



Squelch Tales



Newsletter from the Merry Meeting Amateur Radio Assoc. for November 2005

Minutes of the September 29th Meeting

By KC1W

Call to Order:

The August Meeting of the Merry Meeting Amateur Radio Association was called to order at 7:02 pm by our president Brian/AA1WI at Mid Coast Hospital, Brunswick, Maine.

Attendees:

MARA Members:

Abe/KC1W	Bruce/W1ZE
Bob/N1GWE	Brian/AA1WI
Michele/KC7LIF	John/KC6TVF
Paul/KA5FPT	Donnie/WD1F
Steve/AA4AK	Lee/N1HOC
Jan/KB1MMK	Allan/WA1SCS
Harry/KB1KJY	Don/WN1OTV
Bob/W1NDC	

Treasurer's Report:

Bob/N1GWE reports a current balance of: \$463.53.

Technical Committee:

Bruce/W1ZE and Donnie/WD1F report:

1. The 147.21 repeater controller has been returned, reinstalled and working well. Additional work on signal levels, getting phone lines attached and getting autodial numbers programmed will be completed as time allows.

2. There is still some thought about swapping the .21 and 440 repeater controllers to allow more flexibility on the 440 machine. Bruce/W1ZE explained to members that this would allow us to link the 440 machine with 6 meters and even possibly an HF radio. FCC rules require auxiliary links controlling other equipment be in the 220 MHz band or higher. Using

MARA's 440 repeater as the control would be in compliance with the FCC regulations.

3. New antennas for the packet node and APRS will be completed as soon as brackets are available. Both antennas will be side mounted on the tower.

4. Steve/AA4AK has taken on the responsibility of email supervisor for mara@ks1r.net. Steve will be reviewing incoming email and making sure items get re-routed to the appropriate person for action.

5. Finally, Bruce/W1ZE wanted to remind all members that the technical committee is not just for repeater maintenance. Members of the committee are available to help local hams with any technical question relating to amateur radio.

Activities:

Lee/N1HOC will be contacting the China Rose to schedule a room for our annual holiday party. If rooms are available the party will be the 2nd Saturday in December. Everyone mark your calendars, more information will be provided when available.

Lee and Bruce have also heard from the organizations responsible for the Bike Tours MARA provided support for this summer. All were very impressed with the service provided and the professionalism of our operators. We can expect requests again next year.

Sagadahoc ARES:

Allan/WA1SCS reports:

1. Reports have been submitted to the DEC reporting MARA's busy schedule of Public Service events in August.

2. The Maine Simulated Emergency Test (SET) is scheduled for October 22nd this year. The scenario is a major ice storm and

local and HF nets will be activated. Volunteers to man the nets are needed, if you are available contact Allan or Bruce/W1ZE.

3. MARA will be hosting the Second Annual Emergency Communications Seminar this winter. Target date will be sometime in January or February. Hopefully Bryce will mentor the Maine Emergency Communications Course, Level I and II during the seminar. An additional weekend training session for CPR/First Aid will probably be scheduled in early March. This session will be presented by Michele/KC7LIF through the Red Cross.

4. Recent emergencies along the Gulf coast have prompted discussions regarding activating the MidCoast ARES organization. A couple of ideas suggested were a telephone tree, and programming the .21 repeater with a separate PL tone so you can have a receiver monitoring the repeater and it would only activate when the tone was transmitted. These ideas will be researched and additional information promulgated once an activation plan is ready.

MidCoast Chapter ARC:

Michele/KC7LIF provided an update on the Red Cross's efforts along the Gulf coast following hurricanes Katrina and Rita and in the west due to wild fires. The numbers reported are staggering.

Michele also reports the ARC continues to offer courses on Mass Care, Shelter Operations and Family Care. Individuals interested can contact the MidCoast Chapter of ARC for dates and times.

Old Business:

Steve/AA4AK reminds everyone about the proposal to eliminate CW for all levels of Amateur Radio license in the United States. The FCC is still taking comments and material on how to submit your comments, regardless whether you are for or against, can be found on the MARA website.

Lee/W1LWT's balloon project - the launch date is October 15th. The balloon will launch from the BSA campground, Camp Hinds out

at Panther Pond. The payload for this launch will be APRS and ATV. The ATV will be on cable channel 59. More information will be available as the launch date approaches

New Business:

MARA, Ham of the Year: Board members are taking nominations for the award. Anyone who knows a member whom they feel made a significant contribution to the hobby and/or the organization should contact anyone of the Board members.

