

March 2007

# The Monitor

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## **MARA Meeting March 1 : Radio Station HCJB, Quito Ecuador**

The March meeting of the Massanutten Amateur Radio Association will be held at Tradition's Restaurant on Highway 42 at the Mt. Clinton Pike. Dinner starts at 6:00 pm, Business Meeting begins about 7:00, followed immediately by the program.

This month, we have a video provided by Gerry Brunk, K4RBZ, about the engineering and broadcast facilities of shortwave broadcast station HCJB in Quito Ecuador. Basically a home movie taken by one of the station engineers, this video shows a behind-the-scenes look at a world-class shortwave broadcast station's transmitter and antenna facilities.

## **VARA Meeting March 6 : Movie Part II?**

Want more? The second half of the video, "Death of the Electric Car", may be shown at the VARA meeting. The meeting will be held at Lynn's Pancake House on US 250 West of Waynesboro. As usual, dinner will start at 6:00 pm, the business meeting will begin around 7 pm, followed by the movie.

## **Monitor: Better Late Than Never.... Ummmm, Maybe?**

This month's Monitor is late due to circumstances beyond the editor's control. If you read the Opinionated One's article this month, and then extend it to the travails of new operating systems, new upgrades to a campus network, emergencies in Europe, snowstorms cancelling flights into and out of Dulles airport, faculty curriculum committee meetings, and student drinking problems, you will begin to understand the delay. Thanks to all who have the patience to wait on the newsletter this month.

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## Local Amateur Response to the February 13-14, 2007 Winter Storm

On February 13th, the Shenandoah Valley experienced its largest winter storm of the 2006-2007 winter season so far.

Originally predicted to be a major snow storm, the weather turned into a sleet, freezing rain, and snow event.

Early on the morning of Feb. 13, Vic K4XTT (RACES RO) received a call from Capt. Jim Junkins of the Harrisonburg/Rocking-ham Emergency Communications Center asking if amateur radio operators would be able to standby in case of a major communications outage as a result of the storm.

Vic K4XTT then contacted Bryan K4RMY (ARES EC), and a plan was quickly put into place.

As of 1800 local time, Bryan K4RMY used email and announcements on the 147.225 repeater to place Rocking-ham/Harrisonburg ARES in standby mode. A call went out for several volunteers to man the ECC starting at 0700 on Feb. 14th.

First shift at ECC was Vic K4XTT and Matthew KD4UPL.

Bryan K4RMY and Bob N1QEQ volunteered to help out starting at 0900.

Fortunately, the need for emergency amateur radio communications never materialized, and the standby was discontinued at 1200 on Feb. 14th.

During the standby, several nets were called to determine who would be available if needed and to make various announcements.

Vic K4XTT (RACES RO) and Bryan K4RMY (ARES EC) would like to thank all those who checked in to the various nets and helped out at the ECC. The following list is not in any special order, but is taken from the log sheets of the nets ( I apologize if I missed anyone or made a mistake in a call sign. ;-)

**N4DUG, K4NRA, N3JN, KD4UPL, K4RMY, K4XTT, KA4EEN, WA0TPN, W3HXH, KG4PRP, N4ZFK, KQ4D, W3MMC, N4DBX, N1QEQ, K4RBZ, KE4JFB, K4KLH, KG4FZY, KE4JFB, N4VZC, KC3AN**

As you can see we had a very good turnout. It is nice to know that local amateurs can be counted on when a possible emergency situation exits. Again , thanks to all who helped out.

Bryan K4RMY

## MARA President's Message

Greetings Fellow Hams and Hamsters,

We had a good turnout for our February meeting in spite of snow in the forecast. In fact, we left the meeting only to discover snow falling and our cars covered with white stuff. I guess that is why this time of year is called "winter".

As stated at our meeting, the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer are going to look over the by-laws and make specific recommendations. Very often we put more information in our by-laws than is necessary and instead of our by-laws helping us, they hinder our efficiency. That is why most organizations keep the by-laws simple, usually no more than a page or two at the most. Then the organization writes a manual that contains "standard operating procedures" which cover day-to-day operations and can be easily changed without an act of congress. So that's what we are going to do. We are going to make things simpler. I think you will like what we have done when you see our recommendations.

In fact, I want to thank Jeff (W4PJW), Doug (N8ESW), and Ray (KE4HVR) for their invaluable help in this process.

Last month I mentioned that Amateur Radio Operators should be prepared to be called upon in case of an emergency. Such an event took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of February when our area was hit with a combination of snow, ice and sleet. Augusta County called for help from hams just in case their communication systems crashed. It did not! However, David AD4TJ was called upon to mobilize the troops to man various locations throughout the county. David did all that he could. The question is, were you missing in action? Could you have helped? Several people put in long hours without sleep. So remember, we exist to help, when help is needed.

A special thanks to David and to all those who stood by in case they were needed. Folks like you make Amateur Radio proud!

Finally, everybody needs to be involved in our club. All too often the work is left to a faithful few who over time end up burned out! We can't have that, so rest assured that I will delegate jobs to others. It is your club, how far will you take it this year?

