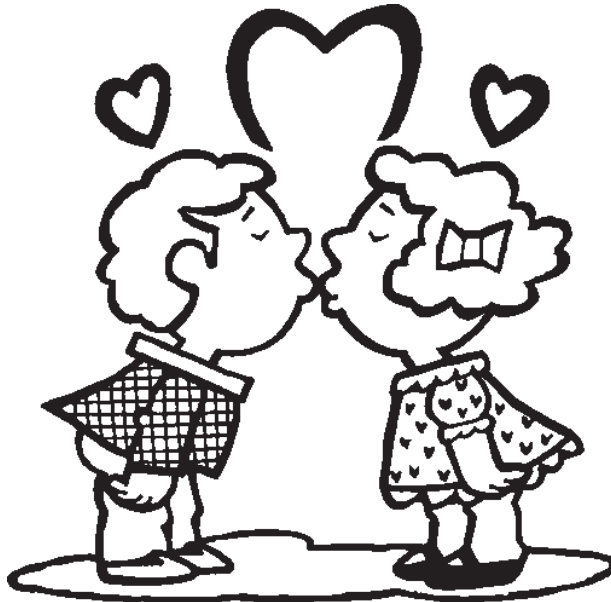


The NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2011 VOLUME 11, No. 2

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



The perfect card, the perfect gift. . . Isn't there enough pressure in relationships without having to live up to some romantic ideal on Valentine's Day?

It's more important to give spontaneously. Don't wait for a specific day to show your wife or girlfriend that you love her.

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E-mail your comments, ideas, or submissions to marane@mara.net or to ve1vq@eastlink.ca

Feature Article

by VE1VQ

GET OVER IT!

There has been an upsurge in traffic on the e-mail reflector in the last few weeks. It was started by Stan N3HS who asked some questions and offered some suggestions about ERC and MARA, both on the reflector and in the [January 2011 newsletter](#).

This has been good, as many have offered their thoughts. You may not have agreed with everyone's words, but we need to hear all sides and all opinions.

I've been trying for years to get a history of MARA from the beginning until the dissolution. No one has yet taken me up on my request to write it, although I seem to be getting closer to getting the facts.

SOME HISTORY

As I understand it, MARA came out of the need for better emergency backup communications between the local ward level priesthood leadership and the Church leadership in Salt Lake City, following the [Teton \(Idaho\) Dam failure](#) in June of 1976.

Several hams in the Salt Lake area were approached with the idea of using amateur radio to provide backup communications should the existing infrastructure fail.

The new organization was formed, under indirect priesthood direction, and was called the Mercury Amateur Radio Association or MARA, after Mercury, the mythical messenger of the Roman gods. Nets were organized and frequencies established.

A general [call was extended](#) in the February 1985 issue of the ENSIGN magazine (in the News of the Church section -scroll down to find it) for any LDS ham radio operator who wanted to join MARA to provide communications in case of emergencies. LDS hams joined! Here was an organization where they could combine their love of the gospel and the Church, with the hobby they loved. MARA continued to grow because it filled a need for LDS ham radio ops who wanted to use their talents and equipment to help others.

In north America, hams were instructed to use their own equipment, although in some stakes, radios seem to have been purchased with local funding or else 'donated'. In other areas of the world where radio equipment was harder to come by, or individuals were less able to afford the purchase, the Church provided and installed the

necessary equipment.

Then came that fateful day when someone asked the question, "Is the Church in contravention of any government rules or regulations because we are providing compensation in the form of a small amount of money (for postage, etc.), and meeting places for MARA meetings?"

The answer eventually came back through the lawyers that yes, the situation could be considered in contravention of certain FCC regulations. At this point, the MARA executive felt they had no alternative but to separate from the Church to prevent possible legal action against the Church.

Was it done in the best way for all concerned? Could it have been done in a better manner? Hind sight says 'no' to the first question and 'yes' to the last.

