



Potomac Valley Radio Club Newsletter

February 2005

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Special Contest Seminar Issue — See the announcement on page 2

PVRC welcomes KB3LEF, Adam Waller; AK3E, Richard Tarbert; KB3JGI, Joe Woods; KA3SVF, Dale Wiles; W3JCT, J. C. Taylor; KD3FA, Bill Nutter; and KB3IWW, Keith Murray to the Eastern Shore chapter. PVRC also welcomes Phil Davis, KD4BMQ to the CVCC Chapter.

PVRC regrets to report the passing of Pud Reaver, W3YD, on January 9. Our deepest sympathy to his family and friends.

Editor's Note

By [Pete Smith N4ZR](#)

The formal announcement of PVRC's Contesting Seminar includes Internet links to more information, and dovetails nicely with an innovation in the Newsletter this month. From here on out, I intend to provide more extensive hyperlinking in the Newsletter. In some cases, these links will be to extended content on the PVRC web site, taking a leaf from NCJ's book. In other cases, they will lead to other Internet resources, or to a quick way to send e-mail to an author or advertiser. Whenever you see [blue](#) text, put your cursor on it, and you'll see it change to indicate a hyperlink. Click and you'll go there.

From the President

By [Jack Hammett, K4VV](#)

Thanks to Brian, N3OC, for leading the Contest Seminar effort. Jim, WX3B, and Bill, N3RR, made major contributions. Many others helped. Key leaders will present at the seminar, making a great event! One change to the seminar detail in this newsletter is that participants who apply for PVRC membership in advance will be voted in at the end of the event, and the reduced rate for attendance will be charged. New members will be asked to apply some or all of the discount to an initial PVRC donation, rather than seek a refund.

January was a busy month of PVRC and contesting activities for me. The presentation by Scott Robins was a good start for 2005. I attended the meeting in Richmond, and went to K4JA. The Frederick meeting was fun. AC5RR operated here for both NAQP events. I traveled to Altoona, PA to operate the W3SO team, and we had a dinner meeting of PVRC on the NW frontier. Our officers for 2005 (W3DQ, WX3B, WM3T, and WR3L) will gather here soon to do some planing. Onward into 2005!

Central Meeting Change for February

The Central meeting in February is shifted to the first Monday, February 7, to avoid poor turnout on Valentines Day on the second monday. The meeting is in Virginia at Anita's Mexican Restaurant at 521 E Maple Ave (Route 123), Vienna, tel. 703-225-1001. Informal program--contests and war stories.

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PVRC Contest Calendar

Courtesy of the [WA7BNM Contest Calendar](#)

Boldface indicates PVRC Events — all dates and times are Zulu

North American Sprint, SSB 0000Z-0400Z, Feb 6

North American Sprint, CW 0000Z-0400Z, Feb 13

ARRL Inter. DX Contest, CW 0000Z, Feb 19 to 2400Z, Feb 20

CQ 160-Meter Contest, SSB 0000Z, Feb 26 to 2359Z, Feb 27

North Carolina QSO Party 1700Z, Feb 27 to 0300Z, Feb 28

ARRL Inter. DX Contest, SSB 0000Z, Mar 5 to 2400Z, Mar 6

North American Sprint, RTTY 0000Z-0400Z, Mar 13

Virginia QSO Party 1800Z, Mar 19 to 0200Z, Mar 21

Russian DX Contest 1200Z, Mar 19 to 1200Z, Mar 20

CQ WW WPX Contest, SSB 0000Z, Mar 26 to 2359Z, Mar 27

CQ WW WPX Contest, CW 0000Z, May 28 to 2359Z, May 29

West Virginia QSO Party 1600Z, Jun 18 to 0200Z, Jun 19

ARRL Field Day 1800Z, Jun 25 to 2100Z, Jun 26

The Toolbox

By [Don Daso, K4ZA](#)

The other day, I was asked where I got the gloves I often wear while doing tower work. That question, along with W3BP's remark about my pants (while up North recently, taking down K4JA's antenna farm), made me realize a few remarks on clothing might be in order this month.

My approach to clothing has always followed the ensemble idea (no laughing, now, for those who know me "outside" of tower work). The ensemble idea incorporates clothing, as well as equipment items, which offer protection while still providing functionality. Protection is just that, and involves you from head to toe: hard-hat, shirt, jacket, gloves, pants, and appropriate footwear. Weather and seasonal conditions dictate some of your choices (I try not to allow economics to influence my decisions here).

The gloves I use these days, for instance, are either mechanics or framers gloves. The key factor is that each hand has the index finger and thumb tips removed. The mechanics version is also heavily padded in the palm; the framers gloves are also padded, but seemingly not as heavily. I've found these gloves in Home Depot and auto-parts emporiums. Each is about \$22-24. I find I can get a good six months of wear from them. The padding truly helps when you're running either the ginpole or work rope up and down through your hand.

I've always been a big [Carhartt](#) clothing fan, ever since getting my first "chore" coat as an Ohio farmboy. I remember being pretty disappointed when I outgrew the coat—it was that comfortable and functional. I truly like their 12 oz. canvas material pants. The ad copy is right on the money: "The relaxed room legs and large, gusseted crotch of the pants offer unparalleled freedom of movement..." Where I live, summers can be brutally hot, and while I don't like the idea, shorts make good sense. The same material, but without the long legs, means I've got shorts I seemingly cannot wear out. I wear them a lot in the hot days of July, August, and September, even while not on a tower.

A few years ago, I invested in some [Carolina Boots](#) http://hutchville.com/carolina_boots.shtml professional pole-climbing boots. My first pair I found at Sportsman's Paradise, a surplus house, for \$90, a real bargain. When

my entire toolbox was stolen from the bed of my pickup, I lost them, and had to buy directly from the factory. At \$200, the first pair was an obvious bargain, and the new pair is higher-topped (Carolina called me to ask if I wanted 12 or 16-inch tops, and I ordered the higher tops) than my original ones. Covering the entire calf means I get some odd looks at tower job sites, but on those rare occasions when I must don climbing spurs, they're perfect. And comfortable. I've also invested in some high dollar socks, with moisture-wicking abilities, and padded soles. I've not regretted it.

It was cold in Northern VA during that K4JA job, and I was again reminded how truly functional the Army "field jacket," the good old M-65 utility coat truly is, with its drawstring waist, multiple pockets, and zippable hood. It was perfect for holding AB-105 hardware, along with the myriad hardware from the antennas, that K4VV and W3BP wanted, having bought the items in question.



