

# Hills resident is veteran of the airwaves

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Administration people working on the space shuttle.

BEING AN amateur radio — or ham radio — operator is "very enlightening" and expands a person's views, Wades said. "It's an opportunity to learn and find out about people and foreign countries."

"It's fun to come in after a major event and find out the Cuban, Russian, and United States government interpretations," he said. "You can also hear Radio Netherlands, South Africa and the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation)."

Much worldwide communication is done through the International Morse code, Wades said, although residents of many other countries know English.

"In Western countries, you can talk about anything you like," he said. "Of course, in Russia you're limited to electronics" and other basics.

Another day, Wades talked with "NASA (National Aeronautics Space

Administration) people working on the space shuttle."

DURING THE recent Mexican earthquake, Wades worked with other amateur operators communicating information between a few outlets in the disaster-ridden area. These outlets communicated throughout Mexico City, as local telephone service was still operational, he said.

He handled at least 77 messages. Because Farmington Hills has an ordinance limiting antenna height to 25 feet, Wades had to go out of the area for his initial disaster aid. He eventually found someone with an antenna variance in the Hills.

His civic activities are not limited to disaster aid. Wades runs an Oakland County emergency radio program, helping the National Weather Service with information from the field. He has also helped local law en-

forcement agencies, including Farmington Hills, upon request.

Wades coordinates the southeastern Michigan network for the Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS).

He works with "half a dozen" MARS operators, transmitting messages overseas and back, between military personnel and their loved ones. This service is offered on a "minimal fee or free" basis. "I've sent everything from love poems to money requests," Wades said.

"It's a way of serving your country on a day-to-day basis," Wades added. Much of the military information is sent via teletype while Wades is at work or not in his communications room.

He calls his licensed hobby "complex," but makes it look simple. With a \$200-250 radio transmitter/receiver and a basic class, anyone can learn it, he said.

Wades estimates there

are about 200 amateur radio operators in the Farmington/Farmington Hills/West Bloomfield areas, and 450,000 throughout the United States.

There are five license classes. Licensing is obtained by passing government tests, which include knowledge of electronic theory and the International Morse code. Wades' Morse proficiency rate is 15 words per minute — the rate of a broadcast professional, he said.

The Farmington Amateur Radio Club, of which Wades is a member, is sponsoring a basic 12-week class starting in January in Farmington High School to help beginning amateur radio operators get a basic license. Several local operators will teach the class, Wades said.

THE FEDERAL radio act of 1912 regulated the entire broadcast industry, including amateur operators. "They (amateurs)

were very much responsible for today's radio," Wades said.

The term "ham radio operators" denotes a beginner, Wades said. As a group, they prefer to be called "amateur radio operators," defined as "lover of an art."

Some of the more famous amateur radio operators include U.S. Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona and King Hussein of Jordan. "They're from every walk of life," Wades added.

Today's computer age also affects his hobby. With new technology, "you can marry the two very nicely," he said. As proof, Wades is getting ready to use a personal computer in his electronics room.

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