

# M.C.W.A. NEWS

August 2014  
Vol. 14, No. 8

McHenry County Wireless Association

Since 1978  
36 Years

AMATEUR RADIO

## Officers & Staff

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Newsletter ..... Jerry, N9AVY  
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## VE TESTING



### Testing By Appointment Only !

7 PM on 3rd Tuesday of month  
(Sept. thru May)

Cost is \$15 one time charge  
for session no matter how  
many elements are taken.  
Must show original license  
and/or CSCE if upgrading .  
Valid photo ID needed.  
SS# or FRN#

Steve, KB9OLD

847/477-3518

## AUGUST MEETING

August 5, 2014

Crystal Lake Bank

5100 Rt. 14, Crystal Lake, IL

6:30 PM - Socializing

7:00 PM - Meeting

## PROGRAM : 10-10 Awards

Last minute change ! Jerry , N9AVY (Secretary of Ten-Ten Net International, Inc.) will do a short program on the various 10-10 Awards.



## ELECTION TIME

## IS NEAR !

As September draws near it's time to think about some new Officers for M.C.W.A. . If it wasn't for trusted and valuable members who step in to serve your club, there would be **NO M.C.W.A !**

Those who think they aren't Officer material should know that the old crew of Officers stands ready to assist in making the transition to the Office. It's not like you're being elected to Congress where half the people want to hang you and the other half don't care !

Don't think you can be an Officer ? Nominate someone !



## “SPECIAL EVENTS AND LIMITED SPECIAL DX”

If you enjoy working special event stations, July has provided a bumper crop. My log shows GA700BOB, The Thirteen Original Colonies (worked all 13), PY22COY, N2M, ZX14RS, W7C, S567O, EF6 and W9IMS. A few of the W1AW ARRL Centennial states were also logged. Even though none of these are very exotic DX, the pile-ups were amazing at times. These special events were entertaining to work when the bands were not too optimal.

Over July we saw some very low sunspot numbers at times. Subsequently, the solar flux was low as well. These numbers plus some “toxic propagation flares,” reduced activity greatly on 12m and 10m. In the midst of it all, there have been some nice E-skip openings on 6m and 10m. After working some 6m activity I tapped into some 10m FM repeater action about a week ago. Perhaps the best opening occurred on the heels of the VHF contest. It's too bad the timing did not work out for the contesters over the weekend before.

As of the writing of this article, the SN is up to 110 and the SFI is at 100. But even during the lowest numbers there was some nice DX. 4X6TT has been very active and strong, especially on 20m and 17m well into the night. On the evening of July 11, I went into the shack and had a nice QSO with JE1NJA on 15m near 11pm local time. Other QSO's of note were with VY0BRR (notice the cold and appropriate suffix), OH2BAD (a good retired pastor), and several others. The best conditions have been on 20m and 17m. 40 m and 30m have also been quite good. 15m

has been minimal overall with some occasional excellent DX openings. I have a QSO or two logged on 80m but the QRN from thunderstorms has been loud.

As we head into August, look for such DX call signs as VK9EC, some 4W/ call signs, A35UO, TK500, XR0YNTT, VK9EX, A43MI, NH0J, VQ9XR, and calls with 3D2/ and KH0/ prefixes, and A25GF. This does not include all of the interesting DX stations that will be running in August.

With the increase in solar numbers, expect some nice openings on all bands. Keep an eye on the DX clusters. Better still, just get on the air and find the DX that is waiting to hear your call. It's there and I expect some improvements as we move toward the fall season. 73 Dave KA9OZP

DX...DX.. DX... DX... DX..DX...DX... DX



*Hey, Kloid, this looks like a great place for a DXpedition ! D'ya think think the Intergalactic Radio Relay League will give us credit ???*





# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

**M.C.W.A.** As we into our 36th year as a local Amateur Radio club, are we meeting the needs of the members ? The officers need your valuable input to plan programs and events that interest you. It's not easy coming up with new programs year after year.

Our Field Day was a decent operation considering only a small portion of the total membership was there. Those that were there had a lot of fun. Perhaps next year we could make Field Day into more of a family picnic. M.C.W.A. used to have dinners at local restaurants around November/December, this might be a possibility.

