The Monitor

Local Ham Swap Shop Is Now Up and Running

Thanks to **Billy Hooke, KG4JOF** for creating and maintaining the on-line ham radio swap shop on the VARA Web page!

The swap shop can be found by going to the VARA home page below, and clicking on the Swap Shop link on the left hand column of the home page.

As of February 21, the shop contained a Pro-2015 scanner, a Kenwood TL-922 linear amplifier, a Heath Power SWR meter, a Drake TR-3, a Drake MN-2000 tuner, and a Dentron MT-3000 Antenna Tuner.

Most of the listings are accompanied by photographs of the equipment, and all contain the contact information. Asking prices are shown, too.

To post to the shop, send an email to Billy at kg4jof@arrl.net.

You don't have to have internet access or email to list an item. Billy can post the details for you. You can reach Billy by phone at (540) 887-2317. Leave a message.

The VARA Webpage can be found at:

http://www.qsl.net/w4mus/

Congratulations to Upgraders, New Calls, and New Hams!

Andrew Barbour, formerly K4AJB, who has changed his call more often than he changes his oil, recently upgraded to Extra class. Andrew now sports the call **AG4XN**.

Roy Trump, KE4UFN, of Verona, recently upgraded to General class.

Larry Moyer, formerly KF4VWL, has a new call: **K4LDM**

William Moyer, formerly KF4TGN, has a new call: **K4MRB**.

Bradley Andersen, **KG4YLE**, of Dayton, is a new Technician-class ham.

Brent Smart, KG4ULF, of Toms Brook, is also a new Tech-class ham.

Jason Miller, KG4YLG, of Bridgewater, is also a new Technician-class ham.

Aaron Blum, AG4XA, of Staunton, is a new Extra class ham, as of December.

Ginger Blum, KG4WQU, also of Staunton, upgraded to a General class license. She was issued KG4WPO as a technician, but upgraded by the time the call was recorded. Her current call is KG4WQU.

And **Ethan Blum, KG4WQV**, also of Staunton, upgraded to General class. He was issued KG4WPP as a technician, but upgraded by the time that call was recorded. His current call is KG4WQV.

Thanks to Volunteer Examiners

"The Next Testing Session will be April 12."

A hearty "Thank You" to the hams who volunteer their time to become Volunteer Examiners, and help others in our community join the ranks of ham radio. At the February test session, we had help from:

**GERALD NAUMAN KN4FM,
ANDREW BARBUR AG4XN,
RICHARD HAXTON KC3AN,
RAY RICHIE K4NRA,
DALE SHOWALTER N4DAI.**

For information on how you can become a VE, contact Gayle Shull, KU4XN, at 540-828-2132.

Our next testing session is scheduled for April 12, at the usual place: The Woodmen of the World building in Dayton, Virginia, on Highway 42, a mile south of the Harrisonburg WalMart SuperCenter.

Gayle, KU4XN

Update Your VE Credentials...

If you are an ARRL accredited Volunteer Examiner in the VE program, you need to know that you can update your VE credentials for free in most cases. Further, you are required to notify the ARRL when you make certain changes to your license or address. The ARRL does not update the VE records from FCC updates.

Notify the ARRL when your license has been renewed so that they can provide renewed VE credentials or stickers. This is free.

Notify the ARRL when your license class has been upgraded so that they can provide upgraded VE credentials. This is free.

Notify the ARRL when your address or phone numbers have changed. This also is free. (And don't forget to notify the FCC about your change of address! Your license can be cancelled or revoked if the FCC discovers you didn't notify them of a change in your address!)
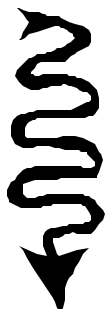
Call sign changes; Notify the ARRL if your call sign has been systematically changed by an upgrade. The ARRL will change your VE credentials for free.

Notify the ARRL by mail with $2 if you have a new Vanity call sign AND if your accreditation is not otherwise in need of renewal or license class update. A new badge at your routine renewal or at upgrade is free.

Notification by email, fax, mail or phone is acceptable (except in the case of the vanity callsign change which requires the $2).

Send your updates and changes to:
ARRL VEC
225 Main St
Newington CT 06111 USA

Email vec@arrl.org
Tel: 860-594-0300
Fax: 860-594-0339

Shenandoah Valley QRP and Homebrew: Visitors Welcome!

Which is better: A homemade birthday cake, or one from CostCo? Which is better: A homecooked pot-roast or a plate from Country Kitchen? Which is better: a homemade birthday card from your 6-year-old, or a $4 Hallmark?

Which is better: A radio you built yourself, or one that you bought and was delivered by the man in the brown truck?

The answer to all four of the above questions depends on your point of view, and what your intention is by buying, or making, your own stuff.

If you would like to try making some of your own equipment for ham radio, check out the local QRP & Homebrew group.

They work on simple projects that anyone can tackle and master. And they also build some pretty neat things that you simply can't buy.

This group gets together the Tuesday night after the first Thursday of each month. This is the Tuesday after the MARA club meeting. They start sometime around 7 pm, give or take a few minutes, at the workshop of Chuck Vogan,

KD5KA, in the suburbs of Weyers Cave, at 1142 Westview School Road.

