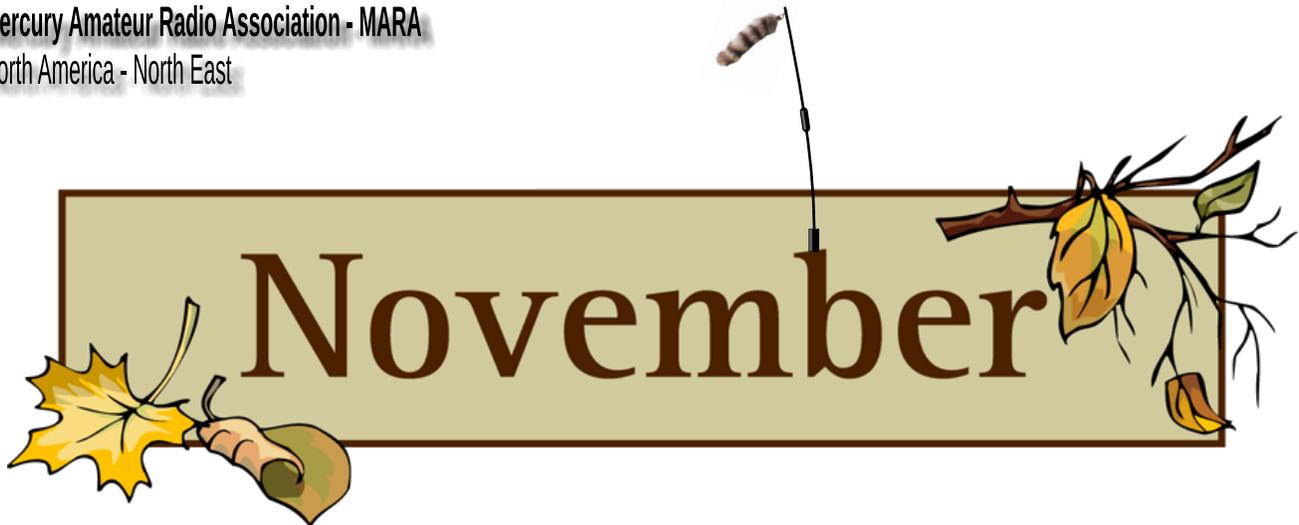


The NEWSLETTER

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Mercury Amateur Radio Association - MARA
North America - North East



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OTHER STUFF

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

Best viewed in Microsoft Internet Explorer. Chrome may not display some items in the correct place.

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

Grandma Mara's RAMBLINGS...

Is it only me or were there less trick-or-treaters coming to the door this year? Perhaps it's global warming or climate change that keeps the tiny tots at home. My take on it is that it is a sign of the times and the worry and fears parents have for their children nowadays, that keeps them from harvesting the candy treats that were much the part of my generation's Halloween festivities.

In my day, the tinys went with older siblings, cousins, or friends, and no one worried about sharp foreign objects intentionally inserted into candy or fruit. Nowadays, it seems like you almost need your own home x-ray machine and more to be safe.

The only ones we see are the little ones from the local area shepherded by watchful adults, who know us. And, of course, the grandchildren who are still young enough not to worry about the "uncool" factor. Even some of the older ones for whom "being cool" is a major part of their social scene, somehow manage to drop by (sans costume) just to say hello. Grandma has noticed that they won't turn down a handful of candy when it is offered to them.

While I am not much for costumes and Halloween decorating, Walter had the front yard decorated with Styrofoam tombstones and skeletons, ghosts, and goblins suspended from handy trees and wires. Last year, he had some of the decorations animated and motion sensed to speak and move when someone got close. Several of the little children got so frightened they burst into tears and hid behind the adults. This year, he made them friendlier and more welcoming. No crying and hiding this time. Mostly giggling.

The only ones we see are the little ones from the local area shepherded by watchful adults...

Several of the little children got so frightened they burst into tears...

