

March 2005

The Monitor

Published jointly by the Valley Amateur Radio Association and the Massanutten Amateur Radio Association, serving Amateur Radio in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley

LOOK! LOOK!

Yes, take a look at this month's Monitor!

There is more stuff going on around here than most hams think!

Take the time to look at every article in here! You might learn something!

VARA President's Message

March is truly one of the most special months of the year. As winter winds down, the promise of spring and new life is a magical experience. For our club, it is a period of anticipation for our many upcoming activities.

Our February meeting was well attended. It was nice to see Dan Beidler back with us. Thanks to Lou Joseph (W2LYL) for volunteering to be on the Field Day committee. We still need two more persons for this important task.

Many thanks to Dave Fordham (KD9LA) for a very interesting presentation on his recent stay in Belgium.

The club sends our condolences to the family of former VARA member, Leon Rosenberger (WA4ZQW), who passed away in January. Jeff Rinehart (W4PJW) gave a

tribute to Leon at our February meeting. I never had the privilege of meeting Leon, but it is obvious from the comments I've heard that he was well respected.

Look on page 8 of this issue for a Logo Contest we are holding. We need your help to design a new logo for the club.

In conclusion, I would like to end each future "President's Message" with the "Quote of the Month". I enjoy studying history and contributions of historical figures. The "Quote of the Month" for March comes from Sir Ernest Shackleton, the British explorer, who said; *"I want to do a little in the world to help it and no honest endeavor can be without its result."*

Marvin Henderson
VARA President

Monte Hall! Come On Down! Let's Make A Deal! Hey, Thomas Edison! Show Us Your Homebrew Inventions! Stop, Look, and Listen!

April is the annual HomeBrew Show-And-Tell and Trader's Meeting for the Massanutten Amateur Radio Club.

Now, don't skip the March meeting, either!

But start getting ready for April! Hurry and finish those QRP projects. Plan on bringing and showing us that 6-meter radio you made out of your Aunt Bertha's antique sewing machine! Bring and show off that six-band directional antenna you made out of left-over spaghetti and some old car-wash rags. Show us the mod you made to your IC-706 which allows it to

double as a color Xerox copy/fax machine. Bring and sell those old Heathkit 9Y7 tubes that have been collecting mold in your refrigerator for the last 40 years.

The April meeting is one of the most popular of the year. Even if you don't bring anything to show off or sell, come and make some bids. Who knows? You might find that unique power cable that goes on the end of your 1957 E.F. Johnson 200-meter receiver!

Leon Rosenberger, WA4ZQW, SK

Leon Rosenberger passed away on the last day of January.

He had been in the hospital two weeks earlier for an abdominal blockage, which doctors believed had been resolved. Leon was doing much better, getting his strength back and kidding around as his usual self, when another problem surfaced. He returned to the hospital for emergency surgery whereupon doctors found a tumor which subsequently ruptured. He had suffered from Crohn's disease for many years, and it is not clear whether the tumor was related to his affliction.

Leon, known affectionately by the ham radio community as "Rosie", was 87 years old. He was born and raised in Bridgewater, worked many years at the Merck plant in Elk-

ton, and retired from the American Safety Razor plant in Verona. He was a member of MARA and VARA over the years.

Rosie was active in the local ham clubs, and will always be known for his amazing accuracy in casting his fishing line into the trees to serve as a leader for raising the wire antennas at the annual Field Day events

Rosie is survived by his loving wife Helen, WA4ODD, and a son and two daughters and their families.

All services were private, but the ham community extends its sympathies and thoughts to Helen and the family. Zed Queue Willy will be greatly missed on the bands.

John Hochmeister, W9IMI, SK

John Hochmeister, W9IMI, MARA member, passed away on Friday morning, February 4, at the home of his daughter Angela Landes, in Weyers Cave, after an extended illness.

John was a long-time resident of the Rockingham-Augusta county line, maintaining a hilltop QTH which would be the envy of every ham in the valley. Overlooking Burketown as well as Mt. Crawford, the tree-shrouded hilltop until recently sported a very nice tower, used by John to amass a large collection of rare DX QSL cards.

John lost his wife a few years ago, and placed an ad in the monitor last year disposing of most of his station.

John's sister passed away last October. He had been in ill health for the last several months, including a couple of stays in RMH in December and January.

In addition to Angela, John is survived by a son who lives in North Carolina. John was the father-in-law of the local State Representative Steve Landes.

John was a master Mason, and full Masonic services were held at the Funeral Home in Staunton on Sunday, February 6. The formal funeral followed on February 7.

The thoughts and sympathies of the entire ham community is with John's family.

John Scott, KD4JUZ, SK

John Scott, KD4JUZ, of Lawyer Road, Penn Laird, passed away in mid-2004. A former member of MARA, John was an avid pilot and flight hobbyist. He taught diesel mechanics at Blue Ridge Community College for a number of years, and was a master of the Cummins' diesel engine line.

John had become active in the Civil Air Patrol over the last few years, an avocation which took up most of his free time. As a result, his signals disappeared from the local ham bands, allowing his passing to go unnoticed by the ham community.

John had been suffering from a minor ailment, and his doctor ordered an MRI at University of Virginia medical center to check for liver problems. The MRI came back negative, but unfortunately, John had a severe reaction to the contrast medium they injected in him for the MRI scan. The substance affected his kidneys, and he was in intensive care for eight weeks before finally succumbing.

John is survived by his wife, Wilsene Scott, as well as a son. The ham community extends its thoughts and sympathy to John's family.

E. Warren Denton, WA4FEI, SK

Warren Denton, WA4FEI, passed away last November 25 at age 78.

Warren inherited a furniture company from his father, but his love was in communications. His interest in ham radio grew into several successful businesses which he started in the valley, including In-Touch communications, which is currently operated by his son, Tripp Denton. The Radio Club of America called him a "pioneer of the paging industry".

In addition to his successful business career, Warren left a legacy of community service. Serving on the city council for

two terms, he expanded the school system, worked to raise pay for police officers and other city workers, and spearheaded the effort to annex land around what is now the Valley Mall area. He was honored by the State Government along with Zane Showker as being one of the valley's major philanthropists.

The ham community is indebted to Warren for his gracious offer of the Denton warehouse downtown Harrisonburg to store the Club's field day equipment, at no cost to the clubs. The ham community pays tribute to Warren and expresses our sympathies to his family.

VARA Club Call Honors Joe Moomaw, W4XD, SK

It's official. The Valley Amateur Radio Association has been assigned club call sign W4XD, formerly held by Joe Moomaw, charter and life member of VARA.

