Captain Junkins’ Program Rescheduled — March 4 MARA Mtg

Due to the snow and ice storm, the MARA February meeting was curtailed before Capt. Junkins’ program on the Rockingham County Emergency Communications System.

With freezing rain falling and accumulating on the streets, Ever’s restaurant closed early to the general public, but kept a crew on hand and a hot buffet on the steam table, just for the MARA meeting.

Braving the treacherous conditions, a total of fifteen hams eventually made it to the meeting by driving very slowly and carefully. During the meal, the group listened to the local repeaters, tracking the cautious progress of those hams still en route.

By about 7:30, everyone had finished eating, and the ladies at Ever’s had cleaned up and were ready to go home to their families.

While they were very gracious in that they would remain as long as we liked, to keep the place open for our meeting, by 7:30 a consensus was reached that it would be safest to curtail the meeting and let everyone, the restaurant ladies included, go on home before the ice got too bad.

A quick business meeting was held to vote on two new members, and then a motion was made, seconded, and passed to adjourn at 7:35 pm. Capt. Junkins had been waylaid by duty (the ice was causing some major traffic accidents) and arrived shortly after the last ham left.

We’ll try again to let Captain Junkins present his program, this time at the March 4 MARA meeting. Visitors are welcome.

Ham Radio Classes — Monday Nights, Starting March 29!

Gordon Batey (WA4FJC), Richard Huttinger (AA4RH), and Greg Czerniak (W4GRC) from VARA are putting together plans for a set of ham radio licensing classes. Entry level classes are planned to start March 29 and run for 11 weeks.

Do you know of anyone who might be interested in getting their license? This is an excellent opportunity for you to “talk up” ham radio at your Ruritan, Lions, Rotary, or Kiwanis club, your church, PTA meeting, or sports clubs. Do you have any friends who have expressed an interest in ham radio? The $25 cost of the class goes totally for the books and other materials the students will use in the course.

And a special VE testing session may be offered at the end of the class for the convenience of the students.

How about yourself?!? Are you interested in upgrading? The team is open to suggestions as to what the classes should offer. If there is enough interest, they’ll offer Technicians, General, and/or Extra, too.

Are you interested in volunteering to perhaps TEACH? Any and all help is greatly appreciated.

Interested parties should contact Gordon at 540-248-2732; or Richard at 540-942-3914, or Greg at 540-885-5292. Or address email to: GPBatey@compuserve.com
**Frostfest Report...**

The Frostfest wasn’t as frosty this year. Temperatures warmed into the mid-60’s on a very pleasant Sunday. In fact, many attendees from the Valley said they had seen colder temperatures in May at Dayton than they saw this past weekend in Richmond.

Perhaps the nice weather had something to do with the fact that there were as many valley hams at the Frostfest this year as there normally are at a regular monthly MARA or VARA club meeting. The local amateurs were well-represented among the green tickets in this year’s raffle cage. Sadly, they were under-represented in the winner’s circles after the door prize drawings!

Jay W4QDC, Bob K4DJG and perhaps a few other brave souls drove down Saturday night for the privilege of paying good money to sleep in a motel room. Bright and early Saturday morning found Clint KB4OLM and Dave AD4TJ at the head of the pack running east on I-64.

Gerry K4RBZ and his brother Paul W4RY made the mistake of using a vehicle not equipped with ham license plates. In fact, their vehicle was so out-of-spec that it didn’t even have a ham radio installed! This required Gerry to use a hand-held in order to talk to the other hams on the highway.

Ken K8KMM caught a ride with a contingent from West Virginia, and he, like the Brunk Brothers, had to use a handheld in order to communicate. He was putting out a decent signal, considering it was coming from the back seat.

Jeff W4PJW and Joe, KD4FKT carpoooled together, but had the foresight and good sense to use a car that had a working radio installed. Kip, K4KIP from Waynesboro joined a caravan which included the Brunk Brothers, and Dave KD9LA, who as usual was transmitting an ultra-quiet signal using his special low-audio Yaesu FT-100D.

Others from the area who showed up at the hamfest included Sandy, K4PZC, Richard KC3AN, Phyllis N4VZC, Matthew KD4UPL, Cowles K4EME, Jason N4DSL, Neal WA4KKL, Benny N4BCC, Ray KE4HVR, Al N3JB, Joe KF4QPC, and even Gordon, WA4FJC.

