



MARS NEWS

Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society



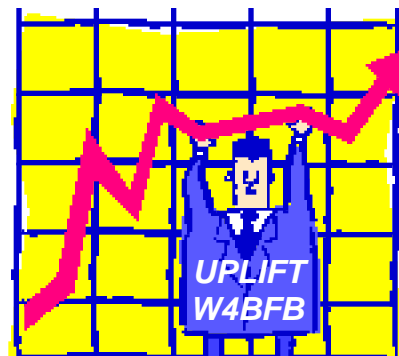
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MARS Meeting* Tue. Feb. 24 2004

In lieu of a more formal program, we will be assigning volunteers to the various work areas of the Hamfest. Also, we will discuss how we can work together to make this event a most successful one. Be sure to attend! This may be your last opportunity to purchase pre-registration tickets and discounted parking passes.

***Meeting location & time on last page.**



President's Letter

First of all, my thanks go to David Masters and Tim Slay of Duke Power for coming down to our January meeting (delayed into February by ice!) to discuss Duke's plans for BPL (Broadband over Power Line) and the test plans discussed thus far. The Club will be loaning an HF rig for use during each of the test days in order to gauge "real life" RFI to the amateur radio community in this area. I'd like to suggest that if you have HF mobile capability, it would be interesting to travel near the area where testing will occur in order to see if we will be interfering with BPL. I am contacting some hams to see if they can assist to some extent, but officially it would be good to have some Club members available as observers.

Our Hamfest is coming up -- the more help we have from our members, the less work each of us will have to perform. Imagine being able to work a single two-hour shift and then have the rest of the day to shop or attend forums, etc. If we could all volunteer to work a two-hour shift on the Safety committee, it would go a long way toward enabling all of us to have fun and not feel overworked. If we have a shortage of help at crucial times and positions, it means that someone has to work a double shift, and that's not fun. Please, when Tim Slay asks for your help for the Safety committee, or if any other committee needs help, please step up and volunteer. If you can work multiple days, that will help too. This will be the focus of the February meeting -- discussing Hamfest needs and



**President
Shawn Goodin
K4RSG**

signing up. Volunteers who work at least two hours will get free admission and a shot at the Hamfest volunteer prize drawing.

In March, we will have the Advanced Storm Spotter class at our Club meeting. Vince DiCarlo from the National Weather Service in Greer, SC will be on hand to present the class. Anyone is welcome to attend.

See you at the February meeting.

73,
Shawn, K4RSG

A newsletter lives or dies with the participation of club members. In the next month or so I would love to receive articles on the following subjects:

Hamfest Happenings - 2004
Getting started in Packet Radio.
CW Traffic Nets (Slow and/or Fast).
An Antenna you built.
Transmission lines.
A review of equipment/software you use.

Thanks for your help.....Tom - W4NCU

**Volunteer Net Controllers
needed for the Metrolina
Emergency 2-mtr net.
Contact Jim Payne,
n4jbp@arrrl.net, Net Mgr.**





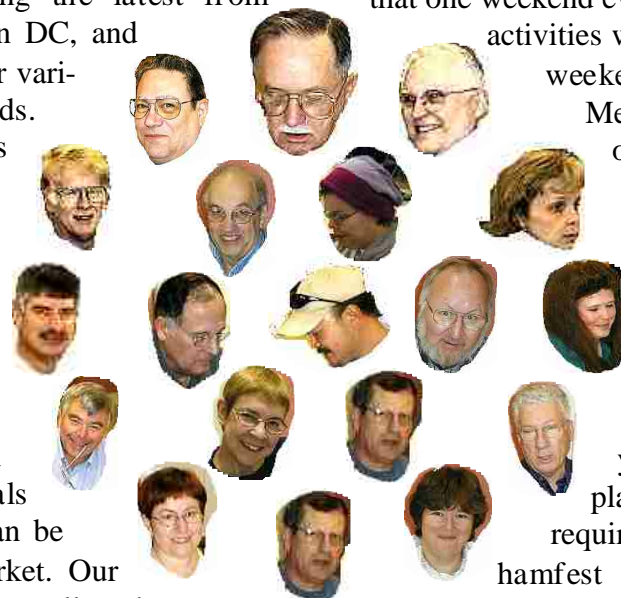
Our most important annual project is hosting the Charlotte Hamfest, and it's important to us for many reasons.

