

# The NEWSLETTER

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Mercury Amateur Radio Association - MARA  
North America - North East

## The month of **MARCH** is *NATIONAL HAM RADIO MONTH\**

\*Actually, it isn't. I'm just trying to start a rumor!

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# Grandma Mara's RAMBLINGS...

**M**arch has always been a blah kind of month for Grandma. Probably the month when winter depression strikes me. If any psychiatrist were to ever ask me the color of March, I would have to say it is gray. Not the whites of the clean snow in February, nor the traces of new green in April, just the dirty gray of left over ice, snow and slush, or of the cold gray rains that manage to creep down inside your coat collar. It's a good thing March doesn't last long, and isn't always that way. If you get a day of sunshine now and then, it gives you hope that March will eventually come to an end, and life will "get on" once again.

Many of Grandma's acquaintances head south for a couple of weeks each March, to Florida, or Mexico, or some resort in the Caribbean. Baking yourself in the sun might have been fun when I was much younger, but not any more. One "good" sunburn in my teens was enough to cure me forever. Not only that, but you have to come home, and returning to the cold you left,

for such a short time, is not all that enjoyable. You see these folks at the airport, in their


**You see these folks at the airport, in their shorts and tees, coming back home, shivering nearly to their death.**

shorts and tees, coming back home, shivering nearly to their death. I could never figure out why they didn't pack a pair of long pants and a lightweight winter jacket. Did they think their body would store the sun's heat for when they came back north?

To tell the truth, I would rather stay home and enjoy the winter season. When it becomes

too much of a "good thing", I can stay inside and "play" ham radio. Walter feels much the same as I do about going south in the winter just to sit in the sun by a pool. His idea of a good time is sitting on some rock or log on the top of a mountain with a QRP radio to play with.

It's getting so that much of the world isn't safe for tourists, and that's not just because of the drinking water! Seems like all some people do is hate everybody else who are different from themselves.

Sure would be nice to be able to travel wherever you wanted without fear. And not to have outrageous air plane baggage fees so you could take along some ham gear. 

## TECH AND OTHER STUFF

### MY VERY OWN RASPBERRY PI AD KILLER

Hate on-line advertisements intruding into your browsing pleasure? Want to stop them from filling your monitor and taking forever to load? Have a cap on how much you can download before extra charges from your ISP kick in? Your *ad-blocker software* just not working any more?

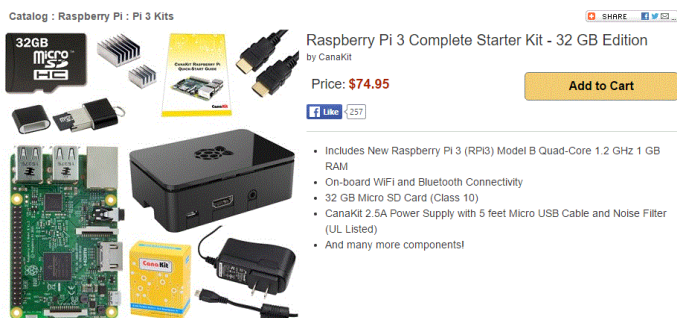


It really comes down to control, and who controls what you see - the ad companies who want to cram as much as they can on the page of a site you want to view, or you as an individual. Personally, I vote for the latter!

If you didn't read last month's feature article, on building your own handy dandy gadget to remove advertisements from your browser's web pages, go back and check it out at

[http://ne.mara.net/pdf/newsletters/2017\\_news\\_feb.pdf](http://ne.mara.net/pdf/newsletters/2017_news_feb.pdf)

After seeing it, I ordered the Raspberry Pi 3 Complete Starter Kit - 32 GB Edition from



**Cana Kit** for \$99.95 Cdn plus tax and shipping. They also sell state side for \$74.95 US plus shipping. The kit contains the Pi version 3 board, case, 2.5 amp power supply, heat sinks, HDMI video cable, 32 GB micro SD card pre-loaded with NOOBS, USB card reader for the micro SD, and a manual. Cana Kit have less expensive kits without some of accessories included in this one. If I order another, I will go for one of those as I wouldn't require the cable or card reader. I would have preferred a clear see-through case, to satisfy my inner geek, but the black version was the one included in the kit.

