

The NEWSLETTER

JULY 2015 VOLUME 15, No. 7

Mercury Amateur Radio Association - MARA

North America - North East

Show off your
PATRIOTISM
this month...

Fly a flag on your
antenna.



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

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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

Past issues of The NEWSLETTER may be viewed at <http://ne.mara.net/newsletters.htm>

Grandma Mara's RAMBLINGS

TECH AND OTHER STUFF

by VE1VQ

I am happy to report, for the most part, our Field Day event went off pretty well. Some of us were on the site by late Friday afternoon, some Friday evening, and the rest coming on Saturday morning. The radio part went very successfully, with everyone logging some time at the HF SSB position. The residents and staff members from the senior's home were well organized in pairs, one to handle the microphone and the other to take care of the log sheet. Half way through their "shift" they would change places with each other.

When the seniors left for the night, Wendy and her boyfriend kept the sideband station going into the late hours. They had a friendly competition to see who made the most contacts in their on-air time. She was able to take the "trophy" with about twenty per cent more. The trophy being a kiss from the loser. Doesn't seem like either one lost!

The HF digital station was popular with a lot of the group, with Wendy acting as a mentor.

Fred and Emily had a slight mishap when it was their turn at the SSB rig.

PSK31 was the main mode, although Walter did play with some others in the late night hours when the radio wasn't being used. Power output was kept under twenty watts.

Fred and Emily had a minor **Murphy** mishap when it was their turn at the SSB rig. A couple of the support ropes holding the position shelter in place let go and the tent roof partly collapsed on top of the couple. Several of us who were close by ran to their rescue. We could hear them continuing to handle calls under the downed canopy. After we got it back in place and secured again, they explained they were on a run with a bit of a pileup of JAs (caused no doubt by Emily being at the mic) and didn't want to lose the frequency!

Things went relatively smooth after that, what with Wendy's dad and her boyfriend keeping track of the scheduling and other goings on, and answering questions from curious passersby. A couple of whom stayed for quite a while, very interested in what we were doing. Wendy's mom handled the meal time prep and kept us all fed and happy.

The retirement home provided the Saturday night meal to slightly over forty people.

The retirement home provided the Saturday night

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By no means do I consider myself any kind of expert at producing a newsletter, but if you have just been given the assignment for doing the Sunday ward or branch bulletin, or gotten "volunteered" to do the local, monthly radio club epistle, then I can at least, give you a few tips that I've discovered along my path to enlightenment, that might help you. The things that follow are things I've learned by trial and error - mostly the latter!

LOOK AROUND

Take a look at all of the print magazines, newsletters, and on-line productions you can find. Make a note of what you like (and don't like)! Copy what you do like. Don't be afraid to make changes as time goes by, if you see something you like better.

FIND SOME SOFTWARE

I started out with an old version (1997) of Microsoft WORD. It was pretty clunky but it was slightly better than nothing. I tried a couple of other programs (Broderbund Print Shop for one) which were so-so, but not what I really wanted, before I lucked into a second hand copy of Adobe INDESIGN, from a friend, at a good price. **Buying a new copy** for a volunteer newsletter is likely more than most people will want to shell out for (currently \$699.99 US).

When you want to move up from the likes of WORD but don't want to lay out cash, or burn a hole in your credit card, try **SCRIBUS**. This is open source software (meaning FREE). It lets you move from the pre-press editing format to the final PDF version suitable for printing or for upload to a web page. You can download it at <http://www.scribus.net/downloads-3/stable-branch/>



One of the nicest programs comes from a British company called **XARA**. They have various flavors of text, photo, and web editing software. The one I have is **DESIGNER PRO** (<http://www.xara.com/us/designer-pro/>) now in its tenth version. The cost may be prohibitive for many, at US\$299, but is worth it if you are into serious work. This one does photo editing, text layout, line drawings, web design and a whole lot more.



Version updates are free throughout the year, version upgrades are under a \$100 if you have an older edition. You can try it free for thirty days.

If you don't need, or want, the web, drawing, and photo editing features, try XARA's **PAGE AND LAYOUT DESIGNER**. The price for that is US\$89.

SETTLE ON A FONT

The font (or type face) you choose will be different for different applications and audiences. One for a *wedding invitation* will not be the same as one for a ham radio newsletter. For the latter, you want a clean and clear font to make it easier to read on a page, be it printed on paper or on the web. The whole idea is to get information across, not to make it confusing and hard to figure out.