Paul/KA5FPT has tried a simplex net following the MidCoast ARES Net on Monday nights and would like to invite more members to participate. The Net will be on 147.525 Mondays and upon closing the MidCoast ARES Net an announcement will be made inviting interested hams to QSY and join in. Paul/KA5FPT will be net control operator.

Bruce/W1ZE also reminds everyone about the Maine Seagull Net on 3940 kHz that operates Monday through Saturday starting at 5:00 pm local time.

Hosstraders is coming up, Friday October 7th and Saturday the 8th in New Hampshire. Several members are planning on driving down.

The Boy Scouts of America Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) is scheduled for Saturday October 15th. Lee's balloon project will be part of this activity.

MARA Board of Directors: Current members up for re-election are; Donnie/WD1F, Bob/N1VVF, Lee/N1HOC and Michele/KC7LIF. All four members were present at the meeting and all would like to continue as board members. Bruce/W1ZE made a motion, seconded by Abe/KC1W, to hold the election tonight. The motion passed unanimously by members present. A vote was held and the four members of the board were re-elected to another 2 year term.

Special Event Station: Popham Colony, here on the MidCoast will be celebrating its 400th anniversary in 2007. Don/WN1OTV has suggested this may be a good

opportunity for a special event station during the areas festivities. A special event call sign could be obtained and there is potential to coordinate the effort with the Virginia Colony, who will also be celebrating its 400th year. Much more on this follow once more is learned about plans in the area.

Next Meeting:

The MARA meeting will be Thursday, October 27th, at MidCoast Hospital in Brunswick, ME.

Adjournment:

Lee/N1HOC made a motion, seconded by Bob/N1GWE, to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm.

Year End Dinner set for Saturday, December 4th

Activities Guru, Lee/N1HOC advises that she has nailed down the date for the MARA's Year-End dinner. As in past years, it will be at the China Rose restraint in Brunswick on the Old Bath Road, across from the Exxon station. Attendees and their spouses, family members and/or guests can order from the menu or take advantage of the always plentiful buffet. Mark your calendars and join us in celebration of another full and enjoyable year with the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association.

Note: There will be no November or December MARA meeting at the hospital. The dinner will take their place

A bit of Ham Trivia, Hi Hi

By W1ZE

If you have been a ham for at least a week or more, you most likely have heard hams use, or you have used yourself the word(s) "HI or HI-HI", ham-speak for laughter. You may have asked yourself why not HA-HA or YUK-YUK? Well, the word HI has been around a long time. And like most old things in our hobby, it started over 70 years ago when most hams communicated via Morse code (CW).

Back then, when hams wanted to show laughter or mirth in a CW exchange the words "HEE-HEE" were used. With senders fists the way they are, what we old CW Ops call swing, the two letters EE (. .) got compressed to (.) the letter "I", Hence the word Hi-Hi. Now you know why it's HI-HI rather than HEE-HEE.

Now, aren't you glad you read this?

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MARA members make it to Hopington

By W1ZE

Forty eight hours prior to the Hosstraders event the National Weather Service was predicting showers on Friday and heavy rain on Saturday. Well, they were 50 percent correct. I decided that for sure Saturday would be a bust plus I had things to do at the new QTH, so I decided to take a chance and drive over to the Hosstraders event Friday morning.

All the way over the sky was overcast and the cloud cover looked moisture laden but no rain. I arrived at the fairgrounds just after the noon hour and was pleased to see modest activity going

on. I parked up front only a few steps from the front gate. I had to plunk down ten bucks for attending early (\$5 after 3:00PM). Oh well, it goes to a good cause.

I entered the event and went into the first building to check on antenna parts and within a minute ran into Jim/N1IPA going through the parts bins too. We hooked up and started a tour of the place. After 45 minutes we decided to sit down and have something to eat and drink. As we were sitting at the park bench filling our faces, John/KC6TVF and Michele/KC7LIF Briggs showed up and joined us.

After that we all went our separate ways to check things out and make sure we had not missed a real good deal somewhere. I was able to find a few parts I was looking for and fortunately I did not find a boat anchor I just needed to bring home. I finished up my wondering around the place about 4:30 and headed back to Maine, still no rain.

