



Viet Connection — Paul Simandl works at his Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS) equipment which

he uses to relay calls from area servicemen in Vietnam to parents and friends at home. (P-G Photo)

Green Bay Amateur Radio Operator Boosts Morale of Soldiers in Viet

By **DAVE DEVENPORT**
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From a room in his West Side home, a Green Bay man helps boost the morale of soldiers in Vietnam.

With specialized Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS) equipment set up to permit two-way telephone conversations, Paul Simandl, 2793 Whippoorwill Drive, an amateur radio operator, has handled hundreds of calls from soldiers stationed in Vietnam to their loved ones.

Simandl, who had the equipment installed in his home about a year and a half ago, is one of two dozen operators scattered throughout the United States and is the only MARS operator in Wisconsin.

MARS is nothing new. Simandl is quick to point out. For almost 20 years, it has established communications for servicemen overseas to relatives back home.

Can Place Phone Call

Simandl was one of two Green Bay operators who worked for the U.S. Army in operating a special teletype network set up in December, 1965.

Now, a soldier in a Vietnamese hospital or another of several stations in that country can pick up a telephone and place a long-distance call.

Simandl says the phone call is picked up by one of the many

stations in the United States and relayed to the home of the soldier's wife, parents or whom-ever he may be calling.

"I do not necessarily handle all the calls that come into Green Bay or the surrounding area. I am simply in contact there (Vietnam).

"My station may be readable. A call to Green Bay can be picked up anywhere and forwarded here. It depends on the conditions."

The "conditions" he referred to include possible magnetic storms in various regions, thunderstorms, fading communications and bad connections.

Relayed From Nevada

For instance, James Ward of the Press-Gazette editorial staff received a call from his son, James, Jr., in Phu Loi, about 19 miles northeast of Saigon. The call was relayed from Carson City, Nev.

Ward, who serves with a helicopter crew, was able to talk to his parents for five minutes, which is the limit on calls.

Simandl emphasized that the cost of the long distance calls is paid by the party called. However, he said, this includes only the call from Vietnam to the specific station reached in the United States.

"The Army pays for the rest of the cost from the station to the party being called," he said.

What kind of calls are they? "They're mostly morale-type

calls, or anniversary or birthday greetings. They want to know what's happening and they are asked if they received the package that was sent out some weeks before," he said.

Simandl, when asked how many calls he handles, said, "It varies, edependng again on the conditions."

"One week I handled only 25 calls. The week before it was 83," he said.

10,000 Calls in May

The MARS stations handled 8,000 phone calls in April and 10,000 in May, according to Simandl, who paid \$2,000 for installation of the equipment.

"There's another one (MARS post) in Chicago, but it hasn't been too active. There's also one in Wilson, Kansas," he explained.

Simandl has been an amateur radio operator for 10 years, a hobby that grew from watching his father make battery-type radios in the 1920's.

As for the hook-up with Vietnam, he says, "It's a wonderful thing. Vietnam is such a rotten situation.

"Whether we are right or wrong in being there is beside the point. The morale of the boys over there has to be kept up," he said.

Simandl feels that the best way to boost their morale is giving them a chance to talk to someone they love — if only for five minutes.

Legion Auxiliary Meets in Niagara