



MARS News

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A Letter from the President

Hey Everyone,

I hope that everyone has been enjoying these beautiful Spring days. We haven't had a lot of MARS activities going on in April. We've mostly been resting up from all the effort we put into the Hamfest. But, we certainly are going to make up for it in May. We sure could use more of this warm weather and these beautiful days to get some important public service events accomplished. I hope that everyone in the club will come out and volunteer some of their time for one or more of these worthy causes.



But, before I talk about next month, I have to urge everyone to come to the special business meeting we are going to have right before the regular monthly MARS meeting on the last Tuesday of this month. We are going to have a special election to elect a new board member to the club's board of directors. The new director will serve out the remainder of a term that ends this year. (See the BOD minutes and an election article in this newsletter for more details)

Now, onto our May public service events. First of all, we will be helping with the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Charlotte MS Walk on May 16th, beginning around 8:00 a.m. and going on until after lunch. The walk will begin at Symphony Park at South Park Mall. This event needs people to volunteer to help at rest stops and many other positions throughout the course. Please sign up at www.ridemaps.com. This event is all in town. There is no travel, and there are no overnight expenses. Just give us your time and a little effort. Please help with this event it is a very rewarding local experience.

The next event that we will be helping with is the National Multiple Sclerosis Society 2009 Carolina MS Challenge Walk on May 28th thru May 31st at Limestone College in Gaffney S.C. This will be a three-day event. We will need many volunteers to help make this event successful. Please go to www.ridemaps.com to sign up for as many days as you can. Your help will be appreciated very much. This is one way that you can help your community and take part in having a world free of MS. It's not much to ask and it's not that far to drive so come on out and help us.

The club will be holding a VE testing session on May 9th at East Baptist Church on Monroe Rd. Please spread the word. If you know someone who would like to obtain an amateur radio license or upgrade their current license, please invite them to join us at this session. See <http://www.w4bfb.org/tests.htm> for details.

One other very important thing I wanted to mention is that we have had a lot of requests for Elmers from the club. If you do not know what an "Elmer" or "Elmering" is, here is a link to a definition of the



Oops! Wrong Elmers

Letter from the President (cont.)

term: <http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/club/mentor>. We are lucky to be getting a lot of new members, who are new to Ham radio or who are returning to it after being out of it for a while. And some of them would like to get their stations on-the-air or back on-the-air but need some help and guidance. If you would like to give a little of your time and experience to help someone, please let me know by email so I can give you their email address and you can contact them. This is what ham radio is all about; hams having fun, hams helping hams, hams helping others and hams talking on the air. So, please contact me at ki4cxo@w4bfb.org if you would like to be an Elmer for someone.

Well, I was not kidding when I said we have a busy May coming up fast and we need lots of help. We have a great club. I call it my second Family. We need to help one another out as much as we can, to make our family and our club a great success.

Thanks for all you do.

73,

Jodie, KI4CXO

Public Service Events

Members,

We have two Multiple Sclerosis events in May that we need support for. Both of the events listed below are out on Elena's web site: <http://www.ridemaps.com>. Please check and see what works with your schedule and volunteer for one, or even better, for both of these events.

Saturday, May 16 -- Walk Charlotte

The event starts and ends at South Park.

We have the following spaces open:

Start Finish Line

EMT

Rest Stop 1 and 2

SAGS -- 2 or 3 needed

This event starts at 8:30 am and we are usually done by noon. So please come and support the walk.

Friday May 29th to Sunday May 31st—MS Challenge Walk

This event takes place in Gaffney, SC. We start and end at Limestone College. This is a 3 day event -- they walk 20 miles on Day 1 and 2 and then 10 miles on Day 3. We need rest stop operators for all days. Even if you can only work one day, we need your help.

If you have any questions on either of these events, please give me a call at 704-948-6006 or send me an email. You can sign up for either event at www.ridemaps.com.

A special thanks to Elena for getting all the information out on her website. Also, please mark your calendars for BIKE MS2009 -- the dates for this event are October 3-4, 2009.

Mary Hunt, N4MH

Public Service Chairperson



Field Day 2009

Field Day is coming! Field Day is coming!



Field Day is June 27th and 28th. So, clear your calendars! This year's Field Day will once again be held at Wilgrove Park located at 7750 Jim Harper Lane in Mint Hill. The event begins at 2PM on Saturday, June 27th and wraps up 24 hours later. We will once again operate as a Class A station using generated power.