Even with a light turnout that Friday I had a good time and I hope Jim, John and Michele did too. It was unfortunate that the second Hosstraders this year had heavy rain in the mix. We will all have to make an offering to the weather Gods that it will be clear and dry for Hosstraders in 2006. 73/Bruce

News from Newington



PENNSYLVANIA UTILITY CITES UNFAVORABLE ECONOMICS IN ENDING BPL TRIAL

PPL Broadband announced this week that it's terminating its broadband over power line (BPL) experiment in

Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley. According to media reports, the company is citing the high cost of a full-scale BPL rollout and competition from cable and DSL service in the region as the reasons for the shutdown. Approximately 300 households participating in the trial were said to be paying \$40 a month for the high-speed Internet service. Although Amateur Radio stations in some of PPL Broadband's service area reported BPL interference, the company did not cite it as a factor in its decision to drop out of the BPL race.

"Several local amateurs reported interference to their home stations," said ARRL Laboratory Manager Ed Hare, W1RFI, who visited the Lehigh Valley several times to take BPL system emission measurements. "While this was resolved in whole or in part by PPL, in one case the interference was 'fixed' by turning off BPL completely to the street in front of the amateur reporting the interference." Even so, Hare says, the amateur continued to experience moderate interference from other parts of the system.

PPL claimed it had no BPL equipment operating on the spectrum the complaint targeted. During a visit a few weeks later, however, Hare said he was able to quickly pinpoint the source "on the band PPL claimed it wasn't using" about a half mile away from the ham's location, although PPL was never able to completely resolve the case.

Hare reports the BPL system was creating S9 noise on entire ham bands within a "rather large" deployment area. "Had this system continued to build out, additional reports of interference from mobile and fixed amateur operation would have been inevitable," he predicted.

ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ, said he wasn't surprised to learn of PPL's decision to get out of BPL. "It bears out what knowledgeable economists have been saying about BPL's prospects for some time," he said. "PPL has considerable excess fiber capacity and was trying to leverage that

investment by offering broadband service to consumers via BPL. If they couldn't make it pay, it's doubtful anyone else can."

The Allentown company first offered BPL Internet service in Whitehall Township and Emmaus, later expanding to parts of Bethlehem, Upper Macungie Township, Hanover Township and Northampton County. In its formal comments in the FCC BPL proceeding, the ARRL cited measurements taken at one site within the BPL test system in Emmaus that "exceeded FCC Part 15 limits by up to 20 dB or more."

An October 4 article in Allentown's The Morning Call newspaper quoted PPL spokesman Jim Santanasto as saying that the utility couldn't charge enough in the face of stiff cable and DSL competition and that its pool of potential customers was too small. "The economies of scale wouldn't work," the paper quoted Santanasto as saying.

Were you a ham prior to November of 1980?



If you were, do you know you are eligible to become a member of the Quarter Century Wireless Association (QCWA).

The QCWA is a nationwide organization of hams that have held, or were first licensed over 25 years ago. The QCWA has a chapter called the Pine Tree Chapter 134. The chapter has the Pine Cone net that meets every Sunday afternoon at 1400 (local) on 3942 kHz Net control uses the chapter call sign of W1MFJ. You are invited to check-in wither you are a member or not.

Several members of the MARA are also members of the QCWA, such as

Bill/K1MNV, Dan/N5AGG and Bruce/W1ZE. Bruce is also the new Maine Pine Tree Chapter President.

If you were first licensed prior to November of 1980 or will have been in a few months and would like to join or get more info on the QCWA, contact Bruce Randall, W1ZE at w1ze@arrl.net or call him at 442-9630; or contact Chapter Sec./Tres. Phil Young, W1JTH at Younpm@aol.com call him at 622-1385.

Additional information about the QCWA can be obtained from their website at <http://www.qcwa.org>.

Editors Notes

By W1ZE

Please excuse this month's abbreviated Squelch Tales. I have had to spend a lot of time helping put the final touches on and moving into the new QTH on Fiddlers Reach, Phippsburg. We will be moved in the last week of October but I am sure we will be living out of boxes for several weeks. Hopefully I will be back on line and able to devote a little more time to the newsletter.

I have been doing the newsletter for the better part of six years now. Getting out a meaningful and informative letter can be a challenge from time to time.

REQUEST: If any of you out there would like to contribute a article or column to Squelch Tales, This Editor would love it. Have you taken a trip where Ham Radio played a part? Have you a topic you want to talk on? Have you built something that you want to share with the newsletter readers, send it to me. It will be published. Most of you are good writers and communicators, but if you think you are not, put your input on paper or email and send it to me and we'll make it fit.

There are a lot of folks out there that are not MARA members but get and read the newsletter. We get lots of positive feedback and I hope we can continue that in the future.

73, Bruce