73, Greg, W4GRC

*Thanks to Ray Colvin KE4HVR for providing the handy list of scanner frequencies this month.*

## Some Scanner Frequencies

Freq	Name	Use
460.550	Paging	Paging in Staunton and Augusta County
453.675	SARS-1	EMS and MVA operations in Staunton
453.750	County-1	Administrative in Augusta County
453.925	County-2	All operations in Augusta County
451.075	County-3	All operations in Augusta County
451.025	County-4	All operations in Augusta County
463.000	County-5	All operations in Augusta County (Simplex)
453.550	Staunton Fire	Fire and Hazmat operations in Staunton
462.950	Med 9	Call channel to request Med Channels to AMC
463.025	Med 2 - Verona	Medical communications to AMC
463.075	Med 4 - White Hill	Medical communications to AMC
463.100	Med 5 - Verona	Medical communications to AMCr
463.125	Med 6 - White Hill	Medical communications to AMC

460.250	Albermarle County Police (F1)	Albermarle
460.475	Albermarle County Police (F2)	Albermarle
463.000	Med 1 - Carter Mountain	Albermarle
462.975	Med 10 - Brown Mountain	Albermarle
463.025	Med 2 - Carter Mountain	Albermarle
462.950	Med 9 - Carter Mountain	Albermarle
155.205	Scottsville Rescue Squad	Albermarle
155.220	Western Albermarle Rescue Squad	Albermarle
463.175	Augusta Ambulance Service	Augusta
39.720	Augusta Sheriff (TAC)	Augusta
460.400	Augusta Sheriff 1	Augusta
460.300	Augusta Sheriff 2	Augusta
453.750	County-1	Augusta
453.925	County-2	Augusta
451.075	County-3	Augusta
451.025	County-4	Augusta
463.000	County-5	Augusta
33.760	Fire (Alternate)	Augusta
33.800	Fire (Alternate)	Augusta
463.025	Med 2 - Verona	Augusta
463.075	Med 4 - White Hill	Augusta
463.100	Med 5 - Verona	Augusta
463.125	Med 6 - White Hill	Augusta
462.950	Med 9 - Elliot Knob	Augusta
155.295	Stuarts Draft Rescue	Augusta
33.820	Hot Springs Fire Department	Bath
460.525	Hot Springs Fire Department	Bath
463.475	Hot Springs Rescue Squad	Bath
462.950	Med 9 - Bald Knob	Bath
46.460	Charlottesville Fire	Charlottesville
46.260	Charlottesville Fire (F2 -	Charlottesville
452.375	Charlottesville Fireground (F2)	Charlottesville
453.650	Charlottesville Police	Charlottesville
453.950	Charlottesville Police (F2)	Charlottesville
155.835	Charlottesville-Albermarle Rescue	Charlottesville
460.025	UVA Police	Charlottesville

452.050	Harrisonburg Fire (Ch.1)	Harrisonburg
453.525	Harrisonburg Fire (Ch.2)	Harrisonburg
453.200	Harrisonburg Fire (Ch.3)	Harrisonburg
460.350	Harrisonburg Police (F1)	Harrisonburg
460.050	Harrisonburg Police (F2)	Harrisonburg
462.150	Harrisonburg Rescue (Ch.1)	Harrisonburg
461.200	Harrisonburg Rescue (Ch.2)	Harrisonburg
167.175	Blue Ridge Parkway Police	Regional
166.900	National Park Service	Regional
155.460	Va State Police (Appomattox Car-Dispatch)	Regional
159.135	Va State Police (Appomattox)	Regional
154.665	Va State Police (Car-Car)	Regional
155.445	Va State Police (Culpepper Car-Dispatch)	Regional
159.165	Va State Police (Culpepper)	Regional
154.695	Va State Police (Surveillance)	Regional
460.575	Buena Vista Fire Department	Rockbridge
460.275	Buena Vista Police Department	Rockbridge
453.025	Buena Vista Rescue Squad	Rockbridge
458.950	Glasgow Fire Department (simplex)	Rockbridge
453.350	Lexington Fire Department	Rockbridge
460.150	Lexington Police Department	Rockbridge
460.350	Lexington Police Department	Rockbridge
460.125	Lexington Rescue Squad	Rockbridge
462.975	Med 10 - Brushy Hill	Rockbridge
453.325	Rockbridge County Rescue Squads	Rockbridge
453.825	Rockbridge County Rescue Squads	Rockbridge
453.525	Rockbridge County Sheriff Department	Rockbridge
453.600	Rockbridge County Sheriff Department	Rockbridge
460.225	Rockbridge County Sheriff Department	Rockbridge
33.740	Fire (F1)	Rockingham
462.975	Med 10 - Massanutten	Rockingham
461.100	OP-5	Rockingham
33.060	Rescue (F3)	Rockingham
460.200	Rockingham Sheriff	Rockingham
460.525	TAC-1 (Southern R'ham)	Rockingham
460.625	TAC-2 (Northern R'ham)	Rockingham
453.150	TAC-3 (Bergton)	Rockingham
462.975	Med 10 - Big Mountain	Shenandoah/Page
155.340	EMS-1	Statewide
39.540	SIRS	Statewide
155.205	Statewide Disaster	Statewide
39.120	Staunton Correctional Center	Staunton
453.550	Staunton Fire	Staunton
460.175	Staunton Police (F1)	Staunton
460.375	Staunton Police (F3)	Staunton
460.550	Staunton/Augusta Paging	Staunton
453.675	Staunton-Augusta Rescue (SARS-1)	Staunton
453.900	Western State Hospital	Staunton
453.100	Waynesboro Disaster	Waynesboro
460.600	Waynesboro Fire	Waynesboro
460.575	Waynesboro Fire (F2)	Waynesboro
453.850	Waynesboro First Aid	Waynesboro
460.500	Waynesboro Police	Waynesboro
460.100	Waynesboro Police (F2)	Waynesboro

## February 10 VE Session Report

We had a rather large turnout for the February test session. There were eight Volunteer Examiners and 11 candidates for exams.

It was a very successful test session as everyone **passed their tests**. I think that is a record, if not it at least tied the old one!

Two candidates, William Garber, KI4SMB, and Morgan Phenix, K4RHD, passed element 4 and are now Extra class amateurs.

Martin Coggine, K4CRC, John Schlabach, KI4FOG, James Phillips, N8PKP, and Marvin Henderson, KF4WDI passed element 3 and will be able to upgrade to General after February 23 when the code requirement is no longer part of the FCC rules (unless they passed the code test before that date).

