



MARS News

Prez Sez for February 2013

Hello fellow members and visitors!

We are off to a great start for 2013! The January club meeting was interesting in that we tried out a new presentation layout and it went down very well with all those that attended. Mitch, KX4MB handed out a questionnaire for the members to fill out, the results of which will be shared with the membership over the coming meetings.

Our biggest fundraiser, the Charlotte Hamfest, is about to happen, and we need **all** members to participate in any way possible to help make this a success for the club this year! As always, we require a lot of volunteers to help with the "Yellow Jackets" contingent and setting up the flea market tables early on Friday morning. The Yellow Jacket

position involves keeping an eye on things and providing help where needed. We have a number of doors that need to be manned and kept closed; we have Yel-



Andy Hawkins

low Jackets checking in customers to the Hamfest and directing them to the dealer area and flea market, concessions, toilets etc. We have Yellow Jackets wandering the aisles and keeping eyes open for nefarious activity.

The shifts are in two-hour increments and you can get into the Hamfest for free! This position is one of the most important ones we have to keep our customers and vendors happy and safe. **PLEASE** volunteer some time either on Friday or Saturday and we will give you Sunday off this year. :-)

This is the first time we have had a Friday and Saturday only event (that I can remember), and we want to make a good impression on our visitors to make next year's event a little easier. Your Hamfest committee has worked **VERY** hard to pull this off and make it a great event for amateurs to attend.

As if that wasn't enough to think about, we are also looking for help with the MS Challenge Walk in Charleston and the Sandblast Rally in Cheraw, SC. More details on these events further down in the newsletter.

On a lighter note, I found some interesting facts from the latest issue of QST, the ARRL publication for Amateur Radio. There were 709,500 licensed amateurs at the end of 2012- this is an increase of 26,500 since 2001. Our '4' call region has the highest number of licensed operators

Inside this issue:

Letter from the President	1
Mary's Messages	2
January Meeting	3
Board Meeting	4
Bill's Message	6
W4BFB Info Page	10

licensed Amateurs at the end of 2012! This is an increase of 26,500 since 2001. Also, our call region has the highest number of licensed operators with 140,000 Amateurs.

This year is also the 100th anniversary of the RSGB, The Radio Society of Great Britain. This is the second oldest amateur radio society, with Wireless Institute of Australia -WIA being the oldest. In the USA, the ARRL celebrates its 100th anniversary next year.

Wishing you all a great month, and looking forward to seeing you at the next meeting and of course the Charlotte Hamfest.

Best 73,
Andy -K4GKK

P.S. If you haven't already renewed your membership, please come to the club meeting prepared to do so!!

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMIT- TEE NEWS—MARY HUNT, N4MH, CHAIRPERSON

Our next public service event will be the MS Challenge Walk. This is a 3-day, 50-mile event. It will be held in the Charleston, SC area the first weekend in March, (the 1st through the 3rd). They walk 20 miles on Friday and Saturday, then 10 on Sunday. For those who support the event all three days, we stay at the Wild Dunes Resort for a nominal fee.

We still need additional radio operators for SAG Vehicles or for Rest Stops. Even if you can only work one day we can use your support.

Currently we have 200 walkers signed up for the event and we expect that number to increase.

If you are interested in supporting this event as a SAG Vehicle or a rest stop radio operator for the three days or even one day, go visit Elena's web site at www.ridemaps.com and scroll down to the Challenge Walk. After you sign up on that page, there is a link that takes you over to the MS 'Site to sign up with MS. There is also a nominal charge for the food at Wild Dunes and this site will ask for a credit card for payment.

We also have members of the Charleston Amateur Radio Club that help support this event. This is a slower paced event than Bike Tour, but is a great event!!!!

MINUTES FOR MARS MEETING OF JANUARY 29, 2013

President Andy Hawkins opened the meeting at 7:35 PM.

He welcomed our visitors and reminded members that 2013 dues are now due.

Tom Hunt, KA3VVJ, discussed the MS Challenge Walk to be held Mar. 1-3 in Charleston, SC. It is expected to draw 260-280 walkers. Sign up on www.ridemaps.com. Tom also discussed the VE session to be held at the church on Sat. Feb. 16. If you want to take an exam, bring your current license original and a copy of the license. Arrive by 8:30 AM so you can do the paperwork to take the exam.