Joe's wishes were for his callsign to be assigned to the club. It is a great call for field days and other special events, and is

well known in the ham radio circles. (Notice that this call works DX backwards and forward!)

Dick Moomaw, Joe's son, wrote a letter to Ray Colvin, VARA Secretary, thanking the club for extending the honor to Joe.

Valley QRP Club: Much Ado With Practically Nothing

Andrew Barbour, AG4NX, continues to host the valley QRP group at his home in Staunton, just off the Interstate.

KG400N, KG4UPN, and others are still making those little radios that work the world using less energy than a firefly puts out on a cold winter's day.

The group meets every second Thursday, the week after the club meeting, and has a great time building, testing, and fellowshipping.

For directions to the location, call Andrew at 540-248-3240, or Mike at 540-248-7134. The group especially invites new hams to come out and see what QRP is all about!

Just a Minute! Just a Minute! Thanks to N4PZC!

Since the MARA club has been unsuccessful in finding someone to fill the spot of corporate secretary, the minutes of the club meetings have been taken graciously by Phyllis Haxton, N4PZC.

Phyllis is experienced in taking minutes, having served two terms as secretary. However, she believes strongly that an active and dynamic club needs new blood in the leadership positions. She makes it clear that she is doing this as a public-spirited citizen stepping forward on a temporary basis, not as acting secretary.

If you are a member of the Massanutten ARA, take the time to express your appreciation to Phyllis for her willingness to "save" the club in this manner. And better yet, consider filling in as secretary for the remainder of the year.

Verizon DSL Service Provides Free Wireless Gear, But No Security Instructions

Security settings are essential for anyone using wireless networks. Would you want to pay for an Internet connection that anyone driving by your house could use without your knowledge? That is exactly what is happening to some Verizon customers.

When you subscribe to Verizon DSL, the company sends you a DSL modem to plug into your phone jack. This modem separates the digital Internet signals from your telephone signals, allowing both signals to share your twisted-pair telephone line.

Subscribers to new DSL lines in the past few months have received a DSL modem which contains a built-in wireless router and access point. This combination piece of equipment is provided free of charge if you sign up for a full year's DSL service.

To Verizon's credit, the piece of equipment comes configured with the wireless link in the "Off" or disabled position.

But there were no instructions or guidance accompanying the equipment. In fact, a complete search of the CD which accompanied the equipment revealed instruction manuals for the modem part of the fixture (and several similar modems, too!), but alas, not one word about the wireless side of the equipment.

A Google search quickly turned up several listserv news posts containing inquiries about this particular model. Obviously many of Verizon's customers are savvy enough to want to use the wireless link. And from these posts, it was clear that activating the wireless 802.11 signal was simply a mouse-click away. Presto, you're on the air!

But wait! Those posts did not mention, let alone emphasize, the need for security!

Before you use an 802.11 wireless network link, you need to implement some common sense security measures.

First, you want to make sure that casual eavesdroppers cannot intercept and read your signals. There are numerous shareware and freeware programs out on the Internet (called packet sniffers) which capture and display the radio packets being broadcast by 802.11 equipment. While this interception is a little more difficult than merely using the "Monitor On" mode of a packet TNC, making it beyond the capability of the average citizen, there are still many, many highly sophisticated hackers out there who could, if they wanted to, intercept a packet containing some information you might not want them to have.

Second, and probably more importantly, you want to make sure a casual passerby (known as a war-driver) does not take advantage of your Internet connection by using your wireless access point as his or her connection to the Internet! For example, you probably don't want to provide your neighbor with free Internet service that you are paying for! Even if you are a good guy, this could be trouble! Letting just anyone use your Internet connection could expose you to serious liability if someone used the connection to commit a crime.

Stealing someone's open Internet connection through an unprotected wireless access point is easily within the capability of practically ANYONE with a wireless card — most wireless de-

vices and computers come equipped and set up to let even a clueless dummy detect, and even connect to such an open and unprotected Internet gateway!

And most people don't believe that stealing an open Internet line is doing any thing wrong! Their position is, if you've been stupid enough to leave your wireless access point open to the public, you deserve to pay for everyone else's Internet link.

Whether this position is justified, ethical, or even lawful, is moot — lots of otherwise-good people detect open networks, and use them without hesitation. This slows down the operation of your Internet connection, and as mentioned above, could create a huge liability for you if they abuse the Internet on your line.

Finally, you may not even want your neighbors to know you have a wireless connection.

As shipped, the Verizon equipment does not have any of the above security measures in place, and worse, nowhere do the instructions or documentation files mention them!

To achieve the first level of security (stopping eavesdroppers), you probably want to encrypt your data while it is on the radio link. You can easily activate WEP or WPA encryption, and even select your own 64, 128 or 256-bit key.

Using WEP or WPA encryption also goes a long way towards preventing a casual neighbor or drive-by war-driver from using your link as his/her free Internet access, too. But to achieve stronger security you can use MAC address filtering.

MAC address filtering is a little more complicated to set up than encryption, but still relatively easy. First, you need to find out the MAC address of the wireless devices you want to use on your network. All wireless network cards come programmed with this address (it can be found in the documentation or even on the set-up screens for your wireless device). Think of a MAC address as the unchangeable callsign of your network transmitter. You enter those MAC addresses into a file on your access point. Then, you tell your access point to allow connections only to those devices listed in your MAC address file.

By using MAC address filtering *combined* with encryption, you are providing a formidable barrier to the casual drive-by hacker who might try to access your network connection.

Finally, you can set your equipment so that the network's name (called the SSID) is not broadcast in the clear. Your network can still communicate with its designated devices, but the devices do not broadcast their network name, making it even harder for a casual eavesdropper to figure out how to address a packet to your system.

Verizon is doing a disservice to their customers by not providing clear, concise, instructions on their equipment. Worse, they aren't even telling novice 802.11 users about the dangers of not using security.

The need for security is not just for Verizon customers. No matter who your provider is, if you are using 802.11, secure your access point!

Where in the World is Carmen SanDiego? Or KC4HYO? Or WX4C?

If Carmen SanDiego had her ham license, it would be easy to answer that question!

Don Landes, WX4C, and Ed Good KC4HYO are the latest local valley hams to put APRS equipment in their vehicles.

Combining a simple packet radio station with a GPS receiver, you can send position reports which allow anyone to pinpoint your location on the map!

For example, if you point

your web browser to the following URL, you will see the current position of Don, WX4C:

<http://www.findu.com/cgi-bin/find.cgi?call=WX4C-14>

Substitute the "WX4C-14" with "KC4HYO-14" and you get Ed's position.

Replace it with "K4EME-3" and you can see Cowles.

