

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



Volume 19

JULY 2006

Number 07

Ye Olde RF Output

FIELD TRIP
JULY 13, 2006
7:00 PM
WTOP TRANSMITTER SITE
UNIVERSITY BLVD,
WHEATON, MD
Contact John, WQ4L for more
info.
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

July 13 - MOUNT VERNON AMATEUR RADIO CLUB Field Trip. WTOP Transmitter Site, Wheaton, Md. 7:00 p.m. Contact John, WQ4L if you need a ride or can drive. Cars will leave Beacon Mall in front of Office Depot at 5:30 p.m. See you there!

July 4,11,18,25 - MVARC ARES NET- 146.055/146.655 **7:00 PM local time**. Come and join in!

July 22 - MVARC Breakfast will be held at The Old Country Buffet on Route 1 at 8:30 a.m. Everyone's invited to join MV ARC members for breakfast. They meet the 4th Saturday of every month.

NOTICE--VE EXAM LOCATION
THE July 8, 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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**MINUTES,
JUNE 8, 2006**

By George, N1BV
MVARC secretary

The meeting was held at the INOVA Mount Vernon Hospital and was called to order at 7:38 P.M. by the President, Bob KI3O. He then led the Pledge of Allegiance. Next, attendees introduced themselves. Mary, N4TCI gave the Education/VE report and reported that 25 individuals were tested at the Manassas Hamfest. Additionally, there would be a test session. The FAR report was given by Mary, N4TCI. She announced that the FARFEST would be on 9/10 September, and she again put out a call for volunteer announcers, a two hour tour. John, K2VPR, past-Treasurer, gave the Treasurer's Report. As of 31 May 2006:

Checking:	\$721.38
Savings:	3,358.33
Cash on hand:	199.75
Doc Hyde fund:	1,839.80
Expenses:	
Corporation fee	25.00
Field Day	125.00
Mail Reflector	150.00
TOTAL ASSETS:	\$4,279.46

There was no chairman or representative present from the MARS or repeater committees. The USGC report was given by Frank, AA4ZS, who reported that the Henry amplifier appears to be working and that the Coast Guard has cleaned up the shack. He also said that the Committee Chairman, Keith,

N6JWN was looking for volunteers to man a USCG Birthday Special Event Station on 5 and 6 July. Bob, KT4KS, gave the Community Outreach Report and said that he sent out the appropriate publicity for Field Day.

The ARES report was given by Steve, K3IZ who, with great musical talent, serenaded the assembled members with songs of the Field Day operations to be held at Lee District Park. A motion was made, seconded and passed to reimburse members who purchase food for the Field Day Picnic. Volunteer side dishes would be welcomed. Bob, KI3O, presented the Program Committee report and introduced the guest speaker, ARRL Director Dr. Dennis Bodson, W4PWF. Bob also asked John, WQ4L, for an update on the field trip next month to the WTOP transmitter site in Wheaton, MD.

The minutes from May were reviewed and approved with a change as follows: the \$150 donation was made for the MVARC reflector at QSL.com, vice the webpage at Mailman.QTH. Julie, KD4WSZ, requested that her position as MVARC Photographer be passed to Leila, WN4PP.

Unfinished Business:

For information of those present, George, N1BV, reported that he had added some new revisions to the draft By-Laws. Glenn, W4OCC, said he would post them on the website for all to review.

NewBusiness:

John, WQ4L, said that the list he had received of members contained people that could no longer be located, or whose licenses have expired. The Treasurer, who maintains the rolls of life and paid memberships, said he would review the list. It was announced that the Pentagon Radio Club was attempting to establish a D-link repeater site.

The Cookie Monster for the evening was Leila, WN4PP.

Bob, KT4KS said he would volunteer for the July meeting.

JULY FIELD TRIP: WTOP

By John, WQ4L

For our "traditional" July meeting field trip, this year we will be visiting the 50 kW transmitting facilities of the Washington DC historic AM radio station WTOP (recently changed calls to WTWP). The new 25 kW FM transmitter is also located at the site.

The tour will start at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday evening July 13. The location is on the north side of University Blvd. about three or four blocks EAST of the intersection with Georgia Avenue in Wheaton MD. Ken Sleeman, W4PVB and Transmitter Site Manager, and perhaps other station engineers will show us around.

There is some history of WTOP on the station's website:

<http://www.wtopnews.com/?sid=598673&nid=274>

<<http://www.wtopnews.com/?sid=598673&nid=274>>

The following websites (not affiliated with Bonneville International Corporation) contain photographs and other historical data about the WTOP/WTWP-AM transmitting facilities.