Andy introduced the current officers and board of directors.

Andy Hawkins, K4GKK, President

Mitch Barbato, KX4MB, Vice President

Sandra Jones, KK4DAW, Secretary

Tom Hunt, KA3VVJ, Treasurer

Charles Comerford, KK4HOK, Director

Bryan Ferdinand, K4NET, Director

George Hohas, W4GEH, Director

Dave Holbrook, KC4YPB, Director

John White, WB2NHQ, Director

Jerry Brewer, N4MIU, the Mecklenburg County EC provided ARRL Certificates of Merit for John White, WB2NHQ, and Kevin Keyes, K4YYD, for their communications efforts during last year's Democratic Convention in Charlotte.

Jerry also reported that the ARES exercise last weekend, "The Great Charlotte Earthquake", was a success with 14 stations checking in on the VHF phone net and 17 stations checking in via WinLink. The Tar Heel Emergency Net and the PETNet were also included in the exercise.

It was reported that the FCC has run out of "A" call signs for assignments to Extra class licenses.

Mitch Barbato discussed the Sand Blast Rally in SC, which uses ham radio communications for coordination. Sign up is on the Sand Blast Rally website, www.sandblastrally.com. The Rally is March 2nd and is between Chesterfield/Cheraw/Patrick SC. There is a Volunteers meeting in Cheraw on Friday night March 1st.

Mitch Barbato handed out a survey to gather ideas for the club activities in 2013.

The NC QSO Party will be Feb. 24. Further details at the Raleigh Amateur Radio Club website www.rars.org/ncqsoparty.

Charlotte Hamfest:

Bryan Ferdinand, K4NET, Hamfest Chairman, recognized the members of the Hamfest committee in attendance. He also showed off the features of the Hamfest website and recognized Wayne Setzer, WB4BXW and Charles Comerford, KK4HOK who have been updating the website.

Two new features are being considered for the Hamfest, a Go Box contest and a Hands-on Antenna workshop. Suggestions for the Go Box contest should go to John White, and the Antenna Workshop to Bob Ferdinand, K9TMU. The Cabarrus club will handle talk-in. Barry May, KC4SSS and Paul Jones, K4VCF are the contacts for the Yellow Jackets and Flea Market Setup this year. Charles, KK4HOK, has put the Hamfest into social networks with a Facebook page and a Twitter account.

The next Hamfest meeting will be Wednesday, Feb. 13 at the Red Cross building.

Submitted by Bill Turner, W4WNT (Temporary Scribe)

MINUTES FOR BOARD MEETING OF FEBRUARY 5, 2013

1. Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm.
Present: Andy Hawkins, K4GKK; Tom Hunt, KA3VVJ; Sandra Jones, KK4DAW; Dave Holbrook, KC4YPB; George Hohas, W4GEH; John White, WB2NHQ; Mitch Barbato, KX4MB, Bryan Ferdinand, K4NET, Charles Comerford, KK4HOK
2. Tom proposed the minutes for the Board Meeting of January 8, 2013 be accepted as presented and John seconded.
3. Treasurer's Report:
Tom presented the treasurer's report. Dave motioned to accept, seconded by Bryan and approved by the Board.
4. Vice President's Report:
Mitch discussed the questionnaire results by members at the last meeting. The Board discussed the responses and how to share them with the Club most effectively. Bryan will briefly discuss the Hamfest at the February Club Meeting.
5. Secretary's Report:
91 total current paid members including 4 life members.
6. Committee Reports:

Repeater Committee: Bryan shared that EchoLink is working well. The Equalizer donated by Mike Wentz- KE4EHC is now installed and active on EchoLink. This greatly improved the audio. Bryan discussed finding out more about the effects of weather on radio-wave propagation. Also, how can we accommodate No-IP or Dynamic DNS for the Club packet site?

Public Service Committee: The Challenge Walk MS 2013 in Charleston is March 1-3, 2013, and the Sandblast Rally 2013 in Cheraw, SC, are coming up March 2nd.

Following that will be the MS Walk in Charlotte in May.

Equipment Committee:

Andy set up a database for the equipment inventory as well as delineating the Go-Boxes. The clock purchased 2 years ago in the basement doesn't work.

Field Day Committee:

This will be addressed after Hamfest.

