



BIG RAPIDS AREA AMATEUR RADIO CLUB



NOVEMBER 2003 DECEMBER

HAMVENTION SIGNS CONTRACT FOR 2004 SHOW AT HARA ARENA

Hamvention <<http://www.hamvention.org>> will be at Hara Arena near Dayton, Ohio, at least for another year. General Chairman Gary Des Combes, N8EMO, announced the one-show contract this week. The last Hamvention contract with Hara Arena was for five years. Des Combes also expressed confidence that behind-the-scenes management changes he's instituted since taking over July 1 will translate into success for "the world's largest Amateur Radio gathering and trade show."

"I think things are going very well," Des Combes said of progress toward pulling together Hamvention's 53rd show, which will take place May 14-16. "I'm confident we're going to be successful." The attraction gathered slightly more than 22,100 visitors in 2003 down by more than 10 percent from the 2002 crowd marking the third year in a row of declining attendance.

Des Combes is banking that the management team and "best business practices" approach he's put into place for next spring's show will turn things around. One significant change is a shift away from jobbing out Hamvention's production to paid professionals and returning to the strong reliance on volunteers that was a hallmark of past Hamventions. "Some of the volunteers, quite frankly, felt they were not welcome," said Des Combes, who believes that moving away from an all-volunteer Hamvention was a mistake and created some unease within the organization. Under his regime, some volunteer staffers from the past now have returned to the fold, Des Combes said. Most of the volunteers for the 2004 show are from the sponsoring Dayton Amateur Radio Association (DARA)

<<http://www.ceitron.com/dara/>>.

The new order at Hamvention means that Garry Matthews, KB8GOL, is out as the show's paid production manager (See "How Hamvention Happens"

<<http://www.arrl.org/news/stories/2003/03/06/4/0004053.pdf>>, by Rick Lindquist, N1RL, QST, April, 2000). Matthews had served as the backstage impresario for more than three decades of Hamventions.

Des Combes said he intends to spread out Matthews' former duties among several volunteers, saving money in the process. He's also establishing--and in some cases re-establishing--a set of committees responsible for various aspects of Hamvention. The Hamvention assistant chairman is Jim Nies, WX8F.

"We have to just work smarter and tougher," he said, adding that the management change will be invisible to those attending. "I don't think John Q. Ham will see anything much different."

While the show is still in the planning stages, Des Combes said one possible change would be to have the award winners' recognition ceremony during Hamvention itself. The recognition event has replaced the traditional Saturday evening banquet, done away with this year because of slack attendance.

Ticket prices for the 2004 Hamvention will remain at the prices established prior to Des Combes' taking over the reins. Advance tickets for all three days are \$20 (\$23 park-n-ride bus transportation). Tickets at the gate will cost \$25. All under 12 years of age are admitted free. Des Combes says arrangements are under way to enable on-line ticket purchases.

There's more information on the Hamvention Web site <<http://www.hamvention.org>>. ARRL Newsletter

TELEPHONE LINE PROTECTION

DON MAC CONNELL, WA4FRJ

Last summer when the 2 meter autopatch stopped operating we suspected that the phone connection was at fault. Telltale symptoms were: 1) Call failure with a terrible hum when the autopatch attempted to place a call and 2) Our inability to phone into the repeater controller. It sounded as if one of the lines was grounded. Just before the problem there was a significant thunderstorm and we assumed that lightning was the cause of the failure. Pete (W8PET) and I (WA4FRJ) made a trip up the hill and were able to pinpoint the problem and fix it. The problem was a failure in the lightning protection device, a Polyphaser type IS-SPTL. We surmised that it died protecting the repeater controller. It was a brave little box.

Telephone connections have two wires. Neither of these lines is grounded. This balanced connection reduces noise and crosstalk from other lines since noise and crosstalk affect both lines more or less equally and are cancelled. Because the lines are not grounded they can easily develop a high voltage when lightning strikes, even if it doesn't directly strike the line. Also, fortunately rarely, a fallen power line can connect to a phone line. The high voltage usually exists between the lines and ground. The phone company provides some lightning protection in the telephone network interface on the outside of a building. Even with this protection lightning voltage surges can raise havoc and additional protection is warranted. In our repeater's case we use the Polyphaser for extra protection.

