

The MARA-VARA *Monitor*

APRIL 1996 -- Volume 96:04

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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.

VARA President's Message

Hello to all. It was nice to see everyone at the March meeting, held at Kathy's Restaurant in Staunton. I would also like to mention that the meetings are open to the public, and everyone is welcome to attend.

We had seven (7) new members voted on and approved, and also one reinstatement of membership. I would like to welcome the new members to the club and hope with the Novice/Tech class going on that we may gain more members in the future.

At the last two meetings I have asked for amateurs to help with the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) walk, which is to be held on April 13th. As of this writing, I have not received much interest. I hope that we can get enough operators together to help out with the walk. Anyone interested in helping, please contact me as soon as possible so that I can let the proper people know if we can help them with the walk. The club did voted against making this a club function, but I am hoping that some will call and offer to help me.

After all, that is what amateur radio is about -- helping the community.

I would like to ask that anyone that may have a topic of interest for presentations (at the club meeting as the monthly club program) contact me, and let's get some interest going.

Field Day 1996 is just around the corner, and I hope that we can get a nice turnout as we did last year and make this a good event. I for one am looking forward to this event and hope others are interested also. Let's get together and have fun enjoying this event as we have in the past.

Our next meeting will be held on April 10th at 7:30 pm at the usual place (Kathy's in Staunton). Come early and enjoy a meal and visit with other amateurs before the meeting.

Again, all are welcome. Hope to see you there.

Kenny Harris, KE4GKD

In Memoriam: -- W4CND, Silent Key

Vernon H. Schmidt, 83, of Harrisonburg, Virginia, became a "silent key" on March 12, 1996 at Rockingham Memorial Hospital. Vernon was born March 24, 1912, in Harper, Kansas. He graduated from Goshen College in 1939, and went to Paraguay on a hospital-building assignment in 1941. He was a long time ham radio

operator, a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, and a member of the Park View Mennonite Church, where a funeral service was held for him on March 16. Burial was in the Lindale Mennonite Church Cemetery. Vernon served as an engineer with the Westinghouse Corporation in Verona, Virginia, and in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We will miss Vernon and his "Chicken, Noodles, and Dumplings" (CND) on the air.

73, SK,
Dick Weaver, W4JZC

Celebration Commemorates Weavers' 50 Years of Compatible Modulation

(Compatible modulation is the combining of two signals to form a third, independent signal which has its own identity and characteristics.) A celebration was held on March 17, from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm at the Weavers Mennonite Church on Route 33 west of Harrisonburg to commemorate the Golden (50th) Wedding Anniversary of Dick (W4JZC) and Ginny Weaver. Dozens of their friends and parishioners paid tribute to the couple. The ham community was represented by Bob Niemeyer (W3MMC) Matthew Huffman (KD4UPL), Jay Suter (W4QDC), Gerry Brunk (K4RBZ), and Rusty Bowman, N4YET.

Congratulations to Dick and Ginny on their accomplishment.

May Monitor Deadline: Friday, April 19

Send your news via U.S. Mail to the address given on the back of this newsletter, or you can use Internet e-mail to: FORDHADR@JMU.EDU, or you can phone (540) 234-0448, or you can leave a packet message on the KB4OLM DX cluster. You can also try to catch Dave on the 146.625 repeater in the mornings between 7:45 am and 8:15 am. You can also leave a packet message on any of the other local bulletin board systems, but be sure to also leave a message on the DX cluster advising Dave of where your primary news message sits. Thanks.

David Tanks, AD4TJ, Wins State Title in ARRL 160m Contest!

The numbers are in, and there is reason to celebrate. David Tanks, AD4TJ, of Verona, placed first in the state of Virginia in his class in the ARRL 160-meter CW contest. David entered in the "low power" category (less than 150 watts), and captured the state title. Way to go, Dave.

Several other local hams also won honors in this "Gentleman's Band" contest. Jeff Rinehart (WB4PJW), Mike Dillon (KO4EA) and Joe Moomaw (W4XD) worked as a team, entering in the multi-operator category, and walked away with the second-place award for the state. It is also known that Al Bonck, N3JB also earned a respectable score.

Dave Allen's (WD8LDY) New Packet Address

For those of you who remember Dave Allen, WD8LDY, his packet address is: WD8LDY@WD8LDY.#DFW.TX.USA.NOAM

He would probably appreciate a note or message from any valley ham who could take the time to remember an old friend.

