

September
2008

The Monitor

Published jointly by the Valley Amateur Radio Association and the Massanutten Amateur Radio Association, Inc.

VARA Meeting: Shoneys at 6:00 pm, Tuesday September 2

The Valley Amateur Radio Association will meet at the Shoney's Restaurant for the August 5 meeting. This is located 1/2 block north of US 250, east of the intersection with Interstate 81, in Staunton (Brands Flat, actually). The dinner begins at 6:00 pm. The business meeting begins at 7:00 pm, followed by the program.

MARA Meeting: Wood Grill at 6:30 pm, Thursday September 4

The Massanutten Amateur Radio Association meets at the Wood Grill Buffet Restaurant on Reservoir Street in Harrisonburg. The program will be a presentation by Ken, 5H3KB, who will regale us with tales of his DXpedition to the dark continent. Ken and his party covered several hundred miles across such familiar Africa places as Zanzibar, Tanzania, and even some unfamiliar (and un-pronounceable) ones, too. He will explain the travails of licensing, power, antenna installation, and other ham radio difficulties encountered in a strange land. Dinner starts at 6:30 pm, with the business meeting at 7:30 pm, followed by Ken's program.

Unprecedented Opportunity!

This fall brings a historic season to the Shenandoah Amateur Radio Community! We have eight (8), count 'em, EIGHT opportunities for public service in the next 60 days!

As you look through the next two pages of this edition of the Monitor, pick out one or two public service events that catch your fancy. Give a call to the coordinator and let him know that you'll be able to help. If even one quarter of the active amateurs in the valley would volunteer for one of these events, they could all be covered with plenty of capacity to the point where everyone would only have to work half-a-shift.

Won't you consider giving a break to your friends who are always volunteering? Come out for a Saturday or Sunday, even if you can only help for an hour or two. Exercise your HT, get back in practice, and help the community at the same time.

Whose Shack is This?

Turn to page 6 to find out.



Public Service Bonanza

Take your pick! Every ham should make at least one of these events!

*Never before in the history
of ham radio in this valley,
have we had such a rich opportunity
for public service,
...to get our hobby in front of the public,
...to test our abilities,
...to practice our emergency skills,
...and best of all,
...to have some fun on a weekend playing
with our radios!*

Event 1 **100-Miler Bicycle Ride** **Sunday, August 31**

This is a new bicycle ride of 100 miles involving a large number of riders of all experience levels. This event needs 4 hams from 12 noon to 8pm in the afternoon and evening of Aug 31st.

There is a possible donation to the club of \$500.

The MARA club agreed to accept this project as a club project.

If you can help, or even if you can simply put in a couple of hours, call the event communications coordinator, Gayle Shull KU4XN at 540-828-2132, or email at gayle64@verizon.net

Event 2 **Bike Shenandoah** **Saturday, September 20**

For the past several years the MARA club has provided communications for Bike Shenandoah.

This year the annual bike ride will be on Saturday, September 20.

As some of you may remember this is a fund raising event for the Virginia Mennonite Missions. More information on the event itself is available at <http://www.bikeshenandoah.org>

We provide communication between four rest stops. Net control is at EMHS, located on Parkwood Dr. in Harrisonburg.

They have 100 mile, 100 kilometer and 30 miles rides. The rest stops are located at Trissels Mennonite Church, located southwest of Broadway, Hebron Mennonite Church located in the Fulks Run area, Mt. Clinton Mennonite Church, west of Mt. Clinton, and Mole Hill Bikes in Dayton.

I need a few volunteers to cover these stops. The stop at Trissels runs from about 8:30 - 12:00, Hebron about 9:30 - 1:30. The stop at Mt. Clinton is the longest, about 10:30 - 4 or 4:30. The stop at Mole Hill Bike is open from 10:00 - 2:00.

If you would like to help, let me know. I can be reached via email at kn4fm@arrl.net, or by phone: 434-0859.

Gerald KN4FM



Event 3

Milepost Zero Mountain Bike Race

Saturday and Sunday, Sept 27-28

This is a bicycling marathon taking place in the rugged mountain trails and backwoods roads near the Blue Ridge Parkway. Last year the hams set up net control in the upper parking area at the top of Afton Mountain. Several ham operators and their mobile equipment are needed to run the stations both days. There will be a sign up sheet at the VARA club's September meeting.

Event 4

Great Eastern Endurance Run

Saturday and Sunday, Sept 27-28

This footrace-type event will be held on Saturday September 27. This is a 50 & 100 km run. We need at least 6 ham operators with mobile equipment to man the stations. The VARA club will have a signup sheet at the September meeting.

Event 5

Camp Still Meadows Horse Ride

Sunday, October 5

This is one of the most relaxing and low-key events of the year. Camp Still Meadows is a facility aimed at providing services to mentally and physically handicapped children, mainly through therapeutic interaction with horses. To raise funds, the group sponsors an annual fun ride of 5 and 10 miles through the brilliant color of North Mountain outside of Broadway and Timberville. About six hams will be needed for this event. See the article on the "Triple Play" on the next page for details. Ray Ritchie, K4NRA is the coordinator for this event. If you can spare a few hours on a Sunday morning, this is a great way to relax and play radio. Call Ray at 540-896-2913 to volunteer.