To reach the meeting place, take I-81 to exit 235, go east (towards the airport). Pass the Weyers Cave traffic light, and take the very next road to the right. Go a long block to the church. Just past the church, turn right onto Westview School Road. Chuck's place is down about a half mile on the right. Give Chuck a call at 234-0081. Or you can give a call about 6:45 or 7 pm on the meeting night on the 145.13 repeater and ask for a "talk-in".

AA4RH's MFJ Tuner Story: A Little Loose Connector

VARA members were informed at the January meeting of a potential problem with the venerable line of antenna tuners from MFJ.

Richard Huttinger, AA4RH, explained his discovery of a problem with the SO-239 connectors found on these (and many other) tuners.

Richard was experiencing unexplainable fluctuations in SWR, power output, and pain in his big toe. Upon investigation, the SWR and power output fluctuations were traced to an intermittent connection between the SO-239 on the tuner and the tuner chassis box itself. Screws, rivets, and other methods of connecting the SO-239 to the box aren't as good as old-fashioned welding or soldering.

Richard firmed up the connections attaching the SO-239 to the metal chassis box, and presto, the SWR changes and power output fluctuations disappeared. As for the big toe problem, well, two out of three ain't bad.

If you are experiencing unusual output characteristics at your station, before you go outside in the snow and begin working on your antenna, check the firmness of the SO-239 on your tuner. While the coax might be connected tightly, the connector itself might be wiggling against the box, causing capacitance changes, reflections, and all kinds of other problems.

443.150 Repeater Is Back Up... —— All the Way Up.

Jason Armentrout, N4DSL, is pleased to announce that the 443.150 repeater is back on the air from its lofty perch way up on Laird's Knob, high on the Massanutten range.

The repeater uses PL tone of 131.8 Hz, and has an input frequency of 448.150 (+5 MHz).

The repeater had been up (working) but down (at low altitude) at Keezletown for a few months. Also, note that this repeater was originally on 444.775 MHz.

This repeater also has a nice autopatch to the Harrisonburg calling area, including limited long-distance service, and in-dial capability where someone can call you on their telephone, and you can answer on your UHF ham radio.

For more information on this repeater or to subscribe to the autopatch ($25 per year), contact Jason at: N4DSL@atrs.com, or telephone at 540-269-8141. Or better yet, call him on the 443.150 repeater.

"PL of 131.8, offset of +5 MHz"

RACES Training: May 31   —— Mark Your Calendar

Some amateurs are confused by the differences between ARES and RACES. ARES is an organization made up of trained and willing ham radio operators who volunteer to help with emergency communications whenever needed. Most of us are ARES volunteers.

RACES on the other hand is a separate FCC-recognized radio service, one which shares frequencies with the amateur radio service.

While the RACES service consists of licensed amateurs, it is not simply a set of amateurs who step forward to volunteer in an emergency. In order to operate in the RACES service, federal law requires not only that you be a ham, but also that you be **enrolled** as a member of a recognized Civil Defense organization. See CFR 47: 97.407(a).

In fact, plain amateur radio operators are **prohibited** from even communicating with stations which are operating in the RACES service. See 97.407(c).

However, as a licensed radio amateur, you are eligible to *become enrolled* with Virginia's Civil Defense" organization. First, you register with Virginia RACES, then you attend a training session, and finally,

participate in regular drills and other training exercises in order to become (and stay) a fully-qualified RACES station, "enrolled in that organization", as required by the FCC rules.

Interesting in becoming a RACES station? Thanks to the efforts of Dale, N4DAI, a training session will be held at Eastern Mennonite University in the Commons, on Saturday, May 31, from 8 am to 5 pm. There is room for up to 130 hams in this session.

The training is free. But advance registration (both in VA RACES and in the training session) is required. Contact Dale Showalter N4DAI, at telephone 540-896-7027 during normal working hours, or at 540-896-6535 evenings and weekends to register.

Within a week or two, information on the training session, including registration opportunities, will likely be posted to the VA RACES web page, which can be accessed at:

http://www.racesva.org

At Long Last: Some Help With the Valley's "Bear Hunter" Problem?

Those who monitor the 2-meter band in the Valley have noticed an unusual rise in the number of unlicensed operators on this band recently.

These illegal stations have been heard talking to each other from their trucks, living rooms, and even in their yards. They are using Radio Shack radios, for the most part.

A test conducted by a local ham last month indicated that anyone can buy a Radio Shack radio at the local stores without even being told that the radio requires a license, let alone being asked for a callsign or in any other way being asked to verify that they are author-ized by law to operate the transmitter.

A proposal has been put forth by Dale Reich, K8AD. Dale has petitioned the FCC to require sellers of two-way voice or data equipment to keep on file a buyer's name, address, telephone number and "any future information when selling a radio that required licensing under the current FCC rules." Comments on the petition, RM-10641, are due February 28.

Information collected would remain private, available only to the FCC or law enforcement. Reich said in his petition that any retail vendor would be able to ask local police for an investiga-tion if the retailer suspected the radios were not going to be used in compliance with the law.

Included in the petition is a requirement for "ownership and license tagging" for gear operating under Parts 5, 15, 18, 74, 80, 90, 95 and 97. In his petition, Reich said such tagging used to be an FCC requirement and that his proposed change was a needed tool for local law enforcement.