And several people have seen and asked about a couple gadgets they've seen me use, namely, a simple swivel attached to a rope or carabiner. But it's not just an ordinary swivel—this is a [Petzl ball bearing-equipped swivel](#) that makes tramping beams or orienting a rope's direction smooth and painless. Pricey, but an energy and timesaving addition to my toolbox.

I'd also like to say heartfelt thanks for the kind remarks and support I've received for this column. Watch for the next edition of the *National Contest Journal*, where an expanded version will soon appear.

What's in your Toolbox?

Smaller and Smarter Keyboards

By [Larry Schimelpfenig, K7SV](#)

Several months ago after my latest attempt at SO2R I decided I wanted a keyboard with reduced footprint, and I wanted the ability to re-map the keyboard. The desire for smaller keyboard was based on desktop space and how I liked to arrange things. I don't like reaching over the keyboard to tune the radio. The desire to re-map keys stemmed from desire to make best use of my ability to touch-type. I wanted to keep my fingers over the home-rows as much as possible.

With time I've pretty much achieved what I wanted in both respects. As things turn out, key re-mapping is a function available in the logging software I use, but what I learned prior to discovering that may be helpful to others. The Internet and search engines sure have made it easy to do the necessary research!

There are a number of mini-keyboards available at a variety of prices. Numerous discussions with Neal, K3NC who went through a similar search in the past were quite helpful. His first suggestion was not to purchase a keyboard if one can't put his fingers on it. He purchased several over the Internet and discovered that he didn't like them. He didn't like the pressure necessary to make contact or tactile feedback. He ended up buying a wireless mini-keyboard locally and likes it a lot. He hasn't experienced any RFI problems with it.

In my search I found a vast range of small keyboards running anywhere from ten to five hundred dollars in price. My search produced a computer store in Fairfax County that listed four or five different boards in stock. Of course when I arrived, they had only one. It was a [Ortek Technologies WCK-91](#) that ran around thirty dollars. Based on what I could tell from pushing the keys without it being connected to a computer, I thought it would do the trick. It's 12 3/4 inches by 5 5/8 inches in size.

When I used the keyboard in the first contest, I discovered three things I didn't like. The F1 through F12 function keys are smaller than those on standard keyboards. I kept fat fingering several at the same time. Several keys (insert in particular) didn't always make contact as I struck them. Finally I wasn't crazy about tactile feedback. Keyboard mapping appears to have resolved the first two issues and I think I've gotten used to the feel of the Ortek. At some point I'm going to visit Neal and see what his [Gyration mini-wireless keyboard](#) feels like. It sells in the \$100-120 range. I fully expect to upgrade from the Ortek, but it's meeting my needs for now.

The search for keyboard mapping software was interesting. Factors such as operating system, function and cost narrowed my search appreciably. Since I did my search I notice a number of new products while doing a Google search for keyboard mapping software.

Some products I tried wouldn't allow mapping of programmable or function keys. One that looked promising wouldn't do AltGrSh, which prevented keyboard cw in Writelog.

Ultimately I found a product called [Keychange](#) that sold for \$19.95. I downloaded the demo and it did everything I wanted. Immediately after I mentioned the product on the Contest reflector, they doubled the price. About that same time I discovered that a recent update of Writelog included keyboard mapping. It was time to upgrade mine anyway, so I zipped \$30 to Ron and had the software loaded the next day. It took a little playing to understand how keyboard shortcuts works, but once I got the hang of it, it was a breeze. I'm not aware of any keyboard functions that can't be re-mapped.

One consideration with keyboard mapping is how it affects typical non-ham computer applications. It happens that I map some keys for contesting that I wouldn't want remapped when doing word processing and such. Many of the external mapping products can be activated and deactivated at will, but with this capability in my logging product, I don't have to deal with it at all.

So what am I re-mapping and how does it benefit me?

When one's hands are on home-row, it's a real stretch to strike the F1 through F12 keys without moving the rest of the fingers on one hand or other from home-row. I believe the majority of the logging programs use the function keys. In addition to the function keys, CT, NA and WL in the CT mode make liberal use of "insert" and "+" or "=". Here's what I've re-mapped:

```
[ = F4    (my call)
] = F1    (CQ)
; = insert (his call & my exchange)
' = +     (QSL + enter)
```

The first two are in easy reach with the right pinky finger. The semi-colon is the key that the right pinky normally rests on. That's an excellent position for the function key that probably gets the most use by me. The apostrophe is just to the right of the semi-colon and is probably the second most used key when running.

This mapping works equally well for most CW, RTTY and phone contests. Because of the different order of the exchange during the sprints depending on whether one has called CQ or answered a CQ, I would make at least one change in mapping for those contests. With the utility in Writelog, that's very simple to do. With Writelog there are several ways that one could retain and use different INI information for various contests, but re-mapping in WL is so easy I'm not sure it makes sense.

Having several contests under my belt since keyboard miniaturizing and re-mapping, I find my efforts have been worthwhile.

"Micro-Local" Weather Available Globally Via APRS

By [Brian Wruble, W3BW](#)

[Editor's note — this isn't about contesting per se, but enough of us are involved with contesting from remote locations that I thought a piece on weather monitoring was timely. Several others contributed on this topic as well; expanded coverage can be found on the PVRC web site by clicking [here](#)]

I like knowing the weather conditions in a very precise location --- my weekend home, 10 acres on the Sassa-

frass River, an estuary of the Chesapeake on Maryland's Eastern Shore. This is how I have met that need.

APRS (*tm* by WB4APR) is a very efficient system designed to allow moving stations to be pinpointed on a map by any number of observers. For example, there is a 2M FM transceiver installed in my wife's car. She is a ham, K2KWB, and this is a safety measure. For a few dollars more, I added a virtually invisible GPS receiver, mag-mounted on the roof, and now her car can be tracked with high precision by anyone with internet access. It happens that I drive her car more than she does, so mostly she is tracking me. Our daughter, Zane, 15, also a ham --- W2YL --- would have one of these installed in her backpack if I thought I could get away with it.

It is easy to configure an APRS station to transmit additional data along with position information, and WX information is a natural. And since, by design, APRS data quickly finds its way into the internet, the weather data that radiates over the APRS network is also accessible, via internet, from anywhere in the world. Follow this link, and you'll see contemporaneous weather data as transmitted by W3BW-5.

www.findu.com/cgi-bin/wxpage.cgi?call=w3bw-5&last=240

There are only a few building blocks in a Micro-Local WX station. First, you need weather measuring equipment. A complete suite can be acquired from reputable vendors. I set up my station using equipment from [Peet Bros](#). I use the Ultimeter 2100 system with sensors for wind speed and direction, a rain gauge and an outdoor temperature and humidity gauge. All of these sensors plug into a small console, about the size of a large HT. Inside the console, besides all the circuitry to gather, display and output data is a barometer and another temperature gauge ("indoor").

