MARA President’s Message: A Really HOT Month of Ham Activities

This issue of the Monitor is absolutely packed with stuff. July is going to be a really hot month for hams in the valley!

First, of course, is Field Day. You are getting this issue a little earlier than normal because I will be at a meeting in Denver on Field Day, and won’t be back until the club meeting.

Don’t miss out on the Rockingham County emergency drill which is taking place the same weekend as field day. See Captain Junkin’s article on page 4 for the details!

The tour of the Greenbank Radio Astronomy Observatory is coming up, and thanks to Joe Meek KD4FKT for arranging this interesting trip.

And there is the Bridgewater Lawn Party parade, a couple of hamfests, the VHF contest, another QRP group meeting, as well as the normal club meetings taking place.

Don’t forget to read the other articles, too! For example, George Hoffman made a generous donation of a satellite antenna system to the JMU Wireless Experimenters. There are pictures of the RMH hospital station orientation, a report on local governments declared Ham Radio Week, and, ... well, there’s a lot going on in this here valley in the ham radio scene!

See you at the club meeting July 1!

73, David, KD9LA

VARA President’s Message: Be Prepared!

Grover Cloyd N4SMT was voted into the VARA, Welcome, Grover!

The club voted to work the Fall Bike Festival (formally Bike Virginia) again this October. We voted to give Pat Smiley KD4WWF a check for $40 to purchase the Field Day generator gas.

The Club Name Badge project has been agreed upon by the Club and is to be funded by the VARA for all paid members, many thanks to Dan KE4JSX for taking care of the Badge project for the club.

I would also 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.

Our meeting next month will be at Kathy’s in Verona, same time for the meal and meeting. Keep Dan James W4DLJ and Lonnie Czerniak N4WIV in your prayers.

P.S.  Think Field Day, June 26th and 27th of this month...it never rains on field day, but we might have a heavy dew.

73’s all
Billy, KG4JOF
Greenbank Observatory, Here We Come!  —— July 10th

I have finally nailed down the trip to the Greenbank Radio Astronomy Observatory.

After a three year gap in visiting the antennae farm at Greenbank, we will visit them on Saturday, July 10.

We will meet at the Staunton Holiday Inn at 8:00 am and carpool from there.

Directions are: I-81 to exit #225 (turn right if you are coming south, turn left if you are coming north). Go west on route 275 a very long block to the first right turn, and then turn right immediately again into the entrance to the Holiday Inn.

I will be at the first area of the parking lot on the right. A light lunch will be available at Greenbank, cafeteria style.

Our tour will be led by Rick Fisher KE8DH. This tour is not just for club members, but is open to any interested ham (and their families and guests!). Hope to see lots of folks there.

Joe Meek KD4FKT

Local Governments Declare June 20-27 as Amateur Radio Week

Thanks to the efforts of Bob Steere, N1QEQ, local government leaders have signed the proclamation (copy to the right) declaring June 20-27, 2004, as Amateur Radio Week.

Efforts to have the local press recognize this event have been unfruitful so far, but time will tell. (Perhaps they are just jealous of Monitor’s high quality articles and really good taste when it comes to selecting what news is fit to print!)

If you have any contact with any of the officials signing this proclamation, don’t forget to thank them for supporting ham radio in the Rockingham-Augusta area.

Field Day Preparations Almost Complete

As this issue goes to press, several hams are already at the field day site camping. Many thanks to the Field Day Committee (and others who showed up at the planning meetings and lent their assistance) for their efforts. Information on Field Day can be found in last month’s issue of the Monitor, which is on the web at: http://mara.ws
WHEREAS, the Shenandoah Valley has more than 250 Amateur Radio Operators who have demonstrated their value in public service by providing emergency radio communications; and

WHEREAS, these Amateur Radio Operators donate these services and equipment free of charge to those groups requesting those services such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, State, City and County Emergency Services organizations and the Department of Homeland Security; and

WHEREAS, the Amateur Radio Operators are constantly on alert for any emergency whether it be local, county, state or national; they demonstrate and practice these skills each year during the American Radio Relay League's Field Day exercise; and

WHEREAS, this year's local Field Day exercise will take place in George Washington National Forest near Flagpole Knob on June 26-27, with members of the Massanutten Amateur Radio Association from the Harrisonburg area and the Valley Amateur Radio Association from the Staunton area operating under simulated emergency conditions and invite the public to attend and participate,

NOW, THEREFORE, the following city and county officials hereby declare the week of June 20-27th, 2004, as

**Amateur Radio Week**

in recognition of this important emergency preparedness exercise and call upon all citizens of the Shenandoah Valley to recognize our Amateur Radio Operators.

