

The NEWSLETTER

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

is certified to be TOTALLY

April Fools FREE!

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*Links that will take you to web locations referenced in this newsletter are shown in **bold blue text**.*

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

Grandma Mara's RAMBLINGS

I've been meaning to tell you that Wendy and her family all passed their tests in early March. It took them a bit longer to prepare than planned. Originally, they thought four months would be enough. But, what with the Christmas season and all of the busy that goes along with that, they decided just to extend their study and prep time out long enough to be sure they were all ready.

As VEs, Walter and a qualified amateur buddy of his did the honors. No one was surprised when Wendy aced her Amateur Extra. Her mother, father, and brother all achieved their Technician licenses, although with varying levels of anxiety. Her mother commented that it had been some time since she had sat for a test, and that this one had been harder than any she had ever taken at university! Her brother, like a typical teenage young man, didn't say much of anything, just gave a smile and a shoulder shrug when asked what he thought of it.

All of them had read and re-read the manuals over the several months of study. They would ask each other questions across the table at meal times. They also made use of on-line sites such as <http://www.hamtesting.com/>

After testing was complete, and congratulations and handshakes given all around, talk turned to the future. Wendy's brother and parents all said they wanted to take a few months to relax and to learn some on-the-air skills as she had done. After then, they would see if they wanted to take it further. Her father and brother thought they might want to upgrade. Her mother wasn't sure, as she had found it more difficult than the other two to comprehend the technology.

Discussion turned to possible equipment, and we tossed around the pros and cons of various manufacturer's hand-held and mobile possibilities. They decided that dual band HTs were the way to go, so they could keep in touch with each other through one of

Wendy's mother, father, and brother all achieved their Technician licenses, although with varying levels of anxiety.



several local repeaters. Walter suggested the **WOUXUN KG-UV3D-2/420-520** covering both 2-meters and 440, and which has an extended life 1700 mAh high capacity li-ion battery. These units have had good reviews and can be had for around \$120. Wouxun is pronounced *Oh-shin* or *Whoa-shin*.

Once again my chocolate cake topped off a successful test session. Everyone left happy and full!



TECH (AND OTHER) STUFF

by VE1VQ

If you lived on the east coast of North America this past year, you likely noticed the unsettled weather (to say the least!). Perhaps you even lost your electrical power for a period of time. Maybe you thought about an alternate source of power, while sitting there in the dark. The middle of a major storm related power outage is definitely not the time to be out shopping for a generator! If you can find a supplier with any in stock, most likely the price will be higher than normal due to supply (they have it and you don't) and demand (you're not the only one who wants it). During a major ice storm in Ontario and Quebec a few years ago, buyers from those provinces were calling dealers across the rest of the country, trying to buy whatever they had in stock.

The middle of a major storm related power outage is definitely not the time to be out shopping for a generator!

I've talked about generators and generator connection in the past, but now seems like a good time to review some **basic things** again.

WHAT DO I NEED?

Unless you have unlimited funds to spend on a generator to handle your whole house, you will have to determine specifically what you need to keep the "lights on". Make a list of all of these devices (freezer, refrigerator, furnace, television, lamps, etc.) you have to operate to survive. Then you need to find the "starting" or "peak" power (if the device has a motor) and the "running" or "continuous" power figures (in watts) for each device. Use the higher of the two figures. Devices with no motors will only have a continuous rating. The total of these two columns will give you the generator wattage you will need.

For a set of forms to help you do your calculations check out <http://www.portablegeneratoradvisor.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/generator-watt-age-worksheet.pdf>

Something to remember, in order to keep your generator size and cost down, is that you don't have to run all of your desired devices at once. Plug in or switch on the freezer until it reaches its operating temperature, and shuts off. Next run your refrigerator until it does the same. In doing so, you can get by with a smaller and less expensive unit.

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Do you need a portable or a fixed unit? Will you want or need to use it in more than just your home location? Power requirement will largely determine this. While it is relatively easy to push around a 5 kilowatt unit on its own wheels, its another thing to move a 50 kw genset on a trailer unless your vehicle is equipped with the appropriate towing package.



