

August 2000

MARA/VARA MONITOR

Published Monthly for Radio Amateurs in the Shenandoah Valley

Wow!! News, News, and More News!

This issue is just **packed** with news.

As you may have heard, yours truly, the Monitor editor, has been out of town for about two months. I thank my anonymous replacement for getting the June-July combined issue prepared and in the mail for me. Lookin' good, Slim!

And I'd like to thank all the many fine hams who have sent articles this month. There is more news in this issue than I've seen in years.

So what are we waiting for! Start reading!



Big Mountain Repeater Picnic: Sunday August 20th

IT'S TOTALLY FREE!

**See map on page 11
for directions to the Big
Mountain Repeater
Picnic**

You are invited to the 9th Annual Big Mountain Picnic and Repeater Benefit, affectionately known as the "Bob's Knob Bash". The event this year will be held Sunday afternoon, August 20th, starting at 1:00 pm.

(In the event of rain, the event will be held one week later, on August 27th.)

Hotdogs, hamburgers, iced tea, pink lemonade, plates, napkins, cups, and silverware will be furnished.

Bring a covered dish (with something good in it) to share. A salad is always welcome. Also, bring your favorite soft drinks, and maybe a folding chair or two.

The usual outdoor games (Badminton and Volleyball) will be available, as well as the venerable horseshoes.

The secret recipe Bob's Knob Open-Fire-Cooked

iron-kettle BEANS will be available again this year. Those beans have been the most popular feature at the picnic for the past eight (8) years!

We will also have a 50/50 drawing, and a bucket or two asking for contributions to the repeater maintenance fund. (Make checks payable to "Big Mountain Repeater Maint Fund").

Take a walk in the woods, try to spot a deer, wild turkeys, squirrels, or one of the many birds that Bob keeps on the property.

Bring grandpa and the kids, plenty of room on the knob for all to romp and play.

Talk-In frequency will be 146.550 simplex, once you get to Fults Run or the West Virginia Line. Use the Big Mountain Repeater if you are further away.

See the map on page 11 of this issue for directions. We'll see you there!

New Page County Repeater On the Air! — Try 146.670 (-)

From Bill Jones (KE4FM) comes word that there is a new repeater on the air in the Shenandoah Valley.

Hams in Page County should be able to access the new KD4DDI/R two-meter repeater, found on 146.670, (-0.600 transmit offset). At press time, this repeater had no subaudible tone requirement. Give it a try.

*The repeater now
uses a
PL of 123 Hz*

Big Mountain Repeater (146.625) Now Linked to "Outback"

The Big Mountain repeater is now linked full-time to the "Outback Link System" repeaters in Cumberland and Oakland, Maryland and in Berkley Springs, West Virginia.

Some audio adjustments still are needed on the Big Mountain site. However, a high-gain receiver pre-amp has been installed to enhance reception. Notice the difference!!

This has been accomplished through the efforts and cooperation of a number of interested parties. Two of the big movers and shakers in the Outback System are Ron Beeman (N8YIB) and Larry Ashton (N2OCW).

Bob, W3MMC, wishes to thank Ron Beeman (N8YIB) for installing the modifications and also for killing the rattlesnake at the site!! Thanks also to Wilton (KF4BFL) for forwarding this article to the Monitor editor for inclusion in the news.

The system repeaters **all use P L of 123 Hz!**

MHZ	Location	Call
146.805	Oakland MD	KB8NUF
53.410	Cumberland MD	N8YIB
145.330	Cumberland MD	N8YIB
447.175	Berkley Springs WV	N2OCW
444.000	Cumberland MD	KN3L
147.435	(*) Berkley Springs WV	N8YIB
146.625	New Market VA	W3MMC

(*) Odd Split repeater, rx=147.435, tx=144.730

More Repeater News: NERA Link Now Available in Valley



A NERA volunteer rigs the coax on the Fork Mountain 443.250 linked machine.

NERA (the Network Engineers Repeater Association, a group of hams who are communications engineers in the D.C. area), operates a wide area link system.

One NERA machine is on Fork Mountain, between Luray and Madison, Virginia, and can be found on 443.250 MHz, up 5 Mhz, in the valley.