___________________________                     ______________________________
Joseph Fitzgerald                                              Charles W. Ahrend
Mayor, City of Harrisonburg                           Chairman, Rockingham County BOS

___________________________                     ______________________________
G. John Avoli                                                     Kay D. Frye
Mayor, City of Staunton                                  Chairwoman, Augusta County BOS
We (public safety personnel in Rockingham County) are involved in a major ground and water search training drill that same day at Briery Branch Dam.

“I will be spending a large part of the day there but am going to try to sneak away and head up the mountain to visit with your group for a while.

“I also invite any amateur radio personnel to stop by our event as we will have the mobile command/communications bus there.

“Just have the hams show their photo ID/credentials and ask for me. I will be glad to give them the grand tour.

(Here is the best part:)  “I will be monitoring the amateur radios on the bus. And hams are free to listen in on our frequencies, too! Amateurs can monitor our search traffic on 33.74, 155.205, 461.100, 462.975 and 460.525 MHz.

“Hope the field day event goes well and hope to see you and yours at the event. Best Regards, Jim”

The following letter is reprinted from an email received June 10 from Captain Jim Junkins, Emergency Communications Director for the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Operations Center.

“David: Just a brief note to advise you that I am going to try to venture to field day sometime that Saturday afternoon.

“Care For A Little Weed? — Er, Um, I Mean, Uh, Would You Like Some Grass, Man?

No, Cheech and Chong are not on the ham bands yet. But thanks are due to the following hams for helping cut the grass, mow the weeds, pickup limbs and rocks, and otherwise create a pleasant meadow for the Field Day site:

E.C. Showalter KG4KUR
Ken Harris, KE4GKD
Pat Smiley, KD4WWF
Benny Cook N4BCC
Jess Hancock W4PQK
Gayle Shull, KU4XN
Bob Van Fossen K4DJG
Doug Tippett N8ESW
Steve Davis KI4CGI
David Fordham KD9LA
Greg Czemiak W4GRC
Bob Steere N1QEQ
Hugh Pettis K3EC

Clockwise from top left: N4BCC whacking the weeds, K4DJG double-clutching on the straight-away, KD9LA highballing in the showoff lane, and W4PQK scaring the pants off the snakes.
KE4GKD and KD4WWF made the first pass with their high-performance all-terrain mucho-powerful tall-grass-thrashing bush hogs.

For more pictures, see:
http://photos.yahoo.com/aa4rh

“Now you listen to me, son. You know you should always fasten your seatbelt before starting the engine. And keep that parking brake on until you make sure the way is clear. And your feet don’t belong on the steering wheel. What are you doing with those clodhoppers up in the air like that? You know better than that. Take off those sunglasses and look at me when I’m talking to you, boy. Why, you can’t even chew gum and mow grass at the same time. And good drivers don’t pop wheelies when they start off. And you forgot to disengage your blades before running over that rock back there. Keep it up and you’ll soon be buying a new tractor. Do you hear me? And another thing, …”
Callsign Insurance: Free Just For Filling Out Form 606

Consider this neat photo of the Valley’s Pegasus medEvac helicopter (from the Harrisonburg Daily News Record, copy provided by Hugh K3EC).

No, it is not the personal helicopter of David Lusk, N5UV, even though it has his callsign displayed prominently on its fuselage.

Rather, the Licensing Division of the FCC has assigned the same alphanumeric identifier to this Pegasus unit—a practice which apparently does not confuse the FCC or FAA. But unless Mr. Lusk has filed an FCC form 606 with Gettysburg, when something happens to this chopper such that its registration number is cancelled, so will Mr. Lusk’s ham license bearing the same identifier!

Yes, that’s right, Mr. Lusk would have his license cancelled without his knowing about it, or being notified. He would find out the hard way once he heard someone else using his callsign, or when he sought to renew and discovered he couldn’t.

Don’t laugh. This has already happened!

The ARRL strongly recommends filing a Form 606 to avoid just such unpleasantness. Form 606 links up your callsign with your FCC registration number (FRN), insulating it and you from other administrative actions which might be linked or connected in the computers to the same alphanumeric identifier somewhere else in the system.

Form 606 can be obtained either off the FCC website (www.fcc.gov/formpage.html) or calling the Forms Distribution Center at 1-800-418-3676.

If you have not already done so, this might save you some kind of real big hassle in future years, as these aircraft age!