Event 6

Grindstone One-Hundred Footrace

Friday Through Sunday, Oct. 3-5

This event takes place in the rugged western mountains of Augusta County, and will provide hams with the challenge of providing support communications similar to that needed during a search-and-rescue or other emergency in this rough terrain. Of all the events, this one holds the most promise for truly testing hams' abilities, and at the same time, teaching some hard lessons before they are really needed in a true disaster scenario.

Like the Camp Still Meadows Horse Ride, this event is part of the Triple Play described on the next page.

Event 7

Shenandoah 500 Suzuki National

Friday Through Sunday, Oct. 3-5

Also in the rugged mountains but in Rockingham County, this off-road vehicle ride also provides a great opportunity for learning and testing our emergency capabilities in really rough terrain. It also is part of the Triple Play described on the next page.

Event 8

Fall Foliage Bike Festival

Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 18-19

The traditional granddaddy of our annual public service events, the ride this year promises to be a big one, but just may be eclipsed by the Triple Play.

Still, mark your calendars because the folks will be counting on the valley hams to come through again to promote the safety and welfare of hundreds of bike riders.

The Great Valley “Triple Play” – Events 5, 6, and 7 – October 3, 4, 5

There is going to be a great opportunity for ARES and all local hams in Rockingham and Augusta Counties to really test their skills in rough terrain along mountain ridges and shadowed valleys. We are going to need manpower for all of these.



We are aware that traditionally, the largest training event in the area for both clubs, is the Fall Foliage Bike Ride (<http://www.shenandoahbike.org/>) **October 17 – 19, 2008**. There is perhaps an even larger challenge coming up the first weekend in October. Hopefully we can support all equally well.

On October 3, 4 and 5 there are going to be **THREE (3) public service events** running concurrently.

In this issue of the Monitor, on the previous pages, they were called **Events 5, 6 and 7**.

Event 5: Rockingham ARES/MARA has traditionally sent about 5-7 hams to help with the Camp Still Meadows Horse ride for handicapped persons (www.campstillmeadows.org/). This activity is on Sunday October 5th. We usually need about 5 hams to help with that and it will continue to be a priority activity. Contact Ray K4NRA (k4nra@verizon.net) to sign up to help. Plans as of now call for the communications during this event to use simplex.

New for us all in 2008.

Event 6: The Grindstone 100. This is an endurance running foot race scheduled for Friday night through Sunday morning which occurs about 99% in Augusta County (more information can be found at: www.eco-xsports.com/grindstone.php). It starts at the Boy Scout Camp west of Swoope and goes to Elliot Knob then north to West Augusta where it crosses U.S. 250 and continues along the ridge just east of Braley Pond – past Elkhorn Lake and Staunton Dam to Stokesville and then up to Reddish Knob – the runners turn around and return the same way. The event’s organizers have almost 100 signed up already, and some are from far, far away. There is one signed up from Spain, one from Germany – several from the west coast and places all over in between.

This course is really going to be challenging for us because of the mountainous terrain. It will probably involve a several repeaters and some simplex to maintain good coverage. There are 15 Aid Stations planned. Seven of these stations will have runners coming through twice, once out from the start and back to the start/finish in Swoope. This footrace begins at 6pm on Friday and goes through the night. It ends some time Sunday morning. This will be a challenge for us but may not be as bad as it appears – ***if we have enough hams to volunteer.***

Event 7: The Shenandoah 500K Suzuki National Dual Sport. Now this one may really be a challenge. It won’t be too bad if we have enough hams to send out. The success will all depend on how many are interested enough to help. There was an article in the July-August monitor with an appeal for help with this event – see next page!

This will be an off-road motor bike ride with possibly 200 riders in the mountains. These folks have done their homework and the ride is totally sanctioned by the National Forest Service. (www.nvtr.org/) They have been doing this ride for 17 years and have tried all kinds of communications schemes but as we could have predicted – nothing works for them in these mountains. They have their own sag vehicles but it has been a real nightmare for them to get help sent where it was needed – all because of lack of communication.

Their headquarters will be at Natural Chimneys Campground – the ride begins and ends there – **it is not a race**. This ride basically runs from Natural Chimneys up and across the mountain where we have our Field Day to a point north of U.S. 33. It includes such places as Sugar Grove, Franklin, Reddish Knob and Switzer Dam area. Most of the ride is in areas not accessible even by 4 wheel drive vehicles. They need hams to go to designated spots, to help with the events sag vehicles, and just stand by for word that help is needed. We can put our radios in their trucks or just drive our own vehicles and follow their sag trucks around or maybe just set up some communication stations. These are issues that are still in the planning stages. They are hopeful that our communications skills won't be called upon to summon EMS type help. More details will be coming soon.

What we have been thinking so far: Jeff W4PJW is planning to get his camper trailer to the top of Reddish Knob parking area and be there all night Friday through Sunday. This will be our headquarters station and net control so we can communicate with 147.045, 147.225, 147.180, 147.285 and also have a good location for simplex in areas where repeaters will not reach. The NFS has granted us approval for this trailer to be on Reddish Knob for the duration of these two events. Since both the foot race and the motor bike ride go to Reddish Knob, we feel this would be a good central location for our main radio set-up.