As everyone knows, it takes a lot of people to put on a fun and successful Field Day. The following are positions that need to be filled:

- Set up coordinator to direct the set up and placement of stations and equipment Friday afternoon
- Media contact person. Having a member of the media visit the Field Day site not only gets the word out to the community about ham radio but it also earns us 100 bonus points!
- Get On The Air (GOTA) Coach. This volunteer supervises the operation of the GOTA station which may operate on any Field Day band. The GOTA station may be operated by any person licensed since the previous year's Field Day regardless of license class as well as non-licensed persons under the direct supervision of the GOTA coach. Having a GOTA coach earns the club bonus points.
- Takedown assistance Sunday afternoon
- Most of all we need OPERATORS! As in the past, we'll have an HF phone, an HF digital/CW station and a 6 meter station. Come to this month's club meeting and reserve an operating time and station. As we'll be on the air continuously for 24 hours, there will be plenty of opportunities for everyone to participate.

Just as we did last year, we'll be utilizing an interactive signup sheet to let those interested sign up for operating time and to offer assistance. Stay tuned for more updates!

We hope to see everyone out at Wilgrove Park on June 27th and June 28th for a fun and successful Field Day!

73,

Kevin, K4YYD

Bill, W4GRW

Your 2009 Field Day Chairmen

Dits and Dahs

Well it's been a while since I bored you with an article. You can always just skip this page in the newsletter!! Hi Hi

I wanted to relay some information to you about learning Morse code (or in my case, RE-learning it!). It has been a struggle for me. But, I have to just do it!

Why would anyone want to learn a dead language? Well, we still use Latin don't we? Somebody somewhere still uses it, i.e. – lawyers, doctors, & the clergy. CW or Continuous Wave is no different. If you go to the lower end of 40 or 20 meters the signals you hear are numerous. And if it's such a 'dead' language, then why did the military go back to it for some of their traffic nets? OK, let's go on a little journey! I love surfing the Internet!

As I said before in an article, I use the G4FON Morse code trainer program. IT'S FREE!! Try www.g4fon.net and look on the left side of the page. I think version 9.0 is the latest & greatest. If you diligently practice using this software and follow the guidance provided in articles located on the site, you will be copying code at 15-20 WPM in no time. Ray Goff G4FON, its inventor, wrote it to help him RE-learn the code. Like me he tried to learn code by counting the dits and dahs. This will only get you to about 5-10WPM. It's a left-brain – right-brain type of thing. Lots of people reach this 'Plateau' and can't get over it. They become disillusioned and give up!! I know I did. So, how do you get around this barrier? Here are some suggestions of what **NOT** to do. Seems I remember doing most of these while I was learning the code in the late 70's!

Don't learn to copy at 5 WPM. If you copy slow, you'll learn SLOW! That's why the G4FON runs at 15-20 WPM.

Don't 'read' the code. Looking at "A" and seeing dit dah slows you down. You must hear the sound instantly associate it with the character in your mind. If you get really fast, you will not only hear letters, but will start to hear entire words at a time.

Along these same lines, don't try and use 'memory aids'. I once had a tape that taught you to associate a letter with words. Like "L" would be 'I Loan It Out' – dit dah dit dit. Now your brain has to connect the words to hear the sound. Leave out the middle process. **Remember, the code is heard with the ears and not with the eyes. (NoHFF – The Art and Skill of Radio Telegraphy)**

Don't listen to tapes to learn the code; some claim you'll just memorize the tape. I guess I never listened to it enough to memorize it! (Hi)

As far as getting started by copying on the air, AGAIN DON'T! You don't know if they are sending the correct spacing or characters or what not. The only exception would be daily W1AW code practice.

Ok now brainy, how do I learn the code? I hope by now you have looked at the web site and read the doc files. One other fine web site is AA9PW's (www.aa9pw.com) who has a whole lot to look at. Written exams, code exams, QSO's to copy etc. Boy you can spend a lot of time on here.

Next, you need to look at some operating guides. "A Beginner's Guide to Making CW Contacts" - by Jack Wagoner WB8FSV is a good read. There is another one that was written by



Dits and Dahs (Cont)



This is a club key from the Straight Key Century Club - SKCC

Keith Williams W6DTY – “**Your Novice Accent – And What to do about it**”! This was written in QST in November 1956. But, the truths spoken then are still true today! Just Google ‘Your Novice Accent’ and you will find a bunch of sites where it can be viewed. This should be read by each and every new licensee before they get on the air. One more, and it is a long one with 241 pages! But, what a gem!! “**The Art and Skill of Radio-Telegraphy**” By **William Pierpont NoHFF**. Oh my gosh! What a great read!! Each of these articles tells you how to learn the code and even how to operate once you’ve mastered it (Notice I said “**Mastered it**” – through this whole process you need to keep a positive attitude!).