Viewing and commenting on petitions the FCC puts on public notice: Members of the amateur community (and the general public) may comment via the Web or e-mail on any Petition for Rule-making that the FCC has put on public notice and as-signed a rulemaking (RM) number. Visit the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) page http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/ecfs/, which includes detailed in-structions. To view a petition and/or any comments filed, click on "Search for Filed Comments" on the right-hand side of the page and enter the RM number in the "Proceeding" field. You must enter "RM" in upper-case letters and include the hy-phen followed by the appro-priate five digits. To file com-ments, click on "Submit a Filing" on the right-hand side of the ECFS page or see the instructions on how to file comments via e-mail.

New Field Day Entry Class!

To promote the "Emergency and Disaster Support" as-pect of ham radio, the ARRL has announced a new class of Field Day station, effective with this years' upcoming Field Day. The new class "F" will apply to stations which operate from their local Emergency Operations Cen-ter or Disaster Relief Center operated by government.

Whales, Baby Seals, Spotted Owls, — What about Ham Radio Spectrum!

The Amateur Radio Spectrum Protection Act of 2003 has been introduced in the US House of Representatives.

The measure is an ARRL legislative initiative. Florida Rep Michael Bilirakis filed the latest version of the bill, HR 713, on February 12. It has been referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

HR 713 is aimed at ensuring the availability of spectrum to Amateur Radio operators. It would protect existing Amateur Radio spectrum against reallocations to or sharing with other services unless the FCC provides "equivalent replacement spectrum" elsewhere.

The previous version of the Spectrum Protection Act at-tracted more than 50 co-sponsors. An effort will be made to encourage addi-tional House members to sign on to HR 713 as co-sponsors. Additional details are on the ARRL Web site.

Hams are urged to write their Congressmen and Senators to urge passage of this act.

VARA President's Message

The Valley Amateur Radio Association met at Shoney's in Staunton on February 4, 2003.

I opened the meeting at 7:30pm. There were 23 members present with five guests....

Bob VanFosson K4DJG, Joshua & Jacob, Sons of Frank Green KE4ASC, Alan Holmes KG4WOA, and Morris Peltz KG4VOQ.

Bob Carlstrom WD4JEL won the 50/50, congratulations to Bob.

The treasurer Jeff Rinehart W4PJW reported we have

$3357.25 in the bank. Bike VA gave us a $700.00 donation which we will share with MARA 50/50....

THANKS TO ALL WHO CAME OUT TO HELP & MAKE IT A SAFE WEEKEND. FALL IS BEAUTIFUL AT THAT TIME OF THE YEAR.

Andrew Barbour has upgraded to Extra Class and changed his call to AG4XN... Congrats to Andrew.

Denny Morland N4XPW was voted into the club as a new member. See I told you it was easy. Welcome to VARA, Denny!

The MS Walk is coming up on Sunday April 6th in Waynesboro. Mark your calendar if you plan to help. I will be there at 1:00 pm to help. The ac-

tual walk will begin at 2:00 pm. We need help. The walk usually lasts about two and a half hours. It is a very worthwhile community event.

We need three volunteers for the field day committee. Thanks to Terry KG4MWI for volunteering. I will be there to help out myself but we still need two more.

73
Benny, N4BCC

MARA President's Message

Hello to all. I hope everyone (and their antennas!) survived the winter weather thrown at us the past week.

My main HF antenna, a G5RV 75 feet high, came down on one end — not as a result of snow or ice, but as a result of high winds.

I had shot the support lines over two tall trees at the house around a year ago using a slingshot/fishing reel combo I bought at a hamfest. It worked great and I was able to put the pull lines high over the two trees enabling me to put the parachute cord antenna support lines at a good level. The problem is that the high winds caused abrasion of

the parachute cord and one line wore through.
I plan to come up with a pulley and weight system to correct the problem until Jeanne and I move into our new house. Thank goodness I still have the 75-meter di-

pole working — although only around 20 feet high. It works quite well.

As of this writing, Jeanne and I are preparing to attend a birthday party tomorrow for the fourth birthday of my oldest granddaughter, Mackenzie, in Warrenton, Virginia. I do not know where the time goes, but it does. It is near the end of February and the year is almost two months old and spring will be here before we know it. Next it will be FieldDay!

Has anyone noticed that the snows we have had in this area this winter have all occurred or started on Thursdays? Hmm!

I want to thank David, KD9LA, our Monitor Editor, for the fine program presentation at our last meeting. It was very enjoyable and informative. We do appreciate it, David and also the fine job you do with the Monitor. Again, thank you!

We are still looking for meeting program ideas. I do not want to have to sing operatic arias from famous operas. What's worse is that Gayle Shull, KU4XN, has said he'll do it if I don't. Just a threat!

Well, that's it for now.

73,
Ellsworth K4LXG

Valley SkyWarn News

Virginia's Statewide Tornado Drill is scheduled for March 25. This includes a statewide NOAA weather radio tone alert. Schools are being asked to participate with tornado drills for students. Homes and offices can also test out their response plans, too. Skywarn Hams are urged to contact their local Emergency Communications Coordinators to find out how to participate in this important drill. ARES officials are closely coordinating with the National Weather Service to make this a realistic emergency practice drill.