M.C.W.A. could make a Field trip to some place within a reasonable driving distance . There might be a possibility of having a Special Event station for Crystal Lake's Cardboard Cup Regatta or one of the many other events which take place here in McHenry county. There are many possibilities.



## Upcoming Hamfests

- \* **Hamfesters 80th - 8/3/14**  
Peotone, IL <http://hamfesters.org>
- \* **Circus City - 8/23/14**  
Baraboo, WI <http://yellowthunder.org>
- \* **Radio Expo 2014 - 9/13/14**  
Belvidere, IL <http://chicagofmclub.org>
- \* **Peoria Superfest - 9/20/14**  
Peoria, IL - <http://www.w9uvi.org>

**STRAY** - When you are using a cellphone or internet or satellite to communicate you are a slave but with your own radio station you are free. when you receive a DX call from far away its magic

*YK3MM via Eham.net*

**Satellites:** There is a case of hams rag-chewing and operating simplex on the uplink frequencies and causing interference to others wanting to communicate through the satellite. As you can imagine this is difficult to monitor and correct. The most obvious answer is courteous operating practices which are not always in the forefront of the offending operator's minds. We need to remind operators to consider the frequencies they choose for their simplex operations a little more carefully. This might encourage clubs to discuss the situation in their club meetings; they are probably in the best position to know what activity is going on in their local area.



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# MCWA Treasurer's Report August 2014



Here is the monthly treasurer's report. Our balance shrank since my 1st report last month, reflecting mostly the Field Day expenses. With a membership of approximately 87 paying dues, we should be able to bear the field day costs each year as long as they stay in the same general fees. I haven't received the last bank balance statement yet so this statement is approximate. Feel free to contact me about any Treasurer related issues.

73 Dave Cox - KC9WYF410 Lake Ave Woodstock, IL. 60098DLCox2@gmail.com

## Bank Balance

Per transactions:

Beginning Balance: (From prior months report)	\$5,381.24
Checks written	\$680.42
Field Day expenses	\$10.00
Deposits (2 half price membership dues)	
Ending Balance:	\$4710.82

Should reflect bank statement excepting interest.

**WANTED: Somebody to go back in time with me. This is not a joke. P.O. Box 322, Oakview, CA 93022. You'll get paid after we get back. Must bring your own weapons. Safety not guaranteed. I have only done this once before.**

## It's in the Mail

By

*Eric P. Nichols, KL7AJ*

"Eeny-meeny-miney-moe.... Zero beat my radio.... If I am not loud and clear... Listen with your other ear. WL7AI fer ID."

"Sounds okay now, OM. Like you say, probably just a little R.F. in the mikefone. KL7AJ, just for the hal-ibut."

"Roger. Hey, while I've gotcha there, can you listen up and down a few and see if I've got any ker-splatter? I'm driving this thing pretty hard, and my sillyscope is dead."

"Sure. Give me a long count."

"One two, skip in my loo, three four, shut the door, five six, pick up chicks, seven eight, lay them straight, nine ten...er...umm...I forgot the rest...WL7AI out."

"Clean as a hound's tooth, El Joe. Nuthin' to worry about."

"Cool. Well since I'm aimed right down your gizzard, I imagine I won't be bothering anyone else either. So are you ready for SS?"

"Dang, is it November already??!!!"

"Yeah, it started just after October got finished. Did the same last year too, I believe."

"Hmm. Well the rotatorator still rotatorates, and nothing seems to be spewing out too much smoke, so I guess I'm pretty much set."

"Care to collaborate this year? Might have a better chance of showing up in the ratings. Haven't operated multi in ages, anyway."

"Sure! Sounds like a slick idea. Your shack or mine?"

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“Why not scoot your boots over here? The XYL is going to some quilting bee needle twiddling conference of some sort that weekend. We can bring over the dancing girls. Maggie sez it’s okay as long as they don’t smoke.” Ahh.

Are the dancing girls licensed? For ham radio, I mean.”

No, but they can keep the logs for us. I think one of them can even read.”

“Great. Sounds like a plan then. Need anything from ye olde junque box here?”

