

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



Volume 18

APRIL 2005

Number 04

Ye Olde RF Output

MEETING NOTICE

APRIL 14, 2005

7:30 PM

**ONE TIME LOCATION
CHANGE**

**INOVA MOUNT VERNON
HOSPITAL**

2501 PARKERS LANE

ALEXANDRIA, VA 22306

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

HAPPENINGS

April 14 - MOUNT VERNON AMATEUR RADIO CLUB monthly meeting. Held at INOVA MOUNT VERNON HOSPITAL, 2501 Parker's Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306. Conference Room C&D Second Floor 7:30 p.m. See you there!

April 5,12,19,26 - 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!

April 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 APRIL 9, 2005 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.**

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

AUTOPATCH AVAILABLE TO
MEMBERS

MVARC HOME PAGE:

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

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CHANGE IN MEETING LOCATION FOR APRIL MEETING

The club meeting on Thursday, April 14, will be at the Mount Vernon Hospital, next to the Mount Vernon Government Center. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. in hospital Conference rooms C & D on the second floor. In May the meeting returns to the Mount Vernon Government Center, 2511 Parkers Lane, unless preempted.

MINUTES MARCH 10, 2005 MEETING

By George, N1BV
Club Secretary

The meeting was held at the Mount Vernon Governmental Center and was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by the President, Carol WA4GFW. He then led the Pledge of Allegiance. Everyone then introduced themselves. The February minutes, as posted on the reflector, were approved with one change. In the minutes, it was reported that Dick WA4USB had made a motion regarding the repeater. It should have read, Demi K4BSA. John, K2VPR, gave the Treasurer's Report. As of 28 February 2005:

Checking:	\$1,112.17
Savings:	3,342.47
Cash on hand:	121.50
Doc Hyde fund:	906.50
TOTAL ASSETS:	\$5,482.64

Steve, K3IZ, provided the ARES report and said MVARC had supported the President's Day Parade in Alexandria. Bill, K2BSA,

also noted that the Venture Crew had a turnout for the parade, as well. John, WZ4A, provided the Education/ Volunteer Examiner Report and noted that there was a test session that coming Saturday. Mary, N4TCI, reported on the FAR and that applicants for FAR Scholarships should get them in. Dick, WA4USB, gave the Repeater Committee report and said the repeater was operating. There was a mention that the receiver sensitivity may be down.

Keith, N6JWN, gave the Coast Guard Station report. Current status of the Mars Station is: The Kenwood 950 and attached Henry Amp is the only functional HF transceiver. The Kenwood 850 and associated AMP are currently not functional. The 850 has what appears to be blown finals and the AMP needs a new switch. Also the Power supply that was attached to the 850 is missing. The 2 meter Radio is functional. The Yaesu Satellite Radio is functional however the Antenna rotor is broken. The antenna Tuner is functional, however there is no documentation on how to use it. The 23 element Log periodic antenna is working, however the rotor is not operational. The antenna is currently pointed at the southern tip of Africa. The inverted Vee antenna is mounted directly to the Tower with no stand off. The emergency generator was working when last tested, however it will not start at this time. Heat is on in the building, not much but it works. The A/C has been repaired and is functional. The following are the plans the Coast Guard has for the site. Under repairs, the Kenwood 850 will be fixed as soon as possible. CWO Bryant was under the impression that the switch that is needed to repair the Kenwood Amp was going to be supplied by MVARC. As soon as a switch can be supplied, the AMP will be repaired. The Log Periodic rotor is believed to have blown fuses at the Rotor. The Coast Guard will check on this as soon as weather permits. CWO Bryant is

