

## **Texas couple's visit makes area lighthouses 'radio active'**

By Kevin Boneske

For The News-Chronicle

Overlooking Algoma's Crescent Beach from a picnic table within view of the pierhead lighthouse, a couple from Richardson, Texas, spent the Saturday of Shanty Days using the power of a lawn and garden battery to communicate with amateur radio from throughout the United States and other countries.

Jim and Patty Martin, also known as W5AZN and W5AZO, visited Door, Kewaunee and Manitowoc counties from Aug. 5 through Sunday and set up their portable station at or near lighthouses, communicating with hundreds of other "hams" from around the world. They were issued special call letters of N9L, or "November Nine Lighthouse" in radio jargon, to operate their special event station.

"The purpose of the event is to promote public awareness of the role amateur radio and light beacons have played in assisting and maintaining safety at sea," Patty said.

The couple operated on the 20-meter band with a battery-powered radio hooked to a vertical antenna. During the Martins' broadcast day in Algoma, which was among their final lighthouse visits while on vacation, one of their numerous U.S. contacts included a ham radio operator from Florida, who reported he was fortunate enough to have avoided sustaining damage from Hurricane Charley. The Martins' love of lighthouses has included collecting memorabilia which depict the lighthouses they visit. For instance, Jim found a souvenir T-shirt being sold Saturday on the Shanty Days grounds.

In conjunction with "National Lighthouse and Lightship Weekend," Aug. 7-8, which was sponsored by the Amateur Radio Lighthouse Society, the Martins decided to operate from the Eagle Bluff Lighthouse in Door County. The ARLHS also is involved in preserving the heritage and history of lighthouses and lightships as well as aid in preserving lights in danger of destruction or decay.

"There is a strong following of lighthouse enthusiasts around the world, and amateur radio makes for an interesting connection," Patty said. "A lot of ham radio operators served as ship radiomen or worked at maritime coast stations, or did something in their life to do with safety at sea."