This system has the capability to link into numerous repeaters, including Canada and (get this!) the west coast! However, the owners ask that you use it primarily for short (very short) calls to

hams in the coverage area in the Mid-Atlantic area. The system also supports SkyWarn.

Before you use this system, the owners ask that you become familiar with their operating methods, to be found on the Internet at <http://www.news.teamvideo.com/nera/>

If you don't have Internet access, get on the repeater and ask for a NERA member to fill you in on some do's and don'ts for the system.

The system uses a PL tone of 107.2.

Public Service Report: Bridgewater Town Parade

A special thank you to all the Amateur Radio Operators that participated in this year's Fire and Rescue Parades at Bridgewater on July 14 and 15.

It was great to see how smoothly everything turned out, especially considering the volume of traffic that the amateurs help divert from major valley highways around the parade area on Main Street Bridgewater.

The police department and town officials expressed their appreciation for the excellent professional job that the amateurs accomplished to make the parade possible. Although, town officials have been told repeatedly that amateur radio help comes with no charge to the public, they insist that they plan to give a monetary donation to amateur radio.

Amateur radio enjoys million-dollar frequencies to use because it is available in emergency situations and is used in the line of public service. Therefore, we as amateur radio operators need to stay active to maintain our record of emergency preparedness and/or public service.

Public service demonstrates communications via amateur radio and makes amateur radio visible to the public. The more that the public is aware of amateur radio, the better our chances of maintaining our frequencies. Traffic

control is great training for an actual emergency in which we may very well be asked to divert traffic around a major incident in order to free up Police, Fire and Medical personnel to work the incident.

You can thank the following amateur operators for doing their part for ham radio at Bridgewater this year. We hope to see others next year. Yes! We are invited back. Doug N4DUG, (our public service ham), stated that he will buy everyone a fresh squeezed lemonade next year. I think that is what he said.

Ray Ritchie, K4NRA

"We as amateur radio operators need to stay active, to maintain our record of emergency preparedness..."

Amateur Operators Participating in the Bridgewater Public Service:

Gary KF4DFH
Gayle KU4XN
Ellsworth K4LXG
Colin N4ZFO
Bob KG4CHL
Steve KF4ZWK
Enos KF4BFF

Gerald KN4FM
Doug N4DUG
Wilton KF4BFL
Kevin KF4WWM
Gerry K4RBZ
Ray K4NRA

Public Service Report: March of Dimes Walk

The March Of Dimes Walk was held on April 29, 2000. This being the first event I had been responsible for, I was a bit nervous at first about having enough help, or wondering what detail I had overlooked. — As the day began, I found as usual that my worries were all for nothing. All total we had nine Hams participate, and one Non-Ham who was a great help with her knowledge of the J.M.U. campus. — Besides providing useful information to the walk personnel, we also gave assistance to five persons who were unable to continue the walk and needed a lift back to the start-finish area. At the conclusion of the event, we were thanked by the March of Dimes staff for our assistance and willingness to help. — We received T-shirts that said we were HEROS as were the many persons who participated in the walk, even a group that helped a person in a wheelchair through the event. — I would like to thank Steve (KF4ZWK); Gary (KF4DFH); & Carrie, Enos (KF4BFF); Gerald (KN4FM); Bob (KF4BFC); David(KF4SVR); Bob T. (KG4CHL); — A special thanks to Ken (KE4GKD) and Paul (KD4DDI) for their willingness to help on short notice. Thanks also to Norman (KA4EEN) who even though unable to help because of illness in the family, came by to see how things were going. Thanks Norman for getting me started!

Doug (KF4YGO)



The March of Dimes communications crew pauses for a picture



Christmas is Coming! VARA Members Take Note!

The Valley Amateur Radio Club has made plans for the Christmas Party this year. This party is open to all Hams and their families or friends.

Gavids is closing the restaurant to the public and reserving it for us that night!

Date: Tuesday December 5th

**Arrive at 7:00 pm,
eat at 7:30pm**

The meal will be \$11.00 for Adults and children over 10 years of age.

Children over 5 to 10 years of age will be \$5.50.

Children under 5 years of age are completely free.

Please! Let us know if you plan to attend and how many so we can let Gavids know no later than November 15th.