We would like to have someone go camping at Natural Chimneys that weekend so they can be there for the bike ride headquarters too. We will need someone at the Boy Scout Camp also, to be at the foot race headquarters. We would place others at whatever Aid Stations seem appropriate and with whatever bike sag vehicles and locations we can cover. We are working on getting specific locations and times. Hopefully these will be ready for the September MARA and VARA meetings.



We have formed a committee consisting of the following who are working on the details of this event:

Bryan K4RMY , Brian N4IRT, Matthew KD4UPL , Bob K4DJG, James NN4JM , David AT4DJ,
Jeff W4PJW , Dave K4DPF, Collin N4ZFQ, Jay KD4OXQ , Bob N1QEQ.

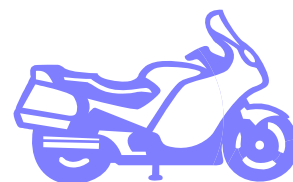
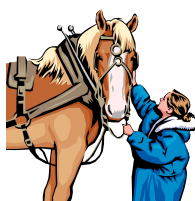
If any of this sounds like something you would be willing to help with please contact Bryan K4RMY EC for Rockingham County (k4rmy@arrl.net) or David AD4TJ RO for Augusta County. We will take help for whatever time period anyone is available. Even if you can only help for a couple hours, it will be beneficial. We don't expect that anyone will be driving around a lot – it'll hopefully be a situation where you will want to bring along a newspaper and a good book.

Check out the respective web sites for more info:

Horse Ride www.campstillmeadows.org/
Bike Fest www.shenandoahbike.org/
Foot Race www.eco-xsports.com/grindstone.php
Motor Bikes www.nvtr.org/



Bryan Daniels, K4RMY



RMH— BCCH EmComm Testing

On Saturday August 2, there was a test of amateur radio communications between Rockingham Memorial Hospital and Bath County Community Hospital.

The test turned out to be resounding success.

At RMH were Bob N1QEQ and Bryan K4RMY, members of Rockingham County ARES, along with Patrick Robertson RMH's emergency communications representative.

At BCCH was Dave K4DPF acting as Manager of the Northwest Regional Healthcare Coordination Center (NW RHCC). Dave's job is to "to assist the Northwest Regional Hospital Emergency Management Committee (NW HEMC) and the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association with efforts to improve the regional and statewide hospital emergency response systems."

Dave was there in part to facilitate the establishment and testing of hospital to hospital emergency communications links and in part as an interested ARES ham from Page County.

Also, involved at BCCH was Becky Armstrong KI4FJV, BCC's representative on the NW HEMC, and her husband Rick KI4GCB.

The first part of the test consisted of making contact through a number of repeaters to see which could be used between the two locations. To nearly everyone's surprise we were able to make contact on every repeater we tried. Although some had obviously better signals than others, all were readable for both sides. These included:

147.225 Laird's Knob
146.805 Covington
147.045 Elliot's Knob
147.330 Rockbridge
147.180 Monterey
147.075 Waynesboro

On the RMH side the equipment used was an Icom 2100H, with a vertical on the roof of the Cancer Center. At BCC for the tests we had both a multiband vertical and a two meter beam.



Since Dave didn't know the specific direction/location of most of the repeaters tried, the vertical was used whenever possible.

David K4DPF says he was "truly amazed how good comms between Bath County Community Hospital and Rockingham Memorial Hospital actually turned out to be." The rig at BCC is an FT-847 that is only used on 2m and 70cm at the moment.

In addition to the voice communications test we successfully tested BCC's Winlink2000 capability by connecting with Dave Potter, W4RPI's RMS Packet email gateway, W4RPI-10 near Roanoke on 70cm. "OK, it was via a digipeater, HI HI" said Dave.

All parties were very pleased with the results and are looking forward to more testing between RMH and other area hospitals.



Rockingham County ARES Net Controls

September 1 (Simplex): David Fordham KD9LA

September 8: Gerald Brunk K4RBZ

September 15: Norman Benner KA4EEN

September 22: Hugh Pettis K3EC

September 29: EC Showalter KG4KUR

October 6 (simplex): James McDowell IV NN4JM

October 13: Gerald Nauman KN4FM

October 20: Gayle Shull KU4XN

October 27: Bryan Daniels K4RMY

This net meets Mondays at 8:00 pm local time. Simplex nets are on 146.550. Other Mondays, the net meets on the 147.225 repeater, which requires a plus offset (+0.600 MHz), and a PL tone of 131.8 Hz.

N4SMT: Letter from an Old Timer

Dear Friends and Relatives:

From Connie Weyrick (daughter) as dictated by "Doc"

I have been incapacitated due to treatment of basil cell carcinoma (confined) on top of my shiny head and melanoma (in-situ, did not metastasize) on my upper lip. Both have been successfully treated by experts in the field. I have had side effects from the medications and these side effects were a lot worse than the mischief they were intended to remedy.

As soon as my attention span exceeds 10 minutes, I will answer each and every email which is presently sequestered in my inbox. Thanks for your continued support.