The number after the call is determined by each ham, and is used to let individuals put more than one locator

on the map. For example, using N4DSL-3 will give you the location of Jason's repeater on Laird's Knob. Using N4DSL-14 will show you the location of his truck. Using just plain N4DSL will show you his home QTH.

By going to the home page of www.findu.com, you can not only see the current location of the station (including map and aerial photograph from satellite photo archives), but also obtain a track of the recent movements of the station

over time.

Getting on APRS is very easy, as Ed and Don will attest. A tiny-trak 2 TNC replacement is about the size of a tuna can, and configuration is quick and easy. Hook one side up to your GPS on the dash of your car, and the other side up to an extra HT on the cushion beside you or a mobile rig under the seat, and presto. Let your family know where you are at all times. It's just like living with Mom again!

WN4JMU Racks Up 83,000 points in School Club Roundup

The James Madison University Wireless Experimenter's club totaled up an impressive 83,151 points in the School Club Roundup the week of February 14-19.

Working four of the five days of the contest from the campus of JMU, the station contacted 46 states, 6 Canadian provinces, and 13 foreign stations, as well as 27 other school clubs and numerous club calls for multipliers.

Thanks to all the local hams who gave the station some extra contacts on 2-meter simplex! The station's final total: 357 QSO's.

This score, if done in last year's roundup, would have taken second place by a comfortable margin (last year's second place only scored 35,000 points.)

Alas, it may not be enough to beat Arizona State University's station, which last year scored 177,000 points! Time will tell.

The School Club Roundup is a unique contest in that stations can operate a maximum of six hours per day. Also, a grand total of 24 hours is all that can be entered in the contest.



The objective is to give teachers an opportunity to bring ham radio into the classroom and have someone else for students to talk to instead of the usual drivel you find on 75-meters or the 20-meter phone nets. Students find it more interesting to

talk to other students than to faceless old geezers who say things like "QSL old man, you are Five Nine Plus Twenty Over, name here is Baker Ocean Baker, QTH is Tango Alpha Mary Papa America, we QSL by Bureau fer shore, copy?"

Clayton, K4RHQ, In the News — — uh, Newspaper, That Is...

Subscribers to the Harrisonburg newspaper, the Daily News Record, were treated to a very nice article February 9, highlighting the accomplishments of long-time valley ham Clayton Towers, K4RHQ.

Although failing to emphasize Clayton's contributions to our hobby, the article was accompanied by a prominent photo of Clayton sitting at his radio desk, microphone in hand, no doubt enjoying some rare DX.

Clayton is a retired educator, having spent most of his life teaching young people the joys of science and technology. His favorite subject for enlightening young people, besides ham radio, is the weather.

Morning listeners to the AM radio station WSVB will easily recognize Clayton's name and voice. He gives the weather report from Bridgewater every morning on the station's popular "weather watcher's" segment.

Clayton has also been guest speaker for the Massanutten Amateur Radio Club meetings, giving demonstrations of weather measuring equipment. His demo's range from the latest state of the art technology, all the way back to the simplest piece of weather measurement imaginable: Clayton's famous "weather rock".

Hats off to K4RHQ.

More Hams In The Newspaper ... And On TV, Too!

High Five goes to Dale Armentrout, N9ATF, for getting his mugshot in the Harrisonburg newspaper. Dale appeared as an uncredited participant engaging in the ritual culinary experience at the L&S Diner. The picture appeared as part of a feature story about the L&S's local popularity among those with discriminating tastes.

Congratulations to George Brunk, WB4IXG, for getting his picture published in the Harrisonburg paper, too. George was booming out a deep, mellow, bass part of a hymn when a DNR photographer caught him in a picture accompanying a story about hymn singing in the valley.

And finally, kudos to Jay Suter, W4QDC, who, although not getting his face shown, was lucky enough to be driving down the street where a Channel 3 news photographer was filming and thus got a picture of his pretty blue pickup truck on the television, complete with his larger-than-life whip antenna showing!



And KB4LCI In A News Release

No, we don't have any idea where this photo was published, or whether we are violating copyrights by publishing it. But it was sent to us with the annotation that it depicts David Gordon, KB4LCI, at his work as the manager of Public Works Communications for the City's radio and telephone systems. (The caption didn't say WHICH city, but we suspect it is Danville, Virginia!) The photo accompanied a press report that David will be overseeing the construction of a new radio installation and tower on "Jenny Lane" (in Danville?) and that he received the MACOM radio certification last November. Congrats to KB4LCI.



James, KI4FZY, Wins School and County Science Fair Awards with Ham Radio

High Five and then some is due to James McDowell, KI4FZY, of Mount Sidney, for a great science fair project on ham radio.

James conducted a test to determine how much Peak Envelope Power, as measured in watts, would be needed from his hand-held tri-band radio in Mount Sidney to reach the W3MMC repeater on the mountain east of New Market, with a full-quieting FM capture effect.

As part of the project, James had to articulate a problem and corresponding hypothesis to describe his test. He then had to describe the procedures and detailed steps for conducting the test. The data collected had to be recorded and displayed in chart, graph, and summary form. Finally, he had to prepare a quality presentation board to display his work and explain his project — a task almost as daunting as conducting the test!

Additionally, he had to discuss the details of the project with the judges, and was expected to answer their questions.

James reports that he had a lot of fun with the project because he was able to combine his hobby with a school assignment.

But in addition to the fun, James' project walked away with the top honors, not once, but TWICE!

First, the project placed in the best of the best at Stewart Middle School (in Fort Defiance in Augusta County).