CONTACT PERSONS

By Phone ---- 146.850 or
224.680 Repeaters ---- e-mail

Joan Pitsenbarger KF4CWR at
886-0235 or kf4cwr@rica.net
Nancy Colvin KE4PHP or Ray
Colvin KE4HVR at 886-1559 or
colvingr@rica.net

Mail your check to:
Jeff Rinehart, 1344 Hankey
Mtn. Hwy., Churchville, VA
24421

KG4FQV: SK

Bob, W3MMC, reports via David Hughes, KF4SVR, that we have lost another ham in the valley.

Keith (Oren) Foster (KG4FQV), who lived in the Tenth Legion area died late Friday night July 7, 2000 at Rockingham Memorial Hospital from complications

following lung surgery which he had a few days earlier.

Our thoughts are with Oren's family.

MARA President's Message

For those that missed the July meeting, Gerry, K4RBZ, presented an excellent program on his experience working DX. Obviously he is the "BIG DAWG" DX'er in the area, having worked 338 countries, with 337 confirmed. There are only six (6, count 'em!) countries on the active list that he has not worked, and admits that those will be difficult because of political issues. He also told how he worked JY1, perhaps better known as King Hussein of Jordan. Thanks Gerry.

Many thanks to Ray, K4NRA, for coordinating the hams that directed traffic during the parades at the Bridgewater Lawn party on July 14 and 15. I believe there were 10 or 11 participants each night. Obviously

we provide a needed service, and although we don't provide the primary communications for the event, we did use radio to communicate among ourselves and keep traffic flowing. If you have never participated in this event, try it next year. It is different from the other events we normally help with.

This month's program is packet. Jeff, W4PJW will present "Packet 101". I don't know what he will call it, but you get the idea. If you have never tried packet radio, this is your chance to learn what it is all about and how it works. Believe me, it isn't all that hard. Jeff has been active with local DX Packet Cluster (remember, Gerry told us to use the Cluster to find DX). My guess is that he

will put in a plug for that system, and tell us how it works and how to use it. And if DX isn't your thing, what you learn can be used with the ARES packet system.

I hope to see each of you at the meeting on August 3, at Ever's Restaurant on Rt 11 north of Mt Crawford at 6:30 pm for dinner.

If you can't make it for the meal, come at 7:30 for the meeting. Just tell the hostess that you are there for the radio club meeting and they will direct you to the meeting room.

Gerald, KN4FM

Mark your Calendars:

**MARA Meeting
on August 3rd.**

**Program:
Packet Radio 101**

VARA President's Message

What can I say? Field Day was great!

I have participated in Field Day activities in New York, Florida and South Carolina, but folks, what the two clubs do in the Valley is awesome!

The Field Day committee and all the workers need to be congratulated for their hard work and effort.

If you did not get to the field day site, you missed an awesome sight. It looked like a village. Camping trailers, RV's and tents surrounded the site. Several enclosed trailers and one large truck served as radio shacks.

But do you really know what made Field Day so good? You! The fellowship! I can't wait until next year.

And by the way, if you have ever wondered why we have field day exercises, all you have to do is look back at the wildfires in Colorado and how Amateur Radio Operators were called upon to provide field type communications. **That** was a field day event, a real life drama that

unfolded in Colorado. More than 60 Colorado hams volunteered for duty while the fires continued to burn out of control. RACES, ARES, and Red Cross Communication teams were involved in the response.

Field Day allows us to prepare for any emergency that requires mobility. In a nutshell, **that** is why we have a field day event every year.

So if you didn't participate this year, how about coming out next year? Why not get involved in some type of community service.? Even our local events help train hams to handle traffic and prepare for emergencies.

Even though we changed our meeting night in July to Monday, we still had a great turn out and I want to thank Clayton (K4RHQ) for his program on weather. He has been accumulating weather facts for 30 years or more. Clayton is a great resource! Maybe he should change his call to K4WX (WX is the cw abbreviation for weather).

Let's shift gears and talk about classes in the fall. I am still

looking for someone who is willing to lead a committee. We might call it the education committee. Do I have any volunteers? Let's get Amateur Radio growing in the Valley! We have the talent and a place to hold classes. Now all we need is for you to volunteer!

As I mentioned in our last newsletter, our club web site is way out of date. We need to update the site. Actually, we need to move the site and make some improvements and then keep the site updated. Do I have a volunteer? Or a couple of volunteers?

