From the Pen of
W 8 P E N

Welcome to the September issue of the MVARC Newsletter. The club has a couple of events planned for the month and could use the help of interested club members.

First on the list is a Boy Scout Merit Badge Challenge on September 13 starting at 9:00 A.M. This event will be held at the Muskingum Valley Scout Reservation [MVSR] near Coshocton. Take State 36 east - turn right onto 16. After leaving Coshocton there will be a traffic light, to left onto this road - cross the river then turn right at the very first road. The camp is three miles out on the right.

Club member Kathleen Dean, KC8VTA, has requested our assistance in this event. I am not totally sure what is to be expected of us. Whether it is a full fledged Merit Badge Course, or simply a demonstration of ham radio with a course to follow shortly after. I plan on talking to Kathleen before the club meeting and will have more information then for those that are interested.

So far President Mike McCardel, KC8YLD has volunteered to help. Also on board is Matt Murphy, KC8BEW. Matt is a member of the Muskingum Valley Council and Co-Coordinator of the councils JOTA event. Matt's experience is certainly welcome. Matt is going to ask Bill Dixon, WB8TRK, whom works on the council with Matt if he would be interested in helping out.

We could still use one or two club members to operate a

demo station or two. Anyone at all wishing to help out, please contact me at w8pen@arrl.net or 740-397-0249. If calling me on the telephone, please be prepared to leave a message on the answering machine and I will get back to you ASAP.

While this is not in our County, we were asked to help and we should give it our best shot. What better way to insure the future of Ham Radio than by teaching/showing these young men how much fun radio can be. Volunteers should plan on being there at 8:00 or 8:30 A.M. Things should wrap up around 3:00 P.M.

The Ohio State football game is at 8:00 P.M. We should be out of there in plenty of time to watch the game.

The other event of notice is the clubs 50th year affiliation with the ARRL. We are having a picnic and Special Event Station at the home of Dick Huggins, N8RDH. An announcement has been posted in QST, ARRL's monthly magazine. This event will be from 12 noon Saturday, September 27 through 12 noon Sunday, September 28. At least that is when the Station will be in operation. We need operators and picnickers. Mainly, we need club members that just want to have fun. Most likely, we will set up antennas Friday night or Saturday morning. It is not like Field Day, so plan on a relaxed weekend and enjoy.
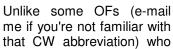
Final plans for this event will be made during the September meeting. Those wanting to voice their opinion and/or be in on the fun should attend this meeting. If you can't make the meeting, just show up for the event. The club would love to have all members and their family there.

Finally, in October, there is the BOY SCOUT JAMBOREE ON THE AIR 2008 event. While the club has not been invited to help out, we should all be

prepared to help with this if asked. Actually, a lot of planning should go into this. However, the event can be as simple as inviting a Boy Scout troop to your shack and provide them with the opportunity to talk to other scouts domestically or around the world. Or it could be another Field Day style event. This year, this annual event is being held October 18th and 19th.

Elmering CW Ops
By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

I have a reputation for being a CW zealot. It's a reputation that I quite deserve, thank you very much, and one that I'm proud of. Working CW is a heckuva lot of fun, and I want to help as many hams as I can enjoy it as much as I do.

Unlike some OFs (e-mail me if you're not familiar with that CW abbreviation) who just complain that no one operates CW anymore or bemoan the elimination of the code test, I try to walk the walk as well as talk the talk. Here are some of the things I do to get guys to operate CW:

* I always carry around copies of the K7QO Code Course on CD-ROM (http://www.kc5cqm.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Main.K7QOcwCourse).

K7QO has graciously allowed this version to be distributed freely, and when I'm at a ham event, and anyone expresses even the slightest interest in CW, I pull one out of my briefcase and hand it to him or her.

* I try to keep one or two inexpensive paddles around to sell to interested folks. Bencher BY-1s are good starter paddles, and you can often find them at hamfests or on EBay for fifty to sixty bucks. I usually keep one or two "in stock." When someone asks about paddles, I offer to sell them one of the ones I have for exactly what I paid for it. Since they know me, they get a good feeling that they're getting a decent paddle at a decent price. And once they have it in the shack, it takes away one excuse for not operating CW. I also, provide technical support. By that I mean I help them get the key and keyer adjusted properly and help them use it properly.

