HAM RAG

Rockford Amateur Radio Association, Inc.

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March 2003

Do's and Don't of QSL Procedures.

Gary Hilker, K9LJN, veteran QSL'er gave a presentation on the Do's and Don'ts of QSL procedures at the February meeting of the Rockford Amateur Radio Association. Gary has several operating awards including: MIXED, PHONE and CW DXCC Honor Roll; 5BDXCC; WPX Honor Roll; and several 9th district CW operating certificates.

He has been a RARA member (on and off) for several years and served on the Board of Directors, Hamfest Ticket Chairman, 2M Net Control Operator, Field Day Chairman plus QSL and Callbook Manager during the 1980's. He was on the committee that started the local Volunteer Examiner program and was a VE for the DeVRY VEC. Charter Member for the Blackhawk DX and Contest Club (BDXCC), serving as President, Vice President and Board of Director member and was a ARRL appointed QSL Field Checker for the DXCC program along with **Gene Duncan, W9GD**,

Gary Hilker, K9LJN presenting his program of Do's and Don't of QSL Procedures at the February meeting.

Photo by David Bond ,W9MG

NEWS FLASH!

New Meeting Location

Due to construction, the regular monthly meeting till further notice has been moved to:

Saint Anthony Medical Center
5666 E. State Street Rockford, IL.

The March meeting is still at
7:00 pm March 14, 2003

The program for the March meeting will be

Dick Isely, W9GIG
Director of the ARRL Central Division.

To get to the meeting room go to the main entrance - turn right at desk - go to the end of hall to the meeting rooms.

Its Field Day time again and **John Birly, AA9SK**, has taken the duties of Field Day 2003 Chairman. Please give John any assistance you can to make this year one of the best.

This year RARA is combining both the Breakfast in the Park and Field Day as a 2 for 1 special. Come and eat, then stay, help setup and operate Field Day 2003.

Notice - This is your <u>last</u> Ham Rag.
If you have not renewed your membership.
Please renew your membership by March 31.

(ex K9IKP).

The principle ideas he presented at the February, 2003 RARA meeting (along with the handout) were designed to help the beginning ham: select the proper format QSL card; fill out the QSL card correctly and follow a few simple rules for mailing QSL cards direct to foreign hams. He admits that he probably broke almost every one of those rules at one time or another, but didn't want the RARA members to go through the same frustrations he experienced.

He likes to include a $2 bill for return postage and to completely fill out the return envelope (with the other person's plus his own name and address). He uses a lettering guide and multi-colored pens to spruce up his QSL card. **He NEVER, EVER** puts humorous or "smart" comments on the QSL cards because they might be interpreted the wrong way. Rather, he always has some sort of positive note or "thank you for the QSO" on each card. Even though his QSL cards are designed to accept printed labels, he prefers the hand written personal approach. He tries to make it as easy as possible for the other ham to return his QSL and these simple procedures have dramatically increased his QSL return rate.

Thank you Gary for the information you provided for this article.

THE NEW NATION OF SERBIA-MONTENEGRO

Yugoslavia has become Serbia-Montenegro. This, after Yugoslavia's parliament voted to formally abolish that nation and replace it with a new country called Serbia-Montenegro.

According to the ARRL Letter, the new arrangement will have little immediate impact on Amateur Radio. For D-X-C-C purposes, Serbia and Montenegro will be considered a single entity, at least for the time being. Also, amateurs there are expected to continue using Y-U and Y-T prefixes. (ARRL)

Presidents Log – March 2003

This months log starts with a Thank You to **Gary Hilker, K9LJN**, for his wonderful presentation at the last meeting, I know everyone found it very informative.

Our presentation this month will be Dick Isely, W9GIG; Director of the ARRL Central Division. We would like to get a good turn out for Dick so if you know of hams that are not members or from other clubs, be sure and invite them to this very special presentation. Also, if there is any presentations you would like to see at the meetings, please let one of your officers or board members know and we will make sure the program is presented.

The SKYWARN training scheduled for the April RARA meeting has been cancelled. The National Weather Service in Chicago has a new director; he requested classes outside of the formal training class at the Rockford Airport on March 12th cancelled. Please make sure you attend the class on March 12th at 7:00 PM.

