

MARA/VARA MONITOR

Published Monthly for Radio Amateurs in the Shenandoah Valley

VE Exams Resume in the Valley!

Yes, you heard correctly, Local VE testing is to resume September 9 at the Woodman of the World Building on route 42 in Dayton, Virginia.

The registration for testing will start at 9:00 AM and the testing will begin at 10:00 AM.

A group of VE's from the MARA and VARA Amateur Radio Clubs have seen a real need for testing in our area and will be conducting the test session which is being sponsored by both clubs.

Walk ins are welcome at this test session. If you have any questions about the testing contact: Gerald E. Nauman at KN4FM@ARRL.NET or (540) 434-0859.

We are hoping for an excellent turn out for the session and hope to be able to hold future sessions on a regular schedule.

The Woodman of the World building will be on the right side of 42 for those coming South and on the left for those going North. The building has a sign out front that is easy to spot.

If you get lost get on the 145.130 repeater (no tone, -600 offset) and ask for directions.

73's and hope to see you on Sept. 9.

Tragedy Strikes Local Ham Family

(see page 4)

Bob's Knob Picnic a Success

(see page 4)

Welcome to new hams (page 5)

K2VJ: SK (page 6)

Can a Stamp Save Money? You Bet!

It is widely known that the largest single cost of MARA and VARA is the printing and mailing of the monthly Monitor newsletter.

That newsletter cost has two components – printing and postage. Your editor is continuously “monitoring” (pun intended) both components to ensure minimal total cost to the clubs.

With the recently-announced hike in printing costs, it appeared the bulk mail option was no longer the lowest-total-cost arrangement.

The editor went out for bids, asking several local printshops for quotes. The results confirmed that printing and mailing 200 copies per month (the minimum to qualify for bulk mail) was indeed more expensive than printing and mailing only enough copies to cover the membership.

But many members prefer to receive the newsletter via email anyway. Thus, the number of copies can be reduced even further, resulting in more savings for the clubs.

The bottom line is this: if you will accept your Monitor via email (PDF file attachment) and forego your hardcopy, you will be helping your club save money!

You will not only get your Monitor earlier than the postage-mailed copies, and in color, too, you will be helping yourself and every other club member by helping forestall dues increases as printing and postage continue to increase.

To get the email version, simply send an email to fordhadr@jmu.edu indicating your desire. Thanks to all who are helping this way.

VARA President's Message

SHENANDOAH FALL FOLIAGE BIKE FESTIVAL

Greetings hamsters! The 10 Annual Shenandoah Fall Foliage Bike Festival is getting closer. 1200 cyclists will participate in the Fall tour. The dates of the tour are October 20-22 and V. A.R.A. will be called upon to assist. We do this every year and it helps the club. So mark your calendar, and make plans to help out. Usually radio operators are needed on Saturday and Sunday. I am looking forward to working with you in this years event.

SOME INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR NEWSLETTER

At last months meeting the club agreed to only send hard copy newsletters to those who do not have e-mail or request a hard copy of the newsletter. So if we don't have your e-mail address, please send it to me at grljc@cfw.com. The cost of the printing and sending the newsletter is rising and something needed to be done to hold down the cost. Dave (KD9LA) reports that \$9.00 per person is saved on a yearly basis if the newsletter is sent via e-mail. Folks, that adds up quick! Let's see, thirty member times \$9.00 equals a saving of \$270.00 per year. That means the dues won't go up! Please support us in attempting to keep the costs down.

EXAMS WILL BE HELD IN THE VALLEY IN SEPTEMBER

On September 9th, exams for Amateur Radio Licenses will be held in Dayton, VA. A group from both clubs are working together to provide testing on a regular basis. Hope to see you at the next session.

FEWER THAN ONE-FIFTH OF HAMS ARE ULS-REGISTERED

The FCC has confirmed that fewer than one-fifth of US Amateur Radio licensees--including club stations--are registered on the Universal Licensing System. The FCC deployed the ULS for the Amateur Service just under a year ago, although registration has been available far longer.

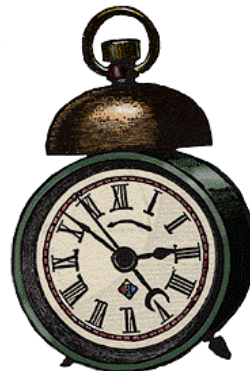
The question of how many hams now were ULS-registered arose during the July 21 meeting of the National Conference of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators, held in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Not even the FCC officials on hand had an answer. After the meeting, RC Smith, W6RZA, of the Greater Los Angeles VEC crunched some numbers to see if he could supply one for his colleagues.

Starting with the 717,629 licensees in the FCC database at that point, Smith subtracted the 31,449 determined to be expired but within the two-year grace period. Sorting on the Licensee ID Number field, Smith came up with 129,947 ULS registrants, or 18.9% of the remaining 686,180 licensees.

The FCC's Steve Linn, N4CAK, says the Commission ran its own numbers and came up with a similar figure--although without subtracting for those within the two-year grace period. "The quick run done here looked at all active records--717,314--and how many had Licensee ID numbers, giving 18.1%," Linn said this week. "Take out the grace records and we're in the same ballpark."

During his comments at the Dayton Hamvention FCC forum, Linn encouraged amateur licensees to register with ULS to "lock in" their FCC records. ULS registration, he said, "protects your call sign within the system" and could prevent it from inadvertently being deleted or reissued due to a filing error.

All amateurs must be registered with the ULS in order to file applications with the FCC, even for such routine matters as a change of address or a license renewal. Registration requires that licensees supply a Taxpayer Identification Number, or TIN--a Social Security number for an individual. Some amateurs have protested that requirement citing privacy concerns, but the FCC has maintained that it's bound by the Debt Collection Improvement Act to require it.



Last month, the FCC announced that it has begun implementing the new Commission Registration System, or CORES. Registration in CORES eventually will replace ULS registration, although the FCC has not indicated just when the switch will occur. CORES registration also will require registrants to supply a TIN. Those already registered in ULS need not register again in CORES, however. The FCC says the ULS will continue to be the primary Amateur Radio licensee database and the only means to file applications and updates.

The FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau recently announced expanded hours for ULS technical support. ULS users may now reach the FCC Technical Support Hotline, 202-414-1250, from 7 AM to 10 PM weekdays. Weekend service is newly available. On Saturdays the Hotline will be available from 8 AM until 7 PM and on Sundays from noon until 6 PM (all times Eastern). Users also may contact tech support via e-mail at .

For more information, to access the ULS or to register, visit the FCC's ULS site, .

73, and see you at our September Meeting. Greg - W4GRC

MARA President's message

I would like to thank Jeff, W4PJW, for the packet program that he presented at the August meeting. I only wish that he had more time to cover more of the subject. Hopefully this introduction helped some of those who didn't know where or how to get started. It seems that the Internet has taken over for packet bulletin boards, but packet still has a use. In this area there is a DX spotting network and the ARES packet system. We don't know when the ARES system will be needed, so it never hurts to be up to speed and ready to go. When the need arises, it is too late to start to set your equipment up to work packet, as well as to learn how to use it. There is no time like now to get prepared.

Elections for club officers is coming up in October. Several of the present officers have stated that they do not want to serve for another year. If you would like to make a nomination or to volunteer for a position, let someone on the Board know. Any suggestion is welcome and will be considered. The same can be said about program suggestions. If there is a topic that you would like to know more about, or that you would like to pre-

sent, let us know. Remember, it is your club and we must all participate to make it the best it can be.

Dale, N4DAI, has offered to teach an amateur radio class if someone will take the initiative to find a location, and set up the rest of the details involved in running a class. Would anyone like to volunteer?

This month's program is the result of a suggestion that I received from Ray, K4NRA. It seems that he spoke with Clayton Towers, K4RHQ, and Clayton offered to present a program that he gave to the VARA club recently. Clayton has been collecting weather data for the last 30 or so years. He is a great source for local weather information.

I hope each of you can make it to the meeting on September 7, dinner at 6:30 and the meeting at 7:30 at Ever's Restaurant on Rt 11 north of Mt Crawford.

Gerald, KN4FM

Briefly...

Dan Schultz, N8FGV, reports that the ham radio station which is slated for installation aboard the International Space Station (orbiting the earth), has been assembled and is undergoing shakedown on-the-air testing. The station is currently located at the Goddard Space Flight Center just north of Washington D.C., with antennas on the 11th floor.

The Phase 3D satellite frequencies can be found at <http://www.amsat-dl.org/p3dqrg.html>. This satellite is slated for launch sometime in October or November, after delays of several years. Almost every ham with radio transceivers can work at least one of the bands on this satellite. Be prepared.

Almost unnoticed by the local news media, the Greenbank National Radio Astronomy Observatory has dedicated its newly-completed antenna. The structure is the largest fully-steerable antenna in the world, measuring over 110-meters across. The antenna has been toured by many in the local Shenandoah Valley Ham Community during its construction.

Vanity Callsign Fees will remain at \$14 for the coming year, according to the FCC.

After a major eruption and flare in early August, the sun has quieted down to its most passive level since January. The sunspot number was way down as of August 28, and dropping. Does this mean the peak of the sunspot cycle has passed? Nope. The sun often exhibits erratic and irregular activity during its maximum in the 11 year cycle. Keep those radios on, folks. The best may be yet to come. — ARRL



The new 100-meter radio telescope at Green Bank, West Virginia.

Tragedy Hits Local Ham

The thoughts and prayers of the amateur radio community are with Colin Hester, N4ZFQ, and his family, as they endure the aftermath of a tragic accident.

Their son, Adam, a recent graduate of Fort Defiance High School, was involved in a major highway collision in Augusta County.

The head-on crash killed one driver and sent Adam to the University of Virginia Medical Center with multiple severe injuries. As of press time, Adam was slowly improving, but still in serious condition.

Informal reports indicate he still suffers from intracranial pressure, and multiple broken bones and trauma, and other severe injuries as well.

Adam, who is known affectionately as "Spud" at school, has

been the subject of heartfelt and emotional conversations among his classmates and friends.

"Spud is one of the nicest guys you could ever meet," according to Allen Fordham, an FDHS senior.

"Everyone at school loves him, he has a smile for everyone, he's always laughing and joking, and he's a friend to everybody. We're all broken up that this could happen to such a great guy. We are asking about him every day."

The school students have painted a get-well-soon message on the famous "Indian Rock", a large boulder across the street from the high school which serves as the unofficial graffiti announcement board for the student community.

Colin and his wife have been staying in Charlottesville, courtesy of Colin's employer, Frazier Quarry, keeping a vigil for Adam's eventual recovery.

Due to the extended recovery period forecast for his son, Colin has asked to be relieved of responsibilities as District Emergency Coordinator, and asked local hams for their understanding. He and his family have a long road ahead of them, and appreciate your prayers and concerns.

According to Jeff Holsinger, KD4JVC, you can send cards and other sentiments to Colin and Adam at 1589 Dam Town Road, Fort Defiance, VA 24437, email at n4zfq@arrl.net.

"Everyone at school loves him ... we're all broken up that this could happen to such a great guy..."

Bob's Knob Picnic a Resounding Success. ... Again!

...From our Bergton Bureau

The ninth annual Big Mountain Repeater Picnic was held Sunday, the 20th of August at Bob's Knob in Bergton, Virginia.

The weather was near-perfect for the outdoor event, and accounts for the large attendance — 120 folks from Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

A large group of new and old hams and families were on hand with barely enough seating available at the picnic tables.

Lots of people helped handle the tables, firewood, cooking, and serving, to make an impos-

sible job look easy: Wilton Thomas, Bob Slaney, Ken High, Ray Ritchie, Matthew Huffman, Chester Field (and his Grandpapa Charlie), and Robert Waggy all provided much-needed help.

Can't leave the women-folk out either: Nancy Ritchie, Carrol Landes, Sandy Bowers, Missy Mullins, Cathy (from Mannassas), and Mable (from Winchester), and a half-dozen other gals were prominent help at the serving tables.

Some special thanks go to Sandy, Missy, and Moon Mullins for donating the large amount of ICE.

Aprons and Bob's Knob hats went to the helpers.

This year's 50/50 prize went to Paulie (Dellinger) Niemeyer. The repeater's share of the winnings was \$20.00.

Proceeds from the event itself amounted to \$345, making the total contributed to the repeater maintenance fund \$365.

Thanks to all for supporting the Big Mountain Repeater. This machine is open to all hams, and is now connected with the Outback Link system, giving good coverage to the area.

VARA Secretary's Report

The Valley Amateur Radio Association club meeting was held at Gavid's Restaurant in Staunton on August 1, 2000. President Greg Czerniak W4GRC opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.. There were 18 members and guests present.

The 50/50 drawing was a total of \$22.00 and won by Benny KF4CZK. He donated his winnings back to the club. Thanks to Benny for that.

Clint, KB4OLM informed the club that negotiations are still on going with the tower that Waynesboro is donating to the club.

Let's all welcome Claude Winters, KG4HTL our newest member to the club.

David, AD4TJ Needs HELP with the Augusta County Emergency net. Anyone that is willing to be net control and help David out give him a call.

FIELD DAY: Report by Jeff, W4PJW the totals have been sent to ARRL.

SKYWARN Basic I class will be held at the end of August at Sterling, Va. If anyone is interested give Greg, W4GRC a call.

A.R.E.S. Colin, N4ZFQ reported on the progress of the ID program and the requirements to get the picture ID from DMV. Must be involved in one set each year and have 6 hours of formal training on a yearly basis as well.

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.

A motion was made to have the newsletter e-mailed to those with e-mail capability. They will not receive a regular mail newsletter, those who do not have e-mail will continue to receive their newsletter via the postal system. Motion made by Frank,

KE4ASC and second by Bennie, KF4CZK. Motion passed. Greg, W4GRC will be in discussion with MARA President and Dave, KD9LA, the editor. E-mail addresses will be sent to the Dave.

Ray, N4NRA reported that MARA club is ready to act on giving exams. The testing sessions will be held at the Whitman Building in Dayton. Looking for VE's to help with the exams.

Clint, KB4OLM gave a good report on QSL cards, storage, mailing and how to fill them out. Thanks Clint.

PLEASE check your address on QRZ and make the necessary changes. Also add your email address if you have one. Remember, under the ULS system all amateurs have to register. The address is FCC.GOV/WTB/ULS

A motion to adjourn the V.A.R.A meeting was made. The motion was accepted and the meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.

Submitted by:
Pat Smiley KD4WWF
Secretary

“Check your address on QRZ and make any necessary changes”

Welcome to some new hams...

Several new hams have joined the ranks of the valley amateurs.

KB4JBE, Dale Armentrout, and his son Jason, KG4IUJ, have become the newest father-son team to pass their exams.

Also, recently-ticketed KG4JAZ, Nancy Ritchie; and KG4JBA Amber Ritchie, join K4NRA in be-

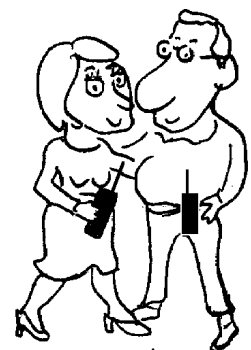
coming a ham family in the Timberville area.

In Weyers Cave, the Vogan's have become another new ham family: KG4IEJ Charles; KG4IEK Jeremy, KG4IEL Dustin, and KG4IWA Benjamin. (Can you imagine the fights over the HF rig in that household?!)

We'd also like to welcome

KG4IUI, Marcus Hevener; KG4IJA, Antonio Martinez; KG4IJC, Randy Weber; and KG4JAY, Dorman Hensley, and KG4JBI, Paul Nesselrodt.

Also, KG4IJE, Robert Beahm; and KG4JBF, Gail Shull (not to be confused with *Gayle* Shull of the same Bridgewater address!)





K2VJ: SK

It is always sad when one of our number passes into the next life. Last month, Vince Luciani, K2VJ, went to that Big Pileup in the Sky.

Vince had lived in Verona for a number of years, and was a contributing reporter for the Monitor.

Recently, Vince had moved from Verona to a retirement community near EMU in northern Harrisonburg, where he continued hamming it up, in spite of deteriorating health.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Vince. He's sure to be trying to make "one more contact".

King David's Nine Little Alligators

This month we continue with our column covering some of the more irritating problems which tend to crop up on ham radio operators, always at the worst possible time: mainly, when we are "in the heat of battle", tied up with emergency communication or public service events, or even in a local net where a dozen friends can hear the problems resulting from our mistakes.

The title of the column comes from that familiar phrase, "when you're up to your abs in alligators, it's hard to remind yourself that you came there to drain the swamp."

In previous months, we have pointed out the need to be prepared for all kinds of problems. We have pointed out the importance of having fresh water in your jump kit. We also talked about the need to know how to fashion a makeshift antenna out of damaged coax cable.

We then mentioned the critical need to have a manual, menu list, quick-reference card, or some other handy way of de-coding all the controls, settings, menu options, and other buttons and settings on the panels of today's modern radios. (Some radios seem like the cockpit of the space shuttle they are so complicated, and an emergency is no time to be trying to figure out how to change the PL tone frequency or reverse the xmit offset.)

This month, we talk about alligator number four: I'll call it "yakkity yak, don't talk back".

Let's face it. Once we press that push-to-talk bar on the microphone, it's really hard to let it go.

Listen to a ham net, any net, and you'll see what I mean. It isn't restricted to a few long-winded individuals, either. Almost all of us do it.

Listen to the net control, asking whether anyone has traffic for the net, "please come now".

The proper response is, "KD9LA, one announcement" or something like that. Period. End of story. Release the mike key. Stop talking and listen.

But nooooo! Most of us can't resist the urge to say, "This is KD9LA, Kilo Delta Niner Lima Alpha, located in Weyers Cave. Paul I've got an announcement that for the net that everyone might be interested in" or something along those lines. Too wordy. Too verbose. Too many words. Too long with the mike key down.

Try this: If your radio has extended receive capability or if you have a scanner, tune in some of the public service frequencies and listen to people whose very lives often depend on communication. They know how it's done. Keeping the mike key down too long can get someone lost, burnt, or killed.

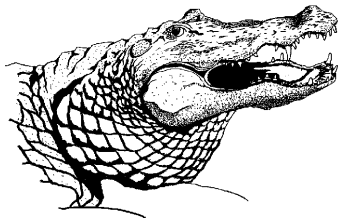
Listen to the pro's. For example, you might hear: "Unit 17 to EOC." "EOC." "Area Secured, Request Permission to Return to Quarters." "10-4 17, stand by." (pause) "EOC to Unit 17" "17" "Permission Granted" "10-4".

Look how short those exchanges were. It got the job done, and if you had a stopwatch, you could time the key-down duration totalling less than, maybe, seven seconds.

But two hams in the exact same situation would sound something like this:

"This is KD9LA to Net Control. Jeff are you still there or have you gone to get lunch?" "Yes, this Jeff, of course I'm still here, did you think I'd abandon my post during an emergency? I mean, come on, give me some credit. Whatcha got,

(Continued on page 7)



"Once we press that 'push-to-talk' bar on that microphone, it is really hard to let it go!"

(Continued from page 6)

Dave?" "Listen, Jeff, we've kinda finished up over here on this side, and there's not a whole lot to do, and the officials have said they See-Cured the area and we can go home. Do you think it would be okay if, like, I went ahead and went home? I remember one time they told us to always check with Net Control before we did anything like that, and, well, since we now have that situation under control, right here and now, well, I figured that this would be a good time to, you know, use that instruction, since that's what we were told and everything, so, you know, can you, uh, check with somebody and see if it is okay for me to take off and go home? I've got to mow grass and do some other stuff this afternoon, and if I'm not really needed anymore, well heck, I'd rather be going home than standing out here with nothing to do, know what I mean? Over." "Wait a minute, hold it, hang on, there, Dave. I didn't get all of that, someone was talking to me. Say that again?"

"I said, ..." "Okay, okay, Dave, okay, hold on a minute while I find out." (pause) "KD9LA from Net Control, Dave are you still there, I've got an answer for you about whether or not you can go home now that the situation is under control on your side of the field." "Net Control from KD9LA, yes, I'm still here. What was the answer? Were you able to find out if I can leave? That grass is growing a lot since last Saturday with all this rain we've been having, and I really need to go home."

"Well, Dave, I couldn't find the guy who I needed to talk to, but I asked the assistant who was on duty, and he said, heck yeah, he knows for a fact that we won't have anything else to do this afternoon on your side of the field, and if you got grass to cut, go ahead and secure and check out, and have a nice afternoon. The rest of us will stay on frequency here and continue to help out with this emergency, since some of the other officials and locations still have major problems, with the fire department's repeaters out and the plane still on fire and everything. But hey, your side of the field is clean and green, so you can go home."

"Okay, check me out. This is KD9LA, checking out, and going home. 73's everybody"

"Bye Dave." "Bye, Dave" "Goodbye Dave" "So long, Dave, thanks for helping" "Oh, Dave, hey, man, before you go, I've got a quick query, if you've got a minute or two. This is Rex." "Yeah, Rex, this is KD9LA, I'm still here. Go ahead, I'm just walking to the car." "Dave, about that antenna you and I were talking about..."

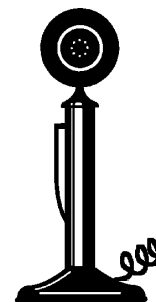
"Break! This is net control! Listen, everybody, we need to remember that we are in emergency mode here. A plane has crashed and we are supporting the fire department, since their communications systems has failed, so let's try to be professional and save the chit-chat for later. If we start rag-chewing on the frequency, we won't be able to handle the fire department's traffic."

"Oh, sorry Jeff, I didn't know. I just turned my radio on and heard Dave checking out, and since he and I had talked about a new kind of antenna, I figured I've give him a quick call, but since you've got an emergency going on, I'll let ya'll have the frequency. By the way, what exactly is the emergency? Did I hear you say something about a plane crash? It wasn't a big plane was it? I saw one of them come over real low last night and I thought it sounded funny and I was thinking maybe it might be the one that crashed. Was that the one?"

If you have read this article this far, you recognize the problem. Dave, Jeff, and Rex are typical hams, and any similarity to real people is purely coincidental. Just keep in mind the KISS method: Keep It Short and Sweet. During a real emergency, never ever hold the mike button down longer than it would take to count to ten. For any reason. Even if you are asked to give a lengthy report, open up and pause every few seconds. Think before you transmit. Think before you speak. Use two words instead of the fifty.

This is where our weekly nets should help get us in practice. If we don't practice short, brief, but effective communication, it will be hard when we need to use it.

—KD9LA



"Never, ever, hold the mike button down longer than it would take to count to ten! Even if you're asked to give a lengthy report, pause and open up every few seconds."

"Our weekly nets should help get us in practice. If we don't practice short, brief communication, it will be hard when we need to use it."

Calendar

September 2: Morgantown (WV) Hamfest
 September 5: VARA Meeting (Staunton)
 September 7: MARA Meeting (Harrisonburg)
 September 9: VE Testing (Dayton)
 September 9-11: ARRL VHF QSO Party
 September 16-17: York (PA) Hamfest
 September 20: October *Monitor* Deadline

September 23-24: Virginia Beach Hamfest
 October 3: VARA Meeting
 October 5: MARA Meeting
 October 20-22: Bike Virginia
 October 21-22: JOTA

MARA/VARA

c/o David Fordham
131 Wayside Drive
Weyers Cave, VA 24486
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Email: fordhadr@jmu.edu

Address Service Requested

MASSANUTTEN AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

President: Gerald Nauman, KN4FM
Vice President: Sandy Mullins, K4PZC
Secretary: Wilton Thomas, KF4BFL
Treasurer: Matthew Huffman, KD4UPL
Board (exp. 00): Bill Tennyson, KF4ZWK
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