<http://s93943464onlinehome.us/wjsv/WJSV3.html> [Photos from the 40's and 50's - webmaster unknown]

<http://www.dcrtv.org/photo/wtop.html> [Dave Hughes - photos taken in the late 90's?]

<http://www.tvuplink.net/gallery/wtop> [Bob Zajko - photos taken in February, 2005]

<http://homepage.mac.com/rucker/PhotoAlbum67.html> [Richard Rucker - photos taken in August, 2005]

Travel to site:

There is a Red Line subway station in Wheaton but the walking distance may be a half mile to a mile to the WTOP site. I strongly recommend that we arrange for car pooling for this outing.

If you will be driving and can take passengers or if you need a ride, please let me know by email (wq4l@arrl.net) with the subject "MVARC-WTOP tour" and I will send out messages from time to time of those who will drive and those who need rides. I suggest we gather at the Beacon Hill Shopping center in front of OFFICE DEPOT no later than 5:30 p.m. we will be traveling during the rush-hour traffic period on the parkway and beltway. (Last year we left a couple of folks stranded because we did not clearly specify the meeting point location at the mall.)

I will need to let WTWP/WTOP know how many will be attending so the staff can plan accordingly. There is ample parking inside the WTOP property fence for all who are planning to drive.

Driving Directions:

When I used MapQuest to secure driving directions from Mt. Vernon to the WTOP University Blvd. address, the instructions had me going out to the Fairfax Parkway over to 95, then up to 495 west around the beltway to the all the way to Connecticut Avenue. The the directions said to take Connecticut Ave. north which becomes University Blvd. through Kensington to Wheaton. I never go this way around, but go up the GW Parkway past the National Airport all the way until it joins I-495 just before the American Legion Bridge. I continue on the beltway until Georgia

Avenue then go north to the University Blvd. intersection and turn right for about three blocks. As I recall, I don't think one can make a left turn directly into the WTOP property (divided highway). You may have to go further east a bit and turn around using one of the side street intersections and head back west to make a right turn into the WTOP gate opening.

You can't miss the WTOP property because it has two guyed antenna towers several hundred feet high and a large stone transmitter building with the call letters on the front.

John provides additional information credited to Dick Rucker, KM4ML, on the QCWA Chapter 91 web site:

"WTOP-AM began in 1926 as a 50 watt station in Brooklyn NY. Its call letters were changed to WJSV in 1929, reflecting the initials of its owner, J. S. Vance. In 1932, it was purchased by the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and moved to Alexandria, VA; later it was moved to 13th and E St., NW, Washington, D.C.

"The building we will visit, with its three tall antenna towers all in a row, was built around 1939 on very high ground in then-undeveloped Wheaton, MD. Its call letters were changed to WTOP in 1943, and it had a new slogan: "This is WTOP, the spot at the TOP of your dial." It was then, and is now, found at 1500 kcs (kHz) on your AM dial.

"In 1949, 55% of WTOP was purchased by the Washington Post Co. In 1953, its studios were moved to Broadcast House in Upper NW Washington. In 1989, its studios were moved to their present location on Idaho Avenue, NW. After another series of owners, it was purchased by its current owner, Bonneville International in 1997. Its history is more completely documented here: "History of WTOP Radio"

<<http://wtop.com/index.php?nid=274>>

"In 1940, a story appeared in the Washington Post entitled "The Voices of WJSV" that told how they went about auditioning some 600 people a year seeking employment as vocal talent. Each candidate received a letter invitation that read something like this:

"In response to your request for an audition, we have set aside the following time: Wednesday, Feb. 14 at 3 p.m. Please come prepared to perform three selections representative of your work. It will be necessary for you to provide your own accompanist, if one is required." The article noted that "WJSV is one of the Columbia's sixteen 50,000 watt stations, and it is the only one within 150 miles of Washington, D.C."

FIELD DAY 2006: SHORT BUT SWEET

By Bob, KT4KS

At 7AM, early Field Day morning, the local weather reports were for rain, lightning, thunder and storms until Tuesday. Local TV news stations were reporting as scientific fact that global warming is now contributing to an increasing number of torrential rainfalls. Al Gore's face was on every channel providing disturbing clips of wild weather patterns from his "An Inconvenient Truth". The weather forecast was not good for contesters or picnicker, man or beast.

At 9AM Bob KT4KS arrived at Lee District Park to find an eerie sky and empty site, and then returned home only to receive a phone call from Tom W1NSS inquiring as to Field Day status. A second call came from another MVARC'er who expressed that he was not going to

partake in the affair, but that the club could use his antenna. Bob then phoned Mary N4TCI, who stated that she had spoken with Vice President Howell KG4CKJ, and that the plan was that the two of them would arrive at the Field Day site about 1PM, and then evaluate the weather situation.