Please also keep in mind this is dues time again, please see **Rich Ludwig, K9PK**, with your membership dues. New cards with the new autopatch code will be sent out at the end of March to all paid members. If your dues are not paid by the end of March, this is your LAST Ham Rag.

If you know of any hams that are not members of RARA or some of the members that have not been to a meeting in a while, please invite them to our next meeting.

As always, your comments and/or suggestions are always welcome, your officers and board members are here to serve you.

73, and see you at the meeting. **Scott, KB9YRW**

The monthly Board of Directors Meeting are held at Saint Anthony Medical Center 5666 E. State St. Rockford, IL on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM.

QSL CARD PROCEDURES

DO NOT:

Have a QSL card with information on both sides (unless your call sign is shown on each side of the card).

Have a 4 x 6 inch metric QSL card (does not fit into a standard size envelope).

Make corrections or mark-overs on the QSL card. This is considered a "altered QSL card" and is unacceptable for any award. Destroy this QSL card and start over.

List the American date format on the QSL card (month-day-year). Universally accepted format for date is day-month-year.

List the date entirely with numbers. Example: October 12, 2003 (12-10-03) should be 12-OCT-03. This prevents confusion whether the QSO date was December 10 or October 12, 2003. Most foreign countries use roman numerals for the month, which is universally understood and accepted. Also remember that some countries have a different alphabet than we do, so their abbreviation for a month may be different than ours. The proper date entry on a foreign QSL card would be 12-X-03.

List local time on the QSL card. Always use 24 hour UTC (Universal Coordinated Time) in your log and on all QSL cards. Convert the time and date by adding six hours to CST for UTC (add five hours to CDST). Example: a QSO at 7:04 P.M. CST (1904 Hours) on January 17, 2003 would convert to 0104 UTC on January 18, 2003.

DO:

Have all your information on one side of the QSL card (including call sign, name, address, county and grid square).

Have a standard size 3.5 x 5.5 inch QSL card.

Have a QSL card with language such as "confirming QSO with", "confirming two-way QSO", "2X" or "2-way" preceding the other stations call sign.

List universal formats for the date and the time.

List the frequency in Megahertz rather than Meters.

List the mode (CW, SSB, FM, etc.) and signal report (RST).

Mark the QSL card "PSE QSL" or "TNX QSL" as applies.

Have other optional information (awards, organizations, rig, antenna, etc.) as desired.

QSL CARDS FOR FOREIGN COUNTRIES

DO NOT:

List amateur radio call signs on envelopes.

Use thin material envelopes (that can be seen through when using a strong light).

Include an SAE (self addressed envelope) that won't accept a 4 x 6 inch metric QSL card.

Fold the SAE before inserting it into the outer envelope (gives away the fact that there is an SAE inside which might also include money).

Put return postage and QSL card loose inside the outer envelope (put these inside the SAE for security).

DO:

Use thick security envelopes.

Use nesting metric envelopes (SAE fits inside the outer envelope without being folded).

Use an SAE large enough to accept a 4 x 6 inch metric QSL card.

Mark envelopes "air mail" or use free "air mail" stickers from the post office.

Preaddressed the SAE (including you name and address plus the other person's name and return address).

Include proper air mail return postage ($2, foreign country's postage stamp, or IRC's).
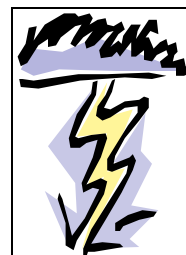
Insert your QSL card and return postage inside the SAE (for security).

Insert the SAE upside down into the outer envelope (so flap on the SAE won't be slit or cut off when outer envelope is opened).

Lightning Protection and Grounding

April 1st the **McHenry County Wireless Association** will sponsor a presentation on lightning protection and grounding. Everyone is invited. **Ed Cruise of Harger Lightning Protection** will give the presentation, which will feature products by Polyphaser. It will be held at 7:30 pm at the McHenry County College auditorium.
For driving directions, go to http://www.mchenry.edu/MapToMCC.asp

Rockford Amateur Radio Association
Monthly meeting of the membership
February 14th, 2003
OSF Center for Heath Care

RARA President **Scott Allshouse, KB9YRW**, called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Minutes: The minutes from the January 10th, 2003, meeting were read aloud by Secretary **Wendy Owano, KC9BCF.** A motion to accept the minutes as read was made by **Eric Hultgren, N9MCS**, seconded by **John Lawrence, N9OTC**, and carried by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer **Rich Ludwig, K9PK**, reported that the club balance was $4,399.92. A motion by **Shari Harlan, N9SH**, and a second by **Larry Snyder,** K0HNM, to accept the report was carried by voice vote of the membership. Report is attached.

