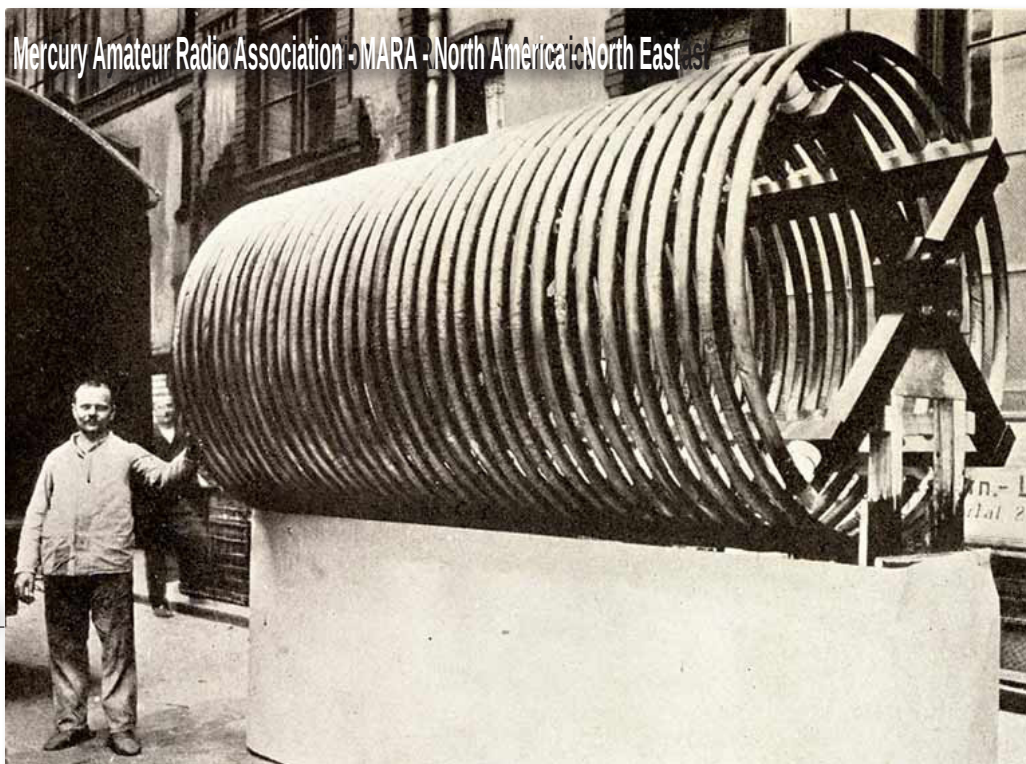


The NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2012 VOLUME 12, No. 6

THIS IS
THE BASE
LOADING
COIL FOR
OUR FIELD
DAY
VERTICAL.

YOU SHOULD
SEE THE
ANTENNA!



CONTENTS

- 2** GRANDMA MARA'S RAMBLINGS
RAMBLINGS OF AN OLDER PERSON - THE FD PLANS CONTINUE
- 2** VOICES FROM THE NET
STEVE - AG4SO
- 4** ANNUAL MEETING
ANNOUNCEMENT
- 5** TECHSTUFF
PLAYING WITH A KILL A WATT
- 6** QUOTE OF THE MONTH
OLD FARMER
- 6** DI-DA-DI-DA-DIT
LEVEL OF TRUST

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

It wasn't until two weeks after our initial planning meeting for this year's Field Day that all of us were able to get together again. With all of our busy schedules, there was always one of us who couldn't make it. Finally, all of the group had a common free night so we could meet and finalise our plans.

Wendy announced that she had contacted our friend the ranger at the state park where we based our Field Day operation last year, and had booked the required two camp sites. There were some nice tall trees for our dipoles, as well as a fair sized clear space for the verticals.

The latter we would surround with warning tape to keep curious people from getting too close.

With our Field Day spots accounted for, we decided to use Wendy's TenTec 538 and external automatic tuner for the general SSB station, and Walter's new Elecraft K3/100 rig with the built-in auto tuner for CW and the digital modes.

Both of these setups would be very forgiving when tuned off to the side of the sweet spot in their respective antenna's SWR curve.

Walter reported that he had mechanically checked over all of his emergency antennas to make sure they would be ready. Not that anybody thought that there would be any problems! That man is meticulous about anything he does, and would have inspected them prior to storing them after the last time he used them.

Wendy's brother surprised us by saying that he had asked his scout leader if the troupe could help in setting up the antennas and with other general duties. The leader had canvassed the scouts and better than a half dozen of them had committed to being there. Perhaps Wendy's offer to bake a dozen chocolate chip cookies for everyone who showed up had something to do with that commitment or

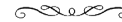


perhaps it was that Wendy was growing into a very pretty young lady!