The font used here is CALIBRI and was available a couple of years ago as a free download. It came as a package containing LIGHT, *LIGHT ITALIC*, REGULAR, *ITALIC*, **BOLD**, and **BOLD ITALIC**. Now, it seems that none of the font sites carry it any more. It appears however, that it is available to purchase, or you can get it included with some Microsoft software packages.

Why bother to buy it when there are lots of similar ones free for the download. Type "free fonts" into your favorite search engine, or go to my favorite one - <http://www.dafont.com/>. Do a search for "sans serif". Pick a font you like, one with at least regular, italic, bold, and bold italic styles.

CHOOSE THE SIZE

If you are writing for a younger crowd with better eyesight, you can get away with a smaller size of type. A smaller size also means you can stuff more information on a page. There is probably some formula somewhere allowing you to accurately calculate what size is best for a given situation. In the end, I chose 11 point. This was a compromise that looked right! Too small makes it hard to read; too large makes it look stuffed and uncomfortable.

ONE, TWO, OR THREE

Whether you go with a single page wide column, or two (as here) or three or more, depends on what you like. QST Magazine uses three which looks great on the printed page. I tried three columns, but to my eye, with the 11 point size text, it looked too crowded, so two columns it is. If it's your production you can do what you want.

If you go for three or more, think about decreasing the font size by one or two steps to make things fit and look better.

WHITE SPACE

Don't be afraid of using open area in your creation! Leave space between text and borders or pictures. You don't have to cram stuff into every last part of the page.

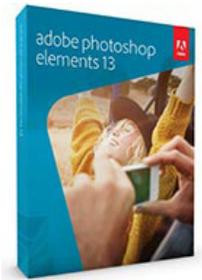


IMAGE EDITING SOFTWARE

The most popular photo editing software around has to be Adobe Photoshop Elements, now (as this is written) up to version 13. The cost is US\$99.99 at STAPLES.COM and CDN\$119.99 STAPLES.CA.

A simple photo editing program that may do all you want is **PAINT.NET**. You can download it for free at <http://www.getpaint.net/index.html>.

If PAINT.NET doesn't cut it for you, try **GIMP**, available for free at <http://www.gimp.org/>. Be aware that as any software has more features, there is more of a learning curve to overcome.

PICTURES

The quality of the pictures in your newsletter is dependent on where they will end up. On-line quality is typically 72 ppi. Going higher in pixels per inch simply bloats the picture file without any quality improvement that you will be able to see. The limiting factor is not your eye but your monitor.

Seventy-two pixels on the printed page does not look good to the viewer, appearing grainy or course. You need to increase the number upwards to the 150-300 pixel range.

Make your pictures as large as you need and no more. For on-line reading, larger than necessary means a larger file your readership must download. Reduce large pictures to the right size using your choice of photo editing software. Don't just reduce the apparent (viewable) size in your newsletter editing program.

PDF FILE

There is no point in producing your finely crafted newsletter for on-line viewing if you save it in some obscure format that no one has. ADOBE's PDF format is the one everybody uses, and many editing programs allow you to save directly to PDF.

If you are producing a web newsletter, consider adding a link on the page to a PDF reader download, just in case one of your readers is the only one on the planet without it.

ADOBE PDF READER is free for the downloading at http://filehippo.com/download_adobe_reader/. There is also a **download link** at <https://acrobat.adobe.com/>



ca/en/products/pdf-reader.html. This last one will also let you cloud connect.

WEB SOFTWARE

Somewhere, if you intend to have a web page, you will have to either learn to code HTML pages or find some software to do it for you. The days of hand coding are just about gone, if you want an attractive looking site. The features of HTML have gotten so complex that coding by hand will simply not produce a good looking page. Unless you are only posting text, you will have to find another solution. XARA DESIGNER PRO will do it all for you, from text to pictures to web site creation. It will even directly transfer to your web host.

An easier way, if you don't see yourself as a web site designer, might be to use a hosting service who will set a template up for you. This lets you concentrate on the content rather than the workings behind the scenes.