Michael Swinson, Alfred Passarell, Donald Casteel, John Bobbie Jr. and Ernest Frank III passed element 2 and will be Technicians as soon as the FCC issues their licenses.

Congratulations to each candidate on a job well done.

Many thanks to the VE's that helped: **Ray Ritchie, K4NRA, James Lehman, W4POL, Richard Haxton, KC3AN, Michael McKay, W4AZR, Hugh Pettis, K3EC, Dale Showalter, N4DAI, and C. Philip Harder, K4NE.** This could not have happened without their help.

Gerald, KN4FM

## Featured Ham of the Month



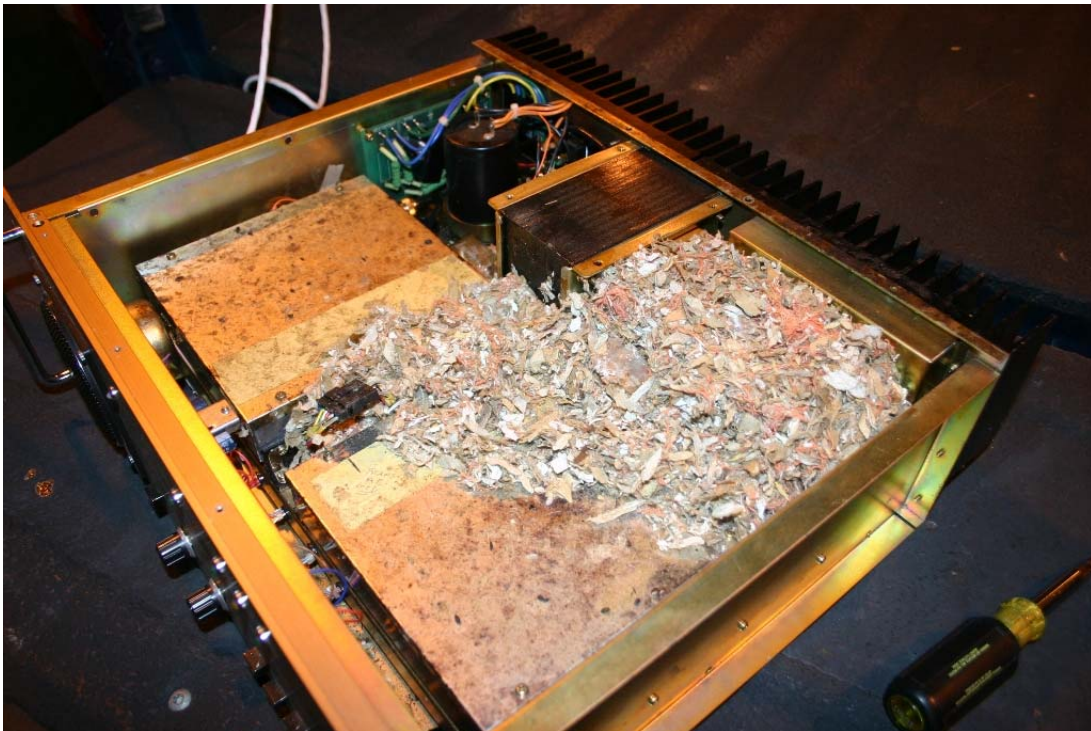
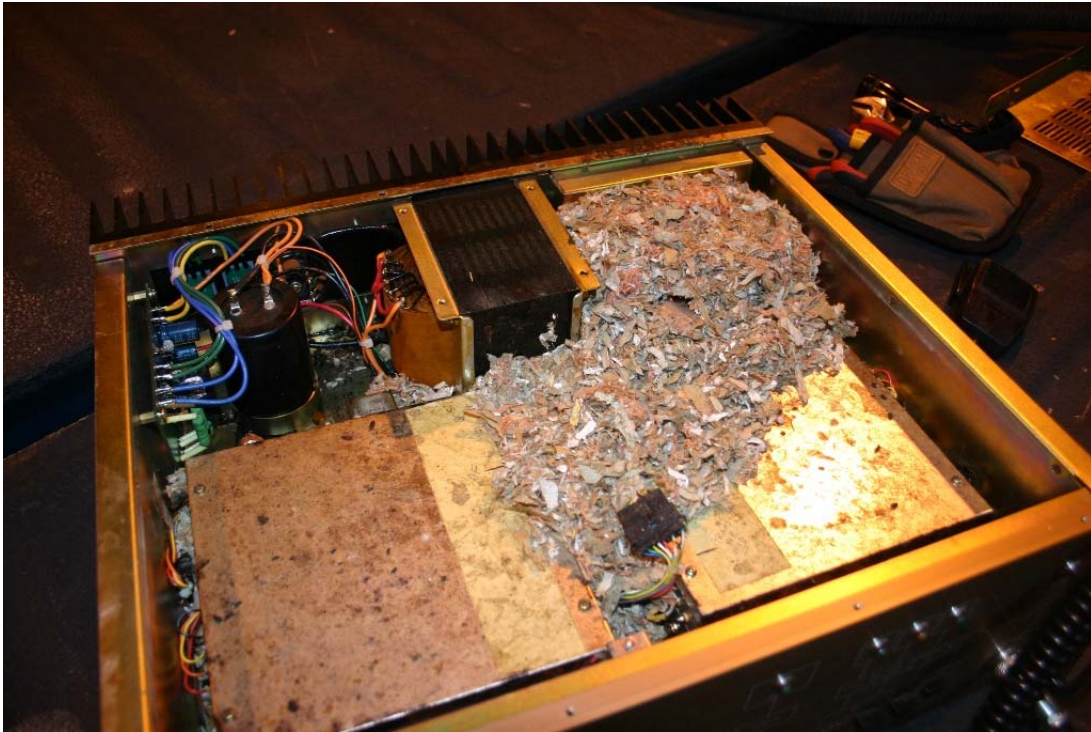
February's ham of the month was none other than Bob Neimeyer, W3MMC, famous resident of Bergton, in the far northern corner of Rockingham County. Bob is well known all up and down the I-81 corridor for his on-the-air personality, and any ham who has operated on 146.625 repeater (known as the Big Mountain Repeater), is familiar with Bob and the tight ship that he runs on that frequency. Old-timers will remember the famous Bob's Knob Bash that he hosted at his QTH each August. Bob is still a regular at the Golden Corral on Thursdays, and is one of the most active Skywarn Volunteers in the area.