In the normal home weather station, the console would be placed on a table or desk, its LCD screen visible and its control buttons accessible. Cables would then run from the console to those sensors which must be placed outdoors --- the anemometer (wind speed and direction), rain gauge and outdoor temperature/humidity sensor. In my setup, and I suspect many others, the house is not the best site for the WX sensors. Rain gauges and wind sensors need to be out in the open, well away from trees and structures that can distort readings. This requirement means that many Micro-Local WX Stations are *untended* and *remote*.

My neighbor, Ted, is a marine pilot who spends long stretches of time away from home guiding enormous ships up the Delaware River. He has a magnificent dock, complete with boathouse. Also at his dock is his obsession, the "*Nellie Crockett*", a beautifully restored Chesapeake Bay "Buy Boat", the subject of a glowing article in [Chesapeake Bay Magazine](#) a few years ago. He and I sited my WX station in his boathouse. The boathouse provides a sheltered spot as well as "shore power." Ted likes to keep close tabs on weather around *Nellie Crockett*.



I have to confess, this was a third attempt at siting the station. Attempt #1 was in the base of my tower, but the sensors were constantly fouled by infestations of wasps and ants. The second site was my own dock, in a locked box, covered by a tarpaulin. This attempt came to a sudden conclusion when Hurricane Isabel left the not-quite-waterproof installation about 6 feet under water.

In the current incarnation, now in service for more than a year, all the outdoor sensors are mounted on a \$10 collection of PVC pipes and couplings, glued together. The anemometer is at the top, well in the clear. The rain gauge is off to one side, again away from overhanging trees or eaves. The temperature/humidity gauge is at the bottom, housed in a special Peet Bros "solar shield". It is accurate even in direct sunlight. The whole thing is mounted above Ted's boathouse, well out into the Sassafras River.

There are two other major pieces of the system, once you have the weather gear.

You'll need a 2 meter FM transceiver. By convention, all APRS activity in the U.S. is on 144.39MHz. If you can get the antenna high enough, you can use something no more powerful than an HT. I use an ICOM IC-2100H, a low-priced plain vanilla mobile rig.

The *heart* of the system is the TNC, and I strongly recommend a Kantronics KPC3+. For about \$170, this thing works miracles. It has sophisticated capabilities intended especially for APRS. When you think of packet radio, you probably picture a PC and a monitor. Not so with an untended remote WX station. You use your PC for initial setup of the TNC, and you then place it in service without the PC. In fact the serial port of the TNC will be used instead as the port through which weather data arrives from the weather equipment. The KPC3+ has one indispensable feature--- you can control the TNC using an RF link. In my case, if I have a problem, or want to change a parameter, say the timing of WX data beacons, I can do that by connecting to the remote station using a packet base station in my shack. The KPC3+ asks for a password, and I can log on and make my changes in comfort.

There are many KPC3+ units in operation in WX applications. This means that it is easy to *Google*-up information on how to hook up the TNC and how to configure it to do what you want. Here are some sites to start you out:

<http://www.theworks.com/~wa6ylb/kpcdigi.txt>
<http://www.wa6oft.com/KPC3+.htm>

The KPC3+ is designed to use changing GPS data in a conventional position tracking application. In the case of a WX station, the known fixed position is entered into the TNC, and it never changes. The TNC uses its normal GPS functionality instead to input data from the weather equipment, and it formats the WX data for transmission as APRS packets. These packets, when they make their way into the internet, appear as a very usable record of weather conditions on a multi-day basis.

The weather console, TNC and transceiver, along with a 12V gel cell and a trickle charger all live in a locked toolbox in Ted's boathouse. There's a small 2M mag-mount whip antenna outside the boat house. The configuration of my property is such that the house is on a bluff above the Sassafras, but the tower is on another, higher bluff, above the house, to the west. The signals from Ted's dock were not making it into the APRS network. I solved that problem by placing a 50 watt 2M mobile transceiver and another KPC3+ in the relay box at the base of my tower, about 1000 ft. from the boathouse. The tower is topped by a 5/8 wavelength 2 meter vertical, 135 ft. above the Bay. This is configured as a digipeater ("W3BW-15"), and it carries the WX data easily into the system. It also fills in a needed coverage gap for APRS users on the upper Eastern Shore.

A couple of years ago, worried about a drought killing some trees we had planted, I had the chance to check the weather at my home in Maryland from an internet café in Juneau, AK. That was a real thrill. Any of you who want to set up your own Micro-Local WX station, please feel free to use me as an Elmer.

Contest Logging Software Stats

By [Pete Smith, N4ZR](#)

Recently I used the World Contest Station Database to compile statistics on logging program usage. A few caveats — many use more than one logging program, Some didn't list any logging software, and there are a few clinkers (one guy, for example, entered "anything but [program]"). Nevertheless, here are the numbers (drum roll) for those stations who have updated their records since January 1, 2002, and the top four programs:
Writelog 444 CT 381 N1MM 264 TR Log 258

If we include the older records (back to 1997), the figures become: CT 713 Writelog 536 TR Log 495 N1MM 268 (note that N1MM Logger has only been around since 2001). I'm not sure what to read into these numbers, except that Windows logging programs are rapidly gaining ground.

What FRC & YCCC Don't Want You To Know

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How to install DOS on a USB Memory Stick

By **Mark Bailey, KD4D**

[Editor's Note — Mark has done a lot of work on utilizing new-generation computers with DOS contest logging programs. Subsequent articles will discuss making a bootable CD, for computers without floppy drives, and partitioning a Windows XP hard drive to add a DOS partition without destroying the original operating system.]

Introduction

Many new computers have a BIOS that supports booting from a USB memory stick. These USB sticks are available with at least 256 Megabytes of memory, starting at about twenty dollars apiece now. You can install DOS and a logging program such as TR Log or CT, boot DOS from the USB stick and run DOS on your new computer. A few caveats. The BIOS must support booting from a USB storage device. I have a 6 month old Dell Latitude D600 which identifies this option as booting from "USB Mass Storage." I have an HP Pavilion which supports booting from "USB Floppy Drive" and "USB Hard Drive", but booting from a USB memory stick does NOT work on that three-year-old computer. Your mileage may vary. Also, USB memory sticks support a limited number of write cycles...typically several hundred thousand. If you do extensive contesting, you may want to replace the USB stick occasionally.

