



**WELCOME
TO
2009!**

NEWSLETTER

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Mercury Amateur Radio Association - MARA - North America - North East

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OTHER STUFF

E-mail your comments, ideas, or submissions to marane@mara.net

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VIEW FROM THE TOWER



ADVENTURES OF A NEW HAM

by N3IA

Bruce, N3IA, has been occupied with family matters and was not able to provide the material for his New Ham series. We hope he will return next month.

CULTURED CORNER

by ANØNMS

A NEW YEAR'S POEM

*The older we get, the less it takes
To make a day go by
Wherever does the time go?
Wherever does it fly?*

*I know it was just a year ago
When last I thought this way
Wherever does the time go?
There seems no time to play*

*And along now comes another year
Will it go just as fast?
Wherever does the time go?
How can I make it last?*

*Spend time with your friends and family
Wise council has oft said
Wherever does the time go?
Make use of it instead*

ANØNMS

GRANDMA MARA'S CORNER

ANOTHER YEAR - SAME OLD, OR DIFFERENT?

Now that you've got it - what are you going to do with it - the new year, that is? Is this another year that you fritter away, or are you actually going to do something positive with the time you've been given. Is this the year that you learn a new skill, start or re-start that hobby that you've been thinking about for years, learn to play a musical instrument, spend more time with your husband/wife, your children and other family members, get 100% visiting or home teaching for the year, learn to balance your checkbook, eat right, exercise regularly, write some poetry, learn who your neighbors are and become friends, clean the garage/basement/attic, do some family history, start or improve your home/food storage, write in your journal, write real letters to a distant friend/relative/missionary, volunteer for something in your community, congratulate your Bishop/Branch President on how well his hair is lasting, bake some cookies for someone every month, hug your husband/wife/kids/parents more often and tell them that you love them, call into the Saturday morning net, smile and say thank-you to complete strangers more often...

Some of you can pat yourselves on the back 'cause you're already doing a lot of these things, but that doesn't let you off the hook. Add something else from your personal to-do list. No matter how busy we already are, we can always do better.

So how about it? What do you have in mind for this new year? Or are you just going to coast along for another twelve months? The choice is yours! Take Grandma's advice and get up off your backside. Your waistline will thank you for it!

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Grandma Mara".

IN FEBRUARY'S NEWSLETTER...

ADVENTURES OF A NEW HAM - PART 4

ODDS & ENDS

ANTENNA STUFF

One of the annoyances in my life is seeing antenna installation articles with open and unsealed coaxial wired connections or connectors. Unless these antennas are installed in an attic or in a desert somewhere, how do they keep moisture out of the fittings and the coax braid? I never could, and for several years early on, out of ignorance, I tried! To seal coax, with or without connectors, here are the two ways that I use; one with self-amalgamating tape (such as **Coax-Seal**), the other using '**Liquid Tape**', both to copiously cover the joints. If you live in an area with really high moisture use both at the same time.

The following pictures show the use of **Coax-Seal** tape. Pictures and captions are taken from the Coax-Seal web site at <http://www.coaxseal.com/>



Figure 1 - Winding Coax-Seal tape. Note that the first wrap comes back on itself exactly, and the second turn starts the diagonal wrap. Wrap from the coax cover toward the fitting with one-half overlap with each winding.

This and any of the various self-amalgamating tapes should be slightly stretched as the turns are wound around the cable and connectors.



Figure 2 - The last wrap again comes straight back over the previous wrap without a diagonal. The seal is slightly sticky and should be molded now by hand to remove any gaps and to ensure that all the wraps are blending together. At some point the wraps will almost fuse together and the material may have to be cut away from the cable.



Figure 3 - View showing Coax-Seal cut away from the cable and connectors.

Liquid Tape is a rubber insulation coating that can be brushed or sprayed on connectors or wire connections to seal them against moisture intrusion. If you use more than one layer, give the coating sufficient time to dry between applications.