HOW ABOUT THOSE CONNECTIONS?

Two basic types of connection are possible; the first is to plug your appliances and things directly into the generator, or to extension cords from the generator, while the second is to utilize some type of transfer switch. The first method is the simplest, while the second type is the safest.

The first involves unplugging the unit from the wall socket and connecting it to the generator via an extension cord. In the case of a refrigerator or a freezer, that is a relatively easy thing to do. However, it is not so simple a task for a furnace. That would involve having the furnace rewired with a power plug and wall socket. For some, it will be easier to use a portable electrical heater to keep a single room cosy in cold weather.

The second most likely will require the services of an electrician to add a second panel and a transfer switch or to replace the entire house electrical panel, one with the transfer switch built in.

Whatever you do, make very sure that you do not back-feed into the electrical system. Some do-it-yourself



installations have required unplugging the clothes dryer cord and plugging in the generator output to that vacated wall socket, feeding back to the electrical panel and out to the home devices.

This works but will feed generator power out to the transformer on the pole and thence into the grid beyond, unless the main electrical panel breaker is turned off.

Whatever you do, make very sure that you do not back-feed into the electrical system.

In the excitement of the moment, this may not happen, with disastrous results for a linesman expecting a dead circuit. It can also lead to criminal charges being filed against you! That is why transfer switches or distribution panels with transfer switches built in are important - your house is powered by the electric company OR by your generator - and the two sources can never share a common circuit.

THE NEXT BURNING QUESTION

What is the most common fuel for a generator in your area? If propane or natural gas is readily available, this may be the way to go. Gasoline generators are the most common, and gas is easily available - until a crisis occurs and the gas stations run out of supply, or have no electricity to run the pumps. Gas does not store well without additives and must be used and replaced to keep fresh. Gas also may pose an explosion hazard especially if stored in unsafe containers in your home. One place that will act as a gasoline storage facility is your vehicle. Stock rotation

for "freshness" is guaranteed as well. Just make sure you can siphon it off as required. Some vehicles have syphon prevention devices in the filler pipe.

Gas does not store well without additives and must be used and replaced to keep fresh.

Make sure to keep your tank filled at all times. Diesel fuel is just as easy to acquire but with the same crisis problems as gasoline. It will last for longer periods of time and is much safer to store, because of a lower flash point. Typically though, generators for diesel are heavier and more costly than those for gasoline. All of these are choices you have to make based on your local situation and wallet.

SAFETY FIRST

You also have to remember that even though your generator may be physically small in size, the power it can provide can be lethal

... the power it can provide can be lethal if you come between the output and ground.

if you come between the output and ground. Read the owner's manual before using.

Don't wait for it to run dry before you re-fuel. If you wait too long you may have trouble restarting. Never attempt to re-fuel a running generator. Shut the generator off and wait for a period of time to allow for a bit of cooling. Pour the fuel using an approved container and a funnel. Avoid splashing or dripping of the fuel around hot surfaces, and do this in a well ventilated area.

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

When your area has been without power for several days, generators can become extremely popular. The sound of one purring happily along outside your home or garage can draw miscreants from near and far, like ants to a picnic. Thieves have been known to drive around with car windows down, listening for just that sound.

In order to protect their investment, some people foolishly install and run it *inside* their garage, with the doors closed and locked. NEVER a good idea! Besides the obvious stink of exhaust fumes, generators

produce tasteless and odorless carbon monoxide which displaces oxygen in the air. No oxygen means no living.

In order to fix or prevent this problem, move the generator to an open main garage door, or add an exhaust venting kit through an outside wall. If you go with the open door solution, visit your favorite hardware store and purchase a suitable length of hefty steel chain. Fasten one end of the chain to a solid building location such as a large and long eye bolt in the concrete floor. Loop the other end of the chain around the generator frame and fasten it with a good quality padlock or an even better bicycle lock. Most of the padlocks you find in the hardware/building supply stores take less than 30 seconds to open for someone with simple lock pick tools. Serious and determined thieves may bring along bolt cutters. Spend a little more money to safeguard your investment.