You can still use the USB stick normally from Windows (or Linux). In fact, I like doing this because I can use Windows to download CT, cty.dat, and master.dta files from the internet and copy them directly to the USB stick in Windows. I can also edit files like autoexec.bat, config.sys, and logcfg.dat on the Windows computer!

USB memory sticks are slower than disk drives...especially on USB 1.0 ports. I have found that using *Smartdrv* is necessary so that TR-Log has reasonable response times. Your mileage may vary!

Procedure

For now, I assume you have a floppy disk drive, internet access, and two blank floppy disks. First, we need to download two floppy disk images. NOTE: You need to have a license to run DOS on your computers. If you have Windows installed on your computer, your EULA (End-User License Agreement) may allow what is called a “downgrade” right to run previous versions of the operating system. (If you have Windows 95, 98, or ME, you are running DOS anyway). If not, you can transfer a license from an old Windows 98 computer, even one that is no longer operating, or you can buy a Windows 98SE license.

Go to www.bootdisk.com. Click on the bootdisks link in “DOS/... Excellent Bootdisks.” Click on “Windows 98 SE Custom.” Select “Save to Disk” and save the file boot98sc.exe to your desktop. Click on “DOS 6.22 ALT1” and save the file boot622.exe to your desktop. Insert a write-enabled floppy disk into your floppy drive. Double click on “boot98sc.exe” and click OK. Remove that floppy and label it “Windows 98SE boot.” Insert another write-enabled floppy. Double click on “boot622.exe” and click OK. Remove that floppy and label it “DOS 6.22” boot.

Plug the USB stick into your computer. Look under “My Computer” for devices with removable storage. On my computer, the USB stick showed up as H:\. Yours may be E:\ or something else. Create a directory called “DOS71” on the USB stick. You can do this from the Windows command line or using the Windows GUI. Copy the following files from the “Windows 98SE boot” floppy to the root directory on the USB stick:

- Autoexec.bat
- Config.sys
- Himem.sys

Copy the following files from the same floppy disk into the DOS71 directory on the USB stick:

Finally, copy the file “emm386.exe” from the “DOS 6.22 boot” floppy to the root directory on the USB stick.

- Chkdsk.exe
- Mem.exe
- Move.exe
- Smartdrv.exe
- Edit.com
- Format.com
- Sys.com

Open a Windows command line and do a “dir/s” on the USB stick. You should see the following. NOTE: Your USB stick may be D: or some other letter instead of H:.

```
Volume in drive H is WIN98SE Volume Serial Number is xxx
Directory of H:\
<DIR> DOS71 04/23/1999 10:22 PM 33,191
HIMEM.SYS 05/31/1994 06:22 AM 120,926
EMM386.EXE 01/24/2005 12:11 PM 107
CONFIG.SYS 01/24/2005 12:16 PM 35
AUTOEXEC.BAT
5 File(s) 248,149 bytes
```

```
Directory of H:\DOS71 <DIR> .. 04/23/1999 10:22 PM 28,096
CHKDSK.EXE 04/23/1999 10:22 PM 32,146
MEM.EXE 04/23/1999 10:22 PM 27,299
MOVE.EXE 04/23/1999 10:22 PM 45,379
SMARTDRV.EXE 04/23/1999 10:22 PM 69,902
EDIT.COM 04/23/1999 10:22 PM 49,575
FORMAT.COM 04/23/1999 10:22 PM 18,967
SYS.COM 7 File(s) 271,364 bytes
```

Total Files Listed: 12 File(s) 519,513 bytes

Now, edit config.sys and change it to the following. Delete the CDROM driver lines, add the emm386 device line and the DOS= line.

```
DEVICE=HIMEM.SYS /testmem:off
DEVICE=emm386.exe noems
DOS=high,umb
FILES=30
BUFFERS=20
```

Finally, edit autoexec.bat and change it to the following:

```
path=c:\;c:\dos71 [you can also add the path to your logging program]
smartdrv a+ c+
```

Now, we need to boot your computer from the “Windows 98SE Boot” floppy. Insert that floppy in the floppy drive, make sure the USB stick is plugged into the computer, and turn the computer off. Turn the computer back on. It should boot from the floppy drive. If it doesn’t, see the manual for how to change the boot order... usually holding down F2, F12, Delete, or ESCAPE while the computer is turning on will get to a setup menu.

When the floppy boots, it will give you an “A:\” prompt: A:\> Enter DIR C: . **Make VERY certain that this is the USB stick.** If you have any FAT16 or FAT32 partitions on your hard disk, under Windows the USB stick may well be “D:” or “E:”. Identify the letter of your USB stick very carefully. In my case, it was D:.

Now, we need to install the boot sector and boot files. Enter: SYS D: (or SYS C: or whatever letter your USB stick is). Now, remove the floppy and turn off the computer. Turn the computer back on and, if necessary, change the boot order so the USB memory device is first. You should see a C:\> prompt and that will be the USB stick! You can now use Windows to install CT or TR or anything else on the USB stick and run DOS from it on many new computers!

How to Win Sweepstakes with 11 QSOs

by [John Kanode, N4MM](#)

In late 1963, I was working for The Sandia Corporation at Camp Mercury, Nevada. This was the atom bomb test site and I was assigned to the Seismic Instrumentation Department. There were four seismic locations that we were responsible for. This required staying at lots of motels and at times the base BOQ.

One weekend in November I was stuck at the base and there was not much to do there. Several weeks before I spotted a van on top of a hill in the base that had lots of antennas around it. I wondered if it might be an Amateur Radio station or maybe a MARS station. I knew the ARRL SS was to take place this weekend and was looking for a place to operate. I asked around about it and after talking to several people, I found out that it was the Amateur Radio club station but it had not been used in years and if I went to the motor pool office, they had the key for it. I found the motor pool office and asked the desk clerk if I could use the station. He was surprised that I wanted to use it due to the fact that it had been over 6 years since anyone requested to use the station. I signed for the key and was off to the site.

Before attempted to open the door, I checked out the antenna situation. There was a small single band beam on a 20 foot pole and several dipoles for 80 and 40 meters. When I opened the door, a funky odor rushed out to greet me. It must of been like opening King Tut’s tomb for the first time. After fumbling around for a while, I found the main power switch at flipped it on. There was a low level hissing noise and after a few seconds the lights came on. About half of the tubes in the lights were not working but there was enough light to get by on. About 30 seconds went by and there was a loud pop and a big blue fire ball jumped out of one of the radios and a big puff of white smoke rose to the ceiling. This was not looking good.