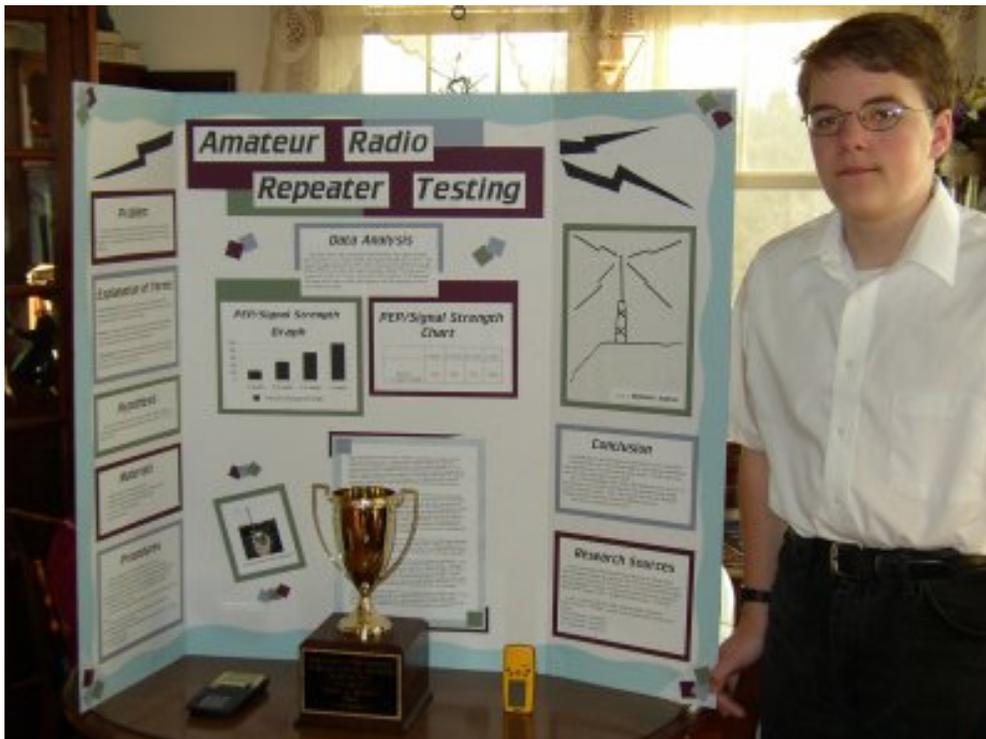
Next, he went on to win the **Grand Prize** at the county science fair at Beverly Middle School, topping the winners from Staunton, Waynesboro, and other schools in Augusta County!

In addition to a very nice trophy, James received a Geko 101 GPS receiver, and a Texas Instruments calculator.

He now goes on to the Regional Science Fair to be held at JMU in March. There, he will compete from the best of the best from counties all over the western part of Virginia.

James is the grandson of long-time Rockingham County ARES Net Manager Norman Benner, KA4EEN, and a member of the Massanutten Amateur Radio Association.

Good Luck, James!





VARA Logo Design Contest

The new callsign of the Valley Amateur Radio Association is now W4XD. This replaces W4MUS. Do we need a new logo to be on our website, Field Day banner, and for other official club uses? Here is your opportunity to help us design a new logo.

RULES

1. The new logo needs to have W4XD and VARA (or some version of Valley Amateur Radio Association) as part of the design or layout.
2. Bring designs to the April 5, 2005 club meeting. Present your design on paper no larger than 17" x 17". These will be put on display in our room at Kathy's during the meal.
3. Judging on the designs will be done by the membership at that April meeting.
4. Put your name on the BACK of the design proposal, not the front.

Shenandoah County Ham Happenings

Hams in Shenandoah County have been trying out a new two-meter simplex net, and Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week, on 146.550 MHz simplex.

On February 16, WN4JMU was operating on that frequency, simplex from the Harrisonburg campus, and most of the hams in Shenandoah County could hear him very well, which was a pleasant surprise for everyone.

In fact, Tom, AF2D, could copy the Harrisonburg station all the way to Warren County, well north of Strasburg.

The Shenandoah County hams welcome check-ins from any and ALL other ham stations, especially ones in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, to further test the simplex range and coverage. Thank you in advance for your help!

Jim Stamper, KG4LDY

Help for Mobile Radio Installers

"Farmer Al" Bonck, N3JB, provided us with some great URL's for those of us who own cars! These websites, published in the ARRL Contest Rate Sheet for February, give information about installing electronic radio transmitting equipment in modern automobiles. They are full of good information about grounding, cable routing, noise management, and other hints and helps. Check them out if you are thinking about installing a mobile radio in your car. Thanks to Al for submitting this helpful information.



General Motors: <http://service.gm.com/techlineinfo/radio.html>

Chrysler Motors: <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/pdf/INSTG01.pdf>

Ford Motor Company: http://www.fordemc.com/docs/download/Mobile_Radio_Guide.pdf

A Different Kind of Contact Sport!

The afternoon of February 6 — a mild temperature, excellent weather — a perfect day for a football game. In fact, that was exactly what has happening in Jacksonville, Florida, as the 39th Superbowl competition was heating up.

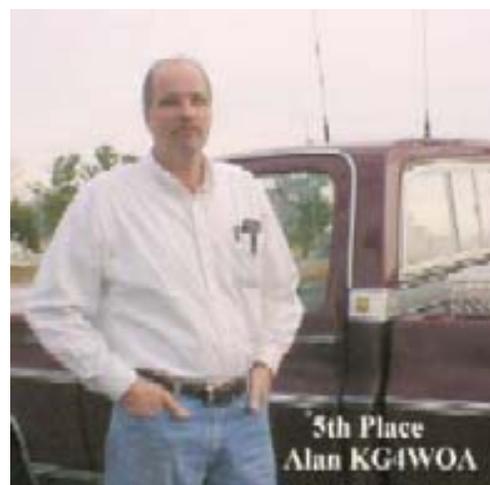
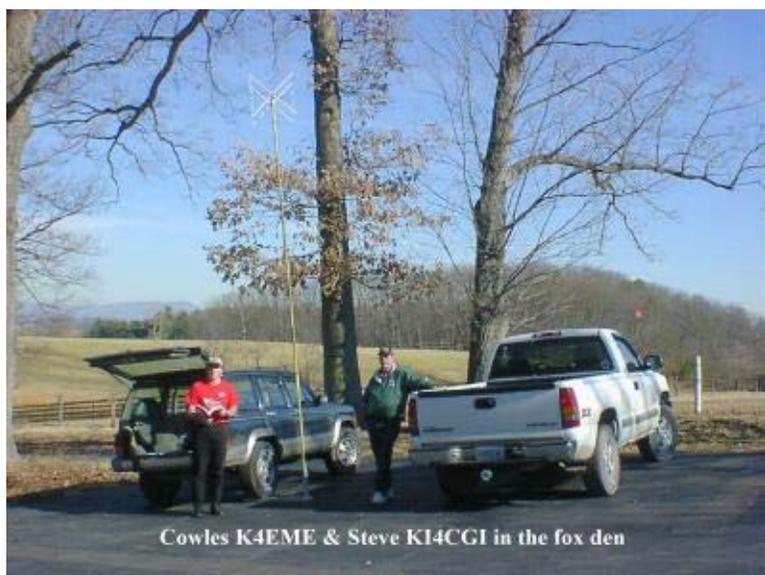
But 800 miles to the north, in Virginia's Augusta County, a different sort of contact sport was going on.

Cowles Andrus, K4EME, Steve Davis, KI4CGI, and Ray Colvin KE4HVR, were posing as foxes, transmitting from an undis-

closed location a minute or two out of every five, and every now and then throwing in some sly and dirty tricks

It took the hunters an hour and 18 minutes before they were able to locate the foxes.