Our featured ham of the month this time is shown to the right. This relatively new ham is actually one of the older old-timers in the valley, having served several decades as the Postmaster of the Weyers Cave post office. Growing up in Weyers Cave, he used to enjoy mowing the hay as a boy on the very hill where he and his XYL now maintain their summer home. During the winter, they travel down to their version of "Golden Pond", a nice mobile home community outside of Lake Wales, Florida, a few miles from Disney World, where he enjoys working the HF bands back to his friends here in the valley. The term "pond" probably doesn't do justice to their winter home, however, since a few years ago a heavy rainstorm combined with a drainage problem to create a very unnatural lake right in the middle of their neighborhood! This fellow also has a son-in-law in Monterey who is also a ham. When most men this age are out playing golf, our featured ham is very active in local public service events, and can be found at numerous events throughout the year. Who is he?



## Wireless Mouse Moves Into N4YET Repeater for the Winter

The photos below were provided by Dale Showalter N4DAI of the Shenandoah Valley Repeater Group. The pictures show the interior of the case of the N4YET 145.130 repeater on Big North Mountain. One mouse (or maybe a family of mice) moved into the repeater, and furnished it very comfortably for the winter. Dale and Rusty hope to have the repeater back and on the air shortly.



## The Opinionated One: Life is Like a Ham Radio...

There we were, six hams, sitting around the table, wishing we had toothpicks since most of us had thrown caution to the wind and ordered off the dollar menu. Verman Krableiss rolled his tongue across his top teeth, smacked his lips, and said, “you know, life is like a ham radio.”

There was complete silence for about two minutes. Verman’s resemblance to Forrest Gump went way beyond a mere box of chocolates.

“Yeah, well, I once had a ‘62 Chevy...” began Fleming, trying to change the subject.

“What’s a Chevy?” asked 21-year old Max Webster, the youngest one at the table.

Flem ignored Max. “Okay, okay, we’ll bite, Verman. Exactly why is life like a ham radio?”

“Because it’s made up of a lot of components that all come together to make it work,” explained Verman. “Big components, small components, by themselves the components don’t amount to much, but when they’re all put together, things happen.”

For once, Verman seemed to have it right. Life is like a ham radio.

I know. I saw it first hand. It happened the morning of Wednesday, February 7, 2007, right in front of my own eyes: a large number of “components” came together in a particular way that made things happen, proving that Verman is either a modern day prophet or a darn good theoretical physicist.

Let me describe some of the components that came together that morning.

First, there’s the big ones, like the fluorescent lights in my shop out in my garage. They flicker when it’s really cold, and don’t light up very bright. Since my garage is unheated, this means that between Thanksgiving and Easter, my shop is about as dark as W4PJW’s hair used to be back in 1970.

Next, there are my six neighbors. Each one of them has been living on earth approximately twice as long as the average VARA member. Given that most VARA members can remember firsthand the campaign slogan for Calvin Coolidge, this should tell you something about my neighbors.

Third is the snowblower. My neighbors all have long driveways: three are over 250 feet long, and two of them are gravel. As a service for these elderly individuals, I and my sons had shoveled snow off their driveways for years. When my sons left for college, the neighbors pitched in and bought me a snowblower, on the condition that I clear their driveways after every snowfall.

Fourth is the snow we got on February 6. Those of you at the February VARA meeting remember that it began to come down pretty heavy just about the time Al started showing Bill’s video. (In fact, after watching the video, everyone in the room was talking about the snow job.) By morning, there was six inches of white stuff on the ground. It looked a lot deeper.

Adding to the big components were dozens of smaller ones: my brand-new \$90 insulated waterproof rubber boots, my slick nylon gloves, a fire extinguisher, the 2x4’s I use to assemble a sawhorse, and an old golf ball I’d found out in the yard last fall and left lying on the workbench in my shop. All these components and more, big & small, all came together in the span of about ten minutes on the morning of February 7, to prove that life really is like a ham radio.

The saga began at 8:16 am. With six inches of snow on the ground, my duty was to clear the neighbors’ driveways, so I bundle up and go out to the shed and start pulling the cord of the snowblower. The little rubber handle on the pull cord kept slipping out of my grip because my nylon gloves are slippery, so I take off the gloves. Hands without gloves get cold fast. I pull another 100 times or so before deciding to wrestle the blower out from under the shed canopy and into the shop so I can thaw out my frostbitten fingers while examining it.

Since the blower weighs three times what I do, getting it through the narrow side door of the shop was a chore. My shop is cramped, so on the way in, I bump into the trash barrel, knocking it over. Fifty-five gallons of trash, sawdust, wood shavings, oily rags, old wire, used kitty litter, and other refuse fans out across the floor.

I get the blower into the shop, barely squeezing it in between my main workbench and my ham radio workbench. Even though the fluorescent lights are on and flickering, the shop is still pretty dark. And cold. My fingers don’t work well when they are frozen solid. I start tinkering with the choke and suddenly feel something wet and slippery on my fingers. Blood. I’ve sliced my finger wide open on the sharp metal carburetor cover.

It’s right about this time that I remember the reason the thing won’t start: I haven’t put any gasoline into the snowblower yet this season.

“Dadburn it”, I say, or words to that effect. I grab a paper towel from amidst the trash on the floor to wrap around my finger and look for the gas can.