Our hamfest is important because of the people who come. We have almost 4000 Hams visiting us who come from everywhere, and that's not counting the many Hams who represent equipment manufacturers, new equipment dealers, ARRL, and other service groups of interest to most Hams. We are an ARRL Convention which means ARRL representatives are here for us to meet, bringing the latest from Newington Ct, and Washington DC, and also to check our QSL cards for various ARRL operating awards. Major equipment manufacturers are represented, not to sell equipment, but to show it to us in real life, and to explain the bells and whistles of their latest models. New equipment dealers come with trucks full of toys to sell at "special hamfest" prices. Flea market dealers and individuals come with those things that can be found only at a hamfest flea market. Our hamfest is important for both small and large dealers, appearing in person, who would otherwise be known only as an 800 telephone number, or a magazine ad.

Our hamfest is important for what our club can contribute to the regional Ham community. We try very hard to have the best hamfest in the southeast, but "best" can be judged in many different ways. It provides the facility for people to see, feel, compare, discuss, or ask about equipment they are interested in, both new and old. People meet others they have only just talked with on the radio, or maybe old friends who now live beyond 2 meter range. Forums are held, and ideas are planted to encourage Hams in many different aspects of our hobby.

Our hamfest is most important though to ourselves, for the sense of accomplishment in doing it each year, and for the money it makes to pay for everything else we do. Repeaters are expensive to assemble and maintain properly. New club equipment is nice to have for operating events where personal equipment might get trashed. We have resources to contribute to our community, and to do our various public service events, including ARES events. Hamfest pays for our monthly meetings, some social gatherings, and even for some of our holiday party. All that we do depends heavily on how profitable our recent hamfests have been.

It is really important that all of us as individuals and as a group support our Charlotte Hamfest because that one weekend event determines how many club activities we can do all year. The second weekend of March at the Merchandise Mart requires everyone's contribution of lots of work, time, and help to make the hamfest possible. At least we don't have to constantly think of other ways to pay for whatever we want to do. Some hamfest activity is spread through much of the year as our hamfest committee plans and performs all those jobs required for the next one. Talented hamfest committee people with new ideas and fresh ambition are always needed. Hamfest 2004 is now upon us, we need everyone's help. Be sure to get on the schedule to do your part, then be sure to be prompt for your scheduled task on hamfest weekend.



Some of the hamfest workers @ the Peel & Stick Party.

This year the hamfest is on Saturday & Sunday - March 13 - March 14. Setup day is March 12.

Please take your digital camera and get some great photos. Send them to the editor for inclusion in a later edition of MARS NEWS. Especially need photos at the forums and if you can, a short description of what went on.

Have a great time!!!!

QSLing For "Wallpaper"

By John Scott, K8YC

One of the interesting facets of being a ham is collecting "wallpaper". For the uninitiated, "wallpaper" consists of the certificates you receive for showing various levels of achievement in making longer distance HF or VHF contacts. All kinds of awards are available—Worked All States, Worked All Counties, DX Century Club, Worked All Continents, Worked All Zones, Worked all Prefixes, and Islands on the Air (IOTA) are but a few. Then, on top of that there are "endorsements" such as winning these awards for a specific band, all bands, or using a specific mode. Collecting QSL cards from faraway places, especially if it is the first time you've had a QSO with that geographical entity, is quite exciting. But, as you progress towards the endorsements, you'll soon find that QSL costs can become a significant part of your hobby budget. If you send your QSLs direct to the worked station, you'll probably include a self-addressed envelope and either a \$1 bill (a "greenstamp") or an International Reply Coupon to speed the reply. If you don't, you'll probably get a reply via the bureau.

Sure, there are alternatives to sending direct. You may choose to use the ARRL's outgoing QSL bureau and request a reply from the foreign ham via the bureau. The process is remarkably effective but it is also very slow. It is not uncommon for the full cycle to take two years or more from the time you send your outgoing QSL. As a sorter for the W4 bureau sponsored by Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society, I've seen incoming QSL cards from overseas acknowledging QSOs occurring as long as seven or eight years ago!! So, if you're anxious to earn your wallpaper in a hurry, get ready to spend some money.

Just recently I noticed hams from Norway and New Zealand citing that a single U.S. Dollar will no longer cover return postage. And Germany's post office has been charging about Euro 1.50 (about \$1.50 USD) for first class airmail postage for at least several years. The IRC which cost \$.95 a few years ago now costs \$1.75, reflecting the rising costs of international mail service. The ARRL recognized the plight of those desirous of seeking various awards but who were finding QSL expense a deterrent to that goal. Yet, to

ensure the integrity of one of the world's most sought after awards—DX Century Club—a means was needed to ensure that bogus QSLs could not be created by the unscrupulous few who desire the award without putting forth any effort. The solution was to create the Logbook of the World (LoTW). LoTW permits submitting your station log to ARRL's LoTW server via the Internet in Amateur Data Interchange Format (ADIF) or Cabrillo format using a personal encryption key. This key ensures that the log is only from you and that it has not been compromised since you prepared it. This carefully crafted encryption process ensures bona fide QSLs only are submitted and ensures the integrity of the DXCC award. With each incoming log submission, the LoTW server flags matches for QSOs already reported as long as they meet criteria for being the same QSO. There is no cost to submit logs. The ARRL set a unit price of \$.25, with a declining unit price for bigger volumes down to \$.15, for each QSL that you wish to apply to an award from the LoTW.

