

May 2000

MARA/VARA MONITOR

Published Monthly for Radio Amateurs
in the Shenandoah Valley

VARA Meeting May 2

MARA Meeting May 4

Hagerstown Hamfest May 7

Dayton Hamfest May 19-21

Field Day June 23-25

Annual Greenbank Radio Observatory Tour Slated for May 13

The time has come for another trip to Greenbank (National Radio Astronomy Observatory) W.VA. to tour the facility and check on the progress of the new GBT (Greenbank Telescope).

The GBT is the largest moveable manmade object on land. Aircraft Carriers are larger but they are on water.

The NRAO just announced a major construction milestone on the antenna: the last of the 2000 aluminum panels was installed April 12.

The date of our trip this year is May 13. We will meet at the Holiday Inn - Staunton at exit 225 on I-81 at 8:00am to carpool. This exit is Route 275. Turn west and the Holiday Inn is the first road on the right.

The trip takes about two hours and we make a pit stop along the way. A very good lunch is available at the NRAO cafeteria.

This trip is open to anyone not just the ham community. So invite your friends and bring your children along as it is educational also. Also there are other attractions in the area you might want to investigate. We usually get through about 2:00-3:00pm and return home.

Hope to see lots of folks turn out for this fun event.

Joe Meek KD4FKT



MARA President's Message

“Summer is on its’ way, which means there will be public service events for us to get involved with...”

I would like to thank those that brought something to show for the April home-brew program. There are still a few of us that build things in our spare time. I hope everyone got inspired and will build something for the next time.

Summer is on the way, which means there will be public service events for us to get involved with. I want to thank Doug, KF4YGO, for coordinating hams for the March of Dimes walk on April 29. I would also like to thank Elsworth, K4LXG, for assuming leadership for the upcoming Multiple Sclerosis bike ride in September. I would like to encourage everyone to lend a helping hand and participate in the events that will take place in the next several months. It is a good excuse to get outside, enjoy the nice weather and to help others.

For the last couple of meetings we have talked about starting new ham classes. Books covering the new technician class question pool should be available in May, so it is time to get started.

We need to find a place to hold classes, and we need volunteers to teach the classes. Bring your ideas for a place and be prepared to volunteer your time to teach. Also, don't

forget the potential new hams, we will need some of them also.

This month's program will be brought to us by Elsworth, K4LXG. He will talk about what ham radio was like when he got started. No, he did not use spark gap, he is not that old! He will tell about the days when AM was the mode used for phone communication, before FM or SSB were in common usage like they are today, and when vacuum tubes, not transistors were used.

Before closing, I want to put in a plug for the Field Day committee. They are doing a lot of work to organize this event. Give them your support. Next month's program will be about Field Day and the plans are for the joint VARA and MARA Field day event the weekend of June 24 and 25.

Don't forget: 6:30 pm for dinner or 7:30 for the meeting at Ever's Restaurant on Rt 11 south of Mt. Crawford on May 4.

73,
Gerald, KN4FM

SkyWarn Classes for the Summer



Bob, W3MMC, our local SkyWarn Liaison, passes along that the National Weather Service is offering two courses this summer for those who have already completed Basic I SkyWarn training and have a current ID assignment from the Sterling Weather Office.

The class is the Hurricane course. It will be offered once on July 3rd, from 7 to 9 pm, and again on August 21, from 7 to 9 pm.

Both classes will be held at the National Weather Service's Sterling Park forecast office.

All SkyWarn courses require advance registration. To register by phone, call Melody Moats at 703-260-0107, extension 226. Or, to register by email, contact

john.margraf@noaa.gov.

VARA President's Message

Anyone who has come to a meeting at either VARA or MARA has probably noticed the lack of young people. It would be fair to say that Amateur Radio is graying. I wonder why this is?

Is it because we have moved into the computer age? Perhaps that explains part of it. It is because our schools no longer emphasize the sciences, especially physics? Perhaps this is also part of it.

Or is it because we as amateur radio operators have lost our excitement for sharing our hobby with others? That might have something to do with it as well.

When I first became an amateur radio operator there were radio clubs in high schools (I was a member of one). Our local amateur radio clubs offered classes to perspective hams (where I learned theory and code). There was a desire to see new faces in Amateur Radio. In fact, my life revolved around other amateur radio operators my age. We did things together, talked on the radio and there was really a sense of community. I guess I was a radio nerd!

I listen on the hf bands a lot. I listen to 3.947 Mhz. and do you know what I don't hear? I don't hear any young people. Our nets are full of old folks! Who's going to replace this valuable asset? Now it is true that the FCC has restructured amateur radio in an attempt to jump start the hobby. However, we as amateurs need to take the bull by the horn and do something to get Amateur Radio back on track.

You see, in my mind, Amateur Radio is much more than a hobby. Amateur Radio is a service to the public, especially in time of emergency. In fact I would suggest to you that if we want to keep our frequencies every ham needs to be active in some sort of community service when called upon. Keeping Amateur Radio highly visible will help us to grow.

