

The MARA-VARA *Monitor*

NOVEMBER 1997 -- Volume 97:11

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(a non-profit organizations under the IRS regulations),
for radio amateurs in the central Shenandoah Valley.

ATTENTION MARA MEMBERS! **Christmas Menu Selection Needed by November Meeting**

At the November MARA meeting, club members will be asked to select a price they are willing to pay for their Christmas Party dinner.

Once the price is set, attendees at the party will be able to order any of the three or four entree items listed under that price option. In other words, if the club votes to go with Option One, each person attending will pay \$8.67, and will be able to order baked chicken, chopped sirloin, the fried trout/shrimp platter, or spaghetti and meat sauce.

There was some question about whether attendees might also be able to order off the menu. A call to Pano's quickly resolved the matter. According to the manager, he asks that "to expedite the ordering process, all attendees should try to restrict their order to only the choices for the selected price group; no ordering from the normal menu, please."

All selections (except the spaghetti dishes and Mediterranean salad) include choice of baked potato or fries, salad, and dinner rolls. For \$1.75 extra, you can order a choice of fruit pie and beverage (coffee, tea, or soda).

Please review these menu options with your family and other guests who may be attending the Christmas party, and be prepared to vote for your preference at the November meeting.

Once the club has informed the restaurant of the price chosen, and the approximate number of attendees, Pano's will make sure they have sufficient quantities of the four entrees on hand and ready for serving. Attendees will inform Pano's of their individual choices upon arriving at the party.

OPTION ONE

\$6.95 per person
(\$8.67 including tax and tip)

Baked Chicken
Chopped Sirloin
Fried Trout and Shrimp Platter
Spaghetti with Meat Sauce

OPTION TWO

\$7.95 per person
(\$9.92 including tax and tip)

Chicken Parmesan w/Linguine
Chopped Sirloin
Broiled or Fried Perch
Mediterranean Salad w/Chicken Strips

OPTION THREE

\$8.95 per person
(\$11.17 including tax and tip)

Fried Oysters
Broiled Chicken Breast
Rib Eye Steak
Baked Spaghetti and Meatballs

OPTION FOUR

\$10.95 per person
(\$13.66 including tax and tip)

Broiled Swordfish Steak
New York Strip Steak
Chicken Julienne

MARA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings to all. We had a super turnout for Wesley Sizemore from Green Bank and his presentation on their activities. I want to thank Dale KD4DAI again for contacting him so we could all enjoy the talk and slides. At November's meeting the program will be presented by Harry N1PG, a Merchant marine for 20 years and also an ex-Navy man, on his adventures throughout the world in his travels. He also has video tape to show.

We all owe Paul WV3J and other hams our gratitude for their efforts at getting the hams alerted to the proposed Rockingham County tower regulation ordinance, and to all the hams who showed up in force at the public hearing(40 plus) to let our feelings be known on the subject. About a week after the club meeting the Board of Supervisors voted to do exactly what they said they would do at the hearing. Hallelujah!

We had our elections for officers for the coming year, and I wish to thank Bill W4IMS for serving a 2 year term as a Board member, and to Bob KF4BFC for accepting to fill the slot. Also I'd like to thank Dick W3HXX for his service as club treasurer for the past 3 years, and to Matthew KD4UPL for accepting the nomination to replace Dick.

Continuing in service to club are: myself for another year as president, Walt KF4BFB for continuing as vice president, Wilton KF4BFL for continuing as secretary, and to Sandy KE4PZC for the final year of his service as board member. Thanks to you all for your willingness to serve.

Don't forget about the Christmas Banquet on Dec 4 at Pano's at 6:30 pm, and the special speaker, John Kanode N4MM, Director of the Roanoke Division of the ARRL. No reservations are necessary, and you pay only after you eat.

It's about time to begin renewing your dues to the club. They are \$12 for a year, and they should be sent to Matthew Huffman at RR 4, Box 59, Harrisonburg, VA 22801. Please send your name, address, call, license class, and whether you are an ARRL member.