“We’ll shake things down early afternoon, and we’ll find out. I think I’m pretty well set. You can use the S-line rigs...they’ve been lonely lately. And the quad. I think I’ll hang out on the low bands.”

“Extra cool! Well, El Joe, I’m gonna grab the last few minutes of ten meters before it takes a dive. See ya Friday I guess!”

“Alrighty then. Yack atcha soon. 73, OM. I’ll start clearing off a bench or two right away. Have a good one. KL7AJ, from WL7AI listening out.”

“73, El Joe. WL7AI, KL7AJ clear.”

*{This makes about as much sense as some QSOs I've heard. - Editor}*



## CONTESTING

One of the best ways to improve one's skill as an Amateur Operator is to participate in one or more of the contests which are held during the year.

How many of us can quickly and accurately copy what we hear? We might think we can, but the proof is in the heat of a contest and working through many stations calling at once. When various letters sound almost the same on SSB, it's common to make a mistake unless phonetics are used.

The weekend of 12-13 July saw the IARU competition. In spite of not ideal propagation, the winners of 1st, 2nd and 3rd place awards all made over 3000 contacts! Each station was running 2 transmitters and operators. This is certainly no mean feat. These were some of the best operators from all over the world.

Most of us will never be in this type of contest, but we can have fun in other contests. Even though many are 24 or 48 hour contests, there is nothing that says you have to participate the entire duration of the contest. Some of us just poke around and try to work a new country or state. Some will get in every year just to see if they can better last year's score. Yet, others will use a contest to check their station to see how well it performs.

Some contests require serial numbers which are nothing more than the number of contacts you make in the contest. Sometimes when you give out “59 001” to a station you can hear a bit of excitement in the operator's voice because he just worked a station that no one else has worked - yet.

Some of the best contests are the “Sprints” which only run about 6 hours. These are nice because you aren't tied down for 24/48 hours and can do other things with your weekend. These also tend to be more family friendly.

All in all contests are a good way to improve the skills one has from the safety of one's own shack. Most contesters are willing to forgive the errors of the “new guys” because we were all there once. So, jump into a contest, any contest, and get your feet wet!

## Our Own Methods are Stifling Technology

By N6JSX, MS-EET  
04/03/14

For HAMs that have been active, locally, in our hobby for +20yrs, we have seen a steady decline in repeater activity since the hay-days of the 70/80's when the original purpose of repeaters (extending the operational distance of weak power stations, i.e. HT) has expanded into becoming 'social' groups. Repeaters have now evolved into 'support' groups for SkyWarn, Red Cross, EMA-HLS, etc. and repeater support in general.

HAM repeater truisms:

1. 2m is the most used and active of HAM repeater bands,
2. repeaters are routinely most active during first-shift commutes,
3. repeaters are infrequently monitored (and 146.520 is even more rarely monitored),
4. when a NOAA Warning or Tornado Sirens sound - HAMs come out of hibernation onto the repeaters demanding to participate (even if they are not current in training),
5. NET attendance is waning, coinciding with the rising age of HAMs, becoming SK's all too soon.

Today you can travel through North America scanning 2m & 70cm, the most popular bands, hearing virtually nothing, why? Is it due to a deterioration in conversational civility, the shift from a technical hobby to a more social hobby, or has the WWW-Internet taken over as our social gathering medium for HAMs (i.e. QRZ, eHam, FB, YGroups, etc.)? Or is it due to programming our newer super +300 memory VHF/UHF radios has become so technically burdensome that often only the first 20 memories get manually programmed?

Why have repeaters becoming non-emergency ghost towns - it cannot solely be caused by the proliferation of cellular telephones or the Internet? Could it be due to the difficulty in finding active repeaters that are infrequently used? For decades we have had the ARRL Repeater Guide - with lots of bad/missing data (but don't blame the ARRL, the guide's accuracy is proportional to the accuracy of the data given to the ARRL

for the Guide). How many times have you been traveling and programmed your radio with ARRL data to find you must search for the PL-tone, ker-chunking until the repeater keys up, if it keys up? I found ARTSCI publication the most inaccurate, listing barely 50% of the area repeaters; the maps are nice but outdated and way short on area data. ARTSCI does not appear to use the FREE area repeater coordination databases, as evident with my own 2005, coordinated repeater never being listed in ARTSCI but it is ARRL listed. The current Ohio OARC database can be downloaded free from web any time.