There were several Hallicrafters receivers and transmitters in the van along with some E.F. Johnson gear and some other odd stuff. I turned on the Hallicrafters gear and it appeared to be working. I found where the antennas came in and as I was reaching for the coax cables to determine what went with which antenna, I saw a diamondback crawling out the hole where the coax cables came in. Needless to say, I was very careful where I put my hands after that. I stuffed a old rag in around the coax hole to prevent the snake from returning.

I hooked up the forty meter dipole and after tuning up the transmitter I was on the air and started making some QSOs. It was slow since the only key I could find was an old J-38 that was in poor condition. After about 5 QSOs the transmitter died. I hooked up another one and had to jury-rig it to work. About after 3 more QSOs the receiver died. This was not my day. I found another receiver and hooked it up and made about 3 more QSOs and the second receiver did not die but went insensitive to the point where it was useless. I tried several other pieces of gear in the van but they too were non-operational, so I gave up and took my log with 11 QSOs in it and left. I informed the desk clerk in the motor pool office of the situation at the station but he appeared that he could not care less.

I sent the 11 QSO log into the ARRL. At least my call would appear in QST and I would probably be at the bottom of the listing for Nevada. I left Nevada for a new job back east in December and several months when QST came with the Sweepstakes scores, I was amazed to see that I won for single operator for the Nevada Section. There was only one other station on from Nevada and it was a multi operator station at the Thunderbird Hotel in Vegas.

As I type this story, I am looking at the certificate that I got from the ARRL in early 1964. I had 11 QSOs in 6 sections for a score of 165 points. Oh yes, the call I had was K5UYF/7.

QSO Parties - The Untapped Resource

By [Dick Maylott, W2YE](#)

I have been a member of the Virginia State QSO Party Committee, sponsored by the Sterling Park Amateur Radio Club, since the late 80's, and was its chairman for a couple of years. Lately, I've tried to provide guidance and continuity rather than serve in a more active role.

Despite our best efforts to publicize the event, and encourage participation, growth has been slow, and we still receive less than 200 logs per year. Among "serious contesters", QSO parties are, unfortunately, essentially non-events. Perhaps that's one reason why PVRC, while no doubt trying to avoid conflicts in a heavy contest season, scheduled its first "Contest Seminar" the same weekend as this year's Virginia QSO Party, March 19-20.

I must admit that except for the Virginia affair, I'm not a big follower of QSO parties myself, although I have on occasion gotten involved in them simply by tuning the bands and finding one in progress. Yet, there's no better training ground for budding contesters than the state QSO party. There's one going on nearly every weekend when there's not a major contest. In the PVRC area, besides the Virginia QSO Party, there is the Maryland-DC QSO Party in August (which I usually enter), and the new Mid-Atlantic QSO Party. There's also a North Carolina QSO Party, and one of the biggest is the Pennsylvania QSO Party. And there are lots of plaques and certificates to reward those that make some effort.

It's a real opportunity for new folks with a transceiver and vertical or long wire to make a bunch of contacts and learn what contesting is all about. They can generally get through without having to wait for a bunch of guys with their beams and amplifiers to get their QSOs first. And with the slow pace, no one will get upset if you aren't too efficient an operator. It's a great way to work on various awards.

Back in my very early days, I was working on my WAS and needed Vermont (didn't we all). The Vermont QSO Party was coming up. I only made three contacts, but only needed one QSL. County hunters find State

QSO Parties great for upping their totals. These events really bring out the mobiles, and some county hunters just follow the mobiles from county to county. DX interest, at least in Virginia, has also increased substantially over the past few years.

If you're used to being a serious contester, you won't build up a good "run rate" during a QSO party, and there may be many times when activity will be very slow. Yet, for the newcomer, this is what they need. What we may consider routine (or even boring) may be pressure operation to some. Most non-contesters I know want to increase their CW efficiency (really). The QSO Parties are opportunities to work stations at a manageable speed, even if you have to resort to "search and pounce" and take a few tries to log a call or county. If you've ever watched over a "GOTA" station at Field Day, or brought in some inexperienced operators to work a "multi-op" at your place, you may have a feel for some problems experienced by the "newbie". And some of it can only be learned on the air. It is very hard to get less-experienced folks out of the "search and pounce" mentality. During a SPARC Field Day a few years ago, I saw our Novice/Tech operator searching the 10 meter phone band in vain for new stations. "Why don't you call CQ?", I asked. "I would," he replied, "but if two or three stations called me at the same time, I don't know what I'd do". "Try it," I said, "and if there's a problem, I'll help you out". I've watched a GOTA operator write down a call, the exchange, retune the rig, and listen for several QSOs worth, before ever keying the mike. I open my station as a multi-op for the club station in the Virginia QSO Party (K4NVA, worth 500 bonus points to work it). A couple of years ago, I was scanning the log of one of the inexperienced operators, and he pointed to a "K2" that he had logged. The operator commented "He claimed to be in Italy - you can't be a K2 and be in Italy, can you?" "Are you sure he didn't say "I-K2...?" I replied. "Yes, that's exactly what he said". I've chuckled over that one for years.

The QSO parties are a untapped source for training new contesters. There is no substitute for actual operating experience, and there is no easier way than the QSO party route. Encourage members of your local club, or anyone you may be "elmering", to get involved in QSO parties - either in-state or out-of-state, as appropriate. If you have an opportunity, take someone under your wing in a multi-op entry at your station. None of us started out working stations at 35 WPM CW, logging a call in the computer the first time heard, and then getting the exchange perfect. (I still can't). We won't be a dying breed if we use positive means to encourage and train new contesters. You've got to get your feet wet before you can swim, and the QSO Party route is a great way to get wet feet.

Around the Club

Meeting Minutes from the Regions

Following a pre-meeting dinner at the Country Buffet in Laurel, MD, the **Central Region** of the PVRC met at Capitol College in Laurel Maryland on Monday, January 10th. Our featured speaker was Scott Robbins, W4PA, Manager of amateur radio products for Ten Tec (and a top-notch contester). While Scott focused on Ten Tec and the ORION transceiver, his talk included a great deal of discussion on HF receiver performance, along with design considerations in the development of state-of-the art receiver technology. Scott's presentation is available for downloading on the PVRC website. Thanks to Bill Hider, N3RR, for arranging, Capitol College for making available their auditorium, and to Scott Robbins and Ten Tec for their participation. We hope this is just the first of many excellent programs featuring outside presenters for the PVRC membership.

