

March 2000

# ***MARA/VARA MONITOR***

Published Monthly for Radio Amateurs in the Shenandoah Valley

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VE Testing

Now at NRAO

In Greenbank

See Page 2

## Time Has Run Out!

Have you renewed your club membership for the year 2000?

If not, *this is the last issue of the Monitor you will receive.*

It is easy to renew. Use the handy form in this issue. Or come to any of the club meetings and talk with the Treasurer.

Remember, *this is it.* Time's up!



## Walt Lam, SK Austin Strawderman, SK

It is always sad to lose one of our own. February saw the passing of not one, but two, members of the Massanutten Amateur Radio Association.

Austin Strawderman, resident of Brock's Gap Road, northeast of Bergton, passed away from a heart attack after falling at his home.

Austin had worked very hard for many years to become a ham, and recently earned his Technician ticket. Unfortunately, the location of his home QTH, nestled in a deep hollow west of Great North Mountain, prevented him from getting a signal into the valley repeaters. Several hams had worked with Austin to try to help, but in spite of their efforts, Austin's signal was rarely heard. Austin will be missed by those who knew him.

Also on February 10, Herbert W. (Walt) Lam passed away, finally losing his struggle with cancer. Walt was well-known to MARA. He had served as our treasurer for several years, and was currently on the Board of Directors.

Walt was a regular volunteer at the many public service events which needed amateur radio communication support. Walt had retired after 26 years of service with the JMU university police force, and knew first-hand the importance of reliable and efficient communication.

It is with fond memories that we remember these two fine gentlemen. We in the ham community extend our sympathy to the wives and families of these silent keys. It was a pleasure to have shared a hobby with them.

Multiple Sclerosis Society changes dates of Fall Ride to enable hams to provide the communications.

See page 7.

## Field Day Coming Up...

Mark your calendars for the fourth full weekend in June!

MARA and VARA jointly sponsor a field day event on Flagpole Knob, just north of Reddish Knob.

At the left is a photo of the new Pennsylvania license plate of Neal Layman. Neal has graciously lent the clubs his call for the combined club Field Day station.

Around here, Field day usually starts with a week of camping on the mountain, for those able to get

off work. This is followed by a Friday "party", a Saturday morning flurry of erecting antennas, setting up stations, and other preparations, and finally, 24 hours of some of the most fun operations you can imagine.

Field day this year is on June 24 and 25. Camping at the site will begin Sunday, June 18.

Field Day chairman this year is Sandy Mullins, K4PZC. Sandy needs some help with the committee, too. Come out and join the party!



Photo of Neal's New PA License Plate

*"Every ham should be involved in ARES, and if you aren't, this is the time to find out what it's all about."*

## MARA President's Message

It is always a sad occasion when we say good-bye to a person that has become a friend, but this past month we had to say good-bye to Walt, KF4BFB.

Walt was one of those persons that always showed up at the public service events to do his duty. Last summer when he could no longer participate we all missed him, and I remember wondering how he was getting along. He was also the guy that took care of the 50/50 drawings at the club meetings. I don't know if he volunteered or was "volunteered" for the job, but either way he seemed to enjoy doing it. He was also a member of the MARA board. Bye Walt, we will all miss you.

This month's meeting is about the Amateur Radio Emergency Service. Dale, N4DAI, Emergency Coordinator for Rockingham County, will bring us up to date on the local activities. ARES is the organization that provides emergency communications

during disasters. It is the way that local and state government best know us, and is the most influential contact we have with them. Every ham should be involved in ARES, and if you aren't, this is the time to find out what it is all about.

Next month is home-brew night. If you don't have a project finished, you have one month to get it built and (hopefully) working. If you don't think you can build something, we still need a person to serve on the Field Day Committee, so you better show up to protect yourself from being "volunteered"!

I hope to see everyone at Ever's Restaurant on Rt. 11 north of Mt Crawford on March 2 at 6:30 for the meal, or 7:30 for the meeting.