In the vacuum left when MARA was cut loose, ERRS (Emergency Response Radio System) was established and later ERC (Emergency Response Communications) replaced that. Those might best be described as 'less than effective', although in some places things are improving. Communications worked between the Storehouses but there was nothing going to or coming from the grass roots ward/branch level.

SO WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

So, what's the answer to all of the hurt feelings? All I can say is, "GET OVER IT!"

For MARA members, the world has changed! We are no longer the 'one'. Emergency communications at the local level are under the direction of the Bishop or Branch President, and the Stake President. They may not have called anyone, but that is not 'your call'! All you can do is to let them know of your capabilities. You cannot lead them to believe that any connection to MARA you may have makes you the 'one and only', that MARA members are the only ones to fill these positions. Don't let this hobby and your desire to serve become an obsession.

Remember that just because you have not been called to any ERC position, it doesn't mean that you cannot make yourself and your station ready to respond to a future call from your priesthood leader, or to any emergency needing your talents. Find out the ERC net information and frequency (or frequencies) for your area so that you are prepared. Listen to the nets, even if you cannot call in.

For ERC people, understand that MARA is NOT the enemy! We only have a desire to help in any way we can. Some of you understand that, while others seem to have the idea that we are only waiting for the right moment to stage a take-over. For some of you, inclusion seems to be your middle name, giving out net information to any LDS ham who wants it, and welcoming with open arms those who call into your nets; for others, the attitude seems to be ERC good, MARA bad, discouraging any contact between

the 'chosen and called' and non-ERC hams.

In some areas, ERC is well established and works well. For others, it is often the opposite, with ERC nowhere to be found. In those latter ones, sometimes it is that no one has been called, sometimes it is the lack of interest on the part of the person called.

LOOKING FORWARD

MARA has survived! Perhaps to the surprise of some. Not only survived but grown! I believe we now have more groups than before when MARA central was 'with' the Church, and the umbrella organization over all. Some are active in emergency readiness preparation, while others are more of a social group. Some are using both HF and VHF for their nets. Others are only on VHF, some only on HF.

So, what will happen to MARA in the future? Will there ever be a place in Church emergency communications again? I can't answer either of those questions. I would hope there would be. Why waste the very specialized talents and the willingness to serve, of many hundreds of Saints?

MNE

Grandma Mara's RAMBLINGS

Grandma was never much for Valentine's Day fluff. Oh, I loved the hand drawn cards the kids used to make for me when they were little (and the grand kids still do). I still have some of them tucked in a box along with their old school report cards. Grandpa used to give me a rose every Valentine's Day, and through all of those years together, I never let on that roses were my least favorite of flowers. I never said anything because he was always so proud that he remembered!

Nowadays, candy seems to go straight to the hips so I have to go lightly on the confectioneries. No matter how much exercise and dieting I do, the pounds seem to slowly, ever so insidiously, sneak up on me. So, Grandma's New Year's resolution is to take it off. How am I doing, you ask? Well, I've managed to lose



a little over three pounds since the first day of January. The experts seem to agree that we should be shedding no more than that amount each month so I'm right up there with the smart folks.

Somehow in the scheme of things, it doesn't seem fair that it is so easy to put weight on but so hard to take it off. Why can't it be the same both ways?

MNE

CULTURED CORNER by ANØNMS

WRAPPED IN RED

*When it comes to things for Valentine's Day
That a husband can give to his wife
He must be careful what comes as a gift
If he wishes to maintain his life.*



*If chocolate happens not to be on
the list of stuff that he wraps all in red
And she be a fan of that candy so good,
He might find he wish he were dead.*

GOT SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SHARE?