Grover "Doc" Cloyd N4SMT

Note: new email address
gdc-n4smt@comcast.net

Thank You....

A big "thank you" goes to the following hams who helped out with the August VE testing session:

RAY RICHIE K4NRA

ELLSWORTH NEFF K4LXG

E.C. SHOWALTER KG4KUR

MICHAEL McKAY W4AZR

RICHARD HAXTON KC3AN

HUGH PETTIS K3EC

Our next testing session will be October 11. If you are thinking about upgrading, you have about five more weeks to prepare!

Gayle Shull, KU4XN

Thank You....

I would like to thank all who contributed to the success of this years Field Day. As Chairman, everyone I called on for a specific task completed their job and made my job that much easier.

Bob Steere N1QEQ Chairman, FD 2008

And Thank You, Too....

Thanks to Mike Reno, KG400N, for printing and distributing the Monitor each month.



Hot Deals



Tower, Rotator, and HF Beam Still Available – with Package Deal Pricing

This is a fantastic deal for a new ham, especially once the sunspots come back and DX becomes hot again a couple of years from now. Five sections of Rohn 25G tower, including a base mounting plate and tapered top section, plenty of new 1/4" guy wire, with turnbuckles and guy-wire preforms, asking \$350 or **best offer**.

HF Beam: TH3 Jr., Old but in fair condition. Needs 1 part that fastens one element to the boom. Paperwork is included. Asking \$95.

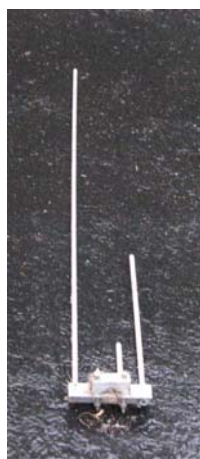
HyGain HD73 Rotator, in working condition, with controller and cables. Asking \$95.

Special Package Deal: Take the Rotator, Beam, and Tower, **ALL** for only **\$400!** Still too much? Make an offer!

Call Wayne Boyers, 540-294-3325 (personal cell), 540-569-6880 (work).

Ten-Tec Corsair HF Rig For Sale: Best Offer!

1987-era digital HF transceiver, 10m-160m including WARC bands, CW/SSB, 80+watts output, includes second VFO and power supply with built-in speaker. Best offer! Call Richard Haxton, KC3AN, at 540-432-6742.



Dual Band J-Pole Base Antenna

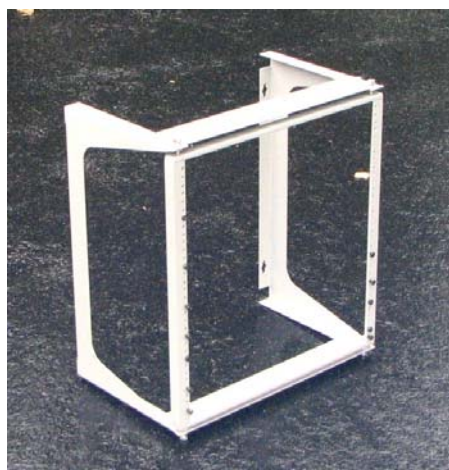
Industrial-grade, rugged, solid-rod metal construction – none of that flimsy tubing stuff here! The perspective and parallax of the photo makes it look warped, but it's razor straight! Handles 2m and 440 with wide bandwidth, omni pattern. Great for harsh weather. Includes mounting bracket, ready to put on your mast or heavy pipe. A fantastic bargain at only \$10, too! Contact Dave KD9LA at 234-0448, or leave a message at 540-568-3024.

Mosley Tri-Band Beam and Rotor For Sale

Dick Smith, W4KHV, in Waynesboro, has a Mosley tri-band HF beam and rotor for sale. No other information was provided by press time. If you are interested in learning more about this offer, email Dick at flyrrs@comcast.net

Legal-Limit Antenna Tuner For Sale

Jason Armentrout also has a Vectronics HFT-1500 roller-inductor 1500-watt antenna tuner for sale. He's asking \$300. Contact Jason via email at Jason@atrs.com or telephone at 540-578-3461.



Wall-Mount Rack Mount: Price Reduced for Quick Sale

Dave still has the mint condition 19" standard rack mount for electronics, designed for direct wall mounting. 22 inches high, 12 inches deep, includes equipment mounting screws. Now asking only \$15.

Also available: rack mount power block and surge suppressor: fits in one standard rack position, six outlets, switched, full surge suppression, fused, includes pull-out illumination lights that shine on rack-mounted equipment below. Now asking only \$15.

Combo-deal: Both rack mount & power block for \$25.

Contact David KD9LA at 540-234-0448 or leave message at 540-568-3024.

Yaesu FT-757GXII For Sale

For Sale: Yaesu FT-757 GXII in Very Good condition both electrically and visibly. It covers 160-10 meters (100w) including WARC bands. It will come with the Power cord, Mike, and manual. I am asking \$350. Email is jmcdiv@msn.com or cwdxchaser@gmail.com . My phone number is 540 476 1912. Thanks. 73s, James NN4JM



Cushcraft A270-10S Dual Band Beam (UHF/VHF)

Covers 2m and 440 with five elements on each band. Brand spanking new, never been outdoors! Completely assembled and ready to use. Includes mounting bracket and phasing harness, too. New cost \$129, yours for only \$60. Call Dave, KD9LA, at 540-234-0448 or leave a message at 540-568-3024.