Her mother and I had been watching the grocery specials and had been busy laying in a store of burgers, hot dogs, and other easy to prepare stuff that we could freeze until the appointed weekend.

Since everything seemed to be going just great, Walter introduced the uninitiated members of our group to Murphy and some of his laws and possibilities.

While Murphy and his relatives were new to most of Wendy's family it turns out that her mom had heard of the esteemed individual back in her college days, with her favorite one being The Murphy's Philosophy - "Smile... tomorrow will be worse".



VOICES FROM THE NET

STEVE - AG4SO

My ham radio interest started several years before being licensed. During high school I was in the Civil Air Patrol, where I became the squadron communications officer. While I did not yet know any hams I was fascinated by the communications equipment I operated, as well as the many stations, both short wave and ham, I monitored on the equipment. Later, I joined the Army Signal Corps, and having free time in Korea, I volunteered to repair and operate the camp MARS station AB4DL. *No one else had an interest!* I became self taught in both operation of the Collins S-line equipment and net procedures running phone patches stateside for fellow soldiers, as well as tuning in various ham QSOs across the world. My association with Army Mars continued while stationed in Germany, as a volunteer working on the station AE1MN, in my spare time.

After leaving the service in 1980 I moved to Garland TX and joined the local ham club where I was licensed as a Novice in 1982. (BTW Bill the ham who was my mentor was blind and operated a radio repair business utilizing

high school students to assist him). I became active in the local RACES program chasing severe weather around Dallas County, as well as participating in local 2m operations. My first rig was an ICOM IC2AT, I home-brewed a J-pole for the house and used a 12W amp in the car with a collinear antenna for RACES operations. At this time I was working for a ham electrical engineer at a local electronics manufacturer. This gave me a unique opportunity to learn antenna theory from him and test various antennas on the company far-field antenna range and lab in spare time.

Around 1981, as a Tech plus, I got on 10M with an IC735 as my first HF rig, along with a multi band vertical. I was also active on local 2/440 repeaters.

I moved to Virginia in 1984, by this time as a technician, resigned to the fact I did not have the knack for CW. I was never able to get past 10 words a minute - being [dyslexic](#) I suppose had something to do with it. The job I took when I moved to Virginia was with FEMA where I spent the first few years in site electronic support for a campus called Mount Weather. Several of my co workers were hams and there was even a MARS station on campus that we were allowed to use in free time. As time passed, I moved into disaster communications where I was able to travel and operate the HF equipment on ham frequencies as time allowed. I also enjoyed meeting a lot of hams while in disasters that were on the air as we rolled in to the areas. In 1995, I was a general class so the spare time fun increased with the new privileges. My boss at the time operated high speed CW while I operated voice and RTTY, so we both had a lot of fun operating from various locations around the country, as well as the US Virgin Islands. By the way, I passed my Extra class in 1995 while



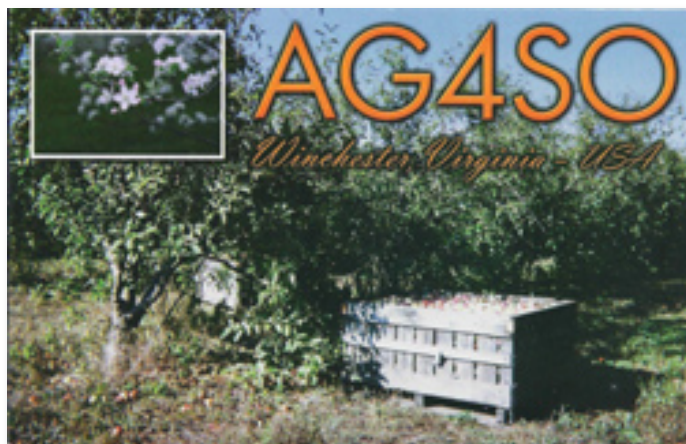
on St. Thomas USVI when I stumbled into a VE session one Saturday when I was at the [VITEMA](#) office. I was not expecting to test and was surprised I passed.

In my last few years, I returned to site support for the campus where I was president of the campus ham club. Among various fun events, I organized a special event operation for the 100th anniversary of the facility and helped organize two field day events using the site HF equip-

ment. It is a blast tuning back 10KW transmitters to 1KW, switching in the rotatable log periodic antennas and calling CQ Field Day.

A few years ago I was called as the stake EM-COM specialist, which led me to MARA. I enjoy giving assistance to the team members as well as the local ham community, and assisting in installing mobile or base radio

systems. Though I can no longer climb, I have many other ways I can assist and find it a joy to share the knowledge I have acquired from fellow hams and potential hams. I am a Volunteer examiner, and I have also spent time teaching the radio merit badge for scouts, and of course operating at home when I get the opportunity.



ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION

This year's annual meeting on *June 9th* will be hosted by Stan Staten, N3HS, at 12012 CHEYENNE RD, GAITHERSBURG, MD 20878-2012

The meeting begins at 11 AM.

We have a light agenda, so much socializing and fellowship will ensue.

Please let N3IA know who can come so we can assess the lunch needs.

Contact Bruce at bruce@bwortmann.com

Looking forward to seeing many of you.

73,
Bruce, N3IA

I retired the end of 2011 and have found things are not slowing down, which is good except it is harder to find free time to operate. *SMILE*

The shack includes a FT2000, an AL80B amplifier, and various antennas. A TMD700 is used for VHF/UHF and an IC910H is in place for satellite operation when I can get the egg beater antennas installed. I am blessed to live in a neighborhood where I have two 50-foot towers, one with the beam and wire antenna. The second has beams for VHF/UHF and a stressed Moxin for 6m. Backup power is from a 10kw generator, one of my to-do projects



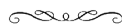
is a battery backup for the shack for short term interruptions.

The QSL card for base operations uses two photos taken by the XYL, of local apple trees; we live next to an orchard.

I also operate mobile. The QSL card for mobile is a cartoon of the mobile shack where I have an IC-706 for HF and 6m coupled through a SGC tuner in to a 102" steel whip. I use a TM-D710 for VHF/UHF and APRS.

Some of my favorite contacts have been while operating mobile. The XYL has even learned how to record the info for me for the log while I drive. I suppose it is self preservation on her part. Otherwise we would never get to our destination if I had to keep pulling over to log contacts.

73
Steve AG4SO



TECHSTUFF

By VE1VQ

A 17D's article about power supplies in last month's NEWSLETTER included a mention of a gadget called the *Kill A Watt*. It happened that I was in western Canada in early May and made a day trip south of the border to Kalispell in western Montana. Like most towns or cities of any size, whether in the USA or "up here" in Canada, Kalispell has one of The Home Depot stores. And in that store they happened to have a display set up with three of the devices monitoring a normal incandescent light bulb, a CFL (Compact Fluorescent Light) bulb, and a LED (Light Emitting Diode) light, just to show the efficiencies of each. Since there were no staff persons around to explain these things, I simply played with all of the buttons until I was able to figure it out. And, figuring that I needed one to play with at home, I bought one with instructions!



I did a little playing with the *Kill A Watt* (KAW) while in Alberta but it wasn't until I got home that I got serious about seeing what it would do. I couldn't find the instructions! I remembered packing them for the flight home. Google them! Found them! Printed them!

The first thing to do was to set the local rate per kilowatt hour (KWH). I found that figure on my power company's web site by looking up my current bill. In my case, it was \$0.1336 per KWH. Using those same helpful instructions, I set the rate to \$0.134. Now when I plug something in to measure the power it consumes, the KAW will calculate the cost of the power consumption for a day, week, month, or year.

My first device was simple. A table lamp with a 40 watt incandescent bulb supposedly made by GE. At least it had a GE logo printed on it. After a couple of hours, I checked and found that it had calculated the rate per day at \$0.10, the week went for \$0.76, the month for \$3.28, and the year for \$39.91.

The next was a 13 watt CFL bulb. According to a chart I found on-line the 13 watt unit sits on the line and may be

equivalent to either a 40 or a 60 watt incandescent. Since it was all I had, I used it for the test. By the day it came out at \$0.04, the week at \$0.31, the month at \$1.35 and the year at \$16.43. Kind of makes you think about replacing your old light bulbs doesn't it? Out of curiosity, I switched the KAW to measure watts. This 13 watt bulb measured 13.8 watts after fifteen minutes "on" time.

Both of the previous power cost tests and results are based on having the lamp on all of the time. Unless you live your entire day and night in a basement with no windows, and have to leave the light on because you have a fear of the dark, this is not likely to happen. It does however give you a relative costing figure.

What about those chargers for cell phones that you leave plugged in all of the time? How much do they cost you? I measured the draw for my iPhone 4 wall charger by itself. *There wasn't anything recorded on an over-night test.* It doesn't appear to use any power when not connected to the iPhone! I tried another charger left over from an older Kodak digital camera and, while it got slightly warm after an overnight test, it didn't show any power consumed either! I plugged in my lamp with the incandescent bulb and it tested normally, so I knew my KAW was good.



I re-ran the above tests a week later to see if I had made a mistake somewhere. After leaving them each connected for a couple of days, the outcome for one changed. Perhaps it takes longer to accumulate enough data to produce a reading at the low power drain. The old camera charger managed \$0.04 for a week, \$0.19 for the month, and \$2.34 for the year. Certainly not significant by itself but if you left a dozen or two of these things connected and seldom used, they could total up to a meaningful amount in the end. The iPhone charger - well, it never did give me any reading!

