

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



Volume 16

MAY 2003

Number 05

Ye Olde RF Output

MEETING NOTICE MAY 8, 2003

7:30 PM

INOVA MOUNT VERNON HOSPITAL

2501 PARKERS LANE
ALEXANDRIA, VA

SECOND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
MVARC MEETS ON THE SECOND
THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH EXCEPT
IN DECEMBER

MVARC REPEATER: K4US/R
146.055 MHz INPUT/146.655 MHz
OUTPUT

AUTOPATCH AVAILABLE TO
MEMBERS

MVARC HOME PAGE:
<http://www.mvarc.org>

HAPPENINGS

May 8 - MOUNT VERNON AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
monthly meeting. Held at INOVA Mount Vernon Hos-
pital Second Floor Conference Room on Parker's
Lane. See you there!

May 6,13,20,27 - MVARC ARES NET- 146.055/
146.655-8:30 PM local time. The Ten Meter portion
meets immediately following the Two Meter Net on
28.415 MHz. Come and join in!

May 24 - 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 MAY 10, 2003 VE EXAM WILL BE
HELD AT

The FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
2723 KING STREET
ALEXANDRIA, VA

CALL JOHN, WZ4A AT 703-971-3905
FOR MORE INFO OR TO CONFIRM THE
LOCATION OF THE TEST SESSION.

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

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MINUTES APRIL 10, 2003 MEETING

The meeting was held at the INOVA Mount Vernon Hospital and was called to order at 7:34 p.m. by the President. He then led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Everyone introduced themselves. We welcomed our guests, Steve WB2EVL and Al-K4TSL. There was a correction to the March 13, 2003 Minutes: The sentences, "There was a question if the proceeds from the sale of a radio went into the Doc Hyde fund. The answer was that the proceeds will be moved into the Doc Hyde fund." Were changed to " We bought the radio from the widow and the radio was sold and the funds went back into the general fund."

Committee/Event Reports

REPEATER - Glenn, W4OCC asked everyone to read the Repeater article in the April YORFO and respond to Frank, K4EC.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH - Bob, KT4KS reported that after four years, our blurb in World Radio paid off, he got his first phone call from one our guests, Steve WB2EVL.

PROGRAM - Bob, KI3O introduced our speakers, Terry Hines, N4ZH and Fred Hall, K3ZO who are going to talk about DX. Next month our Venturing Crew will be making a presentation.

ARES - Steve, K3IZ handed out certificates to those who worked the Special Event Station for George Washington's birthday. Thanks went to Steve, K3IZ and John, K2VPR for making the certificates. We received a CD-ROM

from the ARRL. Steve asked if we wanted to help at Lee District Park. The motion not to support Lee District Park's 4th of July celebration carried.

Business

Congratulations went to John, WQ4L for winning the National Association of Broadcasters award.

The following officers were elected by acclamation:

President, Carol Cutchall WA4GFW

Vice President, Paul Miller, Jr. AA8O

Secretary, Glenn Bilger, W4OCC

Treasurer, John Tyburski, K2VPR

Frank, AA4ZS announced that QRP Field Day will be held on April 19, 2003 at Lee District Park. He said he's still checking on who to contact for us to participate in the Mount Vernon Days.

Howell, KG4CKJ showed us 115 feet of 14 gauge wire wound on a fishing pole that he planned to use as an antenna. There were 120 turns per foot.

Thanks went to Anna, KG4DEX and Charlie, AF4NT, this month's Cookie Monsters. Bob, KT4KS volunteered to be next month's.

The meeting adjourned.

TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER

by Frank, K4EC

If you are like me, and unable to attend the April meeting for MVARC, you might like to know who are new leaders are.

President - Carol, WA4GFW
Vice-President - Paul, AA8O
Secretary - Glenn, W4OCC

Treasurer - John, K2VPR

That is great news and look forward to lots of interesting things in the coming year.

"Wattz happ nin at duh meetin'"

by Bob, K13O

The program for this coming month is a presentation by the Post 80 Venturing Crew. The Crew is co-sponsored by the MVARC. They will discuss the goals, activities and accomplishments of their group. So bring all your interest and questions about the modern day venturing Crew. Come to welcome some new young people into the MVARC. Don't be like all those clubs in the letters we read in the Hamzines about the old fogies who ignore the young folk and new folk and folk not in the "group, the in-crowd, the cool cats, the neat guys, the clique, the team, the know-it-alls". Lets show 'em we are NOT like that.