The gas can is on the floor under the shelves holding the Christmas decorations. Since my son and daughter-in-law were living with us at Christmas, they had put the decorations away wrong, leaving some sharp edges sticking out, which naturally gouged me as I bent over in the dark to get the gas can. I jumped back, and banged my left kidney on the sharp corner of the ham radio workbench. Banging your kidney doesn’t feel good at all.

My impact with the bench made it wobble, and all four of my 36-drawer organizers fell off, scattering 144 plastic drawers and their contents all over the snowblower and the floor. Pieces of Anderson PowerPoles, alligator clips, PL-259s, coax adapters, hundreds of spade lugs, screws, nails, tacks, & cotter pins disappeared into the nooks, crannies and recesses of the snow blower, and bounced across the floor, blending in perfectly with the trash, sawdust, and kitty litter in the dark.

“Dadburn it” I thought again, although the words I used might have been somewhat more, uh, vivid, this time. The phone rang. I decide to let someone in the house answer it, and proceed to get the gas can. A moment later, my daughter calls over the intercom, “Daddy, it’s for you.” I take two steps toward the phone and step on a 1-inch wood screw, which pierces my expensive new insulated rubber boot like a knife through hot butter. The point of the screw lodges neatly in the ball of my foot. I bend grabbing my foot, and in the cramped dark quarters, I hit the handle of the snowblower with my face on the way down. This threw me off balance, and I fell against the main workbench, which began to tilt. Fortunately I caught it – with my head – and kept it from falling over. But everything on it slid off. A gallon can of purple hi-gloss quick-dry enamel left over from my son’s Eagle Scout project hits the floor and loudly goes

“ploosh” as the lid comes off. It’s cold, and the paint is thicker than normal and comes out in an oozing glob. My pliers, screwdrivers, socket set, and the assorted loose contents of six Rubbermaid plastic storage boxes from the top of the workbench all slowly disappear into a deep morass of sticky, purple goo.

“Daddy, the phone’s for you. Pick up!” wails my daughter again, as I listen to the click, click, click, click, click of the golf ball as it bounces around on the floor.

“Daaaddeeee! Answer the phone, why dontcha?! Pick up! It’s old Mrs. Wrinkling from across the street!” my daughter yells over the intercom. I hobble over and grab the phone.

“I was just wondering how long it’ll be before you get my driveway cleared,” complained Mrs. Wrinkling. “I’ve got a nine o’clock appointment in Harrisonburg to get my hair fixed.”

“To get your hair fixed? Really?” I asked. “How did you break it?”

“Break what?” she replied. I bit my tongue and politely informed her that I was actively engaged in efforts intended to ultimately get her driveway cleared. After hanging up, I took off my ruined boot with the screw still in it, and headed back to the gas can. Big mistake. On my first step, my sock-covered foot found four unidentified but very sharp objects on the floor. I jump again, and my other foot slips on the paint. I land squarely and solidly on my behind.

Upon making contact with the floor in the sitting position, I quickly become aware that I have landed right on top of the golf ball. If you’ve never sat down really hard on a golf ball on a concrete shop floor, – well, lucky you. “Dadburn it” I said to myself out loud this time. And I am pretty sure the actual pronunciation I used was quite a bit different from the traditional spelling, too.

Aware of Mrs. Wrinkling’s impending appointment, I return to the task of putting gas in the snowblower.

I very carefully pour the gas in, listening to the glug-glug-glug, trying to judge by sound when the tank was getting close to full. Since the fluorescent lights were dim, I couldn’t see the level in the tank, but knew about how much it held, and knew about how fast the gas came out of the can.

Or at least I thought I knew. Suddenly the glug-glug-glug sound was replaced by the splash-splash-splash of liquid hitting the concrete floor in the dark. “Dadburn it,” I said to myself one more time, and this time I’m positive I improvised the wording quite a bit. In fact, I think anyone who was listening might have thought I used a somewhat different term this time.

I’m smart enough to know that a half-gallon of gasoline mixed with sawdust, wood shavings, and other assorted flammables on the floor of my shop is not a particularly safe situation. So before doing anything else, as a precaution I decide to bring over the fire extinguisher. But my hands are wet with blood and still cold enough not to work right, so as I pull the extinguisher off its hook on the wall, it slips from my grasp. I lunge to catch it, and in the process, rake my left hand across the 2x4’s that I use to make a sawhorse. The 2x4’s are quite old. A couple of nice-sized splinters are just itching to get off the boards, and they are overjoyed at this opportunity to leap off and imbed themselves in the back of my hand. I miss the extinguisher, smashing my knuckles into the cinderblock wall. My fingers go immediately in my mouth, a good thing because there, they are able to keep some really bad sounds from coming out of it, as I hop around on the screws, nails and tacks in my sockfeet. The extinguisher hit the floor upside down, and with a loud “pop”, the plastic head breaks off. For the next three seconds I watch the extinguisher spin around

on the floor like a Twister spinner, the pressurized white powder blowing purple paint globs all over everything. The extinguisher fills the garage with an eerie mist. An on-looker could easily have mistaken me for John Travolta dancing on a sparkling disco floor in a cloud of colorful fog lit by flickering fluorescent lights. I was even making those very same high-pitched sounds that the BeeGee’s made when they hit the Top 40 charts! The only thing missing was my baby blue leisure suit.

After getting my wits about me again, I realize I have to get the garage door open quick, or I risk an explosion that would make Mount. St. Helens look like a birthday candle. But wait a second. Electric door opener. Push-button. Switch contacts. Spark. Gasoline vapor. No fire extinguisher. Hmmm. For some reason, a vivid image of Verman enters my mind.