Hamfest:

Bryan discussed the Hamfest and roles of volunteers. There will be new issues at this Hamfest due to the change of the schedule.

Old Business: John talked about getting instructor's manuals for a Technician class and how to best go about that.

New Business: Bryan told the board about the benefit of going to the meetings of other clubs as a means of learning what procedures work best. He recommended that other members try that as well. He showed us a presentation of his findings. He reviewed Cabarrus, Gaston, and Stanly Counties. There may be a possibility of grants for equipment that might be available for our club could pursue as well. A collaboration of clubs is a possible idea to further Radio. We can initiate this by supporting their events. Another aspect he observed was affiliation with scouting. Other ideas were: food gatherings or prizes. Bryan also proposed changes to the new website.

There being no further business, Tom motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 PM seconded by George.

Submitted by Sandra Jones, KK4DAW

Secretary - MARS

MESSAGE FROM BILL NEWSOME—AC4ZR

Hello everyone, my name is Bill Newsome (AC4ZR) in Lancaster, SC. I was the 2010 W4BFB “Ham of the Year” recipient for my efforts in helping get the MARS club packet nodes and digipeaters restored back to working order (which we are still working on).

I would like to take this time (space) to give recognition to all of the people who helped me along the way. I’m sure it will surprise you how many folks it took just to get everything to this point. I wanted to wait until every single site was up and running before writing this, to include every single person, but it’s still a work in progress. It has been almost three years since taking on the task and I have asked a lot from these people.

Some of the Hams mentioned here are not W4BFB club members and didn’t have to help, but they took time from their busy schedules and families to help with restoring these sites, which shows their dedication to keeping packet going in the Carolinas.

Let’s give a big “THANK YOU” to these folks:

RICHARD ARROWOOD (KD4GCA) from Gastonia, who kept one of the longest running personal packet BBS systems in the area going for over 15 years without any down time. He forwarded bulletins, messages, and NTS traffic to several BBS systems in the area, including our own BBS at the Red Cross Building, to the K4QC group in Hendersonville, NC, and eventually to my BBS before shutting his system off in 2011. Richard made many trips from Gastonia to the Red Cross Building to help keep our BBS working great. Even though he doesn’t have a BBS on the air anymore, he continues to support the packet community when called upon. His BBS is sadly missed.

PETER JOURDAN (KE4UXP) from Rock Hill, SC. Peter took the old DOS computer from the Red Cross building that was running the BBS software and rebuilt the entire system to get it back going again. Going to our club room three years ago to see why the BBS was down was my first task in getting the club system going again, and Peter helped

me get things started. Peter also donated the UPS (backup power supply) that keeps the radios, TNC’s, and computer going during brown-outs and power outages.

TIM SLAY (N4IB) from Mooresville, NC. Tim has hosted two of our packet club stations for many years and continues to support the packet projects for W4BFB. Tim has made many trips to Anderson Mountain and to the old Duke Building in downtown Charlotte to help us gain access for repairing any equipment that went down. Those sites are key to helping hams get into the W4BFB BBS at the Red Cross, and without Tim’s efforts in keeping those sites up and running, the club wouldn’t have the great system we have now.

JOHN COVINGTON (W4CC) from Dallas, NC. John donated several Dell computers to the club which allowed us to upgrade from the old failing DOS BBS computer and the old club station computer to much faster Windows XP machines. Having Windows-based computers now allows for many new features to the station, including remote control of the BBS and connection to the internet, which has also become a reality.

BRYAN FERDINAND (K4NET) Ham of the Year 2012! From Charlotte, NC, Bryan donated a very nice flat screen monitor for the BBS computer at the Red Cross Club Room. He also has assisted Seth (KF4LLF) in troubleshooting and repairing the old DOS BBS computer when it was having issues. Bryan, along with Charles (KK4HOK) and Seth, worked with the Red Cross IT Dept to finally get the new Windows-based BBS computer connected to the internet. This now makes it a Full-Service BBS and capable of moving messages all over the world. Bryan recently provided networking services to connect the newer club computer to the new wireless router. Bryan also donated RAM memory for the same computer. Charles helped in programming the new wireless router in the club room that's now providing our own "hot spot", which can now be used to keep the GO BOX laptop computers up to date in the comfort in the Club Room.