As a recipient of QSL cards for my own QSOs, I do treasure many of my QSL cards for their graphic content and remembrances of the time spent in the pileup. So I hope that QSL cards don't go the way of the buggy whip. Yet, waiting for a QSL card for a "first time worked" entity is akin to waiting for your first driver's license or for your first ham license to arrive in the mail.

The ultimate success of LoTW will be enhanced if everybody submits his log to LoTW, whether he/she wants QSL cards or not. By charging only for credits used and not charging for submitting log data, the ARRL has taken a big step to promote that goal. Can you imagine if all hams everywhere submitted their logs to LoTW regularly? Within several weeks of a QSO, you'd know that you have a confirmed contact that will be allowed for a contact credit. A number of foreign hams have already signed up, and the results are starting to show. Recent statistics show there are over 29 Million QSO records in LoTW resulting in almost 660,000 QSL records. This result is from about 5,500 active LoTW users. I've been doing my part to inform international hams of LoTW by providing a small informative flyer on it in QSLs that I still send direct. I actually had a reply from a ham in Paraguay that he is on LoTW, and when I checked into LoTW, I

Minutes of the Last Board Meeting

The Board of Directors met at the Red Cross Building, on Feb. 11th

Present: All board members attended except Greg Onachila, KG4IOE: Meeting called to order at 7:20PM.

President's Report: The Special Service Club status has been approved by ARRL for MARS (2 year coverage).

Vice President's Report: Feb. Meeting will be Hamfest Sign-Ups. Mar. Meeting will be an Advanced SkyWarn class presented by Vince DiCarlo.

Secretary's Report: The Anti Virus program on the club computer will be renewed.

Treasurer's Report: Parts for repair of the tribanders on the trailer (used on Field Day) have been ordered. Liability Insurance is due Mar. 1. The new License Manuals have been received and will be kept at the Club Room. Alinco dual band radios for the "ARES Go Boxes", purchased last October have arrived.

Public Service: Feb. 21 will be a Mini field Day coupled with an ARES activity. John White is arranging it. No other events until April 17. This is the same weekend as the Lake Norman games.

Repeaters: No news, all seem to be working. The Gaston ARES group will begin using 145.23 for their ARES nets under our MOU.

Newsletter: Tom Nicholls requested that the board meeting move to the first week of the month to be able

to get the newsletter out in a timely fashion with the Board minutes in it. It was agreed to move to the first Tuesday of the month.

Hamfest: All workers need to come into the Hamfest through the Fleamarket entrance to increase security on the Dealer side.

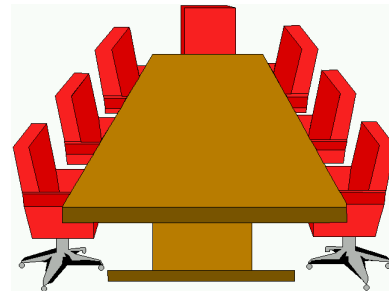
Old business: The calendar of events will be updated to show board meetings and put on the website.

New Business: Tim Slay joined the meeting on the repeater for an update of the Duke BPL testing. Ambient noise level readings will be done on Feb. 25. Testing with BPL signal injected will be done in the second week of Mar. Further testing with more signals will be done in April. Tim will borrow an HF transceiver from the club for the tests. As an extension of the RFI Committee, a group from MARS will observe the tests.

Open House at the Clubroom at the Red Cross will be held on Mar. 17 and 31, April 14 and 28 from 7:00-9:00PM.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:40PM.

Submitted by Bill Turner, W4WNT, Secretary.



Duke Power - BPL - FCC

At our last meeting, David Masters of Duke presented some of Duke's plans for testing Broadband Over Power Lines. Duke made it known they would like our help in testing. They will be injecting signals between 2 & 20 mHz into power lines of an unspecified (as yet) test area of Charlotte. They plan to try some filtering to avoid interference to the Ham Bands in this spectrum. Testing will begin in late February although going live in the test area wont start until March-April. **Note: On Feb. 12, the FCC agreed to go forward with a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) on the subject of Broadband over Power Line (BPL). The NPRM is the next step in the BPL proceeding, which began last April with a Notice of Inquiry that attracted more than 5100 comments--many from the amateur community. The FCC did not propose any changes in Part 15 rules governing unlicensed devices, but said it would require BPL providers to apply "adaptive" interference mitigation techniques to their systems. - From ARRL.**

NEWS

Help Wanted: 4 or 5 Good Hams...

