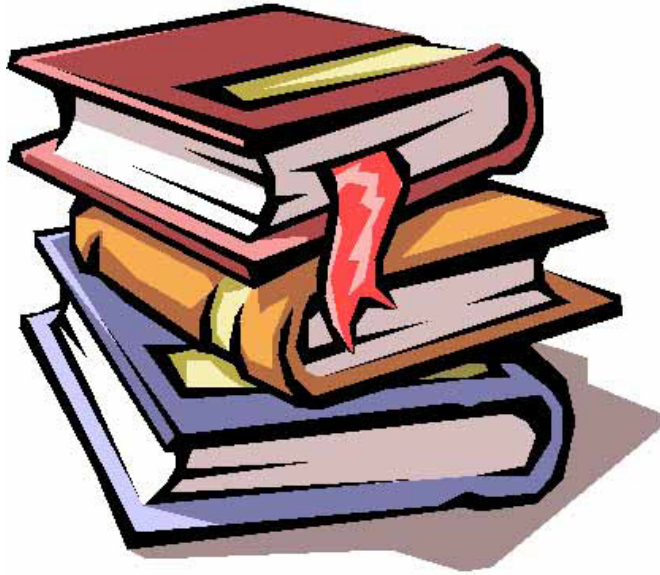


NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2009 VOLUME 9, No. 8

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



September is the time of year when parent's thoughts turn to education, and the money they will have to spend to outfit their children for the year to come.

At our age, most of us don't have to be concerned with crayons or glue or giant school backpacks for personal use!

Why not buy a book just for the fun of it! Who knows, we might even learn something.

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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



THOUGHTS OF PREPAREDNESS

by Dan N3EZ and Ralph AB4RS

I'd like to submit a few ideas about emergency preparedness using normal modes of communications. Though we're normally geared to worst case scenario style thinking, I believe it's good to take stock of our normal communication pathways... the stuff that anyone should have access to.

First, the telephone. Do people in our wards know the value of a **simple non-powered telephone**? When the power goes out next time, you'll be glad to have a \$10 phone that doesn't require electrical power to run.

Let's say your phone works... do you have a **long distance contact to call**. Good idea, especially if there's no local service. This can put your distant loved ones at ease knowing that at least you're still among the living.

Now, what about finding out the status of your community? Battery or dynamo powered radios & TVs do well here. Sometimes (as is the case in Arlington County) there is an AM emergency radio station. Ours is on 24/7 providing tips for emergency preparedness and can be activated for real time broadcasting whenever necessary.

The number of **emergency e-mail and text messaging** has been growing steadily. Its value has been demonstrated during school campus events in the last few years. Here in the DC area, you can sign up and receive text and/or e-mail messages for anything that may affect you. I got a message just last week from the county about an important fiber optic line being accidentally severed. I also get messages about approaching thunderstorms, water main breakages, and power outages. Great tool to have in your bag of tricks. Check your county website for 'Roam Secure' text messaging or the like. In Arlington, it's called 'Arlington Alert'. The messaging is also transmitted on XM Satellite Radio.

The next resource I'd like to mention is your **county website**. You'll find all sorts of useful things like emergency telephone numbers, evacuation planning, family preparedness, and what to know and do about all sorts of emergencies.

Next, I'll mention a tool we use every day in our ward here in Arlington, the ward **LISTSERV** or **e-mail reflector**.¹ This simple tool provides a "back channel" to most everyone in the ward. Normally, it's used for getting a baby sitter, a ride to the temple, or a mechanic or doctor recommendation. However, it's just as effective in reaching a lot of people in a short amount of time. These internet technologies are quite effective as has been recently demonstrated (by TWITTER) in Iran.

Finally, the **ward web site**!² What a wonderful resource. We take pictures of every member we can for the on-line photo directory. This helps us all to get to know each other more quickly and puts a face with a name. Additionally, as people participate in this system, their e-mail is accessible directly from the site. This is quite handy when you wish to contact anyone within your stake and you don't have their e-mail address. Additionally, the church lessons are there so you don't have to cart a bunch of books to church. The Priesthood and R.S. lessons are even available in audio form!³

I encourage all of you to take advantage of the church's web site features. You'll find it a great asset having everyone's photos and e-mails on line. That, together with a ward list serve (e-mail reflector), provide a balanced on-line communication capability that will help you keep informed of anyone's needs, and be able to recognize and contact them as well.