YOU GOTTA PAY YOUR DUES IF YOU WANNA SING THE BLUES

by John, K2VPR

Now that I have your attention.....

It is that time of year again. A new fiscal year begins in May, so annual "dues are due."

One person memberships are twenty (\$20.00) dollars.

Family memberships are twenty five (\$25.00) dollars.

Student memberships are ten (\$10.00) dollars and

Associate memberships (for those living outside of the Washington DC metropolitan area) are ten (\$10.00) dollars.

Send your check to the Mount Vernon Amateur Radio Club, P. O. Box 7234,

Alexandria, VA 22307-0234. Your call sign(s) on the remarks line of the check would be appreciated. I will be checking the call sign(s) and addresses you provide against the data base info that I maintain. The club records can only be as accurate as the information you provide. I would also like to know (via a note on the check) if you are a member of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL). Feel free to provide any information that you even think may have changed since last year. I would rather check and find no correction is necessary than continue to have incorrect data. Call sign and license class changes are especially welcome.

For those life members of the club and those who have already paid your dues for fiscal year 2003, please disregard this notice. The MVARC mail reflector doesn't know who you are. (And I forgot that attachments are not permitted!) Questions concerning your membership status may be addressed to me at: jadad42@att.net.

Your continued support of the Mount Vernon Amateur Radio Club is appreciated.

MVARC'S BOLD BRAVE THE COLD

By Bob KT4KS

On the early Saturday morning of April 19, MVARCers set up a QRP station at Lee District Park for the dual purpose of having fun and making CW contacts. The event had been announced at both the March and April monthly meetings, and published in the Reflector for the benefit of all club members.

The morning was both cloudy and cool, but the 47 degree temperature did not deter event coordinator Frank AA4ZS from being the first to arrive at the site at approximately 8:30 AM. Upon arrival, Frank immediately set up his HF vertical antenna that was neatly supported on the ground by an automobile tire rim. Bob KT4KS

arrived shortly before 9:00 AM, and he helped to set up Frank's Ten Tec Triton IV, MFJ tuner, straight key, battery and CW table. A large number of CW stations that could be heard on the air, but the cool temperature discouraged the MVARCers from reaching for the straight key with bare hands. Ultimately Bob took the first shot at making a contact.

Mike KE4ER subsequently arrived, and general discussion developed regarding affairs of the club. Mike was impressed with the station, and expressed that "[It] looks to be well equipped, and it's a good thing that the club supports the event". Despite Mike's renowned CW skills, he did not attempt to work the station on this cool morning.

One of MVARC's newest members, Dwight, N4GSD, drove up in his fancy VW bug that included both a 9 foot long whip, that neatly extended from his trunk, and dash mounted IC-706. Dwight set his Elecraft K2 upon the dash of his vehicle, and monitored CW stations using a laptop computer that immediately displayed what was being received from other CW stations. Dwight preferred to work within his car, touting the joy of the vehicle's heated seats. Dwight also took some fine photos of Frank's station, subsequently sending them to club members via the Club Reflector that very same day.

Steve K3IZ also arrived to celebrate the event, and met Dwight for the first time. Steve expressed that it was "good to meet the new people [in the club]". The group feasted on doughnuts that were generously supplied by Frank. The temperature remained just too cool to comfortably work the key, though both Frank and Bob took turns calling CQ.

The group was then joined by MVARC's new Vice President, Paul AA8O. Paul successfully displayed skills that possibly showed why he was chosen as a club officer. Those skills included providing the group with some fine jokes, no

doubt a prelude to what he will bring to the monthly meetings during his term. As 11:30 AM came around, the temperature remained at that same 47 degrees, and there was absolutely no sign that the sun would come out, so the remaining group began to break down the station. The station was all packed away by 12 noon. By 2:00 PM, the sun came out, and the temperature approached 65 degrees. Oh well.

CT FOR FREE

by Frank, K4EC

Ken, K1EA, the author of the renown contest logging program CT, a DOS based program used by many contesters, has made the program available free for all to use.

CT is very similar to NA, the program that MVARC has used for Field Day. The key strokes are all about the same and the same interfaces work.

