



M.C.W.A. NEWS

Vol. 16 #1

January 2016

AMATEUR RADIO

MEETING January 5, 2016

Socializing - 6:30 PM
Meeting - 7:00 PM

Crystal Lake Bank
5100 Rt, 14
Crystal Lake, IL 60014

PROGRAM:

At the January 5th MCWA meeting we will do something a little different from past meeting presentations. We will bring together a few select MCWA members (Jim N7US, Cornell KK9DX, John K9JK & Dave K9RUF) for a panel discussion and Mike WB8BZK will be the moderator.

The purpose of the session is to provide an opportunity for panel members to share their knowledge, experiences & skills on a wide variety of ham radio topics. Something for everyone!

The format will be simple: After introductions, Mike will start by asking one of the panel members a question on a ham

3rd column --->

Jan. Hamfests

9 Waukesha, WI

<http://www.warac.org>

17 St. Charles IL

<http://w9ccu.org/wheatonhamfest/index.com>

Jan. Contests

2 PODXS PSKFEST

2/3 ARRL RTTY

3 Kids Day

9/10 NAQP CW

16/17 NAQP SSB

23 MT QSO Party

30/Feb 1 ARRL Jan VHF

See: **WA7BNM**
Calendar (web)

Jan. DX

11/26 K5P Palmyra Is.

17/27 VP8STI South Sandwich Is.

P5 in February

PROGRAM - cont'd

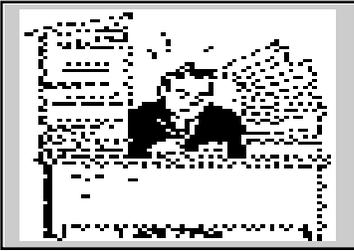
on a ham radio topic that they are very familiar with. Other panel members will be able to join in to voice their thoughts and opinions, and then the field will be open for questions and/or comments from everyone at the meeting. When the discussion (or laughter) subsides, Mike will ask a new question directed to another panel member and we will continue until we run out of time. Basically, everyone is welcome to participate and to learn something new about ham radio operation from a few of the club's masters.

Don't miss this first of a kind club presentation!



**2016 Dues
Still only \$10**

See Joe, N9OK
at meetings or see
application on MCWA.org



**FROM THE
EDITOR'S
DESK**



2016

Still only \$10.00

Pay at meeting or
use application on



Stray!

In a pile up
repeating your call
4 or 5+ times, in a
row, marks you as
a LID, a bully or
both.

KI7DG de eham

M.C.W.A. NEWS

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NEW ! McHenry Wireless Association VE Testing NEW !

Contact is Steve Maresso (KB9OLD) 847-477-3518

Testing is conducted (quarterly) at 7:00pm on the Third Tuesday for the months of February, May, August, and November. Walk in's welcome until 8:00pm. No appointment necessary. Testing Requirements:

1. Cost for 2016 is \$15.00. (Cash, or check made payable to ARRL) If initial test element is passed, the person testing may continue to take the next test element(s) at no extra charge during the given session. Retesting of an element failed during the same test session will require payment of an additional \$15.00 test fee.
2. Must show original, and provide copy of Amateur Radio license and/or CSCE (if upgrading).
3. Must show a valid Government Issued Photo ID (Passport, Driver License or State ID Card) for identification.
4. SS Security Number or FRN number required. Location: Free Methodist Church, 934 N. Seminary , Woodstock, Il. 60098



“Odd Weather and Propagation-- Ups and Downs”

As I shoveled 4 inches of “rain” with my snow blower and shovel tonight, I was reminded of two similar oddities across December---the weather and the propagation. Both have been interesting, to say the least. Is there any connection between the two? Probably. That's why I predicted lots of ups and downs in our winter weather patterns this past fall in a previous article. I have seen this kind of trend before. The sun has peculiar activity occurring. It often seems to translate into ups and downs. Of course, we also have a strong El Nino pattern going on. Put it all together and there will be strange weather and propagation patterns for a while. I do expect January to be more winter-like. That's normal.