For any of our ham friends who came to visit, one of the ghosts beeped out, "CQ friends" in CW when approached. They got an extra bag of goodies if they recognized the code.

But the numbers do seem to be down over the last few years. At one time, we would get several hundred little costumed folks. Now we are lucky to have fifty to sixty ring the doorbell.

Perhaps after the November elections, and with the vast number of pollsters unemployed, we could have a nationwide poll about Halloween.

Something else the politically correct folks could get banned, "for the good of the children". 

TECH AND OTHER STUFF

When I was looking for the cure to my problem of very low audio from my HP laptop's on-board microphone, one of things I tried, was to update the drivers. The program I settled upon to check all of those drivers was *DRIVER BOOSTER*. The basic version identifies which ones need updating and will do the deed one at a time. If you upgrade to the "better" version, (meaning it will cost you money) it will do more of them at once, saving you time.

Before updating your out-of-date drivers, it automatically creates a system restoral point should you decide you don't like one or more of the updates and want to roll things back to what they were before.

The free version has worked well for me.

THE GIVE AWAY

In a recent e-mail, Chuck, WD4HXG, suggested that we start a new thing in the newsletter. What if he had something in his junk box that he was going to throw out (I know, it makes me sad too). But rather than toss it in the garbage, how about he posts it here in the Newsletter to give away for free. If you want it, you come pick it up, or you cover the postage from his place to yours or, if he just got a

**I'M GETTING RID OF IT
AND
YOU CAN HAVE IT!**

raise at work and is feeling really happy, he would cover the cost to get it to you. This would be something the two of you could decide.

In order to qualify, you both must be members of [MARA NE](http://ne.mara.net)¹, and the receiver must actually use the item or items received. No getting something and then turning around and selling it on E-BAY!

Your xyl will no doubt be overjoyed that you acquired some more ham gear! Do you think she will ever believe when you tell her it is free!

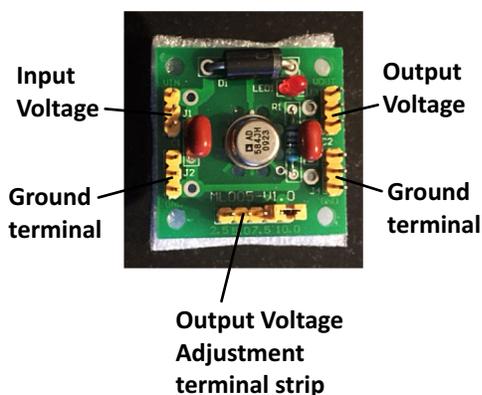
And for the giver, just think how good, and green it will make you feel, knowing that you have saved the planet by removing something from the landfill!

¹ <http://ne.mara.net/join.htm>

CALIBRATE YOUR CHEAPO DIGITAL VOLT METERS

Several voltage calibration devices are available on EBay from a number of sources, often with free shipping. Mine took more than a month to come from Hong Kong - one of the prices you “pay” for free shipping! There was no schematic or instruction sheet accompanying it, and nothing I could find on line. There are some poorly translated bullet points on some of suppliers’ pages. Enough, along with examination of the front and back of the board to figure it out.

Those same pathetic points seem to indicate



that moving the jumper along on the bottom terminal strip will change the voltage on the output terminal strip.

The board size is roughly 1.25” x 1.25”. Tiny enough to stick in a small Altoids tin.

I powered up the board from my variable power supply with 13.0 vdc to the input. Moving the jumper did in fact, change the output voltage. According to my two Fluke meters, the output voltages were close to being correct, or my two Flukes were close to being correct, depending on how you looked at it!

FIRST MEASUREMENT BETWEEN 5-10 MIN AFTER POWER ON.

FLUKE	2.5	5.0	7.5	10.0
179	2.499	5.003	7.50	10.0 ²
117	2.497	4.998	7.49	9.99

SECOND MEASUREMENT AFTER BEING POWERED ON CONTINUOUSLY FOR ONE HOUR.

