

The NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2014 VOLUME 14, No. 8

Mercury Amateur Radio Association - MARA

North America - North East

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

- Nelson Mandela



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OTHER STUFF

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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

AND NOW, A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings. We finally have a date for a meeting. Please mark your calendars for Saturday, October 11th at 9 AM EST. We will be making extensive use of Skype to conduct this meeting. Any wishing to gather for the meeting are welcome to my home in central New Jersey.

Let me first catch up on a few things. Our group has grown over the last two years with new participants in the Saturday morning net and additional use of Skype and Echolink to share our passion for amateur radio, and the many technical and social interests and concerns which surround us. With the elimination of dues as a method of maintaining the membership roster, please remember to respond to VE1VQ's annual invitation to membership and membership renewal.

This year we will be discussing the MARA-NE Constitution and By-laws for any needed amendments, so read them over on the club web site and submit comments on the Yahoo Group.

We will also be electing board members and officers at this year's meeting. There are at least three board positions to be filled:

two, six year terms are due for election and a four year term to fill the vacancy left by Jeff Niceler (SK). Also, all four officer positions are up for election. Steve Kelly was re-elected Vice President in 2012 and the rest having been held over since there was no meeting last year.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you all for the honor of serving as chapter president these few years, and suggest new leadership is needed. I look forward to continuing my association and camaraderie with all of you well into the future.

73,
Bruce
N3IA
PRESIDENT, MARA Northeast

AGENDA for the ANNUAL MEETING

In N3IA's column, mention was made about submitting your ideas prior to the annual meeting, on the MARA NE e-mail reflector. From these e-mail's, I will create a meeting agenda, and post it to the reflector prior to the meeting date. It will also be included in the October Newsletter.

Read over the [constitution and by-laws](#), and get your ideas in. Or, if you prefer, send them direct to me via e-mail (ve1vq@eastlink.ca).

Dave
VE1VQ
SECRETARY, MARA Northeast

Grandma Mara's RAMBLINGS

In keeping with this month's loose theme of education and learning, Fred, from the senior's home, wanted Grandma to let everyone know that even at his age (and he wouldn't exactly tell me what that age was!) you can still learn new things, and enjoy doing so. Walter, and his [Volunteer Examiner](#) group did the official testing in the second week of August, and we're happy to say that everybody was successful in obtaining their Technician's ticket. They immediately made a group buy of [ALINCO DJ-175T](#)

handhelds through a local dealer who was happy to sell them at a small markup over cost price. Now the predominant conversations around the home are not about gall bladders, arthritis, or flatulence, but what was discussed on last week's two meter repeater net, or about a new found feature on someone's handheld. The newly licensed residents have even

Now the predominant conversations around the home are not about gall bladders, arthritis, or flatulence, but what was discussed on last week's two meter repeater net, or a new found feature on someone's handheld.

started their own nightly round table table net on two meter simplex using the low power setting.

The home's administrator (with whom I was already acquainted) called me one day to chat about the change in the attitudes observed in the residents who had taken the radio course. Seems the staff had noticed a more positive outlook from that group as a whole. Now that they have developed a serious interest in something outside of themselves, they have something to look forward to each day - instead of wondering if their kids will ever come to visit them. Staff have observed fewer complaints about aches and pains; some of the oldsters had even discontinued their mild depression medication. She said she called to thank me for the interest we had taken in the group. As much as I would have liked to take the credit, I had to tell her that it was all Wendy's idea (along with a helping hand from Walter). She marvelled at how someone that young (Wendy - not Walter!) would take an interest in folks at the opposite end of the age spectrum. I gave her Wendy's phone number and suggested she call Wendy and tell her what she had said to me.

She also wanted to know if Walter and I would be willing to meet with her, sometime in the near future, to discuss adding amateur radio to their emergency planning. I told her I would check with Walter and get back to her with a date and time, and suggested that both Wendy and Fred be asked to participate as well.

Walter says he had a great time teaching with Wendy. Said it made him feel younger instructing "those seniors". He also said it disproved the myth that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. All that was needed was to be able to explain the concepts in different ways to which they could relate and understand.

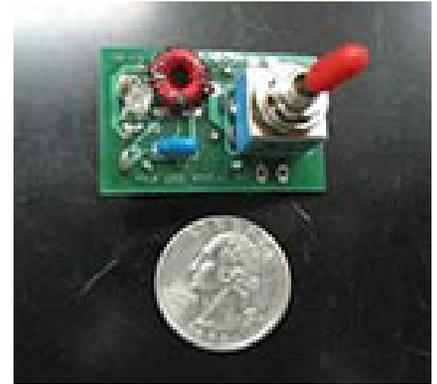
Fred mentioned that others at the home, including a couple of staff members, have expressed interest in a second class, perhaps starting in the fall. Seems that they have seen the new interest in life from these freshly minted amateurs.

Who knows - maybe ham radio could replace **Prozac!**

AR

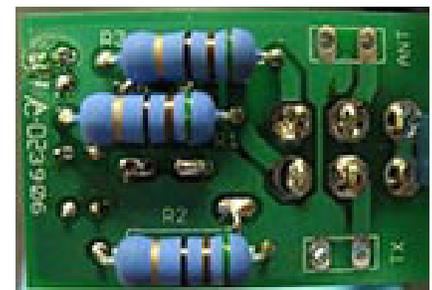
Who knows - maybe ham radio will replace Prozac!