The NOAA Sterling office is investigating the use of the APRS network for mapping severe weather reports in summer, as well as snow reports in winter and rainfall year round. More reliable and regular reports would make the network more useful, but it might still provide good information in its current state.

A storm survey class is scheduled for May 18, from 2-5 pm, to train spotters on how to do a basic preliminary storm damage survey. Details will be announced as May approaches.

The next Skywarn Board meeting will be held on Sunday, May 4, at 2 pm at the NWS Office in Sterling. That meeting will include a Net Control Class. Of particular interest is anyone who can help volunteer to man WX4LWX (the Sterling Weather Forecast Office) during activations, or can man primary or auxiliary repeaters to collect reports.

SkyWarn Operational Frequencies in the Valley

The primary frequency in the Rockingham/Augusta/Page/Shenandoah County area for SkyWarn reports is 146.625. This repeater requires a PL tone of 131.8 Hz.

The secondary or backup frequency for SkyWarn in these areas is 145.130. The repeater requires a tone of 88.5 Hz.

If you are north of Harrisonburg, you might be able to work the 147.300 repeater. This machine has an offset of +0.600 Mhz and uses a PL tone of 146.2Hz This machine is the primary SkyWarn Net frequency and gets direct into the Sterling WSFO office. This repeater will be devoted full-time to weather-related communication any time that SkyWarn is activated.

On the east side of the Massanutten Range, particularly in Page and Warren counties, you might be able to work the Linden repeater on 145.210 repeater. That machine uses a –0.600MHz offset and requires a PL of 131.8 Hz.

Another SkyWarn–affiliated repeater you might be able to work from parts of Rockingham, Page, or Augusta counties is the 146.910 Tyson's Corner repeater. No PL is normally required.

Still another SkyWarn repeater reachable from some areas in the Valley is the 147.120 repeater in Culpeper. That machine requires no PL tone normally. Or you can try the Warrenton repeater on 147.165 MHz. No PL is required for that machine, either.

If you have UHF capability, check out your ability to reach the 444.400 repeater in Madison. This repeater is part of the HamTalk system, and requires a PL of 103.5 Hz.

On packet, SkyWarn uses 145.730 Mhz simplex. You can leave a weather report at KC4OCG-1. The mailbox call is KC4OCG. An alternate connection can be made to 4KMAIL. These connections can be reached via digipeater or nodes 4KNODE, FMNET, FRNET, RARES, and NVARES.

As a last resort, you can use the automated severe weather recording line at 800-253-7091, or 703-260-0206. Telephone calls should be a last resort, or when immediate notification is essential.

Keep these frequencies handy in case of foul weather.

Poor Man's Packet: $15!

Terminal Node Controllers (TNC's) for packet radio are still way too expensive.

Is there a cheaper way?

Yes! If you have a computer with a sound card and a radio you don't need a TNC to work simple packet!

Honest! You can get on the air using packet radio without ever touching a TNC!

Download and install any of the sound-card packet radio programs below. Then connect the speaker jack of your radio or scanner to the microphone input of your sound card.

In most cases, this takes only a mono cable with a 1/8-inch phone plug on both ends. The cords sell for about $2 at Radio Shack.

If you simply want to copy (read) the packet data, that's all there is to it! That one cable is all you need to copy APRS position reports, weather data, or to monitor the DX Clusters. Your sound card will decode the sounds from the packet transmitters, and display the information on your computer screen as simple text. The programs also allow you to save the text to a "log file" for loading to other programs that you might create.

But what about two-way communication? Half the fun of hamming is being able transmit!

If you want to transmit, you simply add one or two more wires. Connect the speaker jack of your sound card to the microphone input of your radio. Additionally, you might need a control line from your serial COM port to the PTT line on your radio's microphone jack.

If you don't want to fool with making up connecting cables, you can buy a Rascal Radio-And-Sound-Card-Adapter-Link, from Bux. See the web page at: http://www.packetradio.com/rascalmkv.htm. They make sound card cables that connect almost any radio to your computer sound card ports, for less than the price of a good steak dinner: $15!

Contrary to rumors, packet radio is not dead. There is still lots of traffic on 1200 baud AX.25 packet. If you want to hear for yourself how much there is, tune your receiver to 144.390 MHz, or 145.73 or 145.75 MHz. Brrrapp! Brrrapp! Brzzzzapppp!

Now for the big question. Where can you get your hands on some of this freeware and shareware that allows your sound card to act like a $189 TNC?

Perhaps the best way to get started is to use the TrueTTY software which is available on the MARA website. On the MARA home page, click on the Reference page, and scroll down to the Download TrueTTY link. Save the file to your hard drive. The entire file is less than a megabyte. When the download is finished, you will have a new folder on your hard drive in the location you specified. Go into that folder, and double-click on the "Setup" icon, and follow the on-screen directions.

The TrueTTY software comes defaulted to work HF Teletype. To change the mode to packet, simply click on the Mode selection on the menu bar and select Packet. The sound card activates and you are on the air!