In the Polyphaser, gas discharge devices break down, much like a neon bulb, when the voltage is high enough. This helps to absorb the voltage surge. Other components provide additional protection and "MOV's" (metal oxide varistors) are used for further protection.

An MOV does not conduct until a certain voltage exists across it. In our unit, the MOV's start to conduct at about 200 volts. When they do conduct they go to a low resistance state and stay that way until the energy is dissipated. The MOV absorbs the voltage surge and turns the energy into heat. Given all this detail, what happened to our Polyphaser?

When we checked the failed Polyphaser, we found a low resistance between one line and ground. Aha, an MOV had failed. It could have but it didn't. Instead we found that a terminal leading to the MOV had arced to the case, which is grounded. The arc was due to a lightning induced high voltage. In a sense it had welded itself to the case; thus the hum and erratic operation. Of course it was a tiny weld and when we moved the terminal the failure disappeared. A new Polyphaser was installed and the old one, repaired with some mechanical modifications, is on the shelf as a back up unit.

Even with lightning and surge protection a strong transient can destroy anything connected to or near the phone line so be careful during storms. You are harder to fix than a Polyphaser.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MATHEW TROMBLEY, KC8VJR WHO PASSED HIS GENERAL LICENSE EXAM AT THE HOLLAND HAMFEST! NOW COMES THE NEED FOR HF GEAR AND ANTENNA FARMS, EH MATT?

LET'S ALL WELCOME CRAIG BAILEY, KC8I JQ OF MORLEY AS A NEW MEMBER OF OUR CLUB. STEP RIGHT IN CRAIG AND GET INVOLVED. MUCH GOES ON ALL YEAR WHERE YOUR PRESENCE CAN MAKE THIS AN EVEN BETTER AND MORE EFFECTIVE AMATEUR RADIO CLUB.

ARRL SPECTRUM PROTECTION ACT OF 2003

ARRL Great Lakes Division Director: James Weaver, K8JE, k8je@arrl.org
Fellow members of the Great Lakes Division, I thought I'd let you know exactly what you have done so far in our work toward getting the passed. You have accomplished much. Much more remains to be done, though.

CO-SPONSORS

At the beginning of our letter-writing campaign, the following members of the US House of Representatives who serve our three states were the only ones to have signed on to the bill. These are:

MICHIGAN: Bart Stupak, 1st District. OHIO: Paul Gilmore, 5th Dist., Ted Strickland, 6th Dist., Patrick Tiberi, 12th Dist. KENTUCKY: There were no co-sponsors from Kentucky.

This evening, I checked the Congressional web site and found the following members of the House and the Senate from our states have added their signatures to those listed above:

MICHIGAN: Peter Hoekstra, Dist. 2, Dale Kildee, Dist. 5, Michael Rogers, Dist 8, Carolyn Kirkpatrick, Dist. 13. Michigan Senator Carl Levin has also signed on. OHIO: Michael Turner, Dist. 3, Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Dist. 11, Sherrod Brown, Dist 13. KENTUCKY: No additions from Kentucky.

There are two reasons I share this information with you. First, I wish to thank you who have done the job in getting these members to co-sponsor HR 713 (House of Representatives) or S 537 (US Senate) and who have written to Congressmen who have not yet chosen to become co-sponsors. Your work very clearly has paid off in the new co-sponsors and in making those who have not yet signed on to the bills aware of the legislation. You each deserve a pat on the back. Stop by anytime you see me and I'll be happy to give one and maybe two to you.

Reason No. 2 is to encourage you who have not yet written to get to your computer or typewriter to E-mail or write a hard copy to FAX or snail mail to any of the Representatives in your district and Senators in your state. You can see from this note that writing has direct impact in getting Representatives and Senators to co-sponsor this very important legislation. Please do it for yourself, for Amateur Radio and for the millions in the public who will benefit from our having a more stable assignment of frequencies to use to help them.