* I never denigrate or complain about hams that never had to pass a code test. That's a sure turnoff. As soon as people get the feeling that you're looking down your nose at them, you lose all credibility with them and they just stop listening to you. My personal opinion is that if more folks have ham licenses, then the pool of potential CW operators is bigger.

* I never denigrate or complain about hams that don't operate CW. See above.

* I acknowledge that Morse Code can be difficult to learn. I often apologize for the fact that I got into it when I was young and it was easier for me to pick it up then. I also apologize that I seem to have at least a limited talent for Morse Code. I acknowledge that this is not something one learns overnight. You're more likely to win someone over if you sympathise instead of criticise. I like to challenge them to learn it, noting that once they've acquired the skill, it's something that they can be proud of. Not only that, it's a lot of fun!

* I try to show them how much fun CW is! I have an Elecraft KX-1, which I take to things like club picnics. Throw up a simple antenna and I am on the air making contacts. I also invite guys to my shack and show them in person how cool it is.

Finally, I give presentations to just about any club that invites me, if I can make the arrangements. On my blog at http://kb6nu.com/a-cw-presentation-for-your-club/,

you can find the text for the slides I used for my presentation, "CW is Fun!" Feel free to use them to give a presentation to your club.

Who knows? If you give this presentation to your club, maybe you'll even get one or two guys interested enough in CW to learn the code and get on the air. If every current CW op Elmered one other ham every year, the CW bands would be chock full of activity. We'd be complaining that it's impossible to find a clear frequency instead of complaining that it's getting hard to find a contact.

GULF COAST PREPARES FOR GUSTAV

From the ARRL letter August 29, 2008. This may be dated by the time one reads this; still it shows the preparations that have been made.

As of Friday, although Tropical Storm Gustav is still several days away from landfall on the US mainland, disaster preparations are being rolled out along the Gulf Coast. ARRL Leadership Officials, with the support of the ARRL Headquarters staff, are taking measures that will facilitate emergency communications among ham

volunteers, among hams and served agencies such as the Red Cross, and among Leadership Officials during the expected emergency and in its aftermath. ARRL Section Managers in the Gulf Coast states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas are marshaling resources and setting up procedures that will take effect as the storm approaches the mainland.

Support from the ARRL Headquarters staff includes referrals from local and national media, shipment of Amateur Radio equipment via the Ham Aid program, Section Manager liaison and referral of inquiries from Amateur Radio operators. Two special Web sites are available for Amateur Radio operators looking for information and volunteer opportunities:

<http://www.arrl.org/gustav/>

And

 <http://www.arrl.org/gustav/vol.html>.

In addition, news will be updated on the ARRL Web site over the weekend and early next week, as Gustav moves toward the Gulf Coast.

On Thursday, as Gustav was slamming into Haiti and heading toward Jamaica, WX4NHC, the Amateur Radio station at the National Hurricane Center in Miami, activated at 12 PM EDT (1600Z). The NHC requested all land based stations as well as ships at sea in the areas affected to send them weather data (measured or estimated) and damage reports.

A post to their Web site stated: "If you are in the affected area and normally monitor on a local Net on VHF, 40 or 80 meters, we would appreciate your checking into the HWN NET or EchoLink/IRLP Net once per hour to receive the latest Hurricane Advisories and to report your local conditions. Please do not venture outside during the hurricane to gather weather data."

In addition, the VoIP Hurricane Net activated Thursday at 11 AM EDT (1500Z), according to a post by Jim Palmer, KB1KQW, VoIP-WX Net Scheduler.

Also on Thursday, FEMA posted a news release that said, in part: "The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is coordinating plans and preparatory activities of numerous federal agencies in close communication with state, tribal and local officials as Tropical Storm Gustav threatens to return to hurricane strength prior to impacting Gulf Coast states. All residents in the region are encouraged to make personal preparations. Information is available at www.Ready.gov on how families and individuals can best prepare before the storm.

"FEMA and its federal partners are in close

communications with states along its potential path in order to review plans, pre-station assets and personnel, and respond to any request for assistance. FEMA's work with states using a Gap Analysis tool to determine in advance of storms where federal assistance is most likely to be needed has helped federal and state agencies to develop pre-scripted mission assignments and other contingency plans to help improve response and recovery efforts."