If you are a little more adventuresome you can try the "king of the hill" of soundcard packet programs: AGWPE. It also is completely free and available for download from: http://www.qsl.net/soundcardpacket/

Detailed information on the AGW engine is available at www.elcom.gr/sv2agw/

ABWPE is supposedly superior to most hardware TNC's, in that it uses the computer's digital capabilities to copy signals as weak as S1. It can use the sound card as a tuning aid to adjust for minor frequency drifts in your receiver. It can even use the stereo feature of your sound card to copy two different radios (tuned to two different packet frequencies!) at the same time with a single sound card!

Another quick way of getting on the air is to use MixW32 software. This package is turnkey and can be found at:

ftp://tav.kiev.ua/~nick/mixw/mixw.htm

All of these packages allow you to do simple text display packet communication. In many cases this is enough. For example, you can tune to 145.510 and listen for the WN4JMU weather station. You can find an Excel spreadsheet for decoding the weather data string at the WN4JMU website:

http://cob2.jmu.edu/fordham/WN4JMU/

Or tune your radio to 145.750 MHz and listen for the DX cluster to see the rare DX stations that are on the air at a given time.

Go back to the MARA web page reference section, and download the PDF file containing the instruction manuals for the HBRGBB system on 145.73, or the DX Packet Cluster on 145.75. Connect to these stations, and –wow!- have fun!

As explained above, the sound-card approach to packet lets you do simple text display communication. If you want to use packet radio for advanced operation, such as automatic log analysis (to spot new multipliers in a contest), automatic rig tuning via CAT interfaces, automatic APRS mapping, or other advanced features, well, then, simple text display operation might not be sufficent. Few of those advanced computer programs can presently interface with the sound card engines. They will be looking for data coming into a serial port, not a sound card.

But unless those programs are on your shopping list, the simple text display of sound card packet will probably be sufficient!

Now, a computer techie might ask a good question: Isn't 1200 baud a rather slow data exchange rate compared to the Internet?

Yes, but walking into your kitchen is a rather slow traveling mode compared to a jet airplane. But you don't use jet airplanes to get to your kitchen, and you don't use packet radio to down-load web pages. These are two very different activities. 1200 baud packet is good for what it is intended to do. And there is lots of neat stuff to do where 1200 baud works just fine.

Give Packet Radio a try today! For $15, you can't go wrong.

High Speed Internet Access Over Ham Radio!

The ARRL has begun a project to put high-speed Internet access on ham radio.

The 802.11 wireless connectivity standards being used for wireless networking fall under Part 15 of the FCC rules. This limits transmitter power to milliwatts, which in turn limits ranges to a few hundred feet.

Since hams can operate at power levels up to 100 watts on spread spectrum on the 2.4 GHz band, the potential exists for hams to utilize surplus 802.11 off-the-shelf equipment, suitably modified, for much longer range connectivity.

The ARRL has named a working group to work on what they call the "Hinternet", or ham internet connections.

The February and March 2002 issues of CQ magazine, and the February and March issues of QST all contained good articles on using 802.11 equipment under Part 97 rules to gain longer ranges.

This equipment could be used to develop a wide area network covering the entire valley. For the most part, the connections could be made as easily as a plug-and-play network card. Of course, there will still be ample opportunity for experimentation and home-brew modifications, too.

Check out the ARRL's website on this exciting new development:

www.arrl.org/hsmm/

Weekly Ham News from the ARRL: Free to Everybody! (not just ARRL members)

Would you like to get ham radio news more quickly than the monthly magazines which are printed weeks in advance of their delivery?

If you are an ARRL member, you can get free emails every Friday containing the latest news in ham radio. If you aren't, you can still get the news from one of the locations below.

As an ARRL member, to subscribe or change your address for e-mail delivery: ARRL members first must register on the Members Only Web Site http://www.arrl.org/members/.

You'll have an opportunity during registration to sign up for e-mail delivery of The ARRL Letter, W1AW bulletins, and other material.

To change these selections--including delivery of The ARRL Letter, registered members should click on the "Member Data Page" link (in the Members Only box). Click on "Modify membership data," check or uncheck the appropriate boxes and/or change your e-mail address if necessary. Then, click on "Submit modification" to make selections effective.

(NOTE: HQ staff members can-not change your e-mail delivery address. You must do this yourself via the Members Only Web Site.)

The ARRL Letter also is available to all, free of charge, from these sources:

* ARRLWeb <http://www.arrl.org/arrlletter/>. (NOTE: The ARRL Letter will be posted each Friday when it is distributed via e-mail.)

* The QTH.net listserver, thanks to volunteers from the Boston Amateur Radio Club: Visit Mailing Lists@QTH.Net <http://mailman.qth.net/mailman/listinfo/letter-list>. (NOTE: The ARRL cannot assist subscribers who receive The ARRL Letter via this listserver.)

Virtual Tours of the Sterling WSFO Office

Since the events of September 11, 2001, federal installations have been a little skittish about giving tours to the general public.

That even holds true for some low-risk government offices such as the weather bureau.

To partially compensate the public for their inability to give tours, the Sterling office has prepared an on-line tour, complete with photographs and explanations, of their facilities. There is even a picture of the Skywarn operating position.

Check out::

http://www.erh.noaa.gov/er/lwx/onlinetour/welcome.htm

The Opinionated One: A "Ham-to-English" Dictionary

There are Russian-to-English Dictionaries. There are French-to-English Dictionaries. There are even Japanese-to-English dictionaries. Why not a "Ham-to-English" dictionary? It's not like the general public can understand our jargon without help. I mean, let's get real. What does the average housewife, gas station attendant, or trial lawyer know about "G5RV", "gain", "DXCC" or "feedlines"?