SERVED AGENCIES

A couple of our members have suggested we should ask representatives of local Red Cross, EMA, Salvation Army and law enforcement and other agencies we serve to write in support of our legislation. These agencies and the people they serve will be the ultimate beneficiaries of laws that protect our frequencies. Prepare a little background package to talk with these managers before you meet with them. Again, on behalf of Amateur Radio, thanks for all of your help with this very important project. Please write. It may not get everyone to co-sponsor our bills, but I am certain we can get several more co-sponsors if you will only write.

SKYWARN Recognition Day



(Several of our Club members traveled to the Grand Rapids Weather Bureau last year to participate in this event. Every one said it was a fun event and a positive experience. Again, the Weather Bureau is looking for operators for the fifth annual SKYWARN Recognition Day (SRD) that will take place this year on Saturday, December 6, 2003.

LAST YEAR'S EVENT *If you would like to join in this cool experience, contact Tom Behler, Mecosta County EC/RO at 231-592-9854. Ed.)*

Come to the National Weather Service (NWS) offices and contact other operators around the world. The purpose of the event is to recognize Amateur Radio operators for the vital public service they perform during times of severe weather, and to strengthen the bond between radio amateurs and their local National Weather Service office. The event is co-sponsored by the American Radio Relay League and the National Weather Service.

Traditionally, hams have assisted the National Weather Service during times of severe weather by providing real-time reports of severe events and storm evolution. "You simply can't put a price tag on it", says Scott Mentzer (N0QE), organizer of the event and Meteorologist-In-Charge at the NWS office in Goodland, Kansas. "The assistance that radio amateurs provide to the NWS throughout the year is invaluable".

SKYWARN Recognition Day this year will be held from 0000 UTC to 2400 UTC on December 6, 2003. Scott Mentzer, the creator and promoter of the event, strives to involve more NWS offices and Amateur Radio operators each year. In 2002, participants logged nearly 23,000 QSOs during the 24-hour event. Last year nearly 70 countries were contacted. To learn more about this year's event, check out the NOAA Web site: <http://hamradio.noaa.gov/>. This site includes a link to a list of participating National Weather Service offices and their call signs.

Questions concerning this event can be directed to Larry Boyd, K0ILB, at larry.boyd@noaa.gov.

Thanks to David Floyd, N5DBZ, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, NWS Goodland, Kansas david.l.floyd@noaa.gov

An announcement on SKYWARN Recognition Day also appears in November, 2003, QST, p. 90, and at this Web page:

<http://www.arrrl.org/FandES/field/skywarn-recognition-day.html>.

RICHARD OSBORNE, KC8UB, PROGRAM COMMITTEE CHAIR

Tim Stoecklein, KC0MDC, Club President, announced, at our last meeting, that Richard, KC8UB has been appointed as the club's new chairman replacing Dale Colby, WD8AUL newly elected Vice President of the club. Richard asks that you consider what programs most interest you and let him know. Further, any leads to persons who might be interesting presenters would most surely be appreciated.



NEXT MONTHLY CLUB BREAKFAST AND COFFEE KLATCH:

8:30 A.M. SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 29, 2003 AT THE
WILLIAM'S CAFE IN
BARRYTON VILLAGE.

EVERYONE REMEMBERS THAT

THE FOOD WAS GOOD AND PLENTIFUL AND THAT THEY HAD AN ENJOYABLE TIME CHATTING WITH EACH OTHER. THE LOCATION IS ON M-66 AT THE NORTH END OF THE VILLAGE.

THE END OF THE YEAR IS APPROACHING AND A FEW MEMBERS HAVE STILL NOT PAID DUES FOR 2003. CHECK THE MAILING LABEL ON THIS NEWSLETTER TO SEE THE LAST YEAR OF YOUR PAID UP DUES. IF NOT PAID FOR AT LEAST 2003 BY JANUARY, YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRES. DON'T LET THAT HAPPEN. GET THOSE DUES IN NOW!

Call: _____ Class: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

E-mail Address _____

Dues \$20.00 for 2003 _____ 2004 _____ Donation _____

Checks should be made out to the Big Rapids Area Amateur Radio Club.
Mail this form to Sue Behler, KC8IFP, Treasurer, 511 Spring Street, Big Rapids, MI,
49307 or bring your dues to the next meeting.