Mark your calendar! We have an assignment on the Thursday afternoons of February 26, March 11, 25, April 15, 29, and May 6, from 2 - 4:30 PM.

We're hosting a Ham Radio Workshop at Discovery Place with about 20 young people, 12 - 15 years old.

If you can come for some or for all sessions, contact **John - WB2NHQ**. (wb2nhq@w4bfb.org).

For Sale

Club members get first Dibs before the Hamfest. Some T.L.C. and a few U-Bolts are needed, but here are some Barn clearing bargains on some old club antennas.

6 meter 10 element Beam, 24' boom

2 meter 14 element Beam, 18' boom

10-15-20 meter 6 element Beam, 24' boom

Make offer. WB2NHQ, 704-366-5375 - Or email wb2nhq@w4bfb.org

Program for March Meeting

Next month our program will be a weather spotter class (advanced). More in March MARS News.

Member Photo Badges

After the February 24 club meeting, photographs will be taken for club badges. See Dave Stewart, AF4ZK or Irv Hoechner, KF4KFN. Badges are free to club members.

Morse Code Practice

There will be a 5 wpm Morse code practice net on a weekly basis for a few weeks starting March 3 on Wednesdays at 8:30 PM.. Code will be audible tones on FM.

146.94 repeater

From ARRL

Feb. 12: Due to a significant decline in applications, the AARL has discontinued the Rag Chewer's Club, the Old Timer's Club and the Friendship Award.

QSL'ing For Wallpaper - Cont'd From Page 3

found all of our earlier QSOs confirmed!

Look up Logbook of the World on the ARRL website at: www.arrl.org for more information. Here are a few things you should know:

1. The process for obtaining your digital signature in the U.S. relies on mailing a password to your FCC licensed station address. Your station address, by law, is supposed to be kept current. If yours is not current, now is the time to ensure it is.

2. The ARRL has made a few changes to the "Trusted QSL" software as small bugs have been resolved. Current version as of January 5, 2004 is Version 1.10. Check with the ARRL webpage for LoTW to download the most current version.

3. After you have completed the full process of getting your digital certificate, the ARRL strongly urges you to make an archive copy of your digital certificate and store it off of your machine in a safe place. This will allow you to move your software to other machines in the event of a disk crash. Otherwise, if the digital certificate becomes unavailable, you'll have to perform the registration process a second time.

So, whether you're an old hand at chasing "wallpaper" or whether you're just getting started, don't overlook the value of Logbook of the World to speed your progress toward the award you seek.

Calendar of MARS & ARRL Events February & March

February

21 - 22	ARRL International DX Contest (CW)
24	MARS Meeting
29	NC QSO Party

March

06	MARS Board Meeting
12	Hamfest - Setup Day
13 - 14	Charlotte Hamfest
30	MARS Meeting

Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society, Inc. - Officers and Board of Directors -2004:

President - Shawn Goodin, K4RSG, Email Address: k4rsg@w4bfb.org

Vice President - Jeff Blythe, KA4WYC, Email address: ka4wyc@w4bfb.org

Secretary - Bill Turner, W4WNT, Email Address: w4wnt@w4bfb.org

Treasurer - John White, WB2NHQ Email Address: wb2nhq@w4bfb.org

Directors - Irvin Hoechner, KF4KFN; Greg Onachila, KG4IOE; Dave Stewart, AF4ZK;
Scott Ellis, KG4UDX; Tom Nicholls, W4NCU

Meetings @ East Baptist Church, 6850 Monroe Road (next to East Mecklenburg High School, near Conference Drive) - Last Tuesday of each month at 7:30 P.M.

Clubroom - Red Cross Building, 2425 Park Road, RM 023, Charlotte, NC Telephone 704-334-3900

Club Repeaters

146.34/146.94 w/Autopatch. 144.69/145.29 w/Autopatch.

144.63/145.23, no Autopatch

449.60/444.60 w/Autopatch and P/T 100.0

Autopatches Access *(don't unkey)+phone number. Disconnect #
222.80/224.40 w/Autopatch 145.01 Packet Digipeater, W4BFB-1

W4BFB Web Site

<http://www.w4bfb.org>

Webmaster: Wayne Setzer - WB4BXW
<wlsetzer@att.net>

METROLINA 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. Net Manager: Jim Payne, N4JBP, <n4jbp@arrl.net>.

Next Meeting - February 24, 2004