Once they got to the hamfest, several Valley hams spent the day “at the tables”. Roger N9ARC for example manned the Red Cross booth (which featured some impressive photographs!) and Jay W4QDC manned a table containing a bunch of “for-sale” items contributed on consignment. And Jay’s table featured free food. It was noticed that the food moved at a much quicker pace than the material that was for sale!

The highlight of the day was a surprise appearance made by Bill KE4FM, who was coerced into attending by Mike, KG4OON. Bill was first seen sometime around 10:00 am, and was still there at 11:30, almost an hour and a half later! Such a long-term appearance by KE4FM is generally seen only once or twice in a lifetime, so those hams who ran into Bill in Richmond call tell their grandchildren that they witnessed the rare event. Thanks, Mike!

There were probably other valley hams at the Frostfest who aren’t mentioned in this article, and to them, we extend our apologies for overlooking them.

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**In Our Thoughts and Prayers...**

The ham community extends its sympathies to Sandy, K4PZC, on the passing of his father last month. Sandy is the treasurer for MARA.

Also, the father of Neal Layman, N4XU, well-known Field Day afficionado, has terminal cancer in its final stages. He is passing his final days resting at Oak Lea in Harrisonburg. He is on a heavy regimen of morphine.

Also, the daughter of Marvin Henderson (KF4WDI) could use your thoughts and prayers, too.

And for some good news: Leon Rosenberger (WA4ZQW—Zed Queue Willy) and his wife Helen (WA4ODD) celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on February 22. The ham community extends its heartiest congratulations!
The VMRC Amateur Radio Station Progress Report:

Saturday's antenna party (February 21st) saw a combination 75/40M doublet installed in the Park Gables attic.

The hard labor was provided by Jason N4DSL and Hugh K3EC aloft, with the assistance of Dick W3HXH, Phyllis N4VZC, Dick KC3AN, Gerry K4RBZ and Bob WA3PPH (visiting from Lancaster PA) all measuring, cutting and soldering down below and handing stuff topside.

Gerry brought a donated 2M J-pole, which after installation under the roof and the RG-8 hookup (big job) Jason found unsuitable. High SWR and marginal performance are most likely caused by the aerial being in the attic.

Step #2 (scheduled for Wednesday, February 25) will see the 75M elements shortened for 3890 kHz and the J-pole replaced with a 5/8- wavelength whip.

Dick W3HXH will bring his Yaesu-901DM to be put in place and later used for RFI testing (Step #3 on or about 2/27 or 3/1).

HF operations will most likely begin with this venerable unit (which usually resides in the W3HXH/Mobile RV) until K3EC or Floyd K3AXA come up with their own gear--assuming all-clear with fire alarms, nurses' net, cable TV and telephone systems. Keep your fingers crossed!

Thanks to the local hams who have been supporting the effort to get this station on the air, and a special thanks to those who took time out on their Saturday to help with the physical installation.

Hugh Pettis, K3EC.

Another Successful VE Session

We had a good test session on February 14. There were six persons that showed up to take tests, and best of all, everyone left with something.

We now have four new Technician class hams in the area, one new General and one well on the way to a General ticket. Congratulations to everyone!

Many thanks to the VE’s that gave up a Saturday morning to help. As usual we had a good group of examiners which help to keep things moving along. Those present were: Ray, K4NRA; Jason, N4DSL; Kevin, KF4WWM; Jim, W4POL; Norman, KA4EEN; Andrew, AG4XN; Bob, K4DJG; and Dale, N4DAI.

I also want to thank the Woodmen Of The World for the use of their building. I don't think they know how much they help us by providing a place to give the exams.

The next VE Session is scheduled for April 10. Would you like to help?

Gerald, KN4FM
Scathing Editorial: The REAL Purpose of Ham Radio...

This column may offend some people. So I'll be up front and perfectly clear. If the shoe fits, maybe you should be wearing it.

What is the purpose of the amateur radio service?

Frequently, I hear hams say, “the whole purpose behind ham radio is to have fun.” I myself have said this.

But is it true?

Why does the United States have ham radio? What is the fundamental purpose of the amateur service.

Let's go straight to the source, the FCC Part 97 rules.

Printed on the next page, word-for-word, is the section of the Part 97 rules which state, very clearly and specifically, what the fundamental purpose of ham radio is. Take a moment to read that section, and then follow along with me.

Paragraph 97.1(a): “Service to the public as a voluntary non-commercial communications service.”


Paragraph 97.1(b): “contribute to the advancement of the radio art.”