Back to leaning the code! My biggest failure was not providing enough time to sit down in a quiet place and study/learn the alphabet. I passed a 5 WPM test in 1980 and just barely. So give yourself a chance to learn. With this program you learn only 2 characters at a time but at 15-20 WPM and at a 90% success rate. Then, you add two more, then two more and so on and so on. You will have ups and downs. But, you will eventually get them all. So, the end result is a code speed of 15-20 WPM. Again, you need to allow yourself time to study. I guess I need to read my own words, huh?

German psychologist Ludwig Koch some 60 years ago studied the learning of Morse code. Dave Finley – N1IRZ talks about Koch and also about getting an idea of how long it will take you to learn the code. The following is from “So You Want to Learn Morse Code”, first published in Radio Fun Magazine in 1995.

“So how much time is required? That will depend on the individual. Koch himself, with hand-picked students, got a group to master 12 wpm code in a mere 13.5 hours. You probably won't match that, but that's much faster than any other method in the psychological literature. You can get an idea of how long it's going to take after you've mastered a few characters. Keep track of your training sessions (some software will do this for you) and calculate your hours-per-character rate (or characters-per-hour if you're really fast!). That, multiplied by the 43 characters in the amateur Morse test, will give a rough idea of how long it's going to take.”

Now you need to practice, practice and practice some more. There are Elmers who would love to help you on the air. Yeah, I know I said not to copy on the air but I know a group of hams who excel when it comes to Morse code. Go to <http://www.skcc.com>, that's the Straight Key Century Club - SKCC. They gather on HF frequencies just to help newcomers to CW. They are so patient with you on the air! They have a list of Elmers on their Yahoo web site that you can contact to set up skeds on HF.

I hope I have peaked your interests in Morse code. Read the articles listed above and be an A1 operator. Catch you on the air! Jeff KA4WYC

March and April Meetings

For the March club meeting, we celebrated the club's 60th anniversary. We placed a call to Jim McCloud (W4NHV) during the meeting. Jim is the sole surviving charter member of the club. Jim wished the club another 60 years of success.

We also had a cake to celebrate the anniversary. The cake had our special event call sign (W4B) on it. We also had some door prizes.

Ben provided a slide show of events in the club's past.

For the April meeting, Bill Stevenson (AJ4JZ) will give a presentation on ham radio digital modes. This should be a very interesting presentation. Please plan to attend.

73,

Jeff - KA4WYC



Election to Fill Open Board of Directors Position

Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society- -W4BFB--

Notice of Special Election to Fill remaining term for MARS non-officer Director Position

On Tuesday April 28th, 2009, a brief Business meeting of MARS will be held immediately prior to the regular monthly club meeting, for the purpose of a Special Election to fill the remaining term of a MARS non-officer Director. The remainder of this term ends on December 31st 2009. The currently declared candidate for the remaining term of the non-officer Directorship is:

(Select Roger or use write-in!)

- Roger Meyers, WA2TKS
- _____
- _____

To submit a proxy, you may present one at the meeting, or email one to the [MARS Secretary: Jeff Blythe, KA4WYC](#),

email: BALLOTS@W4BFB.org.

NOTE: *Emailed Proxies must be received before Monday March 27th*

(Write-ins are subject to qualification review, their agreement to hold office if elected, and a seconded nomination at the election.)

To file an email proxy, send an email with your name and callsign plus the names of your choices for the positions to:

BALLOTS@W4BFB.org



V.E. Testing Session May 9th

The **Mecklenburg ARRL VE Team** will be conducting an exam session for all classes of FCC amateur radio license on Saturday May 9th, beginning at 9AM at the East Baptist Church 3850 Monroe Road Charlotte, NC. East Baptist Church is located next to East Mecklenburg HS, near the intersection of Monroe Road and Conference Drive.

Applicants are requested to arrive by 8:30AM to complete the registration process before testing begins. They should bring a photo ID (drivers license OK), the original and a copy of any current amateur license, the original and copies of any current CSCEs, plus the 2009 ARRL VEC testing fee of \$15.00.

Walk-ins are welcome. But, we would appreciate it if you register in advance by sending an email to MecklenburgVETeam@W4BFB.org or call 704-948-7373. You may also contact us at that email address or phone number if you just need additional information.

