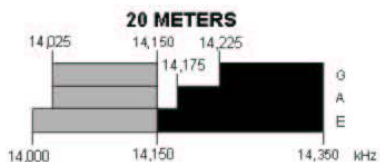
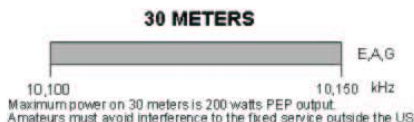
Just to clarify; before my time, the FCC did require identification at the beginning of a communication, but they dropped that requirement many years ago. They do, however, require that we give our call at the end of a communication, or every 10 minutes, whichever occurs first.

Well, I guess I don't have anything else right now, so we'll see you next year. 73

Effective Date December 15, 2006



† Phone and Image modes are permitted between 7075 and 7100 kHz for FCC licensed stations in ITU Regions 1 and 3 and by FCC licensed stations in ITU Region 2 West of 130 degrees West longitude or South of 20 degrees North latitude. See Sections 97.305(c) and 97.307(j)(11). Novice and Technician Plus licensees outside ITU Region 2 may use CW only between 7025 and 7075 kHz. See Section 97.301(e). These exemptions do not apply to stations in the continental US.



### US AMATEUR POWER LIMITS

At all times, transmitter power should be kept down to that necessary to carry out the desired communications.

Power is rated in watts PEP output. Unless otherwise stated, the maximum power output is 1500 W.

Power for all license classes is limited to 200 W in the 10,100-10,150 kHz band. Novices and Technicians are restricted to 200 W below 28.5 MHz.

In addition, Novices are restricted to 25 W in the 222-225 MHz band and 5 W in the 1270-1295 MHz subband.

### KEY

- = CW, RTTY and data
- = CW, RTTY, data, MCV, test, phone and image
- = CW, phone and image
- = CW and SSB phone
- = CW, RTTY, data, phone, and image
- = CW only
- = USB Phone only

- E = AMATEUR EXTRA
- A = ADVANCED
- G = GENERAL
- P = TECHNICIAN PLUS
- T = TECHNICIAN
- N = NOVICE

\*Technicians who have passed the 5 wpm Morse code exam are indicated as "P".

\*\*Geographical and power restrictions apply to all bands with frequencies above 420 MHz. See *The ARRL FCC Rule Book* for more information about your area.

\*\*\*219-220 MHz allocated to amateurs on a secondary basis for fixed digital message forwarding systems only and can be operated by all licensees except Novices.

All licensees except Novices are authorized all modes on the following frequencies:

- 2300-2310 MHz
- 2390-2450 MHz
- 3300-3900 MHz
- 5650-5925 MHz
- 10.0-10.5 GHz
- 24.0-24.25 GHz
- 47.0-47.2 GHz
- 76.0-81.0 GHz
- 122.25-123.0 GHz
- 134-141 GHz
- 241-250 GHz
- All above 275 GHz



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