When I was in Sumter, SC the Sumter Amateur Radio Association was asked by the Boy Scouts of America to help scouts obtain their radio badge. Ten of us got together and taught a ten week class, covering the Novice and Technician theory to 30 scouts. At the end of the class, VE's came in

and gave examines. By the time all was said and done, we had 10 new hams (young hams as a matter of fact). So I wonder, why can't we do the same?

I am looking for some volunteers to teach entry level Amateur Radio. To help folks get their Technician ticket, learn code and move up the ladder. We have a facility in which to hold classes. I serve as a minister in a local church in Staunton and we can use the fellowship hall and teach Amateur Radio.

So are there any Boy Scout leaders reading this? Or do you have children in scouting? How about contacting the Scout Master and letting him know how we can help scouts get their radio badge. Why not contact the area schools and let them know what we can do?

I noticed something at our VARA meeting. We have committees covering a broad area of events and programs. But, we don't have an educational committee. Any volunteers?

This fall I would like to see VARA offer Amateur Radio Classes. And I would suggest that once we get a person licensed that we should give him or her a one year free membership to VARA. So let's talk it up! Let's encourage the young folks we know and tell them about Amateur Radio. Surely we can show them the value of Amateur Radio verses the cell phone!

By the way, let me encourage you to read the minutes from the last VARA meeting. Pat Smiley does a great job. He has all the information you need regarding Field Day, and other up and coming events. In fact, Pat does such a good job I can write about other things. Thanks Pat for setting me free to editorialize!

If you want to contact me, you may e-mail me at gcljc@cfw.com.

73 - And see you at the next VARA meeting scheduled for Tuesday, May 2nd. I look forward to seeing you there, and bring a friend to our user friendly meetings.

Greg - W4GRC

"I listen on the HF bands, and do you know what I don't hear? I don't hear any young people."

King David's Nine Little Alligators

This Month: Half My Kingdom for a Manual ...

This month we continue our series of "Alligators", those pesky situations which always crop up on you at the worst possible time .

The third alligator, "Half my Kingdom for a Manual", has happened to many of us here in the valley just this last month or two.

Here's the scene: you are manning your emergency checkpoint, and everything is going fine, when all of a sudden the repeater goes down.

By opening your squelch just a bit, you can faintly hear the net control station asking everyone to go to Simplex on the repeater output frequency.

Say what? Simplex? Okay, but how?

Many of today's VHF and UHF radios are programmed to automatically set a transmit-receive offset, based on the frequency you are operating on. In other words, the radio already knows the band-plan, so when you set the radio to a repeater frequency, the radio automatically turns on the proper offset.

This way, most of the time, you don't need to bother setting the xmit offset.

But now, in the heat of battle, during an emergency no less, the repeater has gone down, and you need to override, or defeat, that automatic offset on your radio. How do you do that?

If you are like most of us, you don't have a clue.

Today's radios are immensely complex little gadgets. This is especially true for hand-helds, which cram an awful lot of features into a teeny-tiny space.

To accommodate all the bells and whistles of today's microminiature radios, the manufacturers have learned they can get double, triple, sometimes quadruple duty from each button and knob.

This results in a very complex, and often confusing, array of procedures on how to operate the various features and functions of the radio.

Sure, the on-off switch, volume, squelch, and frequency knobs are handy and easy to operate. But what about all the other possible settings?

Manufacturers today are moving towards a "Menu-driven" approach to these other settings. Unfortunately, with the tiny screens on most of

today's radios, the menu selections are abbreviated to the point of being cryptic. For example, on my hand-held, as I scroll through the menu options, I come across such settings as "XTYW" and "RCN" and "DG". What the heck are these supposed to mean? What do they do? What on the radio changes when I turn one of these options on and off?

Adding to the confusion is the manufacturers' steadfast refusal to agree on standardized terminology for the major functions. A long time ago, in a galaxy far away, everyone knew what "Reverse" meant on a VHF radio. Now this function goes by half a dozen names, icons, or symbols, depending on who made the radio.

To set the PL tone, do you select the menu options "Tone"? Or "CTC" or how about "TnSel" or "StT"?

The answer to this dilemma is to keep the operating manual, or at the very least, the abbreviated operator's guide sheet, with you at all times in your emergency jump kit.

Most radios have a manual thick enough to make Merriam Webster green with envy. What's more, few of us could lay our hands on that manual right now, even if we were at home, if our lives depended on it.

But most manuals have a "quickie" reference page which summarizes the features in a couple of pages.

And more and more radios are coming with laminated plastic cards containing instructions on how to operate the menu systems. You can make copies of these pages or the card, and keep in your jump kit.