interested in changing the name of the station from the MARS shack to something else (no name as of yet). USCG is interested in becoming a backup or emergency communication post for the national capital area. The idea being discussed is for the site to be a backup for the Department of Homeland Security, USGC, and MVARC/amateur radio. (This issue will be worked off line between DHS and USCG.) Removal of the old unused Harris Racks taking up space in the shack is planned. Standing off the current inverted Vee from the tower will be done and another inverted Vee oriented for east - west communications will be installed. A vertical HF antenna that covers 10 to 80 meters will be installed as will an additional antenna tuner and SWR meter at the Kenwood 850 radio station. Equipment in the shack will be relocated to make a complete station, i.e., Kenwood 950, Amp, Antenna tuner, SWR meter, patchable to any antenna or dummy load. The list of equipment currently at the station will be reviewed as to what is working and not working. The Letter of Understanding will be reviewed to insure that it is current, or it will be brought up to date. Current document was supplied to USCG for review. Apparently USCG could not find our current agreement. The current access list to the facilities will be updated. He stated that he needs a list of those that will want access to the site. (Please note that if you do not make use of access at least once every (PERIOD TO BE ESTABLISHED BY USCG) you will be removed from the list. He will explore the possibility of offering Amateur Radio classes to military personal and civilians that are stationed or work aboard the base, and that the Executive Officer of the station is very interested in this. He requested training on the proper use of some of the equipment at the shack. (AMPS, Antenna Tuners etc). Currently the USCG does not have

anyone on the station that is versed in the operation of all the equipment installed at the shack. Items that USCG would like help with from MVARC. Work parties to clean up the shack as needed. Work parties to help install new antennas as needed. Establish SOP's for operating the equipment. Help in obtaining missing manuals on the equipment installed and operational. He also reported that the Station may have some unique facilities that may be of use to the NCS/SHARES (the SHaRed RESources Emergency Radio Network).

Bob, KT4KS reported on Community Outreach and noted the QRP Field Day on 16 April at Lee District Park. Bob, K13O, T.J. O'Brien as a speaker. Under old business, George, N1BV, reported that he had drafted an update to the MVARC By-Laws. Bob, N4LBR, made a motion that the By-Laws not reference Robert's Rules. The motion was seconded and passed.

Under new business, Julie, KD4WSZ, inquired as to the people who were going to coordinate the next Field Day. The President announced the next meeting would be held at the Sherwood Hall Library. It was also announced that the Virginia QSO Party was going to be held next weekend. The Coast Guard station would participate.

Paul, AA8O, who is on the nominating committee for the next slate of club officers, was asked by the President if he had any nominees. Paul stated that the present board was doing such a great job, that all members should be re-nominated.

Glenn, W4OCC, made a motion that the club purchase a switch for the 850 at the Coast Guard Station. The motion was seconded and passed. Frank, AA4ZS, was passed the responsibility for this action. It was announced that the Club breakfast would be on the 4th Saturday of the month. John, WQ4L, requested that K2VPR provide to the members an updated membership telephone list. Steve, K3IZ,

demonstrated a "cold soldering iron" purchased at Home Depot. This was followed by adjournment. John, K2VPR was the Cookie Monster. Bob, KT4KS volunteered for the duty next month.

A video presentation of Packet Radio was presented, with a demonstration by Steve, K3IZ, and Dick, WA4USB.

QRP FIELD DAY - APRIL 16

By FRANK, AA4ZS
Club VP

April 16th will be the 10th year for the MVARC QRP field day. MVARC's QRP field day is an offshoot of the QRP field day sponsored by the NORCAL QRP CLUB. Several QRP enthusiasts from MVARC got together in 1995 to participate in NORCAL's event. If I remember correctly the participants then were Tom N4BV, Steve K3IZ, Bob N4LBR, Chuck W3HSW, Bob KT4KS, and myself, Frank AA4ZS.

We set up QRP radio stations on 40, 30, and 20 meters at Lee District Park. The weather that day was good, sunny and warm. We used vertical and dipole antennas fed by battery powered QRP rigs. QSOs were made with state-side and DX radio stations. At the end of the day it was decided that we had a great time and we would do it again next year.