A good time was had by all: David Tanks AD4TJ, Gary Van Fossen KI4FZV, Joe Meek KD4FKT, Alan Homes KG4WOA, John Schlabach KI4FDG, James (IV) McDowell KI4FZY, and David Wolf KR4VL.



New Wrinkles for Field Day

Those planning to participate in this year's Field Day will need to bone up in advance on a few changes in the rules for the ever-popular operating event.

Field Day this year takes place June 25-26. The 2261 Field Day entries for 2004 were the most ever. While similar in format to a contest, Field Day is primarily a means to exercise and demonstrate Amateur Radio's emergency operating capabilities while having fun at the same time.

ARRL Contest Branch Manager Dan Henderson, N1ND, says that among other things rule changes for 2005 expand eligibility for bonus points.

"All groups will be eligible for some kind of bonus points," Henderson said. "Make sure you carefully read Field Day Rule 7.3."

That rule spells out how to qualify for such bonus points as 100 percent emergency

power, media publicity, message handling, making satellite contacts, using an alternative power source and copying the W1AW bulletin, among other things. Many bonus point categories are available to all entry classes.

Henderson notes that some large clubs often compete among themselves to see who can claim the highest number of transmitters. Under the revised rules, all transmitters must be on the air with an operator to count toward a club's entry class.

"You have to actually have individual people and sufficient equipment capable of operating simultaneously," Henderson emphasized, referencing Rule 4. "The key word there is simultaneously."

The Field Day exchange consists of the number of transmitters on the air followed by the participation category (A through F). Operators would send "3A," for example, for a club or non-club

portable setup with three transmitters on the air at the same time.

Rule 4 also specifically prohibits switching and simulcasting devices.

The 2005 Field Day rules also modify the number of transmitters eligible for bonus points that a group can claim for its operating class.

"You can only claim the emergency power bonus points for up to 20 transmitters," Henderson explains. "That's a maximum of 2000 emergency power bonus points."

There no limit on the number of transmitters eligible participants may have on the air, however. Field Day rules already generally prohibit the use of more than one transmitter at the same time on a single band-mode.

In addition, Field Day 2005 will introduce a new "Youth Element" bonus category (Rule 7.3.15). Clubs or groups operating in Class A,

C, D, E or F now can claim 20 bonus points—up to a maximum of 100—for each person aged 18 or younger, who completes a valid Field Day contact.

Single-operator Class B stations can earn a 20-point bonus if the operator is age 18 or younger. Two-person Class B setups can claim a 20-point bonus for each operator age 18 or younger, for a maximum of 40 points.

The maximum number of participants for Class B entries remains at two.

Another rule change clarifies that Get On The Air (GOTA) stations—instituted a few years ago to encourage new or comparatively inexperienced operators to gain operating practice—use the same exchange as the "parent" station.

The maximum transmitter output power for GOTA stations is 150 W, and GOTA stations may only operate on the Field Day HF bands.

Free transmitters do not count toward a group's total, and GOTA stations and free VHF stations for Class A entries do not qualify for bonus point credits."

Reprinted from the ARRL Letter, published by the American Radio Relay League

Professional Tower — Amateur Usage

Ellsworth Neff, K4LXG, announced at the February MARA meeting that Verstandig Broadcasting company is no longer using their 400-foot tower located in southern Harrisonburg.

This tower is equipped with a super ground radial system, and makes a great vertical antenna for the low bands.

Several hams have successfully loaded up the tower and worked 40,

80, and 160 meters.

As the Monitor goes to press, there are plans for K4RMY, WA4KKL, and N4DSL to work the CQ 160-meter contest from the site.

If you would be interested in experimenting with this tower, call Ellsworth at 433-3550 or 434-0331. The tower is being abandoned, and there is no guarantee how long it remain standing.

Thanks to W4QDC, N1QEQ, K4DJG, and others

A hearty thank-you is due to Jay Suter (W4QDC), Bob Steere (N1QEQ), and Bob Van Fossen (K4DJG) for assisting KD9LA in the handling of several silent key's estates.

Jay helped KD9LA with the assessment and identification of KD4JUZ's station.

Bob Steere spent the better part of a day helping take down, dismantle, pack, load, and transport KD4JUZ's equipment, antennas, masts, and other material.

Estate Sale Continues

There are numerous items still remaining from the estates of N4EAU, W2CID, KD4JUZ, W8DTD, and others. Dave, KD9LA, is still holding the following items, available to hams for the prices shown:

Four (4) high-end Akai home theater quality speakers, in great condition. Two of the cabinets are four feet high, two are 21-inches high, speakers and cones in mint condition, handles 200 watts. Asking \$100 for entire set, or best offer.

Two smaller component speakers, woofers in poor condition but still sound good. Best offer.

Full box of miscellaneous telephone wiring supplies (cable, jacks, boxes, cover plates, cords, etc.) make offers.

Miscellaneous 10-Base-T and 100-Base-T networking supplies (Ethernet cords, wall plates, etc.), make offers.

Vo-Com 2-meter HT amplifier, 2-watts in yields 30-watts out, 5-watts in yields 45 watts out. \$45

RF Concepts 2-meter HT amplifier with receive pre-amp, 2-watts in yields 20 watts out. Works FM or SSB. \$60.

Bob Van Fossen arranged and paid for a commercial table at the Richmond Frostfest. This table was used to display the equipment of several silent key's estates: KD4JUZ, N4EAU, W8DTD, and W2CID.

Thanks also to N3JN, W4PJW, KD4UPL, and several other hams who purchased or otherwise helped dispose of this equipment for the families.

Power distribution box, unfused, 12-volt \$2

Television Monitor. 21-inch Sony Trinitron, tuner doesn't work, but video-in jacks (RCA) allow great picture and sound from source such as DVD player, VHS player, Playstation, etc.

Television camera: Sony Handi-cam camcorder where the tape mechanism no longer works. RCA-jack audio/video output makes this camera a perfect companion for the TV above, to create a surveillance system.

Asking \$150 for the camera and monitor, but KD9LA is anxious to get this stuff out of his garage, so deals can be made!

Various lengths of coaxial cable, RG-8 type.

Box full of shielded 6' power cables with 120-VAC 3-prong plug molded on one end. Asking \$1 per cord, but huge discount for quantity purchases!

Four lengths of 10' Radio Shack TV mast, slight rust, but with good physical integrity. \$5 per length.

If you are interested in any of these items, contact Dave at fordhadr@jmu.edu, or telephone 540-234-0448.

