Airwaves reach out

Hams often talk technical, but message spans globe

By CRAIG PIECHURA

You'd figure that a man with access to the most remote corners of the globe through his ham radio would be full of

through his ham radio would be full of facinating insights.

After all, Southfield resident William Roberts has had conversations with ham, or amateur radio operators, in Yugoslavia, Asiatic Russia, Spain, Sweden and the far-flung United Republic of Cameroon in Western Africa.

Did the Russians want to know where they could buy a pair of Levi's?

Mercy artists win contest

Three Mercy High School students placed among the top 10 finalists in a poster contest sponsored by the Society of Automotive Engineers.

of Automotive Engineers.
The girls, who each won a \$50 bond, were: Michelle Decker, an 11th grader from West Bloomfield; Leslie Ratica, as senior from Farmington Hills, and Lucia Kemennu, a 10th grade student from Highland Park.
The theme of the contest was automotive fuel economy. Judging took place last Thursday by members of the society. The contest was open to students in the tri-county area.
Prizes were donated by Borg-Warner.

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macaroons?

How do ham radio operators from other countries view the rapidly changing political alliances?

Roberts, 27, says your guess is as berts, 27, says your guess is as

ing pointeria mianes, 27, asys your guess is as good as his.

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The stating to someone far away you usually give your name, your location, tell what kind of equipment you're using and maybe tell thern about the weather and your family.

And while it's permissible to talk politics over amateur radio, Roberts asys many hams avoid any mention of religion or politics. The talk is usually about megaphertz wattage.

"At 15 (12 years ago) I happened to ask a guy in Cuba how the sugar crop was going," Roberts said. "He didn't bother to come back (on the air).

"And when I lived in Argentina 19 years ago, I looked at their amateur radio rules and restrictions. At that time their rules said you couldn't talk about politics or religion over the air."

BESIDES, SAYS ROBERTS, whenever he makes contact with someone faraway, there are always a number of other hams listening in, waiting to make their connection and log in another contact with another country.

er contact with another country.

Hams are recognized by the American Radio Relay League if they reach 100 different countries or all 50 states.

But the conversations aren't all so mundane. Roberts remembers the time

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he was talking to a ham in Cuba who said he was able to pick up PM radio from the states but couldn't get parts to convert his receiver to stereos. "The parts cost about 50 cents so sent them off in the mail to him," Roberts said. "They were returned to me when the state department refused to send the equipment to Cuba. That's was the only time I'd been asked for a freebic."

Another time Roberts received an urgent call for medical supplies from the United Republic of Cameroon. "Apparently, a young kid had his eye poked out and needed something for an injection," Roberts said.

After getting the pertinent information down, Roberts relayed the message to a missionary network which sent the medicine. "I do know the medicine did get, there," Roberts said. "But I don't know how the young boy made out."

DURING THE Detroit viol of 1957
Roberts worked with the Southfield
Civil Defense Department using auxiliary communication to help find food
and clothing for displaced families.
In the California earthquake of 1971,
Roberts made contact with a fellow
Alma College student's mother when
the pônce lines were down.
When a disaster strikes, Roberts says
overnment and commercial commu-

government and commercial commu-nications networks can't handle the volume of emergency messages. For

that reason, he said, it is imperative that local governments allow hams to operate equipment without imposing harsh antenna height restrictions. St. Hams who live in the city turned out in force in late January when the City Council proposed an ordinance which would have limited CB and ham antennae to a maximum height of 50 feet.

AFTER HAMS ARGUED that radio was should be at least 66 feet high to guarantee emergency messages will get through, council approved a tower ordinate or 15 feet.

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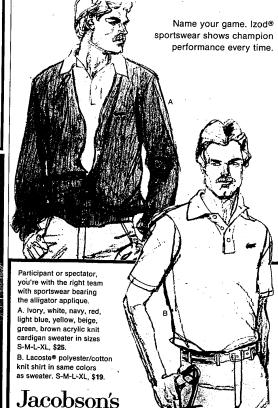
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