

Mike's Antenna Tower

- *Erected his own antenna tower*
- *One of the few remaining active satellite pioneers*
- *Runs his own satellite shop*
- *Works together with the American receiver manufacturer Manhattan Digital*
- *Knows all the satellite channels*

■ Mike Kohl's antenna tower in Plain, Wisconsin, USA. He has installed 16 larger and smaller satellite dishes on his property.

Homemade 8m (26-foot) Antenna Tower



Mike Kohl's dream has come true; many antenna lovers dream about having their very own tower on which they could mount their antennas. His property is large enough to make this dream a reality: it's a wooded hill in the fertile landscape of Wisconsin. All of the local license plates identify Wisconsin as America's Dairyland. West of Wisconsin's capitol of Madison in the small town of Plain and directly on the main road is the hill that goes steeply up. The tower is at the top of the hill and greets visitors with his many satellite dishes.

Mike Kohl explains to us how his tower came about: „When I bought this property in 1993 the trees were not as tall as they are now.“ He had two choices: chop down trees or erect a tower that would reach above the trees. Mike opted for the

latter choice: „In 2002 my neighbor helped me build my tower out of two old telephone poles.“ Mike set up three platforms. On the second platform he installed a bench. „I sit here quite often in the summer and look over all the green that's around me, listen to the bird singing and sit with my dishes.“ A real dream!

Mike is one of the few who managed to gain experience in satellite reception before satellite TV even existed. „I joined the Air Force in 1973. It was there that I learned how to install satellite systems.“ He was stationed in Alaska. After 13 years in the military he left the service and stayed in Alaska. This was coincidentally around the same time that the first satellite TV channels started ap-

pearing. „You needed a 6-7 meter (20-23 foot) diameter dish in order to receive these channels in Alaska.“ Back then nobody really knew how to install satellite antennas. That was Mike's chance: he acquired the dishes and the installation material and began installing the first antennas for satellite TV in Alaska.

After the initial golden years as a satellite installer came to an end, he moved to other parts of the country.

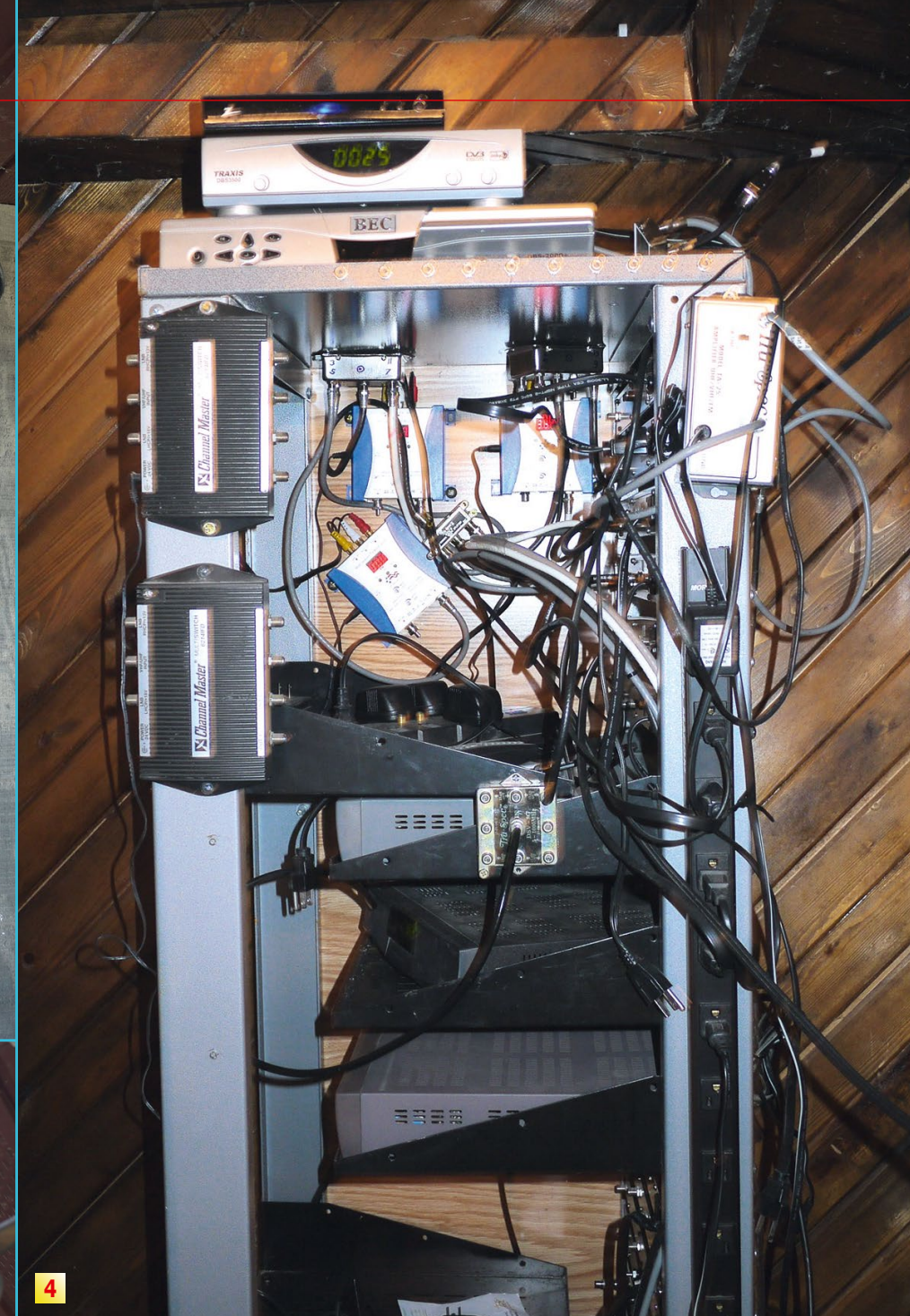
In 1977 he worked for a company in California as a communications technician for satellite and cable and in 1991