Run your generator during the day when you are around and can keep an eye on it. Don't leave it running outside and drive away. After you are finished with it in the evening, bring it back in (if it is outdoors or viewable from the outdoors) and lock the doors.

The sound of [a generator] purring happily along outside your home or garage can draw miscreants from near and far, like ants to a picnic.



FINAL WORDS

Test your generator and connections on a regular basis. Set up a schedule every month or two to start it up. Let it run for 5 - 10 minutes under load before switching it off.

Test your generator and connections on a regular basis.

When I was a kid, there was a Canadian government sponsored advertising slogan on the radio, television, and in print - "Why wait for spring - do it now!" - designed to get home owners to build or renovate in the off (winter) season. To apply that to emergency power situations, you could say, "Why wait for the power to fail - get that generator now!" Or, at least as soon as you can afford it!

Don't be like a friend of mine who bought a generator and had never taken it out of the box, had never added the oil to the motor, didn't have any fuel for it when the power failed, and didn't know how to operate it when he needed it. Trying to comprehend the user's manual in the dark is not a very bright idea.

OTHER STUFF

PAT HAWKER, G3VA - SILENT KEY

RadCom columnist and RSGB Life Vice President Pat Hawker, G3VA, of London, England, passed away February 21. He was 90. For 50 years -- 1958-2008 -- Hawker penned the bi-monthly "Technical Topics" column in RadCom, the member journal of the Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB), focusing on many new techniques and devices that came into being and were enjoyed by radio amateurs in the second half of the 20th century.

Born in Minehead, Somerset in 1922, Hawker's schoolboy interest in radio never left him. He heard his first amateur station on 20 meters in the autumn of 1935. He obtained the "artificial aerial" license 2BUH at age 14 and became G3VA in October 1938, at the then-minimum age of 16. Hawker was involved in many aspects of radio, beginning in World War II as a member of the Radio Security Service (RSS) and its connections to MI5 and MI6. After the Allied invasion of Europe, he spent time with British intelligence services, as well as time with Holland's Bureau of National Security. In 1948, Hawker became an assistant to RSGB General Secretary John Clarricoats, G6CL (SK).

Hawker was also the editor of Electronics Weekly and the journal for the Royal Television Society. From 1968-1987, he worked for the engineering division of Britain's Independent Broadcasting Authority. In addition to writing "Technical Topics," Hawker also wrote various books on electronics and radio and television engineer-

ing, including A Guide to Amateur Radio, Amateur Radio Techniques, Technical Topics Scrapbook (all three published by the RSGB), as well as Outline of Radio and Television, and The Radio Servicing Pocket Book. He was the subject of the RSGB-published book A Bit of Controversy: Pat Hawker -- A Radio Life by Steve White, G3ZVW.

In June 2006, Queen Elizabeth II awarded Hawker the Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for "Services to Radio Communications." In 2006, he was inducted into the CQ Amateur Radio Hall of Fame. Hawker was named a Life Vice President of the RSGB in 2008 for his contributions to Amateur Radio and for his writing across a whole spectrum of publications over many years.

-- from the ARRL Letter 26 Feb 2013.



VOICES

FROM THE NET

RICK - VE3ATM

Back in my early teens, I used to get the HeathKit catalogs, as I was interested in electronics and electricity. I had built a couple of kits and I was starting to get interested in the Ham Radios shown on the pages. I started by listening to an old short wave radio in our basement, to different Ham operators on the bands.

I looked into the hobby, but when I found out I needed to learn Morse code to get my license I gave up on the idea.

Well, a number of years went by; I joined the Church and was in a meeting where our Stake President was looking for brethren to get involved with ham radio for Emergency Communications. I learned that you did not have to learn code to get on the 2m band so I picked up the manuals and after a number of hours of reading I arranged with the local radio club to take the writ-



ten exam; passing with flying colours [for you 'mericans who aren't fluent in Canadian, that's the word for *colors* - Ed] back in 1994. By then I had a radio license for Aviation and Marine as I had flown for a number of years and owned a 24' sailboat before I was married.