Mary expressed that she could always drive to the local Safeway to pick up picnic items just minutes before any actual picnic event.

At 12:50PM, Bob arrived at the site, and found that Howell and Paul AA8O had just arrived. Paul was especially prepared, as he brought both Carol's generator and an operational station. Bob set up a 40M QRP station in the parking lot, setting up a tiny table along side the car to support paddles, and cheap stool that would not support most hams. Mary then arrived, and discussion centered on the possibilities regarding the weather.

Paul AA8O wisely suggested that the club could simply set up some rigs, and if it doesn't rain that the club could just order pizzas from the Telegraph Corners Dominoes, located just ½ mile down the road. Paul then set up his 10-watt IC-703 rig with Halo antenna for 6M, running off of a battery about the size of 3 double-C size batteries. Paul set up on a table in the picnic site, located only 60 feet from the Lee District Caboose.

Frank AA4ZS and his wife Beverly then arrived, and before long MVARC was operating 2 battery powered stations, using the designation 2B VA. Initially, Bob was operating with a guest (Dave) who knew some of the MVARC'ers via the Club's repeater. Glenn W4OCC and Joan KI4FYN arrived to see Bob making contacts in the parking lot, and while Glenn got out of his car he asked, "Is this it?" He must have been a bit pleased to hear that it was not, that Paul AA8O and Howell were operating in the

picnic area, and that Mary was planning to get real picnic food. During the next couple of hours, Bob made 8 contacts, some with the aide of Glenn who showed that he still knows some CW. Running only 2-watts, Bob's contacts included NH, NY, NJ, PA, OH, NC and SC.

Paul managed to make 10 SSB contacts on 6M, his contacts including Maine, Canada and at least one maritime operator. During the contesting, Joan expressed an interest in operating, seeming especially prepared as she was wearing a white ham radio hat that included her name and call stitched in MVARC blue. (She was not observed on the air though.) At about 3:30PM, the weather appeared as if it would hold, so Mary inquired as to what people wanted to eat, and then headed off to the Safeway.

Howell fired up the park grill, and upon Mary's return the picnic aspect of the affair began to take form. Howell did the cooking while Mary set out most of the picnic paraphernalia. In addition to the hot dogs and hamburgers on the grill, items on the table included Frank's pasta salad with separate dressings, Joan's salad and watermelon/blueberry dish, potato and macaroni salad compliments of Paul AA8O, condiments (ketchup, mustard, onions, relish, American cheese), cans of soda and bottles of water.

By this time, John WZ4A had arrived, and Howell's wife Michelle and two twin children Alex and Jake were also present, which made for a good eating group. The MVARCers were by no means the only picnickers, as there was a large family-reunion/graduation-party going on at the adjacent site. It was noticed that none of those at the adjacent site inquired as to our radio stations.

Joan took several photos at the event, seemingly trying to take Lei-

la's WN4PP position as club photographer. During the eating festivities, discussions varied from hot dogs to lobster, from hiking to travel, and from general club affairs to national news.

While transmitting, Paul wanted to shift from 6M to 10M, necessitating using Bob's tuner. The rig was tuned, however, there was no 10M activity. By that time, Bob's tunerless QRP station was no longer usable, and all interest in phone had subsided. The event was then immediately shifted from a competitive contesting event to a strictly social affair.

At about 5:45PM the picnic started to wind down, as Michelle and her children left for home. As in past events, there was an excess of food, so Michelle was able to take Frank's salad home with her. Mary and Joan spent time to pack paper items back into a large plastic storage box, likely not to be opened again till next year. Mary gave the last 12 cans of soda to Paul because in Mary's words, "he got the most contacts during the day."

At 6:10PM, just as the last items were packed away, Paul WC9A and his son arrived. They each enjoyed the last two burgers, and spoke with the remaining members for a bit. Though they arrived after the stations were taken down, like everyone else at the event both Paul and son were awarded 2006 Field Day pins. At that time, Glenn expressed that "We earned out pins today."

At 6:30PM, members were literally in the parking lot and getting into their cars when the last MVARC'er, Julie KD4WSZ, arrived. Julie will get her pin at the next club meeting, as she earned hers too.