In the July newsletter, I wrote about a Z-match tuner from **QRP KITS**. This tuner kit includes a bridge type indicator circuit, using an LED rather than a meter. The circuit was (as far as I know) first described by Dan Tayloe, N7VE, several years ago. It has since been incorporated in several variations and flavors of tuners made by different kit suppliers. You can see from the picture to the right how small it is compared to a US ten cent piece. This makes it easy to incorporate into most any low power tuner.



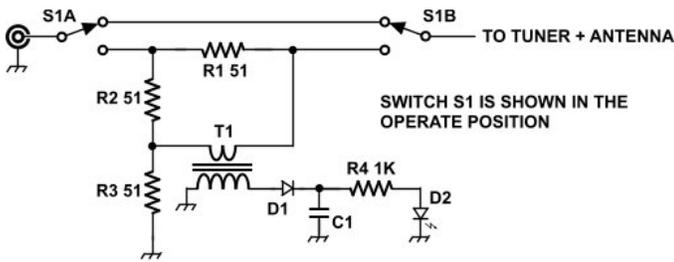
N7VE LED SWR Bridge compared to a US ten cent piece. Photo from **QRP-KITS.COM**

In the schematic below, it is somewhat difficult to recognize it as a bridge circuit. I've redrawn it as shown in the simplified drawing further along. You can see that it now looks like the textbook bridge circuit with three components of known resistance (resistors R1, R2, and R3, and the fourth one unknown (the tuner and antenna).



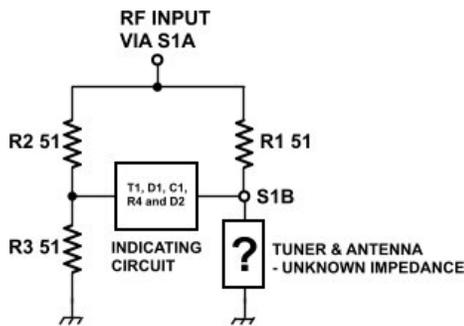
The resistor side of the N7VE LED SWR Bridge. Photo from **QRPKITS.COM**

When the variable capacitors in the tuner section are adjusted to transform the resistive and reactive values of the antenna and feed line to fifty-one ohms, the bridge becomes balanced, the voltage of the junction of R1 and the tuner is the same as the voltage at the junction of R2 and R3, and the LED goes "out". In some cases where the tuner cannot quite tune to a balanced condition, the LED may still be dimly lit. One comment I read on-line says that it is usable down into the microwatt region. Using the TENC TEC 506 QRP rig, the LED glows very brightly off tune and goes out completely when my 500 foot horizontal loop antenna is "adjusted".



The schematic for the N7VE LED SWR Bridge. Switch S1 must be toggled to the TUNE position in order to use the Bridge to adjust your tuner.

In the “tune” position, the three 51 ohm resistors provide protection for your transmitter’s output transistor (or transistors) against things such as a shorted coaxial cable. Just don’t forget to switch S1 back to operate or your output power will be significantly reduced, as will the received signal.



A simplified schematic showing the more recognizable bridge circuit.

This is not designed for higher power output, such as the typical 100 watt transceiver. It is intended for low power levels only.

Simple to build and straight forward to use! What more can you ask.

AR

2014 ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Mercury Amateur Radio Association - North East will be held on the 11th of October utilizing SKYPE video conferencing as the meeting place. Originally, it had tentatively been planned for the 6th of September at 9 AM Eastern. Because of organizational difficulties, it has been moved to the new date in October. The time will likely remain the same but this will be confirmed via the e-mail reflector and in the October issue of this newsletter.

It used to be simple to know who could vote at an annual meeting. Only those whose membership was

paid up could do so. Since we’ve sort of done away with dues (still to be brought forward and voted upon), we don’t have an official list. The parts of the Constitution and By-Laws applicable to membership have the following to say:

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ARTICLE I - MEMBERSHIP

All persons interested in providing emergency communication services for the LDS Church by Amateur Radio shall be eligible for membership. Membership shall be by application and election upon such terms as the club shall provide in its By-laws.

ARTICLE II - OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

5. Officers and Board Members must be members of the club in good standing, must hold at least a General Class Amateur Radio License and be members of the LDS Church.

BY-LAWS

2. MEMBERSHIP. Full membership is open to licensed amateurs. Associate membership is open to all other interested persons. Full membership includes all club privileges including the right to vote for club officers and to serve as a club officer except that club officers must also be members of a unit of the North American Northeast area of the LDS Church. Associate membership includes all club privileges except for the right to hold office and vote for club officers. Applications for membership shall be submitted at regular club meetings or Directors meeting, either in person or by mail.

More simply, what this says is the membership in MARA-NE is open to anyone, anywhere. (Article I - Membership)

Anyone wanting to apply for membership has to submit an application either in person (at a club meeting) or by mail.