Hugh, K3EC

K4NRA On The Road Again...

Ray - K4NRA will be looking for contacts back home every morning starting Sat. 6/19 thru Wed 6/23 at 10 am. on 14.320 + - QRM. He will be operating fixed mobile - if you have a beam point it in the direction of Florida.

Ray will try to make it as regular as he possibly can but says don’t waste a lot of time and energy looking for him - after all - he is on vacation.

I (Jeff W4PJW) can’t be there Sat am but will try other days if I am not too busy “resting” at the field day site - so don’t count on me - some of the rest of you need to contact Ray and let him know we are here - he plans to be back in town in time to be at FD.

Jeff, W4PJW

Bridgewater Lawn Party Coming Up

Bridgewater Lawn Party: The third week of July (Wednesday through Saturday) sees a LOT of cars (no pun intended) having to negotiate around the parade. The party is one of the local fire departments’ biggest fun raisers. The local amateur radio community is enlisted each year to help direct traffic around the parade route. For this, the city usually makes a donation to the club, although the hams have an awful lot of fun, too. Come on out and enjoy a couple of hours telling Bridgewater Residents where to go!

VARA Name Badges On Order

By the time you read this, the VARA club will have ordered their club name badges. Dan Beidler is the one heading this up, and placing the order with the vendor. Dan has bent over backwards to try to contact everyone who is a VARA member to see what they want on their badge. He may have been unsuccessful in a couple of cases, so if you have not heard from Dan, give him a call, like, right now, and ask him if it’s too late to get your order in. Dan’s phone number is 540-942-2557. Thanks to Dan for his efforts.
George Hoffman, W2CID, Donates Satellite Antenna System to JMU Experimenters

Longtime satellite operator George Hoffman, W2CID, of Stanley, has donated his multi-band satellite antenna farm to the JMU Wireless Experimenters Group, WN4JMU.

The system is composed of circularly-polarized antenna arrays for 2-meters and 440 UHF, and a screen-covered “barbecue dish” antenna for 2.4 GHz. The system also includes a FODtracker interface, which links a computer tracking program to a Yaesu azimuth-elevation rotator. The system came with all cables and interface boxes, too.

George is undergoing some heavy-duty treatment for cancer, and has decided to find a home for his station while he is still able to get around. He first offered the system to MARA, and expressed the desire that the antenna system be put to use on a regular basis. MARA expresses its deep appreciation, but the club membership felt that the system would find more use by the JMU Wireless Experimenters, a group of students involved in all kinds of wireless and radio experimentation. A big “Thank You” to George for his kind donation.

QRP Low Power Group Continues to Grow

The QRP group after a brief hiatus is now meeting the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 in Fishersville. The first couple meetings had at best a spotty turn out but as the word has been getting out attendance at the meetings has been increasing. The latest meeting of the group was on June 8th. Members in attendance were Bill Karle KG4UPN, Bryan Daniels, KG4RMY, Mike Reno KG4OON and I AG4XN.

We had by all accounts a successful meeting, with the help of Bryan and Bill we were able to turn Mike into a soldering pro (note the pictures)! We were in fact so successful that Mike was able to construct the Ramsey HR-40 a 40 meter receiver in just a shade over an hour making him an expert according to the instructions that came with the receiver!

The group as a whole found the instructions provided with the kit to easy to follow. We found it interesting that Ramsey decide to include in the assembly instructions descriptions of how the different parts and or stages of the receiver function once the kit is completed.

At the next meeting the rest of us will hopefully be constructing our HR-40’s now that Mike’s kit has been the guinea pig. So order your kits and make plans to attend the next QRP meeting. We would be glad to have you.

Andrew Barbour, AG4XN
Yes, Virginia, There is an 802.11 Network at Field Day...

Last month we told you that there would be high speed Internet access at the Field Day site.

Didn’t believe us? Seeing is believing. To the right is Daryl, KG4PRR, up on K4RBZ’s tower installing the “base station” dish antenna. To the right is the “repeater” station located at Pear Street. Not shown is the mobile/portable link stations (I guess you could call it a “gateway”!) which will be installed at the Field Day site by Jason N4DSL and Bob K4DJG.

Below, Jason wires up the cable modem which will patch the wireless network into the standard cable Internet access system.
Thanks to Dale Showalter N4DAI and Bob McCracken N4JGO, the RMH hospital will have ham radio communication in the event of a disaster.

A total of 25 hams attended the free dinner provided by RMH, followed by the station orientation and training and became eligible to man the station during an ARES/RACES activation.

