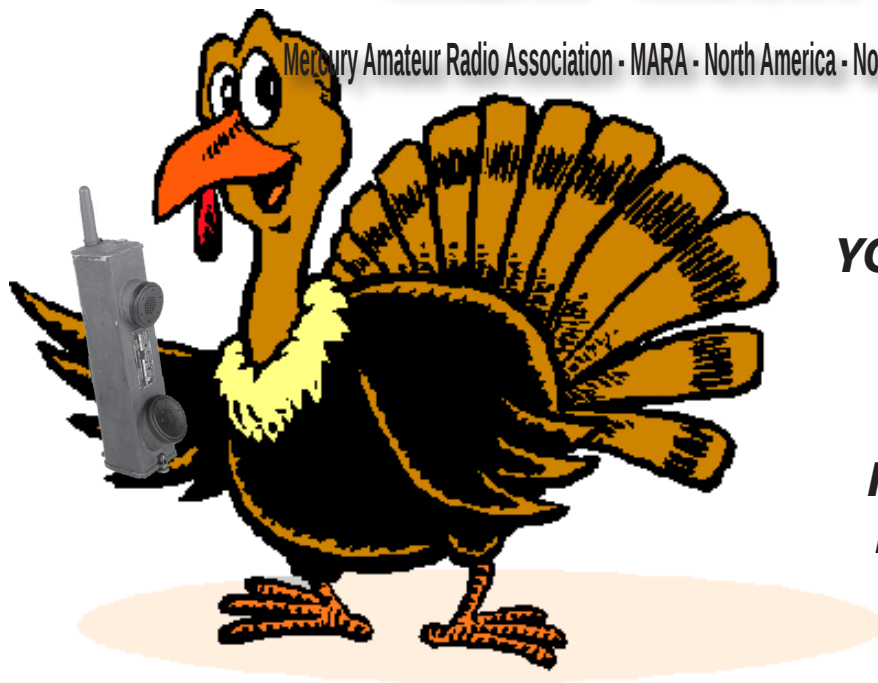


The NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2011 VOLUME 11, No. 10

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



**ALWAYS HAVE
YOUR GEAR READY
TO WORK.**

**YOU NEVER
KNOW WHEN AN
EMERGENCY WILL
HAPPEN!**

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OTHER STUFF

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

Grandma Mara's RAMBLINGS

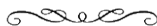
Small gas engines and Grandma have this love-hate relationship and it has been in existence for a long time. I've never figured out how something that simple can be so cantankerous after only having a few months down time.

The motorcycle has never been a problem with its electric starter but the snow blower is something else. With a pull cord to start it, this thing has always been a pain to get going in the fall. Once it has been started, it's okay all winter long. It's not like I leave old gas in it over the off season either! I always drain the gas tank and the fuel line by running it dry. I pulled on this thing until my arm was about to go numb. I figured I'd have to get an electric start kit to preserve my sanity and my rotator cuff.

Fortunately, Walter came to my rescue with a tip for starting those stubborn gas powered things. You know, those ones that have a mind of their own? At the start of the running season, when you take the spark plug out to clean it and check the gap, squirt a bit of fresh gas into the cylinder. Put the plug back in and crank it over. It will usually start on the second pull, and maybe even the first. Then at the end of the season, unscrew the spark plug and squirt in a little oil. Maybe a teaspoon's worth. Re-install and connect the spark plug, as many of the solid-state ignition systems don't like not having the plug in the circuit. Pull the cord or turn the key for a tad, just enough to cycle the piston and distribute the oil in the cylinder.

Now, you may have already known about this little trick. I wish I had when I was first trying to get the snow blower started last month, and attempting to come up with some cuss words that would get by the Bishop!

"It's not like I leave old gas in it over the off season either!"



CULTURED CORNER

by ANØNMS

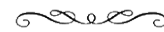
The latest rumor we've heard, from a usually reliable source, is that ANØNMS is in some type of counselling with Grandma Mara to try to cure the writer's block problem.