Dan NE3Z

Just a follow-up from experience. I was in San Diego for the 2007 wildfires. A series of rapidly spreading wildfires struck San Diego County, resulting in burning more than 1500 homes and 500,000 acres of land. More than 500,000 people were evacuated from their homes, including the entire population of our stake. I was serving as ward clerk at the time. We were evacuated for five days, and six families in our ward lost their homes. Our stake had 20-25 families that lost their homes. In our neighborhood we went to bed knowing there were fires some distance away, but comfortable that we were not in danger. We were evacuated at 5:00 AM with fires sweeping through the area. One family was notified by their neighbor beating on the door, telling them that their roof was on fire. The county used a reverse 911 system to call homes with the order to evacuate, but our call was not received until 8:00 AM, hours after we evacuated and

around the time when the front came through our area. Thankfully our **ward network** was calling people and getting them out.

In addition to the ward list I would recommend having the ward leadership collecting **cell phone numbers of everyone in the ward, including teenagers**. Due to the nature of the evacuation, determining the status of each family in the ward sometimes took a bit of detective work and numerous connections. A comprehensive list of cell phone numbers available to the ward leadership, stored in their phones, would have made that job much simpler.

I second the need for having **an out-of-area contact** to keep extended family and friends apprised of the situation. In this case it was my sister in Arizona, which is also where a friend and I sent our families while we stayed local to deal with the consequences of him being burned out.

Another item that helped me tremendously was a **cellular data card for my laptop**. I was able to e-mail and access web sites while displaced. Also, if cellular communications are disrupted government agencies and cellular carriers put a great deal of effort into restoring service with portable cell sites, so cellular is likely to become one of the first communications services restored.

Somewhat related is **data backup, including offsite backup**⁴. Our lives are increasingly stored on our computer. A single disaster can destroy records, correspondence, photos, etc.

Just a few thoughts for what they are worth.

Ralph AB4RS

Reprinted from e-mails with the permission of both Dan N3EZ and Ralph AB4RS

¹ Set up a free E-mail reflector by going to www.yahoo-groups.com and clicking on the button labelled "Easy as 1-2-3. Start your group today."

² You can find your unit web site by going to www.lds.org and clicking on the 'STAKE AND WARD WEB SITES' on the right side of the page. Type in your user name and password and it will take you to your unit web site. Not registered - you will need your membership number and your birth date. Ask your ward or branch clerk for a print-out of your Individual Ordinance Summary.

³ Once you've accessed your unit web site, go to the calendar page. If your stake or unit web administrator has done his or her thing, lesson information should appear on each Sunday. Download the actual lesson from www.lds.org by clicking on 'Prepare a Lesson' on the right hand side. The lessons are also available in various audio

formats which you can find under 'Home/Gospel Library/Audio'

⁴ Over the last couple of years a lot of on-line backup sites have gone out of business with little or no warning, taking people's data with them. One case involved a commercial photographer who lost over 7000 original and edited photos. If you use an on-line service, use the belt and suspenders method and back up to CD or DVD, and store somewhere other than under your computer desk for your pet to chew on.

CULTURED CORNER

by ANØNMS

MORE MONEY...

*I wish I had more money
To install a tower tall
And to put on top of that
A beam to beat them all*

*I wish I had more money
To purchase a bigger rig
With a better receiver
To hear those very weak sigs*

*I wish I had more money
A big linear to buy
Making my signal stronger
Louder than the other guys*

*I wish I had more money
Sadly it is not to be
All I manage to bring home
Goes straight to my dear sweetie*

GRANDMA MARA'S CORNER

GRANDMA'S SUMMER TRAVELS - PART 1

My passport arrived just in the nick of time for the planned date of departure on my summer road trip. Rather than try to cross into Canada at one of the more heavily used border points, I



decided to go for one of the smaller crossings. Using my trusty GPS I headed west on I-90, across the northern US, taking the time to stop



at some of the Church historical spots along the way.

Old Nauvoo was my favorite, with great weather the whole two days I stayed in the area. I spent some time in the Browning home looking at the tools Jonathan Browning used to make the firearms of the period. Interesting how he could turn out the quality of product he did with such primitive (by today's standards) tools.



The brickyard was another interesting place to sit and relax in the sunshine and listen to the 'how-to' of early brick-making. The nice folks gave me a souvenir hand-made brick to remember them by.