The list of 40 attendees follows:

Scott-W4PA, Bud-W3LL, Jack-K4VV, Dan-N3ND, Mark-KD4D, Bob-KC3VO, Rich-KE3Q, Art-W3KHZ, Marty-K2PLF, Fred-K3ZO, Tyler-K3MM, Ben, N3UM, Jim-W4EE, Bill-N3RR, Frank-W3LPL, John-N3HBX, Gene-W3ZZ, Ken-W8JVP, Joe-NE3H, Steve-K3TZV, Dusty-K3WC, Eric-W3DQ, Brian-N3OC, Ray-KT4W, John-N4AM, Dave-WR3L, Jim-W6NRJ, Bob-W3IDT, Frank-K4EC, Bob-W3YY, Tom-W3TOM, Dick-W2YE, Ed-N3CW, Dan-K2YWE, Gary-NC4S, Dick-AI3M, Dave-K3ZJ, and visitors Frank-AC5P, Ian-N8IK, Paul-W3PH, Chip-N3IW, Scott-WA3EKT, and Ken-KF3DC.

The next meeting of the Central Region will be in Virginia on Monday, February 7th [special date, see page 2]. The focus of this meeting will be local: The upcoming PVRC Contest Seminar, war stories and other items of

local interest. See you there!

Eastern Shore Chapter PVRC Meeting Minutes for 22 January 2005.

Meeting was called to order at 1 PM at the station of Al Waller, K3TKJ. Seventeen were in attendance on a very snowy afternoon. Several members had sent their regrets due to weather issues. This was still a record turnout for an ES meeting, the draw being an excellent fare of food grilled out in the snow by Joe KB3JGI. The brats, Italian sausage, burgers and party sub really hit the spot. It was also a great opportunity for many of us to get a tour of Al's fine Multi-op VHF/UHF contest station, and the home of QSL and QTH.net.

A variety of discussions ensued, including operating strategy for the VHF contest, the vast technical resources available through PVRC and the potential for expanding the ES chapter meetings. Seven candidates for membership were introduced, and Al spoke to their suitability for PVRC membership. All seven had attended a summer meeting at Al's last year making this their second meeting. A motion was made by Owen K3CB and seconded by Glenn N3HUV to accept all seven into PVRC membership. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned just before the start of the contest. PVRC members in attendance were: Al K3TKJ, Owen K3CB, Glenn N3HUV, Fred AI3Z, Tony N3ME, and Dallas W3PP. Visitors were John N3LZ, Adam KB3LEF, Bill KD3FA, Joe KB3JGI, Bob W3KSV, Don KB3LVX Bobby N3ETP, J.C. W3JCT, Keith KB3IWV, Dale KA3SVF and Richard AK3E.

The following were welcomed into PVRC: KB3LEF, KD3FA, KB3JGI, W3JCT, KB3IWV, KA3SVF and AK3E. I stuck around for several hours after the meeting to watch this marvel of VHF contesting. These guys are really into it, and Al's station is first class.

Good luck and 73 de W3PP

The **Northwest Region** met at the City Buffet in Frederick, MD on 18 January 2005.

In attendance were W3EKT, N4MM, K8OQL, K4VV, N3VOP, K3TZV, K3WC, NE3H, WF1L, W3KHZ and K2PLF.

Marty Green, K2PLF ran the meeting, filling in for Bud, W3LL who was on a cruise. The combination of extremely cold weather and the lack of the reminder notice, probably accounted for somewhat lower attendance.

Announcements:

Jack, K4VV gave an update on the upcoming Contest Seminar. The Contest Seminar will be held on the 19th and 20th of March at the Holiday Inn in Fredericksburg, VA. Jack visited the Holiday Inn and said it is a first class facility. The Holiday Inn is located off I-95 at exit 17. More information will be forthcoming on the Web Site and the Newsletter. Jack also said the Christmas Party was an outstanding success and that a good time was had by all who attended.

John, N4MM said the Peter One Dxpediton has been delayed 3 weeks due to problems with getting the ship ready. He also stated that Frostfest 2005 would be held on February 20th in Richmond. The ARRL VHF Sweepstakes is this weekend and the CQ 160 Meter Contest is the following weekend.

Around the table:

W3EKT - Ed has been doing a lot of traveling over the past month. He continues to be very pleased with the Steppir antenna. Ed plans to be on in the VHF contest this weekend on 6 and 2 meters. Ed is also playing on 80 and 160 and is getting close to completing his 5BDXCC. He has well over 100 on 80 and about 90 on 160 and is working on getting the QSL cards.

N4MM - John passed along greetings from 5U7JB, Bull, who is an old PVRC member. He also talked to Roy, P4/WTEF and Bob, P4/W3BTX who were Dxing from Aruba and asked him to say hi to the group. He oper-

ated a little in the recent HA contest. John recently started having line noise problems and the power company has promised to come out and check into it. K8OQL - Jerry has been getting up early in the morning to catch the gray line and work DX. He plans to work the CQ 160 contest and both of the ARRL DX contests in February and March. He also worked P4/W3TEF.

K4VV - Jack attended the PVRC meeting in Richmond with Paul, K4JA. Jack operated in the NAQP along with guest op Mark, AC5RR. He will be operating this weekend at W3SO if the weather cooperates. N3VOP - Mike said he got into a PSK contest last weekend and talked to Ed, K3IXD and reports that Ed has an additional new call of NU4SC, for the Low Country Contest Club. Look for him this weekend in the VHF contest. Mike may be taking down a tower this weekend, weather permitting. This may cut into his planned VHF contesting plans.

K3TZV - Steve really enjoyed the Orion presentation on Monday evening. Thought it was very well done. K3WC- Dusty, for all those interested, the tower is still horizontal. Dusty had an unusual RF interference problem that was causing his computer to lock up when he was on 30 meters. It turned out to be caused by his new wireless keyboard and mouse. Dusty is excited about the upcoming contest college and hopes it will help to improve his skills. NE3H - Joe took part in the recent RTTY Roundup and made 940 QSO's. Joe mentioned that there is a good CW contest practice program called Morse Runner put out by VE3NEA, it's free and downloadable.

