

**Mount Vernon
Amateur Radio Club
K4US**
*"PUBLIC SERVICE WITH
FUN AND FRIENDSHIP"*



Volume 19

SEPTEMBER 2006

Number 09

Ye Olde RF Output

MEETING NOTICE **SEPTEMBER 14, 2006**

7:30 PM

INOVA MOUNT VERNON HOSPITAL

2501 PARKERS LANE
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22306

Second Floor Conference Room

MVARC MEETS ON THE SECOND
THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH EXCEPT
IN JULY AND DECEMBER

MVARC REPEATER: K4US/R
146.055 MHz INPUT/146.655 MHz
OUTPUT
PL TONE: 141.3 Hz

AUTOPATCH AVAILABLE TO
MEMBERS

MVARC HOME PAGE:
WWW.MVARC.ORG
WWW.MVARC.COM

HAPPENINGS

SEPTEMBER 14 - MOUNT VERNON AMATEUR RADIO CLUB monthly meeting. Held at INOVA MOUNT VERNON HOSPITAL (2nd Floor Conference Rm), 2501 Parker's Lane, 22306. 7:30 p.m. See you there!

SEPTEMBER 5,12,19,26 - MVARC ARES NET- 146.055/ 146.655 **7:00 PM local time.** Come and join in!

SEPTEMBER 23 - MVARC Breakfast will be held at The Old Country Buffet on Route 1 at 8:30 a.m. Everyone's invited to join MVARC members for breakfast. They meet the 4th Saturday of every month.

NOTICE--VE EXAM LOCATION **THE SEPTEMBER 9, 2006 VE EXAM** **WILL BE HELD AT**

The FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
2723 KING STREET
ALEXANDRIA, VA

9:30 A.M.

CALL JOHN, WZ4A AT 703-971-3905
FOR MORE INFO.

Ye Olde RF Output is published monthly by the Mount Vernon Amateur Radio Club. Voluntary articles and comments are solicited.

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AUGUST MEETING MINUTES

By Glenn, W4OCC
Acting secretary

The meeting was held at the IN-OVA Mount Vernon Hospital and was called to order at 7:32 p.m. by the President, Bob KI3O. He then led the Pledge of Allegiance. Next, attendees introduced themselves. There were no Minutes since we went on a Field Trip to the WTOP transmitter site in lieu of the meeting in July. There was no Treasurer's Report since all the officers including the Treasurer were unable to attend the meeting.

Steve, K3IZ reminded everyone in the ARES report that the Marine Corps Marathon was coming up the end of October. Mary, N4TCI reminded everyone there's a VE exam this coming Saturday. Mary also passed around a sign up sheet to do the announcing at Gaithersburg FARFEST on the September 9 and 10. Frank, AA4ZS said the Coast Guard's 216th Birthday Special Event was very successful. Keith--N6JWN, Bob--KT4KS, and Frank--AA4ZS made a total of 477 contacts Saturday and Sunday. Bob, KI3O introduced our Speaker, Dick Maylott, W2YE the "4" call bureau QSL manager.

There was neither any old business nor any new business. John, K2VPR under the guise of Show and Tell showed us the Dayton Newspaper covering the Dayton

Hamfest. Mary, N4TCI and Leila, WN4PP won the ICOM hats. Thanks went to Bob, KT4KS tonight's Cookie Monster. John, K2VPR volunteered to take it for the September meeting.

YORFO NEEDS YOUR HELP

We are happy to report that Glenn, W4OCC, the YORFO's much appreciated production manager and fill-in club secretary (see above), and his wife Joan, KI4FYN, have sold their house and will be moving to their new place near the beach in October. We are happy for the Bilgers and look forward to QSOs with them from their new digs. But the bad news is that Glenn leaves behind a hole in our operations. He has been responsible for taking the text of the newsletter that I provide converting it to formats for emailing and mailing.

We need someone to step forward and take over this job. And obviously, we need it quite soon. In fact, right now.

Additionally we need an October editor for the newsletter. I have to be away on business travel during the period that the newsletter is assembled and I will not have the time to do this from the West Coast. Please let me know if you can take over for Glenn or, temporarily, for me next month.

If no one steps forward, the next YORFO will be in November.

Thanks,

-Dave, AI4FC

VOYAGE TO BERRYVILLE

By Steve, K3IZ

Well, it's early August and time to be traveling. So many of us want to get in that last trip of the summer, but where to go? Aruba, Rio, The Riviera, maybe Tahiti? Or... Berryville, VA. Whoa... that makes it real easy.

A group of dedicated hams from the Mt. Vernon ARC planned out the trip to them thar hills: yes, the great Appalachian Mountains of Virginia. John, K2VPR, and Julie, KD4WSZ, Bob, KI3O and Steve, K3IZ met behind the Mac Donald's Restaurant d'Rose Hill on the first Sunday of August. This is the traditional day for the Hamfest. The Shenandoah Valley Radio Club has held this Hamfest at the Clarke County fairgrounds for decades. Before that it held at the Winchester National Guard Amory as late as 1969 which is the in the memory of this author.