And the atmospheric conditions have certainly been up and down. My log for December is smaller than that in recent months. However, it does show some decent QSO's. I worked KH2/FHEC on 15m. During the 10m contest, I worked a bunch of Argentine stations in a short period of time. The bands are open with lots of ups and downs. And due to solar flares, 6m has offered some openings as well. We often see 6m open up anyway around Christmas time. Unfortunately, these flares have also knocked out HF propagation on a number of days across this last month of 2015. But on the bright side, the numbers are stabilizing. Instead of obscene A and K indices, tonight the SN is 64, the SFI is 113, the Aindex is 5 and the K index is 2. If this holds, we will swing upwards in our DX prospects.

As we enter January, look for Z21LS, E51LLA, 3D2AG/p, XW4XR, YJ4AO, YJ4AFU, JD1BMH, T8CW, T88UC and T88HK. Of special interest is VP8STI. This is on the more-needed list.

Working DX is a great thrill to me each time I log a station. On occasion, I also work some domestic HF. I'm sure you appreciate this great hobby or you wouldn't be reading this article. Get on the air. Before the daylight gets longer, enjoy the DX on the lower HF bands. There's always something going on in amateur radio.

Happy New Year and Happy DX! Dave KA9OZP

KF4LVC Minor antenna adjustments.



Thought I would share this photo with everyone. Please be careful when trying to readjust your antenna up on the tower! It's a LONG way down! When you begin thinking you're job is hard, just remember these guys!





M.C.W.A.



When is it Okay to Join a Conversation on Ham Radio?

When is it ok to join a conversation on ham radio? Here are some opinions that I have copied and attributed to the author. What do you think?

Joining a Conversation in Process- (ARRL.org)

Remember that private conversations don't exist in Amateur Radio. If you don't want to call CQ to start a conversation, you can join a conversation that is already in progress. Listen carefully to the operators. Are they having an animated, involved discussion? If so, it may be a bit rude to interrupt unless you have something important to offer. If the chat seems casual, the operators may not mind someone else joining. So how do you politely interrupt? The best approach is to wait for one station to stop transmitting and then quickly announce your call sign:

“Yes, Charlie, I hope to get the dipole soldered together this weekend if the weather holds up.”
“N1RL.” “Ah... we have a breaking station. N1RL, go ahead!”

Do not use the word “break.” You may hear other hams doing this, but you should only say “break” when you need to interrupt because of an emergency.

Well, today, we needn't tune around looking for answers, any answers will be right there on the same frequency we're on. Experienced operators know it's easy to break into an ongoing QSO, if you know how and when it's appropriate to do so. I make a lot of my contacts like that: Just overhear an interesting conversation, wait for a pause, insert my call sign, and join the group. But many newbies, as well as some old-timers, are too shy to do this, or maybe just not very good at it. And it is frowned on by most to break into a conversation when you've absolutely nothing to add to it.

So, I only break in when I do think I have something of value to add. It's also acceptable to break into a non-emergency contact (which is about 99.9% of all QSOs) to simply ask for a report, like, “Hey guys, Steve in L.A. here, with a new antenna. How's the signal?” Nobody with a heart can begrudge another ham a signal report when he's using a new antenna. Ditto goes for a new rig, microphone, or a new almost anything.

Steve Katz, WB2WIK

And please! When breaking in, don't say “break, break, break”, as most old timers will consider that you have an emergency. Do as Steve suggests, and just give your call.

Alan, KØBG

Someone asked about joining an in-progress group. I do this frequently on 75 meters, and occasionally on 20 meters.

First, if this is a group you do not know, and that does not know you, the main consideration is “Why?” Are they having an interesting conversation? Why is it interesting? Do you know something about it? Do you have something to add? Or perhaps a question? If the group is talking about Power Stroke diesel engines, do you want to know something about that engine? Or maybe you want to compare that engine to some other engine.