EARL FORTNER (K4KAY) from Harrisburg, NC. Earl has played many roles in helping keep club packet going through the years, including hosting a station at his tower site in northeast Charlotte, the 2 meter/440 MHz, KE4IYH Node. Earl has been very supportive in making sure all the equipment stays up and running, just as he does with the Club repeaters. He recently repaired the Kenwood TM-331A 220 MHz radio on the BBS station at the Red Cross Club Room. The finals in the radio were blown and he ordered a new PA transistor for the radio and replaced it, which got the 220 side of the station going again, which in turn helped keep messages flowing to the K4QC group in Hendersonville, NC. Earl has donated rolls of coax to replace the aging cracked coax at various sites, as well as connectors. He has ordered new antennas for the Duke Building site (the antenna was full of water) and Anderson Mountain site (pending replacement along with coax). Earl is also the Club's repeater Chairman. A BIG THANKS goes out to Earl Fortner!

SETH O'NEAL (KF4LLF) from Concord, NC. Seth also plays many roles in designing, building and implementing the latest technologies into our system, which until recently was only connected through RF connections. Seth has networked over 4 area BBS systems and BPQ Switches through IP connections, including his own in Concord and another system in Union Grove, NC, which makes it possible to get messages in and out of the Charlotte area to the rest of the world. Seth is a TRUE Sysop (Systems Operator). He has worked many hours programming the W4BFB BBS system along with my BBS here in Lancaster, making sure that they run smoothly 24/7. He has also taken the time to learn the complicated software (WinFBB and BPQ32) that's needed to run a BBS computer and make it all talk through RF ports and through the internet. Recently, he was quick to meet Earl at his tower site to replace a defective packet radio that had gone down using his own radio to get it back going again. Seth is always looking for new ways to improve our system. He has also written several articles for the MARS newsletters to help hams new to packet radio get started. These are referenced here:

http://www.w4bfb.org/w4bfb_archives/newsletter/Sep2012.pdf

http://www.w4bfb.org/w4bfb_archives/newsletter/Oct2012.pdf

JEFF BLYTHE (KA4WYC) from Clover, SC. For many years, Jeff has been helping host our W4BFB Clover, SC packet site, which until recently was at the Bethal Fire Dept. where he is a member. During last year's hail storms, it was discovered that the outer jacket of the coax feeding the antennas had been stripped off and the site had to be shut down until repairs were made. The equipment is pending a move to a higher location. Jeff also has donated commercial-grade coax and connectors to help get that equipment going at its new site. The club also bought a new antenna for the station for when it gets put back on the air.

TIM O'ROURKE (W4YN) of Charlotte, NC. Tim has been a major contributor in getting two club sites back up and running. He has donated a Yaesu FT-2400H 2-meter radio for the W4BFB Clover, SC site, and an MFJ-1270C TNC (with manual) for the downtown W4BFB Duke Building site that runs the 220 MHz side of the station. Tim, we appreciate your help very much!

LEE PRICE (KD4GCF) and STEVE McCABE (KE4IYH) - Lee from Jamestown, NC, and Steve from Charlotte, NC. Lee and Steve are the "ORIGINAL" sysops for the W4BFB packet system. Together they built, programmed, and maintained the old DOS-based BBS computer, repaired and maintained the club packet nodes and digipeaters, and at times took their own personal equipment to sites to replace whatever was broken. Thanks guys for all the years of hard work in keeping the club packet stations up and running!

SHAWN GOODIN (K4RSG) of Harrisburg, NC. Shawn donated a 220 MHz FM radio for the AC4ZR BBS here in Lancaster, SC. The radio is used to forward messages and bulletins to the K4QC club up in Hendersonville, NC when 2-meter and 440 is either down or propagation isn't good on those bands.

CARL STARNES (W4EAT) from Stanfield, NC. Carl donated a PacComm Tiny-2 TNC just to have on hand in case a site went down and we needed another one. Carl is also the Sysop for the Stanley County K4OGB-7 node in Albemarle, NC.

