

# The Open Feed Line

A Publication of the Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance (MARA)

Volume 19, Issue 1 - Friendship, Community Service & Advancement of the Hobby - Jan-Feb.-2010

## Spaghetti Dinner Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Effort



(Above, L to R. Marian, Nancy N8IPG, Wayne K8WMD, Dan N8NIJ and Bill N8VWI)

Our club had so much fun last year putting on the Spaghetti Dinner, we thought we'd give it another try. We're doing this fund raiser since our members are getting a tad too old to be lifting 75 lb buckets of cement! A fork with spaghetti on it is much easier to lift. ( and it tastes much better too!)

This time, due to illness and travel plans, we were short on members, but we were far more successful than last year. At the very end, we were left with only 3 deserts! Not bad! Next up. A Berger night! Some time in mid-winter. Yum. A big thanks to Carl WA8AAT & EVELYN KB8ILI, Mike K8OOK & Nancy N8IPG, Wayne K8WMD & Marian, Connie N8WKQ and Bill N8VWI, Dan N8NIJ, and our desert bakers, Peg Dells, Marian Dowling, Nancy N8IPG, Bill N8VWI & Connie N8WKQ. As Jack, AB8ND, said, "You Mara folks sure know how to cook!". And how. See you all there for Berger night!

## Make your Burger Night!

While we're old hands at tossing the old pasta around, we thought it might be a nice change of pace to try other menu items. What goes better on a cold winter's night than a Hamburger that you make yourself! We've booked the hall for Friday March 5, 2010. We're going to offer a make it yourself Burger with all of the fixings ( fixings depend on seasonal availability) We haven't finalized the menu offering yet, so stay tuned to find out what we're going to offer.

## West Michigan Ham of the Year

You didn't think it was that time again, did you. Well, it's January and we now ask you, the Ham's in the Amateur Community, to nominate those people you think deserve to be honored by receiving the West Michigan Ham of the year Award. If you are not sure what criteria is used in nominating folks, just visit our web site, [www.w8usa.org](http://www.w8usa.org) and click on Ham of the year. You will see who already has received the award, and can look at the suggested characteristics of why you should nominate somebody. Good luck and we are really blessed with oodles of folks who qualify for this award.

Once again, it will be presented at the New Hams Dinner, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

## **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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### **Membership Information**

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.

### **Great Lakes Award**

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.

## The Night W8USA Repeater got zapped.

It was during the May 13<sup>th</sup> club meeting, while Carl WA8AAT and Tom, W8RER were talking, that the W8USA repeater went silent. The next day, I noticed that the repeater's signal was noisy: I only live 2 miles from it, so I suspected something wasn't right. The next day, Larry KC8KVR and I headed up to the site. Just unlocking the door and crackling it open told us what had happened: We had been struck by lightning! A cursory examination showed that linear had a hole in the chassis that wasn't there before. Bill N8VWI packed the linear and sent it off to be repaired. The lightning hadn't just struck the linear. Hind sight is always better, but when one thinks about the cost, it is some times easier to wait things out. That's what we did.

As of October 28, 2009, the lightning strike took out our linear, the Yaesu repeater, the controller and scorched several coax connectors.

It has also been evident that something else has been affected. We've been experiencing a crackling noise since right after we installed the new repeater. We're working on it. During the week of November 9<sup>th</sup>, we're going to have T & W check out the duplexers. Cross your fingers on this one. They aint cheap!

The list of replaced components includes, a brand new repeater, digital capable, Icom UR 5000, a rebuilt linear, several coax connectors and cable.

What we lost. The Yaesu repeater, the controller, the linear, but it was rebuilt.

It could have been worse. Our repeater site has several other commercial repeaters in it, all UHF. None were hurt! There was evidence of scorching on a duplexer frame. Larry, with his sharp eye, installed a good ground to the unit. While we're still working on cleaning up the mess, we still haven't figured out where the lightening got in. I suspect it was from a phone line that is hung on the wall, but isn't being used. I'm just guessing on this one. We're also, thanks to Bill N8VWI, checking out another repeater controller. This one looks like it is a lot less expensive than the one that got zapped.

Stay tuned for further updates.

## Spaghetti Dinner. Part 2.

Wow, this club just loves to work together and eat together. On September 18<sup>th</sup>, Mara held its 2<sup>nd</sup> Spaghetti Dinner. We were short several members, due to traveling and illness, but we got a few new ones to fill out the kitchen. Carl and Evely Thompson joined in by selling tickets at the entrance. Dan N8NIJ had planned to bring in a chef from a local grocery store's kitchen, but that plan had to change quickly. Bill N8VWI stepped up and we now had the full cooking kitchen staff. Marian Dowling prepared the salad while Nancy N8IPG got the deserts ready. Connie N8WKQ and Rich K8JX set up the tables while Mike K8OOK put out the table ware. Everybody was pitching in to bring this off.

The spaghetti was done, the people were ready and we started to serve.