The QRP enthusiasts in MVARC have continued to put on this event until the present day. One change we have made is that we no longer schedule the event with the date of the NORCAL event. For some reason finding out the date of the NORCAL event was difficult. It was decided since we were in the event for fun, and never submitted logs to NORCAL, that we would schedule the MVARC QRP field day for the 3rd Saturday in April.

This date works out well as it doesn't conflict with other club functions. The park authorities

have been very supportive and we have no trouble securing the site on that date. One caveat the park authorities have is, we don't use the trees to support our antennas. This is a reasonable request and hasn't been a problem to comply with.

I am really looking forward to the MVARC QRP field day this year. Last year was the best one yet. We had many participants and visitors from the club and the weather was super! There as many as five QRP stations set up at one time! There were many different QRP rigs, classic and current, to see and discuss. All kinds of telegraph keys, bugs, and paddles to pound and swipe (use! not steal). And best of all was the array of antennas that were used, many very imaginative, and most worked quite well. There was even a mini buffet, with coffee, sodas, doughnuts, cookies, and hot dogs.

This event is a great way to test your ability to set up a radio station in case of an emergency. It's also a great way to spend some time with your fellow MVARC members, see what the QRP community is up to, demonstrate ham radio to the public, and have some fun.

Come join us! Bring some QRP gear to set up or show off! Or come down to operate or just hang out with the gang! I had a great time last year and thank all the members, visitors, and participants that made this event so memorable. I hope to see every one of you and more at this years MVARC QRP field day April 16th at Lee District Park.

K4RT TAKES ON FWS OVER DXpedition

By DAVE, A14FC
YORFO EDITOR

It started years ago with a telephone conversation between MVARC member Brad, K4RT, and his longtime ham friend and fellow DXer Glenn, K0JGH. "How about we go on a DXpedition?" Glen asked. "Somewhere close like

Desecheo or Navassa would be nice. But they are both closed."

Brad wondered why Desecheo and Navassa were closed, and with that a campaign to open them was born. "Both islands are in the Top 10 DXCC most needed list," Brad said over lunch last month. "There hasn't been a DXpedition to either island in the last 12 years. The day after his telephone conversation with Glen, Brad wrote a letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which oversees Desecheo and Navassa, both wildlife refuges, and asked for permission to land for radio operations.

"They said Desecheo was closed for safety reasons due to drug smugglers, illegal aliens, and unexploded bombs from when the island was a bombing range in the forties, and that Navassa's ecology was so sensitive, no human should go there so I wrote back and asked them to supply me with evidence that supported their reasons," he said. "That was in 2002. To date, they haven't provided any evidence supporting their decisions to close the islands, and I have obtained a lot of the agency's own records that show there isn't any."

So Brad, whose day job is a Washington, D.C., lawyer for a firm that specializes in regulatory affairs, is on a crusade to get the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to see it his way.

The campaign has moved into the halls of Congress and already raised ripples with the environmental community, though for reasons unrelated to Brad's mission. It hasn't been a smooth journey.

But first, a little background.

These two small islands are officially uninhabited, although Brad said fishermen and trespassers seem to make their way to shore relatively unimpeded. Part of the reason is that the islands, now protected as national wildlife refuges are in the middle of the Caribbean Sea.

The largest of the islands is Navassa, which is 30 miles west of

Cape Tiburon, Haiti. At three square miles, it makes 360-acre Desecheo Island about 14 miles off the west coast of Puerto Rico seem like a big rock, which basically it is. Until 1993, when the FWS closed the islands to public use, the government authorized a number of ham radio operations from each location. The agency claims Navassa's habitat is so sensitive humans should not be allowed on the island; Desecheo is dangerous because of illegal aliens, drug smugglers and unexploded bombs left on the island from when it was a bomb practice range during World War Two.

But that doesn't mean that no one is going to the islands. In addition to the illegal visitors, the FWS has permitted three scientific expeditions to Navassa between 1998 and 2000, for example. So why can't there be a DXpedition?