The news release also provides details on preparations now underway by several other agencies, including the American Red Cross and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal declared a state of emergency for his state on Wednesday, and he activated 3000 National Guard troops, with more on call. The state of Mississippi declared a state of emergency on Thursday. Governor Haley Barbour stated, in part: "I urge all Mississippians to please take this storm seriously. One of the most important lessons we learned after Hurricane Katrina was that there is no substitute for awareness and self-help, especially in the days before the hurricane is predicted to hit."

RADIO-ACTIVITY
By Don Russell, W8PEN

For some time now, I have been flirting with the idea of changing out my desktop computer in favor of a notebook computer. The way technology is advancing, you loose very little by doing so.

To put my decision in perspective, I had just bought a new desktop last summer. I never have need for the higher end computers, so this one was on sale and priced right. It had all the features that I thought a ham may want. It was a Pentium 4, had 1 Ghz of memory, and had a DVD read/write drive. Certainly enough power to run any logging program or digital program desired these days. It was fast too. Amazingly fast.

However, every time I entered my shack, I noticed all those wires running out the back of the computer. The fact that when entering the door, one saw the back of the computer did not help any. There were two power chords, one each for the monitor and computer, mouse chord, keyboard chord, usb chords going to two printers, cat cable going to the router, serial chord going to the transceiver. You get the picture!

Another swaying factor was that I actually used the desktop very little. Mainly for contest logging and a little operating on PSK31.

 I already own one laptop. This was the computer that

got most of the work, including editing the MVARC Newsletters. I also keep my main logging program on it. This is the log I use to verify contacts before sending out a QSL card. It has all my contest logs merged into it, plus my day to day HF operations and the little satellite I have done on occasion.

I wanted to be able to grab the "ham shack" computer and take it anywhere I wanted, just like I do with my older laptop. I like the idea of sitting out on the deck and working on a ham radio program.

So, I finally found a laptop on sale that I thought would do the trick. Pentium duel chore, 2 Ghz memory, DVD read/write. All for what I thought was a pretty good price. My decision made, I quickly grabbed up this "bargain". I had no problem selling my old desktop.

Now I was faced with the task of integrating this new computer with my two main radios. Since I do contesting, one of the priorities was to have automated CW operation from within the contest logging program. It will also be necessary for the logging program to control the contest radio. Before computer control, it was easy to switch the radio to a different band and forget to do likewise to the logging software. Letting the logging program switch the radio, or the radio switch the logger, solves this problem.

Here comes the stopper: Presently, all logging programs use com ports and printer ports to communicate with the radios. There are no logging programs that I know of that use USB ports. With the exception of a few desktops, all computers (including notebooks) use USB ports and no longer support com ports or printer ports.

Manufactures have tried to solve this problem by introducing the USB to SERIEL port (com port) interface. There is also a USB to PRINTER port. Interface available. Searching the internet, I have read horror stories of hams trying to use these interfaces for rig control. Seems most do not work as advertised. This certainly had me concerned.

Again, searching the internet and reading reviews looking for one that I thought may actually work, I believe I found one that had excellent possibilities.

The USB to Serial Port Adaptor from Donner's Digital Interface Sales at $15.00 seemed like a good one to try. This is after pricing others from $25 to $79, and seeing poor reviews on these higher priced ones. While I could not find a review on this particular adaptor, I did find many reviews on other Donner's products and they were all very good as far as performance and customer support. So I ordered one. Donner"s Digital Interface Sales is in Hamersville, Ohio. The total price with tax and shipping was around $22. Still way cheaper than Walmart, Staples, or Radio Shack.

Donner"s Digital Interface Sales is owned by Carolyn Donner, N8ST. Check the website here:

http://home.att.net/~n8st/DDI-index.html

How does it work? Like a champ! First time, every time.

I was a bit nervous because the Driver CD provided did not have a driver for Windows Vista. However, on the web page, it was mentioned that Vista had its own drivers for this product. That fact was not a guarantee however, because it was hearsay from a satisfied customer.

Indeed, the driver loaded immediately without problems upon plugging this device into the USB port of my new computer. I plugged my serial cable into the adaptor and the other end into my Rig Blaster Soundcard Interface. Opened up one of my contest logging programs and had CW up and running in no time. Next I tried the rig control interface with it, and that ran without a hitch too. Life is good!