Pictured at right, standing left to right: Vic KE4LKO, Joe KF4QPC, Dale N4DAI, Gene KG4JBC, Bill KG4UPN, Bob N1QEO, Gayle KU4XN, Nancy KG4JAZ, Phyllis N4VZC, David AD4TJ, Gerry K4RBZ, Dick KC3AN, Bryan K4RMY, Hugh K3EC, Bob K4DJG, Andrew AG4XN, John N3JN, Laura (Bob’s XYL), and Bryan KG4JOE. Kneeling, left to right: Wilton KF4BFL, Debbie KB4WPE, David KD9LA, Norman KA4EEN, Mike KG4OON, and Mike KG4USG. Not pictured is Ray, K4NRA.

After the training, the group used the station to check into the Monday night Rockingham County ARES Net.

The station is built into a console stored in a room right off the main RMH “situation room” which would be used as the command post in the event of a major disaster.

The station includes an Icom IC706 Mark IIIG HF transceiver, a Kenwood TM-D700 digital FM station, an Icom IC2100 VHF 2-meter rig, an Icom IC-207H dual bander, and a Bearcat trunktracker 3 scanner. Permanent antennas are mounted on the roof.
VARA Secretary’s Report — June 1 Meeting

The Valley Amateur Radio Association met at Kathy’s in Verona on June 1, 2004. The President Billy Hooke KG4JOF opened the meeting at 7:30pm. There were 16 members present and 6 guests, Bob VanFossen K4DJG, John Bottemiller N4SYH, Robert Wilson, Danielle Beidler, Michaela Beidler and John Schlabach KI4FDG. Welcome to our visitors, and we would like to see all of you back next month.

The 50/50 winner was Al Bonck N3JB, congratulations Al.

**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.

Lonnie Czerniak N4WIV will see her doctor on June 10th, hopefully he will get her operation scheduled soon.

Let’s keep these folks in our thoughts and prayers.

**New Member:** Groverloyd N4SMT was voted into the VARA, Welcome to the VARA Grover!

The VARA voted to work the Bike Festival again this October. We will have more information as that time nears.

The VARA voted to give Pat Smiley KD4WWF a check for $40 to purchase the Field Day generator gas.

The Club Name Badge project has been agreed upon by the Club and is to be funded by the VARA for all paid members. Our contact person Dan Beidler KE4JSX is collecting badge information from members and will contact Vector Industries soon to get our order in process.

**WEATHER WATCH:** We have been having some strange weather lately. This is a good time to check out our equipment and make sure it is in working condition. Have our local repeaters and their correct tones programmed into your radios and HT’s. If you are not sure how to program your equipment make a copy of that part of your operators manual and keep it in your go box. Keep your batteries charged and emergency antennas, mast and coax where you can easily get to them and go set up a temporary station if an emergency situation should arrive.

Gordon reported that all was going well with the students in the ham radio class. The lessons ended on June 3rd and the VE’s gave the test on Saturday June 12th. Good luck to all these students on passing their TECH Class test. Thanks to all that helped with the classes.

Our Field Day committee volunteers for 2004 are: Billy Hooke KG4JOF, Richard Huttinger AA4RH and Jess Hancock W4PQK. Field Day committee meetings is the second Thursday of the month at Burger King in Mount Crawford at 6:00pm. 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. While mowing if we have to stop to pick up rocks and limbs it makes the job more time consuming.**

**New Club Call Sign:**

Charlie Garner WA4ITY the Club callsign Trustee, has been on vacation and has not had time to go on the FCC site and get a FRN number to continue our request by Memoriam for Joe Moomaw’s callsign W4XD for the VARA Club callsign.

Kathy Stout, Assistant Director for Augusta Co. Parks and Recreation for the Special Event at the New Stuarts Draft Park on Saturday July 24, 2004 was supposed to be at our June 1st meeting to explain what she needed from us but didn’t show up. The **Club voted not to participate because of lack of information and the time line to get volunteers.**

**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/ IF YOUR ITEM HAS BEEN SOLD, PLEASE notify Billy so he can take it off the Swap Shop Web page.

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.

**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.

**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 8:05pm.

Submitted By:
VARA Secretary
Ray Colvin KE4HVR
Lots of Important (and not so important) Stuff...

The Field Day issue of the Monitor has the details of the operation and lots of other goodies. You can pick up a copy at the Field Day hospitality center, or check out the MARA website.

Does anybody know where Brown Snyder went? Someone said he was going to retire to Florida. He has not updated his FCC records, but his newsletter to Penn Laird came back undeliverable. N3BES, where are you?