One more thing, thanks Dave for the good job you do on the newsletter!

That is all for this month. I am looking forward to a great turn out on the 2nd of August (first Tuesday). How about inviting someone to attend? We are going to have a home-brew project night. So bring something you have home-brewed and share it with the rest of us!

73 and see you next month - Your President, Greg, W4GRC

Mark your Calendars:

VARA Meeting on August 2nd.

Program: Homebrew!

Public Service: May's MS Walk



Thanks to the hams who helped provide support communication for the valley's Spring MS (Multiple Sclerosis) Society's fund-raising walk.

Pictured from left to right: Joe (KD4FKT); Richard (KG4QZG); Ray (KE4NNV); Ken (KE4GKD); Joe (W4LIG); Lonnie (N4WIV); Greg (W4GRC) & Excel the Mascot (no call at this time).

Not pictured is Pat, KD4WWF

Lightning: Nothing to Play Around With!



These pictures show the result of a lightning strike suffered by Pat, KD4WWF, last month.

At left, you can see that most of the antenna has literally been "blown away", leaving only the bottom coil section.

This lower section is all that's left of the 146.700 repeater antenna.



Here, you can see the tattered remains of the destroyed coaxial cable feedline. The energy "exploded" the cable itself.



At left is the smoked-up interior of the house. Notice that the junction box is blown right off the wall.

As summer thunderstorm season reaches its peak, be sure your shack is well grounded! You can't prevent a strike, no matter how hard you try. But you can at least provide the bolt with a quick and easy path to the ground, and hope that it will find the path you provided, instead of taking its own direction.

Bits and Pieces – This and That – Here and There ...



Norman Benner, KA4EEN, would like to advise ARES net control stations that he can now accept your net logs via email, as long as you send them as a text message and not an attachment. The email address is: NBENNER4@JUNO.COM



Cowles Andrus, K4EME, calls our attention to a patent which was recently issued for a new type of communication antenna. Even the creators of Star Trek hadn't considered this one! If this is for real, it could revolutionize communications. Check it out at: <http://www.patents.ibm.com/> and then use the search field to look for patent US06025810, "The Hyper-Light-Speed Antenna".



Friends of WV3J, Paul Helbert, recognized his son, Eli (KC4UZG) featured in an article in the Harrisonburg Daily News-Record the week of July 20th. In addition to being a ham, Eli is a world-class "paddler". *Just don't get the radio wet, Eli!*

SkyWarn Classes Scheduled

The National Weather Office in Sterling, Virginia (near Dulles Airport) is offering several SkyWarn classes over the coming months.

If you have already completed the SkyWarn Basics I class, you are eligible to attend the upcoming Hurricane Class. The class is free, and will be held on Monday night, August 21st, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm, at the NWS forecast office in Sterling.

If you have completed Basics I but aren't interested in Hurricanes, sign up for the Basics II course, to be held Wednesday, September 13, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm.

If you haven't yet attended a Basics I class, or have recently moved to the valley and would like to obtain a local SkyWarn ID number, you can attend the Basics I class to be held Monday, August 28th, again from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at the NWS office in Sterling.

SkyWarn is open to persons 14 years of age and up, who have the ability to spot severe weather and forward the reports to the Weather Service. You do not have to be radio amateur to be a SkyWarn volunteer.

For more information, contact our local SkyWarn coordinator (Bob, W3MMC, on the 146.625 or 145.130 repeaters), or contact Melody at the NWS offices at email:

Melody.Paschetag@noaa.gov or by phone at: **703-260-0107 ext. 226**



Ken's Antenna Dilemma

As most of you know Ken KE4GKD, tried out a "trap door" beam with invisible coax. See the photo at right. A version of the famous "long john" dipole, this antenna had two legs coming off the tower, but suffered trouble capturing and holding the signal. Ken also encountered a lot of trouble when he tried to tune it "on the fly". So he took it down and did a lot of thinking on what to put on his tower. He didn't want to make the same mistake twice.