I wisely choose to manually raise the garage door. This means I have to pull the red handled cord dangling from the top of the door to disengage it from the opener mechanism. Almost overcome by gas and paint fumes, I don’t have time to get the stepladder, so I drag a spool of coax cable on its side over to the door to stand on so I can reach the red handle. As I step up on the plywood side of the spool, it breaks off, causing me to sprain my ankle. Just as bad, my shin goes into the loop formed by the loose end of the coax, so now I’m hopping around trying to get my balance dragging the coax spool, slinging wet purple PowerPole pieces right and left. I fall onto the snowblower, toppling it over, and upsetting the gas can. At this point, I realize I was in such a hurry to get the fire extinguisher, I had not yet replaced the caps on either the gas tank or gas can. A half-gallon of spilled gas quickly becomes four-and-a-half gallons of spilled gas. As I try to get up, my hands mash into something moist and squishy, and I remember that the kitty litter had been thoroughly used before it was dumped into the trash barrel. For some reason, the term “Dadburn it” just doesn’t seem like the appropriate choice this time.

I wipe my hands on my pants and finally get the door open. I spread two bags of “Oil-Dri” granules on the gasoline. I get the caps put back on the gas tank and gas can. I come across the golf ball and angrily hurl it out the door, listening a split second later to the tinkle of glass as it finds the passenger window of my Chrysler parked in the driveway. I move the blower out into the yard, and it starts on the very first pull of the cord! As it warms up, however, I notice that the sun is melting the snow faster than I could possibly blow it. I watch old Mrs. Wrinkling happily pulling out of her driveway to go to Harrisonburg to get her hair fixed.

I trudge back into the garage and discover that with the door up, the paint was now freezing and drying – my tools and everything else in it solidifying into a flat sculpture resembling a classic work by Salvador Dali.

As I stumble into the house, I at least remember to remove my paint-soaked socks so I don’t track on the carpet. I collapse on the sofa, and my wife looks up from her paper, and smiles, “Well, that didn’t take long, did it? Aren’t you glad the neighbors bought you that snowblower?”

“Hey! Neat! Where’d you get the way cool striped purple pants?” my daughter asks. “Say,” she sniffs, “do you smell gasoline?”

As I trudge into the bedroom for a shower, I think that life isn’t like just any old ham radio. It’s a Kenwood!

Then, through the wall I hear my wife yell, “Aaaagghhh! There’s purple cat poo all over my sofa!!”

## KB4WPE's Version of Events Described in the Article "Life Is Like A Ham Radio"

Many people ask me what it's like being the XYL of the Opinionated One. Well, to start with, our household goes through a lot of things a lot faster than most other homes. For example, we use a lot more Goo-Gone, mineral spirits, soap, cotton, bandages, aspirin, and most of all, a double-helping of old-fashioned patience and a solid sense of humor.

What most people would never guess about the Opinionated One is that underneath it all, he is a very nice, giving person. He always is in the community spirit. Every time it snowed, he'd encourage our sons to join him in clearing the elderly neighbors' driveways for them. Okay, well, "encourage" might not be the right word to hear my sons tell it, but he always goes the extra mile to help people.

A couple of years ago, he was saddened to discover that his days of shoveling snow for the neighbors are over. "The boys are off at college, and thanks be to God that I'm too old for that kind of stuff anymore," he happily announced one winter's day, not realizing the neighbors were plotting, er, planning, to cheer him up by pitching in and buying him a snowblower. "All you have to do is use it to clear our driveways," they said when he insisted that they really, really, shouldn't have. But they did. And he does. When he's around.

Of course, since I don't use snowblowers, and he is gone on business trips quite often, this means that many times when it snows, Daughter and I go out and shovel six driveways. It also means that every time it snows, ours is the last to get cleared! ... If at all, because even with a snowblower, six driveways is a lot of work for an old, asthmatic arthritic gray-haired geezer.

I secretly had some doubts about the snowblower. The Opinionated One has this certain something, this "je ne sais quoi", that is almost like an allergy when it comes to operating certain types of equipment. It's like a curse or something. In fact, he's never even been able to get his Kenwood radios to work right, let alone high-powered equipment like a snowblower.

So when the AM radio woke us up February 7 with the announcement "County Schools are Closed Today", I knew we were in for a real disaster.

I looked out the window. Two inches of light snow. No big deal, I thought.

But, no, I failed to take into account ... "Snowblower Man."

"Oh, boy, oh, boy. I haven't used the snowblower in two years and it is all ready to go!" he proudly exclaimed as he put on his new boots and gloves.

"You've got to be kidding!", I protested. "Everyone knows the whole valley closes down with a snow like this but everything opens up this afternoon. Leave it alone and this snow will go away by itself in a few hours."

"A commitment is a commitment," he dutifully replied. "Now where is my hat?" After searching for fifteen minutes for his favorite hat which he left on the train in England, he gave up and grabbed the hat on top, pom-pom and all, and headed out back to the shed next to his garage.

"Aren't those gloves a little thin and slick? Shouldn't you use the leather ones?" I asked. Big mistake. I should have known better.

Never criticize Snowblower Man's gloves (or anything else of his for that matter). He "harrumphed" off to his doom.

We could tell by the resolution in his step that he had passed over the line from sanity. Daughter and I went to work, locating the hot pads, aspirin, clearing his stuff off the easy chair, covering it with old towels. Although we had no idea exactly what was coming, we knew for certain that it was indeed coming. It was only a question of when.

I peered out the back door at his garage. Sure enough, he had taken the snowblower *inside*, a very bad sign to be sure. Particularly since he refused to get the overhead lights working in there. "They work fine in the summer. Why should I waste my time and money trying to fix something that works fine more than half the time?" he'd rationalized.

I cringed to think what was happening out in there in the dark.

The phone rang, and Daughter said it was Mrs. Ringling across the street. I told her to tell Mrs. Ringling that Dad was busy, but Daughter insisted on getting the message to him anyway. Like all 17 year olds, she gets a sadistic pleasure out of irritating her father.

She announced the phone call over the intercom. He took a little while responding, and when he finally did, it was in a voice that made it clear we did NOT want to go out there. We grinned at each other, imagining what he had gotten himself into now.

