

The NEWSLETTER

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Mercury Amateur Radio Association - MARA
North America - North East

Remember
your
sweetie,

this
Valentine's
day

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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

TECH AND OTHER STUFF

by VE1VQ

Grandma isn't one of those people who gets all mushy over these faux anniversaries that some women seem to spring on their men, but I kind of like Valentine's Day 'cause that was sort of the first date Walter and I had! This year we plan on going to the annual Ward dance, this time as an "old" married couple! Hopefully, this year Walter won't be as nervous when it comes to pinning on my corsage! Or when we hit the dance floor. It was cute how he was so worried that he would step on my toes and create the wrong impression.

Once he got over his nervousness, it turned out that he was quite the "hoofer". I can tell you, by the end of the evening, I knew my feet would be aching the next few days.



Speaking of tender tootsies, Grandma is going to have surgery sometime later this year on my bunions. They have been plaguing me for nearly a decade now, and it's getting to the point where my dancing days will soon be over unless I have something done. I'll be on crutches for the better part of a couple of months for each foot as the sawbones won't operate on both at the same time. She said I'd be totally bedridden for the two to three months while they healed if she did that. And she said there was no way she would do that to anyone!

I looked up the incidences of bunions in women and men and found that we outnumber males nine to one. Some of the reasons given for their occurrence are poor fitting shoes (especially high-heeled pointy-toed ones for women), and genetics. Although there's a lot of controversy about how much each of these really play a role.

Walter says he will wait on me "hand and foot" during my convalescence. When a friend suggested I should have a bell to ring to "summon" him to my bedside should I need anything, Wendy told me that's what we have our two-meter hand-helds for!

I figure that at the very least I'll get some quality time on the HF rig during the recovery period. The surgery certainly won't affect my CW "fist".

AR

ANY ANTENNA IS BETTER THAN NO ANTENNA OR EVEN A BAD ANTENNA IS BETTER THAN NO ANTENNA

Many of us are lucky these days if we can hang any piece of antenna wire outside, let alone a full size dipole or end-fed for the lower frequencies, what with restrictive covenants and the seemingly always present regulation Nazis, postage stamp sized lots, or unsympathetic spouses.

From the time I first got my ticket, except for a few years in boarding places or apartments in the late 1960s and early to mid 1970s, I've had enough room to string out whatever wire antenna I was interested in experimenting with at the time - money permitting. Even in the apartment, I played with wires taped to walls, hanging from light fixtures, or outside over balconies. That was in the days before antenna modelling software was available to tell me why I shouldn't have done it. Sometimes what we didn't know (and couldn't measure!), or didn't hurt us or our tube transmitters, we simply did it anyway, managing despite the drawbacks, to somehow work other stations.

Sometimes what we didn't know (or couldn't measure!) didn't hurt us or our tube transmitters so we simply did it anyway, managing despite the drawbacks, to somehow work other stations.

When it was alive, **73 Magazine** used to have an annual antenna issue with a lot of one or two page articles on just this type of thing. These were great, not complicated, and something that most everyone could try out.

Speaking of 73 Magazine, an index is available on-line at <http://mikeyancey.com/73mag/>. You can search by title, author's call sign, by year, or by month. Links are provided to view the issue or article. The actual archives are located at <https://archive.org/details/73-magazine>. Type "concealed", "hidden", or "stealth" in the title field.

One such article I found is about the efforts of one ham to install concealed antennas¹. Another is an article

about a hidden-in-plain-sight multi band antenna²

Now with the Internet, finding information about hidden or stealth antennas is easy. Simply type the search term into GOOGLE or your favorite browser and wait a second for the "hits". Many talk about making antennas using small diameter magnet wire, or wire painted³ camo, blue, green, or black. Stealth colored wire is even available commercially^{4,5}.

Constructing an antenna out of #28 (or finer) magnet wire has always seemed like an exercise in futility and failure. I tried it once or twice but never with any success. If I remember, the wire always broke during the attempt. Obviously, I lacked something in the finer skills of wire weight tossing.

And then there's the always popular flagpole vertical, both home brew^{6,7,8,9} and commercial^{10,11,12,13} for those living with homeowner associations and covenant restrictions, or partner prohibitions. These antennas range from the very simple single band to the more sophisticated with complicated multi-band matching circuits. There's one by N4AQ¹⁴ that is a combination of commercial and home brew with a Hustler vertical and PVC pipe. The links listed below are just a very small sample of those available. Using your favorite search engine, type in *flagpole vertical antenna*.

While you're checking out the link for reference #8, take a look around N6CC's web site. There is a lot of good information on both hidden/stealth and portable styles of radiators, and operating portable. He comes from a military background which shows in his choices of antennas, and he's all for making do with what you have on hand.