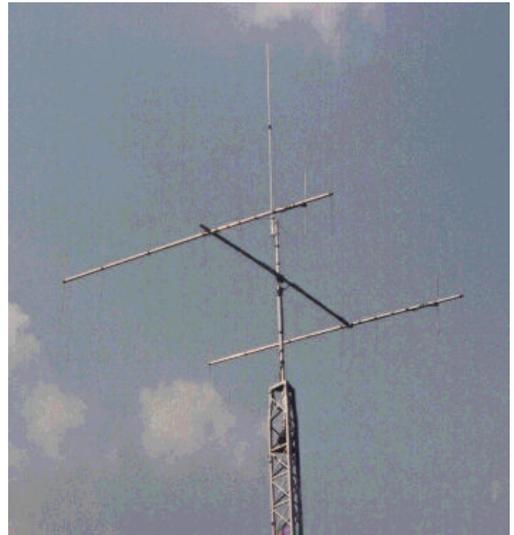
After a year of research and planning he started getting things together for the new installation. This time he decided to go to the metallic type phased array eight element beams and even put a rotor on it so he could turn it toward the station he wanted to talk with. He also made his mind up to mount the antennas on *top* of the tower and use regular coax this time.

One night he woke up from a deep sleep of at least ten minutes with a bright idea to put a tri-band vertical omni antenna on the very top of the tower. With this, while laying back in his recliner, he could listen in all directions and wouldn't have to get up to turn his beams.

This seems to be working well for him, since he has talked to Delaware several times on 2 Meters with fifty watts.

Here is what he exchanged his trap door beam for. Let's all let him know we are proud of him for using real antennas this time.

*Submitted by
Ray Colvin, KE4HVR*



Hot Radio: N4NOL's Kenwood TM-721



Al McNett, N4NOL, had a Kenwood TM-721 a dual bander stolen. The serial number is 0010174. Al had purchased it on 2-13-89. Be on the lookout for this hot radio.

If someone offers it to you, please contact Al at (540)574-4249. Thanks.

Joe Moomaw, W4XD, Back On Line...

Joe Moomaw, W4XD, the "elder" of Staunton ham radio, had computer problems a while back, but is now back on-line using JUNO.

His e-mail address is:
joemoomaw@juno.com

Ozzie met Joe's son-in-law in Richmond. He brought Joe's computer to Durwood. Durwood upgraded it to Windows 95 and a 56K modem.

I helped Durwood load a lot of the valley addresses

to his email program's address book.

I am sure Joe would like to hear from some of us in the valley so...Welcome him back on-line!

Ray Colvin

Calendar of Upcoming Events ...

Aug 2nd	VARA Club Meeting	Gavid's Restaurant: Staunton
Aug 3rd	MARA Club Meeting	Ever's Restaurant: Harrisonburg
Aug 5th	Roanoke Hamfest	Byrd High School, Vinton 9am to 3pm talkin 146.985 (-)
Aug 6th	Berryville Hamfest	Clark County Fairgrounds Talk-in 146.820 (-)
Aug 5-6	ARRL UHF Contest	See QST
Aug 19-20	NA SSB QSO Party	See CQ July pg 98
August 20	Big Mtn Rptr Picnic	See pages 1 and 11 this issue
Sep 2nd	Morgantown WV Hamfest	Call 1-304-594-3779
Sep 5th	VARA Club Meeting	Gavid's Restaurant: Staunton
Sep 6th	MARA Club Meeting	Ever's Restaurant: Harrisonburg
Sep 23-24	Virginia Beach Hamfest	Call 1-757-Hamfest

Website Updated ... again...

The editor appreciates all the photo's in this month's issue. It is a shame that color copiers, and high-resolution off-set printing, put these reproduction techniques out of reach of the local ham clubs. (Most reproductive techniques are far, far out of reach of your editor... ahem.)

Anyway, the color pictures, along with even more photo's, are now on the updated MARA club home pages. If you have Internet access, check them out.

And don't forget to pass the word: The Monitor is available electronically to anyone whose email

account can accept PDF attachments. Simply drop the newsletter editor an email message at fordhadr@jmu.edu and give him your email address.

And finally, the deadline for the September issue of the Monitor is August 20th.

Happy Reading!