The Opinionated One: The Value of a Good Education

I was talking with my friend Verman Krabliess the other day, and the subject of education came up. Education is to Verman like fresh water is to the Sahara Desert. If it was ever there, no one can find any evidence of it today.

“Hey, wait a minute,” Verman protests. “I’ll have you know I went to school for 12 full years.”

“Yes, but all of them were in grade school,” I reminded him. “And education doesn’t have to be acquired in a school,” I continued. “If you’re sharp, you can learn stuff without having to set foot in a classroom.”

I should know. The most valuable learning experience in my life was not in a school. Nope, it occurred in another ham’s back yard, on Saturday, July 11, 1970, when I was a teenager in Jacksonville, Florida. I learned more in that one single day than any day, week, month, or even year, spent in school.

I was a brand-new Novice. The backyard was owned by an old Extra-class ham named Fester Wrengwurm. Fester had offered me his 100-foot radio tower in exchange for helping him take it down. He was moving into a retirement villa and having to give up ham radio. Never having participated in a tower party before, and excited at the prospects of owning my very own tower, I agreed to do it. It was an educational experience of a lifetime, and one I’ll never forget.

To start with, I learned that Fester was a bald-faced liar. As it turned out, I didn’t “help *him*” take down the tower. I helped the *other four guys* he’d talked into helping him take down the tower. Fester didn’t do anything except provide some hard hats and a cooler full of various beverages, all of which, because I was under age 21, were illegal for me to sample.

The second thing I learned was that for the first hour after arriving at a tower party, everyone stands around enjoying the liquid refreshment. Everyone except minors, that is. “Get the young man something to drink,” ordered Pete, an overweight, mustachioed giant of a ham. Fester muttered something under his breath as he went into his garage and dug around, and finally came out with a dusty old can of lukewarm Dr. Pepper.

The third thing I learned that day is to never, ever, open a can of lukewarm Dr. Pepper — especially after having shaken the dirt and insect parts off of it. All four of the guys (Pete, Henry, Stan and Zahn) were completely soaked in Dr. Pepper from head to foot, much to Fester’s and my amusement.

The fourth thing I learned is that you don’t laugh at hams when they are completely soaked with lukewarm Dr. Pepper. Being young and nimble, I was able to dodge, but the empty beer bottle knocked Fester’s false teeth halfway across the yard.

As the small talk progressed, I learned that I’d gotten the short end of the proverbial stick. Fester had offered each of the other guys one of his radios plus generous selections of assorted tuners, pre-amps, amplifiers, meters, test equipment, cables, and all kinds of other neat and expensive gear from his shack, not to mention unlimited beverages, in return for their assistance. He had also offered them \$150 ...each. As for me, not being fully educated yet, and having no experience with towers, I had agreed to help only for the promise of the tower itself. I could feel myself becoming smarter and smarter by the minute hanging around these guys.

I next learned one of the many age-old traditions among hams — specifically, the tradition that says hams who soak others with Dr. Pepper earn the privilege of being the “Ground Man” on the tower crew. The “Ground Man” is the one who stays on the ground while the others climb the tower to take it apart. The ground man has to operate the ropes which pull things up and let things down the tower, such as pieces and parts of the tower itself, buckets of tools, hardware, etc. It wasn’t until later that I learned that Ground Men typically wear leather work gloves. And I learned why, too.

I learned that being Ground Man is harder work than it sounds. One side effect of serving as ground man is the crick you get in your neck from looking up watching for things that need to come down. By early afternoon, I’d learned that having a sunburn underneath your chin is painful.

In addition to teaching me the duties of the Ground Man, the guys instructed me in other protocols of tower work, such as the rule that once a ham climbs a tower, he doesn't come back down until the job is completed. This is one of the things that makes the ground man's job so important. And unpleasant. Six times during the day, the team on the tower heard the sound of nature calling, and I had to take refuge under Fester's carport as they answered.

I picked up on many other aspects of tower work myself just by watching what was going on. For example, by carefully observing the proceedings, I learned an awful lot about Gin Poles. I had read that the most important thing to have when working on a tower is a good solid, reliable, and sturdy Gin Pole. It was nice to actually see one for real, up close, and see how they worked.

In fact, we had two Gin Poles that morning. One's name was Stan Stanislawski from Danzig, and the other was Zahn Uffavitch from Warsaw. These two Poles could empty a gin bottle faster than Deb can empty my bank account. They downed two bottles of the stuff before starting up the tower, and tucked three more bottles into their pockets and tool belts for consumption later in the day.

As the guys ascended, I learned how exciting it is to be working under a tower with four hams perched 100 feet above you, especially after two of them have consumed enough alcohol to put the entire Democratic National Convention over the legal driving limit.

One reason I learned so much that day is that these guys were master teachers. Within a minute of their arrival at the top, they were all four busy teaching me the folly of not taking a can of hornet spray with you when you and three other guys climb a tower after being completely soaked with Dr Pepper.