Old Business: Gene Harlan, WB9MMM, reported that an ATV meeting will be held at his house at am February 15th, to discuss needed equipment and a means of acquiring funds for the project. Currently about 15 people are involved with this, not all of them are RARA members. Some equipment already has been donated.

President Scott Allshouse promoted the Ham Fest at Princeton, the 2003 ARRL Division Conference, and the Advanced Weather Spotting seminar to be held March 7th and 8th. See Scott for details on these events.

Shari Harlan promoted the following: Sterling Ham Fest on March 16th and the North Shore Radio Club event on March 23rd. See Shari for any additional information.

New Business: Shari Harlan reported that ARRL has received a $150,000 grant from United Technologies. The funds are to be used for reimbursement in conjunction with the Level II and III Emergency Communications courses that are offered by ARRL.

John Lawrence brought to the attention of the meeting attendees his concerns about the shutting down of the 146.610 repeater. He noted that he was able to attend the special board meeting that was held about this issue on January 8th, 2003, but was unable to have any input into the regularly scheduled board meeting on January 25th, 2003. At the meeting on January 25th, President Allshouse called for a closed session at the beginning of the meeting. Discussion on this issue included input from **Brad Smith, WW9WWW**, Rich Ludwig, Eric Hultgren, and Wendy Owano. John

suggested that the members of RARA need to be informed about the Board of Directors' meetings and the minutes of all meetings be published. No further action was taken on this matter as **David Bond, W9MG**, suggested that we continue with the business of the club.

John Auerswald, KA9SOG, suggested that the 147.000 repeater be available for other uses such as slow scan and digital. **Jim Miller, W4JR**, suggested that blocks of time be dedicated to a specific use. Rich Ludwig would like to see time allotted for CW practice.
Action on this issue is expected next month.

President Allshouse reported on the truck that is owned by the club. In order to put the truck to its best use, a chairman and committee will be needed. Anyone interested in this issue should contact Scott. Action on this is expected at next month's meeting.

Field Day will be held at Aldeen Park on June 28th and 29th, 2003.
Breakfast in the Park will be held on June 28th, 2003, before the set-up for Field Day.

The Annual Picnic will be held August 10th, 2003, at Alpine Park, Shelter #2, 1-4 pm.

Amateur Radio Awareness Day was at Cherryvale Mall last year. Scott is waiting to hear back from the contact person at the mall about having the event this year.

The next license testing is February 15th, 2003. The new fee is $10 and the exams are given at North Suburban Library.

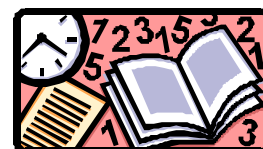Membership dues for the year 2003 are payable to RARA Treasurer Rich Ludwig.

Gary Hilker, K9LJN, gave a presentation on QSL Procedure to the meeting attendees. Thank you Gary for the useful information!

Eric Hultgren asked for a moment of silence for the three Hams that were lost in the Colombia Shuttle disaster.

Chuck Derwent, K9SAN, motioned for adjournment. Second by **Dick Flemming, KC9BCB**, and the motion was carried by vote of the membership.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Owano,
KC9BCF
RARA Secretary

RARA is now starting to experiment with SSTV and other modes on the 147.000 repeater. Here are some things you may want to know about SSTV, interfaces and some basic guidelines. The following has been assembled from various SSTV websites to make this primer.
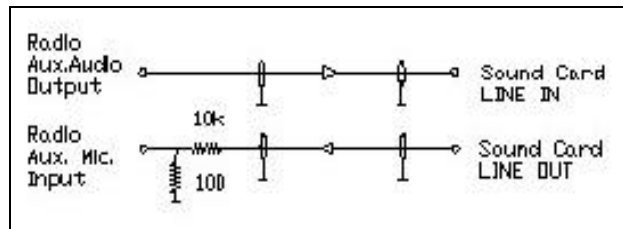
Getting on SSTV is really easy these days using your PC running Windows 95/98/XP. Several SSTV programs are available using the PC sound card to encode and decode high quality color pictures. These programs can be for analog SSTV such as: Chroma Pix, MMSSTV, Mscan, MixW Ver. 2 for Windows and Blaster SSTV for DOS by **Gene Harlan, WB9MMM**. For the new digital SSTV you have DigiSSTV and Simple 32. These can be easily found on the Internet using most any search engine. The RARA website will have links to various software sites in the future.

