

The MARA-VARA *Monitor*

FEBRUARY 1996 -- Volume 96:02

This is the web page version of the MARA/VARA *Monitor*.

The *Monitor* is published monthly by the Massanutten Amateur Radio Association, Inc., (a non-profit organization under the IRS regulations), for radio amateurs in the central Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

MARA President's Message

Greetings to all! It was good to see everyone at the January meeting. Just a reminder, if you have not gotten your renewal in, it is due by the end of January.

Included in the *Monitor* this month is a Membership and Information Guide for the 1996 club year. Please look at the different committees for the upcoming year. Please review the list and come to the February meeting ready to volunteer for one or more of these committees for the coming year. It takes all of us contributing to the club to make it successful. This is my plea for helping make this a very successful year for the MARA club. I appreciate all of the help I had last year and am looking forward to this year again.

Look forward to seeing all of you at the club meeting on February 1.

Dale, KD4DAI

Don't Forget! Renew Today!

If you have not yet renewed your membership for the MARA or VARA clubs, this will be the last newsletter you receive. Beginning with the March issue, the new mailing lists furnished by the club treasurers will be used, reflecting only those members who have re-upped for 1996. Don't miss a single issue. Send in your dues today.

Yes, The Monitor Has 'Lost Wait'

Several factors combined this month to make a first-class mailing of a skinny *Monitor* more affordable than using our bulk-mail permit.

First, due to a busy schedule at work (overtime!), Roy Trump, KE4UFN, was unable to find the huge amount of time he usually donates to print the issue this month. Printing is being furnished by Kwik-Kopy. Therefore, to save printing costs, fewer copies were produced this month, running us short of the 200 copies needed for bulk mailing.

Second, the MARA club is using the Monitor this month to distribute copies of its flyer to its members. Since bulk mail requires that all 200 pieces be identical, that precluded sending the flyer in the Monitor, unless additional flyer copies (at additional cost!) were printed for all Monitor recipients.

Third, due to a very busy schedule at the University (trying to make up snow days!), the editor has not had time to put together the full 10-page newsletter anyway.

Fourth, since bulk mail delivery time has seemed to be a day or two later than first class, your editor wanted to make sure everyone received the newsletter on time this month. Happy reading. Bulk mail may return next month.

Address Corrections Critical

If you are a member of the MARA or VARA and have not received a newsletter recently, check your address label on this issue. Bulk mail is NOT forwarded, period. Nor is it returned to sender. When we use the bulk mail system, if your address is not correct in our records, your newsletter gets deep-sixed, and we never know about it.

If you have changed addresses recently, please contact the Monitor editor directly to update your address. Keep your Monitor coming!

March Monitor Deadline: Wednesday, February 21

Be sure to get your news, announcements, minutes, advertisements, hot air, or whatever, to David before Wednesday, February 21 to get in the March issue. Thanks.

Brown Snyder is Looking for Few Good Hams! Maybe You Can Be One of Us!

Brown Snyder is the coordinator for the Volunteer Examiner program for licensing new amateur radio operators. He needs volunteers to man the upcoming VE testing sessions. If you are a VE, or are interested in possibly becoming a VE, contact Brown, N4ZHV, at (540) 434-3133.

1996 VE Testing Schedule: Next Exam on February 10 at Massanutten Vo-Tech

As usual, there will be a VE testing session on February 10 at the Massanutten Vo-Tech center on Pleasant Valley Road 1/2 mile east of US 11. Sign-in begins at 9:00 am and the testing begins at 10:00 am sharp.

Testing sessions at the Vo-Tech center are held the second Saturday of every even-numbered month. Future sessions will be held on April 13, June 8, August 10, October 12, and December 14.