It may well be that K1EA can not get any more capabilities out of the DOS program and it now has some excellent Windows based competition from Writelog.

CT is available at
<http://www.k1ea.com/>

Writelog is at
<http://www.writelog.com/>

THOSE BADGES AGAIN

by Jim, AF4QG

Check out my new revised web site, just revised as of today.

www.enravingbyhartselle.com

FCC GOT IT RIGHT!!!

by John, WZ4A

Got my ticket today, and it has the correct address info! Thank you so much for helping ensure the correction! My intro to Amateur Radio has been simply amazing and a wonderful experience. Once again, thanks for all your help, and hope to see you soon. I'm starting to study for the General exam and CW certificate.

73, Billy Ball, KG4ZQZ

NCAC INSTITUTE RETURNS

by Jeanne, N4ZGI

On May 24th, Saturday of Memorial Day weekend in Alexandria, the NCAC Institute will return to the region. Beginning at 8:30 in the morning we will cover The ARES/RACES Organization, Response to the La Plata Tornado one year ago, Young People in Amateur Radio, Directed Net Procedures, NTS Messaging, Incident Command and an all new Science Fair: a show and tell of clever gadgets and homemade goodies!

All materials and the ever popular gourmet pizza lunch for only \$10! Look for details and registration info here:

<http://www.ncacdc.com/>><http://www.ncacdc.com/>

TIPS FOR THE CASUAL DXER

From Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

If I was serious about DX-ing, I'd probably go out and buy a big linear and put a ten-element Yagi up on a 50-foot tower. I'm not all that serious about DX, though. I'm more of a casual DXer. My current station consists of an Icom IC-735 running between 50 and 100W into a 20m ground plane antenna. I work some DX when band conditions are good, and when they're not, I'm happy

working US stations.

I imagine there are a lot of casual DXers. Casual DXers have neither the time nor the money to build a true DX station and track propagation reports, but enjoy working foreign stations when they can. For these folks, I have a few tips:

Use the right band. In general, you should use the highest frequency band that's open. If the 10m band is open, get on 10. You'll get the most bang for your buck on 10 and 15 when they're open, than you will on 20 or 17.

LISTEN! This is a corollary to "If you can't hear 'em, you can't work 'em." I've worked many DX stations by just tuning around and pouncing on them when I hear them calling CQ. In many cases, I was the only one to return their call. Listen even when the band seems to be quiet. Sometimes this means that the propagation is such that it's skipping over the domestic stations and DX conditions are good. I remember one evening tuning around for a while, and almost giving up when I heard a Spanish station calling CQ with a 599 signal! I answered his call and he gave me a 579 report. We had a very nice QSO on a "dead" band.

Also, listen for really weak signals. I've worked a couple of DX stations whose signals were almost unreadable, but for one reason or another, were able to copy me just fine and gave me quite respectable signal reports.

Get a good set of headphones to help you dig out the weak ones. I bought a pair from Radio Shack after reading the reviews on eHam.net.

Be patient. If the DX station doesn't come back to you on your first call, hang in there and try again. A lot of times, DX stations are interested in working as many stations as possible, meaning that they'll rip them off one right after another. If they're not extremely rare, or the band is not that active, the DX station will quickly work all the strong stations and after a while

it will be your turn. If you tune away too quickly, you'll never get your chance.

Hone your CW skills. It really is true that it's easier to work DX on CW than on phone. There are several reasons for this. First, there are fewer stations clamoring for the attention of a DX station on CW. Second, weak CW signals are more readable than weak phone signals. This is important if you're using 50-100W and even more important when you're using a QRP rig. You hear a lot of DX stations operating at 20 wpm or more. While most of them are courteous and will come back to a station calling at 12 or 15 wpm, it's very satisfying to be able to work them at the speed they're calling CQ.

Work the contests. Contests can be intimidating, but your best chance for working new countries is during the DX contests. During these contests, you'll not only hear a lot of DX stations on the air, they will be eager to work you. Making US contacts is, after all, how they score points.

You don't have to work the entire contest, nor do you have to send in the logs for scoring. Figure out what information they're expecting you to exchange with them, either by listening to several contest QSOs or by reading the rules in QST or on contesting.com, then just jump in and start working stations.