The most basic method and cheapest is putting the microphone of your radio to the speaker of your computer and a microphone of your computer to the speaker of your radio. But over time you will the timing down to transmit and receive good quality pictures and earn a headache from all the sound you will be hearing for your hard work.
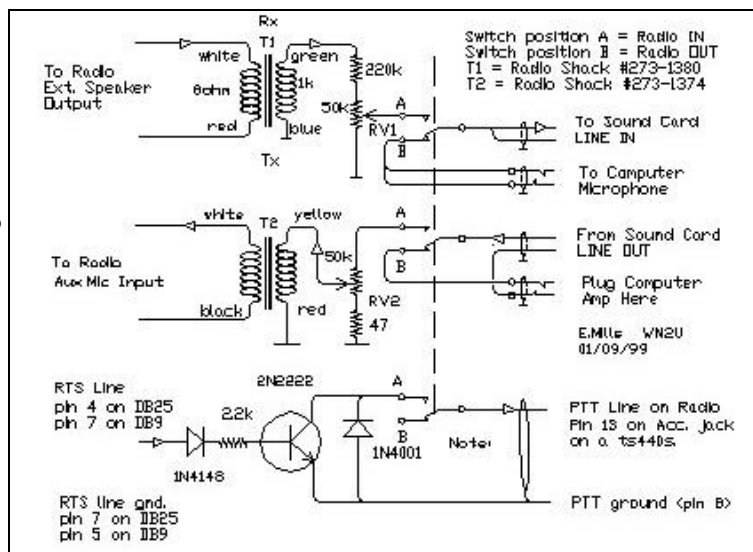
The best method would be taking the output of the sound card and connecting it through an attenuator to the input of the transceiver. If you don't disable the microphone while transmitting SSTV pictures the microphone will pick up noise that puts black lines through your nice color picture. Most of the homebrew and commercial interfaces disable the microphone when transmitting a picture yet keeps the microphone ready for voice communications. The interfaces will cover both HF SSB, VHF FM and even over satellites.
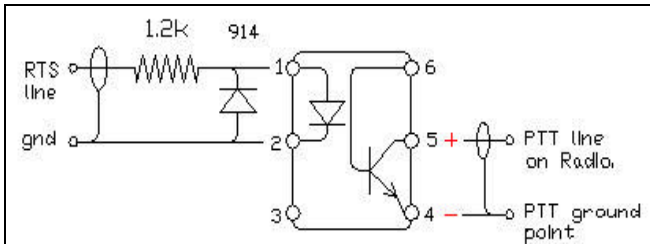
Interfaces:

The simplest and quickest computer to radio interface is to connect the Line Output from the Sound Card to the transceiver audio input with a 100:1 voltage divider to reduce the voltage output, and the Sound Card Line Input to the audio output of the radio. You can use the VOX to switch from Receive to Transmit. To setup this arrangement, adjust the sound card output level using the computer 'mixer' control until maximum transmit power is reached, and the ALC is just starting to read. Then tune to a strong carrier and adjust the soundcard input gain until the red line goes away as observed on the spectrum display. (waterfall indicator)

This circuit to the right shows the method WM2U used which isolates the Sound Card Line In and Line Out from the Radio using a couple of Radio Shack transformers, and a 2N2222 transistor to switch the PTT radio line triggered by the RTS line of the computer Com Port. All audio levels are equalized when running either the computer, the SSTV program or PSK31. A switch is used to switch between Computer and the Radio Modes. To adjust this circuit, tune to a strong carrier and tweek RV1 until the red overload lines disappear. At this point simply tweek RV2 to give the required output power from the transmitter. The author of this information is WM2U.