**I would have preferred a clear, see-through case, to satisfy my inner geek...**

It took several days for it to move out the door to the post office. About a week after placing the order, the tracking link showed it was at my local post office two days early. Cana Kit is located in British Columbia and I thought that's where it was being shipped from. However, the label said it was sent from Amazon in Mississauga, Ontario. The first point showing on the Post Office tracking site was Calgary, Alberta and not Mississauga. It's a mystery, my son!

Ordering it to Alberta (with no provincial tax) only cost me 5% (federal) tax instead of the 15% (combination federal and provincial) if it had been shipped to Nova Scotia.

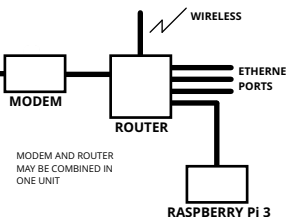
None of the computer monitors around the house had an HDMI port, so I pressed the flat screen TV into service.

The first thing I did was to insert the NOOBS

micro SD card into the connector at one end of the Pi board (it goes in easy one way - do not force it!). I connected to the TV with the HDMI cable. Make sure the TV's input is set to HDMI or you won't be seeing much! Using

an Ethernet cable, I connected to my network<sup>1</sup>. And finally, I connected

the power supply cable to the matching micro USB port on the side, and then plugged the wall wart into a 120 VAC wall outlet. There isn't an on/off switch so the board should power up immediately. A small red LED on the end of the board between the power supply connector and the micro SD should turn "on" when the power supply is plugged in. The green LED next to the power indicator LED will flash indicating SD card activity.



Follow the on-screen instructions for set-up. It will take about ten minutes to do this phase.

Once that is completed, you might want to do an update. There is a good chance that the software on the NOOBS card you purchased is not the most up-to-date available.

Make sure your Pi is connected to your network as the following commands will reach out to the Internet and download files.

Click on the LXTerminal icon at the top of the screen to open a command line. Type in

**`sudo apt-get update`**

and hit the Enter key on your keyboard to update your system's package list. Once this is finished (your screen will again display the command line prompt), type in

**`sudo apt-get dist-upgrade`**

followed by the Enter key, to upgrade all the installed packages to their latest versions. This will take some time even on a fast connection.

Mine took somewhere between twenty and thirty minutes to complete. The screen will show whether or not a file is upgraded or remains the same version number. Be patient. Sometimes it seems like it is frozen. If the green LED is still flashing it is still working!

Use the following command to free up space taken by downloaded package files that are no longer needed after the upgrade above.

**`sudo apt-get autoremove`**

The time on your Raspberry Pi 3 will set automatically when you connect to the Internet. Make sure in Preferences that you set your time zone.

Back to the ad blocker project. I followed the steps in [last month's article](#) but I could not get it to work. I spent considerable time on-line searching but never found anything that would bring me to a happy spot. There was a YouTube video,

but the presenter appeared to be one of those people who

**“...if they want to pay me to view their ads, I would be happy to disconnect my blocker.”**

think everyone else knows about what they know, and lowered his voice in a couple of crucial places (places where I needed clear information), and kind of skipping over some details. Finally, having to admit I was stumped, I e-mailed the author of the February Newsletter article. He told me what I had to do (fairly simple) and walked me through the steps over the phone to change the DNS settings on my laptop. Set-up with the download seems to have changed since he did his, so he has agreed to write a follow-up article to cover the changes.

At last, success! It is interesting to see outlines of blocks where ads should be, or simply blank spaces of nothing at all.