I liken round-tables or 'groups' to a group of men standing at the bus stop. They are talking about sports. You arrive at the bus stop and overhear their conversation. But you know none of these men. However, you do know something about sports, so you want to join in. You wait for the right opportunity and then you say “How about dem Cowboys?” Or whatever sports comment is appropriate.

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M.C.W.A.

Happy New Year

When is it okay - cont'd

It's the same thing on ham radio. This is a group of people talking about a subject. If you listen for a few minutes, the subject may switch from Power Stroke engines to fishing boats. That's OK. Maybe you like those, too! In other words, be pertinent. Don't pick a group that is talking about digital photography and hop in there with "Any of you guys rebuilding Power Stroke engines?"

Having determined you have a reason for breaking into a conversation, you need to pick the time. Some of the round tables go pretty quickly, with none of the operators "dragging their feet" to listen for newcomers. So you have to be ready for a pause that is longer than a second. If not, you are going to be doubling with someone, and that won't earn you points. See if you can pick up the rhythm of the conversation. Usually one fellow, and maybe a couple, will be a bit slower on the uptake than the rest, and you will recognize this. But if not, sooner or later there will be a brief moment of silence. And that's where you fit in! Be ready! Don't be off feeding the dog or fixing a snack.

Say your call sign, once only, clearly, and no phonetics! You have only one or one and a half seconds to get it in, so make it count. Be sure you are right on their frequency, and let's pray you didn't tune up there!

Recognize that not everyone in the group may have heard you, depending upon propagation, QRN, etc. But someone probably did. If you are immediately acknowledged, great! Someone will say, "was there a breaking station in there?" Well, yes, by gosh, there was and you're "it." Now you can return with "This is (call) and the name is (name) in (location). I heard you guys talking about that fishing boat and I have one. (Or I plan to buy one. Or mine sank.)" But keep it short! One sentence if possible. I recommend still not using phonetics for your call sign until and unless you are asked to clarify it.

You are in. Next go around you will be included, and someone will probably comment directly to you even at this point. "Oh, your boat sank, Joe? Was it overloaded with fish?" You are on your way. But don't get long winded and tell a long, tall tale. Make your transmissions short, conversational the way they would be if you were standing around the room chatting with these guys. (In AM operation, yeah, make your tale long!)

Suppose you weren't heard? Or no one acknowledged you. Wait a few moments; perhaps through three or four other guys transmitting, then try it again. Still not acknowledged? Wait again, and try it a third time, after perhaps three more transmissions. Trust that if you can hear all of them, certainly some of them, if not all, can hear you. So if you aren't allowed in, or acknowledged, in three tries, find another group.

Ed - W5HTW

It is rude and Liddish to break in to a conversation when you don't know what is going on or you can't understand both sides of the conversation.

A person should use the same common sense as he would use in person. If two or more people are in a conversation about some specific topic, would you really walk up and say "hey, how loud is my voice"? If you couldn't understand one or hear him at all, would you join in?

I've been criticized for pointing out to people who are rude enough to break in when they don't have anything at all to add that they are being rude.

I still remember way back to 1962 or 63 when I broke into a roundtable and said "I don't know who is here or where you are at but I want to join in". I was politely educated! I learned a very good lesson about manners, and still respect and value having it explained how rude it was to break in without being able to contribute or knowing who was there.

LET
IT
SNOW

M.C.W.A.



When is it Okay - cont'd

Nothing wrong with joining in or asking for a signal report from strangers as long as the TIMING is correct.

Tom W8JI

The correct way to join in to an ongoing QSO.

While tuning around on the Hamsphere Bands, you may come across an ongoing QSO and maybe you'd like to join in. There is a right way to do this and a wrong way. Of course, we all want to operate in the correct manner. Remember, we want to operate on Hamsphere as we would be required to do on the actual Ham Bands.

If you'd like to join in or "break" in to an ongoing conversation or QSO as its called, the first thing you want to do is LISTEN. Make a note of the call sign of one or all in the QSO. Then, WAIT for the transmitting station to hand it back to the next station. Between the break in their QSO, you would say your call. That's all.... Just your call or if you'd like, the prefix or last numerals of your call. For example; Between the "overs" I would break in by saying, "N1TKO" or if your call is 321HS123, you can say, "123". Thats all... Very simple.