YORFO AT A CROSSROADS: PART II

By Dave, AI4FC
YORFO editor

In the June YORFO, I raised the idea that perhaps the club should focus on the e-mail reflector as the best way to communicate in a timely manner with members, and cease the publication of the monthly newsletter you are reading now. Among my concerns was the apparent low readership, the ability to provide more prompt access to news of interest to members via the reflector and the high cost in time and dollars to produce the monthly iteration of what in many cases is old news.

As if to underscore the point, I received just three comments to the article.

Buck, K3BUC, said he was a loyal monthly reader. He offered several useful suggestions, stressing throughout a sensitivity to the time commitment of those involved in its production.

"I am the newsletter editor & publisher for our Boy Scout Troop so I know what's involved in getting out a monthly rag, writing some articles, soliciting articles about campouts where I wasn't in attendance and putting it all together and emailing it to the membership," Buck wrote. "Sometimes I just skip a month or two for lack of news or for lack of time. We, too, are relying on email for much of our communications. However I often get comments from parents that they rely on an occasional newsletter because it consolidates many of the past announcements into one place."

Bob, KT4KS, whose contributions to the newsletter are sprinkled throughout this issue, said he was struck by the monthly cost of mailing the newsletter. It cost about \$20 a month to print the 30 copies we mail out, plus the cost of postage at 39 cents

apiece. But Bob said he thinks the readership supports the expense but wishes, as do I, that more members would contribute articles or ideas.

"I write for the YORFO as it's fun to write something," Bob wrote. "I suspect that not many people read it, but I think more do read it than you're aware of. After all, people do mention items that I've written to me on occasion. I never really understood why members are hesitant to draft something. Most likely, they are just not practiced at writing anything. Secondly, they are unable to believe that anything can be an article"

Bob had a suggestion that perhaps the club's leadership might consider: "It just occurred to me that the club can hand out copies of the newsletter at the test sessions."

The last response came from North Carolina from our friend Dave, N4YPR, who reported that he is still grieving over the recent death of his wife but adjusting. Our thoughts are with him.

On the topic of the YORFO, Dave's comments strike at the heart of the matter:

"While it may be a pain to send it out to members it is convenient to those who get them, and I would suspect if most members are like I was when I was there, looked forward to receiving the newsletter," Dave wrote. "Even if it is just a one page newsletter, it is a good thing. Then again I am just an old fashioned guy set in his ways and enjoys what he is used too. While most people have computers there are still a few that don't, and that includes some old timer Hams.... (T)he newsletter is in my opinion, a important and comfortable part of MVARC."

So where do we go from here?

I think the answer lies in the club membership. For example, in the June article I noted that Glenn, W4OCC, a key part of the

YORFO's production team will soon be moving and wishes to hand off that function to someone else. No one stepped forward to volunteer, so that vital position remains a looming vacancy. Do you want to keep the newsletter in print badly enough to volunteer?

But the piece did seem to stir the interest of other club members and I now have the promise for an article in the August newsletter that gives some hope for one of the driest months of the year. It may not be enough. It may be possible, following the seasoned recommendations of Buck, that we simply skip the August issue.

Comments greatly accepted.

-Dave

dmwhitney@comcast.net

June VHF QSO Party

By Carol, WA4GFW

The June VHF QSO party was a great time to be on the air for the hams who had an all-mode rig that would operate on 6 meters. I was unable to operate the entire time due to family commitments but I was able to operate on Saturday afternoon and some on Sunday. The best part was that 6 meters was open into Idaho and Montana at the start of the party. The 6 meter band sounded like 20 meters with rare DX coming in. There were pileups in the first 300 kilohertz of the 6 meter band. My first contact was N7ID in grid square DN24, Idaho and the second contact was W0FY in grid square DN26, Montana. The band continued to stay open most all afternoon and I had contacts in Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and other mid-west states. It finally opened into Texas and Louisiana later in the day. I only had two contacts on 2 meters and two on 70 centimeters and both were local stations.

I had just changed out my antennas for the VHF/UHF bands but didn't see any big improvement over the old setup. My home brew 4 element

6 meter beam worked well for this contest and I am looking forward to the CQ VHF contest in July 15th and 16th. The CQ VHF contest will be restricted to 6 and 2 meters. So if you have a rig get on the air and have some fun on the magic band, as well as 2 meters.

I (hadn't) talked to Paul AA8O since field day; he said he made several contacts on 6 meters using his IC703 running 10 watts and my Saturn 6 halo. He said he had contacts into Canada and the northeast as well as locals. This shows you don't have to be running big power to make long distance contacts on 6 meters.

Hope to talk with you on the VHF UHF bands.