*Submitted by
Bill Jones, KE4FM*

Harrisonburg VE Exams

Don't forget, ham radio license examinations are held the second Saturday of every even-numbered month at the Massanutten Vo-Tech Center on Pleasant Hill Road south of Harrisonburg. The next exam will be held on April 13th. Registration starts at 9:00 am, and the exams begin at 10:00 am. Everyone is usually finished and the lights turned out by noon.

If you are a General class licensee or above, you can become a Volunteer examiner and assist with this public service. For more information, or to volunteer to help, contact Brown Snyder at (540) 434-3133.

Charlottesville VE Exams

A VE testing session is also planned in Charlottesville for the National Ham Radio Examination Day, April 27th. (This provides a quickie "second-chance" for candidates who might need it after the April 13th exam!) For further information, contact John Gray, W6UZ, on the 146.76 Charlottesville repeater (88.5hz PL tone).

Motorola Commercial Radio For Sale -- Cheap!

Matthew, KD4UPL, has a big, old, Motorola commercial radio set. It is of probably 50's or 60's vintage. Its working condition is unknown. There is a base unit, a mobile unit with a remote head, a base antenna, and microphones, coax, and many other accessories. The plate on the base rigs states 27.4 Mhz and 82.1 Mhz.

If anyone wants to know more about this and especially if anyone wants the thing, they can call Matthew on 146.625, 147.315, or 444.600. He can also be reached by phone at: 540-867-5120 or 540-867-9102. Matthew says, "This equipment is free if you haul it away but a donation would be appreciated."

*Submitted by
Matthew Huffman, KD4UPL*

Personal Message Handling on the DX Cluster

(Now that we have another DX cluster gateway on Afton mountain, it might be a good time to review some of the system's messaging capabilities. The messaging system is intended for short, brief, personal messages between users, and is not a substitute for a packet BBS system.)

Command: DIRECTORY This command is used to display a list of the current mail messages on the PacketCluster node to which you are connected. A hyphen (-) next to a particular mail message number indicates that the message has been read by the station to which it was addressed, a plus sign (+) indicates message set to noauto_delete, an asterisk (*) indicates both read and noauto_delete, and a "p" indicates a private message. If you specify a call on the command, you will see messages only sent by or to that station.

Syntax: DIRectory callsign

DIRectory/ALL (Displays all active mail messages. By default, only the five most-recent messages, or all since your last use of the DIRECTORY command (whichever is greater) will be displayed.

DIRectory/BULLETIN Displays mail messages addressed to ALL.

DIRectory/NEW (Displays all mail messages which have been sent since your last use of the DIRECTORY command.)

DIRectory/OWN (Displays mail messages which are addressed to you or were sent by you.

DIRectory/SUBJ text Displays mail messages which have the specified text in the subject, e.g. DIR/SUBJ DX.

DIRectory/nn Displays the nn most-recent mail messages.

Command: READ This command is used to read a mail message which is shown in the DIRECTORY display. A READ without a message number will read the oldest unread mail message addressed to you. Any mail message may be read if the message number is specified on the READ command.

Syntax: READ

READ message-#

READ/NOPAGE message-#

Submitted by Jeff, WB4PJW

ARRL Bulletin Summaries

Bulletin #14, February 28th: Ex-ARRL Director and Wife Killed in Robbery -- Well-known contesteer and DX'er Floyd Teetson, W5MUG, and his wife Winnie, WN5YTR, were found murdered, apparently during a home robbery attempt, in Heflin Louisiana on February 23rd. (ARRL Special Bulletin #8, issued March 22nd, announced that an arrest had been made by law enforcement authorities.)

Bulletin #15, March 1st: FCC Drops VE Conflict of Interest Rules -- The FCC formally deleted the provision of the VE program which prohibits publishers and commercial marketers of ham license material and study guides from serving as VE's and VEC's. The FCC said that other checks and balances of the VE program were sufficient to prevent fraudulent testing, and the change was being made in accordance with the deregulation requirements of the Telecommunications Reform Act.

Bulletin # 16, March 14th: NY Section Changes -- Effective April 1, 1996, the New York counties of Herkimer and Otsego will move from the Northern NY ARRL section to the Western NY section, in accordance with the voting by hams in those counties.

Bulletin #17, March 15th: FCC Callsign Update -- The latest callsigns issued in the 4th call district were AE4RF, KT4LS, and KF4HFX. In the 8th district the most recent calls were AA8WE, KG8VV, and KC8CON.

Bulletin #18, March 22nd: East NY Section Manager Appointed -- Due to several leadership changes in the

ARRL organization, a new SM had to be appointed to fulfill the term left by a "promoted" SM.

Public Service May Be the Only Way to Save the Ham Bands

Those of you who have been keeping up with the on-line ham forums, newlines, and NetNews have probably been surprised to learn that, for the first time ever, the Congressional hearings on spectrum auctions this spring included the ham bands!

In the past, the ARRL has been successful in keeping the ham radio spectrum out of the auction process, knowing full well that hams can not afford to compete with business interests for valuable spectrum space. This time, however, the ham bands were included in the opening hearings, in spite of a vigorous effort on the part of the ARRL.

Fortunately, however, a number of public service organizations came forward to our defense, and it looks very likely that the ham bands will be taken out of the auction process, if they haven't already by the time you read this. But the problem is far from solved.

Yes, it is true that the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the National Weather Service, FEMA, and numerous other agencies stood up for us this time. But this was only because we have served them well in the past. If we hams curtail our volunteer service to these organizations, they will have absolutely no reason to come to our defense in the future.

With VHF and UHF spectrum selling for millions of dollars per megahertz (in the case of some upper UHF spectrum, hundreds of millions per megahertz), no rational person could ever advocate leaving over a hundred megahertz (our current VHF/UHF spectrum) out of the auction process for mere "hobby" use. It is only because of the important societal function we offer to the American public that our bands were not sold for half-a-billion dollars to people who claim to make much better use of them than do "mere hobbyists".

Hams offer "free" communications support for safety (such as the MS Walks, and the Bike Virginia activities), activity coordination (such as the First Night events), traffic control (such as the Bridgewater Lawn Parties), emergency assistance (such as the ARES responses to the floods and blizzards), and weather reporting (the Skywarn activities), among others. If we were not to offer these services, we would not be able to enjoy the rag-chews, the packet networks, DX clusters, nets, APRS, or other enjoyable aspects of the hobby.

In other words, ham radio is not a free hobby. We must "pay" for our use of the spectrum. If you enjoy contesting, rag-chewing, packeteering, and other aspects of the hobby, then you owe it to all of us to come out and help with the public service events.

There is plenty of opportunity here in the valley for you, (yes, you!) to help pay your way for using what has become a scarce national resource: the radio spectrum.

Sign up for ARES and become a trained emergency-support communicator. Or, attend the Skywarn training sessions and then participate in the Skywarn nets. Or, come out to the MS walks, the races, the bike tours, the First Night events, the lawn parties, and the other community activities which need communications support. Or, help teach a novice or tech class. Help with the Volunteer Examiner program. Assist with the demonstrations of ham radio in the public schools. Support the BSA Jamboree-on-the-Air in October.

These are just a few of the many ways that hams in the valley are doing their part. The question is, are you doing yours? If you are not participating in the above activities (or ones like them), then just what are you doing to reimburse the American people for the resource you are occupying?

Only by continued public service will hams be able to continue to enjoy the spectrum we now have. Merely "filling up" the spectrum with repeaters, contests, and packet links will be insufficient to hang on to our scarce spectrum space if Congress is pushed to get the most out of the available air space.

In spite of their well-earned criticism, Congress does (sometimes) take the public good into account. If hams stop serving the public, there is no doubt that Congress will give our megahertz to someone who will serve the public, and rightly so.

*compiled from
the ARRL Letter, Ham Radio Newsline,
NetNews, Washington Review IRC,
and other sources*

Staunton MS Walk: April 13th

The Staunton area Multiple Sclerosis Walk will be held April 13th. Hams have done a good job in the past of supporting this event, which is the primary fund-raiser for the MS Society in this area. At last report, no one had signed up for this except Kenny, KE4GKD. If you are able to help out, please contact Ken.

Harrisonburg March of Dimes Walk: April 27

April 27th is the Harrisonburg March of Dimes Walk. Hams are needed to provide communications support for the safety and organizational aspects of this charitable event. If you can assist, please contact Norman Benner, KA4EEN, or Ray Ritchie, KD4OXU. We will meet in front of Price Club, behind the Valley Mall at the intersection of Reservoir Street and University Boulevard to receive our assignments.

Staunton March of Dimes Walk: May 4

The Staunton March of Dimes Walk will be held on May 4th. Again, hams provide communications support. If you live in Augusta County, you are invited to participate. Contact Kenny, KE4GKD.

Big Mountain Repeater Association Announces Date of 1996 Annual Picnic

The Big Mountain Repeater Association, sponsor of the 146.625 repeater, has set Sunday, August 18th as the date for their annual "Bob's Knob Bash". The annual event features a fantastic picnic, complete with live music and entertainment. The menu will be the same fantastic fare as in past years. The event is free, and is open to the entire ham radio community. Mark your calendar!

SkyWarn Volunteers: Get Ready for Summer

As summer approaches, the SkyWarn organization turns its attention away from snowfall reporting and concentrates on severe thunderstorm and wind activity. Heavy rainfall, over 1 inch in an hours' time or over 3 inches across 12 hours, is cause for concern and activation of the SkyWarn nets.

It is suggested that you prepare your station for summer SkyWarn service before the coming of the storm season. Below is a checklist of things that might need your attention.

Lightning Protection: Loosen your grounding clamp and connections, wire-brush away the corrosion, and reconnect everything tightly. Double-check your lightning arrestors to make sure they haven't blown. Check the electrical continuity all the way from the antenna to the ground rod.

Emergency Power: check the liquid level in your backup lead-acid batteries. Remember to never use a power supply line that is not properly fused. Check for over-rated fuses (fuses rated at an amperage higher than that which the wiring can safely carry).

Weather Equipment: Check your rain gauge. If you left yours out during the winter, it may be cracked. Be sure your thermometer won't be in the direct sunlight. Calibrate your barometer at least once a year. (If you live near the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport in Weyers Cave, you can use the barometric pressure reported continuously on 124.925 Mhz AM as a calibrator.)

Antennas: Make sure that snow and ice have not loosened your antennas, that water has not seeped into your feedlines, and that your station can withstand the winds and rains.

Emergency Rations: Check the shelf-life and expiration date of the food and medicines in your family and personal emergency response kits. Change the water in your emergency water jugs.

Other supplies: Check the batteries in your flashlights. Keep your gas can full at all times. Refill your car gas tank when it drops below halfway. And above all, have an emergency plan for your family -- where to meet and regroup if you are separated, whom to contact in emergencies, and how to get hold of relatives.

VARA Treasurer's Report

I thought I'd start this month's report with a summary of last year's income and expenses. In 1995, the VARA club brought in \$355 in dues, \$161 from the 50/50 drawings, and \$275 from donations (including the Bike-Virginia donation). Major expenses included \$382 for the newsletter, \$71 for non-newsletter postage (including \$58 for the post-office box rent), \$223 for field-day expenses (including \$185 for the VARA portion of the broken beam replacement), \$113 for Christmas Party expenses, and about \$100 for other miscellaneous expenses. All numbers were rounded to the nearest whole dollar. Our expenses last year exceeded our income somewhat, but due to last-minute deposits by the Treasurer before Christi, our balance actually increased. So far as I know, none of these funds is reserved for any particular purpose.

When I took over the books, we had a beginning balance of \$822.25. As reported at our last meeting, I have received \$445 in dues and \$10 in donations, and expended \$22.90 for newsletter postage in January and February, \$32 for stamps, and \$22.90 for flowers. This left an ending balance of \$1193.47.

Since the meeting, and through March 21st, I have received \$20 in dues, and \$10 in 50/50 drawing income (\$9.50 was reported at the meeting, but an extra \$0.50 was found later), and expended \$27.78 for March printing and postage on the newsletter. This leaves a balance of \$1195.69.

Unless there are objections, I intend to make all future Treasurer's Reports here in the newsletter instead of taking up time at the meetings. As always, I remain available to explain any questions you may have about the club income or expenses.

*Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Garner, WA4ITY*

MARA Members: Don't Forget!

April is HomeBrew Month!

Bring your home-made projects, transmitters, receivers, keys, accessories, gizmo's, widgets, unique antennas, anything that you made with your own ten thumbs, to the April MARA meeting, and share your ideas with the rest of the members!

MARA SECRETARY'S REPORT

March 7, 1996 Meeting

The Massanutten Amateur Radio Association held its March meeting at the Golden Corral Restaurant in the Harrisonburg on March 7, 1996. 21 members attended. The meeting started at 7:30 pm with introductions.

Dale (KD4DAI) encouraged everyone to sign up for one of the various committees.

Norman (KA4EEN) received a certificate from Blue Ridge Community College in appreciation for the communications that the hams provided for their "Walk of Scholars '95" that took place on November 4, 1995. They are looking forward to us helping them again during next year's event scheduled for November 2, 1996.