Clubs Express Appreciation to Hams for Equipment Relocation Effort

With the passing of Warran Denton, the MARA and VARA clubs were requested to find a new storage location for the Field Day equipment. Long located in Denton's downtown Harrisonburg warehouse, the motley collection of antennas, masts, guy wires, and other paraphernalia was relocated to a temporary storage area (AG4XN's yard!) until more permanent storage can be arranged.

On short notice, a group of hams was recruited to spend a Saturday identifying, inventorying, packing, loading, relocating, and unloading the equipment. Helping were Bill Karle KG4UPN (president and spearheader), Andrew Barbour. AG4XN, Bill's brother Tim Karle, AL1VE from Arkansas, Jason Armentrout N4DSL, Sandy Mullins K4PZC, Ray Ritchie K4NRA, and Bryan Daniels K4RMY.

Plans are tentatively being made to store the equipment (for a to-be-negotiated price) at a mini-warehouse west of town. If you have any leads on cheaper storage, let the MARA club president know!

Return of the Opinionated One: Hobbies – Getting Started in Ham Radio

I was on 15 meters the other day, talking to an old friend down in Florida by the name of Fleming Beddwedder. We got on the subject of hobbies.

“How’d you get started in ham radio?” asked Flem.

“It’s a long story,” I replied.

“Shucks, I knowed that,” said Flem. “All of your stories are long. Remember that time poor ol’ Spitz’n Vommett’s barn caught fire, and the fire truck stopped at your house to ask directions to Spitz’s house? The barn was gone and the fire’d done burnt itself out and the insurance adjuster was there before you’d finished telling the fire truck driver where to take the turn off the main road!”

“Don’t bring that up again,” I hissed. “It’s a long story because it’s a long story. I can’t help it if you ask questions that take a long time to answer.”

That got me to thinking. If Flem was interested in how I got started in this hobby, maybe readers of the Monitor would be interested, too.

Yeah, right. Not a snowball’s chance, as they say. But I’ll write the story anyway, because it’s Wednesday afternoon, and this month we need — not one, but two — pages of filler to round out the newsletter and make an even multiple of four pages for the paper copy.

So here goes. My interest in radio dates back to my childhood. In fact, I remember the exact moment I became interested in two-way wireless communication.

Let me give you some background. Let’s go back to one June day in North Florida, when

I was 11 years old. I and my friend Sniffie McGee were in his back yard, looking for something to do. “I’m already bored with summer vacation,” Sniffie said.

“Yeah, me too. We need a hobby,” I offered. “Maybe we could build something.”

“No way,” Sniffie snapped. “Remember what happened last time you and me used Pa’s tools?”

“Oh, yeah, I guess you’re right. Did he ever get the saber-saw out of the wall?”

“No, but he wasn’t nearly as mad about that as he was about what we did to the drill press and his arc welder. Anyway, Pa said next time we build something, we can’t use his tools.”

Well, that pretty much settled that, because as any man, even an 11-year-old one, will tell you, the only reason to build things in the first place is so you can use tools.

“Hey, how about making wine? My Aunt Violet up in Minnesota makes wine, and sells it for \$10 a bottle. and it don’t take tools. All you need is some grapes & some empty bottles.”

“Your Aunt Violet? Is that the funny-looking lady with the mole that looks like that mountain pictured on the cover of last month’s National Geographic?”

“Yep, that’s her. Her name is Violet, but everyone calls her ‘Vile’ for short. Pa says once you get to know her, you know why. He says all of mom’s sisters should have been named Violet.”

“Okay, sounds good to me. Where do we get the grapes

and the bottles?” I asked.

“Well, there’s a scuppernong arbor over at my Aunt Luce’s place. I’m sure we can gather some from there without her missing them.”

“Your Aunt Luce? Is she the real pretty one with red hair?” I asked.

“Yeah, that’s her. Her real name is Lucy, but everybody calls her ‘Luce’ for short. Ma says she got that nickname in High School ‘cause that’s what all the guys on the football team said she was.”

“Okay. Where do we get the bottles?”

“I think I know!” Sniffie grinned. “Come with me.” I followed him into their old rickety garage, a run-down unpainted wooden building at the very back of their property. Calling it a garage was something of a stretch, because it had no doors and no back wall.

“Look up here in the attic,” said Sniffie. Calling it an attic was even more of a stretch. It was nothing more than a piece of plywood laid down on the cross-beams under the roof. It could only be reached by propping a metal extension ladder up between the beams.

“Gee, this would be an ideal clubhouse for us,” I said.

“Yeah, Pa said the same thing. That’s why he said it’s off limits to us. We shouldn’t even be here.”

We climbed up the ladder, and there on the plywood sat a dozen cardboard boxes, each full of empty mason jars.

“Ma got them at a flea market. She was gonna can the stuff from our garden, but the bugs

got to the garden first, and she never used them.” The lids were all rusty.

“Are you sure she won’t mind if we use them?” I asked.

“Let’s not tell her. Haven’t you noticed that any time we tell Ma or Pa about what we’re doing, they get all nervous and shaky and real upset?”

Sniffie had a point. The less his parents knew about what we were doing, the better off everybody was, it seemed.

It was June, and the scuppernongs were ripe. If you aren’t familiar with scuppernongs, they are huge green grapes that grow all over the southeastern U.S. The only thing we didn’t think about was, wine is made from grape *juice*, not whole grapes. Scuppernongs aren’t particularly juicy. They are big and pulpy. But being 11 years old, this particular operational detail escaped us.

We must have collected two tons of grapes over the next month. We stepped on them (Sniffie said you had to step on grapes to make wine), and then stuffed them into the jars and screwed on the lids.

“This doesn’t look right,” I said, surveying our first box, a carton of 24 quart-sized mason jars containing a mash that looked more like stewed okra than it did the rich purple wine we had envisioned.

“That’s cause it’s gotta age. It may take months to turn into wine,” explained Sniffie.

Now at this point, I need to pause and point out that grapes, like all fruits, contain sugar. We had spilled some of the grape mash on the boards while we were filling the jars.

I'll also explain that in Florida we have a particularly irritable insect called a "paper hornet". It loves sweet stuff. It also chews up cardboard and uses the pulp to build these huge nests which can contain hundreds or thousands of the short-tempered critters.

A few months later, Sniffie and I put the ladder up to the attic to check on the progress of our wine collection. As we climbed the ladder, we quickly discovered that our stack of boxes had been turned into a huge seven-foot-high hornet nest. The hornets had discovered the spilled grape mash and decided this would be a good place for a multi-family housing development. They were in the process of consuming the cardboard and encasing our mason jar collection within the walls of their gated community.