Then, WAIT to be acknowledged by the station it was going to. Once acknowledged, the station would say "N1TKO, you are acknowledged, please stand-by" or "The 123 station, stand by". Then, when the station calls you in, then you can transmit and join into the QSO.

NEVER say BREAK or BREAKER.... The term "Break - Break" is only used in the event of an emergency.

ALWAYS listen first on a frequency before you transmit to be sure it is not already in use. A good habit to get into is to select a frequency you'd like to use then ask "Is this frequency in use?" "Is this frequency in use"? If you hear no response, the frequency is all yours.

N1TKO

What do you think? Do you agree with the ARRL and WB2WIK and others, and insert your call sign between the "overs" to join a conversation? Or do you think that is "Liddish" as said by W8JI unless you have "something to add"? Is there a polite way to indicate that a conversation is not accepting other participants? Should you indicate that you are accepting other stations in the conversation or is it accepted and taken for granted that you accept others to join the conversation on ham radio?

73, DE W3TTT

(de eham)

FCC Proposes to Penalize California Licensee \$25,000 for Causing Intentional Interference

The FCC Enforcement Bureau has proposed fining William F. Crowell, W6WBJ (ex-N6AYJ), of Diamond Springs, California, \$25,000 for intentionally interfering with other Amateur Radio operators and transmitting prohibited communications, including music. FCC San Francisco District Director David K. Hartshorn released a Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture (NAL) on December 18, detailing the allegations. An Advanced class licensee, Crowell is no stranger to the Enforcement Bureau, which had warned him as far back as 2000 about intentional interference. In 2008 the FCC designated his current license renewal application for hearing, alleging that he had caused intentional interference, interrupted others' communications, transmitted music, and made one-



M.C.W.A.



FCC Fine - cont'd

“Deliberate interference undermines the utility of the Amateur Radio Service by preventing communications among licensed users that comply with the Commission’s rules,” the FCC said in its NAL. “Mr Crowell’s deliberate interference to other users, using voice, noises, and music, directly contravenes the Amateur Radio service’s fundamental purpose as a voluntary non-commercial communications service...”

The Enforcement Bureau recounted that its agents and the High Frequency Direction Finding (HFDF) Center monitored Crowell’s transmissions during the WARFA Net on 3908 kHz on August 25 and August 27. As the agents and the HFDF Center listened, Crowell “repeatedly interrupted other amateurs using noises, recordings, and music, in addition to talking over amateurs affiliated with the WARFA Net, so as not to allow them to transmit on the frequency,” the FCC said in its NAL. “His transmissions and recordings included racial, ethnic, and sexual slurs and epithets.” According to the NAL, the interference continued until the net shut down.

During an inspection of his station, Crowell acknowledged to FCC agents that he operates on 3908 kHz among other frequencies on most nights, and that he was transmitting on the evening of August 27. The agents warned Crowell that his transmissions violated the Communications Act and FCC rules. Crowell asserted that playing recordings was not against the rules and, the FCC reported, “that he would continue to operate his amateur station as he had been doing.” The FCC said on August 30, the HFDF Center again monitored Crowell “using his amateur station to engage in the same types of intentional interfering transmissions during the meeting time for the WARFA Net.”

Crowell was given 30 days from the release of the NAL to pay the forfeiture or to file in writing seeking reduction or cancellation of the proposed penalty.

de ARRL

Experience Counts

I’m a fairly new ham. Got licensed in 2008, crammed for the tests, lucked out in 2010 and got my Extra. Here is a lesson on how this newbie was nearly driven to insanity because he didn’t have the knowledge that only years of experience can bring. For years my Elmer, Dan, repeatedly told me to get rid of the commercial aluminum antenna monster in my front yard and replace it with a random length dipole up in the trees fed with ladder line and tuned with an old Johnson Matchbox. Dan had been making QRP CW contacts worldwide with that rig. That’s all good and well, but it took about four years of flea market hunting to find a reasonably priced Matchbox. Finally we found one about a year ago. Plus, the XYL told me to get the shack out of the living room and move it to the spare bedroom. Time to build an antenna! What could be simpler? Random lengths of wire to a tee insulator, ladder line to the shack, into the Matchbox, and then to the rig...