MVARC's WorldRadio

Coupons Sold Out

By Bob, KT4KS

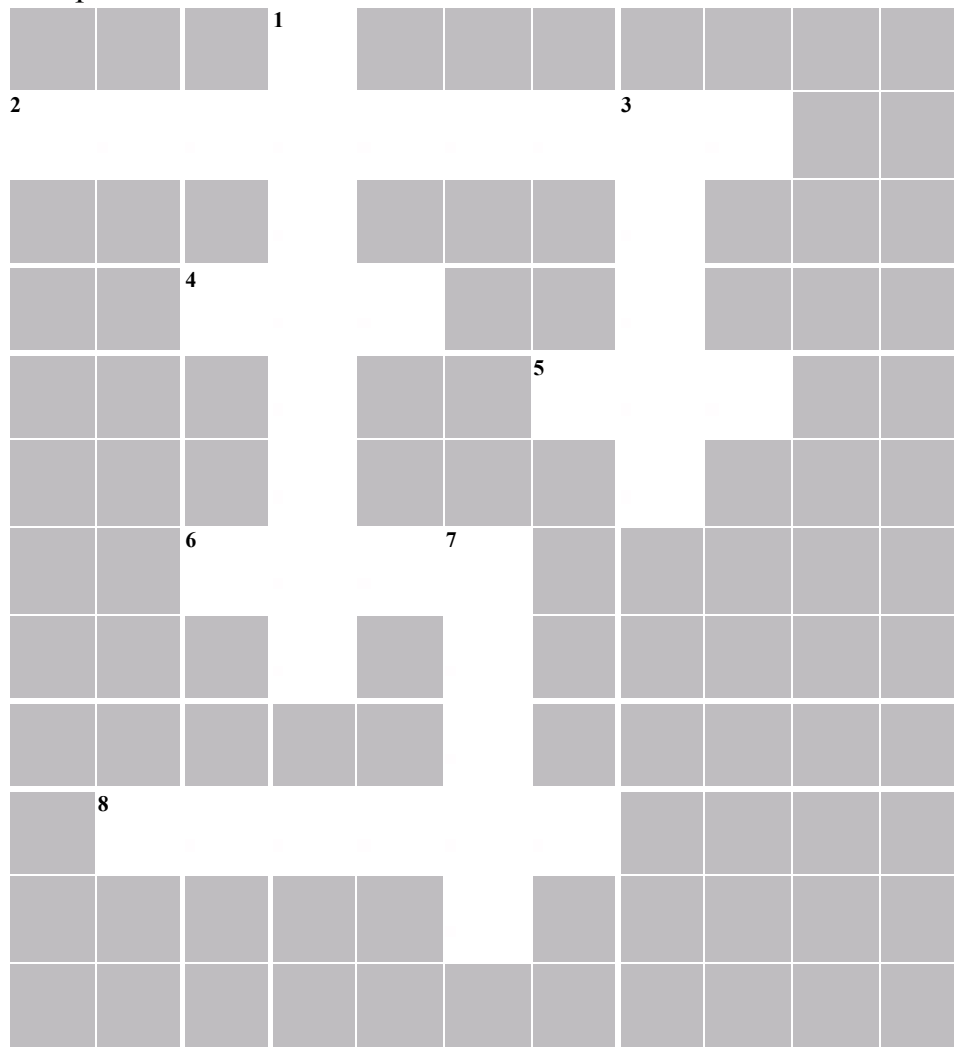
Last month, I mailed out a notice through the club Reflector inquiring if there were any MVARCers interested in purchasing a one-year subscription certificate to WORLD RADIO magazine for only \$8. Three days later, after having obtained positive responses from 6 members, I mailed WORLD RADIO \$65 for their package deal of 8 one-year subscription certificates.

Upon receipt of the coupons, Bob distributed them to purchasers either in person at the July test-session or via the US mail. All the purchasers seemed to be pleased with the bargain price of only \$8 per certificate, especially considering that the regular price is \$17.

This year, all coupons moved quickly, aided a bit by one member who purchased 2 coupons (and would have been happy to take a 3rd, if available). Thus, when it comes to WorldRadio coupons: don't ask - don't tell. Don't ask me if I have any more because I don't, and don't tell me I should have ordered more -- as he got all that he could.

BOB's (KT4KS) PUZZLE PALACE

Complete the puzzle.



Down

1. Hamfest location where MVARC provided free ham testing
3. PM start time for Tuesday evening net
7. Acronym for Club newsletter

Across

2. MVARC event on 4th Saturday of the month
4. What MVARCers do more than transmit at Field Day
5. Type of display on K2VPR's hat
6. First name of MVARC FAR Representative
8. Call of Leila's WN4PP OM