To completely isolate the computer from the radio the PTT line schematic shown below should be replaced by the following optically coupled circuit. WM2U has this unit installed and it works great.

```
        1.2k      914
RTS o---WWW---|>|---1        6
line                          
gnd o-----------2        5 +  o PTT line
                              on Radio.
                3        4 -  o PTT ground
                              point
```

Make sure your radio PTT line has a positive voltage on it and it requires a pull-down to ground to activate.
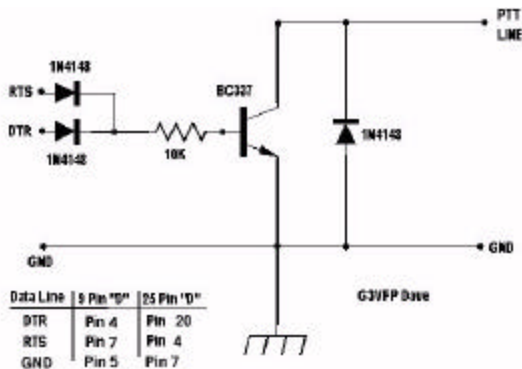
RTS line is pin 4 on DB25 & pin 7 on a DB9 connector.

Ground line is pin 7 on DB25 & pin 5 on a DB9 connector.

IC1 is a 4n29 Opto Isolator or equivalent from Digi-Key, Newark or Radio Shack. I used a TIL111.

Another interesting PTT circuit from G3VFP to cover both the RTS and/or DTR source.
You can use a 2N2222 in place of the BC337 transistor in this circuit.

```
                              1N4148         PTT LINE
       1N4148                 BC337
RTS o---|>|---               
DTR o---|>|---WWW---|         1N4148
       1N4148       10K       
                              
GND o-------------------------------o GND
                              G3VFP Dave
```

Data Line	9 Pin "D"	25 Pin "D"
DTR	Pin 4	Pin 20
RTS	Pin 7	Pin 4
GND	Pin 5	Pin 7

This is some of the basic stuff to get started with but if you aren't that handy with homebrew projects, there are many commercial interfaces on the market to use.

Local SSTV QSOs

"Local" SSTV QSOs are the most common QSOs, just like in the rest of amateur radio activities. One can define "Local QSO" as a conversation with an amateur that is one of many conversations. A great number of pictures are required to keep local QSOs interesting. The pictures must be personally interesting or others will not find them interesting either.

Roundtable QSOs and SSTV Nets are particularly difficult to maintain an interesting chain of audio and visual intercommunication. A good unifying topic goes a long way towards maintaining an interesting multi-party QSO.

Announced in advance a suggested topic for the image transmissions that would occur on the net that day. Most stations would transmit a picture that was related to the suggested topic. There are many different topics that can be used such as: Easter, Birds, Airplanes, Sunsets, Military, Kids, Mugshot, Rig/Ant, Pets, QTH, Hobbies, Cartoons, Circuits, Old Radios, Vacations, Old TV, Flowers, CQs, Memorial Day, Fish, and Trains.

The best local QSOs are those between individuals or groups sharing a common interest. Think back to the best QSOs that you had in the past. Now imagine what the ability to exchange pictures would have added to those QSOs.

There can be instances when exchanging pictures with another ham with similar interests, that another ham can break-in with similar interests and the fun can really begin.

Local QSOs can be particularly interesting at Holidays when SSTV stations exchange images such as Christmas and New Years cards.

INDECENT & OFFENSIVE MATERIAL ON SSTV

Slow Scan Video operators who send nudes, and other kinds of pornography should take heed. While it is generally considered bad taste, and it violates regulations, the greatest fault with it is that it reflects badly on a Hobby/Service that has always been family-oriented. Even while ARRL and The FCC and members of Congress have turned amateur radio into a Sport, Videops should be aware of the following:

1. Demonstrations of SSTV by Ham clubs are ongoing in shopping Malls.

2. High school radio clubs are demonstrating Slow Scan every day with young men and women, teachers and administrators watching.

3. People who want our frequencies cite such use of the frequencies as a good reason to show less consideration of our claims to the amateur bands.

4. Many parents will not allow their children to become involved in a Hobby that has been corrupted by indecency in all forms, visual and aural.

Those who are acting aggressively to stop indecent material on the SSTV channels are to be commended. Why not join them in cleaning up the Bands. When Congress authorized "deregulating" Amateur Radio in 1982, supporters of the changes in the Communications Act believed that WE were capable adults, able and willing to police our own bands."