Also interesting is the occasional pop-up

message whining to me about having ad blocking on my computer, as that's how they, as a site, make money to cover their expenses. It has been suggested that I should respond and say, if they want to pay me to view their ads, I would be happy to disconnect my blocker.

It doesn't block all ads, as mentioned in that first article, but it seems to take a good many off the screen.

Viewing the Pi Hole Admin Console on your home computer or laptop will show you the blocked numbers. Typing in the 192.168.x.xx address chosen in the initial set up followed by /admin in your browser will take you there. In my case the set up procedure chose <http://192.168.0.24> for the Raspberry Pi, so I added /admin after it.

Two heat sinks are included in the kit. There is considerable discussion on the Raspberry Pi reflector sites as to whether or not you need any cooling. The answer is no - ***you do not*** - unless you are using the board in some intensive fashion, or you are seriously over-clocking the processor<sup>2</sup>. But since they look kind of geeky cool, I added them. They are peel and stick, so it only takes a couple of minutes to install. Use tweezers or needle nose pliers and place them after you mount the board in the case. Should you really need heat reduction, it would be better to add a fan.

And there you have it! In the next few months, there will (hopefully) be updates on its use as an ad blocker and more about what can be done with it in other areas. Perhaps even related to ham radio.



<sup>1</sup> The Raspberry Pi 3 has built-in 802.11n wireless. Click on the two computer icon at the right top of the screen. A list of available networks should appear. Choose the one you want and enter the necessary information. It is probably better to do any updates/upgrades with a hard wire connection.

<sup>2</sup> An over heating problem is NEVER going to happen when the Pi is used in a normal manner in the open or with a properly ventilated case. If, for some strange reason, the processor does over heat, the CPU speed throttles back to prevent any damage.



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

downloadable from the [web page](#).  
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 April, when next I am  
out that way. If you want stuff earlier, I can ship from  
Canada, but the shipping will most likely be higher.

END - APRIL 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  
(or a family member) have to personally have a use for  
it.

Submit your item or items to [ve1vq@eastlink.ca](mailto: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 six 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) to get you on the  
digital modes. Used with my Ten-Tec Jupiter. Comes with  
several cables. Mint condition. Software and manual

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

**You cannot live a perfect day with-  
out doing something for someone  
who will never be able to repay you.**

— John Wooden

## DI-DAH-DI-DAH?

I remember going to ham club meetings back  
in late sixties, when I was first licensed. A lot  
of the talk at these meetings concerned getting  
new members into the hobby. And about all of  
the other things out there as alternatives to "us".  
The same things occupied editorials in the ham  
radio publications of the times. Interestingly,  
when you read the current editorials, and the  
occasional article, the same thoughts are echoed  
once again. Only now, things have changed.  
Now it is cell phones, computers, and the  
Internet that are blamed.

Years ago, most other hobbies didn't (and still

don't) require the level of technical knowledge and skills, amateur radio did. And then there was the code requirement. Remember the anger, division, and angst that was generated whenever a no-code ticket was proposed or talked about! Nearly as bad as dropping President Trump's name in a mixed company gathering today.

Face it - we have always been "a bit different" than most other hobbies. I remember seeing a strange looking antenna on the back of a car during a visit to

southern New

Hampshire, when I

was a kid. My uncle

responded that it

belonged to a "ham

radio operator" who

would "drive into the mountains to talk with other hams." I remember getting the sense that there was something weird about this. Why would any person drive into the mountains, just to talk with someone?

Now, knowing a bit more about these things, I realize the antenna was a two-meter halo and the ham in question drove to the mountains for the height, to be able to talk to other hams at greater distances.

So, how do we entice others to join us in this hobby of amateur radio? It has been suggested that the Maker groups might be interested. I see mention in QST in the last couple of months that ham clubs have done just that, and have met with some success.

I'm glad that smarter folks than I are grappling with this issue. I'll just spread the word whenever I can.

Until next month,

VE1VQ

**I remember getting the sense that there was something weird about this.**