BOOKS YOU MIGHT CONSIDER HAVING

If you are serious about making a quality piece of work, you need to have a few books in your library. Definitely the one at the top of the pile should be **THE NON-DESIGNER'S DESIGN BOOK** by Robin Williams (not the actor). Written for people who know little or nothing about graphic design, she takes you through basic principles, including space, color, fonts and how to use them, and many more things. All of this for business cards, letters and print material, and for web sites.

A book that gave me some good ideas was **THOU SHALT NOT USE COMIC SANS: 365 Graphic Design Sins and Virtues**.

Another book to have on hand is a Stylebook to give consistency to your words. A stylebook sets a standard for the written word. There are several out there. The one I use is **The CANADIAN PRESS STYLEBOOK** - A Guide for Writers and Editors. The equivalent in the US is the **ASSOCIATED PRESS STYLEBOOK**. Two others are **The CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE** and **The ELEMENTS OF STYLE**.

We can't forget about grammar. Pick up a copy of **The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation** by Jane Straus. Placing periods is easy, inserting commas is a bit harder. This book will help you with all that and more.

And lastly, make sure you have a dictionary. Either

the paper kind or an on-line version. Nothing take away from a well maid nuusletter or brochur like misspelled wurd or pour grammer!

And please, make sure your spell checker is turned on.

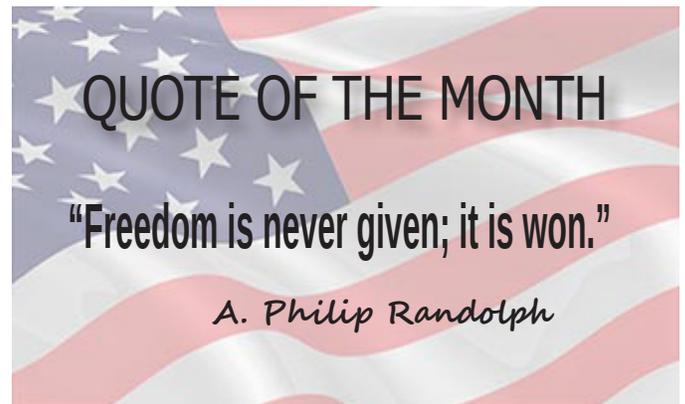
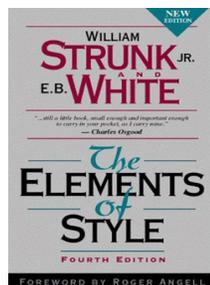
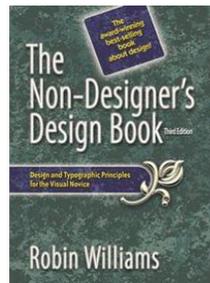
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GRANDMA MARA ...continued from page 2

meal to slightly over forty people. They transported the folding tables and chairs to the site, brought in the food (garden salad, roast beef with gravy, mashed potato and veggies, rolls and several kinds of bread, along with a choice of beverages. And of course, chocolate cake for dessert.

The weather was not the greatest, temperatures were lower than seasonal, and the bug population made its presence known. Everyone said they had a great time anyway, and they can't wait for next year's Field Day. Life is good!

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DI-DAH-DI-DAH ^D!

One of my (many) peeves is the annoying habit of web sites that offer free downloads of a program or app, of hiding the download icon. You know the places. All of the obvious download arrows and buttons take you to some place offering to scan your hard drive, or check for virus or malware infections. I've even been on some that do not have a place to click for the item you are looking for!

Why can't they make the software download the most obvious one?

Why can't they make the software download the most obvious one?

And the obvious answer to that question is that they want you to click on the other "DOWNLOAD" boxes so they can gather revenue (for clicking) or to interest you in downloading some useless stuff you don't want or need.

The only reason I continue to go back to these places is they often have the software (freeware or shareware) I'm looking for.

I ran into another annoying thing a few days ago. My venerable HP laptop has been acting strangely for several months. Now and then it wouldn't boot normally, or it would boot with a host of error messages, but it would always recover, leading me to hope for the best. Finally, a week ago, the display went intermittent. Thankfully, it was only the display and not the hard drive. Plugging in a spare monitor has given me time to off-load important files. The annoying part of all this is the crapware that came pre-installed on the new HP laptop. Before I even began to install my own software I had to remove the junk that HP "just knew" I wanted to have!

Don't you love it how manufacturers know exactly what you want. Doesn't it make it such a much more pleasant experience. Doesn't it want to make you...



Until next month,

VEINQ