Field Day 2000: Preliminary Report

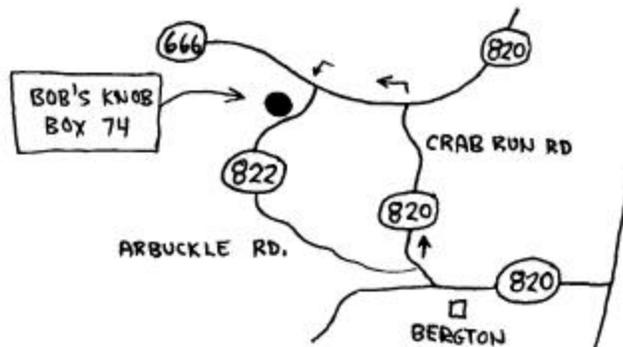
Well, Field Day has come and gone again for another year. — I hope everyone made it to the site at least once and had a good time. Many thanks to those who put in the many hours to make it all happen, either as a committee member, or as someone that helped set-up, operate, log, kept the generators running, tear down and pack everything up for next year. — Also to those that loaned equipment, ran the welcome booth, got the site ready and cleaned up afterwards, hauled equipment to

the mountain top (and back down), got the publicity information out, and to those that participated in some way that I failed to mention. — It took a lot of work, and it all happened because we all pitched in and made it happen. — We should all hope and pray that Field Day always remains what it is, a fun event, and that we never have to do what we did because of a disaster.

Gerald Nauman, KN4FM



Map to Bob's Knob, Home of the Big Mountain Repeater Picnic



Take Interstate 81 to Exit 257.

Follow State Route 259 into Broadway.

Turn left at the light, following Route 259, as if you were headed to West Virginia. Look at your odometer as you cross the Railroad Tracks in Broadway.

Exactly 14 miles past the railroad tracks on 259, take a left turn (just past the flashing yellow light) onto Bergton Road (route 820).

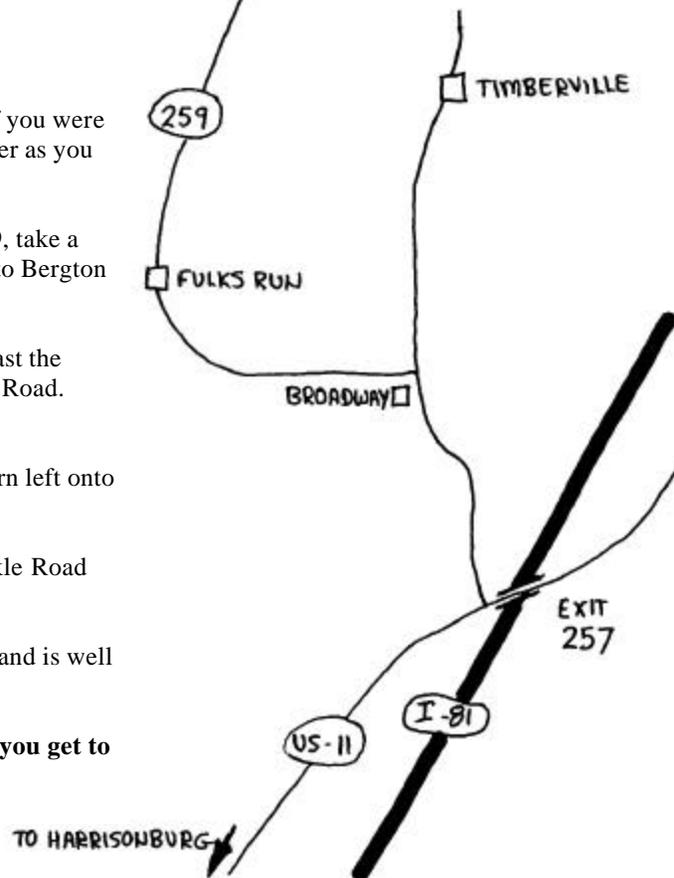
Continue on Bergton Road for about 2 miles, past the Bergton Grocery, and turn right onto Crab Run Road. Pass the fairgrounds, and keep on comin'.

Follow Crab Run Road to the stop sign, then turn left onto Mongold Hollow Road (gravel).

About a mile down, turn left again onto Ar buckle Road (route 822).

Bob's Knob is the fourth mailbox on the right, and is well marked.

Remember, Talk-In is on 146.625 (PL) until you get to Fulks Run, then switch to 146.550 simplex.



MARA/VARA

c/o David Fordham
131 Wayside Drive
Weyers Cave, VA 24486
Phone: 540-568-3024
Email: fordhadr@jmu.edu

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Packed with News
this month.

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