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY: RC-110 REPEATER CONTROLLER GOES OPEN SOURCE

How would you like to be able to customize a repeater controller your way? Well, according to Ken Arck, AH6LE, There has been considerable interest from folks wanting to customize their RC-110 repeater controllers. So Arck, who is both president and CTO of Arcom Communications says that he has decided to make the source code available to any ham who wishes to take a stab at 'hacking' it for their own use.

Writing to the Repeater Owners Reflector, Arck says that as far as he knows, no other repeater controller offers this open source architecture. Of course there are certain conditions, but they're pretty straightforward.

If you are interested in getting the source code, Arck says that you simply need to join RC-110 mail list. To do this send an e-mail to rc110-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. The source is available in the files section of the list. More information is at Ken's website – www.ah6le.net **(Repeater Owners Retailer)**

ISS CREW TO RETURN TO EARTH VIA RUSSIAN SOYUZ CAPSULE

The all-ham crew aboard the International Space Station will return to Earth in early May via the Russian Soyuz escape vehicle. Appearing before the US House Science Committee February 27, NASA Chief Sean O'Keefe said that the 16 ISS partner countries have agreed to use the Russian capsule to ferry a new two-person crew to the station--one American and one Russian--and to bring the current three-man crew home. The shuttle fleet remains grounded in the wake of the Columbia tragedy.

But the substitution of the Russian Progress rockets for the shuttle as a transportation system between Earth and the ISS will strictly limit the amount and type of supplies and equipment carried to the space station.
The priorities will be food and water. This means that the ARISS hardware--including SSTV and all-mode HF/VHF/UHF gear that was planned to be flown this year--probably will be delayed, Bauer said.

NASA has not yet revealed who the two new ISS crew members will be. Originally set to replace the current crew next month was the Expedition 7team of Commander Yuri Malenchenko, ISS Science Officer Ed Lu, KC5WKJ, and Flight Engineer Alexander Kaleri, U8MIR. The back-up Expedition 7 crew member is Mike Foale, KB5UAC. All four are now training in Russia. **ARRL**

THE NEXT AMATEUR RADIO EXAM SESSION IS

9 AM SATURDAY MARCH 15, 2003.

**North Suburban
District Library
6340 N 2nd St.
Loves Park, IL**

Check-in is from 9AM till 11AM. We require two signature ID's (one must be a photo ID).

If you are a licensed amateur radio operator bring your original current license and a copy.

If you are using a CSCE for an element credit bring the original and a copy.

Copiers available at site. (We need to see the originals & keep a photocopy of each document used for element credit.)

The test fee for 2003 is $12.00. Walk-ins welcome.

RARA Officers for 2003

**President: Scott Allshouse KB9YRW
Vice President: John Auerswald KA9SOG
Secretary: Wendy Owano KC9BCF
Treasurer: Rich Ludwig K9PK
Director: Shari Harlan N9SH
Director: Joe Roling N9HEZ
Director: John Birly AA9SK
Director: Larry Snyder K0HNM**

Have anything or would like to summit an article to be put in the Ham Rag or the website? Contact me by e-mail at ka9sog@arrl.net and visit http://rara.tripod.com for any late breaking news and information.

**Rockford Amateur
Radio Association, Inc.**

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★ **This may be your** ★
★ **last *Ham Rag*** ★
★ **Renew your** ★
★ **Membership** ★
★ **Today Before** ★
★ **March 31.** ★
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

The
Mailing
Address
Goes
Here

✂ -

ROCKFORD AMATEUR RADIO
ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION
New Student Fee $10
DUES REGULAR/INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY $25
SENIOR 62 OR ON DISABILITY INCOME $10
HAM RAG ONLY $5

NAME_____CALL SIGN_____
ADDRESS_____
CITY_____STATE____ZIP____
HOME PHONE_____
WORK PHONE_____
EMAIL_____
RENEWAL_____NEW_____RETIRED____
RADIO INTEREST_____

OTHER INTERESTS_____

SUGGESTIONS_____

RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO:
ROCKFORD AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 8465
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS 61126

RARA
ROCKFORD AMATEUR
RADIO ASSOCIATION