



Squelch Tales

Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Assoc. for June 2000

May Ham Exam Report

The MARAs ARRL VE coordinator Robin Walls, N1NFK reports that the new exam site in the Bath Health Care Facility was a great place to run a ham exam. Results of the May 20th exam had 12 people taking exams or processing previously passed element certificates into upgraded tickets. Six folks received General class upgrades and five folks received Extra Class upgrades. One chap passed his element-3 (general written), but needed to get his 5-WPM certificate before he can receive his General.

Kudos to MARA members Andy Cote (KB1CGJ), Paul Towne (N1ZYB) and Linda Towne (N1ZYC) who are now Extra Class ticket holders. Nice going folks.

KS1R/R 444.4 MHz Repeater Update

Most of you received e-mail in May with a proposal to resurrect the MARAs 444.4/449.4 UHF repeater and had the chance to vote on-line to expend funds to make the machine come back to life on Cole's Tower at Bowdoin College. The majority responded in the positive. Pete, K1MJP and Bruce, W1ZE wasted no time in getting things rolling. Bruce refurbished the repeaters diamond collinear antenna and Pete started to tweak and peak the GE transmitter strips. Pete donated a GE equipment cabinet and swapped his Asden 30-amp supply for the clubs Asden 20-amp supply, so that we could take advantage of a power amplifier donated to the club by Fulton Hunt, KA1NGO. A used GE UHF duplexer was purchased from MDM Radio and assembly began in earnest. We hope that sometime this month the repeater will be back on the air from Cole's tower with a bigger bark. The PL will remain the same (88.5 Hz) so no need to reprogram your dual-banders. For those of you without a 440 MHz FM transceiver you are missing out on a great band.

It's time to get ready for FIELD DAY

It is that time of year when folks start thinking of field Day. Again this year the MARA will gather on the *grassy knoll*. No, not the one in Dallas but the one behind the Woolich Museum and fire station on route one. As always Field Day is the last full weekend in June (24th & 25th).

With all you new General and Extra class OP's out there we hope you show up and operate in the "all ahead panic" mode of contesting. Come out, bring a friend and have fun.

NEWS FROM NEWINGTON

FCC says ULS registration can protect license record

Registering now on the FCC's Universal Licensing System can benefit amateurs, even if they have no plans to file an application anytime soon. FCC staffer Steve Linn, N4CAK, says that ULS registration "protects your call sign within the system" and could prevent it from inadvertently being deleted or reissued due to a filing error.

Linn also pointed out that amateurs filing for a change of address should file an "administrative update" (AU) and not request a "modification." The ULS will not renew an amateur's license unless it is within the 90-day window of expiration or within the two-year grace period after expiration. The same applies for those upgrading under restructuring.

Linn said the FCC continues to work out the bugs in the ULS. He said that support for the Mac platform and other browsers, such as Internet Explorer, should be available soon.

The FCC in late April opened the ULS to Web filing. Linn advised filers to use the on-line system whenever possible, since it helps users to avoid errors that will not get trapped when filing on paper and could lead to delays or errors in your FCC record. Visit

<http://www.fcc.gov/wtb/uls> for more information or to access the ULS

Upcoming Maine Events

<u>DATE/TIME</u>	<u>EVENT/LOCATION</u>
<u>JUNE (Sat.) 3rd, 8 AM:</u>	Bangor Hamfest, Herman High School, Herman, ME (ARRL Exams given: POC Bill Sullivan, K1AG 947-4051)
<u>JUNE (Thur) 8th, 6 PM:</u>	ARRL VE Exam, Winslow Elementary School, POC Don Smith AE1Q 293-2935
<u>JUNE (Sat.) 17th 8AM</u>	St. Johns Bazaar road race MARA provides communications
<u>JUNE (Sat-Sun.) 10-11:</u>	ARRL VHF Contest
<u>JUNE (Sat-Sun.) 24-25:</u>	Field Day
<u>JULY (Sat.) 8th, 8AM:</u>	Union Hamfest, Union Fairgrounds (ARRL Exams given: POC Dick Baldwin W1RU 529-5781)
<u>JULY (Wed.) 19th, 6 PM:</u>	ARRL Exam, Togus VA Center, POC Don Smith, AE1Q 293-2935
<u>AUGUST (Sat.) 12th, 8 AM:</u>	St. Albans Hamfest, Snow Devil Field, St. Albans (ARRL Exams & St. Albans Elementary School, POC Bill Sullivan, K1AG 947-4051)
<u>AUGUST (Sat.) 12th, 9 AM:</u>	W5YI Exam, Auburn Red Cross Building, POC R. V. Damon AD1RV 782-4721
<u>AUGUST (Sun.) 13th, 8AM</u>	Morris Farm Bike Ride, MARA provides comm.
<u>AUGUST (Sat.) 26th</u>	Dan Michaud Memorial Century Bike Ride MARA provides communications
<u>SEPTEMBER (Sat.) 9th, 8 AM:</u>	Windsor Hamfest, Fairgrounds (ARRL Exam given, POC Bill Crowley, K1NI T 623-9075)
<u>SEPTEMBER (Tue.) 19th, 6:30 PM:</u>	ARRL Exam, NMTC Augusta Charity Bldg., Presque Isle, POC Wilburn Scott, WA1YNZ 455-8333
<u>SEPTEMBER (Sat.) 22nd, 8 AM:</u>	Lincoln Hamfest: Ella Burr School, Lincoln, ME (Exams given)
<u>SEPTEMBER (Sat.) 23rd, 10 AM:</u>	ARRL Exam, Bath Health Care Facility, POC Robin Walls, N1NFK 725-5135
<u>OCTOBER (Thur.) 5th, 6 PM:</u>	ARRL Exam, Winslow Elementary School, POC Don Smith, AE1Q 293-2935
<u>OCTOBER (Fri-Sat.) 6-7th:</u>	Hosstraders Hamfest, Rochester, NH Fairgrounds
<u>OCTOBER (Sat.) 14th, 9 AM:</u>	ARRL Exams, Knox Co. Court House, Rockland: POC Dick Baldwin, W1RU, 521-5781
<u>OCTOBER (Sat.) 14th, 9 AM:</u>	ARRL Exams, Bangor Community Center, POC Bill Sullivan, K1AG 947-4051
<u>NOVEMBER (Wed.) 15th, 6 PM:</u>	ARRL Exam, Togus V.A. Center. POC: Don Smith, AE1Q 293-2935
<u>DECEMBER (Sat.) 2nd, 10 AM:</u>	ARRL Exam, Bath Health Care Facility. POC: Robin Walls, N1NFK 725-5135