So I built an air launcher from scrap plastic pipe like I’d seen advertised in QST, built the antenna with 34 feet of wire on either side, soldered the ladder line to them, shot fishing line 55 feet over a tree, pulled the whole thing up, routed the line to the shack and got all excited to make contacts. No dice, wouldn’t load, consistently 100-1 SWR. Call Dan. He looks the thing over and then tries it himself. Same thing, won’t tune, won’t take power. “You have an open somewhere” Dan says. “Take it down and check the continuity from the shack end of the ladder line to the end of each wire.”

Down it comes, and it checks out fine. Huh? The mystery deepens. This is frustrating. So I figure, what the heck let’s just rebuild the whole thing with 12 gauge stranded copper, lengthen the wires to 50 feet or so, carefully route the ladder line through standoffs for an electric fence, test everything for continuity, hook it up, and make DX contacts. After another day working in the rain, buying more wire, standoffs, and ladder line, then checking continuity back up it goes and into

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M.C.W.A.



EXPERIENCE COUNTS - cont'd

the shack I go, thinking nothing could be wrong now, time for contacts! No dice. 100-1 SWR on every band, won't tune, won't load.

At this point I am so frustrated I write to Dan and say "this hobby has worn out its welcome, I'm putting everything in storage, kicking the cat, and chopping down the trees. How could something so bonehead simple not work?" I can't describe how black my mood got. A wire that won't load? How can that be? Dan scratches his head and implores me, "before you do something completely stupid, let me bring my Matchbox over and try it". He does and it works so well that in 20 minutes he made six cross country CW contacts with 5 watts. All 599. So the problem is my Matchbox!

I'd taken the cover off the Matchbox before and it looked pristine. -- Still nice and shiny inside after all those years. No burns, no modifications, no solder drips, no cracked insulators, no loose screws or nuts, just plain perfect. What could be wrong? Out to the shed to examine this thing. Stick one probe of the Fluke ohmmeter into the center of the coax connector. Start poking around with the other probe. What? No continuity from the input to the link coil. Makes no sense, I can see the wire going to the coil, nothing wrong there. Hey, what's this relay doing in this tuner? I press the relay and voila, continuity to the link coil! Time to get a schematic of the Matchbox and get a real understanding of what's going on

It turns out the default, i.e. unenergized, position of the relay is "receive" which takes the whole tuning mechanism out of the circuit. All the old timers know that when the Matchbox was designed transceivers were rare and folks worked with separate transmitters and receivers. The relay was energized by the transmitter and kept the outgoing signal from blowing up the receiver. I'd solved the problem. Stick a toothpick in the relay to permanently close it. Or use a cable tie for a high tech solution.

With a toothpick, the Matchbox works perfectly with my transceiver. DX contacts galore, great signal reports, blah blah blah. I am certain that no old timer would have put up and taken down, and rebuilt an antenna twice when it was obvious that all he needed is a toothpick. Experience counts.

Richard Braun, KE7VXP de Eham.net



*From
The*

Editor

Guess a few were unhappy with my Xmas issue in December. I put in something I thought was humorous and it was deemed "unsuitable" by someone who took the liberty of deleting it from tpage 4 of the online copy, but left the punch line on page 5. I let this slide, but there will not be a second time. Back in 1980 when I was Editor, a similar thing was done which led to my resignation and that led to a succession of Editors. This is a tough job at best and I could spend the hours put into this doing more production things like being on the air. This is not as easy as it looks. This is not an apology nor a retraction, I'm simply stating what is. Should anyone feel the urge to take over... have at it !

STRAY In a pile up repeating your call 4 or 5+ times, in a row, marks you as a LID, a bully or both. KI7DG de eham.net