If you ever get to Nauvoo, make sure you take the time to walk through the Monument to Women Memorial Garden. What a peaceful place. Closing your eyes and listening to



the sounds of the horse drawn wagons going by can almost make you think you have gone to a more relaxed time and place.

And of course the temple.

Another place I wanted to see, even though it was a bit out of my way, was the Corn Palace



in Mitchell, SD. If you like corn (really like corn!) you won't want to miss this.

Over 275,000 ears of corn are used to decorate the exterior of the building each year.

I took my time as I didn't have to be anywhere on a deadline. If I wanted to stop to look at something I did; preferring to travel the less busy roads rather than the multi-lane ones. Interstate 90 varies from very



busy (around Chicago) to old-style two lane. For those crazy busy stretches I found less travelled and slower alternatives, eventually crossing the border on Rt. 89 at Pine Creek, Montana and Piney, Manitoba (just because the names interested me).

When you cross over into Canada, you ignore the officials on the US side and drive straight to "GO". The nice folks at Canada Customs welcomed me to Canada (in both English and French!) and after a few questions and an examination of my shiny new passport, sent me on my way. They even came up with directions for places to eat and a couple of motorcycle friendly 'bed 'n breakfasts' in the area. I'm not one to load down the bike with camping gear, preferring to 'rough it' at a place with a clean bathroom and a comfortable bed.

Grandma Mara

TECH STUFF

by VE1VQ

BATTERIES & RELATED THINGS - PART 1

Batteries are everywhere, in just about everything we use. They power so many things we simply take for granted, expecting that they will work whenever we turn them on. Cell phone and laptop sales have spurred the development of smaller and more powerful batteries, making for marked improvements in portable power in the last decade.

This article will deal with battery technology that we commonly see in our daily ham radio lives or that we might come across as amateur radio operators.

A BIT OF HISTORY

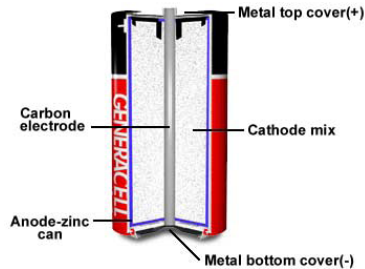
"The first battery was invented in 1800 by Alessandro Volta. Although it was of great value for experimental purposes, its limitations made it impractical for large current drain. Later batteries, starting with John Frederic Daniell's wet cell in 1836, provided more reliable currents and were adopted by industry for use in stationary devices, particularly in telegraph networks where, in the days before electrical distribution networks, they were the only practical source of electricity. These so-called wet cells used liquid electrolytes, and were thus prone to leaks and spillage if

not handled correctly. Some, like the gravity cell, could only function in a certain orientation. Many used glass jars to hold their components, which made them fragile. These practical flaws made them unsuitable for portable appliances. Near the end of the 19th century, the invention of dry cell batteries, which replaced liquid electrolyte with a paste, made portable electrical devices practical.” - from Wikipedia

NON-RECHARGEABLE BATTERIES

ZINC-CARBON

The first dry cell (so called because it did not have a liquid electrolyte) was patented in 1887 by Carl Gassner. Instead, the chemicals were mixed to make a paste. The primary materials used in these batteries were zinc and carbon, and developed a potential of 1.5 volts. Unlike earlier wet cells, these batteries could be used in any position. The first mass-produced model was the Columbia dry cell, first marketed by the National Carbon Company in 1896. The zinc-carbon battery (as it came to be known) is still manufactured today.

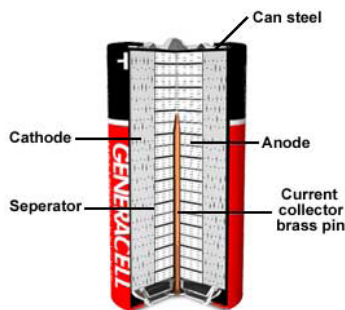


For those of you who are into trivia, the flashlight was invented that same year.

The battery companies were well aware that the zinc-carbon unit was not very efficient and were actively searching for a better battery. The next advance in technology brought about the alkaline battery. - from Wikipedia

ALKALINE

The alkaline battery gets its name because it has an alkaline electrolyte of potassium hydroxide, as opposed to the acidic electrolyte of the zinc-carbon batteries which are offered in the same nominal voltages and physical size. - from Wikipedia



The capacity of an alkaline battery is larger than a zinc-chloride cell of the same physical size because of

improvements in materials and physical design. These improvements can provide between three and five times as much operating time depending on load. The majority of batteries purchased by the public today are alkaline because of that increase in operating time.