Gerald Nauman  
KE4FM

## VEC Testing Available in Green Bank ...

By now, it is widely known that after many years of service, Randy Smith, KN4KB, has "retired" from the post of team leader of the Volunteer Examination group that held ham radio examinations in Harrisonburg.

Selecting a replacement for Randy is in process, but in the meantime, VEC exams are being held in Greenbank, West Virginia. Held the 3rd Thursday of every month, at 7 pm, BY APPOINTMENT ONLY, at National Radio Astronomy Observatory

To make your appointment, call Gary Anderson, W8IVF, at 304-456-2317.

NRAO is located in Pocahontas County, WV, just about 2 driving hours from Harrisonburg and about 1-1/2 driving hours from Staunton. Take Route 250 West from Staunton and follow the signs to NRAO!

But, don't forget to call first! A week's notice would be nice. Contact Gary about a special Test Session that might be held on April 15th, allowing you to get in "under the wire" under the old rules!

David, KB4LCI



## VARA President's Message

As the new president of VARA, I would like to say "thank-you" for the opportunity to serve the club in this capacity. I take my responsibility seriously and promise to do the best I can to make VARA the best club possible.

I will need your help. The fact is, I am the "new kid" on the block. I moved into the Valley in August 98. So I ask for your patience and for your support.

Please allow me this opportunity to tell you a little about myself. I have been an amateur radio operator since February 1963. I currently hold an Extra class license. I am a volunteer examiner and have helped Randy in the past. I am a strong believer in public service. I believe amateur radio exists to help in the community.

In the past I have been very involved in RACES and ARES. In Florida and SC I worked with the Red Cross to man shelters and provide emergency communication. I have helped to teach others in the art of amateur radio through my association with past radio clubs. In South Carolina I was on the hamfest committee. The bottom line is this. I like my hobby!!

A president should have an agenda. But the truth is, the office was thrust upon me so quickly I can't tell you that I have an agenda just yet. But let me share some ideas with you. Let me cast a vision:

1. I would like to see more young folks at our meetings. Amateur radio is struggling to gain

new hams, especially young hams. I would like to see the club offer a amateur radio class in the near future.

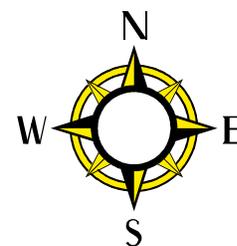
2. To help the club grow I would like to offer this suggestion. If a young person obtains an amateur radio license, we should give them a free one year membership to the club and encourage them to attend the meetings.
3. I would also like to see the club have a building of its own one day. A place where an amateur radio station can be set up. Now I know I am looking way in the future, but there is nothing wrong with dreaming a little!
4. I want to foster good operating techniques, fellowship and community service.

This is only a thumbnail sketch of how I view the future of VARA. Together we can accomplish great things. So dream a little with me and share your dreams for the future and let's make this club the envy of all others!!

I want to thank Dan Beidler, KE4JSX for his hard work as president over the past year. In fact, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the club. There are too many names to mention at this point! Without you and your support the club would suffer.

Finally, if I can be of any help. You may call me at anytime. My work number is 886-5560 and my home number is 885-5292. You can also contact me via e-mail at [grcljc@cfw.com](mailto:grcljc@cfw.com).

73 - Greg Czerniak, W4GRC



Setting the Course for VARA

*"Together we can accomplish Great Things. So dream a little with me and share your dreams.. ... Let's make this club the envy of all others!"*

## Virginia QSO Party March 18-20

The Sterling Park Amateur Radio Club (SPARC) once again will sponsor this year's Virginia QSO Party.

For those who might be new to the term, a QSO Party is a little "miniature" contest, a fun little on-the-air gathering intended to let stations in a certain locale (in this case, the Commonwealth of Virginia) work as many stations as possible. It is a good way to build up your station log, have some on-the-air fun, and learn a little bit about contesting. Often, these little parties are not as "dog-eat-dog" as the major national or international contests, making them the ideal way to get

your feet wet in the fun of HF contesting.

If you are interested in this year's party, check out the web site sponsored by SPARC:

<http://www.qsl.net/sterling/>

That site has a direct link to the rules, list of frequencies, and other information about the QSO party.