Again, if you know of someone who you think could present an interesting program at the meetings please feel free to let me know; or if you have something to share, I'd like to hear about it. Send me e-mail at ad4tj@jjuno.com, or leave it on the packet cluster, or call me at 540-248-1207.

Hope to see you at the November meeting on the 6th.

David Tanks, AD4TJ
MARA president

VARA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We had a good meeting this month. Thanks to all who came. We also have all the club offices filled except the president's. I hope someone will agree to take this position by November's meeting time.

Doug KE4RMD won the 50/50 and Karen KE4WIE said it was her ticket that really won so they will fight it out at home. (I sure would like to know who win's!)

We will put the patch on hold until next year and see what the cost will be i have a picture of the banner so we will have some idea of what we want on it.

By this printing bike VA. will be over but I want to thank all that came out and helped with this event both VARA & MARA and non members also. I would like to thank Ken KE4GKD for the use of his trailer it makes it real handy for this event.

A special thanks to Paul WV3J for getting out the info. on the tower situation that came up last month in Rockingham County and to all the amateurs that came out to support our hobby. I would also like to thank Charlie WA4ITY for the time and effort he put in on this situation.

Don't forget the Christmas Party -- It is scheduled for December 18th at 6:00pm at Evers restaurant in Harrisonburg. They have good food and we are sure to have a lot of fun and fellowship.

We now have two people to contact in the event of an emergencies. First is Jeff Rinehart WB4PJW. Jeff's home phone is 337-7337, work 434-0062. The second is Ken Harris KE4GKD Phone 885-1818. In the event of an emergency contact them and give your support.

I would like to welcome our newest member Ozro Dillon KD4RD into the club. Everyone make him welcome.

I am looking forward to the Nov. meeting and hope to see everyone there we will have a lot of business to take care of with the election of officers for 98.

Pat Smiley KD4WWF
VARA President

IT'S OFFICIAL!

As reported in the November QST, page 101, the 1997 joint MARA/VARA field day operation placed 21st out of 675 entries in the 2A category! This places us in the top 3% in the nation in our category! We scored 6,766 points, with 2,120 contacts. Way to Go!

PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITY ROUNDUP

September 13

Varsity Race at EMHS

We received a call to provide communications for the Varsity Foot Race and Eastern Mennonite High School held on September 13th. This activity was announced at the September meeting of MARA. However, due to such short notice and other activities already planned for the same weekend, the club thought best not to take it as a club project.

So Larry, AA4TC, and Norman, KA4EEN, got busy and shook antennas and came up with the needed help. Those helping were:

- AA4TC/Larry,
- KF4BFE/Lois,
- KD4DDI/Paul & his XYL Mary,
- KF4QPC/Joe,
- KE4LKQ/Vic,
- KE4ZLH/Jeff,
- KD4OXU/Ray, and
- KA4EEN/Norman.

All went well and we showed them what we could do and they were amazed at the job that we did. They expressed their appreciation for our contribution to the event with the desire that we mark the second weekend of September 1998 for the Varsity Foot Race at EMHS.

There was a total of 392 runners representing 22 different schools, 180 in the boy's varsity, 140 in the girl's varsity, and 72 in the junior varsity.

Even though this was not a club project I want to thank each one who helped at the last minute call.

KA4EEN/Norman

PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITY ROUNDUP

October 4-5

Johnny Appleseed Horseback Ride

Saturday and Sunday was a beautiful weekend for the 16th annual ride for the Seven Stars Therapeutic Center, better known as the Shenandoah Therapeutic Riding Center. Their 97 riders (with the youngest being 4 years old on an old pony!), raised \$6,500.

We had a good turn out of amateur help on Saturday with 9 hams ready to go. They were:

- KF4BFL/Wilton,
- KE4PZC/Sandy,
- KD4DAI/Dale,
- N4ZKH/Marshall,
- KD4UPL/Matthew,
- KC4LTP/Phil,
- N4ALS/Glen,
- KF4SUR/Dave, and
- KA4EEN/Norman.