MARA February Meeting Program: Traffic Handling

All hams are invited to attend the February MARA meeting at the Golden Corral restaurant on South Main Street (1/4 mile south of Port Republic Road) in Harrisonburg. The program this month will be on Traffic Handling and the National Traffic System. Come learn the many efficient ways of passing messages. This meeting is indispensable training for ARES members, and interesting for all hams, whether on HF or VHF. The dinner starts at 6:30, the business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

Whether you eat dinner or only order a drink or coffee, it is customary to leave a tip for the waitress as you leave. (Of course, if you come only for the business meeting and order nothing, then there is no obligation.) Most waitresses earn less than the minimum wage, and the IRS assumes that they earn a certain percentage of the restaurant's gross receipts as tip income. So please, remember the waitress, especially if the service has been good!

MARA Material Needs Returning

The MARA club owns a copy of "Welcome to the World of Amateur Radio". Unfortunately, someone borrowed it and has not yet returned it. If you have this material, please contact Dale, KD4DAI, and let him know where it is.

HomeBrew Month Is Fast Approaching

Do you have a half-finished home-brew project sitting on your workbench? Take advantage of the snow days to finish it up. April is HomeBrew month at the MARA club.

Upcoming Novice-Tech Class

Although the details are being worked out, it is expected that another Novice-Tech class will be offered sometime in the late spring or early summer. Keep watch on the Monitor for details.

AREA HAMFEST ROUNDUP

- Vienna VA: February 25
- Charlotte NC: March 9-10
- Baltimore MD: March 30-31
- Virginia Beach VA: April 6
- Hagerstown MD: May 5
- Dayton OH: May 17-18

MARA Committees Need You

If you are a MARA member, your newsletter this month contains a nice brochure or flyer outlining the basic information about the club. Make special note of the committees. We need your help. If you would like to contribute to the advancement of our hobby, please consider volunteering for service on one or more of these committees. (Besides, it is a nice excuse to avoid other, more unpleasant, assignments if you can say, "But I already serve on the ___ committee!")

Volunteering is easy. All you do is let the President Dale (KD4DAI) know which committee you would like to serve on. Most committees never hold formal meetings except on the air anyway. And you can take pride in knowing that you are contributing to the furtherance of ham radio in the valley. Thanks for your assistance.

Future MARA Programs

MARA members have several real treats in store as upcoming programs are planned. Vic and others active in the APRS automatic packet position reporting service are thinking of a program on this exciting "leading edge technology" system. Also, a tour of the Greenbank Radio Telescope facility is being considered. If you have an idea for a possible program, or know of a topic about which you would like to know more, let your officers know.

ARRL Rebate Program Gives \$\$\$ to Local Club without Costing Members A Penny

Are you an ARRL member? Did you know that you can specify \$2 of your ARRL dues to go to the MARA club treasury? If you are not an ARRL member (or your ARRL membership has lapsed more than a year) and you join the ARRL, you can specify that \$5 of your ARRL dues goes to the local club!

Few ARRL members are aware of the program. If you join the ARRL as a new ARRL member through an ARRL-affiliated special service club, the club gets \$5 of your ARRL dues money. If you are already an ARRL member and renew your ARRL annual membership through an ARRL-affiliated special service club, the local club gets \$2 of your ARRL dues money.

Yep, that's right. This does NOT in any way affect the cost of ARRL membership... you don't pay \$5 or \$2 extra. It's just that of your regular ARRL membership fee, \$2 (\$5 for a new ARRL member) can go to the local special service ham club.

To take advantage of this offer, simply renew your ARRL membership through the MARA club. Send the normal amount of your ARRL membership dues to the club Treasurer, Richard Weaver, instead of the ARRL. Make your check out to the club, and specify (very clearly) that the check is for ARRL membership. Be sure to include the normal ARRL membership renewal form with your check!

Richard will deposit your check to the club treasury. He will then fill out a special form provided by the ARRL indicating that you are a member of an ARRL-affiliated special service club, and send your renewal form along with this special form to the ARRL. The renewal forms will be accompanied by a check for \$2 less (or \$5 less for new members) than the amount of your ARRL dues. The ARRL will use the special form as authorization for the withholding, and verify that the check was written by an organization authorized as a special-service club.

In this manner, you can contribute an additional \$2 to the club without it costing you one red cent!