If you want to add an additional layer of protection, wrap the self-amalgamating tape or the liquid tape with a couple of layers of good quality electrical tape. Something made to withstand a wide range of temperatures. Scotch 88 electrical tape comes to mind. Stay away from the cheap stuff. It will fall off in the cold.



Figure 4 - Coaxial cable center conductor and braid treated with Liquid Tape and mounted to a piece of plastic using ty-wraps for strain relief.

MORE ANTENNA STUFF

It has been some time since we mentioned emergency antennas in the newsletter. I suppose by now, you all have a dipole cut to frequency or an end fed wire and tuner, with all the mounting hardware stowed in a box or container, ready to go if your home station antenna comes down for any reason, or if you have to set up an emergency station at your chapel or stake center? Raise your hand if you don't!

Just in case you are too shy to put up your hand, here's a thought. Now is a good time, while the snow is blowing around outside, to visit the basement or garage and make up something; just in case!

Just before the temperatures went seriously downhill, I cobbled together an end fed antenna out of some of wire and hardware I had laying around. As soon as the weather gets a little milder I'll string it up at the chapel and try it out. I'll take some pictures and put it all on here. But then what with all the wind and miserable weather we've had so far, it might come in handy before winter's end!

We hams have always been led to believe, by most of the antenna handbooks and magazine articles, when it comes to 'getting out', that higher was always better! The suggested height for an antenna, such as a dipole, is usually at a half wave length above the ground. The idea is to radiate RF energy at a low angle and use the reflective properties of the ionosphere to get the signal out

there at the greatest distance. What if instead, you want to communicate reliably, not with the other side of the world but with stations over all of your state or province?

Now there's a thought - reliable radio coverage for emergencies where VHF and UHF repeaters won't make it!

With NVIS and HF we can communicate reliably in emergencies over an area where VHF and UHF won't make it!

We have an article, coming in February's Newsletter, on NVIS (Near Vertical Incidence Skywave), also called cloud-warmer antennas. Not the greatest for DX, but much better for the Saturday morning HF net and for emergency situations you might find yourself in.

TOOL HEAVEN

In November's musings, I mentioned a pair of my favorite tool suppliers. Well, I've found another one to add to my list - [The House of Tools](#). If there is such a place as tool heaven on earth, I think I've arrived! When I was in Alberta visiting family in mid-November, I found one of these outlets nearby. These folks have about everything! I could (and did!) spend some quality time there.

SWAP SHOP

List any items you wish to buy, sell, trade, or give away at "no charge"!

DI-DAH-DI-DAH-DIT

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

How many of us make New Year's resolutions each year and how many of those who do, actually keep them. According to one web site I visited, about 40 to 45% of American adults make one or more New Year's resolutions each year. The most popular resolutions include weight loss, exercise and quitting

smoking. Also common are resolutions dealing with better money management and/or debt reduction.

The following statistics reveal how many of these resolutions are maintained as time goes on:

Past the first week: 75%

Past 2 weeks: 71%

After one month: 64%

After 6 months: 46%

I wonder if something similar happens to those people who proceed along the path to getting their amateur licenses; those who actually get their ticket.

What was it President Hinckley said about new members? "I hope, I pray, I plead with you, every one of you, to embrace every new member of the Church. Make a friend of him or her. Hold onto them." We need to do the same with people who enter this community we call amateur radio, especially those who are LDS. Some who have answered the 'call' to become hams lose interest because they don't know what to do once they pass their test. For those, we need to be a friend, an Elmer, a teacher; otherwise they will drift away. And we will be the poorer for it.

To keep a new ham active we need to be a friend, an Elmer, a teacher.

So how about making a New Year's resolution to find and bring someone into our hobby? And try to stick to it this year!

Until next month,
VE1VQ

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IN FEBRUARY'S NEWSLETTER...

'Propagation Between Not Too Close Radio Stations' by AA3LS

MARK IT ON YOUR CALENDARS



**May 2nd 2009 for the MARA
NorthEast Annual Meeting
at Nazareth Ward,
Scranton PA Stake**