KD4UPL/ Matthew served and net control. Sunday was a different story we were very short on help. Only three hams showed up. KD4OXU/Ray, served as net control with N4ALS/Glen, and KA4EEN/Norman keeping check on the riders on the trails.

Mark your calendars for the first weekend of October 1998 for the Johnny Appleseed Horseback Riding.

The Horseback Riding staff expressed appreciation for our help again this year. Thanks for all who helped and also those willing to help but weren't needed.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITY ROUNDUP

October 14

Wilbur Pence Middle School

Once again, ham radio was the hit of the party at Wilbur Pence Middle School in Dayton, Virginia. Three hams visited the science classroom of Ray Ritchie, KD4OXU. They talked to approximately 200 eighth graders. The visiting hams were:

- W3MMC/Bob
- KD4EQA/Dave
- WA4E/Mark

Bob and Dave made most of the VHF and UHF contacts, including repeater QSO's. They also talked about public service, how to become licensed, QSL cards, and the fun that hams have in the area. They talked about the picnics, weekly nets, and just talking around the world.

Mark strung a 20m dipole and made several long- distance contacts as far away as Texas and Florida. He also talked about Morse Code, giving a demonstration on CW.

The highlight of the day was a contact with Alan Strauss in Florida, callsign WA4KTJ. He stood by on frequency, talked to several students, and gave a very interesting set of QSO's. He was a colorful individual who kept the kids entertained. He even stood by on the bands during class changes to talk to all of the different classes.

Special thanks to K4LXG, Elsworth, for standing by on the VHF, UHF, and HF frequencies ready to give out contacts.

Ray is glad to see the hams back in school again. Many kids were impressed. This is one way of keeping ham radio alive in the next generation. Thanks to those who volunteered.

Ray Ritchie, KD4OXU

PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITY ROUNDUP

October 18

M-S Walk in Harrisonburg

The weather man missed the weather again, we had very nice weather instead of the light rain predicted.

With the number of walkers down about 100 from last year, they still came up with around \$13,000, only about \$1,000 less than last year.

Several staff members stopped by and expressed appreciation for our help and looking forward to seeing us again next year. They don't know what they would do without us.

Those helping this year with the communications were:

- KF4BFB/Walt,
- KF4BFF/Enos,
- KN4FM/Gerald,
- KF4BFE/Lois,
- KD4DDI/Paul & Mary,
- KF4QPC/Joe,
- W2CID/George, and
- KA4EEN/Norman.

Thanks again to all who helped.

Norman KA4EEN.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITY ROUNDUP

October 25-26

Bike Virginia's Fall Foliage Ride

One of the premier ham radio public-service events of the season, this activity is also one of the most fun. A full report was not available by the time this issue went to press, but next month's Monitor will hopefully contain a complete report recognizing the many hams who put in the hours supporting this bike ride around the valley.

GOT NEWS?

The newsletter editor is in need of more news from VARA and Staunton/Waynesboro/Augusta County. Send in your articles, comments, news, and announcements today.

HEY, GUYS

I built last year's winner (the "38 Special", CQ, September), and have never seen a better done circuit board. This year's winner should allow you produce the best iambic key available at a third the cash outlay of anything on the market. I've ordered mine. Check out the website:
<http://www.fix.net/~hmilller/paddle/announce.htm>

You won't be sorry. While there check out the whole NorCal page and the QRP-L page as well.

Paul, WV3J

HELP NEEDED

Does anyone have the ability to capture a frame in a VHS video and convert it to a jpg, jif or similar still picture format? Eli is on fall break and has some video I'd like to get converted. Thanks in advance if you can help.

Paul Helbert, WV3J

LATEST FCC SEQUENTIAL CALLSIGN ASSIGNMENTS

The latest sequential callsigns for the fourth call area are: AF4FS for Extra class calls, KU4LB for Advanced class calls, and KF4UEF for all other classes. For the eighth call area the latest callsigns are AB8BG for Extra class hams, KI8DU for Advanced class, and KC8IOH for all others.