Unfortunately at the time, no other brethren in the Stake were interested in ham radio so I

decided to learn Morse code, using practice tapes and a computer program, to have access to the HF bands, as a letter handed to me by the Stake President spoke about quarterly ERRS nets, and some group called MARA with weekly nets.

I managed to pass the 5 wpm code which gave me access to the 80 metre [another of those Canadian things; means *meter*, as in length - nothing to do with meter, as in a measuring instrument] band. I was able to borrow an old Kenwood TS-830 rig from an older family friend that had been in ham radio from just after WWII. I was then invited to attend a special meeting for Stake Communication Specialists that was coming up at the Indianapolis Storehouse. There I met a number of the MARA Mid-West members who gave me a lot of encouragement to get involved. I remember Paul Forgrave, K8ES, [SK] who spent some time with me after the weekly nets helping me where he could. I also spent considerable and enjoyable time talking with Bill Young, W7RVY, [SK] in Pennsylvania, on both HF and two metres through a repeater that we could both access on the south shore of Lake Erie. I live in the middle of the Niagara Peninsula and from my back window I can see across Lake Erie on a clear day into the states of NY and PA.

I continued with the books and passed the Advanced Test but I was still lacking full access to all bands as I did not have my 12

wpm code. I purchased an old HeathKit electronic keyer, continued with the tapes and computer program practicing the code until I actually passed the 12 wpm test on the first try... not bad for a guy with a tin ear. Because of my tin ear though I gladly gave up using CW once I passed the test. I did spend some time with Packet and other HF digital modes for a time as my background was Computer Repair and end- user Computer support.

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My Station

I spent time walking around the neighbourhood with my kids while they delivered newspapers, and noticed a number of homes with TV towers and satellite dishes, so I made up a flyer saying I would remove their old tower and antenna at no charge. Well, I managed to get enough of the same type of tower sections to put together a 40 foot tower. I cleaned it up and painted it with

Tremclad Rust

Inhibitor paint. I used a few old TV antennas to make a two meter beam and a few lengths of copper pipe to build a few different types of two metre antennas including Double Zepp, J Pole and $\frac{1}{4}$ wave antennas.

My first two metre rig was a used Kenwood HT a friend sold me very reasonably; the TH-27a. Over time I managed to purchase a Yaesu two metre rig that served me well for a number of years, but about two years ago I upgraded to the Kenwood dual band rig so down came the home-built beam, but I left up the Double Zepp just as a backup antenna should I ever need one. I put up a Diamond X-50 antenna since I needed a dual band antenna for the dual band rig.

When it was time to put up an HF antenna, I had limited back yard space; so after speaking with a few older Ham's in the area I ended up putting up a long-wire antenna that when viewed from above would look like a Z. The apex is at approximately 40 feet coming down to about 8 feet above the ground with one leg going south the other going north. The excess wire on the north leg then runs parallel to the ground for approximately 20 more feet to the west. The south leg also runs parallel to the ground to the east and it is approximately 15 feet long. That antenna has been up for about 12 years and works very well at getting out and picking up fellow MARA members to the west, some as far away as Wis-



VE3ATM Station equipment - Kenwood TS-590s, TM-V71A, PC-1A phone patch and a basic Weather Station in the background.

I managed to get enough of the same type of tower sections to put together a 40 foot tower.



Rick's tower with the G5RV, home brew 80M long-wire, home-brew Double Zepp and the Diamond X50 at the top.

consin, over 600 miles as the crow flies. It is also doing well at getting out to the south to Dan, NE3Z, net control for the ERS net, at this time from South Carolina - over 650 miles as the crow flies to the south. It also seems to do well to the east when band conditions cooperate to you folks in the MARA-NE net.