Having stuffed well er... fortified ourselves on the fine faire at Mickey D's. We started out with VPR at the wheel of his van. Heading out on the beltway and down Route 7, which went through the high rise area of Tyson's Corner, it was quite nice to get to a more rustic setting beyond it. Getting to Leesburg and finding it growing more than can be imagined. Julie informed us of the many outlet shops in that area. The other passengers chimed in about the demise of the famed outlet malls in Reading, PA. With Leesburg and the commercialization being left behind, the rural areas are a true highlight of the ride out to Berryville. Cieli, traditional Irish fiddle music from John's excellent sound system rounded out the trip there.

We finally get to the front gate, pay our way in and find our super tailgating spot. It took about 2.33

seconds for the vultures, uh fellow hamfesters to descend upon us and to inquire as to "what cha got in'ere"? "How much is that radio?" "You got any 811A's new?" "Give ya a 2 bux for that tuner." OK, maybe not quite that bad and they all meant well. It was great fun.

We got the van unpacked, the table set up, and the selling began. We all did quite well in the bartering that ensued. We even sold some of George's, N1BV, connectors and cables. I think he has an endless supply.

Quite a number of old friends dropped by. As I remember, when I was there, if was paying attention, (Whew, that should save me if I forget anyone. Maybe) I saw Dave, KD4SV, John, KI4HK, George, K3UT, Dale, N4EDE, and Bill, W3HXF. I think Carol, WA4GFW and Leila, WN4PP were there but well maybe not. There was quite a crowd of the MVARC on hand. So we were well represented.

The deals were flying hot and heavy. However, the best and some might argue the only reason to go to Berryville is for the Ruritan's BBQ chicken and/or beef dinner. It was truly fantastic. This year I had the privilege of sitting with Dave, KD4SV John, KI4HK and George, K3UT. It was crowded at the tables and it was great. A little bit of an addition to the lunch was homemade cake. Not some gag-ya stick-ya in the throat dried up store ole bought cake, no real homemade cake. There were even two kinds chocolate and yellow. I don't know it whose home they were made but it was real good.

It soon became apparent the fest was winding down. So we made some last minute deals, dropped the prices, gave some things away and found some freebies too. We packed the van with the "valuable remnants" to take to Gaithersburg and hit the trail. The trip back was very short for this author because I

was snoooooozzzing most of the way home. Sorry again for the snoring. I'm sure it rattled the windows.

It was wonderful outing to a pleasant bucolic atmosphere. No one is going to mistake Berryville for the Dayton Hamvention or Hamcation in Orlando, Fl. However, it is a very nice get together in the county to see friends, find a goody or two and have a fine meal.

SDR: I CAN HEAR YOU NOW

By Thomas J. Lally, W1NSS

Listen, I'm a dinosaur left over from the 1940s, and I've seen plenty of new ideas in the electronics world, and in ham radio, but I'm telling you that software defined radio is the new and most exciting path for ham radio in this decade. Are you with me so far?

First let's go back to the dim, distant 1950s. The avant garde group was using keyboards—yes, a system that spat out Morse as you hit the keys on a typewriter. Rudimentary computing, but a start.

After this came the Sinclair and Commodore computers with do-it-yourself radio controllers. They could turn the transmit/receive rigs of their day on and off. Fair enough, but look what came along.

By the 1970s computer plug-in boards were being produced to use early computers to send and receive CW, FSK and ASCII. A true computer/transceiver link.

By 1980 the manufacturers of ham transceivers were providing ports for computer control, but still a far cry from software defined gear. In the 1990s, a British ham invented a new code called varicode, which really began to involve the computer in reading the shifting phase of audio tones to produce text copy on a screen (PSK-31).

By the 2000s the stage was set for total integration into the receive/transmit cycle by the digital technology. Most hams already had the computer power in their homes. Now it was time to see what it could do with on-air signals.

The combination of radio and computer technologies has given us a whole new window on what's going on out there in the spectrum. Quadrature detection, with single sideband selectivity, can now be looked at with selectable digital audio filters. Hey, who needs triple heterodyning to get the selectivity we need?

The computer can be programmed to look at a wide band of audio frequencies and present the output as a graph of output level versus frequency. It's called a band scope.

Now, I hope that I've convinced whoever is reading this that venturing into this new realm is a worthwhile pursuit. You've got the antenna, the computer and the transceiver. Let's hook 'em up.

You'll find software defined radio information in: 2006 Radio Amateur's Handbook (ARRL); Homebrewer Magazine (now defunct), issue #6 "Softrock 40;" schematic and parts list on the internet www.sdr.com.

If you can afford it, you can buy an SDR receiver for between \$400 and \$600 -- both pretty steep just to get your feet wet. If you're not allergic to solder smoke, you might get a homebrew kit for a neat little I and Q receiver. It plugs into the computer's USB or any other source of 5V.D.C. power, and puts two audio signals into the stereo jacks. That's where the free software takes over. The output is then heard on the PC speakers.