As soon as the hornets realized that two 11-year-old boys were checking out their neighborhood, they immediately began informing us of their development's deed and covenant restrictions, especially the provision which prohibited 11-year-old boys from visiting the area. This experience is the main reason why to this day I hate covenanted neighborhoods.

Two boxes of baking soda later, we decided the hornets could take title to our wine without payment, since we weren't interested in contracting the services of a collection agency. So we just abandoned the whole wine project, leaving the jars to the hornets.

But I still haven't gotten to the part about my interest in radio. Read on.

About two years later, Sniffie calls me on the phone. "Come over here quick," he sounded excited. "Pa just turned 40,

and he told Ma he was going through a midlife crisis, and he just bought a new Thunderbird convertible!"

I literally ran the mile from my house to Sniffies. A real 1967 Thunderbird convertible! Wow!

The car was parked in the old garage out back. "Pa put the top down yesterday, and couldn't figger out how to get it back up, so he parked it out here to keep the dew off it.

Sniffie's Pa was in the house, but when he saw me through the window, he ran outside. Sniffies' Pa is a short fat little fellow who suffers from high blood pressure, nervous shakes, and a host of similar ailments, all of which those people who know the family attribute totally to the fact that he is Sniffie McGee's daddy.

"Don't touch my car!" he yelled as he rushed to where Sniffie and I were looking into the garage. "Get away, get away, I don't want you... What the -?!"

Now I've never understood why they put white velour car seats in a convertible. Sniffie's dad saw a brown spot on his white car seat, and looked up at the roof of the garage to see where it had come from. Sniffie and I recognized it as honey, but his Pa didn't.

"Dad-gum it," he fussed. "I'll bet there's a pigeon or something up there building a nest." Mr. McGee propped the ladder up in the attic and began climbing. Sniffie and I looked at each other, eyes wide, paralyzed with fear. Mr. McGee reached the point on the ladder where he was at eye-level with the plywood board. He peered into the darkened attic, not recognizing the true identity of the seven-foot-high edifice. Sniffie and I both opened our mouths to shout a warning, but it was too

late. Awakened by the vibration on the plywood, the hornets started their engines, and suddenly the garage was filled with a buzzing so loud it sounded like a submarine klaxon.

Mr. McGee yelled out a loud "Whoooooeeeeee" and jerked back on the ladder without thinking about where it (or he) was going to go. He also completely forgot that the plywood on which the ladder was leaning wasn't nailed down.

To complicate matters, Sniffie's old dog Poopy had been asleep under the hickory tree outside, but hearing the "Whooooee" from Mr. McGee, she thought she was being called. Seeing the Thunderbird, she figured we were going for a ride. She ran to the car and jumped over the door into the front seat.

That happened to be the very spot where Sniffie's dad was headed, now that he'd jumped off the falling ladder.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, in Poopy's nine year life had ever prepared her for the sight of a 40-year-old, balding pot-bellied man coming out of the sky towards her while she was sitting on a car seat. She looked up, saw Mr. McGee, arms and legs outstretched like a hawk swooping down on a mouse, and she froze. Well, most of her froze. At least one major part of her digestive system was still working a little bit.

When the impact came, you never heard such a sound. There was yelping and growling and snapping jaws and gnashing teeth and howling that would curdle your blood. The dog was making some noise, too.

And then two things happened in the next second. First, Sniffie and I both decided that for our own safety, we were going to

live the rest of our lives in Brazil, and that this very moment would be a great time to depart. We took off running as fast as we could.

Second, the plywood board, knocked out of position when the ladder jerked, gave way. The huge nest tilted over and broke across the beams. It came apart in sections, spilling 366 glass mason jars, a few dozen at a time, each jar holding a quart of thick, sticky, black, pungent mash which had been rotting for two years in the sweltering Florida heat.

And ten thousand hornets, really irritated at having their property owners' association meeting so rudely interrupted, commenced live-fire testing of their personal weaponry and associated delivery systems.

As Sniffie and I ran without looking back, we wondered if perhaps Brazil might still be too close to north Florida. We could hear the glass jars bursting against the hood, the trunk, the windshield, and even the car seats of Mr. McGee's new Thunderbird. We could hear the howling of Poopy over the yells of Mr. McGee, as they fought each other trying to seek shelter in the T-Bird's glove compartment. And over it all, like the deep bass note on a pipe organ, was this really loud, eerie buzzing sound.

Later that evening, about ten o'clock or so I'd guess, Sniffie and I were riding our bikes down a dusty dirt road, illuminating the tracks ahead of us with a flashlight.

"I sure wish I had a two-way radio," he said. "That way I could ask somebody how far it is to Brazil."

And that is how I first got interested in ham radio.

MARA Secretary's Report – February 3 Meeting

The MARA February meeting was opened at 7:30 PM by its President Bill Karle, KG4UPN. Introductions were made and several guests were introduced. David Fordham was accompanied by his wife Deborah Fordham and his daughter Dianna. Jerry Brunk introduced Ken Brunk and Ken's son Gabriel. They are interested in becoming radio amateurs.

At present there is no one on the sick list.

Leon Rosenberger [WA4ZQW], a well-known ham who is usually present every Field Day, died this week at age 86. He would throw the lines up in the trees when others found it difficult to place the antenna lines where they were needed, so Field Day could continue. He will be missed.

A motion was made to give \$50.00 to the local Rescue Squad. There was a discussion and all agreed to send the amount and the motion was passed unanimously.

No new call signs were reported.

The Treasurers report was accepted as given.

The Secretary's report was accepted as read in the Monitor.

The position of secretary remains open. If you feel that you can perform this office, please get in touch with Bill Karle or any member on the board. Their names are on the last page of the Monitor.

There will be a test for amateur licenses at the Woodmen of the World building on Route 42 near Dayton at 9:00 am Saturday the 12th

of February. As a reminder, it is the day we celebrate Abraham Lincoln's birthday.

Dale Showalter [N4DAI] gave a good report of the progress & condition of the new EOC Communication System, including pictures of the center and some equipment.

Our QRP Club will meet on 7p.m. at Andrew's home on the second Thursday of the month. If you would like to know the way to his home, phone him for directions. His home phone is 540-337-1201. His address is: 516St James Rd, Fishersville, VA, 22939.

Elsworth was presented with a plaque, thanking him for his service as our president.

The 50-50 was called. Deborah Fordham was the winner. She donated her share of the kitty to the club.

Thank you Deborah for your contribution.

The business meeting was closed at 8:10.

David Fordham was our special person of the evening, sharing some slides and other information of his trip supervising JMU students on a four month study trip to Belgium. He especially enjoyed the experience as his wife and daughters were able to accompany him. The remainder of the evening showed David as an excellent photographer, a wonderful humorist, and understanding of other cultures. Any time David can return to us as a speaker we will welcome him.