Bob (KF4BFC) reported on information on the banner and prices. The banner would have MARA Communications and other info on it, and it would be 3x8 feet, white heavy vinyl, and would be between \$80 and \$100. Dale noted that \$25 had already been donated towards the cost.

Norman (KA4EEN) reported that the March of Dimes Walk will be on April 27 in Harrisonburg. Seven or eight hams will be needed for communications. Meet at the Price Club to get organized.

Field Day is coming up, and Dale asked for Committee members.

Dale reported on upcoming hamfests/contests: Virginia QSO Party happening on March 16-18; CQ WW WPX Phone Contest March 30-31; Dayton Hamvention May 17-18-19; Boston Hamfest March 30-31; Raleigh Hamfest April 14.

Albert NcNett, N4NOL, was voted in as a new member. The applications of Lois Bowman (KF4BFE), and Bob Lilly (KE4WII) were read and will be voted on next month.

The 50/50 drawing was won by Paul (WV3J). His share was \$9.50.

April is Homebrew Month. Bring your projects in and show them off!

Dick (W4JZC) told the members of a ham who is moving out of the area and is donating equipment to the club, consisting of a military type tower, a Ham-IV rotator, Tri-Band Beam, coax, etc. The club board members decided that the beam and coax would be good to use for the club for Field Day, and that the tower would be auctioned off to raise money for the club. Dick is bringing all the stuff to his garage for anyone to look at before the auction. The ham donating this is Don Howell, W2FIB.

Dale asked if there was anyone interested in teaching a new ham class as he had been asked by prospective hams about classes.

Paul said that a teacher at Elkton school would like the hams to present a program in his class about amateur radio, like Ray (KD4OXU) had in his class at Pence Middle School last year.

A code practice net was discussed, as several people expressed an interest in improving their code speed so they can upgrade.

The Staunton MS Walk is April 13, and the March of Dimes Walk is May 4 in Gypsy Hill Park. Ken (KE4GKD) would appreciate any help.

The meeting officially adjourned at 8:06 pm.

Jeff Rinehart (WB4PJW) presented the program: Part One of Two concerning the National Traffic System. Jeff showed how the system works, from the time a message enters the system to the time the message is delivered. The NTS consists of three areas: Eastern, Central, and Western. Within those areas are Regions, and within the regions are sections. Messages are passed not only on 2-meter nets, but also HF nets. Jeff showed a videotape of an actual HF net in progress passing traffic.

*Respectfully submitted,
David Tanks, AD4TJ
MARA Secretary*

VARA SECRETARY'S REPORT

March 13, 1996 Meeting

The VARA club meeting was held at Kathy's Restaurant on March 13, 1996. It was opened by Ken Harris, (KE4GKD) at 7:36 pm. Present were 21 members and guests.

The 50/50 drawing was won by Joe Ragione (KF4CWS).

The Secretary's Report was accepted as printed in the March newsletter. Dick Waldmuller (WB8GIF) made the motion and Terry Henderson (KE4SSD) seconded.

Charlie Garner (WA4ITY) gave the Treasurer's Report.

There was no old business.

Ken Harris (KE4GKD) announced that the club treasurer's address has changed. Anything needing to be sent to Charlie Garner (WA4ITY) should be sent to PO Box 666, Staunton, VA 24402.

Gus Vollmar (KQ4CZ) was recognized as having been reinstated into the club. Other new members to the club were voted in and are as follows: Melody Moats (KF4HEW), Jerry Moats (WD4ITN), Betty Ralston (KF4EKU), Jeff Colvin (KD4SYW), Kay Cook (KF4CZL), Benny Cook (KF4CZK), and Joan Pitsenbarger (KF4CWR).

Ken Harris (KE4GKD) received a packet message from Bill Bearden (KC4TQF) in regards to the April 13th MS Walk. Last month the club voted to not sponsor the activity as a club-supported event. This was in response to prior club commitments on this date. The walk is still going on and anyone, on an individual basis, can still volunteer to help out. Volunteers can contact Ken Harris.

Ken would like to see more presentations in the future. If you have any ideas for one or would like to do one yourself, please contact Ken.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dick Waldmuller (WB8GIF) and seconded by Brown Snyder (N4ZHV). The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 pm.

Submitted by
Doug Zirk, KE4RMD
VARA Secretary

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*

*It does not necessarily contain all information
which appeared in the paper copy.*