Of course, you need to take a few minutes every so often, and familiarize yourself with that card, because often the card itself is confusing. Be sure to read, and highlight, the functions you are likely to need in an emergency setting: Reverse, Offset defeat, band change, frequency entry, memory store and recall, power settings, and so forth. One more you might want to learn how to defeat is "Auto-Off after nn minutes"!! Take it from experience!

Be Prepared. — KD9LA



What does "UbSlr" do?

VARA Secretary's Report

The Valley Amateur Radio Association club meeting was held at Gavid's Restaurant in Staunton on April 4th, 2000. President Greg Czerniak W4GRC opened the meeting at 7:30 pm. There were 22 members and guests present.

50/50 was \$14.00 for the club and \$14.00 for the winner Lonnie N4WIV. Lonnie donated her winnings back to the club. Thanks Lonnie for that.

Richard KF4QZG informed the club that negotiations are still on going with the tower that Waynesboro is donating to the club.

The linear that the club offered for sale has been sold. Ozro KD4RD made the only offer of \$250.00 and we accepted his offer. Thanks Ozro.

CONGRATULATIONS: For 1st place in the ARRL 10m contest won by Clint KB4OLM, Jeff W4PJW, Colin N4ZFO, Richard KF4QZG, Ray N4NRA, Zane N4YET, Matthew KD4UPL, John N3GLZ, Charley WA4ITY, Michael K2VJ. A task well done by all.

FIELD DAY: Both clubs M.A.R.A. & V.A.R.A. need folks to help with the set up of equipment and the taking down of said equipment. Remember when field day is over that's when the work starts, so please be on hand for this, especially the taking down. We will operate as 2A this year. Some equipment is needed, and don't forget to sign up to help operate this year. I understand both clubs will have operating pins on hand for those that do operate so let's all help out and receive a pin.

We have the time, date and cost of the Christmas Party. It will be December 5th, same day

as the club meeting night. Time is 7pm and we will eat at 7:30pm. Cost is \$11.00 per person. Children 5 and under eat free, over 5 to 10 will be half price-\$5.50. The menu is country style steak, western ham, fried chicken, salad bar, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, green beans, lima beans, macaroni & cheese, baked apples. Dessert will be cobbler & ice cream.

November 15th is the cut off date so please make your reservations early so we will know how many to prepare for. Send your checks to Jeff W4PJW 1344 Hankey Mtn Hwy, Churchville, Va. 24421.

EVENTS: M.S. Walk in Waynesboro the 30th of April at 12:00 N. Till about 4:30 p.m. Please call Greg W4GRC if you can help with this walk.

River Fest in Waynesboro is coming the 27th of May & Bike Va. has ask for help in "July" 5th, 6th, & 7th for a special bike event. Anyone that can help with the events please give Greg W4GRC a call.

NOTICE: July the 4th is the first Tuesday in July. We have changed the meeting night for this month only to the 10th of July, which is the second Monday. So keep this in mind and make your schedule accordingly.

THANKS: to Clint KB4OLM, Jeff W4PJW & Dan KE4JSX for the program on emergency preparedness. Things you should have ready to grab and go when called on to help out in case of an emergency. A very good presentation. Thanks Guys.

Next month will be Old Radios, some show and tell. It should

Richard KF4QZG & Clint KB4OLM will be working on a presentation to present to Dupont company and try to get some help with setting up some emergency equipment for the different communities, also David AD4TJ will be helping out with this task.

PLEASE check your address on the ham call lookup and make the necessary changes. Also add your email address if you have one. Remember ULS all AMATEUR'S have to register. The address is FCC.GOV/WTB/ULS

A motion to adjourn the V.A.R.A meeting was made by Joe KD4FKT and seconded by Ken KE4GKD. The motion was accepted and the meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm.

Submitted by:
Pat Smiley KD4WWF
Secretary



Come out and join us
at the next Club meeting!

Sorry, the MARA Secretary's Report did not arrive by the Monitor deadline

MARA/VARA

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MASSANUTTEN AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

President: Gerald Nauman, KN4FM
Vice President: Sandy Mullins, K4PZC
Secretary: Wilton Thomas, KF4BFL
Treasurer: Matthew Huffman, KD4UPL
Board (exp. 00): vacant
Board (exp 01): David Hughes, KF4SVR

<http://cob.jmu.edu/fordhadr/MARA>

MARA meets the first Thursday of each month at Ever's Restaurant on U.S. 11 south of Harrisonburg. Meal starts at 6:30 pm. Business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

Visitors are welcome.

Dues (\$12 per year) should be mailed to:
Matthew Huffman, KD4UPL
5166 Mt. Clinton Pike
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

President: Greg Czerniak, W4GRC
Vice President: Richard Huttinger, KF4QZG
Secretary: Pat Smiley, KD4WWF
Treasurer: Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW

<http://www.hamsnet.net/W4MUS>

VARA meets the first Tuesday of each month At Gavid's Restaurant on U.S. 11 south in Staunton. 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