AUTOPATCH USER INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE BRAARC REPEATER

TO BRING UP THE AUTOPATCH AND PLACE A CALL:

Before you bring up the patch, be sure the repeater is not in use. Then, acknowledge that you will use the patch. E.g. "W8OWN is accessing the autopatch".

Key the microphone, enter a Ⓢ(star) and enter the number. Release the key when done and you will hear a dial tone followed by beeps as the repeater is dialing your number. You will hear the phone ring and if you're lucky a real person might answer instead of a machine.

Please remember that the autopatch should not be used just to "chew the rag" since it may unduly tie up the repeater.

TO TEST YOUR TOUCH TONE PAD:

Key the microphone and then first press 375, (use no star Ⓢ) followed by any tones on your keypad. Release the microphone button and you should receive an acknowledgment that the autopatch understood your input of the numbers.

TO RECEIVE THE TIME OF DAY:

Key the microphone and then press 400 (use no star Ⓢ) and the repeater gives you the time.

TO END YOUR AUTOPATCH TRANSMISSION:

Simply depress the microphone button and press "#". Then indicate that you have ended the patch, e.g. "W8OWN is clear". If the pound sign fails to work for you, don't panic! The patch will soon cut itself off.

AREA OF COVERAGE: YOU MAY CALL ANY OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

TWO METER REPEATER:

440 REPEATER:

CALL AREAS:	PREFIXES:	CALL AREAS:	PREFIXES:
BIG RAPIDS	796, 592, 591	BIG RAPIDS-PARIS	796
REED CITY	832	REED CITY-ASHTON-CHASE-HERSEY	
BALDWIN	745		832
EVART-SEARS	734	CHIPPEWA LAKE-EAST RODNEY	867
LEROY	768	STANWOOD	823
LUTHER	797	MECOSTA	972

EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

440 METER REPEATER: USING A Ⓢ 911 (**STAR 911**) WILL CONNECT YOU TO THE 911 DISPATCH FOR EMERGENCY AND SHERIFFS DEPARTMENT SERVICES IN BOTH MECOSTA AND OSCEOLA COUNTIES

TWO METER REPEATER: USE 911 WITH **NO STAR (NO Ⓢ)** TO CONNECT TO THE 911 DISPATCH FOR EMERGENCY AND SHERIFFS DEPARTMENT SERVICES IN BOTH MECOSTA AND OSCEOLA COUNTIES.

FOR EMERGENCIES IN THESE COUNTIES, DIAL THESE SHERIFF'S OFFICES:

LAKE COUNTY; BALDWIN, IRONS, LUTHER 745-2711
NEWAYGO COUNTY 689-6623

FOR ALL OTHER AREAS CALL THE STATE POLICE AT THE REED CITY POST 832-2221

AN OPEN REPEATER: ALL LICENSED AMATEURS ARE FREE TO USE THE AUTOPATCH, NOT JUST MEMBERS

NOTE THAT THE AUTOPATCH ONLY WORKS FOR LOCAL CALLS RELATED TO EACH REPEATER SITE

EMERGENCY COMMITTEE MEETING

NOVEMBER 13 2003

[The club's Emergency Committee is increasingly active in making our group better prepared to face any serious natural or man caused disaster that might come our way. To give you all an idea of what is in the works now and in the future, just read, below, the minutes of the last meeting prepared by Pete Chesebrough. Ed.]