I did run into a problem though. My Rig Blaster is supposed to be able to run CW and Rig control through one serial port. So far I have been unsuccessful in getting this part of it to work. The documentation does say: with appropriate software. Since I have not been able to get this to work on two other computers, I am sure the problem is not in the adaptor.

One thing that needs addressed is that I found out one of the reasons people have trouble with this type of adaptor. I read a lot of comments like: "It worked when I first bought it, but now it does not". I found out that you need to plug the device into the same USB port each time. If the computer has three USB ports, pick one and use it for the adaptor. Apparently, if you use a different port, the computer will think it is a new device and install the driver again, possibly selecting a different com port. Not good once you have all your I programs set for one com port. I am not totally sure of this however. It may be just the fact that you unplug the device and upon plugging it back in it selects a different com port. I think this happened to me once, but not real sure. I need to test this theory a bit more. Anyway, if you buy this adaptor and it works the first time, but then quits, you may want to check the com port settings in the "Device Manager". This is located in the control panel of your computer. I believe you can manually select which com port you want it to be.

There is still work to be done. So far I have added a 4 port USB hub, USB keyboard, and USB mouse, along with the serial adaptor. Everything is plugged into the hub. I only need to unplug one USB cable and the power cable. Then I can take the laptop where I please. I still have one port left on the hub for another serial adaptor for my rig control. I will be ordering it soon.

See you at the meeting.

Blast from the past special celebrating our 50 years affiliation with the ARRL:

Vacuum Tube Daze
A tongue-in-cheek look at the days when tubes ruled.
By Phillip Buble, N1GTZ

Episode 6: Time to warm up the furniture.
From January 2005.…

Now I'm really about to show my age. Radio sets have not been constructed as chest high furniture since before I was born so I cannot in all fairness claim to be of that generation. However such sets survived into my youth so I have seen them in regular operation. Those things were huge and moving them required 2 strong men. In the case of television the idea of making them look like fine furniture hung on much longer and even my transistorized 1983 Heathkit color TV carried on this tradition in style. Moving wooden color sets constructed in the 50's, however, required 2 strong men and a small boy.

Despite the latest 50's retro trend nowadays the attitude toward home electronics has changed and usually no attempt to hide their existence behind closed cabinet doors is made. Plain black plastic cases are the norm and with the advent of flat screen even the pretense of woodgrain plastic is completely gone as these sets are nearly 100% screen with not much else to be seen except speakers. Hang it on a wall as bold as brass.

It's interesting to project this trend into the future. Instead of black plastic the cases could be made clear making a fashion statement of the raw electronics themselves. Naked electronics. Sorry, this to me is a horror of an idea, I like at least the pretense of woodgrain. More than likely what will happen instead is exactly what was projected in the 1936 movie "Things to Come." The electronics, even the speakers, will all become part of the screen itself, thin as glass and looking all the world like a plate of clear glass until it was turned on. This was projected to happen by 2036 and we're right on track. Amazing prediction given the size and state of television electronics back in 1936.

Episode 7: Do it yourself TV
From Febuary 2005.…

Break out the camcorder uncle Henrys' going around with a lampshade on his head again. D.I.Y. TV, source

for more of America's funniest home videos correct? No actually I mean D.I.Y. TV as in you build your own TV from a kit, every part of it. Odd as this sounds from at least the late 40's to the mid 80's TV's, both b&w and color, were available in kit form. I know this as a fact as I've seen the reviews of at least one TV kit in a 1948 Popular Science or Popular Mechanics 'zine (I can't remember which) This does not mean that kit TV's weren't available even earlier. Heathkit came along not long after and was the last known producer of kit televisions. They hung on until the mid to late 80's. I purchased a 25" color console from them in 1983, a real beauty. Other kit producers were around to give Heathkit competition early on but they went by the wayside even earlier. So what happened why can't we still do this, why did even Heathkit go under?

Sad to say I believe it had to do with labor costs. How can this be, how can a TV be shipped across the Pacific ocean at lower cost then kitting it here? Unfortunately physically kitting all the pieces of a TV cannot be done by machine, it's labor intensive while assembling and soldering PCB's can be nearly completely automated. Worse yet it can be nearly completely automated in Mexico or China were labor costs are low, and the assembled and tested TV placed in a SINGLE box and shipped out. My kit came by truck in 4 large boxes with the individual PCB's already assembled and soldered, an unexpected surprise.