To get started, here are some handy definitions for a few terms used by Valley hams.

Rig: As in, "I can't wait to try out my new rig." *Noun*. Any piece of ham equipment that costs more than a thousand dollars. A $189 HT is not a rig. Neither is a $269 mobile dual bander. But an FT-101 Mark V, now *that* is a rig! A rig does not have to actually be a radio. For example, rigs with the name Kenwood on them primarily serve as filler material for cardboard boxes sent back and forth between hams and the repair facility in Virginia Beach.

Kerchunk: As in, "Be real careful with my new $3000 rig and don't drop- ... *kerchunk*." *Noun*. The sound made by Kenny's new rig when it hit the floor of Clint's field day trailer.

For I.D.: As in, "This is KG4JOE for ID." *Adverb*. This is an abbreviation. Ham radio is full of abbreviations. This one stands for, "I don't care what Bob or the other ham radio police say about redundancy. I have to say KG4JOE for ID because I'm not done talking yet and I don't want the other clowns in this conversation to think I'm signing out, because that's exactly what they'll do if I just say 'KG4JOE'."

QSY: As in, "Let's QSY over to 146.895." *Verb*. Another ham abbreviation. This one means, "Forget 146.895. Let's get back together again right here on this frequency in about ten minutes, because by that time I'll have given up trying to figure out how to change the PL on this radio."

PL: As in, "Why are there so many PL tones anyway." *Noun*. An invention created for the sole purpose of weeding out the bozo's who can't figure out how to work their radios. If you don't have a masters degree in Chinese trigonometry and a doctorate in Advanced Puzzle Theory, you will never be able to figure out how to set the PL frequency on a modern radio. Thus, you are effectively weeded out off the VHF and UHF airwaves... unless you are like Frank, who *did* happen to stumble across the instructions, buried on page 674 of the manual under the heading "Additional Features". To help prevent the accidental discovery of PL settings, the ham radio manufacturers have agreed among themselves to each list PL as something totally different in their manuals' index. One calls it "PL" and lists it under P. Another calls it "tone access" and lists it under T. The third calls it CTCSS, found under C.   I still haven't figured out what the other three manufacturers call it! And heaven help you if you try to set the PL tone by using the labeled buttons on the rig's control panel. A few months back, Ray tried to set a PL tone without the manual in front of him. The next thing he knew, his rig was locked into scan mode, the on-off switch no longer worked, and the radio's display panel turned a pretty shade of blue and said, "Unable to find DLL, Windows caused a System Fault at $R2D2"! To this day, that radio is still in scan mode. He uses it as a scarecrow in his garden.

XYL: As in, "My XYL said no." *Noun*. A safety device, widely used by ham radio operators to prevent the uncontrolled transfer of money from their wallets & bank accounts to the cash drawers of ham radio dealers.

"Hi-Hi": As in, "Just wait till his XYL finds out how much he spent on his new rig, hi-hi." Some hams are under the mistaken impression that hi-hi means laughter, — sort of a pseudo "ha-ha" with a French accent. It doesn't. If hi-hi meant laughter, you would at least occasionally hear hi-hi preceded with something funny, such as "W3MMC working CW? Hi-hi, hi-hi, hi-hi." But you don't. Hi-hi is never preceded with something funny. No one knows what "hi-hi" really means. So it is used like a squelch tail beep, meaning "back to you".

Fine Business: As in, "fine business on whatever it was that you just said." *Adjective*. This is an abbreviation for "ok". It is also a code word meaning, "None of my ancestors married their brothers or sisters." If your ancestors *had* married their brothers or sisters, instead of 'fine business' you would say, "Yupp, yupp, I heard thay-utt, I heard thay-utt, I shore did."

<censored> As in, "who the *<censored>* writes these instructions, anyway?" *Noun* This little short word means, "I've just spent six hours rubbing the skin off my fingertips by tightening all 12,375 screws, nuts, and bolts on this new 35-element beam, and now I discover the boom is on upside down!" It is also used to describe directions which were written using a Japanese-to-English dictionary and which say things like, "To construct: yes before first. Considerate quickly. Place a minutely gentle and after a quadrant insertion during the counterclockwise. Caution: Assure the utmost extremely that you don't. Warranty voided then."

<censored> As in, " Holy *<censored>* !!". *Expletive*. This word has several different meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. For example, if the situation is one where you are a ground crew member of a tower-raising party, you might energetically shout this word to the fellow standing at the 75-foot level of the tower, in which case the word means, "Wow, Jeff, that 10-pound sledge hammer you just dropped missed my head by an eighth of an inch. Now I've got to go change my underwear!" In a different situation, it might mean, "How the heck did I get way out here in the front yard?" right after you let your fingers brush against the live contacts of your shack's 600-volt power supply. If this word is repeated numerous times rapidly in succession, it generally means, "I knew I should've double-checked the polarity of that power cord before I plugged it into my new $3000 rig!"

There are many other terms out there in Shen-Valley ham-land which need defining, but we'll stop here by popular demand.