■ Mike can often be found sitting on the bench on the antenna tower's second platform taking in the view of nature all around him - and of course his many satellite dishes.



■ Mike installed the larger dishes on the upper platform. Further down there are older DirectTV dishes that are pointed to the satellites at 111W and 97W (left) and 125W and 87W (right).



he went to the antenna manufacturer Orbitron. Towards the end of 1999 Orbitron was acquired by KTI and then after a few years it went out of business. It was 1994 when Mike started his own company, Global Communications, along with his wife Laurel. At first his company was more or less a side job but in 1999 his company became his primary job.

„We sell everything that you would need for satellite reception“, explains Mike. The advantage he has is that he can solve any problem because of his extensive experience. „I have a very close relationship with Manhattan Digital“, explains Mike, „and distribute their receivers.“ Because of this, all of his satellite dishes provide a great benefit to him in that he checks out Manhattan Digital's receivers: „I test them to see if they really can receive every satellite channel.“ Mike has a true monitoring station that can receive every visible satellite. In this way he can also utilize his hobby professionally and give his friend, Jeff Schumann, Manhattan Digital's President (www.manhattan-digital.net), the correct receiver configuration advice.

Mike Kohl is one of the real satellite re-

1. A look under the tower: here all the cables come together and are routed into the house through multiswitches.
2. This is how a portion of the cable lines go into the house.
3. And then the other portion. Mike receives each satellite with its own cable. In this way he can quickly switch between satellites.
4. Once in the house, the cables are split to all the different receivers.
5. Mike is currently receiving Televen Cable from Venezuela on NSS806.



■ Mike Kohl in front of his 3.0-meter (10-foot) motorized antenna for the satellites from 43W to 127W



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6. Homemade multi-satellite reception: an old downlink dish was modified with conduit - like that used in the USA for electrical installations - in such a way that 12 LNBs could be mounted 2° apart. Reception range covers 89W to 119W.
7. Close-up of the LNBs. The reflector of a damaged Toroidal antenna serves as protection from rain.



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ception pioneers in the world and is still active. And another thing: most satellite DXers are more interested in the technology and not so much in the channels. Mike, though, is interested in both. He regularly watches many TV channels and for each of these channels he's is able to point out what its contents are and for what audiences they are suitable for.

Although Mike had suffered some setbacks in his life, he was always faithful in satellite reception and enjoys his dishes every day.

8. Mike has become a specialist in tubular construction. His 1.8-meter (6-foot) offset antenna was also modified to carry multiple LNBs. A C-band LNB is in the focal point and three Ku LNBs are offset.

9. The main thing is that it works. Mike mounts the LNBs as inexpensively as possible.

10. Mike Kohl in his office. He and his wife Laurel run the company Global Communications (www.global-cm.net) from here.



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