Remember, the party starts on the air at 1800 UTC Saturday, March 18, and lasts until 0200 Monday March 20 (which actually is 10 pm Sunday night, here in Virginia).



Virginia's QSO Party is the ideal way to open the door to the fun of HF Contesting.



*"With traditional lines of communications inoperable, the Amateur Radio Operators ... provided the only reliable communications into and out of the flood-ravaged area."*

## Virginia General Assembly Praises Hams

The Virginia General Assembly has approved a joint House-Senate resolution praising the Amateur Radio response to Hurricane Floyd. The resolution unanimously passed both chambers on January 27 and was signed February 17. The resolution compliments the work of Virginia's ARES/RACES members last September when Hurricane Floyd totally isolated the City of Franklin, and rising flood waters forced city officials to abandon their Emergency Operations Center, forcing the city to rely completely on Amateur Radio for communication with the outside.

"With traditional lines of communication inoperable, the Amateur Radio operators, members of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), provided the only reliable communication into and out of the flood-ravaged Franklin area," the resolution says.

According to the resolution, the Hurricane Floyd

activation was "the widest geographical and longest-running ARES/RACES activation in Virginia's history" and involved nearly 150 ARES/RACES volunteers who put in some 9500 hours of duty to help coordinate emergency operations in Franklin.

"Due to the tireless efforts of amateur radio volunteers, the tragic effects of Hurricane Floyd were mitigated, the lives of those in the flood zone safeguarded, and the suffering of Franklin's residents alleviated," the resolution said in expressing the General Assembly's "admiration and gratitude for the vital contributions of Virginia's amateur radio operators."

Some of you may recall the story in the January Monitor covering the activities of our very own Jay Suter, W4QDC, who donated several days to the Franklin recovery effort. There were several others from the Valley who also participated. It is events like this that persuade the government officials to protect amateur radio, and win us friends when commercial interests try to "put the

## Gullibility Virus Still Spreading

If you receive an email titled "bad-times" delete it immediately. Do not open it. You may be suffering the gullibility virus. This one is pretty nasty.

Badtimes and its relatives will not only erase everything on your hard drive, but it will also delete anything on disks within 20 feet of your computer. It demagnetizes the stripes on ALL of your credit cards. It reprograms your ATM access code, screws up the tracking on your VCR and uses subspace field harmonics to scratch any CD's you attempt to play in your audio equipment.

It will re-calibrate your refrigerator's coolness settings so all your ice cream melts and your milk curdles. It will program your phone autodial to call only your mother-in-law's number.

This virus will leave dirty socks on the coffee table when you are expecting company. It will replace your shampoo with Nair and your Nair with Rogaine, all while dating your current boy/girlfriend behind your back and billing their date expenses to your Visa card.

It will cause you to run with scissors. It will give you Dutch Elm Disease. It will rewrite your backup files, changing all your active verbs to passive

tense and incorporating undetectable misspellings which can't be caught by your spellchecker.

If the "Badtimes" message is opened in a Windows95 environment, it will leave the toilet seat up and leave your hair dryer plugged in dangerously close to a full bathtub. It will not only remove the forbidden tags from your mattresses and pillows, but will also leave the stove on when you go on vacation.

It is insidious and subtle. It is dangerous and terrifying. It is also a rather interesting shade of mauve. One of the surest signs of pending infection is when you see the words, "PLEASE FORWARD THIS MESSAGE TO EVERYONE YOU KNOW!!!"

To fight this problem, set your browser to the URL below, and learn about how you can take the time to check out urban legends, myths, and silly rumors before you embarrass yourself by sending them on to dozens of people who, like yourself, were once infected, but are now immune.

<http://cob.jmu.edu/fordhadr/gull.html>



The bug is real.

## KD9LA teaches about “King David’s Nine Little Alligators”

This month: Alligator Number One – The Water Cooler Conundrum

**“When you’re up to your abs in alligators, it’s really hard to remember that the whole reason you are there in the first place is to drain the swamp.”**

I grew up just a few miles from the Okefenokee Swamp in North Florida. I loved canoeing through the tall cypress trees. One thing I learned from the old-timers down there is to watch out for alligators. According to them, alligators jump up and bite you when you least expect it.