Thanks,

73,

WB2RHM



April Board Minutes



Jodie started the meeting @ 7 PM, present were Jodie-KI4CXO, Bill-W4GRW, Jeff-KA4WYC, Tom-KA3VVJ, Ben-WB2RHM, Kevin-K4YYD, Andy-K4GKK, and absent were Mary-N4MH and Jerry-N4MIU who had resigned from the Board.

Jodie asked if there was a motion to accept the minutes of the last board meeting and there was a motion and seconded and voted to approve the minutes.

Bill said Bill-AJ4JZ would give a program on ham radio digital modes on April 28th.

Tom had a balance sheet and went over the profit & loss sheet.

Membership Committee – Jeff said club members are still sending in dues. The Board is working on calling club members to remind them to renew. In the process of calling members there are some phone numbers and addresses (both email and home) that have changed. It is important to keep the club updated on with current information.

(Sect. Note - There is an update button on the club web site <http://www.w4bfb.org> to update your info. Please leave a note of WHAT you are changing in the comments box.)

Repeater committee – Earl requested via a letter that the 220 repeater be moved from the bank building downtown to the Spencer Mt site. This recommendation was approved by the board. The repeater committee will go ahead with the move. This will greatly improve the reception of the 220 machine.

Also the board had approved a motion to install a phone line for 145.29 repeater. Tom is to call Earl to schedule the installation of the phone line with the phone company.

Equipment Committee – Andy said we raised \$1,765.00 from the sale of Tally Simpson's equipment at the Hamfest. These funds were donated to the Club.

Jodie said we had several members who need help getting antennas and equipment on the air. If you would like to help, please see Jodie. There will be more to come on this later.

Tom had a report on public service from Mary. Routes for the MS events are being finalized. There were some other events also.

Grants And Resources – Nothing new on Food Lion Share the Wealth, according to Kevin. We need to remind the membership if they have a Food Lion card to link it for the club. They can use the link from our website to get to the form. Each time they make a purchase, a percentage will go to the club.

Under the Party and Entertainment Committee - Jodie wanted to think about when to have a picnic. She was thinking about sometime in September.

Bill didn't have anything on Operations and Contest Committee. Last month we had two operating events; the NCQSO Party and the WPX Contest.

Nominations Committee – Jerry sent in a resignation from the board, which was received and approved by the board. Now the board needs to set up a slate of people eligible to run for the

April Board Minutes (cont)

open position. Kevin and Andy suggested that Roger WA2TKS be offered this open slot. After a call to Roger, he has agreed to fill rest of the 1 - year term. At the next club meeting, the membership will vote on this position.

Web minder – Ben said the reflector had a problem but is working now.

Under old Business – Kevin said Mint Hill Park has been reserved and paid for. Field Day will once again be held there. The dates are June 28th & 28th 2009. Please make plans to help and join the fun!

New Business – The board has received a couple of requests for assistance. One member would like someone to help them in setting up their computer to interface with their radio. Another wants some help with antenna work.. There was a discussion on working out the details. Jeff was to call and schedule a time to do this.

Jodie asked if there was anymore business, and having none, there was a motion made and seconded and we adjourned @ 9:02.

Respectfully submitted by Jeff KA4WYC Secretary of the Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society W4BFB

Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society— <http://www.w4bfb.org>

Club Meetings The Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society meets on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM

We meet at:

East Baptist Church
6850 Monroe Rd
Charlotte, NC 28212

(Next to East Mecklenburg High School, near Conference Drive)

Club-room Red Cross Building
2425 Park Rd, Room 023
Charlotte, NC 28203
(704) 334-3900

Club Repeaters 146.34/146.94 (w/autopatch)
144.63/145.23 (no autopatch)
144.69/145.29 (no autopatch)
222.80/224.40 (no autopatch)
449.600/444.600 (no autopatch) PL 100.00

Mecklenburg 2m Emergency Net
9:00 PM local time, daily on 146.34/146.94 featuring the ARRL
Audio News feed on Sunday night.
Alternate frequencies announced

Club Officers and Board of Directors

President

Jodie Rowland, KI4CXO, ki4cxo@w4bfb.org

Vice President

Bill Fisher, W4GRW, w4grw@w4bfb.org

Secretary

Jeff Blythe, KA4WYC, ka4wyc@w4bfb.org

Treasurer

Tom Hunt, KA3VVJ, ka3vvj@w4bfb.org

Directors

Ben Antanaitis, WB2RHM, wb2rh@w4bfb.org

Mary Hunt, N4MH, n4mh@w4bfb.org

Andy Hawkins, K4GKK, k4gkk@w4bfb.org

Kevin Keyes, K4YYD, k4yyd@w4bfb.org



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