And herein lies our problem, there is 'NO' National HAM Repeater Database 'FORMAT', our own methods are stifling progress in radio technology. Each Coordination body does "their own thing their own way," and this is the autonomy we all must suffer. Since the database 'formats' are different from State to State, area to area, band to band, group to group, how do the radio manufactures incorporate any radio memory programming features? I envision a Bluetooth (or cable) link from your Smartphone/Tablet/Notebook to the radio, using a Smart-APP/program to quickly search a specified Repeater area, find the near repeaters, and send the data to the radio to program your specified memory group(s). This will be much SAFER and quicker with far fewer fat-finger errors than trying to manually program the radio while driving. Plus you would not have to get the manual out (that you left at home) or decipher the short cheat-sheet to rediscover how to program that radio. Or once again tempt fate, using one hand on the manual, the other hand on the radio, and one knee on the steering wheel --- and how many of us condemn cell phone talking drivers as being unsafe!?

In getting to a 'National Standardized Repeater database FORMAT' there is an issue that needs to be addressed, many repeater owners do not want their physical repeater location made public for security reasons. Here is where the physical location needs to be changed to a service-area location, i.e. 6-digit Grid-Square. A repeater's typically service area is usually never bigger than a 4-digit Grid-Square (Grid-Squares within continental USA; 4-digit "EN70" is 70x100mi: 6-digit "EN70vh" is 3x4mi).

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## OUR OWN METHODS - cont'd

I recommend the standardized repeater database format FIRST nine columns shall be:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Call-Sign ( N6JSX )	Grid-Square ( EN70vh )	TX-Freq out (444.8875)	RX-Freq in (449.8875)	PL-Freq (107)	CTCSS-Freq (107)	Mode FM W/N/D (W)	Open/ Closed O/C (O )	SkyWarn/ RACES/HLS Y/N (N)

All other columns added to the database are for the local coordinators use. The first seven columns contain all the pertinent data needed for searching and programming a radio.

With this recommended 'FORMAT' the radio manufactures would have a standardized 'FORMAT' to use to include auto-programming features within their radios. This would make it so much easier, faster, and safer for the traveling or impaired HAM's to find and use in and out of area repeaters.

The bigger issue will be HOW to get omnipotent repeater coordination groups to adopt this 'FORMAT' or any National FORMAT? There is no USA "super" repeater Coordinator and the ARRL can only apply 'peer' pressure to obtain compliance. I do not see the big radio manufactures (Icom, Kenwood, Yaesu, Alinco) collaborating in adopting a one-fits-all FORMAT forcing area Coordinators into a format. I do not want the FCC to get involved, but then again Charlie did set the enforcement policy between coordinated vs. uncoordinated repeaters. So it will likely take some type of FCC 'policy recommendation' to get USA Coordinators to standardize to a common 'FORMAT' as well as directing ALL USA Coordinators to publicly share the first nine columns of data, annually.



**STRAY :** *The one ham formula that will get you on the air anywhere, 468 divided by the desired operating frequency. Know it, use it, love it.*  
KK5DR de Eham.net

**BAD ATTITUDE:** *My local ARC has been hounding me for years to join, so they can instantly make me an officer or something like that. My answer to that is an old W.C. Fields line, "I don't wish to be a member, of any club that would have ME, as a member."*  
KK5DR via eham.net

### REALLY ?

There has been a lot of debated on the safety of using XP when no longer being updated well here is another reason to move on. Oracle is readying the release of Java 8 soon with performance and security enhancements. It will not be possible to upgrade XP to Java 8 because it requires a "blessing" from MS in the form of some code that MS will not provide because it is EOL (end of life). This adds another bullet to chamber when playing Russian roulette with XP.

**STRAY:** *"When did Elmer's die"? I quit helping one new ham because he was too lazy to read the operating manual for his rig. Told him I would be glad to help him understand if he tried, but he just wanted me to tell him how to do all of the set up!*  
N4VNV

Just a reminder as a public service that the following licensees are banned from the 145.41 repeater:

KC9ONA, W9RCM, and ex - K1MBE