With this column, I hope to share some of the “alligators” I’ve encountered in my years of emergency communications service. When you are in a critical position during an emergency, it is no time to be bitten by a hidden alligator – those pesky problems which interfere with your ability to communicate.

This month, the alligator is “the water cooler conundrum.”

Let’s say you are called out of bed at two in the morning. A flash flood has caused an evacuation. They need you to man an important road intersection and direct people to the Red Cross shelter. And you need to count the cars headed towards the shelter and report by radio so the shelter manager will be prepared. (This really happened to me!)

You grab your “jump kit” containing your radio, batteries, poncho, flashlight, and other equipment. You hop in your car and arrive at the intersection in record time. There is a highway patrolman waiting for you. He hands you a supply of flares and a traffic wand.

“Boy, I’m glad to see you,” he says. “I’ve got to go up the mountain and finish the door-to-door evacuation. Here, take this wand and direct traffic that-a-way.” With those instructions, he jumps in his unmarked Caprice Classic and roars out of sight.

You’ve got your HT tuned to the emergency net on two meters. Net control asks if you’ve arrived at your intersection. Just as you key the mike, it happens...

All net control hears is you coughing. Cough, cough, hack, hack, cough....

Just as you opened your mouth to answer, you choked. The coughing makes you hoarse.

Man, if you just had a drink of water! Sorry, pal. There is no water cooler at the intersection of Boonie Mountain Highway and the Wilderness Road.

Several times, I’ve been stationed in more comfortable surroundings, and still wished I had a water cooler handy. Once in the back room of fire station I was so busy I couldn’t leave the radio to seek out the faucet. One time I was assigned to stand in front of a locked school building and count the number of runners passing the checkpoint – for several hours! Twice I was in a vehicle following bikers at 10 mph, along a stretch of rural road that seemed a thousand miles away from the 7-11. Hot and thirsty? Sorry. No water. Not a drop. No water coolers out here.

The solution to this alligator has turned out to be amazingly simple. I keep a sealed bottle of spring water – you know, those kind you see in the convenience store coolers beside the colas – right there in my jump kit.

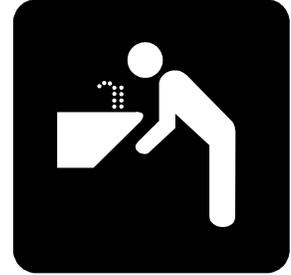
Here’s a question: Do you?

If you can’t afford the dollar for the bottled water, you can make do with an empty 2-liter bottle from a soda. Clean it out, let it dry, then put the top back on it – empty! Yep, empty. Keep the empty but sealed jug on top of your jump kit in the garage. Then, when you are mobilized, take a minute to fill the jug from your kitchen sink. It makes you a minute later arriving at your assigned location, but it will save several minutes away from the radio once you are on station. You’ll have fresh tasting water instead of stale water from June.

(Of course, I also keep a couple of huge 5-gallon jugs always filled as part of my family’s emergency evacuation kit. You never know when your home’s water supply will fail!)

Next month, we’ll cover another tip for the emergency communicator: Alligator number two – The kink in the coax! Until next time, ...

Be prepared!  
David Fordham, KD9LA




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*“It makes you a minute later arriving at your location, but it saves several minutes away from the radio once you are on station.”*

## MARA Secretary's Report

The monthly meeting of the MARA club was held on 3 February 2000 at Evers Restaurant at Mt. Crawford, Va. Many of the members enjoyed the buffet dinner beginning at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting opened at 7:30 with each person introducing him/herself giving name, call sign, and place of residence. 31 members and guests were present.

As the first item of business, Andrew Barbour (No call sign) was elected to membership by unanimous ballot. The reminder was also given by the treasurer that it is time to renew memberships.