In the several years that Brad has been pestering the FWS for a special use permit, the reasons have varied, changed, shifted, reversed or morphed, Brad said. After reviewing some 1,200 pages of internal documents obtained from the agency, Brad concluded that, at best, the agency has only speculative evidence to support its reasons for closing the islands. "The Fish and Wildlife Service's own records state that Navassa is among the healthiest habitats in the world," he said.

It all boils down to the fact that the FWS just doesn't want to open the islands to ham expeditions anymore, and whether the reasons for that are justified or merely of the "arbitrary and capricious" variety has yet to be determined in a court of law.

That could change, too. Brad has a lawsuit pending over the denial of his permit applications. In the meantime, Brad and his supporters of have turned to Congress for help.

Another ham from West Virginia, a DXer, knew a source in a high place - W. V. Rep. Nick Rahall, for former broadcast execu-

tive who just happens to be the senior Democrat on the House Resources Committee that has jurisdiction over the Fish and Wildlife Service.

About this time - and this is where it starts getting tricky -- a West Coast ham gets involved. His interest is opening the Farallon Islands about 30 miles out in the Pacific Ocean from the San Francisco to an expedition. That shared interests looked like a political marriage in heaven, because suddenly Rep. Richard Pombo, a suburban Bay Area Republican and chair of the House Resources Committee, saw something in it for him, too. Out of this marriage was born House Resolution 298 in January, which would have opened all three national wildlife refuges.

That's when matters got more complicated. It seems that the Farallons have a large constituency of protection-minded people who think no one should go onto them and thereby inconvenience nesting birds, seals, seal lions and other such critters that make the foggy rock their home. Stories about ham operators wanting to set up shop on to the rocks appeared in Bay Area and Los Angeles newspapers. A letter to the editor in the QST this month also defends the islands from an RF invasion.

Brad's legislation has since been reintroduced as HR 1183 with the Farallons dropped from the text. But also dropped as a cosponsor was Richard Pombo. With Republicans holding the keys to the congressional agenda, it's unclear what happens next.

Brad remains hopeful. A website, WWW.KP1-5.com has been set by the Lone Star DX Association in Texas, which is helping to raise some money for the effort, which Brad has largely been self-financing all these years. Brad said there's no way to know at this point how the court case will turn out or how long it will take. He thinks the legislative approach might provide a more timely result "If we can get enough congressmen to look at

this, we might have a real chance," he said. Letters to Capitol Hill might help.

Brad, who moved to the Washington area from Iowa five years ago, has been a ham for 26 years. He has never been on a DXpedition. "But we've submitted a very restrictive application and hams have always acted responsibly on Desecheo and Navassa," he said. " We believe the law and the facts are on our side."

HAMFEST WAS SUCCESS FOR MVARCers

By Bob, KT4KS

The Vienna hamfest provided MVARCers with a fun meeting place on the second Sunday of last month. Fortunately, the weather for the event was very agreeable, as it was dry with a morning temperature approaching the mid-forties. As in the past years, it was Treasurer John K2VPR who reserved both table and visitor passes for the club, setting the stage for club members who wished to either sell items or sit down with fellow members while indoors.

The first MVARCer to arrive at the site was Bob KT4KS, who immediately headed for the tailgating section looking for deals, and successfully purchased a 7-amp power supply for only \$5 from former MVARCer Dean WA4TK. A short time later both John and Steve K3IZ arrived, and the two of them secured the club's vendor's badges so they could set up inside of the building. Steve was generous enough to pay for a supply of doughnuts, which lasted throughout the entire affair. Apparently, food was very much on Steve's mind, as in addition to paying for doughnuts, he mentioned that after the hamfest he planned to eat at the Hard Times Cafe in Springfield, an establishment owned by a fellow MVARCer.