Remember Tom Jones, W3HMB? Tom was a good old old-timer here in the valley before he became a silent key a few years ago. Well, his call is back on the air. Buck Mowbray, the former N3RIQ, has obtained Tom’s old callsign. Buck is now W3HMB, keeping the memory of Tom alive and well.

Rumor has it that Gerry K4RBZ, went to Florida and, get this, forgot his HF rig! Can you imagine Gerry going for a week without being on HF? Sad, but true.

The MARA June meeting minutes did not arrive in time to be included in this month’s Monitor. But it isn’t Todd’s fault. The Monitor deadline had to be moved up this month due to a business meeting by the editor. Look for June’s MARA report in August!

The weekly ARES net schedule (on the local 2-meter repeaters) can be found on the MARA schedule page on the MARA website: http://mara.ws

The MARA website also has some great reference material on it, such as a listing of all the local repeaters and their tone, a nice set of reference links, all back issues of the Monitor for the last seven years, an updated membership listing, links to information pages about all the upcoming events, and much much more. Check it out.

If you have an outside antenna, don’t forget to keep your GROUND in good shape. Lightning is no laughing matter, and having an ungrounded outside antenna is extending an open invitation for a strike to come in any time it likes. If you have an outside antenna, be sure it is well grounded!

Does Your Mailing Label Say “Sample” On It?

If so, it means that we are sending you a complimentary copy of the Monitor this month. It is our way of introducing you to the two major ham radio clubs in the central Shenandoah Valley.

The Valley Amateur Radio Association (VARA) meets in Verona, and the Massanutten Amateur Radio Association (MARA) meets in Mount Crawford. Both clubs start with an optional dinner about 6:30 pm, followed by a business meeting.

Both clubs have an average attendance somewhere around 30 or so for their meetings, and both offer interesting programs after the business is over.

Meeting attendance is not mandatory. Plenty of hams are club members primarily to receive the monthly newsletter, a sample of which you are holding in your hand. It is a great way to keep up with all the activities on ham radio in the local area.

But the most fun is participating in events with other hams, including Field Day, picnics, field trips and behind-the-scenes tours, informal lunches, service opportunities, and of course the monthly club meetings and dinners, not to mention the annual Christmas banquets with our wives and families.

If you wish, you can get an electronic copy of the newsletter, delivered via email, in living color, about four days before the paper copy would arrive.

It’s free with your membership. Membership of both clubs is open to anyone interested in ham radio. You can join whichever club you are most comfortable with. Or, you can do like a lot of us, and join both! For more information, come to a club meeting, or send an email to fordhadr@jmu.edu asking for a membership application. Be sure to specify which club (or both) that you are interested in.

We hope you will join us for the fun times on ham radio!

Calendar of Upcoming Events

June 26: Rockingham County Emergency Drill
June 26-27: ARRL Field Day

July 1: MARA July Meeting
July 4: Harrisburg (PA) Hamfest
July 6: VARA Club Meeting
July 10: Tour of Greenbank Radio Observatory
July 13: QRP Group Meeting
July 17-18: CQ WW VHF Contest
July 24: Asheville-Waynesville (NC) Hamfest
July 25: Baltimore-Timonium (MD) Hamfest
July 31: Roanoke Valley Salem Vinton (VA) Hamfest

August 1: Berryville (VA) Hamfest
August 3: VARA Club Meeting
August 5: MARA Club Meeting
August 7: 10-10 Summerfest Contest
August 7-8: ARRL UHF Contest
August 14: VE Exams in Dayton VA
August 15: Westminster/Carroll County (MD) Tailgatefest
August 21: North American QSO Party

September 4-5: Shelby (NC) Hamfest
September 18-19: Virginia Beach Hamfest
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 north
of the traffic light in Mt. Crawford.
Meal starts at 6:30 pm.
Business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

Visitors are welcome.

Dues ($12 per year) should be mailed to:
MARA
PO Box 1882
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

President: Billy Hooke, KG4JOF
Vice President: Greg Czerniak, W4GRC
Secretary: Ray Colvin, KE4HVR
Treasurer: Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW
Program Manager: Richard Huttinger, AA4RH

http://www.qsl.net/w4mus

VARA meets the first Tuesday of each month
At Kathy’s Restaurant on U.S. 11 north of
the traffic light in Verona.
Meal starts at 6:30 pm.
Business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

Visitors are welcome.

Dues ($15 per year) should be mailed to:
Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW
1344 Hankey Mtn Hwy
Churchville, VA 24421