1. Tom, KB8TYJ, reminded the group of RACES requirements, spoke about the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) IS-2 course procedures on-line, and updated the group on HAZMAT course progress. Gary, WB8WIA. said that Capt. Randy Bell of the Big Rapids DPS could give the course. Tom will follow through.
2. Beverly, WD8PFC, reviewed the Emergency Committee list. Several additions and deletions were made, and will be posted on the website.
3. Tom talked about a "Resource List" of local ARES/RACES members needed by Tom Vandermel, DEC. We will use our present list of ARES/RACES members, and Tim KCOMDC will create a form to fill in information regarding equipment, antennas, modes used, etc., and hand out at next club meeting.
4. Tom updated the group on the local ARES/RACES 2 meter repeater net at 9 pm on alternate Wednesdays. Several members thought that more HF activity might be used, as well as more modes (pactor, code, RTTY etc)
5. Mark Watkins, Osceola Emergency Manager, gave update on new National Weather Service (NWS) tower. Progress has been slower than anticipated due to other Homeland Security issues and priorities. Faster progress is anticipated.
6. Tom gave update on Skywarn Recognition Day on December 6. District 6 will provide help at the GRR (Grand Rapids NWS designation) location from 7 to 11 am. At present, Tom, Sue, Matt, and Tim will be participating.
7. Tom reviewed first draft of the Local Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), drawn up by himself and Tim. Questions have been raised by Dan Dowdy on the Public Information procedures. Mark gave his perspective of PIO procedures and some advice for changes. Tim will rewrite the EOP and resubmit.
8. The Calling Tree was discussed as to the amount of time spent on the net reporting to and from the field regarding requests and results of calling tree operations. Also, Mark suggested that instead of the current ABCD columns in the callout tree, that the counties should be sectioned off to better localize problem areas. Also, spotter overlap between amateurs and official spotters should be minimized. Also, there appear to be differences between the 2 counties in philosophy of the spotting and early warning activities. Mark will offer to help out with our procedures.
9. The SOP for the State Essential Elements of Information (SEEI) reports were passed out and discussed. This is a program, initiated by Jim Wades, State Races Officer, to standardize efforts on reporting, to the State EOC, infrastructure disruptions, storm damage, hazardous material release, and other significant events of potential interest to public safety.
10. Don WA4FRJ, gave an update on the emergency power changes to the 2 meter repeater operation. There will be 2 deep cycle batteries with an automatic charger, a relay system for loss of power transfer, and software changes by Pete W8PET for audio changes to indicate

battery operation in progress. There will also be a net operator actuated procedure to indicate that a severe weather net is in progress.

11. Mark gave an update on the Osceola County Mobile Emergency Operations RV.

"REPORT ON THE MICHIGAN STATE CONVENTION AND SUPER-SWAP"

TOM BEHLER: KB8TYJ, AND PETE CHESEBROUGH: W8PET

On Friday: October 31, and Saturday: November 1, the first Michigan State Amateur Radio Convention and Super-Swap in over 10 years was held in the Holland/Zeeland area. A number of our club members were able to take part in at least some of the festivities. They included Tom Behler KB8TYJ, Sue Behler KC8IFP, Matt Trombley, KC8VJR, Dale Colby, WD8AUL, Jeff Barstow, WD8DLK, Pete Chesebrough, W8PET, Thom Durfee, WI 8W and Ken Schneide,r KC8SWY.

The following is a report on some of the major events of the weekend, from Tom Behler and Pete Chesebrough. Although we can't possibly cover all of the events that happened, this report should give at least some picture of this fun and informative weekend.

On Friday: October 31, Tom Behler, Sue Behler, and Matt Trombly attended the Michigan ARRL Section banquet. The banquet included a great meal; awards and recognitions for various ARRL section leaders and others for their contributions to amateur radio; and a number of inspiring speeches. The keynote speaker was Rosalie White, from ARRL Field and Educational Services in Newington. After the dinner, Tom, Sue, and Matt stayed for the induction ceremony for the Royal Order of the Wouff Hong. To put it mildly, the Wouff Hong was an incredibly fun and unique event that must be experienced to be totally understood. If you get the chance do become a member.

Saturday, November 1, was highlighted by a great swap at the Zeeland High School. Lots of good bargains could be found, and a great time was had by all as we chatted and "caught up" with hams from across the state. A VE license exam was also held, where Matt Trombley took and passed both the code and theory portions of the General Class License exam. Way to go, Matt!