FRED ROBERTS (WB4QOC) of Kannapolis, NC. Fred, back in the heyday of packet radio, ran some of the best packet nodes in the state of North Carolina on 145.77 MHz. This was called the SEDAN system (South Eastern Digital Association Network). The SEDAN system was literally throughout the entire south eastern part of the US. He had nodes on Clingmans Dome (Mount Mitchell), Grandfather Mountain, in northeast Charlotte, Salisbury, and even down in Florence, SC. Two Charlotte Hamfests ago, Fred found out about the club's intentions of restoring all their packet sites and he donated the equipment from one of his SEDAN sites right off of his flea market table. The equipment consisted of a commercial-grade Motorola radio and an MFJ-1270c TURBO 9600 BAUD TNC.

Dr. Bill Heybruck (WA2EDN) of Mint Hill, NC. Bill has been providing technical support and assistance to the project ever since taking on the task of bringing the system back to life. Bill has used his own resources to design and build custom made Diode Matrix boards that are used to interface multiple packet TNC's. He recently performed a major rebuild to a donated GSC power supply that wasn't working. He traced out every circuit in the supply and made a schematic of it including the newly-installed crowbar circuit which he designed and built. Bill also custom-built the mounting brackets that hold the up-sized capacitors in it. The power supply will soon be used to power another packet site in the Charlotte area in the very near future.

BEN ANTANAITIS (WB2RHM) of Charlotte, NC. Ben has been providing technical support and assistance with a variety of TNC issues and helping repair several of them.

Ben's technical background and knowledge has been instrumental in getting TNC's back on the air in a timely fashion. It has been a pleasure working with Ben!

MITCH BARBATO (KX4MB) Ham of the Year 2011! Originally from NJ, but here in Charlotte for over 30 years, Mitch has been providing technical assistance and working with the packet group on a

broad range of issues, and has helped solve many problems. (He also recently added the W4BFB packet frequencies to the back page of the MARS club newsletters.)

RAY OLSZEWSKI (KA3VME) of Charlotte, NC. Ray donated an Alinco DR-110 radio and an AEA PK-88 TNC for the our packet system along with an MFJ TNC-Mic switch.

I hope I haven't forgotten anyone, as I have kept good written records as to who has helped me along the way. So as you can see, I cannot take full credit for the 2010 W4BFB "HAM OF THE YEAR" award, as it has been a team effort. We still have two sites that have been down for some time now, but we are working very hard getting them back up and running, and with that team effort we are seeing light at the end of the tunnel!

Again, thanks to all the hams for your support. It is very much appreciated!

73....Bill Newsome (AC4ZR)

Club Repeaters

Input	Output	Offset (KHz)	Autopatch	Tone
146.34	146.94	-600	No	118.8
144.69	145.29	-600	No	118.8
144.63	145.23	-600	No	118.8
222.8	224.4	-1600	No	none
449.6	444.6	+5000	No	118.8

W4BFB & Local 1200 Baud Packet Radio Frequencies:

145.010 / 145.090 / 223.400 / 446.500

W4BFB-9 = Charlotte BBS / W4BFB-2 = World Wide Chatroom
(All W4BFB packet nodes have links to all listed frequencies)

More info: <http://www.w4bfb.org/packet.htm>

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

Meeting Location:

East Baptist Church

6850 Monroe Rd

Charlotte, NC 28212

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

Clubroom

Red Cross Building

2425 Park Rd, Room 023

Charlotte, NC 28203

Club Officers and Board of Directors

President

Andy Hawkins, K4GKK, k4gkk@w4bfb.org

Vice President

Mitch Barbato, KX4MB, kx4mb@w4bfb.org

Secretary

Sandra Jones, KK4DAW, kk4daw@w4bfb.org

Treasurer

Tom Hunt, KA3VVJ, ka3vvj@w4bfb.org

Directors

Charles Comerford, KK4HOK, kk4hok@w4bfb.org

Bryan Ferdinand,, K4NET, k4net@w4bfb.org

George Hohas, W4GEH, w4geh@w4bfb.org

Dave Holbrook, KC4YPB, kc4ypb@w4bfb.org

John White, WB2NHQ, wb2nhq@w4bfb.org

Newsletter Editor

Thea Barbato, w4bfbeditor@w4bfb.org

www.w4bfb.org

*Mecklenburg 2m Emergency Net
9:00 PM local time, daily on 146.94
(-600)*

Alternate frequencies announced

Newsletter Editor

Thea Barbato

8609 Doe Run Road

Charlotte, NC 28277

w4bfbeditor@w4bfb.org