It was less than 10 minutes before we saw him again. Reeking of gasoline, totally covered from his hat tassel to his sock feet in purple paint, cat poop, wood shavings, trash, and screws, he painfully opened the door, pulled off his wet socks, and practically crawled his way to the couch and plopped down, arms outstretched, just as he's done at the end of countless other adventures. We gave him words of encouragement, served him his hot chocolate and suggested he take a long hot bath.

As he took the bath, we carefully plucked out the screws and wood chips from the clothes we could salvage, then put them in the washing machine. Then we got out the mineral spirits and went to work on the sofa.

Finally we went out to his garage, opened the door, shone a flashlight around, — and cried. The rest of the afternoon was spent in our usual exercise of speculating what in the world could possibly have gone on in that garage during that quarter hour. No matter how creative our imaginations, we in our wildest dreams could not possibly figure out any explanation for how he'd gotten so much to happen in so little time. From the broken glass of the Chrysler window, to the hard purple sculpture with the socket set and Allen wrenches imbedded in it, from the upside down and dented gas can, to the white powder that coated *everything*, from the gasoline and cotter pins to the plastic organizer drawers stuck to the broken spool of coax cable, it was absolutely unbelievable.

But look at the bright side! At least this time we didn't have a trip to the emergency room, his workbench looked relatively clean for a change, and best of all, *he found my lucky golf ball!*

## New 10-meter Net in the Valley

To celebrate the new FCC ruling, here in Augusta County we will be holding a 10-meter Net, Friday evenings at 7:00 pm EST (local time) on 28.490 MHz SSB Phone. On the first Net held February 23, 2007 we had 14 check-ins with three Technicians experiencing their first time on HF. With limited propagation at the moment, contact was limited to local area Hams, but we're looking forward to conditions improving and having others check-in to the Net.

Darrell Little, KI4LLA  
<http://www.ki4lla.us>

## NPR's "All Things Considered" Features Ham Radio and Morse Code

Mike Solomon, KJ4RM, alerts us that the National Public Radio Show "All Things Considered" (even though it doesn't) did a feature story on what they called the "demise" of morse code. If you are interested, you might be able to download and listen to the story by going to the NPR website [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org) and clicking on All Things Considered. The story aired on February 24, so click on past shows, then select Feb 24 on the calendar. The story is titled, "Will FCC Move Be the End of Morse Code".

## Virginia's 400th Anniversary Special Event

Bring up your Internet Browser and go to the following URL:

[http://www.arrlva.us/arrlva/va400/va400\\_index.html](http://www.arrlva.us/arrlva/va400/va400_index.html)

This is the official website of the Virginia 400th Anniversary on the Air special events. More and more Virginia clubs are planning special events, including the VARA club here in the Valley, which is planning an operation from the upper Lake Sherando Group Campsite in May. There is even a group in England that is planning a commemoration of the Jamestown settlement.

Additional links can be obtained from  
<http://www.arrl.org/sections/VA.html>

## MARA April Meeting: Date Change

MARA members are reminded that the April meeting will be held on the SECOND Thursday of the month, rather than the first.

This is due to the fact that Tradition's restaurant scheduled another event on the first Thursday.

April will be the traditional Homebrew and Trader's meeting. Hurry and finish that project you've been working on. Dig out those old pieces of junk you've been thinking of lugging to a hamfest. And if you want to, you can even bring that box of 1974 QST magazines your XYL has been bugging you about, in the hopes of trading them for some really mint condition copies of 1981 issues of 73 Magazine!

The April MARA meeting, like all MARA meetings, is open to ALL hams, not just MARA members. In fact, visitors are always welcome.

## Rumor Mill Lacking Lately

The Monitor would like to hear from anyone with any scoop on anything even remotely related to ham radio. If no one sends articles in, then you have to read more drivel from the Opinionated One. This month, we even had to resort to asking Debbie, KB4WPE to write something.

Has anyone heard from Hugh K3EC since he moved?

How about Rusty, N4YET, how's he doing?

Dan, KE4JSX has been mighty quiet lately... anyone know how he's getting along?

Or what about Jason, N4DSL?

Paul, N4RY, has also been incommunicado recently. If you've heard any of these hams (or others) on the air recently, let us know. And give us

## MARA Secretary's Report: February 1 Meeting

### 1. Reports

New member applications: none.

b. Secretary's report: Minutes approved as printed in Monitor.

c. Treasurer 's report: none.

d. Groups :

ARES/RACES - Rockingham County now has an internet website: <http://rockingham-ares.org>

Bob, N1QEQ is taking pictures for hospital ID badges for those who have attended the hospital station training session.

The RMH hospital station is back on the air.

VE - Next VE session is Feb. 10, 2007

Public Service: On April 21, the Harrisonburg March of Dimes will hold their walk at the city offices again. Volunteers are needed. Bob Steere, N1QEQ will act as the contact person this year.

### 2. Announcements:

Frostfest Sunday February 18; Jay W4QDC and Jeff W4PJW will be hosting a table, all those going are invited to stop by.

Hugh, K3EC has finished his move to Staunton and hopes to continue to check into the local nets and attend MARA meetings.

3. Old Business: none

4. New Business

Note the April MARA meeting will be held on the 2nd Tuesday April 12 at Traditions.

Introductions were made all around.

No 50/50 due to lack of tickets.