As the day wore on, I learned more and more. I learned why it's called a "wrench", and why it's called a "nut", and the difference between a "bolt" and a "%@#*\$* bolt!" I learned what the "D" stands for when referring to a safety belt's "D" ring.

I learned that it takes four hams working a full hour and a half to loosen the six little screws holding the tri-band beam to the top mast. Based on the heated conversa-

tion going on way up on top of that tower, one might think this was due to rusty hardware, perhaps complicated by an acute shortage of hornet spray. But my personal opinion is that the two Gin Poles were playing a big part in the picture. For a while there, I thought it was raining screwdrivers.

I learned that Florida fire-ants are capable of climbing 100-foot towers and making nests inside the traps of tri-band beams. From the dancing going on up on top of the tower, I figured the other crew members were learning something more about fire ants, but they weren't sharing the details with me.

I learned that when you leave a coil of 500-pound-test nylon rope lying in the grass behind a shed in the Florida sun and rain for nine years, the rope won't actually hold up 500 pounds anymore. In fact, it won't even hold 51 pounds.

I learned that the drum cadence in the opening credits of the old Hogan's Heroes TV show isn't played by drums. No, it's a recording of the sound made by a 51-pound antenna rotator as it dismantles itself by bouncing down the rungs of a 100-foot tower, after breaking a 500-pound-test rope that's been sitting behind a shed in the Florida sun and rain for nine years.

I learned that hams can use a standard car jack to dislodge a stuck top section from the section of tower beneath it. And I learned that you're supposed to first make sure the jack is fastened to the tower solidly, so that when the top section finally breaks loose, the jack doesn't slip off and come sailing down 100 feet to embed itself in the sandy Florida soil for the ground man to have to dig out.

And speaking of soil: A curious neighbor just happened to wander into Fester's back yard to find out what was going on, at precisely the same time the car jack started its rapid descent. The neighbor had no inkling anything was going on up above him. The jack missed him half an inch. That's when I learned that the noun "soil" can be used as a verb, especially in connection with a pair of pants.

Sometime along about noon, the four guys up on the tower decided to take a break. Because of the rules of tower protocol already mentioned, they didn't come

down the tower, but merely rested from their labors while staying up on top, leaning back against their safety belts. Pete and Henry lit up cigarettes, while Zahn and Stan pulled out their bottles of gin and began swigging away.

Then it happened. I'll never forget. The scene will live with me the rest of my days.

Stan sneezed.

Ordinarily, sneezing is fairly inconsequential. But being on the tower, Stan sneezed right into Pete's face. Now even this normally doesn't create too much of an incident. I expected Pete to react normally, such as playfully tapping Stan's head with the 15-pound sledgehammer to remind him of his breach of common etiquette.

But no. This sneeze was different. It was memorable. What made it memorable was the timing. For when it happened, Pete was in mid-draw on his cigarette, and Stan still had a mouth full of 160-proof Beefeater gin.

A bright yellow fireball twenty feet in diameter engulfed the top of the tower. Fester and I were temporarily blinded by the flash, and when we could see again, the first thing we noticed was the melted aluminum siding on the neighbor's house. Dogs were barking for miles around, and the Duval County fire department was busy fielding calls from tourists at pay phones along Interstate 95 who swore they'd seen an oil refinery's flare stack exploding.

Fortunately their safety belts kept all four of the crew members in place on the tower, saving me the trouble of digging them out of the sandy Florida soil. Although a three-day search was conducted, we never found any trace of Pete's mustache or Henry's eyebrows. I also noticed that Stan and Zahn's bottles of gin had disappeared. (Pete and Henry later confided to me that the bottles will turn up the next time Stan undergoes a thorough colonoscopy.)

My education continued. I learned about guy wires, and why you should always wear leather gloves when working with them. I learned that when the Ground Man misunderstands the instructions and loosens the guy wires in the wrong order, the entire tower sways precariously, and the four guys up on top swing back

and forth, and repeat the educational illustration about how the noun "soil" can be used as a verb.

I also learned at least fifty new words that day, none of which my mom would let me use until I turned 40 or became an Army drill sergeant, whichever came first, she said. In fact, even today, Deb won't let me use those words, although all of our children are fully grown and gone.

I learned that once a tower was up, it's best just to leave it up.

In spite of that, at the end of the day, ten sections of tower lay neatly stacked in Fester's back yard, along with a dump-truck load of guy cables, pins, bolts, nuts, thimbles, and other assorted hardware. But my education still wasn't over.

I learned that although the tower had looked gray when it was up in the air, now that it was down on the ground, it was really a deep chestnut brown. "If I'd a know'd that tower was so rusty, I'd a never climbed it," said Henry.

"Yup, yup, me neither. Har-har. It's a good thing we had a few drinks a'fore we went up, ain't it," laughed Zahn, through his bleary eyes and red nose, brushing the burnt hornet wings and toasted fire ants off his coveralls.

One by one, they loaded their radios and other gifts into their pickups, collected their \$150, and drove off. Because of their conditions after the refreshments, I decided not to ask any of them if they would give me a lift or carry the tower pieces to my house half a mile away. And not being old enough to drive, I ended up carrying the tower, section by section, on foot from Fester's to my own back yard. It took me two weeks and more than thirty trips to get all the sections, hardware, guy wires, and related stuff home.