Some years ago, I did battery life versus temperature tests on both zinc-carbon and alkaline for a project involving radio direction tracking of ice floes. I found that the former packed it in a lot sooner than the latter by many hours. I also found that burying the container into the ice led to longer battery life than did leaving it on the surface. The factor here was temperature; the air temperature was colder than the ice temperature.

For the extra cost, go with the alkaline over zinc-carbon if you are using non-rechargeable batteries in your hand-held radio and keep it out of the cold as much as possible.

The cut-away drawings of the zinc-carbon and the alkaline batteries shown are from the <http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/> website.

Next month - Rechargeable Batteries

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“REMEMBER THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS. EVERY ACT CREATES A RIPPLE WITH NO LOGICAL END.”

- SCOTT ADAMS - CREATOR OF THE 'DILBERT' COMIC STRIP

SWAP SHOP

List for free any items you wish to buy, sell, trade, or give away.

DI-DAH-DI-DAH-DIT

I was listening to the car radio the other day and heard one of those advertising phrases that we accept for some reason as having some truth about them. That made me think about other dumb advertising sayings that are pitched to us.

“AS SEEN ON TV”! What exactly does that phrase mean? Why should I want to buy this item based on the fact that it appeared in a commercial on television? Should that make it better than average because someone pitched it on my television screen? Years ago when television was new, it seems to have meant that there was something special about the product.

“RECOMMENDED BY THREE OUT OF FOUR DENTISTS” is another one we hear. Usually in an ad extolling the virtues of dental floss, or toothpaste guaranteed to freshen your breath, whiten your teeth, and slay that ever present plaque. Or its near relative, “RECOMMENDED BY MORE DENTISTS (DOCTORS/LAWYERS/TEACHERS/DENTAL HYGIENISTS, JANITORS, ETC.) THAN ANY OTHER BRAND”. I always wondered what they do to find that out! How large a group did they poll in the first example? Or did they interview groups of four professionals until they found a group where three out of four agreed with what they wanted? What about the opinion of the fourth individual? In this day of political correctness, shouldn't we hear the opposing viewpoint?

“ACCURATE TO WITHIN +/- 1.9 % NINETEEN TIMES OUT OF TWENTY”. I wish someone could explain this one to me! Some time back, on a radio program, I heard a statistics ‘expert’ explain exactly what this means. After he was finished talking, I still had no idea what it meant. Made me wonder if he did either! We had a provincial election here in Nova Scotia a few years ago where the TV news people were declaring one party elected based on a contracted polling company's calculations. Imagine the chagrin of the talking heads when the actual voting results were tallied, and another party won instead. There was considerable post election air time spent trying to explain that mistake.

“IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT” is my personal favorite (and the one I heard on the radio)! This was in an advertisement for credit card debt reduction. According to the pitch, the fact that you got into such debt was not your fault, but that of the credit card companies! I don't remember seeing any strange charges by VISA on my VISA card. But isn't that the way things are now. Whatever happens is never the fault of the individual. Have you noticed that no one is responsible for anything they do anymore?

So why do advertisers use these phrases? Well, the most obvious answer is that they must work (or the advertisers think they work) to increase product sales. Maybe we subconsciously accept them as true, making us more comfortable about parting with our money.

You may have noticed that advertisements for ham radio gear has changed over the years. I don't mean that they contain the phrase ‘as seen on TV’ or that ‘Three

out of four top DXers prefer TenTec over Yaesu’! They have become more of the consumer style, containing less technical information and more ‘flash and splash’. You have to do some digging to find specifications for most of the current rigs. Personal testimonials have replaced hard facts. Maybe that's because today's amateur is a less technical user, and the previous style of advertising is perceived not to work. I'm not saying it's good or bad, just that it's different.

So the next time your thought processes snag on a piece of advertising, give some thought about what it actually means. Are you being manipulated by an advertising phrase?

Until next month,
VE1VQ

NEXT MONTH...

**PART 2 of GRANDMA MARA'S
SUMMER TRAVELS and...**

**PART 2 of TECH STUFF
- BATTERIES**