5. Program: David KD9LA gave an interesting program on 802.11 networks.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm

Submitted by  
Bryan Daniels, K4RMY  
MARA Secretary

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

March 1: MARA Meeting  
 March 3-4: ARRL International DX Contest Phone  
 March 6: VARA Meeting  
 March 10-11: Charlotte (NC) Hamfest  
 March 17-19: Virginia QSO Party  
 March 17: Charleston (WV) Hamfest  
 March 24-25: CQ WW WPX Contest SSB  
 March 31-April 1: Greater Baltimore Hamboree  
 April 1: Raleigh (NC) Hamfest  
 April 3: VARA Meeting  
 April 14: VE Exams in Dayton VA  
 April 12: MARA Homebrew Night (note date change!)  
 April 15: Chesapeake (VA) Hamfest  
 April 21: Harrisonburg March of Dimes Walk  
 April 21: Waynesboro MS Walk  
 April 22: York (PA) Hamfest  
 May 1: VARA Meeting  
 May 3: MARA Meeting  
 May 4-6: VARA Special Event Camp at Sherando  
 May 6: Hagerstown Hamfest  
 May 18-20: Dayton Hamvention  
 May 26-27: CQ WW WPX Contest CW

## Some Trivia Questions.

1. Who used to have the call W4JZC?
2. Who always introduces himself at club meetings as living in "Wilda"?
3. Who is "Farmer Al"?
4. Which ham in the valley used to be a lounge singer on a cruise ship between Miami and Jamaica?
5. Which ham in the valley is the child of the former Vice-President of GE's Radio Division, and who worked on the radios on Barry Goldwater's airplane during his 1964 presidential campaign?
6. Who in the valley will have been a licensed ham 70 years next year?
7. Which ham owns a kilt. And actually wears it?!
8. Which ham has a working seismograph in his basement to detect earthquakes?

## VARA Secretary's Report: February 6 Meeting

The Valley Amateur Radio Association met at Lynn's Restaurant in Waynesboro on February 6, 2007. The President, Greg Czerniak W4GRC, opened the meeting at 7:00pm. There were 28 members present and 5 guests, Angel Wilson, Jim Newlen KE4CAS, Andrew Babour AG4XN, Colin Hester N4ZFQ and John Fiske KI4QQX. Welcome to all our visitors, we would like to have you back for next month's meeting.

**50/50:** was won and donated back to the VARA by John Lasher N3GLZ, congratulations and thanks, John!

**New Members:** Robert Wilson KI4GST, Fred Evans N4KYM and John Morrison KO4YK. Welcome to the VARA!

**Public Service Event:** Waynesboro MS Walk will be held on Saturday April 21, 2007 at 10:00am. Come out and support our club in this annual event.

**Meeting Place:** The club voted to meet at Lynn's in Waynesboro through the month of June 2007.

**Virginia's 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special Event:** plans are underway for May 4 – 6 at Sherando Lake.

**VARA By-Laws:** Plans are under way to update the by-laws and get the memberships approval on all changes.

### **ON THE SICK LIST:**

**Denny Morland N4XPW** I e-mailed Denny, he said that he was doing ok at home now.

**Mike Solomon KJ4RM** is recovering well at home in preparation for the second part of his bone marrow transplant.

**Let's keep these folks and their families in our thoughts and prayers.**

### **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 the VARA Web Site at: <http://www.qsl.net/w4xd/> **PLEASE notify Billy when your item is sold.**

**e-Mail ADDRESSES: Keep your e-mail address up to date.** Please send them to:

Greg Czerniak W4GRC  
[grcljc@verizon.net](mailto:grcljc@verizon.net), Doug Tippet N8ESW  
[dtippett@ntelos.net](mailto:dtippett@ntelos.net), Ray Colvin  
KE4HVR [colvingr@adelphia.net](mailto:colvingr@adelphia.net) and  
David Fordham KD9LA [ford-hadr@jmu.edu](mailto:ford-hadr@jmu.edu).

**ALSO,** 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month at 8:00pm. This repeater has a minus offset and a tone of 131.8 when needed. Foxhunts are also scheduled for some months as weather permits.

**PROGRAMS NEEDED:** Al Bonck N3JB, our 2007 Program Chairman, is looking for anyone that would like to do a program for the club. Give him a call and set up a date to present it. It does not have to be HAM related. It could be anything you think the group would find interesting. Al's e-Mail address is: [margeal@ntelos.net](mailto:margeal@ntelos.net)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32pm.

**PROGRAM:** Al Bonck N3JB and Bill Shott W2ZVM presented the first half of a video on the "Death of the Electric Car". The video tells about the beginning of the electric car, it's performance and the top speeds using battery power. Then, there are the gas powered car manufacturers that are against the Electric Car production and possibility of stealing their share of the market. Second half should follow at our March 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

Submitted By:  
VARA Secretary  
Ray Colvin KE4HVR

# MARA/VARA

c/o David Fordham  
131 Wayside Drive  
Weyers Cave, VA 24486

Phone: 540-568-3024  
Email: fordhadr@jmu.edu

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## Return Service Requested

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### MASSANUTTEN AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION, Inc.

President: Eugene Rogers KG4JBC  
Vice President: David Fordham KD9LA  
Secretary: Bryan Daniels K4RMY  
Treasurer: Sandy Mullins, K4PZC  
Board (exp 07): David Gordon KB4LCI  
Board (exp 08): Gayle Shull KU4XN

<http://mara.ws>

MARA meets the first Thursday of each month  
at Traditions Restaurant on Mt Clinton Pike, in  
Harrisonburg.

Dinner begins at 6:00 pm.  
The Business Meeting begins at 7:00 pm.

**Visitors are welcome.**

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

MARA  
PO Box 1882  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

### VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

President: Greg Czerniak, W4GRC  
Vice President: Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW  
Secretary: Ray Colvin, KE4HVR  
Treasurer: Doug Tippet, N8ESW  
Program Manager: Al Bonck N3JB

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

VARA meets the first Tuesday of each month  
at Lynn's Pancake House on Hwy 250, in  
Waynesboro.

Dinner begins at 6:00 pm,  
The Business Meeting begins at 7:00 pm

**Visitors are welcome.**

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

Doug Tippet  
2348 Mosley St.  
Waynesboro VA 22980