Another benefit of working contests is that it seems to help improve your code speed. My theory is that during a contest you're concentrating more on the contest than you are on the code, and this helps break down the mental barriers we erect to increasing our code speed. Having given you these tips as if I were some kind of expert, I'd like to be able to report that I'm DXCC with a couple hundred countries under my belt and a boxful of DX QSL cards. Of course, I can't, though. Since getting back on the short-wave bands in August 2002, I've logged maybe sixty countries and have only a handful of QSL

cards. After all, if I knew the exact numbers and had QSLed a higher percentage of my DX contacts, I wouldn't be a casual DXer anymore, now would I?

INSPECTOR MORSE RETURNS

by Frank, K4EC

At the club breakfast last Saturday, a discussion came up about where one can find a list of Q signals. Another was where does one find info about Morse Code. Well one place is on the MVARC web page under links. There are some links there on methods for learning the code and other stuff related to CW.

Another place is the following link <http://www.ac6v.com/morseaids.htm> which has not only a list of Q signals, but also commonly used CW abbreviations.

TOP TEN REASONS TO TUNE TO MVARC'S TUESDAY EVENING NET

By Bob KT4KS

1. Just to say "Hello" to your local friends via your 2M rig.
2. Make sure that your radio is working properly.
3. Meet some of the new members in the club.
4. Check the status on how close Bob KI30 is towards earning even more wall paper.
5. Find out about future club activities in our area.
6. Make money, by posting a ham related item of yours for sale.
7. Check the name/location of a call sign that you recently heard on the air.
8. Pass traffic to another ham buddy.
9. To actually take a turn at being the Net Control Operator.
10. To demonstrate to your friends

that there are other hams who are actually on the air who like to talk to other hams, and suggest that they too can join into this group.

MORE HAMFEST LINES: THINGS YOU WILL AND WON'T HEAR OR SAY AT A HAMFEST

by Bob, K5IQ

"Sorry I'm late, but I would never THINK of going to a hamfest without taking a shower!"

"Hey, does anyone here have a table selling sock puppets?" or "homemade jelly," "ugly jewelry," "inkjet cartridge refill kits," or "ceramic doodads"

"There's no way I'll be able to see everything before the 2 o'clock prize drawing!" (Mega-fests like Dayton obviously excluded).

"Hey, there's old Pete from 75 meters...he just keeps looking younger every year!"

"\$700 for a TS-520?? Well, okay, but only because it's a collector's item."

"WA#XXX told me on the air to look for him at the fest; said he'd be the balding, pot-bellied, middle-aged guy with a handie-talkie on his belt."

"Let's choose a secret frequency to coordinate on. How about...let's see... 146.52?"

"Great Meal"!

"Used COAX sold out".

"There was absolutely no QRM in the parking lot".

"I don't really need anything, but I'll walk around".

"I haven't seen this many buff bodies since last year's Boston Marathon."

"It's so great that DARA provides a map showing who is where at the flea market."

"Wow, those technical presentations are really top notch."

"I can't wait for this to be over so I can get back to my exercise routines."

"I really need to keep the spending low because my family has some needs this year."

"I can't wait for this to end. I have a major family event later today that I'm really looking forward to."

NEWS IN PHYSICS - NEW ELEMENT DISCOVERED

Submitted by Jim, W5WN

A major research institution recently announced the discovery of the heaviest element yet known to science. This new element tentatively has been named "Corporatium". Corporatium has 1 neutron, 12 assistant neutrons, 75 deputy neutrons, and 111 assistant

deputy neutrons, giving it an atomic mass of 312.

These 312 particles are held together by a force called morons, which are surrounded by vast quantities of lepton-like particles called peons. Since Corporatium has no electrons, it is inert. However, it can be detected as it impedes every reaction with which it comes into contact. A minute amount of Corporatium causes one reaction to take over 4 days to complete when it would normally take less than a second.

Corporatium has a normal half-life of 3 years; it does not decay but instead undergoes a reorganization, in which a portion of the assistant neutrons and deputy neutrons and assistant deputy neutrons exchange places. In fact, Corporatium's mass will actually increase over time, since each reorganization causes some morons to become neutrons forming isodopes. This characteristic of moron-promotion leads some scientists to speculate that Corporatium is formed whenever morons reach a certain quantity in concentration. This hypothetical quantity is referred to as "Critical Morass."

You will know it when you see it.