FLUKE	2.5	5.0	7.5	10.0
179	2.499	5.003	7.50	10.0 ²
117	2.497	4.998	7.49	9.99

THIRD MEASUREMENT AFTER BEING POWERED ON CONTINUOUSLY FOR THREE HOURS.

FLUKE	2.5	5.0	7.5	10.0
179	2.499	5.003	7.50	10.01
117	2.497	4.998	7.49	9.99

NEITHER OF THESE METERS HAVE BEEN CALIBRATED SINCE MANUFACTURE.

For those of you who want to know more of what goes on “under the hood”, download [the data sheet](#) from Analog Devices.

So, for under \$4, you too can have a voltage calibration device to check out those cheapie digital volt meters you get from Harbor Freight, and other places.

Something that only a few years ago would have cost much, much more, and very, very carefully stored and handled.



² Last digit (.0) flickers between 0 and 1.

I'M GETTING RID OF IT
and
YOU CAN HAVE IT!

This was working when I last used it. I replaced it with the Signalink USB model.

Both the cartridges and the Signalink can be shipped from Montana for a taker in the US, in early December, when next I am out that way. 

END - JANUARY 2017

THE WAY IT WORKS IS THIS...

You have to be *a member of MARA NorthEast* to submit an item or items to give away - and it (or they) must be free (except for any shipping costs).

You must be a member of MARA Northeast to claim and receive an item or items.

The two of you will have to agree who is paying for the shipping, if you are not within driving distance to pick the stuff up in person.

Doesn't have to be amateur related. It can be anything you want to get rid of.

No getting it for free and then selling it on E-Bay. You have to personally have a use for it.

Submit your item or items to ve1vq@eastlink.ca to be listed in the next newsletter. Provide some text describing what it is and its condition (and a picture if you have one).

The item/s will stay listed for three newsletters (or less, if you notify us that it has been given away).

From VE1VQ...

Canon Ink Jet Printer cartridges - new, unopened.

BCI-6BK	Qty 2
BCI-6M	Qty 2
BCI-6PC	Qty 3
BCI-6Y	Qty 1
BCI-6C	Qty 3
BCI-6PM	Qty 2



The Canon printer, for which I had them, failed. Of course, the new replacement Canon does not take the same ones.

Signalink SL-1+ (not the USB model)
Used with my Ten-Tec Jupiter.
Comes with several cables. Mint condition.
Software and manual downloadable from the [web page](#).



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"The more complex they make the plumbing, the easier it is to stop up the drain."

the one and only, the Immortal
Lt. Cmdr. Montgomery Scott
of Star Fleet:

DI-DAH-DI-DAH

I've mentioned before that I use *XARA DESIGNER PRO X* software to make this newsletter. Every now and then, I see another program that tempts me to "stray", but I manage to resist the siren call and stay true! Granted, XARA doesn't have some of the features that the *PhotoShop* had, or it does things in a different way, and I've had to learn things that don't feel "quite right", or doesn't seem as intuitive. But isn't that what life is all about, learning different things?

Among the things I especially like is the cost. Price wise, it is a whole lot less expensive than *Adobe InDesign*. New versions are available at a discount for those holding a valid license for an older one.

I also like how it installed and worked the first time, and continues to work with each upgrade. Have you noticed how so many things don't do that? How many times have you downloaded a trial

version of something only to find problems with operation, or even that it makes your PC unstable. You did create a restore point before you installed it, didn't you?