WF1L - Bill put in a little bit of time in the RTTY Roundup on 20 meters only. No antennas allowed in Reston so he is using attic antennas. He is continuing to work on 80 and 160 WAS. W3KHZ - Art said his on the air activities this past month were nil. He has been working on catching up with he QSL chores. He has 61 CW countries worked but not confirmed that he needs to QSL. Same on RTTY, 39 worked that need to QSL. K2PLF - Marty said that N6WHB, his wife, plans to operate in this weekend's VHF contest, so that she can come to a meeting and report some contest activity. He got on in the NAQP and worked about 20 stations, mostly PVRC members. Marty plans to operate in both the ARRL VHF Sweepstakes and the CQ 160 contests. He is looking at going to either PJ2 or TI for the WPX SSB and maybe the ARRL DX CW at Jack's, N4RV.

A PVRC/**Pennsylvania Chapter** dinner meeting was held on Friday, January 21, at the Outback Restaurant in Altoona, PA. Attendees were Bob-W3BTX, Roy-W3TEF, Tom-W3SF, Jason-KB3LGS, Marty-W3YOZ, Jack-K4VV, Barry-WR3Z, and Dick-AI3M. We discussed the plans for the weekend VHF Contest. Marty had climbed twice in brutal weather to repair storm damage to antennas. Tom was there both times as ground crew.

Jack gave special recognition to Marty for his initiative to make the W3SO station fully operational for this contest during very challenging weather. We had a lively conversation about the contest preparation and the good turnout of diehard operators who were determined to put in a diligent effort. Bad weather would discourage some competing teams from making a full effort.

Jack—K4VV

Minutes from the **CVCC Chapter** January meeting. Thanks to Sheila, K4WNW and Marie, K4KML.

Those present: W4DR BOB, WK4Y ROY, W4HJ A.C., KD4BMQ PHIL DAVIS (joined), WD4LBR BRUCE, K4WNW SHEILA, NK4H BOB, W4MYA BOB, W4PRT PETE, N4EHJ RALPH, KF4QQY BARRY, W3BP BRUCE, K4JA PAUL, K4VV JACK, K4KML MARIE. The regular meeting of CVCC was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Marie Long. Ed, NW4V, sent apologies for having to miss the meeting; he is out of town on business. Several guests were present, and members and guests introduced themselves. Phil Davis, KD4BMQ, guest brought by Roy, WK4Y, is getting active in ham radio again. Phil has FrostFest tickets to sell. Pete Thorsen, W4PRT, guest of Ralph, N4EHJ, is from Charlottesville and is also getting back into ham radio. Jack Hammett, K4VV, president of PVRC, also attended.

John, W4TNX, could not be at the meeting. Thanks to Sheila, K4WNW, for taking minutes. (Note the call sign

change.)

Old Business: Still need program suggestions. Marie suggested a logging/contesting program seminar.

New Business: Thanks to Dennis, N4DEN, for making arrangements for the Christmas Dinner. Band entity totals need to be submitted by January 31. Send these to John, w4tnx@comcast.net. Winners will receive a plaque at the March meeting. Sterling Park is looking for sponsors for the 2005 Va. QSO Party. There was a motion to sponsor a plaque by Bob, NK4H, and a second from Bob, W4DR. Motion carried. Our first choice of plaques is High Virginia Club Combined Score, and second choice is High Virginia Single Operator All Mode. Omar, YK1AO, contacted Bob, W4DR, seeking financial support for radio kit building. Bob recommended making a modest donation, maybe \$200. Bob, D4DR, made a motion to send \$200, seconded by Paul, K4JA. Motion carried.

FrostFest is Feb 20 at The Showplace. This year the keynote speaker will be Bob Bruninga, WB4APR, inventor of APRS. Volunteers are needed to help with FrostFest. A contribution to QSL/QTH.net was discussed. We gave \$100 in June, 2004. A motion was made by Bob, W4DR, to send \$100. Motion seconded by Bob, W4MYA. Motion carried.

Peter I DXpedition starts Jan 20 and runs to Feb. 4. Bob, W4MYA, will be doing a multi-2 for NA QSO Party on Jan. 15. He will set up a schedule for those who wish to participate. Jack Hammett, K4VV, told us about a Contest Seminar PVRC is planning. It is scheduled to be held in Fredericksburg with a projected date of March 19 & 20. Cost will be around \$25 - \$40, with PVRC picking up the cost of the facility for members. Read about the contest in the PVRC newsletter. Program - Show and Tell Ralph brought some fiberoptic wire, and read a letter from Tom Jones, K4JM. He also brought a portable emergency car kit that will power a radio. Bruce brought a ham license issued in 1923 to a 14-year old boy. Jack, K4VV, gave us an update on PVRC.

Phil Davis, KD4BMQ, was voted in as a member of CVCC. The door prize from the Christmas Dinner of 2 tickets to Busch Gardens was won by Judy Motley. Respectfully submitted, Sheila, K4WNW

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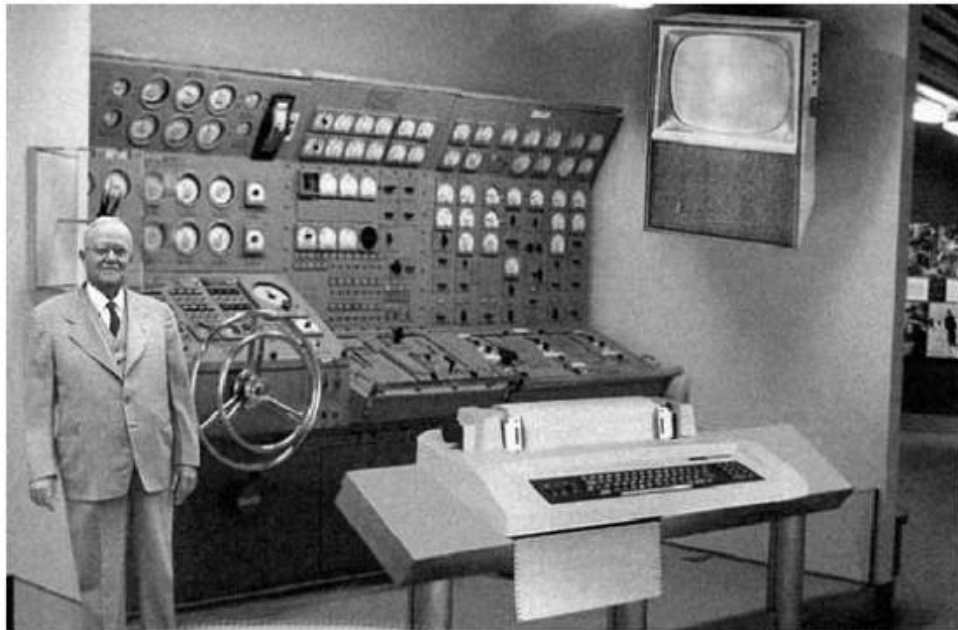
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Contributed by [Dave Siddall, K3ZJ](#)

According to Popular Mechanics 50 years ago, "Scientists from the RAND Corporation have created this model to illustrate how a 'home computer' could look in the year 2004. However the needed technology will not be economically feasible for the average home. Also the scientists readily admit that the computer will require not yet invented technology to actually work, but 50 years from now scientific progress is expected to solve these problems. With teletype interface and the Fortran language the computer will be easy to use."