FREE:

Collection of Ham Radio Magazines. QST-almost all issues, 1972-96, Ham Radio, 1972 to final issue. CQ 1974-1996, and 73 Ham radio, to 1996. Need the shelf space. Please contact Harry Brooks, N1PG, at 540 434-0368 or email N1pgbrooks@aol.com.

FOR SALE

- Santec ST-142 2M handheld, 3W, 10 memories. Includes desk charger, wall charger, extra battery, speaker-mike. \$125
- W9GR DSP unit built from partial kit, version 2. \$75
- Digital PWR/SWR meter built from ARRL handbook article. \$60
- B&W AC-1.8-30 All band antenna, new wire. \$75

Contact Richard Wilkins, KR4V at 433-5277 or email rwilkins@shentel.net

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 1-3: ARRL Sweepstakes, CW

November 6: Skywarn Winter Storms Class

November 15-16: ARRL Sweepstakes, Phone

November 19: Skywarn Basics I Class

November 29-30: CQ WW DX Contest, CW

December 4: MARA Christmas Party at Pano's

December 5-7: ARRL 160m Contest

December 13-14: ARRL 10m Contest

December 18: VARA Christmas Party at Evers

December 31: Straight-Key Night

MARA: 1998 OFFICERS

Congratulations to the 1998 officers of the Massanutten Amateur Radio Club, Inc., elected by acclamation at the October meeting:

- President, David Tanks, AD4TJ

- Vice-President, Walt Lam, KF4BFB
 - Secretary, Wilton Thomas, KF4BFL
 - Treasurer, Matthew Huffman, KD4UPL
 - Board Member at Large, Term expiring 1999, Bob Hughes, KF4BFC
-

HOW'S DX?

International Reply Coupons: The One (1) and Only

A while back, the question was asked on one of the electronic newsgroups about how many IRC's it takes to get a QSL card back from a foreign country. I promised I'd get an official answer from the United States Postal Service. I did, and here it is.

The answer was given to me by a long-time USPS friend that teaches, actually teaches, window operations. His answer corresponds to what I thought I remembered from a large discussion over this a year or so ago.

Not long ago, as life goes, in 1995 to be exact, there was a major change in the way First Class Mail is serviced. As far as "First Class" mail is concerned, all members of the International Postal Union Compact (virtually any country that you'd ever contact on the radio or otherwise) agreed that there will be one, and only one (1), class of delivery called "First Class".

As of 1995, there is no longer any distinction between "air mail", and "surface mail" in any country where air mail exists. All first class mail is treated the same. It all goes air mail as long as air mail exists. In other words, all first class mail is now air mail, unless there isn't any airmail in the country in question.

For that reason, it does no good to send something "air mail". If you send it first class, it goes air mail. If there is no air mail in the country you send it to, then marking it "air mail" won't do any good anyway.

Thus, in 1995, a complete change in the way IRC's are valued and how they apply to first class mail occurred, all over the whole world, in all Postal Union countries.

There is no longer any need for a variable number of IRC's being required to send ONE unit of standard weight first class mail by IRC methods.

Publication #51 of the United States Postal Service, issued July of 1995, on page 14, says clearly, "International Reply Coupons: This service allows you to prepay a reply by purchasing reply coupons. The coupons are exchangeable for postage stamps at post offices in countries that are Universal Postal Union members. One coupon is exchangeable in any member country for a stamp or stamps representing the minimum postage on an unregistered letter. The fee is \$1.05 per coupon in the U.S."

Anyone who tells you that it takes more than one IRC to get a first class envelope back from anywhere (minimum weight, ½ ounce in the U.S.), is trying to make a buck off of you. One, and only one (1) such coupon is all that is required for the minimum standard letter. Period.