If you are not yet an ARRL member but are interested in this national ham organization, see any club officer for details on joining. ARRL members receive the monthly QST magazine, the largest, oldest, most respected ham magazine on the newsstands, as well as many other benefits of being in the national ham organization.

You're Grounded!

The above phrase, familiar to all parents who have teenagers, is especially important to hams. Although not preventing a direct lightning hit, a good ground can bleed off charges which might otherwise attract a bolt, and can sometimes avert disaster in case of a nearby strike.

BullsEye: Lightning Strikes the DX Cluster

Users of the local packet DX cluster went off-line recently due to a lightning strike. The circuit boards looked like something off of a New Orleans gourmet menu: "blackened something or other". However, by the time you read this, Jeff, Clint, and the other hardworking hams will have replaced the boards and hopefully restored the radios (even the antennas were zapped and destroyed!) and power supplies, and hopefully KB4OLM will back on the air. Thanks to all those who are contributing (monetarily and in effort and time) to the restoration effort. If you would like to help defray some of these expenses, contact Jeff, WB4PJW.

Local Packet BBS has Dial-In Access for those not on 2m

The KC4MZN BBS system has dial-in access to registered users. The phone number is (540) 942-5511, and the line is up 24 hours a day. Set your communications program to the usual 8-N-1 parameters, and use ANSI terminal emulation. The system can handle any data rate between 300 baud and 14.4 kps.

MIR Now Has U.S. QSL Manager

Richard, KD4UPF, reports that the MIR orbiting Soviet space station now has a QSL manager in the United States for handling QSL and SWL requests for stateside hams. The turnaround is expected to be only 7-10 days, far less than the weeks and months of the Russian QSL operation. Richard reports that he received his in only 8 days. The manager is N6JLH, at P.O. Box 1501, Pine Grove, California (CA), 95665.

N4RAG Thanks Supporters

Buck and Don thank everyone who is supporting the N4RAG repeater, its links, autopatch, and other facilities. Due to rising costs, the autopatch subscription increased to \$15 per year. If you are interested in the many capabilities of the N4RAG group of machines, phone Buck, N3RIQ, or Don, N4RAG, at (540) 2895580. If they are out, leave your name and number with Linda, N4RAF, and they'll get back with you.

ARES Responds to the Blizzard of '96

ROUND ONE: January 6

As weather forecasters continued to bring us news of the "Big One", ARES members were gathering the essential gear awaiting that call that would put them into action. Snow began to fall on the morning of January 6th and continued throughout the day. Accumulations were small, which only misled most of us as to what we would wake up to on Sunday morning.

With an impending weather event, announcements were made of an emergency planning net to be held on the 147.315 repeater at 2100 hours on Saturday night. The net was held and checkins were listed, including N4ALS who was responsible for seeing that his employees could get to work. (Glen is an administrator for a local retirement community and nursing facility.) Volunteers were advised of their duties and told to meet on the repeater at 0500 hours Sunday morning. At net time, 12 to 15 inches of snow had fallen on the Valley area, and traveling was treacherous at best. Glen advised net controls KA4EEN and N4ZFQ that his phone had begun to ring. Pickups of critical personnel began shortly after 0500 with KE4ZLD, Dave, and KC4SFE, Lane, providing the transportation.

Net Number 3 began at 1230 hours only to have its participants report that another 10-12 inches of snow had fallen. This now made venturing out nearly impossible. Stations on the net apologized, but informed net control that traveling would not be safe and it was suggested at that time to discontinue the transportation service. Glen understood and thanked those for their efforts that had helped so far.

Some people did not have the luxury of staying inside their homes. A dialysis patient in Weyers Cave had already gone the maximum 3 days without the blood-cleansing procedure, and was rapidly approaching a life-threatening situation. By working through the SkyWarn severe weather net in Augusta county (which had convened on the 146.85 repeater), rescue squad personnel were able to make arrangements Sunday night with a Weyers Cave ham, Dave, KD9LA, to dig out and transport the patient to the dialysis center early Monday morning.