St. Johns Bazaar 5K Run Needs Your Help

Do you have a couple of hours to spend Saturday morning, June 17? We need your help in providing communications for the St. Johns Bazaar run through the street of Brunswick. The kid's run is at 8 AM and the 5K run starts at 9 AM. If you can, please let Bruce, W1ZE know. Contact him at 442-9630 or brandall@zwi.net. Andy Cote, KB1CGJ invites all the MARA members to stick around after the run and enjoy the Bazaar.

Dan Michaud Century Bike Ride set for August 26th

It is only June but time by so quickly that maybe this is a good time to remind all of you to mark August 16th on your calendars so you can help your MARA provide communications for the Merrymeeting Wheelers Bicycle Club's annual fund raising event.

For those of you that are new to the MARA, the event is named for Dan Michaud, a member of the MWBC and one of the original members of the MARA. Dan, an avid amateur radio operator, lost a long battle to cancer and became a silent key in the mid 80's. His friends in the bicycle club started the event in the early 90s to raise funds to fight cancer here in Maine and your MARA has been involved in it for many years now.

Last year the turnout from MARA members was light and we had to get help from the good folks at the Blackstrap repeater group to cover several spots on the 100 mile route. We hope that you will volunteer to help make this year's event a big success and show the general public that the MARA cares and can do the job.

73, W1ZE

VHF PACKET ISN'T DEAD YET

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE

Many of you have upgraded your tickets over the past several months and others of you are working on that old CW to pass the 5 words per minute test so you can get those HF privileges. Many of you may want to try you hand at DXing.

You may be asking, What does that have to do with VHF Packet, and isn't packet dead in Maine,. No packet is not dead; it has been evolving here in Maine. There is a growing group in the state using APRS, a form of packet that marries GPS, packet, PCs and 2-meters and lets you know where your friends are and still communicate in the digital packet format. Another and older use of packet is a digital communications system and network known as the DX PACKET CLUSTER.

The packet cluster system doesn't require anything different than what you needed to get on the old packet network. A TNC, PC (or dumb terminal) and a 2-meter FM transceiver.

Have I got your interest yet? If so read on: The cluster is a network of packet nodes connected to one another via a radio backbone, sat-link or Internet link and is dedicated to DX spotting, propagation and other DX related subjects. What makes it different than the old packet network is that you do not connect to just one other packet station, you connect to the whole system and when you make an announcement it appears on the screen of everyone connected to the system. Say you are tuning across the 10-meter band and hear Ben, 4X4AA in Haifa on 28410 kHz calling CQ. You work him, but want to let the rest of the DX hungry crowd on the cluster know Ben is on and where he is. You can make a simple entry on the keyboard that goes something like this: SH/DX 4X4AA 28410 BEN IN HAIFA, CQ US/CANADA. The crowd knows in a few seconds and can tune to Ben's frequency. The system is not limited to Maine but is connected to nodes all over the northeast and on occasion all the way

to the West Coast and across the pond into Europe.

You can use the cluster system to have a station to station chat with another individual connected to the system by going into the TALK mode. You can carry on a "blind" keyboard conversation without anyone else seeing your packets.

We here in southern Maine are fortunate to have two DX Packet Cluster nodes, K1EU in Cape Elizabeth on 144.91 MHz and W1AO in Augusta on 144.93 MHz. We here on the mid coast should be able to connect to one or both of the cluster nodes with a modest antenna and modest power levels.

For you flea market scroungers, you should be able to get an old PK-88 or similar TNC for dirt cheap prices, but I wouldn't expect them to stay cheap forever with the increasing popularity of APRS and DX packet clusters.

73, Bruce

Morris Farm 15/50/100 Mile Bike ride in August

Last year in early August Mark (N1JIM), Woody (W1WEW), Bruce (W1ZE) and Robin (N1NFK) helped the Morris Farm folks present a successful bike tour on the back roads from Wiscasset along the Kennebec River and back down the Sheepscot river.

We received word from Mark Wheeler, the bike ride coordinator that they would love to have the MARA provide communications again this year. The event will take place on August 13 starting from the Morris Farm on route 27 in Wiscasset next to the grammar school. Rides consisting of 15, 50 and 100 mile routes. Mark Wheeler and his lovely wife Kitty have invited the communications team to stay for the Barbecue feast starting at 4 PM.

Mark this date on calendar and let Bruce, W1ZE, knows (442-9630 or brandall@gwi.net) if you plan to help out.

Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association

KS1R

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