Now that the "official" answer is here before us, recall that these little pieces of paper can be exchanged for "stamps", and possibly other things off the legal market. So will the postal service at the other end of the postal pipeline really hand over a first class stamp for one IRC? Officially, he or she must. In practice, well... let's just say that not all countries have Postal Inspectors like the U.S.! Remember that \$1.05 US is a valuable chunk of change in countries where the average annual income of a family of six is only \$250.

I hope this clears up the misconceptions. The old hardcopy callbooks used to have a section in the front telling how many IRC's it took to buy an airmail stamp in all the foreign countries. Well, you can throw that list away as of 1995. Now, it takes only one IRC to buy an "air mail", e.g., "first class", stamp, anywhere in the world.

Am I the only one who noticed that the cost of an IRC is now more than the cost of the proverbial "green stamp"?

Mike Luther
W5WQN
Mike.Luther@ziplog.com

HAMTALK SYSTEM

- Morgantown 147.075
- Clarksburg 146.685
- Blepre (Ohio) 147.315
- Canaan Valley 147.135
- Spruce Knob 147.285
- Craigsville (WV) 145.270
- Glenville 145.130
- Madison (VA) 444.400

Several valley amateurs have been asking about the HamTalk system what is it, and where does it go? The system is a network of linked repeaters. Together, they cover most of the state of West Virginia. In the Shenandoah Valley, the network can be accessed from the Madison (Virginia) repeater on 444.400, or from the Spruce Knob repeater on 147.285. Talk on either of these two machines, and your conversation can be heard as far away as Ohio! All of the HamTalk repeaters require a 103.5 PL tone on the input signal, including the 444.400 machine in Madison. The system utilizes mountain-top sites, giving the signals good coverage across the rough terrain.

The system is an open repeater system, available to all amateurs. So next time you are travelling in West Virginia, make a schedule to stay in touch with the valley hams!

More information on the system can be obtained by contacting N8HON, N8FMD, or WJ8G. How to get in touch with them? Call on the 147.285 or 444.400 machines! Remember, use 103.5 CTCSS tone.

MARA SECRETARY'S REPORT

October 2, 1997 Meeting

The MARA club monthly meeting was held on 2 October 1997 at Evers Restaurant in Mt. Crawford, Va. A good fellowship was enjoyed around the tables during the buffet meal which began at 6:30 p.m. Then at 7:30 p.m. the business meeting was called to order by the president, David, (AD4TJ) with each person introducing giving name, call sign, and place of residence. Thirty-one members and guests signed the attendance roster.

The first order of business was the reading of applications of two new prospective members. Then the

following reports were given:

ARES: Norman (KA4EEN) spoke about the schedule for nets and then reminded members of the events coming up where help would be needed in community service.

- 4-5 Oct. The Johnny Appleseed Horseback rides in northern Rockingham.
- 18 Oct. The MS Walk in Harrisonburg.
- 25-26 Oct. The Bike Virginia program held in northern Augusta and southern Rockingham.

Discussion was held on the ordinance being considered by Rockingham Board of Supervisors to regulate radio towers. Forty-plus amateurs appeared at the meeting to voice our concerns which resulted in amateur radio being totally eliminated from the ordinance.

It was called to our attention that one of our own, David (KD9LA) had written an article which appeared in QST.

A letter was read from ARRL requesting help in printing more of the "Archie Comics" promoting Amateur Radio. Marshall (N4ZKH) moved and Stin (KE4SSF) second that we contribute \$50.00 to this cause. The motion was carried.

OLD BUSINESS: David (KD9LA) brought up that it was time to renew the bulk mailing permit and by vote he was empowered to take care of this matter.

NEW BUSINESS: The report of the nominating committee was given as follows for the new year:

President- David (AD4TJ),
Vice President- Walt (KF4BFB),
Secretary- Wilton (KF4BFL),
Treasurer- Matthew (KD4UPL),
Director- Bob (KF4BFC).

Motion was made and supported that the slate be accepted and these be declared the officers for the coming year. It is to be noted that Dick (W4HXH) requested to be relieved of duties as treasurer which he had fulfilled for a number of years.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: John (WA4KQX) spoke of a contest in Pennsylvania. Paul (WV3J) said there would be a QRP Fox Hunt going on all winter.

Some discussion was included concerning bear hunters using 2 meters illegally. Rusty (N4YET) told of the Howard County Hamfest on 5 Oct. and David (AD4TJ) reminded everyone of the Christmas plans for our December meeting at Pano's Restaurant.

50/50 was won by Jeff (WB4PJW).

A most interesting slide and lecture program was given by Wes Sizemore from the National Radio Astronomy Observatory at Greenbank, West Virginia.

We have recently received 7 new members and have applications from 2 more.

Respectfully submitted
Wilton B. Thomas(KF4BFL)
Secretary

ADDRESS CHANGES NEEDED

Many hams in the valley have been given new addresses or ZIP codes. If you are one of them, please let the newsletter editor know! We have no other way of finding out!

VARA SECRETARY'S REPORT

October 8, 1997 Meeting

The V.A.R.A. club meeting was held at Gavid's Restaurant in Staunton on October 8, 1997. The meeting was opened by the club president, Pat Smiley (KD4WWF) at 7:30 p.m. There were 17 members and 2 guests present.

The total amount raised with the 50/50 raffle was \$20. Doug Zirk (KE4RMD) won and collected \$10 with the remaining amount going to the club.

The Secretary report was accepted as printed in last month's newsletter. Ken Harris (KE4GKD) made the motion to accept and Buck Mowbray (N3RIQ) seconded.

The club jacket's decision was tabled until January. Joe Meek (KD4FKT) made the motion and Joe Archambeault (N4TRH) seconded.

The V.A.R.A. Christmas party will be on December 18th at 6:00 p.m. and the location is Evers Family Restaurant. Send your money to either Pat Smiley (KD4WWF) or Charlie Garner (WA4ITY).

It was announced that Karen Zirk (KE4WIE) volunteered for the vice-president position for the year of 1998. A president will have to be selected by next club meeting.

Ozro Dillon (KD4RD) by majority decision was voted into V.A.R.A. as a club member.

Jeff Rinehart (WB4PJW) announced that there will be a 10 meter contest on December 13 and 14. Jeff will operate from his home if enough people are interested. The modes used will be CW and phone. The contesting will be during the day.

The details of operation for Bike Virginia on October 25th and 26th were discussed.

Brown Snyder (N4ZHV) thanked the club for the flowers given to him while he was at the hospital.

The "hat" was passed for the flower fund and \$48.65 was collected.

Joe Meek (KD4FKT) passed a newspaper article around showing some local bear hunters along with some of their equipment for their sport, which included portable ham radios. These hunters most likely are some of our local unlicensed ham radio operators. If you hear them on our frequencies, time and date their transmissions and report them to the FCC. Do not exchange any type of transmissions with them.

Jeff Rinehart discussed Rockingham's antenna ordinance and how it will eventually affect or not affect the surrounding cities and counties. Amateurs must stay alert to its progress and plan to attend any meeting involving this ordinance if and when it threatens your county or city.

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting by Dick Waldmuller (WB8GIF). Buck Mowbray seconded and

the meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Submitted by:
Douglas S. Zirk (KE4RMD)
V.A.R.A. Secretary

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the deadline for the December issue of the Monitor is Monday, November 17th.

End of this month's issue.

MASSANUTTEN ARA

President: David Tanks, AD4TJ
Vice-President: Walt Lam, KF4BFB
Secretary: Wilton Thomas, KF4BFL
Treasurer: Richard Weaver, W3HXX
Board (exp 97): Bill Edmundson, W4IMS
Board (exp 98): Sandy Mullins, KE4PZC

THE VALLEY ARA

President: Pat Smiley, KD4WWF
Vice-President: Kenny Harris, KE4GKD
Secretary: Doug Zirk, KE4RMD
Treasurer: Charlie Garner, WA4ITY

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by David R. Fordham, KD9LA*

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