MARA Secretary's Report: February 6 Meeting

The February meeting of the Massanutten Amateur Radio Association was held at Evers Restaurant in Mt. Crawford, the meeting was opened at 7:30PM by the club president, Ellsworth Neff, K4LXG, there were 19 members and guests present.

Secretary's Report: The secretary's report for the January meeting was accepted as given in the February MARA monitor.

Treasurer's Report: The treasurer's report was accepted as given by Sandy Mullins, K4PZC.

New Members: Richard Gunick, KG4WNZ and Brent Smart, KG4YLF were voted in as new members.

50/50 was won by Bill Karle, KG4UPN, $11.00 went to Bill and $11.00 went to the club.

Chuck, KD5KA reported there will be a meeting of the QRP club on Tuesday, February 18th at 7:00 PM.

Chuck, KD5KA also showed the club his latest QRP project, a really small 20 meter transceiver with CW key.

A reminder of the Vienna hamfest on February 23 at the Northern Virginia Community College Annandale Campus.

The formal meeting was adjourned at 8:19PM and the program was given by David Fordham, KD9LA on the JMU wireless experimenters group (WN4JMU) wireless weather station.

Todd Harrison, K4TMH
MARA Secretary

Local Net Schedule Summary

Net Information can be found on the MARA Web page. Go to the Schedule and Calendar Page, and scroll to the bottom. Each net has its own information page giving frequency, PL information where necessary, meeting days and times.

The Rockingham County ARES Net meets every Monday night at 8:00 pm local time. On the first Monday of each month, the net is held on 146.550 simplex. All other Mondays, the net is held on the 145.130 repeater (-0.600 offset, PL of 88.1).

The Augusta County ARES Net meets the second Thursday of very month, also at 8:00 pm local time, on the 146.850 repeater. This repeater uses a -0.600 MHz offset, and a PL of 131.8 Hz.

The Page County ARES Net meets every Sunday night at 8:00 pm local time, on the 146.670 repeater (-0.600 offset, PL of 114).

The Highland County ARES Net meets the first and third Wednesday nights at 8:30 pm local time, on the 147.180 repeater (+0.600 offset, PL of 100.0).

The Virginia Sideband Net meets every day at 6:00 pm at 3947 kHz, LSB.

The Virginia Phone Net meets every day at 7:30 pm and at 10:15 pm on 3947 kHz, LSB.

The Virginia Traffic Net meets every day at 1:00 pm on 3907 kHz and 7260 kHz, LSB.

The Old Dominion Emergency Net meets the first and third Mondays at 6:30 pm local time on 3947 KHz. It also meets the last Wednesday night at 8:45 pm, local time on 3927 kHz, LSB. It also meets on the second Wednesdays (until March 31) at 8:45 pm on 1900 kHz. Starting April 1, the ODEN net will move the second Wednesday net meeting time and frequency to 6:30 pm local time on 7243 kHz.

Calendar

March 1-2   ARRL International DX Contest (Phone)
March 2:   Page County ARES Net (and every Sunday night)
March 3:   Rockingham County ARES Net Simplex night
March 4:   VARA Club Meeting
March 5:   Highland County ARES Net
March 6:   MARA Club Meeting
March 9:   North American RTTY SprintA
March 10:   Rockingham County ARES Net Repeater Night
                (and all other Monday nights in March)
March 13:   Augusta County ARES Net
March 15:   Charleston (WV) Hamfest
March 15-17: Virginia QSO Party
March 19:   Highland County ARES Net
March 24:   Spring QRP Homebrewer Sprint
March 25:   Virginia SkyWarn Tornado Drill
March 29-30: Timonium (Baltimore) Hamfest
March 29-30: CQ WW WPX Contest (Phone)

April 1:   VARA Club Meeting
April 3:   MARA Homebrew Night
April 12:   VE Examinations in Dayton VA
April 12:   Chesapeake (Norfolk VA) Hamfest
April 13:   Easton (PA) and York (PA) Hamfests
April 13:   Raleigh (NC) Hamfest

May 4:   SkyWarn Board Meeting and Net Control Class
May 16-18:   Dayton Ohio Hamvention
May 18:   Skywarn Storm Damage Survey Class
May 24-25:   CQ WW WPX Contest (CW)
May 31:   Virginia RACES Training Session

June 1:   Manassas Hamfest
June 14:   VE Exams in Dayton VA
June 14-15:   ARRL June VHF QSO Party
June 21:   Ham Radio Kid's Day
June 28-29:   ARRL Field Day

VARA Secretary's Report: February 4 Meeting

The **V**alley **A**mateur **R**adio **A**ssociation met at Shoney's in Staunton on February 4, 2003. The President Benny Cook N4BCC opened the meeting at 7:30pm. There were 23 members present and 5 guests, Bob VanFossen K4DJG, Joshua & Jacob, Sons of Frank Green KE4ASC, Alan Homes KG4WOA, Morris Peltz KG4VOQ.

The 50/50 was won by Bob Carlstrom WD4JEL, congratulations Bob!

Jeff Rinehart W4PJW sent an e-mail to report we have $3357.25 in the bank at this time.

Bike VA gave a donation of $700 for the help of VARA and MARA last year. This $700 will be split 50/50 between the two Clubs, which will be $350 going to each Club.