WIKIPEDIA defines *Writer's Block* as "a condition, primarily associated with writing as a profession, in which an author loses the ability to produce new work. The condition varies widely in intensity. It can be trivial, a temporary difficulty in dealing with the task at hand. At the other extreme, some *blocked* writers have been unable to work for years on end, and some have even abandoned their careers."

We found out that the two of them are using IM (instant messaging or cell phone texting) as a way to keep the costs down being as they live a bit over a thousand miles apart, and to see the actual words on screen as part of the therapy.

Grandma, of course, is bound by the professional rules of confidentiality never to breathe a word of what goes on between the two of them. The last time she bent the rule, even if it was okay with the client and even if she didn't use any names, it nearly got her in trouble with the powers-that-be. Sometimes those P-T-B can be awfully stuffy!

We here at the newsletter, not being bound by any such rules, will keep you posted on whatever rumor comes our way.



GOT SOMETHING YOU CARE TO SHARE?

A construction project, pictures of your station... home or mobile; a Field Day station at the chapel or elsewhere, a trip in the woods or some remote location with a portable rig, or maybe an antenna in your back yard. A poem or fiction or a real life story involving ham radio would be just fine as well.

Whatever it is, share it with us. Send it to one of the e-mail addresses shown on page one. Don't be shy now!

TECH STUFF

By VE1VQ

No one has said anything about a MARA Field Day in recent memory. Did anyone have an entry this year or did those of us with an interest join up with another non-LDS group?

Unless you are well organized and have things all planned and arranged in marked storage boxes, you really should start to think now about next year. Yes, I know the 2012 Field Day is a long way off but it can't hurt to at least think about it now, can it?

WHERE TO GO?

First, you have to figure out where you are going to operate. Will it be on a distant mountain top under a drafty tree-branch lean-to, a nearby park from a pup tent, or perhaps in your luxuriously appointed RV...



Or... perhaps a room in your chapel?

Chapels are really a good choice if you think about it. AC power of the 120V variety. Not enough for your average kilowatt amplifier but plenty for the normal 100 watt rig. Washrooms nearby – always an important consideration for those of us of the older persuasion! And a kitchen with a refrigerator to keep the root beer properly chilled. Find all that at the top of your mountain, all of you healthy hikers!

Next Sunday, take a stroll around the outside of your chapel and pick out some trees with possibilities. Should your building not have any trees then you'll have to provide your own in the form of extension poles or go with a vertical and laid-on-the-grass radials. Take a look at earlier copies of the NEWSLETTER for temporary antenna ideas. Make sure that anything you think about stringing up for an antenna will not damage the chapel in any way.

How about the room itself? Most classrooms have a table and a few chairs so that part is probably good (unless they are Primary sized!). If not, then somewhere in the building there will be some. If the window opens then the problem of getting coax outside to the antenna is solved. If the windows are permanently closed then find a different room! Hey, the kitchen would work, right next to the cold root

beer! Some things are a trade-off but you certainly need the feed line to exit the building and reach the antenna!

Let's say that a room in the chapel checks out! Talk to the person in the ward/branch who has the responsibility for emergency preparation stuff. Pitch the idea of emergency communications practice to them. Once you have their interest and approval, call your building scheduling person and book the room. If you wait too long you could lose your chosen spot to another (but less worthy!) activity wanting the space.

WHAT TO BRING?

Don't forget about the food. What would a Field Day operation be without the eats. This is your chance to bring all of your favorite junk food to go with the RB!

Now that you have all of the really important stuff figured out, don't forget to do up a list of the equipment you will require. Your rig should top the page. Next off, you will need an antenna of some kind, and of course a feed line. A power supply is always handy! If you want to operate battery power consider that a naked battery sitting on the carpeted floor is never a good idea!

Having it in some sort of plastic case or RUBBERMAID style bin outside the window on the ground with leads running inside is the best plan. Make sure you have the correct wire size to avoid unnecessary voltage loss. Perhaps a tuner would be appropriate if your antenna isn't resonant. Remember to bring all of the required cables along. If the tuner isn't on your list then a stand-alone SWR meter to keep track of your antenna condition is always good. Otherwise, you can spend the whole time shouting into the mic, trying to make contacts with an open/shorted feed line. A few basic tools and a digital test meter might well mean the difference between the success and the failure of your day.