I learned that although it really *should* be, it technically isn't against the law to give a rusty worthless tower to a Novice class teenage ham.

And finally, at the very end of the whole ordeal, I learned that I really didn't want a tower after all.

Nope, education doesn't have to be acquired in a schoolroom to be valuable!

VARA Secretary's Report: August 5 Meeting

The **VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION** met at Shoney's in Staunton August 5, 2008. The Vice President, Scott Newlen KI4QQZ, opened the meeting at 7:00pm. There were 24 members present and 1 guest, Carl Williams KJ4EYQ. **50/50** was won by Steve Ferguson N4PJK. Congratulations **Steve!**

NEW APPLICATION: Carl Williams KJ4EYQ Staunton.

MEETING PLACE: Al Bonck N3JB passed information along to us for Mossy Creek to eat then go to the Augusta Co. Library for the meeting. He was told that the Library has plans to do some upgrading and we would have to move somewhere else soon. The meeting place was tabled at this time.

The VARA September meeting will be at Shoney's in Staunton.

PICNIC: Plans have been started to have a picnic September 13, 2008 the second Saturday of the month.

CLUB APPAREL Doug Tippett N8ESW brought some prices for caps, shirts and hooded sweatshirts with the club logo and callsigns. These were in the price range of: Caps \$8.99, Shirts \$9.95 and Hooded Sweatshirts \$15.98. With XX and XXX sizes \$2 to \$3 higher. Doug will bring more precise prices to our next meeting.

Augusta Co. ARES NET: David Tanks AD4TJ is looking for Net Controls for the Augusta County ARES Net. 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. The ARES Net will be run on simplex from time to time so listen on the repeater and watch for e-mails to this effect.

YOUR HELP IN NEEDED FOR THE FOLLOWING EVENTS

MILE POST "0" SPECIAL EVENT: This event will be held on Saturday and Sunday September 27 & 28. Last year we were set up in the upper parking area at the top of Afton Mountain. Operators and equipment are needed to run the station both days. There will be a sign up sheet at our September meeting.

GREAT EASTERN ENDURANCE RUN: This event will be held on Saturday September 27. This is a 50 & 100 km

run. We need at least 6 operators to man the stations. We will have a signup sheet at the September meeting.

SHENANDOAH FALL FOLIAGE BIKE FESTIVAL: This event will be held on Saturday and Sunday October 18 & 19. There will be more information on this event at our September meeting

PROGRAMS NEEDED: Al Bonck N3JB, our 2008 Program Chairman, is looking for anyone that would like to do a program for the club. Give him a call and set up a date to present it. It does not have to be HAM related. It could be anything you think the group would find interesting. Al's e-Mail address is: margeal@ntelos.net

ON THE SICK LIST:

Denny Morland N4XPW I talked with Denny's wife on Saturday August 16th, she had just been to see Denny. He has been sick for some time now and is still on oxygen. Shirley said he didn't feel like talking much so she didn't stay long. **Let's keep Denny in our thoughts and prayers.**

NOTE new contact person: SWAP SHOP This is 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 Fred Evans at: n4kym@yahoo.com Also a picture of the item would help it sell. Go to the VARA Web Site at: <http://www.qsl.net/w4xd/> **PLEASE notify Fred when your item sells so he can remove it from the list.**

E-MAIL ADDRESSES: Keep your e-mail address up to date. Please send them to: Greg Czerniak W4GRC grcljc@verizon.net, Doug Tippett N8ESW dttip-pett@ntelos.net, Ray Colvin KE4HVR colv-ingr@comcast.net and David Fordham KD9LA ford-hadr@jmu.edu.

ALSO, keep QRZ updated when call signs and e-mail addresses are changed.

Tour of Duty: Scott Martin KI4MSJ will be leaving December 20th for a tour of duty in Iraq. Let's all keep him in our prayers. He also plans to set up a ham radio station there and already has his Iraqi call sign YI9MSJ. His first cards were printed wrong...YI9MST. Hopefully some of us in the valley will be able to make a contact with him while he is there.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm. No program.

Submitted by
VARA Secretary
Ray Colvin KE4HVR

MARA Secretary's Report – August 7 Meeting

Introductions made all around.

1. Reports:

New Members: 2nd reading for: Sheryl Tonini KJ4DOC. approved unanimously

1st reading:

Jay KD4OXQ
Bob W4TMV
Tim KJ4FQK
Ann KA1LSK
Don KI4TOQ

- a. Secretary's minutes as printed in the Monitor, moved, seconded and approved, with corrections to Treas. report.
- b. Treasurer's report - \$1,853.70 Motion to accept , seconded, approved
- c. Groups

ARES/RACES -

Bryan, K4RMY had ARES membership forms for those willing to join Rockingham Co. ARES

Dave K4DPF discussed the RMH to Bath County Community Hospital communications test which was very successful. Participants were Bob N1QEQ, Bryan K4RMY at RMH and David K4DPF and Becky KI4GCB at BCCH. They were able to connect via several different repeaters that all had good reception at both RMH and BCCH. A more detailed article is planned for the Monitor.