Here in [Canada's "Ocean Playground"](#), I have nearly fifty acres to hang antennas and play radio. For the last number of years, I've been using a 500-foot horizontal loop fed with home brew open wire line. In Alberta, at the site of the retirement digs, the 0.89 acre on the edge of town is looking awfully small, what with the house and the front yard taking up a good part of it. Nary a tree on it. Just some scraggly bushes on the rear boundary line. The town office tells me antennas fall



A flagpole installation at [KX9DK](#) using a Hustler 4BTV trapped vertical antenna inside plastic pipe. As with [N4AQ's](#) antenna, he omitted the antenna's capacitance hat.

(not always a good word to associate with an antenna!) under Federal jurisdiction - not theirs! I wonder how many officious local officials will come crawling out of the woodwork the day after I raise any kind of antenna? May soon be the time to fly the flag.

1 http://archive.org/stream/73-magazine-1975-03/03_March_1975#page/n62/mode/1up

2 http://archive.org/stream/73-magazine-1997-02/02_February_1997#page/n72/

3 <http://www.radiosurvivalist.com/antennas/stealth-hidden-camouflage.asp>

4 <http://www.davisrf.com/antenna-wire/flexweave.php>

5 <http://www.thewireman.com/antennap.html>

6 <http://www.arri.org/news/the-field-day-flag-pole-vertical>

7 <http://www.hamuniverse.com/kx9dk4btvflagpole.html>

8 <http://www.n6cc.com/tactical-antenna-systems>

9 http://www.youtube.com/embed/zXb_BPMdedc?

10 <http://www.zerofive-antennas.com/30-foot-10-80-meter-6-high-performance-commercial-duty-flagpole-vertical-antenna>

11 <http://www.sgcworld.com/23ftflagpoleinstall.html>

12 http://static.dxengineering.com/pdf/flagpole_antenna.pdf

13 <http://www.eham.net/reviews/detail/9112>

14 http://static.dxengineering.com/pdf/flagpole_antenna.pdf

EASY TRIM METHOD FOR WIRE ANTENNAS

In last month's column, I mentioned the error I found with the QST *Hints and Kinks* article (October 2013) on an easy method of trimming a wire antenna. I see they published a correction in the December QST. Assuming you have an analyzer covering the band, it is a simple way to tune the antenna with a minimal amount of raising and lowering. 



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of other’s opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.”

Steve Jobs

DI-DAH-DI-DAH ^D_I

Walter and I are both in agreement that the “real” anniversary dates are hard enough to keep track of without introducing ones for “first date”, “first hug” or first kiss”. Maybe we should have ones for passing our first amateur exam, our first CW, voice or digital on-the-air contact, or..., well you get what I mean!

Some of this stuff we have in our lives is simply clutter. Not only do we fill our lives with physical “stuff” but also the mental and emotional “stuff” as well. The above examples of ridiculousness

are a prime example.

Maybe the female side of the equation can remember these things. I certainly know that I can’t! After more than forty years of marriage I’ve gotten her birthday down. Still having a little trouble with the anniversary date.

Why do we do this to ourselves? Do we not have enough going on in our lives to keep us occupied? Do we have empty time and feel the need to fill it? When we are younger, we say we are doing it “for the kids”; that they have to be doing all kinds of things to make them more “rounded” in their skills, talents, and abilities. Once the children leave the nest, what is our

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excuse then? Or have we just gotten used to the being busy and have the incurable need to fill the vacancy?

The interesting thing is that surveys indicate that most of us dream of going back to a simpler time of our lives.

I remember back many years ago when we had only one very young child (eventually that turned into four). I changed jobs and we moved about three hours away to the southern part of the province. There was no Church unit nearby (closest was a two hour drive!), and I relinquished my duties in the executive of the gun club to which I had belonged. I still remember the feeling of *freedom* I had when, in the new place, I had nothing that took me out nights and on Saturdays. Wasn’t more than a few years when that open space seemed to have filled back up again.

Now, as I’m older (and perhaps a bit wiser), I try to be more careful about what I take on to occupy that spare time.

Now, as I’m older (and perhaps a bit wiser), I try to be more careful about what I take on to occupy that spare time. I still shoot occasionally but I’ve stayed clear of the administration side of things. A couple of evenings a month I teach a fire arms safety course. Church-wise, I’m the tech specialist for the stake, but that only kicks in when someone has a computer, internet, or a sound system problem. Most weeks, that makes for a fairly quiet time.

The point of all this is that we can take what spare time we have, and fill it with essentially good but really just busy-stuff. Why not take the time to learn a new skill - like cooking, painting (either pictures or walls!), dancing, or a new language. How about volunteering for something in your community to share the talents you already have?

Just don’t replace old busy-stuff with new busy-stuff. What’s the point in doing that?

Until next month,
VEIVQ