ARES: Dale (N4DAI) announced he had applications for RACES, etc. He brought us up to date on meetings concerning this and other items related. Norman (KA4EEN) asked for persons to serve as net-control for future nets. Dale (N4DAI) said it would be suggested that all RACES members take a turn at being net control for training purposes.

At Dale's (NRDAI) suggestion, it was moved by Rusty (N4YET) and seconded

by Matthew (KD4UPL) that the club pay up to \$125. To make copies of the county ARES/RACES manual for members of the club.

Paul (WV3J) came with some things he was offering to members free, some things he wished to sell, and gave some discussion about QRP. He also stated he had a reservation for a room and would like to have anyone interested in going the hamfest at Dayton, Ohio in May to get in touch with him. He hopes to work up a car pool.

Our president, Gerald (KN4FM) made announcements about hamfests at Vienna on 27 February and Raleigh on 9 April. He also reminded of the Virginia QSO coming up on 18-20 March. Also David (KD9LA) would like any photos and articles that could be used in future newsletters.

VE exams will be given in Charlottesville on 8 April. The Field Day committee was appointed with Sandy (K4PZC) as chairman and David (KF4SVR) as a

member. One other member is needed and volunteers were solicited. The Field Day will be 23-25 June.

Changes have been made in the classes of licenses. After April 15, 2000, only Technician No-Code, General (which requires 5 words per minute of code) and Advanced class will be offered.

The 50/50 was won by Norman (KA4EEN).

Since our meeting, one of our faithful and active members has become a silent key. We regret the passing of Walter (KF4BFB) and extend our deepest sympathy to his family.

The meeting was adjourned and the Dick (W3HXH) presented a program on the Vertical Antenna Project he has been working with now for some time.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Wilton B. Thomas (KF4BFL)  
Secretary*

## VARA Secretary's Report

The Valley Amateur Radio Association club meeting was held at Gavid's Restaurant in Staunton on February 1, 2000. The meeting was opened at 7:30 pm by acting President, Dan Beidler KE4JSX. There were 20 members and guests present.

First of all we have a NEW PRESIDENT! "GREG CZERNIAK" W4GRC Just call him Greg. We need to support Greg in his endeavor as president this year. I think he will help the club and Amateur Radio. Thanks Greg for "volunteering" for the job as club president.

David AD4TJ gave a rundown on RACES for the snow we had and it reached a level 3, which is standby mode. We were lucky nothing happened in this area. Thanks David for your report and all the

work you do.

The 50/50 was \$26.00 won by Fred Fitzgerald and he donated his winnings back to the club. Thanks Fred for that.

Richard KF4QZG informed the club that Waynesboro has donated a tower to the club. More information on the tower will be forth coming.

Bob N4ICT has donated a liner amp. to the club. We will offer it for sale for \$300.00. It's a Metron MA1000 and covers 15,20,40,75 & 160M. Works good we got Ozro KD4RD to check it out. Thanks Ozro for the time you spent checking this out. If anyone is interested give me a call at work 946-1164 or at home 886-0347.

We would like to thank Dan KE4JSX for being president this past year and hanging in there until we got a new president. I think Dan KE4JSX did a great job as president this past year so "Thanks Dan" for the effort.

Remember the club meets the first Tuesday of the month. Also remember dues are due NOW, so let's all make our checks out and get them to Jeff W4PJW.

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was accepted and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm.

*Submitted by  
Pat Smiley, KD4WWF  
VARA Secretary*

## For Sale Corner

### Cleaning Shack

Drake TR4C, MS 4 speaker/power supply w/manual.....\$250  
 DSI 3550 Frequency Counter 50hz-550mhz w/manual.....\$ 25  
 Palomar Engineers R-X Noise Bridge (NEW) w/manual.....\$ 30  
 Varitronics PA-50A Mobile 2 meter Amp. 10W in 50W out.. \$ 15  
 Newtronics Hustler CG-144 Mobile Ant.....\$ 15  
 AEA PAKRATT PK-232MBX w/mods, manuals.....\$175  
 SONY TC-105A Portable Reel Tape Recorder (NEW).....\$ 50  
 HeathKit HO-10 Monitor Scope w/manual.....\$ 50

**Ken Miller, K8KMM**

**HC 74 Box 5**

**Brandywine, WV 26802**

Phone-304-249-5278

E-mail-k8kmm@access.mountain.net



## Multiple Sclerosis Society Changes Dates to Accommodate Hams

Last year, the Virginia Multiple Sclerosis Society asked for help from valley hams to support their 150-mile fund raiser bike ride. That ride, last October, fell right on top of several other activities which the local amateurs had already committed to cover.