VEC — Need people to help on Aug. 9th VE session Discussion of a possible Technician class to be taught in Luray.

d. Public Service-

A Bike ride of 100 miles needs 4 people from 12 noon to 8pm in the evening of Aug 31st. There is a possible donation \$500. Motion to accept as club project was passed. Gayle KU4XN will be the contact person for this event.

Bike Shenandoah is scheduled for Sept. 20th. At least 5 people needed to work. Contact Gerald KN4FM.

Grindstone 100 info for first weekend in Oct. There will be a 100 mile ultra mountain race the first weekend in Oct. Friday evening thru Sunday morning. They are asking for hams to help with communications during the race. More information will follow.

Motor Bike Ride on 1st weekend in OCT. Camp at Nat. Chimneys. Starts 9:00 Sat. and 10:00 Sunday
6-8 hams needed each day. A presentation was made by the Northern Virginia Trail Riders about this event.

Camp Still Meadows Horse ride will also be that same weekend on Sunday. Ray K4NRA will be the contact person.
5-7 hams will be needed.

There was discussion of trying to do all three events the first weekend in October. A motion was made, seconded and passed to create a committee to work on the coordination of all three events. Bryan K4RMY will head up committee along with David K4DPF, Bob N1QEQ, Jeff W4PJW, James NN4JM, and Elsworth K4LXG.

2. Announcements: None

Continued on next page...

MARA Secretary's Report

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3. Old Business

K4DJG— tower safety - VARA will build a triangular addition to the MARA tower to replace the ladder used in the past to make it safer. A motion was made to allow VARA to add the addition. Gordon WA4FJC will do the construction. Seconded, and passed.

4. New Business: None

New Call or Upgrades: None

Motion to adjourn, seconded and approved. 50/50 Won by XYL of W4TMV \$13.00

Submitted by
Bryan Daniels
K4RMY

Calendar of Upcoming Events

August 31: 100-Miler Bike Ride Public Service Event 1
 September 1: Rockingham County ARES Net (simplex)
 September 2: VARA Club Meeting at Shoneys
 September 3: Highland County ARES Net
 September 4: MARA Club Meeting at Wood Grill Buffet
 September 7: North American Sprint Contest
 September 7: Page County ARES Net
 September 8: Rockingham County ARES Net
 September 11: Augusta County ARES Net
 September 13: VARA Picnic (location TBA)
 September 13-15: ARRL September VHF QSO Party
 September 13-14: Work All Europe DX Contest
 September 14: Page County ARES Net
 September 15: Rockingham County ARES Net
 September 17: Highland County ARES Net
 September 20- Bike Shenandoah Public Service Event 2
 September 20-21: Virginia Beach Hamfest
 September 20-21: QCWA QSO Party
 September 21: Page County ARES Net
 September 22: Rockingham County ARES Net
 September 27-28: Milepost Zero Run Public Service Event 3
 September 27: Great Eastern Endurance Run Event 4
 September 27-28: CQ WW RTTY DX Contest
 September 28: Page County ARES Net
 September 29: Rockingham County ARES Net



October 1: MARA Club Meeting
 October 3-5: Grindstone 100 Footrun Public Service Event 6
 October 4-5: Suzuki National Public Service Event 7
 October 5: Camp Still Meadows Horse Ride Service Event 5
 October 7: VARA Club Meeting
 October 11: VE Exams in Dayton VA
 October 17-19: Shenandoah Fall Foliage Bike Festival Event 8
 October 20-24: School Club Roundup
 October 25-26: CQ WW DX Context Phone Weekend
 October 25-26: 10-10 International Fall QSO Party
 November 1-3: ARRL November Sweepstakes (CW)
 November 4: VARA Club Meeting
 November 6: MARA Club Meeting
 November 15-17: ARRL November Sweepstakes (SSB)
 November 27: Thanksgiving Holiday
 November 29-30: CQ WW DX Contest CW Weekend

Check into some of the many nets listed in the July issue of the Monitor.

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.

President: Eugene Rogers KG4JBC
Vice President: David Fordham KD9LA
Secretary: Bryan Daniels K4RMY
Treasurer: Sandy Mullins, K4PZC
Board (exp 08): Gayle Shull KU4XN
Board (exp 09): Ray Ritchie K4NRA

<http://mara.ws>

MARA meets the first Thursday of each month
at Wood Grill Buffet in Harrisonburg.

Dinner begins at 6:30 pm,
the business meeting begins at 7:30 pm

Visitors are welcome.

Dues (\$12 per year) should be mailed to:

MARA
PO Box 1882
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

President: Greg Czerniak, W4GRC
Vice President: Scott Newlen, KI4QQZ
Secretary: Ray Colvin, KE4HVR
Treasurer: Doug Tippet, N8ESW
Program Manager: Al Bonck N3JB

<http://www.qsl.net/w4xd>

VARA meets the first Tuesday of each month
The September meeting will be at Shoneys
in Staunton at I-81 and US 250.

Dinner begins at 6:00 pm,
the business meeting begins at 7:00 pm

Visitors are welcome.

Dues (\$15 per year) should be mailed to:

Doug Tippet
2348 Mosley St.
Waynesboro VA 22980