Thanks to all that gave up their weekend and came out to help make a safe weekend for the bikers and to enjoy the scenery on the country roads.

Andrew Barbour has upgraded to Extra Class and changed his call to AG4XN. Congratulations Andrew!

Denny Morland N4XPW was voted into the Club as a new member. Welcome to the VARA !

Since our Club is out growing the room at Shoney's we have a committee of three, Richard Huttinger, Benny Cook and Al Bonck, that are looking for a new location.

The MS Walk is coming up on Sunday April 6th in Waynesboro. Mark your calendar now if you plan to help. We should be there by 1:00pm and the walkers will start at 2:00pm. The walk usually last about two or two and a half hours and is a worthwhile community event.

Billy Hooke KG4JOF has the swap shop page completed and Bob McCracken N4JGO has linked it to the VARA Web Page. **This will be for Ham related items only.** You can send a list of items you have for sale, swap or something you would like to buy, to Billy Hooke KG4JOF at: KG4JOF@arrl.net   Also if you have a digital camera or scanner and can send a picture of the item, that would help it sell. Check it out from the VARA Web Site at: http://www.qsl.net/w4mus/

Jerry Moats WD4ITN and Butch Washer N5SMQ are starting a Net on the Monterey repeater 147.180+ and tone of 100.0 at 8:30pm on the 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month. They would like to welcome everyone that can get into the repeater to check into the Net.

ADDRESSES!!! If your e-mail address or home address is changed for any reason **YOU** need to notify us so we can make the necessary changes so you will continue to get your newsletter. Also you should update your e-mail address in QRZ and Buckmaster. This is where we look if an e-mail is returned to us. You can send your e-mail address to: Benny, bennycjr@ntelos.net or to Ken, klharris@rica.net   or to Jeff, jmrinehart@yahoo.com or to Ray, colvingr@rica.net or even to Dave fordhadr@jmu.edu

On the sick list:
I talked with Ozzie Dillon KD4RD on Wednesday Feb. 5th. He is still getting out for a drive now and then and watching some of the building that is going on. He has watched some of the work on the new Ryan's Restaurant, the bridge on Rt. 11 and the work near Dice's off Frontier Drive. He is still on oxygen full time but his spirits at good. Dan James W4DLJ is still taking therapy here in town and getting along well at this time. Lets keep these folks in our thoughts and prayers.

David Tanks AD4TJ Needs HELP with the Augusta County ARES Net. Anyone that is willing to be net control and help David out give him a call. The Net will be held on the 146.850 repeater on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 8:00pm. This repeater has a minus offset and a tone of 131.8 when needed.

Mark your calendar and check into the net. Remember without YOU there will be NO ARES NET.

We would like to get training classes started for the Technician level. Anyone interested in helping teach the classes please contact Benny N4BCC, Alby AD4KZ or Richard AA4RH. We need to get some young people interested in ham radio. Listen for any hints that someone may like to learn what ham radio is all about.

PROGRAMS NEEDED...Richard AA4RH, our Program Chairman, asks for anyone who would like to do a program at one of our meetings to give him a call and get a date set up to present it. It does not have to be HAM related, it can be anything you think the group would find interesting.

It's time to start thinking about Field Day. Make plans to be there and help set up stations, pull up antennas, have fun operating FD 2003. Then comes the time to tear down all the equipment and antennas, pack them up for another year. Don't forget, we need help tearing down also.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48pm

Richard Huttinger AA4RH gave a great slide show from pictures he took on his second business trip to Singapore. It was hard to believe the architecture that went into the tall buildings and the special way the top of each building was built with its own design. There were lots of bright colors along the streets and walkways. Also lots of bright colored birds of all sizes. The trees there were a lot different from ours, some looked like long roots almost all the way to the top. There were many channels for the boats that ran near and parallel to the tall buildings. Clint Campbell KB4OLM displayed several different items, maps and pictures that he had brought home from Singapore on his business trip. Thanks to Richard for this presentation and Clint for the display!

Submitted By:
VARA Secretary
Ray Colvin KE4HVR

MARA/VARA

c/o David Fordham
131 Wayside Drive
Weyers Cave, VA 24486

Phone: 540-568-3024
Email: fordhadr@jmu.edu

Return Service Requested

MASSANUTTEN AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION, Inc.	VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION
President: Ellsworth Neff, K4LXG Vice President: Chuck Vogan, KD5KA Secretary: Todd Harrison, K4TMH Treasurer: Sandy Mullins, K4PZC Board (exp 03): Jason Armentrout, N4DSL Board (exp 04): Richard Haxton, KC3AN	President: Benny Cook, N4BCC Vice President: Ken Harris, KE4GKD Secretary: Ray Colvin, KE4HVR Treasurer: Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW Program Manager: Richard Huttinger, AA4RH
http://mara.ws	http://www.qsl.net/w4mus
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.	VARA meets the first Tuesday of each month At Shoneys Restaurant on U.S. 250 east in Staunton. Meal starts at 6:30 pm. Business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.
Visitors are welcome.	**Visitors are welcome.**
Dues ($12 per year) should be mailed to: MARA PO Box 1882 Harrisonburg, VA 22801	Dues ($15 per year) should be mailed to: Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW 1344 Hankey Mtn Hwy Churchville, VA 24421