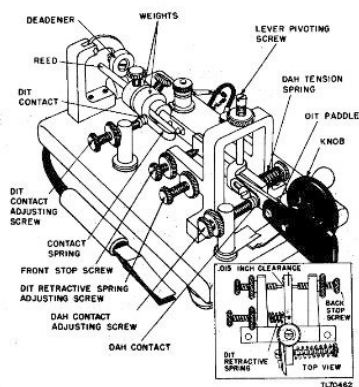
Have something you want to share? A construction project, pictures of your station... home or mobile, a station installation at the chapel, or maybe an antenna in your back yard. Whatever it is, share it with us. Send it to VE1VQ@eastlink.ca

TECH STUFF

By VE1VQ

Back in the late 1960s, when I'd been on the air for a couple of years, and had some CW experience under my key, I had a call on 80m from another VE1. This individual had been around the bands for more years than I was old. But despite her time on the key, her sending was poor. Her use of a Bug (no, not the Volkswagon kind!) didn't improve things either. I remember making some excuse why I had to sign off in such a hurry. I really didn't want to tell her that her sending was awful! I met her in person a few years after that episode and found her to be a really sweet lady.

At that time, a lot of hams used separate receiver and transmitter combinations instead of the transceivers that are so common today. The option of having a side-tone to monitor your sending wasn't as common as it is now, and a lot of hams really didn't know how they sounded. That along with the use of a Bug made for some interesting 'fists', or code sounds, on the bands. In the case of my VE1 contact, and very common with the use of Bugs, the dashes get shortened to nearly the same length as the dots, making it hard to decipher the message. Sometimes this is in the bug's mechanical design (they're not made for slow sending) and sometimes it is in the adjustments.



Now that electronic keyers have all but taken over from the Bug, and more people using computers and software, this isn't as prevalent as it once was, but you still run into it now and then.

There are still lousy fists around. Even a straight key, if improperly adjusted, with no attention

being paid to the side tone, can provide for an interesting attempt at trying to understand the attempt at communicating!

I found a good site with detailed information about adjusting your keys. Check out Milestone Technologies at <http://www.mtechnologies.com/misc/keyadj.htm>. The page, written by N1FN, has complete generic instruc-

tions for all types of keys. You might take some time and look around the rest of the site. If you read the December Newsletter and were interested in building a sine wave generator but didn't want to track down the parts, you might check out the [sine wave generator](#) kit. Or if you wanted a [small audio amplifier](#) like the 386 one in the June Newsletter, take a peek at the one on their site. For one of their kits that does both, look at the [T-Tone Practice Oscillator](#) kit.

Despite the fact that the rules have been changed so code is no longer a requirement for a ham license in most countries, the use of code on the ham bands doesn't seem to have lessened any. Many people have found that once they weren't forced to learn the code it actually became enjoyable!

MNE

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I don't understand why Cupid was chosen to represent Valentine's Day. When I think about romance, the last thing on my mind is a short, chubby toddler coming at me with a weapon."

Unknown

DI-DAH-DI-DAH!

SO THERE!

My two year old Garmin 255 GPS quit working just before Christmas. It would come on for about ten seconds then die. I suspected the internal battery was the problem and so I started thinking about looking for one on sale. Around New Year's Day, when I had a better chance to check out the problem, my keen troubleshooting skills deduced that the LED on the cigarette power plug wasn't 'on'. Further examination revealed that the center pin in the plug was missing, as was the fuse, spring, and end cap. A search of the front seat floor area of the car netted the spring and center pin but nothing else.

Now, I don't usually throw things out so I have a fairly extensive collection of old phones and their charger cables. Seems like every time I get a new cell phone it comes with a different charging connector than the previous one and I'm forced to buy yet another charger for the car. A search through a couple of boxes produced an old Samsung cable with the right cigarette lighter (or as they call them now - accessory) plug end. A few minutes work and my GPS was restored to working condition.



A search on-line revealed that I'm not the only one to have the problem with the disappearing parts - a lot of people had the same thing happen to them. Some even had an explosion from the parts shorting out the 'accessory plug'. If you have one of this style of connector, you might want to check to see if the end cap is tight. If it isn't, put a small amount of Loc-Tite (or tiny dab of fingernail polish) on the threads and retighten.

My XYL has been after me for years to clean up and throw out the things I don't use (like old charger plugs). I finally got to tell her that by saving the old Samsung charger cord I saved us \$12 for the cost of a new Garmin one. So there!

Until next month,
VE1VQ