Even worse was the added cost of producing, double checking and printing the assembly manual. (for which Heathkit was so famous) The manual that came with mine is every bit of 400 pages long, no trivial matter to produce and print it. Remember 400 pages and it did not have to detail the assembly of the PCB's themselves! This is doubly sad when you think about it since a modern color set contains far fewer parts than mine and only about 1/3 the parts count of that kitted 1948 b&w set, large scale integration reducing the parts count to a few IC's and their satellite components, also few in number. Assembling one would be a breeze! With a 20" color set now selling for $99.95 a TV is now nearly disposable, when it finally breaks throw it out and get another. When no one is left who can build a TV soon there is no one left who can fix one. OK, I'm sorry but this is obscene to me.

Show "N" Tell Night
By Don Russell, W8PEN

The August club meeting of the MVARC proved to be another fun filled night. You guys just have to start coming! About twice a year the club has a Show n Tell night at one of the meetings. These have always been popular and the one at the August meeting was no exception.

Pictures will do most of the telling in this article, so lets get started:

The first picture shows everyone present at the meeting except the picture taker (Don, W8PEN). From left to right (up and around): Barry Butz (N8PPF), Tony Spiegel (KC8UR), Don Bunner (KB8QPO), Don Blizzard (W8UMH), Mike McCardel (KC8YLD), Tom Evan (KD8HSA), and Jeff Butz (N8SMT).

Tony, KC8UR, brought in his digital broadcast receiver. It works on both AM and FM. The unique thing about digital receivers, at least for TV and FM broadcasts is that there are usually many different programs being played from the same station on the same frequency. For example, one program (or channel) may be broadcasting Country Music, while another channel may be giving the News, or Weather, or 1960's Rock Classics (Yes!). Not sure if this is the same for AM digital. However, with AM digital the signal is FM quality with no static.

This is Jeff, N8SMT, with his capacitance bridge that he bought at a ham fests. After some experimentation, Jeff found it to be very accurate at measuring capacitance values. Sounds like an ideal instrument to have when going through ones junk box.

This one is of Mike, KC8YLD, showing off his mp3 player loaded with Morse Code practice. Mike can take a walk, drive to work, or whatever, and practice Morse Code along the way. Morse Code lives on!

W8UMH's Rig in the trunk

And the antenna mount

Now the "Radio Head"

Don, W8UMH, took us outside for a look see of his "no holes drilled" HF mobile installation. Actually, there were one or two small holes drilled, but you would never notice unless they were pointed out. This is a very neat and effective mobile installation covering 80 meters through 440 Mhz.
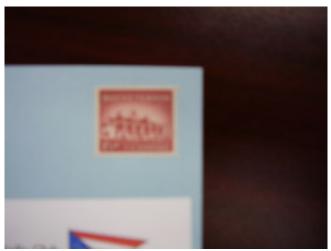

Next up was Tom, KD8HSA, who had pictures of his trip to the Alaska oil fields in 1989. He was working with a group modifying the aircrafts there. Tom describe much of what he did, which was way over my head. However, Barry, Jeff, Mike, and the others seemed to understand it more. What can I say. It was interesting. I think Tom could do a whole program all by himself on his work. Hmmm. Maybe we should sign him up!

**On the right, 1 cent cancelled
Stamp from Mt. Vernon, Va.**

**Not cancelled stamp from
Mt. Vernon, Va.**

QSL card from KI3O

Barry, N8PPF, brought in an interesting QSL card from a station he worked on 6 meters during this years Field Day. KI3O from Alexandria, Virginia sent the club a QSL card. On the envelope was a 1 cent stamp depicting the plantation home of our first president of the United States, George Washington, in Mt. Vernon, Virginia. The curious thing about it was this 1936 postage stamp was pasted next to our current forever stamp. It appears it was a mint stamp. I believe the envelope was from the early days too, but it has been too long and I cannot remember Barry's story completely.

The second picture was on the envelope that was to be returned (with our own QSL card). At least I believe it is. Guess we will have to ask Barry to retell the story at a latter meeting.

The final picture is the QSL card received from KI3O.