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PVRC REFERENCE PAGE Please send corrections to the editor. February 2005

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PVRC Dues PVRC has no annual dues. Donations are gratefully accepted by the Treasurer, Dave Baugher WR3L, 615 Rockaway Beach Ave., Baltimore MD 21221. Please make your checks payable to PVRC.

Autocall Column Editor is K3DI 410-757-6706

PVDXSN Packet Network

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Most of the system is sponsored by the Potomac Valley DX Spotting Network. Nodes with * are independently funded by each SYSOP., The W4ML node is funded by CVCC.

PVRC Meetings

ANNAPOLIS: Dick Wilder, K3DI 410-757-6706

BWI: Weekly breakfast Wed at 7:00 AM at Basil's Deli Port on Elkrdige Landing Rd 1/4 mile South of Winterson Road 410-850-4333. Director: Ike Lawton, W3IKE, 410-263-2830. Sec: Howard Leake, W6AXX, 410-465-7008, w6axx1@starpower.net

CENTRAL VA: Pres: Ed Moore - NW4V - nw4v@comcast.net, Secy: Marie Long - K4KML - long2624@netzero.net, Treas: Robert (Bob) Ladd - NK4H - rladd@comcast.net. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM at the Henrico Doctor's Hospital, 7700 Paraham Rd., Richmond, VA. To the right of the main entrance is a second entrance. Go through that door, turn left through that door and the cafeteria is the first room on the right. There will be some who meet at Nick's Roman Terrace, Westlands Shopping Center, West Broad Street starting at 5:50 PM for dinner before the meeting. Talk-in available on 145.430

CENTRAL: The Central Meeting is always the second Monday (except June, July, and August) at 7:30 pm. The central meeting generally alternates between MD and VA locations. A pre-meeting dinner is usually held between 5:00 and 6:30 pm. Check via 147.000- repeater. VA LOCATION: The Patrick Henry (Public) Library, Route 123, Vienna, VA. MD LOCATION: Church of the Nativity (Episcopal), Route 5, Temple Hills, MD. Pre-MD meeting dinner at Topoleno's Restaurant about 6:00 or 6:30 pm.

EASTERN-SHORE (DEL-MAR-VA): Dallas Carter, W3PP 302-875-0550 ludal@dmv.com

LAUREL: Bill Smith, N3XL (n3xl@arrl.net) 301-935-4873 Laurel Region meets concurrently with the Laurel Amateur Radio Club at the first LARC meeting of each quarter.

NORTH CAROLINA -- EAST: Chair: Guy Olinger, K2AV, k2av@contesting.com; Sec: Jim Price WW4M. POC's are K2AV and WW4M (h:919-362-4635, w:919-460-2991). PVRC/NC meets at 6 pm the first Thurs of each month, plus an additional meeting in April at the Raleigh Hamfest. For details see <http://pvrcnc.org>

NORTH CAROLINA -- WEST (TRIAD): Meets the 4th Monday of the month at 7:00 PM at Cobal's Elemental Eats and Drinks on Deacon Blvd. in Winston Salem. Ragchew at 6:30. Directions are available upon request. The chairman for the new PVRC/NC West chapter is Henry Heidtmann W2DZO, henry@summitschool.com and the secretary is Robert Whitaker KG4NEP, kg4nep@yahoo.com.

NORTHEAST: WR3L Dave Baugher 410-DX1-WR3L dave@wr3l.net

NORTHWEST: Chair: Bud Governale, W3LL, 410-666-9189. W3LL@arrl.net. Meets monthly the 3rd Tuesday. Informal dinner about 6pm; meeting at 7pm at the City Buffet, 1306 W Partick St, Frederick, MD 301-360-9666. Rear of shopping center, behind Mountain View Diner.

OCOQUAN: Jack O'Mara W4NF, H:703-791-3302 W:703-739-7636 w4nf@comcast.net and Cliff Deel W4CE, w4ce@aol.com 703-491-0841

OVER-THE-HILL LUNCH BUNCH (VA DC MD): Meetings are held monthly at two locations: Falls Church, VA (Parkview Marriot) and Beltsville, MD. Meetings are announced by E-mail. All members, their guests and non-members interested in membership are welcome. For information contact Roger Stephens K5VRX, rogerergo@netzero.net, 703-658-3991 for the VA meetings; or, Bill Leavitt W3AZ, 301-292-5797 for MD meetings.

PENNSYLVANIA: Steve Cutshall, K3TZV, k3tzv@paonline.com, 717-763-0462.

RAPPAHANNOCK: Steve Bookout, NR4M (ex-NJ4F) NJ4F@erols.com. Also, Larry Schimelpfenig, K7SV, k7sv@va.prestige.net

SHENANDOAH: Bill Hinkle KV3R kb3aug@juno.com 304-567-3138

CARROLL COUNTY: Jim Nitzberg, WX3B.410-374-9233 nitz@selectsa.com

SOUTHERN MD: Chair: Wayne Rogers N1WR E-Mail: n1wr@chesapeake.net Phone: (H) (410) 394-0313 Meetings held at the home of N1WR.

SOUTHWEST VA: Coordinator: David Jones, N4JED, Vinton, VA 540-890-2034, N4JED@AOL.COM. Meetings begin at 6 pm at the Roanoker Restaurant, Roanoke, Virginia in a private room (ask at the desk if you have not joined us before).

TIDEWATER COLONY OF PVRC: This group now meets in conjunction with the Virginia DX Century Club at Ryan's Steak House, which is on Battlefield Blvd in Chesapeake, at the Battlefield Blvd South (VA 168) exit off I-64. The meeting is still the third Tuesday of every month. We gather for dinner around 1815-1830, with the meeting around 1915-1930. Contact W4ZYT at 757-457- 5181 or w4zyt@exis.net for additional info.

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