The next thing on the list to try was my satellite receiver and old Sony TV complete with a picture tube (you remember the Trinitron?). With the television off and the receiver on, the cost was \$0.08 per day, \$0.56 per week, \$2.41 per month and 29.34 per year. Turning the TV on, with the volume at comfortable listening level, the results were up to \$0.36 per day, \$2.56 per week, \$10.99 per month, and \$133.00 per year. A good reason to move up to a large screen LED TV!

One of the problems I have with the *Kill A Watt* is that with no built-in backlighting, you need a decent light level, or a flashlight, to read the smaller text on the screen. Couple that with having to get down on your knees to use

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“If you get to thinkin’ you’re a person of some influence, try orderin’ somebody else’s dog around.”

~ Old Farmer

From the May 2012 issue of FUEL FOR THOUGHT, a monthly newsletter by Harold’s Auto Service, Lethbridge Alberta

DI-DAH-DI-DAH!

Why is the level of trust so low these days? I was noodling around the Internet and found the following chart listing the results of a Gallup poll. The polling organization asked 1,017 American adults the following question: “Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields—very high, high, average, low or very low?” The survey takers then read the respondents a list of 22 different professions.

Here are the twenty-two professions included in the Gallup poll ranked by the percentage of Americans who gave its practitioners a “high” or “very high” rating for honesty and ethical standards:

1. Nurses (83%)
2. Pharmacists (66%)
3. Medical doctors (65%)
4. Policemen (63%)
5. Engineers (62%)
6. Dentists (57%)
7. College teachers (54%)
8. Clergy (50%)
9. Chiropractors (34%)
10. Psychiatrists (33%)
11. Journalists (23%)
12. Bankers (19%)
13. State governors (15%)
14. Lawyers (13%)
15. Business executives (12%)
16. Advertising practitioners (11%)
17. Senators (11%)

it in a normally located wall plug makes for a certain awkwardness in testing. My recommendation is to use a short extension cord and save your knees.

Another minor thing to do when you are resetting the KAW to clear memory of a previous test, you need to disconnect any device. Mine wouldn’t reset until I did so. I couldn’t find any mention of that little fact in the instructions. I thought at first that my unit was defective and would have to be returned the next time in Montana. Thankfully, it turned out to be user error on my part. Another example of the poor instructions you get these days.

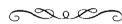
The *Kill A Watt* also measures line voltage and frequency, in addition to the power factor and power associated cost factors. My voltage varies depending on the time of day/night from 118.5 to 121 volts AC. Frequency stayed constant at 59.9-60 Hz. I didn’t check either of those readings for accuracy. The manual says that accuracy (depending on the specific function) is typically 0.2 to 0.5%. Not bad for an inexpensive meter.

We had an electrical storm the other night and at one point the lights dimmed. Not unusual, but normally they recover fairly quickly or the power goes out altogether. After a few minutes, I looked at the voltage function and saw that the line voltage was dropping slowly. It dropped to a low of 92.1 VAC over the next hour before the system corrected itself and snapped up to 133 VAC, then dropped to the normal 120 VAC in the following half hour. At the beginning of the brown-out I switched off the water pump and the furnace, preferring to wait it out.

Home Depot has the EZ model for \$28.97. Their web site also shows a slightly less expensive version for \$20.28. Lowes has the EZ at the same price as Home Depot.

There you have it; my initial testing (playing) with this inexpensive power monitor. Turns out to be a fun and useful piece of test equipment, despite the minor problems encountered.

Now - who knows where there’s a deal on for a new 60-inch LED television!



18. Insurance salesmen (10%)
19. Stockbrokers (9%)
20. Members of Congress (9%)
21. HMO managers (8%)
22. Car salesmen (6%)

Some were a surprise to me, some weren't! Clergy at 50%! How they have fallen. When you think about it, ministers and priests aren't doing so well when it comes to children and abuse in the same sentence these days, are they? How about journalists? Walter Cronkite, when he was alive, was called the most trusted man in America. Guess that doesn't say much for the current crop, does it?

No surprise with politicians and lawyers, is there? Folks just assume that just about anything issuing forth from their mouths will be untrue. Last place, as always, goes to the car salesmen. Members of Congress and stockbrokers shouldn't pat themselves on the back with too much pride, however.

Wonder where pollsters would fall?

Until next month,
VE1VQ

More Pictures and Words

Will you or your group participate in this year's Field Day? If you do, how about sending us a picture and a write-up?

If you are not of the writing type, a picture will do just fine!

Send it to VE1VQ@eastlink.ca

Pictures and Words

How about sending a picture of you and your station? If so inclined, send me a bit of a write-up about your ham radio career. And if you have one, send me a copy of your QSL card.

You're thinking, "no one wants to hear about me!" That's not true because everyone has an interesting story to tell.

Send it to VE1VQ@eastlink.ca in whatever format you want - even scribbled in pencil on a piece of paper.