It all went very fast. Good times usually do that. We had a few deserts left and our Desert seller, Dan N8NIJ, stepped up and got folks to buy all but 3 deserts! That was a major accomplishment. We almost sold out.

The final report showed we made a lot more than we did last year, a testimonial to our experienced people buying the lowest priced food around and using everything up.

We seem to have found a way to replace our "Operation Care Coffee Stop" as a funding source.

Besides making enough money for most of next year, we also had more fun than anybody deserves to have.

We decided right there and then to hold another dinner, but this time, a "Berger Night". We're working on the menu and will get it out to you as fast as possible.

Once again, Jack AB8ND stated "You Mara folks sure know how to cook!" "Do you suppose that might have been a veiled challenge between clubs?"

## Club News

January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010. That's the date that the **Breakfast Nook** will serve their last breakfast. They are closing their doors due to the poor economy. Wayne K8WMD has asked that we take our time in selecting another spot to have Saturday Breakfast. We will discuss the matter further at the next club meet.

It's November, and that means its time to nominate members for another year's term. We nominate in November and vote at the December

meeting. Simple. If you know of a member who would like to invest their time and make a commitment to help the club grow, just nominate them. But please, be sure you have their permission before you nominate them.

With club elections, that means Nominations for "West Michigan Ham of the Year" is upon us. This is our club's way of sharing with the rest of West Michigan, those folks who have contributed to helping make Ham Radio a more interesting, more pleasant hobby to be in. To see the rules and also get an idea of what to look for, visit our web site [www.w8usa.org](http://www.w8usa.org) and click on Ham of the Year.

Our club, as well as many others in the area, is concerned over how to bring in new members. We've always thought new members, new energy and new ideas. Everybody thought the new no-code technician license would create a massive influx of members. For a short while that's exactly what happened. But it never provided the huge increase we thought would happen. We're scratching our heads, wondering what is going to happen to the club's in the area. We need new folks, but how to get them. One club is actually offering a free vhf handie if they pass their exam. (I do not know the particulars on this one. It would seem to be really close on the edge) Is that the solution? I think not. Why did you and I join and invest in a club? I can only answer for myself but these seem to be valid reasons.

1. To gain new insights and learn more about our hobby.

2. To meet other minded people who share our interest in Ham Radio.
3. Have opportunities to get involved and use Ham Radio in practical situations.
4. To be a valuable resource for our community.

Maybe all we really need to do is keep doing what works well and find ways to tell people what we're about. I can think of two huge methods that help with that. Web sites and printed or electronic newsletters. You've got to tell folks what you're doing. "Can you think of something that would help attract new members?" please let us or the club of your choice know.

### **Upgrade fever.**

Ok, perhaps that's a bit strong, but it seems like a lot of people have upgrading on their mind this fall. The General class seems to be the target license of interest. We've heard that a local club is offering a Morse code class and they seem to have a lot of interest. Mara voted several months ago to hold Morse Code classes in the Steepletown building. But the events of the spring and fall kind of delayed that. At least till now. Are you interested in upgrading? Would you like a theory or/ and Morse code class this coming winter, time permitting? A lot of things would have to be worked out, but this is something that might benefit a lot of us.

### **We've got YAHOO!**

Ok, we've started the Yahoo! Group for holding discussions and also for mailing out flash announcements and questions to other members. Larry KC8KVR brought this to the meeting and we voted to give it a try. It works. This is a simple way to let a lot of people know something all at one time. Pretty neat!

It would work better if all the hams in the area would sign up to both Grara and Mara's Yahoo! Groups. It's simple to join and if you have a question, what better resource than asking other people you know.

Don't look now, but the Mara after Christmas dinner is coming up in January 2010. Please keep this social event in mind as you make plans.

### **WD8KPQ Bruce D Reffeor S.K.**



Mr. Bruce David Reffeor, aged 68, of Coopersville formerly of Montague passed away Saturday, Oct 3, 2009. Bruce was born and raised in Sunbury, PA. and in 1961 he married his high school sweetheart, Charlotte. In 1966, Bruce and his

wife moved to Montague, Mi where they lived for 27yrs. Bruce taught math and science at Oakridge Jr High School. After 7 years he left teaching to work full time as co-owner and eventually owner of Reffeor and Brown Construction. He built many homes in the Montague, Shelby, and Whitehall area. Bruce sold his construction business in 1986 and took a job at Muskegon Community College as lead carpenter where he worked until his retirement in 2003. Bruce was an avid Ham Radio Operator and member of the Muskegon Amateur Radio Council, and Michigan Amateur Radio Alliance in Grand Rapids. He enjoyed jumping out of perfectly good airplanes (skydiving), gourmet cooking, traveling and practical jokes.

Above all, Bruce WD8KPQ was our friend. He kept the spirit of volunteering going by getting involved with Operation Care, helped our veterans by operating on Veterans day, participated cooking at Field Day and always had a warm, friendly smile for all.

His involvement in two Ham Radio clubs shows how invested he was in Ham Radio.