At 7:30 AM, John

expressed that the number of indoor vendors appeared to be reduced as compared to the past years, but when the doors finally opened at 8:00 AM, the majority of the tables were covered with ham related gear just like always. Immediately after 8:00 AM the activity began to increase, as the parking lot began to fill up with vehicles supporting ham radio tags. There were two rows of tailgaters, and they generally included the routine items that all of us are accustomed to seeing at fests.

Some of the lesser routine items for sale included two older QRP kits (one of which was Norcal's neat looking "Red Hot" unit, which really does have a bright red housing), and an MFJ device for the code-impaired that automatically displays the CW translated message onto an LED. The indoor vendors also included many routine items. One of the lesser routine indoor items included a 10 Meter Yagi that was sold by Jim AF4QG, and seen to be carried away by two buyers. The Alexandria dealer who has provided many MVARCers with badges containing an engraving of the Mount Vernon home was also present. One of that dealer's sample badges included an extravagant engraving of a sailboat (used by the Alexandria Radio Club). A second of his many sample badges coincidentally was that of MVARCer Joan KI4FYN.

As always, MVARC had its table filled with ham trinkets. About 80% of the table was covered with George N1BV's valuables, and particular items included a Norcal 40, tuner, head phones, VCR, meter, monitor, Bob's earlier acquired \$5 power supply (which sold for \$10),

and John's seemingly always hamfest-present metal footlocker container.

In addition to Jim, many MVARCers were tending to tables that were non-MVARC related. In particular, John WQ4L was seen to be running the Quarter Century Wireless Association's (QCWA) table, and was attempting to obtain new members. John WQ4L mentioned that he planned to check into the Sunday QCWA's net from his table. Other MVARCers manning separate tables included Jeannie N4ZGI, Terry N4ZH (believed to be the Vienna Club table) and Alan N5LF (Alexandria ARC table).

Unlike passed years, there did not seem to be excessive spending on the part of MVARCers. Members purchased mostly smaller ticket items, including headphones, balun, microphone hooks, cigarette lighter outlets, memory, adaptors, batteries and power supplies. In addition, unlike the passed, our Vienna Wireless sponsors strictly maintained their no-food/no-drink indoors policy, as this year the college was serious about keeping food out of their gym where the vendors set up. This necessarily resulted in three of our MVARCers eating their doughnuts out in the lobby. Though not terribly convenient as we had to be away from the club table, it was much better than the alternative of eating outside while sitting down on a cold roadside curb.

During the event there was a good level of socializing. Frank AA4ZS was seen speaking with Pam KR4XM by one of the many indoor tables. Many MVARCers stopped at the MVARC table, including Demi K4BSA, Dick Harmon

WA4USB, Paul AA8O, Dwight AI4II (who was wearing a sign advertising his IC-703 for sale, and who took the time to show off his fancy tiny paddles and tiny straight key), Mary N4TCI (who had a "no comment" when asked for a quote for our YORFO), Howell KG4CKG (who said he had "not seen anything of interest yet at the fest"), John KI4HK (a Cherry Tree Net regular who lives in Point of Rocks, MD), Terry K7MPP, Brad K4RT, Alan (who said he was planning to bring his Elecraft K1 to MVARC's QRP Field Day in April), Doug WA3WEP, Keith (MVARC's MARS coordinator), Bill W3HXF, Anna KG4DEX, Charlie AF4NT and Bob KI30. It is likely that Dave WA3GIN was also in attendance, as his name and call were seen displayed on a monitor of a vendor's call look-up CD product.

From the club table, Steve was making an effort to locate MVARCers who might be interested in attending the Dayton hamfest, and obtained at least some interest from two of MVARC's newest members Don KA6AKH and his daughter Veronica KI4FPZ.

Everyone seemed to be pleased with the local hamfest, as it provided us with a local meeting place at the cost of only \$6 each. Hopefully, the sponsors of this fest secured sufficient funds to continue the event in 2006.