Paragraph 97.1(c): “provide for advancing skills in both the communications and technical phases of the art”

Okay, how about this one? Advancing skills. The key word here is advancing. How long has it been since you advanced your skill? Or helped someone else advance their skill?

In the last year, have you served anyone as an Elmer? Have you volunteered to teach a ham class or two? Have you learned a new mode? Upgraded your license?

Have you ever come to a club meeting and learned something from the speaker that you didn’t know before?

Advancing your skill. Think about it.

Paragraph 97.1(d): “expansion of the existing reservoir ... of trained operators, technicians, and electronics experts.”

Let's take these one at a time. Trained Operators. Not just someone who can push a PTT button. Are you really trained?

Do you know how to use modern communications techniques?

Digital? Microwaves? Computer networking? Heck, do you even know how to use all the features of your new radio without the manual in front of you?

Do you really think the emergency operating skills you learned back in 1978 are going to let you fit in seamlessly with today’s 2003 Incident Command System, the one used by modern emergency response teams? Do you know the current jargon? Do you know the current emergency plans? Shoot, do you even know where Rescue 55 is located?

Do you know the frequency of the emergency packet BBS? How about its user commands? Could you work it if you had to?

Do you know the PL of the Skywarn repeater in Winchester? The frequency and times of the Virginia Phone Net? Honestly, could you get a message to Charleston WV or York PA in less than half an hour if the phones and Internet were down?

Are you a trained technician? Can you repair your transmitter? And do you really consider yourself an “electronics expert”?

Paragraph 97.1(e): “the amateur’s unique ability to enhance international goodwill.”

Okay, how about this one? Do you enhance goodwill when you operate DX? Or would your mom be embarrassed at your behavior during the last contest?

What? You don't operate DX? You don't have HF privileges yet? Hmmm.

The point I'm trying to make is this: Are you using ham radio for the purpose for which it is intended? Or are you wasting the national resource (spectrum) by doing nothing except having fun?

A disappointing number of hams in this country are just “having fun” on the radio. Nothing more.

So I say this: If you aren't serving at least one or two of these purposes — and serving them well — then I invite you to sell your equipment and go find a hobby where you can “just have fun”.

Severe? Yes. But ham radio frequencies are far too valuable to waste by using them “just for fun”.

Nothing says you can't have fun WHILE you are serving the real purpose of ham radio. In fact, I have a lot of fun myself. If we didn't have fun, none of us would be here. So having fun is extremely important. But it isn't enough.

Right here in this issue of the Monitor are almost a dozen ways you can use ham radio for its intended purpose in the next 60 days! Are you going to take advantage of those opportunities?

Because if you aren't going to use your radio to serve the purposes of the amateur service, then you have no business being on the ham bands. Leave. Go away. Find some other place to “just have fun.”
The Harrisonburg March of Dimes walk takes place every April. About six to eight hams can provide valuable communications support—a safety layer for the participants. The MARA club has supported this event for the past eight years. Charles Bilbrey, volunteer logistics coordinator for this year’s walk, has recognized our contribution and extended his appreciation for our past service, and asked if we could help again this year. The date this year is Saturday, April 24th. We need one base station operator to serve as net control, one ham to ride in the sag wagon, and about three to six hams to man the check points as the walkers pass, ready to relay any problems back to net control.

You will need a portable stations (hand-held or mobile with battery). This is a very safe, low-stress, and enjoyable morning activity. You get a free breakfast, a free chicken or pizza lunch, and a free T-shirt, too.

The walk this year will start at the H’burg Municipal Building and go through Highlandale Park, over to the JMU campus, and back to the municipal building. Please mark April 24 on your calendar. The weather is usually nice, and this event is one of the more enjoyable spring activities.

Public Service Opportunity: MD Walk

Disagree? Riled up by this editorial? Write back! We’ll gladly print a rebuttal.

VARA President’s Message

The Club voted to set a date to start lessons for new hams. We have three volunteers for the committee, Gordon Batey WA4FJC, Richard Huttinger AA4RH and Greg Czerniak W4GRC. Gordon gave a report on the material they had received from the ARRL to help get classes organized.

Our Field Day committee volunteers for 2004 are: Billy Hooke KG4JOF, Richard Huttinger AA4RH and Jess Hancock W4PQK.

I would like to remind everyone to be prepared in case bad weather should hit, like keeping batteries charged and a go box on standby and have radios programmed for the local repeaters and simplex frequencies.

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.

Let’s keep Dan James W4DLJ, Marvin Henderson’s (KF4WDI) daughter, and Neal Layman’s N4XU, father in our thoughts and prayers.