SAFETY FIRST

Take a look around before you lift the vertical or throw a support line over a tree. Are you anywhere near a power line or other object that might lead you into trouble? Re-

**ARRL Field Day is
June 23-24,
2012**

ARRL Field Day is the largest on-the-air operating event in Amateur Radio. It draws tens of thousands to the airwaves each year, bringing both new and experienced amateur radio operators together for a weekend of fun!

member this is supposed to be a fun event, not a tragedy!

Secure your antenna well. After all, if a sudden wind comes up, you don't want the thing coming down on the roof or against the building and doing some damage. That's not the way to impress the people who were nice enough to let you use the premises!

WE CORDIALLY INVITE YOU...

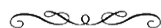
Who to invite? That list should include your Branch President or Bishop and the counsellor over emergency communications/preparedness, and if you are not the ERS person for your unit, invite that individual to join you. Perhaps they are not even a ham! If any of the Stake Presidency or the high counselor whose area is emergency preparedness or communications live close by add them to your list. If you have a cub or scout group you might want to touch base with the leaders and include them. Maybe some of the boys will be curious. Don't leave out the Primary or Young Women either. What, you think the young ladies aren't interested? And what about your non-member friend who expressed an interest in your antennas and station the last time he and his wife were over for a visit?

NEATNESS COUNTS

If you expect observers, set up your station area in a welcoming way so that people don't see the back of your head or the back of the equipment. Make them feel that you are truly interested in having them there, having an extra chair or two, by showing them how the stuff works, letting them tune around, making a contact and letting them use the microphone (if they are not too shy!). It's been my experience that Primary girls are often more likely to talk into the microphone than are Primary boys.

THE END IS NIGH

When the appointed Saturday evening hour for power-down and clean-up arrives, remember to leave your operating area in better shape than when you arrived, even if some of the mess isn't of your making. I suppose you could operate all night, but just be prepared for the strange looks and the whispered comments from the other members when they arrive on Sunday morning and find you asleep by your gear surrounded by all those empty root beer cans!



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

LEST
WE
FORGET...

"The soldier, above all other men, is required to perform the highest act of religious teaching — sacrifice."

Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964)
American General



DI-DAH-DI-DAH!

Some years ago, before we had the Halifax NS temple, or the Boston temple, or the Toronto temple, my xyl and I and another couple made the twenty-six hour drive to the Washington DC temple. The husband of the other couple was a friend of the Temple President. The T.Pres mentioned to my friend that Elder Gordon B. Hinckley was coming the next day, which was Sunday, to conduct a meeting in the temple to sustain a new Temple President. My friend asked if we could attend. The T.Pres said that if we were to show up, present our recommends, change into our whites, and go to the assembly room, no one would object. Certainly he wouldn't as he was being released.

And so we did.

Strictly speaking, the meeting with Elder Hinckley to sustain and set apart the new Temple President was announced for temple workers and not to the general membership, in order to keep the number of attendees within reason. Nonetheless it was an interesting occasion and I was glad we had the opportunity to be there. In case you think that we took

someone else's spot, that was not the case as there were plenty of empty seats.

So what has this to do with anything? Well, back in October of this year there was a forwarded notice of an ERC meeting and re-posted by myself on the MARA NE e-mail reflector. This started discussion that threatened to escalate until I stepped in and asked people to take a deep breath and be respectful of each other's opinions.

“I suspect if you show up for an ERC training meeting (ERC person or not) that you would be more than welcome.”

I suspect if you show up for an ERC training meeting (ERC person or not) that you would be more than welcome. You would be there to gain information on how you can better provide communications in the event of an emergency. What harm would it do if you attend? Tomorrow you may get a phone call from your Bishop or a member of your Stake Presidency inviting you to an ERC calling. Remember also that any emergency communication knowledge you gain will stand you in good stead should circumstances demand that you have to use your station in an emergency situation.

It all comes down to spirit-of-the-law versus letter-of-the-law! As for me, I'll go with the spirit of the law if I have to make a choice.

Until next month,
VE1VQ