Kits or wired assemblies are presently available from: Tony Parks at 1344 E. 750N

in Springport, IN 47386.

More info is available at: www.raparks@ctcisp.com

Good Hammin'! –Tom

(eds. note: The YORFO invites articles about ham radio gear and technology and counts on members to offer their own reviews. We are grateful to Tom for this submission.)

MVARCers SPARK COAST GUARD K4CG SPECIAL EVENT

By Bob, KT4KS

On August 5 (Saturday) and 6 (Sunday), MVARC Coast Guard liaison Keith McDaniel N6JWN successfully coordinated a special event commemorating the 216th birthday of the US Coast Guard.

During club meetings early this year, both Keith and Frank AA4ZS expressed an interest in operating this special event, and suggested that the site of operation would be the MARS station at the US Coast Guard Base located on Telegraph Road.

Attending members readily agreed that it would be a worthy venture. Keith then obtained permission from the base, solicited the names of all interested members via the club reflector, and subsequently provided the base's guard at the Telegraph Road gate entrance with a list of individuals who would be permitted entry onto the base grounds for those two days.

The event's date, times and anticipated frequencies was listed on the ARRL Special Event web site so that hams throughout the country could plan to listen for it.

The MARS station is the tiny red

brick building about the size of a small garage, is located on the extreme north end of the base, about 100 yards East/South-east from the intersection of Telegraph and Dunmores Roads, and during the fall/winter when the leaves are down can be seen while driving along Telegraph Road.

The station includes two HF station, one 2M station, marine radio, and a large amplifier, all connected to large Yagi and other assorted antennas on towers near to the station. While the building is small, the interior is quite spacious as all equipment is on tables along the walls. The building is both air-conditioned and heated.

On the Saturday morning of the event, both Keith and Frank arrived early, and were quickly on the air making contacts before 9:30 AM. Keith was operating 20M-phone, while Frank occupied the 40M-phone station.

Frank came especially prepared with his own HF rig, and assortment of keys for CW, though was not seen operating any CW. Bob KT4KS arrived about 9:30 AM, plugged in his Bencher paddles into a 3rd HF rig, and started to make CW contacts on both 20 and 40M.

While Keith and Frank were easily making many phone contacts, Bob struggled a bit to make them on CW. Taking a CW-break, Bob took some time to read Saturday's Civil War page of the Washington Times, and also made a 2M-phone contact with an operator who was coincidentally driving through the Civil War battlefield site of Sharpsburg, MD.

About 1:30PM, Bob closed his station, packed away his paddles, turned in his CW log that listed 9 quality contacts, and called it an event. QTHs for Bob's contacts included NY, Florida and New Mexico.

Bob Keith and Frank continued through the afternoon, and returned the next day to make additional contacts. The event continued until early Sunday evening, with a total of over 400 contacts, most of which were made by Keith.

The event used the Coast Guard Call Sign K4CG, which usage is actually quite rare. All QSL requests will be mailed directly to the Coast Guard address. The Coast Guard will reply with their own colorful QSL cards, the cards to be completed by MVARC volunteers (to date, including both Frank and Carol WA4GFW).

All postage will be paid by the Coast Guard. Over all, the event was a great bargain for MVARCers, as participating MVARCers needed to bring only themselves to the event, as it was the Coast Guard who provided the site, all the equipment, antennas, cards, postage, and air-conditioning. Keith and Frank put together a fun event that was available for all us MVARCers.

YOU KNOW YOU'RE A HAM IF :

(With much thanks to Dave, N4YPR)

You know you're a ham if:

- You buy electrical black tape in ten packs.
- You've stripped wire with your teeth.
- You've told your son that, "One day, all this will be yours", and he doesn't respond.
- You'd rather help a buddy put up a new tower than mow the lawn.
- You've grabbed the wrong end of a soldering iron.

- You start giving out RST reports when you are on the telephone.

- The propagation forecast means far more to you than the local weather forecast.

- The microphone or visual aids at a meeting don't work and you rush up to the front to fix it.

- You tell the XYL, when she notices a new rig in the shack, why that has been there for years.

- Your watch is set only to UTC.

- At night, when you pray, it starts off something like: CQ CQ CQ GOD DE (your callsign).

- You ever had to patch your roof after an antenna project.

- Ham radio magazines comprise more than 50% of your bathroom library.

- You ever put a GPS tracker in the XYL's car, just so you could watch her on APRS.

- You and the XYL took a cruise so you could visit the radio room.

- You ever tapped out HI in Morse on your car horn to another ham.

- You ever had an antenna fall down.

- Your teenager refuses to ride in your car because it looks like a porcupine.

- You know the Latitude and Longitude of your home QTH.

- You go into the local Radio Shack store and the clerk asks you where something is.

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