Anyone wanting to apply for membership has to submit an application either in person (at a club meeting) or by mail. The application will then be considered either at a regular club meeting, or a Directors’ meeting. (By-Laws 2. Membership) In this Internet age, an application by e-mail to the secretary would also be considered.

Full membership is open to licensed amateurs. Anyone

who wishes to be a member and who does not hold a valid ham ticket becomes an associate member and cannot vote. (By-Laws 2. Membership)

Officers and Board Members must be a member of a unit of the Northeast area of the LDS Church, and must hold an amateur license of General class or higher. (Article II - Officers and Board of Directors)

There you have it!

Since we are no longer requiring dues for memberships, and those dues have long since run out, we need to redo our membership list. Would everyone who wishes to become a member of MARA NE print off a copy of the [membership application form](#) and mail it to

MARA NE SECRETARY
Dave Marling
PO Box 33
Tusket, Nova Scotia
Canada
B0W 3M0

Or you can download a copy of the form, print it out, fill it in, then scan and e-mail it to the address shown for VE1VQ on page one of this newsletter.

Even if you have been a member before, if you consider yourself one now, or are a member of the executive or the board of directors, please send in a new application. Since we have less than two months before the annual meeting, you should get it in the mail quickly. Scanning and e-mailing would be better.

From the application forms received, a new membership list will be created, with only the person's name, call sign, Stake or District, and e-mail address (modified so as not recognized by web crawlers). If you do NOT want your e-mail address showing on the web page, simply indicate so on the membership application. 

Subscribing to the MARA NE e-Mail Reflector

When the MARA NE web site was hosted by the previous internet provider, we had a page telling you how you could subscribe to the e-mail reflector. When we changed over to [ARVIXE](#), the new provider, the time seemed right to update the page. Well, that hasn't happened yet, but it will soon, real soon...

In the meantime, here is the way to join the e-mail reflector.

1. Using your web browser, go to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mara_ne/join
2. If you already have a YAHOO user name and password then sign in. If you don't, then you will have to

sign up for a free account by clicking on the Create New Account link. Follow the instructions to create your account. Once done, sign in and continue to the next step.

3. In the search bar at the top of the next page, type in "mara_ne" (without the quote marks).
4. Click on the mara_ne link that appears. That will take you to the MARA NE page.
5. Click on the "Join Group" button
6. Set your membership preferences (your public profile, email address, message delivery, etc.).
7. Click Send Request.

There should be a box somewhere in the process following step 5 above, that will allow you to add a short comment. Be sure to type your call sign, or if you have no amateur call, the reason why you want to join the reflector.

Because the group is access controlled, a request will be sent to the moderators who will approve your request, usually within 24 hours. You will receive an e-mail confirming your acceptance.

If this doesn't work for you, send an e-mail to ve1vq@eastlink.ca. He will send you a Yahoo invitation from the reflector. 

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of all adults of every age?"

Erich Fromm

DI-DAH-DI-DAH

From the chatter on the MARA-NorthEast e-mail reflector, it appears that we might be going to have an annual meeting this year! We haven't had one since 2012! What is the reason for that? Is it apathy on the part of the executive? Is it a lack of interest on the part of those making up the general membership? Are we so "Church conditioned" that we have been waiting for the leadership to bring the idea forward? Are we all so busy with all of life's other "things" to be concerned with MARA? The constitution does call for a meeting at

least every two years, so we are within our governing rules here.

If you subscribe to the MARA NE e-mail reflector you know that WD4HXG, Chuck, has been advocating for a virtual meeting. Every Saturday morning, following the 80 meter SSB net, a few folks connect using SKYPE to see how it works. For the most part - it does (work!), but with some difficulties. If you use SKYPE on a regular basis, you will know about the freezing of the video and the drop-out or delay of the audio, both seemingly common happenings. WD4HXG has done a lot of research into the problems and possible fixes. You might want to review his reflector e-mails if you are interested in joining in for the on-line annual meeting.

So what's to become of the MARA Northeast? Our NE SSB net has decreased in numbers, partly due to the poor propagation conditions on 80 meters, and partly due to the level of interest of LDS amateur radio operators within and without the geographical area that comprises the Northeast. The Church's ERC Saturday morning nets on 80 and 40 meters may have drawn some away as well.

There may still be a lingering distrust of MARA from some of the older ERC personnel who remember the separation of MARA from the Church, and that may carry over to the new LDS hams, especially those involved in branch/ward/stake ERC callings.

Is it simply time to let MARA fade into an interesting but minor footnote in the history of the LDS Church? Or is there enough interest in keeping it going?

Some of the local MARAs are flourishing. Others are languishing. Some have dropped "MARA" from their group's name, possibly to put some perceived distance between themselves and the Church.

There has been some whispers about reviving the main MARA, as sort of an umbrella organization, with representatives from the local or baby MARAs. Not with top down control, as in the past, but as a loose confederation.

Let's face it, our MARA is, at best, a social organization these days, despite what it may say in the mission statement. Is it simply time to let MARA fade into an interesting but minor footnote in the history of the LDS Church? Or is there enough interest in keeping it going?

Until next month,

VE1VQ