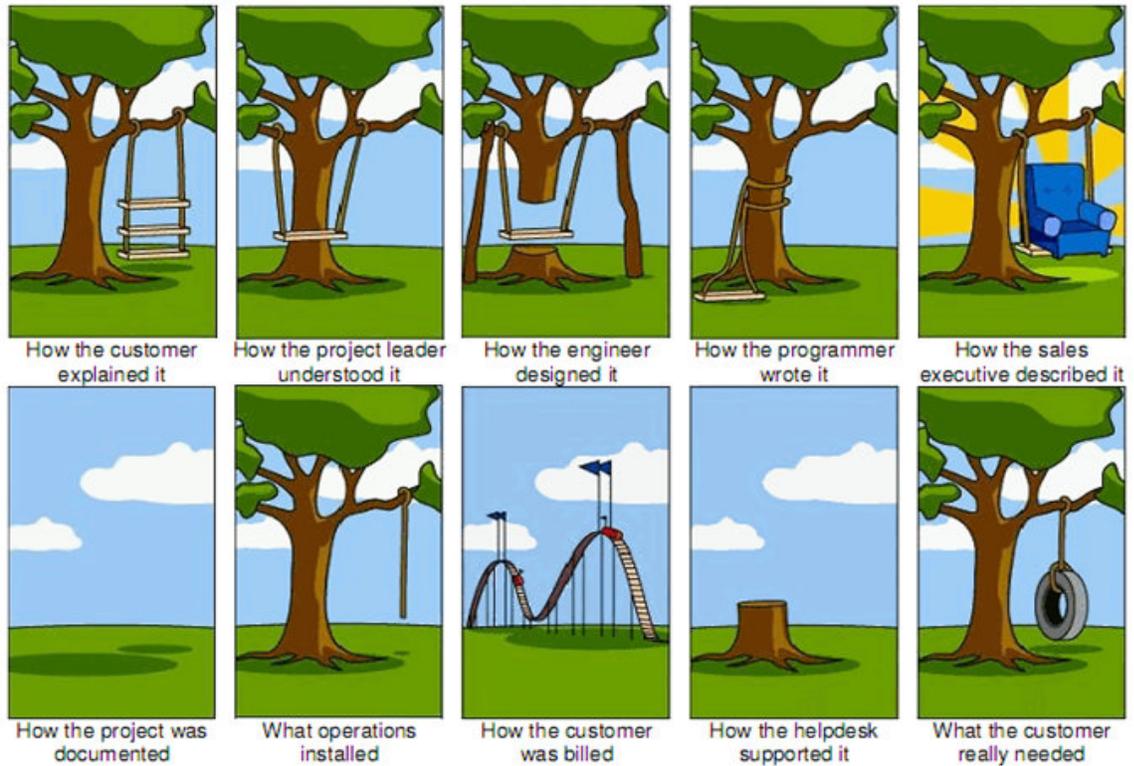
Zero Defects (ZD) was a movement that was popular in the mid 1960s to the early 1970s. The idea behind the term was that it was less expensive to do it right the first time then to have quality control send it back for rework, or worse, to have the customer return the product for failure right out of the box. A lot of you whose first computer was the Commodore 64 can relate to that!

Zero Defects has fallen out of favor these days. Now that accountants and marketing types have taken over from those in companies whose job it is to deliver what the customer actually wanted. The people in control of the cash, figure it is cheaper to let the customer find and report the problem and then perform a fix. After all, if the customer doesn't notice or isn't bothered by the trouble then it doesn't cost anything to be solved. Case in point - GM is only now crawling out of the hole it created for itself by giving the bean counters control over what went out to the dealers' showrooms.

Anyway, whether it is a product like XARA or a new ham rig that works right out of the box without having to read a 500 page manual just to find out how to turn it on - it's nice having something that just works!

Another argument for not buying the first new I-gotta-gotta-have-it version of anything.

Perhaps if we do our research and buy products



Most of you will have seen this or something like it over the years and laughed about it. Those of you who work or have worked for large and some not-so-large companies will know just how true it really is!

that have good out-of-box performance, leaving those that don't on the shelf, then other manufacturers will get the hint. Maybe there's still hope for ZD philosophy designed products after all! Wouldn't that be nice.

Until next month,
VENQ