This year, to accommodate the hams, the MS Society has changed the dates of the ride to **September 16-17**, just to avoid conflict with the other ham events.

“Having ham radio operators at the checkpoints and safety stations is absolutely critical to our success. We can’t provide a safe ride for our participants

without this communication structure in place,” says Kathy Garrif of the Charlottesville MS office. “Most hams don’t realize just how important you are to us.”

To reward hams for participating, the MS Society will provide overnight accommodations (lodging), all meals, and a complimentary T-shirt to all communicators. The communications coordinator will warrant additional rewards.

The route for this year’s ride hasn’t been finalized yet, but is expected to be a 150-mile round trip on the back roads up and down the Shenandoah Valley, starting

somewhere near Augusta County and ranging to Strasburg and back.

Right now, Kathy is in dire need of a ham to volunteer as the communications coordinator for this event. The coordinator would work with Kathy in the coming months as liaison to plan the communications strategy.

If you can help, please call Kathy or Kim Elliott at 804-971-8010. These fine folks have changed their entire event plans to allow us to provide communications. Can you assist? Please?

## Calendar

MARCH 2: MARA Club Meeting

MARCH 4-5: ARRL DX Phone Contest

MARCH 7: VARA Club Meeting

MARCH 11-12: Charlotte (NC) Hamfest

MARCH 12-13: QCWA QSO Party

MARCH 18: Charleston (WV) Hamfest

MARCH 18-19: Russian DX Contest

MARCH 18-20: VA QSO Party

MARCH 20: Monitor Submission Deadline

MARCH 16: Augusta ARES Net

MARCH 25: Beckley (WV) Hamfest

MARCH 25-26: Timonium (MD) Hamfest

MARCH 25-26: CQ WW WPX SSB Contest

APRIL 4: VARA Club Meeting

APRIL 6: MARA Club Meeting (Homebrew)

APRIL 8: VE Exams (Charlottesville)

APRIL 9: Raleigh (NC) Hamfest

APRIL 15: Chesapeake (VA) Hamfest

APRIL 15: VE Exams (NRAO Greenbank)

MAY 19-21: Dayton (OH) Hamvention

JUNE 24-25: Field Day

# MARA/VARA

c/o David Fordham  
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Weyers Cave, VA 24486

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Email: fordhadr@jmu.edu

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in the Shenandoah Valley*

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## MASSANUTTEN AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

President: Gerald Nauman, KN4FM  
Vice President: Sandy Mullins, K4PZC  
Secretary: Wilton Thomas, KF4BFL  
Treasurer: Matthew Huffman, KD4UPL  
Board (exp. 00): vacant  
Board (exp 01): David Hughes, KF4SVR

<http://cob.jmu.edu/fordhadr/MARA>

MARA meets the first Thursday of each month at Ever's Restaurant on U.S. 11 south of Harrisonburg. Meal starts at 6:30 pm. Business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

**Visitors are welcome.**

Dues (\$12 per year) should be mailed to:  
Matthew Huffman, KD4UPL  
5166 Mt. Clinton Pike  
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

## VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

President: Greg Czerniak, W4GRC  
Vice President: Richard Huttinger, KF4QZG  
Secretary: Pat Smiley, KD4WWF  
Treasurer: Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW

<http://www.hamsnet.net/W4MUS>

VARA meets the first Tuesday of each month At Gavid's Restaurant on U.S. 11 south in Staunton. Meal starts at 6:30 pm. Business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

**Visitors are welcome.**

Dues (\$15 per year) should be mailed to:  
Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW  
1344 Hankey Mtn Hwy  
Churchville, VA 24421