Saturday's events also included a variety of forums on various topics of interest. Pete attended three of these forums. As Pete reports:

"The ARRL forum included such topics as BPL, PRB-1, NASA promotion of Amateur Radio, losing spectrum space, self-policing of the airways, and an update on Official Observers in Michigan and elsewhere. These updates in information were given by Rosalie White, K1STO, ARRL HQ, Dick Mondro, W8FQT, Vice Director ARRL Great Lakes Division, Dale Williams, WA8EFK, Michigan Section Manager, Tom VanderMel KB8VEE, District 6 EC, as well as state reps from Ohio and Kentucky. Dick Mondro finished the session with a plea for amateurs to follow the RAP principle, i.e.: Recruit, Advocate, and Participate in all aspects of the Amateur Radio experience.

The FCC forum featured Jim Bridgewater, District Director of the FCC Field Office in Detroit, and Don, N8NJE, the Michigan Director of the Official Observer program. Don started out discussing the new ARRL handbook, out-of-band problems and enforcement, repeater

control issues, and the 'Section Interference Committee' on the ARRL Michigan Section web pages. Jim followed with an explanation of FCC Field office procedures on complaints from constituents, including Amateur Radio Operators. He explained the levels of investigation on radio interference issues, from a 'Letter of Inquiry' to the 'Notice of Violation' progression. He also discussed how amateur operators could aid the FCC by documenting continued violation events, and procedures for relaying that info to the appropriate authority.

The last meeting I (Pete) attended included just myself and Sandy Mondro, Michigan Section Club coordinator. She and I had a good discussion of our newsletter, and the new changes it has gone through with its inclusion on the BRAARC website in full color. Sandy also indicated that the newsletter contest would be sure to include online newsletters in the future. She also made a point about the club's need for a proactive PIO, and some of the ways they could be more effective in promoting Amateur Radio in the newspapers, radio and TV."

Tom Behler, Sue Behler, and Matt Trombley attended the ARES/RACES forum that was held early Saturday afternoon. The forum was led by Jim Wades (Michigan Section Emergency Coordinator and State RACES Officer), and Val Rose (Assistant Manager of the Amateur Radio Public Service Corps). One major point of emphasis at the forum concerned the tremendous growth in demand for ARES and RACES as standardized services, especially in light of increased "Homeland Security" concerns since the events of 9-11. The increasing importance of cross-jurisdictional mutual aid and inter-operability were also stressed. Counties were urged to have active ARES and RACES programs, so that all possible emergency situations (local or otherwise) can be covered effectively if needed. The necessity for local clubs to continue actively recruiting both ARES and RACES members was emphasized. The importance of more closely integrating ARES, RACES, and the National Traffic System was also highlighted. Finally, all hams with an interest in ARES, RACES, NTS, or the public service aspects of our hobby were urged to participate in a variety of "on line" polls on major issues of concern. These polls can be accessed at: <http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/miarpsc>

As you can see, a good and productive time was had by everyone who attended this major amateur radio event in the state of Michigan. We understand that plans are already being formulated for next year, so stay tuned to this newsletter and local club nets for more details as they become available.



CAUGHT BY THOM DURFEE (W18W) & HIS CAMERA ARE CLUB CHARTER MEMBER ALAN VAN ANTWERP, WA8LKV AND WIFE, MATTHEW TROMBLEY, KC8VJR AND KEN SCHNEIDER, KC8SWY. ON THE NEXT PAGE ARE SHOTS OF THE FEST AREA. MORE PHOTOS ARE ON THE WEBSITE.



**NEXT MONTHLY MEETING: 7:30 P.M. THURSDAY
DECEMBER 4, 2003 AT THE MECOSTA COUNTY
SERVICES BUILDING ON STATE STREET (OLD U.S.
131) JUST NORTH OF THE PIZZA HUT IN BIG**



**RAPIDS. THE
BOARD
MEETING
PRECEDES IT
AT 6:30 P.M.
PROGRAM:
PROGRAM FOR
THE MEETING
IS= STILL
BEING
DEVELOPED
AND WILL BE
ANNOUNCED
ON THE CLUB
NETS. IF YOU
CAN'T MAKE
THE NETS,
COME AND
ENJOY A
SURPRISE!**

LOTS OF GEAR AND ACCESSORIES WERE AVAILABLE AT THE HAMFEST

INSIDE: OUR 2 METER REPEATER PROTECTION SYSTEM BY DON, WA4FRJ.

