from New Hampshire to New Jersey. Not bad, considering the low height and less-than-optimal ground. In short, the JADE Marconi allowed me to get on 160 meters with minimal fuss from my small suburban lot. I'd never pictured myself as having 160-meter capability, but the twinlead Marconi proved to be a good solution to the problem. Now I can't wait for winter—and better low-band conditions—to arrive. The antenna is rated at 700 W, but so far I've just used it with my barefoot transceiver.

Manufacturer's suggested retail price: 160-meter twinlead Marconi: $45; 80-meter version: $38. Manufacturer: JADE Products, PO Box 368, East Hampstead, NH 03826-0368; tel 603-329-6995, fax 603-329-4499.

Ladder-Loc Center Insulator/Strain Relief for Ladder-Line Fed Antennas

Reviewed by Steve Ford, WB8IMY

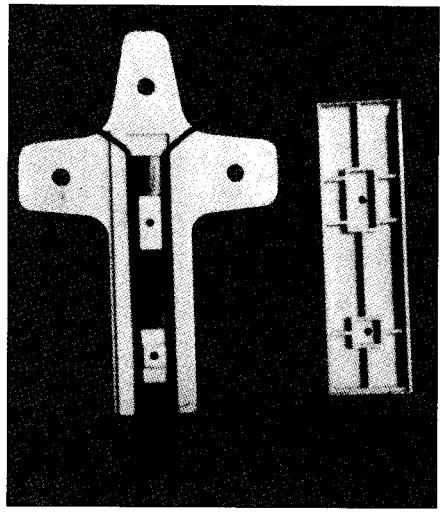
Hams are rediscovering the joy of feeding antennas with 450-Ω windowed ladder line (see "The Lure of the Ladder Line" in December 1993 *QST*'s New Ham Companion section). With its extremely low loss at HF frequencies, you can use ladder line with a single dipole and get multiband performance. Even though the SWR may be quite high on some bands, the resulting loss in the ladder line is often negligible.

One of the problems of working with ladder line, however, is supporting it mechanically at the antenna feedpoint. If you simply solder the ladder line conductors at either end of a common insulator, you can count on seeing your cable on the ground within a few weeks! Windy days take their toll, flexing the cable back and forth until it eventually breaks.

My solution was to tape my ladder line to a square piece of Plexiglas. I knew this approach would work—at least until heat and cold loosened the tape. A more elegant solution was needed and Jim Hagerty, WA1FFL, finally came up with it.

He calls his brainchild the Ladder Loc, and you have to admire the sheer cleverness of this product. Two Nylon wingnuts hold the Ladder Loc cover in place. You simply unscrew the wing nuts, remove the cover, insert your ladder line (with the conductors stripped back to the proper length), and replace the cover. The cover overlaps on the top and sides to provide a secure fit. The rectangular blocks inside the Ladder Loc case fit through the ladder line "windows" and support it perfectly without strain. The antenna wires attach to extensions on each side. There is even a top extension if you want to hang the Ladder Loc from a center support.

I replaced my Plexiglas monstrosity with the Ladder Loc. The effort required all of 15 minutes! The polypropylene/calcium composition of the Ladder Loc stands up very well to heat. I used a propane torch to resolder my antenna wires and the high



temperatures had little effect. Although the cover fits tightly, Jim recommends that you add some silicone sealer for weatherproofing. I just ran a bead of silicone around the edges of the cover when I secured it to the body. That did the trick.

Not only is my feed line connection more secure, it looks a heck of a lot nicer, too! The solid construction of the Ladder Loc makes me confident that my ladder line should remain in place for a long time to come. This is the type of product that'll make you say, "Why didn't *I* think of that?"

Manufacturer's suggested retail price: $12. Distributor: Ladder Loc is available from RadioWare, PO Box 1478, Westford, MA 01886; tel 800-950-9273.

SOLICITATION FOR PRODUCT REVIEW EQUIPMENT BIDS

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The ARRL-purchased Product Review equipment listed below is for sale to the highest bidder. Prices quoted are minimum acceptable bids, and are discounted from the purchase prices. All equipment is sold without warranty.

ETO Alpha 89 linear amplifier (see Product Review, July 1994 *QST*). Minimum bid: $2425.

Nye Viking MB-V-A antenna tuner (see Product Review, June 1994 *QST*). Minimum bid: $475.

Yaesu FT-840 MF/HF transceiver with FP-800 power supply and YF-112 CW filter (sold as a package only; see Product Review, May 1994 *QST*). Minimum bid: $800.

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