Roger Sack N9ARC gave a talk on the Red Cross in which he is directly involved. Thanks to Roger for the great presentation.

I would also like to remind everybody that next month we’re meeting at Kathy’s in Verona, same time for the meal and meeting.

Billy Hooke KG4JOF VARA President
The Valley Amateur Radio Association met at Kathy’s in Verona on Tuesday, February 10th. The President, Billy Hooke KG4JOF opened the meeting at 7:30pm. There were 20 members present and 4 guests. Bob VanFossen K4DJG, George Spolnicki, Fran Davis and Craig DuCharme.

Welcome to our visitors, and we would like to see all of you back next month.

It was good to see everyone at our first VARA Meeting at Kathy’s in Verona on Tuesday February 10th after having to cancel for bad weather on our regular meeting night on Tuesday February 3rd.

50/50: The 50/50 was won by Ron Burch W4ZEE... Congratulations Ron!

New Members: John Lasher N3GLZ and Charlie Bennetch were voted into VARA this month. Welcome to the VARA!

Joe Pehan W4LIG, reported that Joe Moomaw W4XKD, gave him one of his name badges several years back and told him when the time comes he would know what to do with it. Joe Pehan suggested that we start a plaque with name badges to honor the club’s silent keys. There was also mention of laminated QSL cards for them. Pat KD4WWF agreed to take on the project and it started.

The Club voted to set a date to start lessons for new hams and we have three volunteers for the committee, Gordon Batey WA4FJC, Richard Hottinger AA4RH and Greg Czeniak W4GRC. Gordon gave a report on the material they had received from the ARRL to help get classes organized. Plans are to use the ARRL Now You Are Talking text books and have a fee to cover these expenses. Anyone that is willing to help teach when the class begins should contact a member of the committee.

Our Field Day committee volunteers for 2004 are: Billy Hooke KG4JOF, Richard Huttinger AA4RH and Jess Hancock W4PQK. They will be looking for help during field day such as equipment, shelters, set up and when it’s time to take down antennas, towers and gather up extension cords, tarps, stakes and get them all loaded to bring off the mountain. We would like to have more help with site clean up, mowing and trimming this year. There’s a lot of grass to mow at the site and the extra help would be greatly appreciated. When those mowing have to stop to pick up rocks and limbs it makes the job more time consuming.

New Club Call Sign: Charlie Garner WA4IHY has received a letter from Joe Moomaw’s Daughter and Son granting permission for us to use Joe’s call sign W4XK for the VARA call sign. As soon as we can get the necessary forms filled out we can get them to Charlie, our Club Callsign Trustee, to be signed and get them in the mail. Thanks for doing this for us Charlie!

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/

Highland County ARES Net will be on the Monterey repeater 147.180+ and tone of 100.0 at 8:30pm on the 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month. They would like to welcome everyone to check into the Net.

ADDRESSES!!! Keep your e-mail address up to date. Please send them to: Billy Hooke KG4JOF, KG4JOF@arrl.net Jeff Rinehart W4PJVW, jmrinehart@yahoo.com Ray Colvin KE4HVR, colvingr@rica.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.

ON THE SICK LIST: Dan James W4DLJ is getting around without his walker part of the time but not able to join us for the Friday lunches. Neal Layman’s N4XU, father recently became ill and was hospitalized, with a serious illness. Kenny Harris KE4GKD, had his shoulder operated on Friday January 30th and started therapy Feb. 4th.

Benny Cook N4BC, had gallbladder surgery Feb. 10th and is well on the way to recovery. Let's keep those folks in our thoughts and prayers.

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 8:17pm.

Roger Sack N9ARC gave a talk on the Red Cross which he is directly involved. The American Red Cross was established in the year 1881 by Clara Barton and Associates. The first chapter was formed in Dansville, NY and the first disaster relief effort was aiding the victims of the Michigan forest fires that year. In 1912 they aided the survivors of the Titanic. The Red Cross has given aid in time of world wars I & 2, Vietnam, and up to present time. They also help in times of flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, plane crashes, explosions and disasters like 9-11-01. They hold blood drives trying to keep the blood supply up for emergencies. The Red Cross is trying to get more Hams involved within their system to help with communications where cell phones won’t work. They welcome local trained ARES Hams in times of disaster and would like to have more Hams trained so they could be involved with their communications during disasters. The Red Cross has plans to install Ham Radios in all their establishments for emergency communications. These radios will be ordered at the same time so they can get the same model. When the operators move from one unit to the other the operation will be the same and will not require extra time reading the book to find how the radio operates.