Barry also brought in a couple of watt meters for show n tell. This one is a picture of the clubs bird watt meter. Barry claims it is very accurate. Just what you would expect from a bird watt meter.

The next two pictures are of a watt meter that Barry picked up on E-Bay. This is a Struthers Electronics Wattmeter model # TS-1285B/URM-120. Range is from 2 to 1,000 Mhz and I believe up to 1KW. Maybe more.

Lastly, since I had to bring in a QSL card for Barry to send to KI3O, I made that my show n tell. This QSL was designed three years ago after Field Day. It really looks nice when printed on photo paper.

Treasurer's Report
Aug 1, 2008
for July

Income:
Interest: $ .02
Donations for Field Day: $ 120.00

Expenses:
Field Day: $ 95.06

Balance on 8-1-08: $2105.63

Designated Funds
Year 2005 Repeater Fund: $684.94
Field Day Fund: $133.24

Barry N8PPF

MVARC Club Meeting is Monday September 8, 2008 at 7:00 P.M. in the Red Cross Annex Building, 300 North Mulberry Street, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. There has not been a program announced as of this writing. If the trend continues though, we can look forward to something interesting.

Please remember the long running Sunday Night ARES net at 9:00 P.M. Please note the change in time, which was effective May 4, 2008.

Also check out the new UHF net on the KD8EVR Repeater. This net runs each Wednesday at 9:00 P.M. This is a social net. Please join us for the fun of it.

Note: This net has not been too successful yet. However, we will continue to run this net with the hope of more activity in the fall and winter months.

Every Wednesday at 5:00 PM, MVARC club members meet at Wendy's, 522 South Main Street, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Dinner Coordinator Dick Huggins, N8RDH, reports good turnouts for this event.

Come share dinner with friends, or make new friends, by attending one or all of these events. Family and friends welcome. You do not need to be a ham or club member to participate in this event.

Come join MVARC club members every second Saturday of the month for breakfast. Each month we try a different place, so check the MVARC Newsletter for current information. Breakfast Coordinator Arlin Bradford, KD8EVR, can also be contacted for the latest news on the 2 meter or the 440 Mhz. Repeaters. Or tune into our ARES net each Sunday at 8:00 PM for current information.

The next Breakfast will be September 13, 2008 at 9:00 AM at Ryan's Steak House, 1515 Coshocton Ave. , Mt. Vernon, Ohio.

Mt. Vernon ARC Officers

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Editor: Don Russell, W8PEN

Clip Art and Cartoons thanks to http://wm8c1.50megs.com/radio_clip_art.htm, http://www.qsl.net/k4adl/, http://pages.prodigy.net/kg0zz/clipart/ham_art3.htm, http://www.arrl.org/,

The ARRL letter is a weekly e-mail publication by the ARRL. You may read the entire ARRL letter by visiting the ARRL Web page at http://www.arrl.org/. **Other News** from: http://ky4ky.com/fyi.htm.

The ARES E-Letter is an e-mail digest of news and information of interest to active members of the ARRL Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES). Past issues of The ARES E-Letter are available at http://www.arrl.org/ares-el/. Issues are posted to this page after publication.

Project OSCAR is a monthly column written for Newsletter Editors. Columns will appear as space permits. You may download all the columns yourself at: http://www.projectoscar.net/beacon.php

Members are encouraged to send articles pertaining to ham radio, with an emphasis on local activities, equipment reviews, and personal experience to w8pen@arrl.net or Don Russell, W8PEN, 815 Brookwood Road, Mt. Vernon, Ohio 43050

Membership Form

Club dues run from Jan. 1 until Dec. 31 and are collected during the last quarter of the year. You can mail in the dues to the address below or bring them to a meeting. Dues are prorated for new members at the time of application. Visit our Web Page at www.mvarc.net

Dues Schedule: $12 regular

$10 for second member in the same family, for those over 65 yrs. of age, and for those living outside Knox County

Mt. Vernon Amateur Radio Club, P.O. Box 372, Mt. Vernon, OH 43050

Name_____Call-Sign_____

Street_____

City_____State_____Zip Code_____

Phone Number_____License Class_____

ARRL Member (Y/N)_____E-Mail_____

Extra Donation (Optional)_____

Members are entitled to a free MVARC E-Mail address. Would you like one?   No_____Yes_____

If yes please enter password_____

Other Comments: