

The OVH ARC Newsletter
"OLE VIRGINIA HAMS" AMATEUR RADIO CLUB, INC.
Post Office Box 1255, Manassas, Va. 20108
FM Repeaters - W4OVH - 146.970- & 224.660- & 442.200+
D-STAR Repeater - W4OVH - 442.5125+
OVH Packet - Port 1: 145.730 Mhz, Port 3: 223.540 MHz - Sysop: Bill/N4SV
<http://www.w4ovh.net>

OLE VIRGINIA TIMES

April 2010

Next Meeting: Monday, April 19, 2010

PRESIDENT'S LETTER:

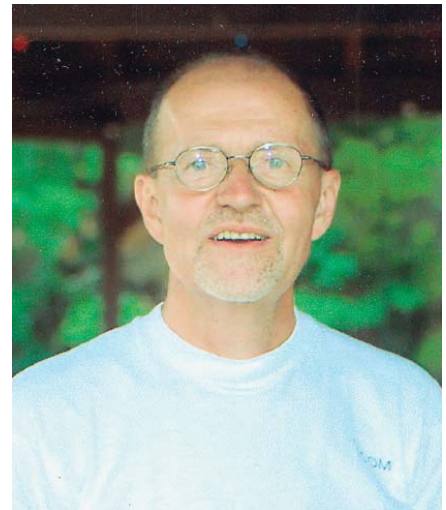
Greetings to all! I hope everyone is enjoying this wonderful Spring season.

As I write this, I can't help but smile. This past week the City of Manassas has announced that they will be discontinuing BPL service because of the financial burden BPL has placed on the City. The City has notified its customers of its intentions to shut down BPL and requested they find alternative means for Internet provisioning.

As most of you know, the Manassas area Amateur Radio community has "battled" this BPL monster since 2004. I can say with certainty, "we won!" Since sometime in 2004 we have provided meaningful data and presented facts on the devastating results of BPL ingress to Ham Radio and licensed services. This data was presented to the BPL Consortium, Comtek, City of Manassas Council, and the FCC. The FCC ignored us, the City of Manassas Council ignored us, Comtek and the BPL Consortium met with us under the cloak of "let's work together." In all actuality, they wanted to buy time. Their belief was that they could buy time and as the BPL deployment grew, the voice of the public would override the Ham community. This would be the justification for the FCC to squash our rights! If you don't think so, remember the FCC was not on our side. The FCC went as far as to say they notified every Ham in Manassas of the BPL emissions survey they were going to conduct. Mysteriously, not even one Ham received an invitation to this survey. Also, look at CB - the majority ruled and Ham radio lost!

This BPL issue could have gone in a completely different direction. Some say, "BPL was going to die by itself." I say, "NO!" If not for us - yes, us Hams, BPL would have grown much larger and stronger. We provided the needed data; we proved that not only does BPL interfere, it was highly susceptible to RF ingress and could be brought down by Ham, CB,

Cont'd on Page 3



Ole Virginia Hams Amateur Radio Club, Inc.

Post Office Box 1255
Manassas, Virginia 20108

OFFICERS

President: George Tarnovsky	K4GVT	791-5956
Vice Pres: Wayne Kline	AG4ZZ	791-2100
Secretary: Theresa Heartney	KG4TVM	257-3556
Treasurer: Gary Gilham	WG4ARC	932-1118

DIRECTORS

Don (Butch) Blasdell	W4HJL	369-2877
Art Whittum	W1CRO	791-4330
Charlie Dale	WA4YGI	361-3091

WEEKLY NETS

Thursdays - 8:00 PM	JOHN H	257-3566
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HAMFEST 2010

Chris	KI4POT	361-3257
Bruce	AB8CI	361-8873

FIELD DAY 2010

John	KG4NXT /	257-3556
Theresa	KG4TVM	257-3556
Wayne	N7QLK	393-8447

CLUB ROSTER

Blaine	KB4RKL	369-2877
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EDUCATION

Mark	WA4KFZ	818-8033
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CLUB EMERGENCY COORDINATOR

David Meola	KI4AZX	393-6681
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ARES AREA EMERGENCY COORDINATOR

David Lane	KG4GIY	361-3042
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F.A.R. REPS.

Ruth	KU4WH	331-1234
Mary Lu	KB4EFP	369-2877

FINANCE

Mary Lu	KB4EFP	369-2877
Joe	KI4OHR	369-2639
Ruth	KU4WH	331-1234

GENERATORS

Steve	N4OGR	361-0008
Keith	KM4AA	909-1512
Al	KB4BHB	368-4794

HISTORIAN

Theresa	KG4TVM	257-3566
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WEBMASTER — W4OVH.NET

Bill	N4SV	590-9562
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EMAIL REFLECTOR — w4ovh@googlegroups.com

David Lane	KG4GIY	361-3042
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JOTA

John H.	KG4NXT	257-3566
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LEGAL

Pete	KB4RME	369-2436
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MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Bruce	AB8CI	361-8873
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NEWSLETTER

Paul	W4ZB	754-0910
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NEWSLINE

John H.	KG4NXT	257-3566
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PACKET

Alan	KD4KBX	330-8844
Bill	N4SV	590-9562

PROGRAMS

TBA

WINTER FIELD DAY 2011

Joe	KI4OHR	369-2639
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PUBLICITY

Trisha Wells	KI4PCM	335-1096
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QUARTERMASTER

Steve	N4OGR	361-0008
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REPEATER CONTROLLERS

Keith	KM4AA	909-1512
Art	W1CRO	791-4330
Butch	W4HJL	369-2877
Steve	N4OGR	361-0008
David	KG4GIY	361-3042
George	K4GVT	791-5956
Alan	KD4KBX	330-8844

W4OVH / W4PVA — TRUSTEE

Keith	KM4AA	909-1512
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SCHOLARSHIP

Jim	W4JTP	392-0150
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SUNSHINE

Theresa	KG4TVM	257-3556
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TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

George	K4GVT	791-5956
Art	W1CRO	791-4330
Alan	KD4KBX	330-8844
Bill	N4SV	590-9562
Butch	W4HJL	369-2877
Karl	W4KRL	802-1527
David	KG4GIY	361-3042
Bob	K4HJF	335-1939

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The OVH ARC regular monthly meeting is at 7:30 p.m. every third Monday of the month at the Prince William County Red Cross Chapter House at 9930 Liberia Avenue, Manassas, Virginia. Members, prospective members and all other interested persons are invited to attend. Local information can also always be obtained through the OVH's FM repeaters on 146.97 & 224.660 Mhz. Up to date information about OVH activities and meetings is also available on the OVH web site at <http://www.w4ovh.net>.

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and other RF users. We educated the BPL Consortium on RF, provided spectrum analysis (this even they couldn't do), and proved time after time we Hams are more technically astute than their engineers. We spent hundreds of hours monitoring, surveying, meeting, documenting, and reporting the devastating effect of this "flawed technology" and it was all worth it, wasn't it!

With that said, what have we learned from this experience? When you're right, you don't give up or give in! As Wayne Green, W2NSD/1, former publisher and editor of 73 Magazine always said, "Never say die!" Hams will pull resources and work together when the spectrum is threatened.

Now for the unpleasant side of this experience, most of you have heard of the so-called 80/20 rule. For those that have not, in a given population it is statistically proven that 20% do 80% of the work. This 20% is known as the "vital few." The 80% are the trivial many. Unfortunately, it appears the Ham community falls outside of this rule. Only a little more than 10% of our membership actively joined in for the fight and even fewer continued to its end. This is not the way it should work. We are all in this together and we all benefit from the outcome. Fortunately, the "vital few" persevered, persisted, and won for all of Ham Radio! On behalf of all of Ham Radio, "THANK YOU" to each and every one of you that took time to fight this "battle."

To change subject, the D-STAR board parts and parts are all here at long last, I'll be notifying all that committed to the build when we will begin, hopefully in the next two weeks.

The next 60 days will also be a very busy time for all of us preparing for the OVH Hamfest to be held on Sunday, June 13th and then Field Day to be held on June 26 and 27th. I hope each of you will volunteer in one way or another to help out with each of these.

Hope to see you all on Monday, April 19th at 7:30 p.m. at the meeting room at the Prince William County Red Cross at 9930 Liberia Avenue, Manassas.

73 George K4GVT

Sunshine Corner:

Celebrating with a springtime birthday – Joe / KI4OHR, Chris / KU4FT, David / KI4AZX, Paul / W4ZB and Roger / KJ4RDJ.

Best wishes to Butch / W4HJL and Doc / W1IMX as they both continue to recover from falls.

Condolences to Ruth / KU4WH on the loss of her dad.

Welcome home to Wayne / N7QLK returning from overseas.

Welcome to our newest member Randal / WB7RAV voted in at the March meeting.

John / KG4NXT and I had a great time on March 20th participating in the Virginia QSO party, we hit the road and traveled around to 10 different counties! We are also looking forward to working the Mini Tri on March 28th!

David / KG4GIY has several ARES events coming up, if you are interested in participating, please contact David. You will definitely get some use out of your radio and meet a lot of other hams!

Hamfest is coming, all hands are needed, please contact Bruce / AB8CI or Chris / KI4POT and let them know where you can help out.

Just a reminder, the Thursday night net is going strong at 8:00 pm, please join us on the OVH repeater! If you would like to be a net control just let John / KG4NXT know. **Continued on page 4**

Wayne / N7QLK, John / KG4NXT and Theresa / KG4TVM are co-chairing Field Day 2010, a planning meeting was held already, more details at the meeting, any suggestions and/or requests – send them to me.

Please send me your news to kg4tvm@hotmail.com or call 703-257-3566.

73 Theresa KG4TVM

Minutes of the Ole Virginia Hams Amateur Radio Club Meeting March 15, 2010:

George / K4GVT called the meeting to order at 19:30. Meeting was held at the Prince William County Red Cross Chapter House, 9930 Liberia Avenue, Manassas, Virginia.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, all present stated their names and call signs. There were 21 OVH members and 5 guests.

PROGRAM: John Nagel from the Prince William County Police Department gave a presentation on TAP (Terrorism Awareness & Prevention). The program is part of Fleet Watch, the OVH is a participating member of Fleet Watch. John reported on Domestic & International Terrorism as well as Cyber Terror. He also provided handouts that included contact information and bumper stickers. John gave another great presentation to the OVH and it was well received.

BUSINESS MEETING

Minutes from the February meeting were passed with no changes.

Treasurer's report was given by Art / W1CRO. The Finance Committee will present a budget to the officers before the next meeting and this budget will include the allocation for DStar. Report was approved as read.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Membership – Bruce / AB8CI read in Mark Weiss / W2RX and Jeff Weiss / W4JWX. Randal Cohen / WB7RAV was voted in as a member.

ARES – David / KG4GIY had a list of upcoming events as follows: March 20th ARES Meeting, upcoming events will be discussed, if you are attending please bring all your forms – March 27th Volunteer event at Georgetown South to do home remodeling/neighbor clean up, need communication help – March 28th, Tri It Now Mini Tri at the Freedom Center – April 3rd MS Walk Harris Pavilion to the Hospital and back – April 11th MS Walk in Reston – May 8th Dulles Drill - 150 operators are needed.

Repeater – Keith / KM4AA no changes at the repeaters, he will be going to the site to check for any storm damage, DStar repeaters in the area are having problems with the gateway being down, Keith attended the TMarc meeting at Winterfest, TMARC's February 2011 will be the next vote by TMarc on repeater allocations for 2-Meter DStar, Operators are using W4OVH instead of registering with N4USI for DStar, Keith is doing a DStar presentation to a group in Anne Arundel next Thursday, Steve / N4OGR asked if there were problems with the OVH FM repeaters, Keith and George both responded that some work needs to be done.

Training – Mark / WA4KFZ has a General class underway and will have a

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Tech class on April 10 and 17th, VE Session will be April 24th at the Nokesville Fire Department #25. John, Al, Steve, Bob & Ross will be the VE's for the session.

Scholarship – Jim / W4JTP asked about the scholarship for this year, George / K4GVT informed us that there will be one scholarship for \$1000.

BREAK

Hamfest – Bruce / AB8CI thanked everyone that attended the meeting, he needs someone to oversee the Back Gate, Security and to work with Steve and Jan on Tailgate area preparation. George reported that Commercial Vendors from last year have already said yes for this year and he will be going to Timonium and handing out vendor packets. Admission this year will be \$7. Art asked if we had checked with Office Depot on printing of tickets, George has checked and he has a better deal elsewhere.

Field Day – John / KG4NXT reported that Wayne / N7QLK is still out of the country, and John has been working on the educational activity as a Foxhunt in the park and asked how the group felt about this, it was received well. Also he is considering making a lemon battery.

Sunshine – Theresa / KG4TVM reported March birthdays – Russ / WB4HHN and Jeff / N1SN, also that Butch / W4HJL was able to attend the Hamfest meeting and is recovering from his fall, Ruth / KU4WH is out of town due to the death of her dad, Doc / W1IMX is on the mend also from a fall, also don't forget the Virginia QSO party this Saturday, March 20th.

50/50 – John / KG4NXT won \$9 and donated his share back to the club.

Meeting was adjourned at 21:07.

Reminders about some upcoming events / calendar dates:

HAMFESTS:

May 14th - 16th, Dayton Hamvention - Dayton Ohio ARA, details at <http://www.hamvention.org>. This is the still the biggest hamfest in the world.

June 13th, OVH ARC Hamfest Prince William Fairgrounds, Manassas Virginia, up to date details at <http://www.w4ovh.com>.

June 25th - 27th, Ham Radio – Friedrichshafen, Gemany. This conflicts with ARRL Field Day but is the biggest hamfest in Europe, 18K+ attendees. Details at <http://www.hamradio-friedrichshafen.de>.

July 18, Maryland Hamfest and Computer Fest at the Howard County Fairgrounds. Details and more information at <http://www.bratsatv.org>.

Aug 1st, Berryville Hamfest at the Clark County Fairgrounds, Berryville, VA. Details and more information at <http://www.svarc.us/hamfest>.

OPERATING EVENTS AND CONTESTS

There a many other operating contests almost all of the time The excellent web site maintained by WA7BNM lists most of them! See <http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/>

PUBLIC SERVICE / TRAINING / ARES EVENTS

Check the online Calendar by David / KG4GIY at <http://www.pwcares.org> for latest updates. David maintains a comprehensive calendar for upcoming events at that web site.

BIG NEWS this month is the decision by the City of Manassas to discontinue BPL in Manassas

from the Washington Post:

Manassas to end broadband-over-power line Internet service

*By Jennifer Buske
Washington Post Staff Writer
Thursday, April 8, 2010*

Manassas residents who rely on the city's broadband-over-power line Internet service will have to find a new provider after Manassas City Council members voted unanimously Monday to end the city's role as a telecommunications provider.

Manassas took over the program from Communication Technologies in October 2008, and city officials have debated whether to keep it. The BPL service, which reaches about 520 residents and businesses, runs off the city's electrical grid and allows users to access the Internet through any electrical socket, rather than through phone or cable television lines. The service is about 10 times as fast as dial-up, while most households today have a service that is 50 times as fast as dial-up, officials with the Manassas utilities department said.

Proponents once said they wanted to give BPL a chance

because it provided affordable Internet service, about \$25 a month. Some council members said it is not the government's job to provide Internet service. Manassas officials said BPL costs the city \$170,000 annually.

"I think this was a worthwhile experience . . . but the business model just didn't work," Manassas City Council member J. Steven Randolph (I) said.

Manassas officials said notices will be sent to users of the BPL service, who will have until July 1 to find a new provider. Comcast serves the entire city, and Verizon officials said they serve "most" Manassas residents, with plans to have Fios Internet available to all residents by 2011.

Discontinuing the BPL service could mean losing the wireless Internet available in Old Town, which was launched less than a year ago and has not had many users, city officials said. Manassas utilities officials said they will try to find the \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year needed to operate it through another provider.

from the ARRL:

City of Manassas to End BPL Service

Once touted as "the most successful BPL deployment in the nation," the City of Manassas, Virginia has decided to get out of the BPL business, once and for all. At a Special Meeting on Monday, April 5, the Manassas City Council -- acting on a recommendation from the Manassas Utilities Commission -- unanimously voted to discontinue Broadband over Powerline (BPL) Internet service as of July 1, 2010 to the approximately 520 residents and businesses who currently subscribe to the service; these customers were told that they have three months to find a new Internet service provider.

According to Manassas City Clerk Andrea Madden, there was no discussion on the resolution to discontinue service and the motion was passed "without incident."

With the motion made by Councilman Jonathan Way and seconded by Mark Wolfe, the City Council cited three reasons for discontinuing BPL service: a declining customerbase, an annual income deficit of almost \$166,000 from providing Internet service, and a determination that AMI [Advanced Metering Infrastructure] platforms don't require BPL. Way and Wolfe favored shutting down the BPL system in November 2009, the last time this matter was brought to the Council's attention. "The City needs to get out of BPL forthwith," Way said back in 2009. "It's not a good product. The whole business is not financially sound and it never has been."

Manassas residents pay \$24.95 each month to receive Internet service via BPL. In November 2009, the Utility

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Commission showed the Council that little more than 500 residents and 46 businesses currently subscribed to the service, which since 2008, has been run by the City. "It's costing a little more to maintain the system than we projected in the budget," Manassas Director of Utilities Michael Moon told the Council. "The original projections were that the customer base would be double this." In September 2008, the Manassas City Council voted to assume control of the BPL service from COMTek, the private company that served (back then) approximately 675 residents.

In January 2009, there were 637 residential and 51 commercial BPL subscribers in Manassas. In February 2010, those numbers had shrunk to 457 residential and 50 commercial subscribers. The Utilities Commission said that the total revenue brought in by BPL for FY2010 was almost \$186,000, but the expense of keeping up the City-owned system was costing the ratepayers a little more than \$351,000, resulting in a net loss of almost \$166,000.

"In October 2003, the Manassas City Council was told that it could expect as much as \$4.5 million in revenue from awarding a 10 year BPL franchise," said ARRL Chief Executive Officer David Sumner, K1ZZ. "Instead, six months later, BPL had turned into a money pit for the City of Manassas. Anyone thinking of investing in BPL would do well to learn from the Manassas experience."

In November 2009, Manassas' Assistant Utilities Director (Electric) Gregg Paulson told the ARRL that they had "every intention of putting BPL Internet service in the budget and the Council can decide its fate as they work through the budget process." Paulson also said that while Internet service to consumers would "probably" be the only thing that would be cut if the Council decided to forego BPL, he left the door open as to using the BPL

infrastructure for other purposes: "We still own the BPL network, but we may or may not use this network for utility monitoring or other AMI purposes."

But according to the resolution passed by the Council, the Manassas Utilities Department will not be using BPL for AMI, but instead will use "a combination of fiber and wireless technology exclusive of the BPL." According to the Agenda Statement for the Special Meeting, the BPL equipment will be removed from the system and "inquiries will be made regarding the salvage value."

Sumner said that the ARRL's concern was not with the business plan -- that he termed "obviously flawed" -- but with "the interference to licensed radio services -- and in particular the Amateur Radio Service -- inevitably caused by putting radio frequency energy on unshielded, unbalanced conductors. Manassas was touted as 'the most successful BPL deployment in the nation' when FCC Chairman Michael Powell visited the site with much fanfare -- and, the ARRL maintains, in violation of the FCC's own rules -- on the eve of the FCC's vote to adopt inadequate protection for licensed radio services against interference from BPL systems. The taxpayers and ratepayers of Manassas are not the only ones who benefit from the end of this ill-considered foray into BPL. Radio amateurs in the Manassas area have good reason to celebrate, for they have spent countless hours documenting the widespread interference caused by the system."

BPL technology uses the electricity grid in a city and the wiring in individual homes to provide direct "plug in" broadband access through electricity sockets, rather than over phone or cable TV lines. Because BPL wiring is physically large, is often overhead and extends across entire communities, these systems pose a significant interference potential to over-the-air radio services, including Amateur Radio.

A Few Sources with Interesting Technical Information

1. <http://www.broadband.gov/download-plan/>. At this URL you may download the FCC's recent (3/16/2010) National Broadband Plan in a 12 MB PDF file, 376 pages total. Thanks, David / KI4AZX. Worth skimming through and reading in part to find out what the masterminds are thinking and what may be coming.
2. <http://www.dh1tw.de/>. Most of the German ham's website is very well written in almost perfect American English. Focuses on Software Defined Radios, software, Linux, computer systems and contesting.
3. <http://garage-shoppe.com> - this web site by NI9N focuses on Software Defined Radios, especially one which his small firm (Lazy Dog Engineering) is manufacturing.
4. <http://www.surgex.com/library.html> - info about electric line surge protection, UPS's, etc.
5. <http://www.kv1j.com/6BPF/> - info about how to build a 6 band HF bandpass rx filter.
6. <http://www.eham.net/articles/23127> - article by KØFF about his 5/8 wave 40 meter vertical antenna, construction and feeding. Your editor used to have one and will vouch for the DX performance reported.

Improve Yourself By Reading About Ham Ethics and Operating Procedures

A free publication, Ethics and Operating Procedure for the Radio Amateur (Edition 3) is available as a 67 page PDF file (600K) at the <http://www.iarur-1.org/> web site. This publication was assembled and written by John / ON4UN and Maark / ON4WW and it contains a lot of information and many useful tips about operating, both for newcomers, experienced hams and old timers.

New Hardware / Software Approaches For Remote Control of Ham Radio Stations

Ham experimenters have been using digital based circuitry to control element of ham radio stations since at least the early 1960's; by the late 1970's, early programmable personal computers had proliferated and so did the use of digital based controls connected to them; in the 1980's the designs of manufactured ham rigs became largely "digital" and the manufacturers began routinely to incorporate digital interfaces which could be used to control the rigs into their designs; various internetworking schemes also evolved and it was then possible at considerable expense to network personal computers together, but most of the internetworking schemes required proprietary hardware and software which were difficult to adapt or customize; however, powerful and low cost remote control software became available for interconnected personal computers. By the early 1990's access to the Internet had become readily available (at least by dial-up connections) to the public; as a result, the TCP/IP networking standards of the Internet became universally supported and networking software and network hardware became relatively inexpensive. Since the mid-1990's various schemes to remotely control ham rigs over TCP/IP based networks have proliferated as has remote control software to control ham rigs. Until very recently, most of these post mid-1990's schemes have required personal computers at both ends - i.e., one at the ham rig and another at the control point, with relatively complex setup between the two computers. The most difficult practical problems with this approach are (1) signal latency (delays) over the network and through the decoding and processing provided by each personal computer at each end, and (2) difficulty or impossibility of resetting the remotely located computer. Technical improvement is unstoppable, however, and this is now changing.

Within the past year two manufacturers have begun to offer dedicated hardware devices which dispense with the need for two personal computers with a relatively complex setup between them over TCP/IP based networks. These hardware devices, of course, contain embedded, dedicated microcomputers which perform and automate the complicated set up tasks which previously had to be handled manually, and which could be very difficult or impossible to reset remotely.

The first of these products is offered by Glentek Corp., a U.S. based firm, and that product was reviewed in a February 2010 QST product review. See, <http://www.glentekcorp.com> for more details.

The other product known as RemoteRig [see <http://www.remoterig.com>] is manufactured in Sweden; it has not yet been reviewed in QST, but it has been mentioned several times in the ARRL's NCJ and has been reviewed extensively in the German ham magazine, FunkAmateur.

The Glentek devices appears to be a slightly simpler (and a bit less expensive) than the RemoteRig devices. Glentek recommends that signal (e.g., voice) audio (and CW keying) connections be made by wired connections to minimize the signal latency, but does say that VOIP using external VOIP devices can be used for the voice (and cw) signals if direct wired connections (e.g. within a large house) are not available. RemoteRig, on the other hand, provides a built in, dedicated VOIP (and CW keying) facility between its two hardware devices, and says that the signal latency in its system is so small as not to be noticed by the user.

Both the Glentek and RemoteRig devices appear to solve the main problems associated with the two personal computer type remote control set ups for ham rigs; both also appear to be quite simple to set up and use. New devices of these types are likely to make remotely controlled ham station much more common in the future.