Thanks to Roger for sharing this with us. Great Job Roger!

Submitted By: VARA Secretary Ray Colvin KE4HVR
Calendar of Events

March 1: Rockingham County ARES Net — 146.55 simplex
March 2: VARA Club Meeting at Kathy’s in Verona
March 3: Highland County ARES Net — 147.18 repeater
March 4: MARA Club Meeting at Ever’s in Harrisonburg
March 6-7: ARRL SSB DX Contest
March 7: Page County ARES Net — 146.67 repeater
March 8: Rockingham County ARES Net — 145.13 rptr
March 11: Augusta County ARES Net — 146.85 repeater
March 13-14: Charlotte (NC) Hamfest
March 14: North America RTTY Sprint
March 14: Page County ARES Net — 146.67 repeater
March 15: Rockingham County ARES Net — 145.13 rptr
March 17: Highland County ARES Net — 147.18 repeater
March 20: Charleston (WV) Hamfest
March 20-21: Russian DX Contest
March 20-21: Virginia QSO Party
March 20-21: 10-10 Mobile Contest
March 21: Page County ARES Net — 146.67 repeater
March 22: Spring QRP Homebrew Contest, CW/PSK31
March 22: Rockingham County ARES Net — 145.13 rptr
March 27-28: CQ WW SSB WPX Contest
March 27-28: Baltimore/Timonium (MD) Hamboree
March 28: Page County ARES Net — repeater
March 29: Rockingham County ARES Net — 145.13 rptr
March 29: Beginning of Ham Radio Classes

April 1: MARA Homebrew Night—Evers in Harrisonburg
April 4: Raleigh (NC) Hamfest
April 4: Page County ARES Net
April 5: Rockingham County ARES Net — 146.55 Simplex
April 6: VARA Club Meeting—Verona
April 7: Highland County ARES Net — 147.18 repeater
April 8: Augusta County ARES Net — 146.85 repeater
April 10: VE Examinations in Dayton Virginia
April 11: Page County ARES Net — 146.67 repeater
April 12: Rockingham County ARES Net — 145.13 rptr
April 15: York (PA) Hamfest
April 18: Page County ARES Net — 146.67 repeater
April 19: Rockingham County ARES Net — 145.13 rptr
April 21: Highland County ARES Net — 147.18 repeater
April 24: Harrisonburg March of Dimes Walk
April 24: Chesapeake Hamfest
April 24: SP DX RTTY Contest

May 14-16: Dayton (OH) Hamvention
May 39-30 CQ WW CW WPX Contest
June 6: Manassas Hamfest
June 12-14: ARRL June VHF QSO Party
June 26-27: ARRL Field Day

Something You Can Do...

Take five minutes and do something to help your hobby. Write your Congressmen. Ask them to support two pieces of legislation currently in committee.

In the House, ask Rep. Goodlatte to support bills HR 713 (which if passed will require the FCC to find replacement spectrum space for any ham bands which are given to other services), and also HR 1478 (which will give hams some limited protection from unreasonable CCRs). Write to Rep. Goodlatte at:

Rep. Bob Goodlatte
2240 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515-4606

In the Senate, ask Senators Warner and Allen to support bill S.537 (the spectrum protection bill). There is not yet a Senate version of the CCR relief act. Write to them at:

John Warner
225 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

George Allen
204 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC  20510

Congressmen generally will not support little minor pieces of legislation unless they get some evidence that their constituents think the bill is important. So take five minutes today, and write. If 50 hams write, it says a lot.

More information on these bills, including their complete text, is available at: http//www.arrl.org/govrelations/

Field Day Material On-Line

The ARRL Field Day packet of material is available online at: http://www.arrl.org/contests/forms/04fdpack.pdf

Don’t Forget: VARA is now at Kathy’s

If you show up at Shoney’s Restaurant for the VARA meeting, you won’t be at the VARA Meeting! VARA now meets at Kathy’s in Verona. Take I-81 to Exit 227, go west 1 mile to the US 11 traffic light, turn right, and Kathy’s is 3 blocks on the right.
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:  David Fordham KD9LA
Vice President:  Bill Karle KG4UPN
Secretary:  Todd Harrison, K4TMH
Treasurer:  Sandy Mullins, K4PZC
Board (exp 04):  Richard Haxton, KC3AN
Board (exp 05):  John Nelson N3JN

http://mara.ws

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:
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 US 11 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