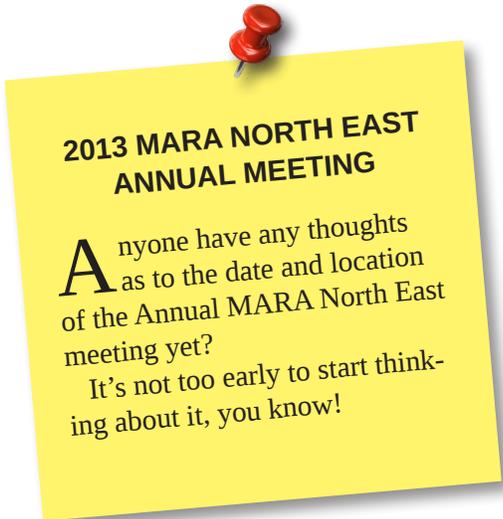
A few years back I purchased a G5RV antenna and use it for the 40 and 20 metre bands. I don't use it much as I don't spend a lot of time on the HF bands, but it has come in useful of late with the new weekly North Eastern ERS net on the 40M band.

As I mentioned, a friend loaned me his older Kenwood TS-830 rig along with the matching antenna tuner. I used that for two or three years until I managed to get the funds together to purchase a used Kenwood TS-850SAT. I loved that rig and it served me well, but I decided that it was getting older and time to sell it before it caused me any problems. I purchased a new Kenwood TS-590S last spring. With the built-in DSP, it makes it much easier picking out signals when

band conditions so often deteriorate. I would love to own a linear amplifier, but it will be some time before I acquire one of those.

I would love to own a linear amplifier, but it will be some time before I acquire one of those.

At this point in time we do not have any plans for a mission, as both my wife's and my parents are still living, but now require much more help than they have ever needed, so time will tell. Until then you will continue to hear me on the weekly MARA-MW net and the North East ERC 80 and 40 metre nets.



2013 MARA NORTH EAST ANNUAL MEETING

Anyone have any thoughts as to the date and location of the Annual MARA North East meeting yet?

It's not too early to start thinking about it, you know!

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I've always believed that a lot of the trouble in the world would disappear if we were talking to each other instead of about each other."

Ronald Reagan

DI-DAH-DI-DAH †

I don't consider myself racist. I like to think I'm a tolerant person. I like to think I'm a little better than my father and grandfather. I hope my children and my grand children will be even more tolerant than me.

One situation I encounter fairly often is in phoning a customer service line and getting someone for whom English is very obviously not their first language, someone with an accent so bad as to be impossible to understand. The question

is - why would a company put someone, who can't be understood in English, to answering questions and trying to solve problems with an English clientele? Of course, the answer is almost always the desire on the part of the company to cut costs. Despite what they may say, it is certainly not to provide better customer service.

One of the major Canadian banks uses, for their first level computer service desk, support people in India. Some of these are knowledgeable about the technology, and very proficient in English. Others, and the one's I seem to get most often, are the ones whose mothers probably can't understand. At times, it has been so bad that I've had to say, "I'm sorry but I can't understand you. Can you transfer me to a supervisor, or someone who speaks English more clearly?" As you might expect, this does not make them happy!

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I should explain at this point that one of the jobs I do is as a service sub-contractor to IBM/LENOVO/LEX-MARK on their computers, printers, ATMs, and other assorted hardware.

I wouldn't expect any company to hire me and then put me on the phones to provide service in French to a French client base, just because I can read the back of corn flake boxes. So why don't companies put people on the help desk lines who can properly and clearly speak the language?

I just think providing service on the telephone in the clearly understood language of the customer is good common business sense.

I don't think my attitude is racist or bigoted. I just think providing service on the telephone in the clearly understood language of the customer is good common business sense.

But then a lot of business these days is more about cents than sense.

Until next month,
VE1VQ

2012 MARA NORTH EAST ANNUAL MEETING

I'm still looking for the minutes for the 2012 Annual Meeting. Does anyone have a copy of those for the web site page?

FIELD DAY 2013

Is anyone thinking about operating from a chapel for Field Day this year?
Remember, it's June 22nd and 23rd this year!

LDS FIELD DAY 2013

Does anyone know if LDS Field Day is taking place this year?