Snow continued to fall into Monday. It finally began to taper off and quit in most areas of the valley by 1000 hours. This left everyone with one thing to do: start shoveling. Snow depth at the Grottoes Rescue Squad building was 34 inches. Wow! Dave, KD9LA, dug out through over 32 inches of accumulated snow and cautiously drove at 10 mph down the iced-over Interstate 81 to deliver the dialysis patient to Harrisonburg, averting what otherwise would have been a real emergency.

Although some backlog on the packet frequency was encountered by stations attempting to report in to the Weather Center in Sterling, all in all, the situation went more smoothly than expected. Many thanks to Norman, KA4EEN, for maintaining a watch on the 147.315 repeater and acting as net control station, and to those who put themselves in standby mode in these areas. ARES is a team effort as was shown that weekend.

ROUND TWO: January 11

A phone call to N4ZFQ on January 11th from Captain Jimmy Junkins of the Harrisonburg/Rockingham Emergency Operations Center (EOC) dictated a different scenario for the ARES group. With another two feet of snow on its way to the eastern seaboard, the HREOC was looking for a way to establish a dedicated link between their center and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) office on the corner of Waterman Drive and Chicago Avenue in Harrisonburg. This was going to be the salvation to the fire and rescue apparatus responding to calls where accessibility would be dependent upon the arrival of a snow plow to open the road. The storm on the weekend of the 6th proved that normal telephone traffic with VDOT was

nearly impossible due to the overflow load of calls being received from the panicking public. With a ham operator stationed at each location, a request for assistance would be only seconds away.

A net was formed to take volunteers for the assignment. This resulted in Claude, N4YRZ, being stationed at the EOC center and Lane, KC4SFE, at the VDOT office. Ronnie, KS4SP, offered to float between the locations to relieve operators if needed. Norman, KA4EEN, once again locked down a communications watch to assist in any way necessary.

In the beginning, it was thought that ham operators might be needed to even ride with VDOT snowplow drivers to be their contact with EOC, since the snowplows were not equipped with radios which operated on the emergency services frequencies. But it was later determined that this measure was not needed as long as the plows maintained radio contact with the VDOT office, which in turn would communicate via ham radio with EOC.

At 0700 hours Friday, Claude was in place at the EOC. However, Lane was encountering some resistance at the VDOT office -- apparently there were some crossed signals between VDOT and the fire chief. By 0730 the situation had deteriorated and it was apparent that VDOT would not allow an operator to be utilized at their office and a new plan had to be formulated. After a conversation with Captain Junkins, a program of non-emergency assistance calls would be responded to by ARES members directly, using 4-wheel-drive vehicles. Lane, KC4SFE, Ronnie, KS4SP, Steve, N4WVY, Rusty, N4YET, and Matthew, KD4UPL, all responded in one manner or another. An elderly woman was taken for an overdue dialysis treatment and returned to her home. A Bridgewater resident was taken to Dayton for essential supplies. Critical employees were taken to work. Anything that could be handled by ARES members relieved the fire and rescue personnel, allowing them to respond to major emergency calls.

The snowfall did not materialize as expected. We received 6 to 8 inches, much less than the Weather Service had predicted. By noon on Friday, Claude was informed by EOC that our services were no longer required. After debriefing, operations came to a close at 1250 hours and everyone returned home.

Once again, duty called, we responded, and the job got done, thanks to Y-O-U. Remember, ARES WORKS.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the February meeting where we will talk about traffic handling over long distances and numerous relay stations in the National Traffic System. Please bring the inserts from the January newsletter with you to the meeting.

Thanks again to all those who helped,

Colin, N4ZFK
Emergency Coordinator
Rockingham County

Calling all VARA Members: Submit your Stuff!

A local preacher tried to increase his weekly collections by replacing the collection plates with a large wooden box at the back of the church. He announced from the pulpit that the box was there for the deposit of parishioner's collections, and he would begin by depositing the first five dollars. He strode to the back of the church and duly dropped a five-dollar bill into the slot in the box's lid. He then returned to the pulpit and preached a sermon on giving.

Later, after everyone had left the church, the preacher went with his 5-year-old son to the box and opened its lid. To his dismay, the only thing in the box was his five-dollar bill. He was muttering something about not getting more out of the box, when his son asked, "Daddy, if you wanted to get more out of the box, why didn't you put more in?"

The Monitor is your newsletter. We try to serve both MARA and VARA. If this month's issue seems skewed more towards the MARA side, it is only because your newsletter editor did not receive anything labeled as being from VARA. Please, send in your stuff -- news, announcements, new call signs, upgrades, new rigs or antennas, for-sale items, contest operations, activities, advertisements, ANYTHING related to ham radio which you would like to share with the valley hams. Your editor does not have time to go out and round up the news, but he will print almost anything you send in (assuming he can read it and assuming he doesn't lose it first!).

MARA Secretary's Report

On January 4, 1996, the Massanutten Amateur Radio Association, Inc., held its meeting at its new location at the Golden Corral on South Main Street in Harrisonburg. The meeting was opened at 7:33 pm by President Dale Showalter, KD4DAI. All those present made the usual introductions.

Two hams were voted in as new members: Colin Hester, N4ZFQ, and Jay Stewart, KD4OXQ. The application of Albert McNett, Sr., N4NOL, was read and will be voted on at the next meeting.

Dick, W4JZC, treasurer, gave a report on the finances of the club. The balance in the account after the Christmas banquet was \$984.60.

Dale again thanked Dave, KD9LA, the newsletter editor, for the effort of getting the non-profit organization mailing permit for the club, saving it much money for mailing costs.

Dale reminded us of the upcoming Frostfest in Richmond on January 21, and the Dayton hamfest on May 17, 18, and 19.

Norman, KA4EEN, passed around the signup sheet for net control operators for the ARES nets, which will continue to be on Monday nights at 8:00 pm. Note that this is a change from what had been "a planned change". Colin, N4ZFQ, said that after much discussion it was decided to maintain the current net times and frequency of net operations (both actual radio frequency, and number of nets).

Dick, W4JZC, Skywarn director for Rockingham county, reminded everyone that wants to give information to the Skywarn nets that they should follow the format given in January's newsletter for most efficiency of time.

Dale is looking for ideas for programs for the meetings. If you have one or would like to present one at a future meeting, contact Dale for scheduling. April is HomeBrew month: bring in your project and show it off.

The 50/50 drawing was won by Al, N3JB, his share being \$10.00. The meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm.

The program was presented by Dale. He presented awards to Tim Taylor, K4SAD, former treasurer of the club (the first and only treasurer until this year, 1988-1995). The award was a hat with MARA and his call printed on it. Ray, KD4OXU, was given a hat in recognition of his service as secretary for 1994. He also received the highest award given by the club for his unselfish donation of time given in the support and promotion of amateur radio at Wilbur Pence Middle School. Then, Dale showed a promotional tape by Kenwood about the TS-870S HF transceiver with IF digital signal processing.

*Respectfully Submitted,
David Tanks, AD4TJ
MARA Secretary*

VARA Secretary's Report

[Unfortunately, the VARA secretary's report had not arrived at the Newsletter Editor's desk by the time this issue went to press.]

End of this month's issue.

MASSANUTTEN ARA

President: Dale Showalter, KD4DAI
Vice-President: Vic Alger, KE4LKQ
Secretary: David Tanks, AD4TJ
Treasurer: Richard Weaver, W4JZC
Board (exp 96): John Nelson, WA4KQX
Board (exp 97): Bill Edmundson, W4IMS

THE VALLEY ARA

President: Kenny Harris, KE4GKD
Vice-President: Jeff Rinehart, WB4PJW
Secretary: June Waldmuller, KC4PKJ
Treasurer: Christy Osterloh, KC4PKK

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by David R. Fordham, KD9LA*

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