Respectfully Submitted
Phyllis Haxton, N4VZC

Calendar of Events

March 1: VARA Club Meeting
 March 2: Highland County ARES Net (147.18 repeater PL 100)
 March 3: MARA Club Meeting
 March 5-6: ARRL DX SSB Contest
 March 5: Page County ARES Net (146.67 repeater, PL 114)
 March 7: Rockingham County ARES Net (simplex 146.55)
 March 10: QRP Group Meeting
 March 12-13: Charlotte (NC) Hamfest
 March 13: Vienna Virginia Winterfest Hamfest
 March 13: Augusta County ARES Fox Hunt (talking 147.075 rptr)
 March 13: Page County ARES Net (146.67 repeater, PL 114)
 March 14: Rockingham County ARES Net (145.13 repeater PL 88)
 March 16: Highland County ARES Net (147.18 repeater PL 100)
 March 19: Charleston (WV) Hamfest
 March 19-21: Virginia QSO Party
 March 20: Page County ARES Net (146.67 repeater PL 114)
 March 21: Rockingham County ARES Net (145.13 repeater PL 88)
 March 26-27: CQ WW WPX Contest
 March 27: Page County ARES Net (146.67 repeater PL 114)

April 2-3: Baltimore (Timonium) Hamfest
 April 5: VARA Club Meeting
 April 7: MARA Annual Homebrew/Trader's meeting
 April 9: VE Examinations in Dayton, Virginia
 April 17: Raleigh (NC) Hamfest
 April 17: York (PA) Hamfest
 April 29-30: SE VHF Conference (Charlotte NC)

May 1: Hagerstown (MD) Hamfest
 May 3: VARA Club Meeting
 May 5: MARA Club Meeting
 May 20-21: Dayton (OH) Hamvention
 May 28-29: CQ WW WPX CW Contest

June 2: MARA Meeting
 June 7: VARA Meeting
 June 11: Winston-Salem (NC) Hamfest
 June 18-24: Camping at Field Day Site
 June 24: Field Day Pot-Luck Dinner
 June 25-26: Field Day

VARA Secretary's Report – February 1 Meeting

The Valley Amateur Radio Association met at Kathy's in Verona on Feb. 1, 2005. The President, Marvin Henderson KF4WDI, opened the meeting at 7:30pm. There were 32 members present and 4 guests, David Pickering KF4JCY, Bill Karle KG4UPN, Andrew Barbour AG4XN and Bob Van Fossen K4DJG. Welcome to our visitors, and we would like to see all of you back next month.

Joe Pehan W4LIG won the 50/50 drawing. Congratulations Joe. Don't forget to take Maria out to eat!

Field Day is coming and Marvin is looking for two more volunteers for the Field Day 2005 Committee. Louis Joseph W2LYL has volunteered to help.

ON THE SICK LIST:

Dan Beidler KE4JSX Dan attended our February meeting and looked great. It was good to see you Dan!

Ken Harris KE4GKD is still visiting his doctors regularly. But ask about his dry bath,

the picture came out on the net.

Leon Rosenberger WA4ZQW – SK on Monday Jan. 31, 2005. Leon will be missed by all the valley hams. **Lets keep these folks in our thoughts and prayers.**

The VARA voted to send a donation in memory of Leon Rosenberger WA4ZQW, Leon was one of the early members of the VARA.

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 Billy Hooke KG4JOF at: kg4jof@arrl.net Also a picture of the item would help it sell. Go to VARA Web Site at: <http://www.qsl.net/w4mus/> **PLEASE notify Billy when your item is sold.**

ADDRESSES!!! Keep your e-mail address up to date. Please send them to: Marvin Henderson KF4WDI marvista@ntelos.net Jeff Rinehart W4PJW jmrinehart@yahoo.com Ray

Colvin KE4HVR colvingr@adelphia.net and David Fordham KD9LA fordhadr@jmu.edu Also, it's good to keep QRZ updated when call signs and e-mail addresses are changed.

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. Fox hunts are also scheduled for some months as weather permits.

PROGRAMS NEEDED: Richard AA4RH, 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.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02pm.

David Fordham KD9LA gave a slide presentation of his recent trip to Antwerp, Belgium with a group of college students. David said Belgium takes you back in time and housing from what he was used to at home. The buildings were really old but kept in good shape. The buildings were built against each other but some had shifted one way or the other. One thing strange about them, they didn't get any cracks in them as they shifted. There were very few elevators and most buildings had at least four floors, the first floor was numbered "0" and a basement floor was numbered "-1". There were lots of beautiful buildings with fancy trim work and sculptures. The transportation was by bicycle, very small cars and trolleys because of gas prices. They had to use special power strips to plug into the Belgium receptacles. He passed around some of the power strips, coins and paper money for us to look at. Then at the end he showed some slides in Flemish and explained how easy it was to figure out what was written on the street signs and the front of stores.

Great job David! Thanks on behalf of the VARA.

Respectfully Submitted
Ray Colvin, KE4HVR
VARA Secretary

Rockingham County Fox Hunt

To hone the skills of Rockingham County Hams, the new ARES net coordinator, Vic Alger KE4LKQ, decided to run the February 7 Rockingham ARES net as a simplex fox hunt.

The net is normally a simplex net on 146.55 on the first Monday of the month.

Vic hoped to stimulate some interest by not disclosing his location and asking hams to either triangulate him by either comparing signal strength readings from various locations for hams with beams, or perhaps by the old fox hunting method of RDF direction finding.

A team found the fox after less than an hour, located on the hilltop near EMU's observatory. There was no official report turned in to the newsletter editor, so recognition to the winner will have to wait until next month.

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: Bill Karle KG4UPN
Vice President: Bryan Daniels K4RMY
Secretary: vacant
Treasurer: Sandy Mullins, K4PZC
Board (exp 05): John Nelson N3JN
Board (exp 06): Richard Weaver W3HXH

<http://mara.ws>

MARA meets the first Thursday of each month at
Ever's Restaurant on U.S. 11, just north
of the traffic light in Mt. Crawford.

Meal starts at 6:30 pm.
Business meeting starts 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: Billy Hooke, KG4JOF
Vice President: Greg Czerniak, W4GRC
Secretary: Ray Colvin, KE4HVR
Treasurer: Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW
Program Manager: Richard Huttinger, AA4RH

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

VARA meets the first Tuesday of each month
at Kathy's Restaurant on U.S. 11 north of
the traffic light in Verona.

Meal starts at 6:30 pm.
Business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

Visitors are welcome.

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

Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW
1344 Hankey Mtn Hwy
Churchville, VA 24421