All who came to know Bruce became a better person: his sunny out look couldn't but help change one's attitude on life. He was a special person who once you met him, you never forgot him.

We will all miss you Bruce. Rest in peace.

**Harold J. Wisneski WD8EMD  
S.K.**

Harold Wisneski was a dedicated person, whether it is to the Marine's or his family, he would always put them first in his life. His involvement in ham radio was a life long investment. He even carried it over to his son Bill, who would later become N8OAR, now K8WM. Harold also helped our club purchase our first repeater by joining the Mara repeater group. Harold participated in various club functions, such as Operation Care Coffee stop and Field Day. We offer his family our sympathy during this sad time.

**Ralph Ortwig N8PWR S.K.**



Ralph William Ortwig, M.D., F.A.C.S. of Cascade, passed away on September 16, 2009, at the age of 75. He is survived by his wife, Elaine; his two sons, Kurt (Deyan) and Erik Ortwig; Ralph was a graduate of the University of Michigan Medical School. He was an early proponent of emergency rooms in the Grand Rapids area before specializing as an ear, nose and

throat doctor who became known to many of his young patients as "the Balloon Doctor". Ralph joined our club just before he retired and was having a ball getting into just about everything Ham radio related. He always had a smile for everybody and would discuss Ham Radio till the sun came up.

### **John Rittenhouse WB8VOJ S.K.**



RITTENHOUSE - John Robert Rittenhouse "WB8VOJ", aged 50, passed away on Friday, October 23, 2009 after a courageous battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife of 29 years, Silvia Rittenhouse; He will be missed by his furry buddies who kept him comfortable Rudy, Ahi, and Billy. John was vice president of the family business Electronic Automation Inc. for 26 years. He loved trees, being outdoors, traveling up north, and amateur radio. Most of us at Mara will remember John for his total dedication to the I.R.A. link system and his own 220 repeater. John always had a friendly smile and

advice for new hams. He was one of the first hams I ever talked with.  
John will be missed.  
Rest in piece, my friend.

### **Club News**

One can not help but feel saddened by the lost of so many of our club friends. These people were very special in our lives. I have talked with several people and ran the idea by them of creating a special web page, titled "In Memoriam" Jim K18JD suggested the title. Mike K8OOK further suggested perhaps we could add person comments to each individual's story. Please send your comments to [maranews@sbcglobal.net](mailto:maranews@sbcglobal.net) . Jim K18JD will receive them and pass them on to us.

### **Election Results**

I guess our members know something we don't. They elected the same folks we've had for the last few years.

President Rich K8JX  
Vice President Wayne K8WMD  
Secretary Mike K8OOK  
Treasurer Jerry W8MSK.

Let's all help these folks do their job of helping us folks.

## **MARA after Christmas Dinner.**

Once again, while the February wind howls and blows snow all over the place, we'll be seated inside Johnny Brann's restaurant on Cascade near 28<sup>th</sup> street. This is like the 6<sup>th</sup> time we've done this, and we just keep coming back for more. Please let

Marian Dowling know if you're coming. While the restaurant staff can accommodate most groups, it is nice to give them an idea of how many customers to expect. We're also going to have the White Elephant exchange again. This works like this. If you have an item you'd like to exchange for another white elephant, wrap it up and put on it if it's for a man or woman. This is only if you want to participate. You don't have to.

The dinner time is 5:00PM February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

Please let Marian Dowling know if you're coming.

## **New Hams Dinner**

"Did I mention we at Mara like eating?" one week later and we'll be involved in the "New Hams Dinner."

This is the event where we invite new hams to the area and New hams to have dinner on the 4 local clubs. This event is sponsored by The Lowell ARC, Grand Rapids ARA, Michigan DX Association and MARA. We will be holding it at the same place we've held it the last 2 years, "Fire Mountain". That's located on Alpine just north of 4 mile Road. The time is 2:00PM and while we're enjoying a great meal and our friends, we'll also be presenting the

"Pillars of Society Award" and the "West Michigan Ham of the Year award." This is a great time to get out and share a meal and conversation with our Ham friends.

## **Ham classes anyone?**

I was thinking that perhaps it would help attract new hams to our club by holding a demonstration on various techniques that come in handy being a ham. Like, how to prepare and solder a coax connector, both PL-259 and "N" connectors. How to measure the wire for a dipole without cutting it too short. Where to go to get rid of "Malware" objects. ( Malware is more a program than a virus)

If you have any suggestions on what you would like to have explained further, please let our editor know and we'll pass it on to the people who have the expertise to put on the demo's.

## **W8USA is now grounded!**

While we were picking up the pieces of our repeater after being struck by lightning, we discovered that none of the equipment was grounded! It seems like nobody actually thought to check to see if the gear was protected. We decided to change all that and on November 22nd, Bill N8VWI went to the repeater site and hammered in 3 8foot grounding rods.

By the end of the day, Mara's repeater had polyphasers installed, a grounding bus, so the other UHF stuff can use the provided ground and a hard line shield strap. We now are ready for the storm season.